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Guṭakās from North-Western India: An Introduction to their Structures and Materials

Abstract: *Guṭakās* are pocket manuscripts that comprise collections of devotional texts dedicated to a specific Hindu deity. They are products of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the north-western regions of India. Their various forms reflect the interconnections between the Hindu pothi, made of unbound leaves and protected by a cloth wrapper, and the Islamic codex, reminiscent of the western book tradition. The present article aims to provide an introduction to the characteristics of their binding as well as their materials and decorative elements.

1 Introduction

The term *guṭakā* or *guṭkā*, गुटका in Hindi, means manual or handbook but also relates to a small selection or collection of various texts. Nalini Balbir provides the most complete description related to the *guṭakās* in the Jain context:

> A guṭakā is a format comparable to a western pocket-book or note-book. It may have originally been bound, but in most cases the folded sheets are placed inside a cover without binding. A guṭakā is generally made of several individual texts, which may have something in common [...]. They can be written all by the same hand, or by different hands [...]. The object is one, but it can be ornamented in different ways in different places (different margins, different types of blank space in the middle, etc.). [...] In most cases of this type, there are on the one hand full-fledged texts which have been copied neatly and properly, as any other manuscript, and, on the other hand, some sorts of notes in cursive script (accounts, recipes) which are rather meant for personal use than for others to read. The analysis of such manuscripts is problematic.[1]

However, *guṭakās* are not only found in Jain contexts but also in Hindu ones. They usually include a single text or a compilation of devotional texts, often dedicated to Śiva, Viṣṇu or Devī, sometimes mixed together, and are used on

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1 Balbir 2006, 60.

various occasions, such as personal reading, worship or puja, and meditations.[2] These are eighteenth- and nineteenth-century products from north-western India, in the regions of Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan, and evoke a portable book of approximately a landscape postcard format that can be easily carried in a pocket or bag and read outside during a trip, for example, in a place of pilgrimage.[3] They are mainly written in Devanāgarī, a script widely used in northern India to write, for example, Sanskrit or Hindi. In Kashmir, the text can also be written in the local Śarada script. *Guṭakās* are also used in Sikh communities and contain compendiums of Sikh religious scriptures, such as the *Pañj Granthī*, which contains a selection of five texts from the *Guru Granth Sāhib*. The latter, the sacred book of Sikhism, is copied in large and heavy volumes and can be enthroned for recitation only in the prescribed ritualistic manner and opened in the *gurdwaras* or in a special room dedicated to that purpose.[4] Small anthologies were prepared in the form of *guṭakās* in order to facilitate private recitation or study.

Depending on the production context, the means of the devotee, and the skill of the scribe or the painter and the tools at his disposal, the text can be more or less elaborately illuminated and illustrated. A rich palette and the use of gold or silver paint are usually the apanage of skilled and accomplished artists and wealthy clients.[5] Similarly, the bindings feature a wide variety of covering materials, from simple cotton fabric to sari and brocade silk.

The codicological study of *guṭakās* is in its infancy. The most extensive research project, the results of which have been compiled in a book by Heike Oberlin and Frank Köhler,[6] takes an in-depth look at two *guṭakās* preserved at the University of Tübingen in Germany through various scholarly essays.[7] In

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2 Balbir mentions that Jain *guṭakās* are private prayer manuals 'which are meant to include everything which is useful in the context of daily ritual and religious life for any pious layman, from textbooks on the doctrine [...] to narrative texts, hymns and vidhis' (Balbir 2006, 112).

3 Formigatti 2020, 70; K. Goswamy 1989, 19.

4 In Sikh shrines called *gurdwaras* (which means in Punjabi 'doorway to the Guru'), the *Guru Granth Sāhib*, the sacred scripture of Sikhism, is worshipped as the spiritual embodiment of the Guru. The large and heavy copy is safely opened on a cushioned stand called *manjī*, protected by a canopy. In addition, every Sikh family endeavours to set aside one room of the house for the reading of the *Adi Granth*, and that room is also called a *gurdwara*.

5 Karuna Goswamy gives a brief overview of their decorative repertoire in *The Glory of the Great Goddess*, K. Goswamy 1989, 19–21.

6 Oberlin and Kohler 2020; Singh Dhillon 2021, 252.

7 Tübingen, TUB, Cod. Ma I 893 contains three texts from the Vaiṣṇava tradition and Cod. Ma I 894 eleven texts, of which the first eight are excerpts from larger Vaiṣṇava texts, while the last three belong to the Śaiva tradition. The texts dedicated to Viṣṇu are the *Bhagavadgītāmālāman-*

addition, the conservation of these volumes was the occasion to deeply observe and record their structure.[8] A Master's thesis by Madeline Helland explores two *guṭakās* found incidentally in the basement at the Denison Library at Scripps College (Claremont, CA).[9] Helland recounts her journey through the understanding of the socio-historical context as well as the construction and content of these books that were totally unknown to her.[10] Nina Cavazos's dissertation will not be further discussed here, many aspects of which have been questioned by Camillo Formigatti.[11] All of this is to say that *guṭakās*, although fairly simple in format, as will be discussed later in this article, may have been overlooked because of the lack of understanding resulting from the 'obscure' iconography and the illegibility of the text to the uninitiated. Other reasons for this lack of interest or research opportunity may be that the relatively small number of scattered copies, the lack of a coherent corpus in western collections, the difficulty of accurately identifying the content of the texts, and the great variety of materials and structures are the main obstacles preventing the collection of sufficient data for analysis and interpretation. The examination of several *guṭakās* from European institutions (in France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands) has made it possible to highlight certain characteristics of their structures independently of their textual meaning (see Appendix). Therefore, the article aims to provide an introduction to the materiality of these books, while exploring the various binding structures of a few manuscripts from Kashmir to Rajasthan. A particular emphasis will also be placed on the materials used to prepare the text block and cover the book.

2 The form and use of the *guṭakās*

It is plausible to think that a *guṭakā* is a hybrid book form inherited from the long horizontal palm-leaf manuscript or pothi together with the Islamic codex.[12] Although it is not entirely clear how the manuscript took its final form of a

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tra, 'Garland Mantra of the *Bhagavadgītā*' and a form of *Viṣṇusahasranāma* or 'Thousand Names of Viṣṇu'. See Formigatti 2020.

8 Dipper 2020.

9 Helland 2018.

10 The first book contains a copy of the *Bhagavadgītā* written in Devanāgarī and the second a compilation of Vaiṣṇava texts copied in Śarada.

11 Formigatti 2020, 71; Cavazos 2016.

12 The term pothi ultimately derives from the Sanskrit word *pustikā or pustakā*.

small, compact and oblong handbook, it is probable that the format gradually derived from both of the models above through the course of the eighteenth century. When fully opened, the *guṭakā* is reminiscent of the long horizontal palm leaves of the pothi, albeit in a stitched form (Fig. 1). An interesting manuscript, London, BL, Or. 13682, might be a noteworthy example of the structural evolution of the book towards a more compact and intimate format (Fig. 2). The volume does not contain devotional texts but a copy of the *Madhumālatīvārtā* (the love story of Madhu and Mālatī) included in a collection with four other Rajasthani poems. The date of the copy is given as Samvat 1829–1832, which is equivalent to 1772–1775 CE, and the location is assigned to south-eastern Rajasthan because the illustrations are in the Mewar style.[13] The volume is of a square and small format and the text block measures 120 mm in height and 125 mm in width. It consists of a single and thick section of folded bifolios that are held together by a string that passes through two holes pierced in the middle of the section. The string forms a knot in a third hole, in the middle of the height, on the spine, to hold the whole structure together. It comes out of the spine and serves as a tie that is wrapped around the volume to keep it closed. In addition, three pieces of leather at the sewing holes protect the paper from the friction of the cord (Fig. 3). The limp cover is made of four repurposed pieces of brown leather assembled together with a saddle stitch. It has a flap which sits on the lower board when the book is closed. The leather protrudes at the top and bottom to protect the edges of the text block. Although the type of sewing described above was rarely used for Indic manuscripts, it is, nonetheless, a quick and inexpensive method that requires no special skills or tools other than a needle and thread and can, therefore, be done on site. During my research, I only came across one similar sewing but for a small and thin manuscript containing several religious texts.[14] The British Library manuscript contains many illustrations painted with a bold palette and, therefore, may reflect a certain standard of its patron. All of these features, including the use of a leather wrapper with a flap, may suggest that this book is part of a tradition of small books intended for a local and private readership, as were the *guṭakās*.

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13 The text was composed by the Rajasthani poet Caturbhuj Dās but the present British Library copy was written in Rajasthani or Braj Bhasha. The author thanks Marina Chellini for providing the bibliographic information. See also Losty 1982, 130–131.
14 Leiden, UBL, Or. 27.616, containing texts written in Devanāgarī and dated to the nineteenth century.

Fig. 1: Open *guṭakā*, collection of texts related to Viṣṇu's worship, Kashmir, *c*. 1777; Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 709. © Fondation Martin Bodmer

Fig. 2: Closed copy of the *Madhumālatīvārtā*, 1772–1775 CE, Rajasthan (Mewar); London, BL, Or. 13682 (binding); © British Library Board.

Fig. 3: Open copy of the *Madhumālatīvārtā,* 1772–1775 CE, Rajasthan (Mewar); London, BL, Or. 13682 (middle of the book); © British Library Board.

Returning to the sewing structure, most of the *guṭakās* in this study are composed of multiple quires that are bound along their short vertical edges (see Appendix). Nevertheless, there is a variant to this format. As illustrated in a copy of the *Jvālāmukhīsahasranāma*, Paris, BnF, sanscrit 434, the folios are still assembled in quires, but these are sewn along their long horizontal edges (Fig. 4). Therefore, the page-turning is done upwards and not sideways. This format is again reminiscent of the pothi manuscript, but in a stitched form in order to prevent scattering and loss. The text is here read vertically and continuously from the upper to the lower folio. According to Pranita Ranade, who studied seventeenth-century unbound books written in Devanāgarī from Maharashtra, this conventional system of page orientation is dictated by the form, function and use of the book and the position of the reader.[15] The vertical format allows for smooth and uninterrupted reading, as well as an ergonomic handling of the folios, made possible by the size of the page, the ratio of width to height and the collocation of the text within the folios.

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15 Ranade 2015, 2–12.

Fig. 4: Open manuscript of the *Jvālāmukhīsahasranāma* showing the sewing made along the long horizontal edge; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 434; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

Two interesting photographs illustrate the use of both book forms. Fig. 5 shows a devotee from Rajasthan performing a puja. The *tripuṇḍra*, three horizontal lines and a dot on his forehead, as well as other marks on his body drawn with sacred ash, indicate that he is a disciple of Śiva. The *mala* or rosary he is holding in this right hand is hidden in a prayer sock or *gomukhī*.[16] The cultic objects necessary for the rituals are arranged around him: a *thali* tray filled with offerings, pestle and mortar, oil lamps, candlesticks, various pots and jugs, and a miniature shrine, probably containing the image of a deity adorned with fresh flowers. The manuscript made of unbound leaves, which are flipped upward, is opened flat on the low table. Similarly, Fig. 6 presents a Brahmin from Gokarna

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16 There are several reasons for such a practice: to ensure the sanctity of the *mala* and, therefore, of the practice, to protect the *mala* from impurities and dirt and to keet it out of reach of strangers. By preventing prying eyes, the devotion and prayers are protected and remain private and personal.

reading a horizontal book, laid flat on a small stool.[17] Both books have a similar format, except that the second one is sewn and bound along the long horizontal edge. In both cases, the worshippers sit cross-legged on the floor with the book lying flat on a small table or low stool in front of them. By contrast, a photograph taken by William Johnson between 1855 and 1862 shows two Smarth Brahmins performing puja (Fig. 7). The devotee on the left is reading a *guṭakā* sewn along the short and vertical edge held in his left hand. Another *guṭakā* with an envelope flap sits on a larger volume wrapped in a decorative textile, itself placed on a low table in front of the second devotee on the right. Naturally, bound and oblong *guṭakās* could be simply handled and read as one would with paperbacks.

Fig. 5: An Indian devotee squatting in front of a small table on which is a shrine, perhaps in a temple; photo *c.* 1900, Wellcome Collection; public domain.

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17 Gokarna in western Karnataka is a popular place of pilgrimage. It is home to a number of scholars and pundits who pass on their knowledge from generation to generation. The main temple is dedicated to Śiva in the form of Mahābaleśvara.

Fig. 6: A Brahmin from Gorkana; courtesy of Kamat's Potpourri.

Fig. 7: Smarth Brahmins; photos of western India, William Johnson, *c.* 1855–1862, albumen print; Dallas, TX, Southern Methodist University, DeGolyer Library, Ag2002.1407; © DeGolyer Library.

3 The binding structures of the *guṭakās*

After the bifolios of the future book are prepared, it appears that, in most cases, the ruling is carried out before writing the text. A photograph taken around 1895 by a British traveller in Kashmir shows three pandits or Brahmins copying a text, possibly in a street shop. Although the scene appears to have been staged, it provides a rare image of what the process of writing the sacred scriptures might have looked like (Fig. 8). While two scholars write on bifolios placed on their knees, a third pandit probably dictates the text to be copied or checks the completed folios. The bifolios on which the scribes are writing show that the ruled lines had already been drawn previously. Some books confirm this observation: it is not uncommon to find a series of blank lined sheets without text at the end. The manuscript Paris, BnF, sanscrit 337, for example, containing some texts dedicated to Viṣṇu finishes with three blank ruled folios (Fig. 9).

Fig. 8: Book writers, Kashmir, 1895; © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images.
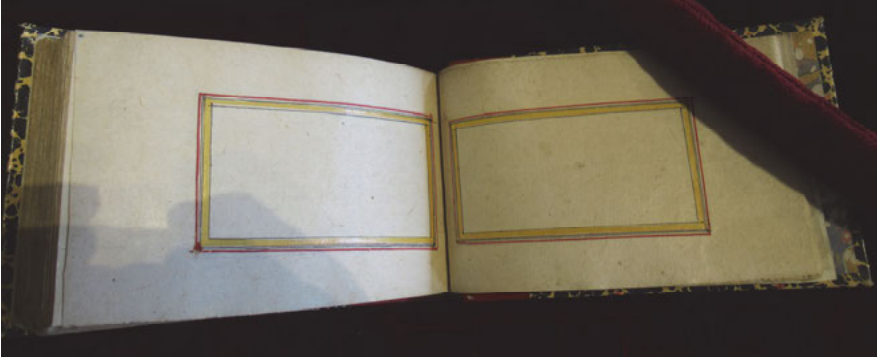
Fig. 9: Blank ruled folios at the end of the manuscript of the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Viṣṇusahasranāma*; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 337; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

After the text is written, the bifolios are usually assembled into quires and the text block is sewn on two, three or sometimes four sewing stations (Fig. 10). The sewing is unsupported, which means that the quires are bound to each other with link-stitch sewing, similar to that of Islamic manuscripts.[18] An examination of several books reveals that, most of the time, the quires are quinions, that is, five bifolios or ten folios. Two dashes drawn in charcoal and situated at one of the corners of the left and right folios indicate the middle of the quires and serve as aids to facilitate the sewing operation for the bookbinder (Fig. 11). In addition to the predominance of unsupported sewing, supported sewing has also been reported. Helland, for instance, notices a book being sewn on one or two strips of leather.[19] Similar supported sewing on leather was also implemented for Islamic manuscripts during the nineteenth century and might be reminiscent of western binding sewn on ribbons.[20]

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18 Scheper 2015, 35–41.
19 Helland 2018, 22.
20 Scheper 2015, 43–45, 152.

Fig. 10: Sewing on four stations, compilation of texts related to Viṣṇu's worship; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1875; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

Fig. 11: Centre of a quire marked by two charcoal dashes, compilation of texts related to Viṣṇu's worship; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 337, fols 35ᵛ–36ʳ; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

In some cases, the books have no quires but simply consist of a stack of loose folios which are connected together with stab sewing on three or four stations (Fig. 12). Stab sewing became popular in the second part of the nineteenth century as a fast binding method with the influence of lithography and the development of commercial books which required cheap binding.[21] In addition, this sewing structure was also used as a repair operation for damaged books in which the gutters are torn, the quires dismantled and the folios loose. Similar sewing is, however, not only found in Islamic manuscripts but also in ledgers or registers called *bahi khattas*. This kind of stationery limp bindings was used by bookkeepers and genealogists to record, respectively, accountancy and genealogy, deeds and contracts in a village or community (Fig. 13a). The use of merchants' account books is reported at least as far back as the seventeenth century. John Ovington, who travelled in the western part of India around 1680, gave the following description:

> the paper-books in vulgar use among the Inhabitants of India, on which they write, are long Schrowls of Paper, sometimes Ten Foot in length, and a Foot broad, sewed together at the upper end, as many long sheets as the occasion of the Writing requires.[22]

The long and oblong format of the leaves often corresponds to the dimensions of a long sheet of paper. The leaves are simply accordion folded, with the folds used for column layout to note numbers and calculation. The pile of leaves to which are added two covers made of thin leather, usually red, is held together by a rope that passes through holes punched along the short edge. Thick paper or leather washers are placed over the holes to prevent wear and shearing (Fig. 13b). The volume is folded in half lengthwise and a cord wrapped around it keeps it closed for storage (Fig. 13c). This binding technique is a fast, cheap and efficient way of making registers that were obviously sturdy enough to have survived to this day. Such books are still manufactured today, although the covers are now made of embroidered cotton fabric as a substitute for red leather.

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21 Singh Dhillon 2021, 249. For more details on stab sewing structures in Islamic manuscripts, see Scheper 2015, 41–42.

22 Ovington 1696, 148. John Ovington (1653–1731) was an English priest who was hired as a chaplain by the East India Company. He settled in Surat where he lived for two and a half years.

Fig. 12: Stab sewing, *Bhagavadgītā* and other devotional texts related to Viṣṇu's worship; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 341; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

Fig. 13a–c: Ledgers or *bahi khatta* from Udaipur, Rajasthan (a); paper or leather washers, *bahi khatta* from Udaipur; courtesy of Emma Fraser (b); piles of *bahi khattas* folded for storage; courtesy of Hussayn Family, Sanganer, Rajasthan (c).

Returning to the *guṭakās*, the endbands are either non-existent, an imitation of Islamic endbands or an original creation of the bookbinder (Figs 14a–f).

Fig. 14a–f: Woven endbands made of red silk threads, collection of texts related to Viṣṇu's worship; Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 709; © Fondation Martin Bodmer (a); absence of endbands, *Bhagavadgītā* and subsidiary texts; Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 704; © Fondation Martin Bodmer (b); endbands made of twisted pieces of coarse cloth sewed on the tail and head, *Viṣṇusahasranāma* and other devotional texts related to the worship of Viṣṇu; Leiden, UBL, Or. 25.464; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (c); endband made of a rope rolled up in a piece of purple and white striped fabric directly glued to the tail and head, *Bhagavadgītā*, *Viṣṇusahasranāma* and other excerpts related to Viṣṇu's worship; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1875; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (d); endbands featuring the Islamic chevron woven pattern made of pink and white threads, *Pañj Granthī*; Paris, BnF, indien 693; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (e); absence of endbands, *Bhagavadgītā* and other devotional texts related to Viṣṇu's worship; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 341; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (f).
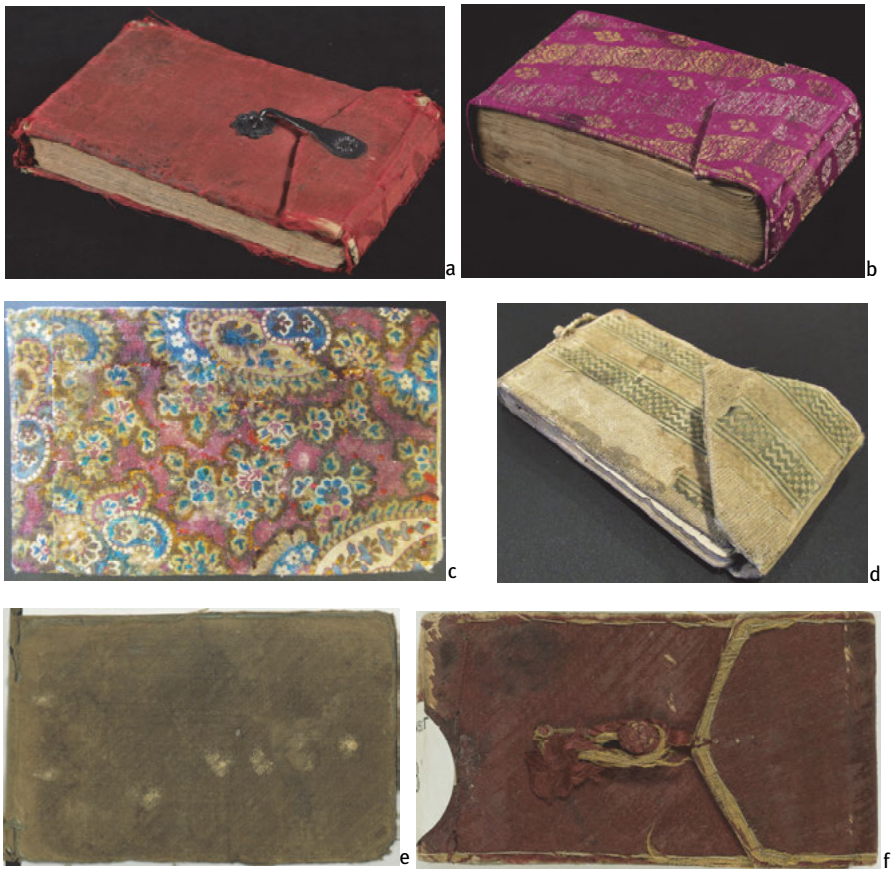
Fig. 15a–b: Red silk with a metal clasp, *Bhagavadgītā* and subsidiary texts; Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 704; © Fondation Martin Bodmer (a); purple sari with gold thread embroidery, collection of texts related to Viṣṇu's worship; Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 709; © Fondation Martin Bodmer (b); block-printed cotton cloth, history of Kṛṣṇa; Leiden, UBL, Or. 25.463; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (c); two layers of textile: a coarse cotton cloth and a coloured woven fabric, compendium of Sanskrit texts; Leiden, UBL, Or. 27.616; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (d); brown woven cotton cloth, *Bhagavadgītā* and *Viṣṇusahasranāma*; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1875; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (e); red silk and yellow textile with knot and tie, *Bhagavadgītā* and other devotional texts related to Viṣṇu's worship; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 341; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (f).

However, it seems that the Islamic type of endbands featuring a woven chevron pattern is rarely reproduced as they require some skill and practice from the craftsman.[23] The text block is protected by two pasteboards made of repurposed pieces of paper. If the binding was supplied with an envelope flap, the latter is connected to the lower board situated on the right, because the reading was done from left to right, unlike the Islamic books, which were read from right to left. Dissimilar from Islamic binding, the envelope flap sits above the upper board and not below (Figs 15a–f).

4 The covering of the *guṭakās*

The volumes studied for this article are all covered with fabric (except for London, BL, Or. 13682). Observation of a larger number of books would be necessary to determine whether this aspect is a general characteristic dictated by religious principles or by the convenience and availability of textile material. From a technical standpoint, it is easier, cheaper and less time-consuming to cover a book with a piece of repurposed textile than with leather, which must be considerably prepared before being used as a covering material.[24] Nevertheless, the boards of Hindu *guṭakā* are covered with a large range of fabrics depending on what the artisan had at hand and on the budget of the patron: fine or coarse woven cotton cloth, mixed cotton and silk fabric called *mashru*, satin, silk, velvet, a recycled piece of sari or shawl, waxcloth, woodblock-printed cotton fabric, etc. (Figs 15a–e).[25] Naturally, the large array of fabrics encountered reflect the rich and diverse tradition of textiles in South Asia. While some designs and techniques are characteristic of a specific region, it should be borne in mind that the trade was well-established and, therefore, the textile used to cover a

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23 A variation of Islamic type of endband is found in a *guṭakā* from Kashmir examined by Helland 2018, 22.

24 According to Dominik Wujastyk and Brijinder Nath Goswamy, the observance of the *ahiṃsā*, the brahman concept of vegetarianism and harmlessness for living creatures in which the use of any animal material is banned, prevents the bookbinder from using leather; Wujastyk 2014, 166; B.N. Goswamy 2008, 22. It is interesting to mention that Sikh *guṭakās* and larger volumes, such as *Guru Granth Sāhib*, are equally bound with leather and textile.

25 *Mashru* is a handwoven fabric made of silk and cotton. It has a glossy and silky appearance and the soft comfort of cotton. It is often striped in two or three colours. It was very popular during the nineteenth century, and the fabric was produced across the country in different forms, from Deccan to Lucknow to Bengal. As a result, it was often used as covering materials for nineteenth-century *guṭakās*.

guṭakā might not always be considered as a geographic marker. The fabric is most often constituted of a single and long piece which connects the boards to the spine and, thus, serves as a board attachment. The binding for some of the manuscripts studied, such as Leiden, UBL, Or. 18.060 and Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1875, is a sort of wrapper prepared separately from the text block by pasting the textile to the boards and the flap. The fabric is not pasted along the spine, but the binding is simply connected to the text block by the doublures of cloth which extend onto the first endleaf (Fig. 16). Nevertheless, other books, such as Leiden, UBL, Or. 25.463 and Or. 25.464, show that the spine was lined with a cotton cloth, more or less coarse, which extended onto the inner sides of both boards to ensure a reliable connection between the text block and the boards (Fig. 17).

Different types of fabric were sometimes put together in the same binding or parts from other books were reused. The outer sides of the boards may be covered with a red silk fabric, as seen on the binding of a *Bhagavadgītā guṭakā*, Coligny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 704. The same fabric was used on the inner side of the envelope flap, but it seems that the bookbinder had run out of material and used a striped red and blue *mashru* to complete the covering operation (Fig. 18).[26] This again underlines the limited availability or recycling of supplies to which the artisan could have access. Similarly, decorative elements borrowed from other objects can be added, depending on what the craftsman has on hand. The flap and the front board of the same aforementioned *guṭakā*, for example, are supplied with a metal clasp which seems to have come from a piece of furniture (Fig. 15a).
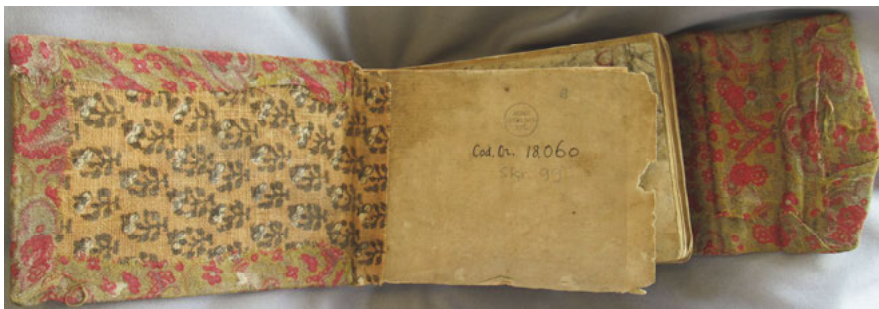

Fig. 16: Doublure of the front board and first endleaf; Leiden, UBL, Or. 18.060; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

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26 Helland 2018, 21.

Fig. 17: Spine lining, compilation of texts on the history of Kṛṣṇa; Leiden, UBL, Or. 25463; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

Fig. 18: Inner side of the envelope flap covered with red silk and a piece of *mashru* textile, *Bhagavadgītā* and subsidiary texts to Viṣṇu's worship; Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 704; © Fondation Martin Bodmer.

Another aspect is the originality and creativity of the bookbinder in using various supplies to produce a kind of personalised book. The *Bhagavadgītā* Paris, BnF, sanscrit 341, for example, was covered with red velvet, while the edges of the boards were lined with strips of yellow textile. A kind of knot and tie made of the same fabric were added to the flap and in the middle of the upper board to allow the book to be closed properly (Figs 15–16).

Another key feature is the layered structure of the repairs found in these books, which sometimes makes it difficult to observe the original materials against later additions. If a textile used for the cover was too worn, then another fabric was simply pasted over it.[27] It, therefore, seems difficult to distinguish whether the secondary cover was indeed a repair, an esthetical addition or a cloth wrapper used by the devotee to protect his or her precious manuscript. Three books illustrate the different function of these additions. First, the *Pañj Granthī* Paris, BnF, indien 693 was covered with a coarse cloth that was itself covered with a second red fabric decorated with coloured painted patterns; the purpose of the second cover probably being more decorative than functional (Fig. 19). Second, the *guṭakā* Cambridge, CUL, MS Or. 2031 shows three different fabrics laid on the boards. While a white cloth with small blue flowers was pasted along the spine, the boards were lined with two layers of cotton, woodblock-printed with large purple and red floral patterns, the top layer being very worn and dirty.[28] It seems more likely that these are later repairs given the deterioration of the covering materials.

The third case illustrates the importance of book preservation and the confection of cloth wrapper to protect codices. The small volume Oslo, SC, MS 2099, for instance, which comprises a collection of texts from the *Pañcaratnagītā* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, is covered with a wrapper made of plain fabric decorated with block-printed floral motives. An extension along the fore-edge allows the book to be enclosed in order to keep dirt, insects and other intruders away (Fig. 20). The seam is sewn manually and may have been done by the owner him/herself. Similar cloth wrappers supplied with extended tabs to protect the text block edges are also used to enclose Sikh manuscripts.[29]

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27 Helland 2018, 22.
28 Cambridge, CUL, MS Or. 2031 contains two devotional texts: the *Bhagavadgītā* and a Śaiva hymn called *Mahimnastotra*, by Puṣpadanta in Formigatti 2020, 72. The manuscript was observed via its digital version available at https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OR-02031/1 (accessed on 6 February 2023).
29 Singh Dhillon 2021, 250–251.

Fig. 19: Edges of a copy of the *Panj Granthi*, Punjab; Paris, BnF, indien 693; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

Fig. 20: Open *guṭakā* showing the cloth wrapper, collection of texts from the *Pañcaratnagītā* and the *Bhagavadgītā*; Oslo, SC, MS 2099; © The Schøyen Collection.

5 The context of production

Very little is known about the scribes, illuminators, bookbinders and their practices in the context of the making of Indic manuscripts and *guṭakās*. Some nineteenth-century images illustrate bookbinders at work, but they are Muslim and in the process of making *kitāb*, the Islamic codex. A well-known illustration belonging to an album of trades and occupations in Kashmir dated 1850–1860 (British Library) depicts a Muslim bookbinder (*jeld sāz*) and his tools for the

bookbinding operation (*jeld sāzi)*. In the upper register, the artisan is trimming the edges of a text block held in a press with a blade as long as a sword (Fig. 21). On the left side, there is a slab and a weight (painted in grey), described by the caption as a unit for preparing the pasteboards. In the lower register of the image are his tools with corresponding captions written in Persian and Urdu: scissors, scrapers, various awls and knives, a ruler, a piece of leather, a pot of paste, a needle and a spool of thread for sewing the text block and a binder's press in which the book is pressed to proceed with the making of the endbands. Another depiction from Bengal shows a bookbinder sitting on the floor in the process of shaping a leather cover. Although this representation is more realistic than the first, the easily identifiable tools are the same as those represented in the image from Kashmir.[30] However, to the best of my knowledge, there is no representation of an artisan in the process of binding a Hindu *guṭakā*.

Several Sanskrit treatises, such as the *Silpaśāstra* were compiled during the medieval period and served as technical and spiritual aids to scribes and painters in the observance of canonical proportions and figures, the use of tools and implements, and the symbolism in the use of colours.[31] The act of accurately copying a book (*pustaka*) was described in Ballālasena's *Dānasāgara,* or 'Ocean of gift-giving', a twelfth-century Sanskrit compendium on religious gift etiquette. The text focuses on the quality of the materials, the copying procedure and the principles of textual correction.[32] Naturally, no information is given on

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30 A depiction of a north-Indian bookbinder and his tools, illustration from the Wellesley Album, Bengal, *c.* 1798–1804, London, BL, Add. Or. 1111.

31 Nardi 2007.

32 Each step in the process of having the manuscript copied should be done at an auspicious time and in an auspicious place. Adheesh Sathaye mentions that: 'First, the donor should select the appropriate text to be copied and gather together the right kind of paper (pure white, with a black or red border), pots of good black ink, gilded pens, and well-made wooden book covers. The *Dānasāgara* advocates the use of a special device for the copying process, called a *sarayantra* (spreading device) or *vidyādhara* (knowledge carrier). What this artifact looked like is unknown, but it was probably a kind of book stand, fashioned from gold, silver, ivory, or wood, that could simultaneously hold both the exemplar and the new copy in place. The scribe is instructed to face east; wear white garlands and clothing, a golden armband, and finger caps; and have at hand a set of pens and a nail cutter (for sharpening the pen). Then, as string music plays in the background, a sample of five or ten verses is to be copied and thoroughly scrutinized for writing mistakes as well as to check the content, consistency, and subject matter. In subsequent sessions, the copying is to proceed in this same, deliberate manner, and, upon completion, the manuscript should be nicely decorated, perfumed, tied, and wrapped in cloth, and if it was going to be donated to a temple, ceremoniously taken by palanquin, elephant, horse, or chariot to a temple, and offered to the presiding deity' (Sathaye 2017, 62–63).

the binding, for the simple reason that, at the time, pothis were, strictly speaking, not bound but protected by wooden boards and wrapped in cloth. Furthermore, the text is a detailed and idealised account of the copying of a book, thus it also focuses on the ritual of the gift. Some books were copied during the medieval period to be given by a devotee to a temple, a guru or a Brahmin for the purpose of acquiring merit. In return, the recipient would arrange for a public reading of the book by a competent reader as well as a guru to teach its contents to the general public.[33] The *Dānasāgara* points out that books in premodern times were hardly the property of private disciples but belonged to the clergy and nobility, the transmission of religious knowledge and principles among the common people still being largely oral.

Fig. 21: Bookbinder and his tools, volume depicting trades and occupations in Kashmir, *c.* 1850–1860, opaque watercolour and inks on paper; London, BL, Add. Or. 1700, fol. 41ʳ; © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images.

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33 For more on this aspect, see Heim 2015, 124–127.

During the modern period, some courtly workshops or *kārkhānās* had sections dedicated to the fabrication of Indic manuscripts, such as the Amber and Jaipur palaces in Rajasthan.[34] Indeed, Jeremiah P. Losty mentions that *guṭakās* were brought to perfection with fine writing and luxury illuminations in the late eighteenth century and mainly produced in the workshop of the Jaipur Royal Library.[35] The *kārkhānās* were supported by the rulers and rajas and maintained by the nobles and merchants, so the production was controlled to match the tastes of the patrons. The functioning was hierarchical, based on the system of cast, and apprenticeship was made from father to son or from teacher to student. Their activities were recorded in registers which were studied by Sumbul Haleem Khan, who describes the different workshops and their management.[36] Among others, she details the organisation of the *pothīkhānā*, an atelier which specialised in the preparation of pothis and books.[37] She notes the production of religious and literary works in Sanskrit and provides a brief account on book-binding: the design of the cover was done in accordance with the value of the book: 'Persian and Sanskrit literature were leather-bound and other manuscripts were covered with velvet, striped silk material and pure silk from the Atlas silk moth'.[38] Here, we can hypothesise that volumes of importance were bound with leather and others were covered with textile, leather being more expensive to purchase and shape into books. She also adds that 'hides were processed with laxatives and spices [reference to the tanning process] and were then shaped, coloured and stretched over a pasteboard'. The following description of the doublure is unclear but it seems that coloured leather was pasted onto the pasteboards. Interestingly, she mentions that blank books (*kora kagad*) were passed to scribes and painters for the writing of the text and the execution of illustrations and illuminations. Finally, she lists the variety of cloth and fabrics utilised for making book wrappers or dustcovers and bags and their origins, such as *mashru* from Bharuch in Gujarat.[39] The striking diversity and quality of embroidered and gilded textiles reflect the wealth of the rajas as well as the vast

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34 The word *kārkhānā* literally means manufactory.

35 Losty 1982, 145. He refers to a beautiful copy of the *Pañcaratna* written by Ghāsi Mahātmā for Maharaja Prithvi Singh of Jaipur (1767–1778).

36 Khan 2015. In her volume, she describes the organisation of the painting, cartography, textile, arsenal and gun foundry, palanquins and carriages, harness and bridles workshops and manufactures, from various archives dated 1643 to 1843 reporting income and expenditures, lists of supplies and materials, orders and purchases, staffs, etc.

37 Khan 2015, 45–63.

38 Khan 2015, 53.

39 Khan 2015, 57.

fabric trade network in India. In addition, *kārkhānās* produced wooden boxes and cane baskets cushioned with velvet and wooden stands to ensure the safe transport and reading of the books.[40] However, it must be remembered that this description refers to a royal context in which the best supplies were available and the most skilled craftsmen worked to produce objects of the highest quality. The *guṭakās*, similar to those examined in this study, correspond rather to utilitarian productions made for the market, the local clientele, or the clergy and pandits.[41] However, given the diversity of materials and techniques, the hypothesis of domestic production of the binding cannot be ruled out. It is plausible to think that the person who commissioned the book, once he had received the written text, proceeded to bind it himself or one of his relatives who had special manual skills.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, professional itinerant groups of Kashmiri Muslim scribes, sometimes accompanied by painters, would wander about in the countryside of the Punjab and Kashmir, looking for commissions among the local audience of priests and worshipers. Karuna Goswamy interviewed Pandit Sthanu Dutt, a renowned Sanskrit scholar, who saw, during his childhood, groups of itinerant scribes visiting Kurukshetra, his native village located in the Haryana state.[42] They would walk until the edge of the village and shout '*kātib, kātib*', meaning 'scribes', to announce that the scribes were available for executing any commission of copying manuscripts. When a painter was in the group, the scribe would shout '*kātib mai musavvir!*' meaning 'painter among scribes'. When a client wished a work to be copied either from his or her own or a neighbour's collection, after negotiating the price, the scribes would copy the text. The manuscript was taken to a *serai* or inn at the edge of the village where the group stayed. All the members of the group were trained so that they often wrote through the night, and brought out the folios they had copied in the morning. Pandit Sthanu Dutt recalled seeing a quantity of oil for burning the lamps, by the light of which the scribes kept working into the night. The scribes carried all the necessary writing implements and materials with them, pens and rulers as well as inks and colours, and paper.[43] The copy could be more or less elaborate depending on the materials they had and their skills.

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40 Khan 2015, 59.

41 Karuna Goswamy mentions that production was 'non-elitist' in Kashmir and catered to the popular and middle-class readership rather than royalty as well as the priests, astrologers and physicians; K. Goswamy 1998, 59; K. Goswamy 1989, 21.

42 K. Goswamy 1998, 54–55.

43 K. Goswamy 1989, 22–23. Karuna Goswamy also provides interesting information on the payment of the scribes.

However, Pandit Sthanu Dutt does not provide any information about the binding of these books, their format and their materials. Was the binding made by the scribe himself? Was it made later by another craftsman? Since these manuscripts were not bound in leather, it is assumed that no leather craftsman was involved. However, the block of text still had to be sewn and bound to a cover, no matter how rudimentary or elaborate. The operations involved the use of a needle and thread, as well as paste to assemble the various elements of the binding, such as the spine lining , the endpapers and the textile to the boards, all of which required manual and technological skills. However, the technical simplicity of the majority of the copies and their small size may indicate that this small and oblong book format may have been favoured by the scribes because of the ease and speed of execution. In addition, Karuna Goswamy highlights that the tradition of itinerant writers explains the large dissemination of Kashmiri copies in northern India.[44] Indeed, the scribes were proficient in the copy of several scripts, such as Śāradā, Devanāgarī, Gurmukhī and Gujarātī, to meet the demands of a local readership from one region to another.[45] Therefore, we can assume that these scribes, in addition to producing books with Kashmiri characteristics, were also responsible for the spread of this specific book form throughout the north-western part of the subcontinent. Furthermore, many *guṭakās* bear the traits of the Kashmiri style in the illustrations and illuminations as well as in the bold palette (Fig. 22). But, while the scribe may indeed be of Kashmiri origin, the pictorial style cannot be considered a sufficient geographical marker to determine the place of production of a manuscript and the origin of the patron.[46]

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44 K. Goswamy 1998, 56.

45 Brijinder Nath Goswamy mentions that many scribes were illiterate; if they were so, they did not necessarily know the different languages but were able to copy them word for word; B.N. Goswamy 2008, 56. In Hinduism, sacred texts were transmitted mainly based on orality, recitation and memorisation using elaborate mnemonic techniques. While the clergy could read the sacred scriptures, the majority of the population was illiterate. During the nineteenth century, with the British occupation, education was gradually emphasised, although it took some time larger segments of the population to become literate. However, Karuna Goswamy points out that while some scribes knew a wide range of scripts and languages, others, who were simply good copyists, were able to reproduce an entire text, word by word; K. Goswamy 1989, 21–24.

46 For other *guṭakās* with Kashmiri types of illustrations, see Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 709; Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Libraries, Ms. Indic 27 (Collection of Sostras); Tübingen, TUB, Cod. Ma I 893 and Cod. Ma I 894 (see Ditter 2002); Cambridge, CUL, MS Or. 2031 (see Formigatti 2020; and K. Goswamy 1998, 84–91).

Fig. 22: Representation of Viśvarūpa or the divine revelation of Viṣṇu (or Kṛṣṇa) to Arjuna. Devotional manual of diverse Vaiṣṇava texts; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1875; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

6 The function of the *guṭakās*

As mentioned in the introduction and exemplified by the photographs above, the *guṭakās* were not only used for private recitation and reading, but also for meditation and worship through the images and representations they convey. This aspect prevails mainly for popular texts, such as the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* ('The story of the God [Viṣṇu]'), *Devīmāhātmya* ('The glory of the Great Goddess'), *Bhagavadgītā* (a moral dialogue between the Paṇḍava Prince Arjuna and his guide and charioteer Kṛṣṇa) and *Rāmāyaṇa* (the life of Rāma and his combat to deliver his wife Sītā from the grip of Rāvaṇa, the fierce king of Laṅkā).

While some manuscripts remain in perfect condition today and appear to have been barely read and handled, others show clear signs of use and the passage of time. Brijinder Nath Goswamy recounts that on specific days, the manuscripts were taken out of the wooden boxes and displayed for veneration in the freshly cleaned and plastered courtyard of a family estate. The texts were not read, but the books were simply displayed to celebrate knowledge. Elders recited mantras and performed rituals associated with prayers. At the end of the celebration, each book was passed from hand to hand and *tilak* marks were applied to them, which merged with countless others.[47] The *Devīmāhātmya*

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[47] B.N. Goswamy 2008, 58. *Tilak* marks, generally made on the forehead with ash from a sacrificial fire, sandalwood paste, turmeric, cow dung, clay, charcoal, or red lead, indicate a

Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1854 illustrates this aspect, perhaps to the extreme. The initial manuscript was of a horizontal and small format and contains several depictions of the various manifestations of the goddess. The extent of the damage and the rubbing of the images indicate that the book has been touched and handled a great deal (Fig. 23a). Some images are so deteriorated that the scenes and the gods depicted can no longer be seen or identified. The corners and edges of the folios show recognisable smudges and fingerprints, the results of extensive reading. The manuscript has lost its original binding and the detached folios are now held between two wooden boards salvaged from a piece of furniture or architecture, one board showing remnants of red thread and the other a perforation (Fig. 23b). All of these details lead us to believe that the book was highly valued and the deterioration of the binding and folios was the result of the intense devotion of its owner.

a

b

Fig. 23a–b: Depiction of the goddess on her tiger mount (a); piece of repurposed furniture for the cover, Devīmāhātmya; Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1824; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes (b).

person's sectarian affiliation. They were also applied to sacred images, such as sculptures in temples and shrines and representations of gods and goddesses.

A close examination of *guṭakā* Leiden, UBL, Or. 18.060, its text and illustrations shows that the present volume has been reassembled with some passages from at least three other books. Some paintings illustrating various episodes from different texts (e.g. Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs, Viṣṇu Gajendra Mokṣa, the goddesses Durgā and Sarasvatī, Rāma and Sītā with Hanuman and Balarama, and the *oṃ* sign) were cut out, rearranged and pasted on the folios, whereas entire quires coming from older books were rebound in the extant binding (Fig. 24). Some of the paintings are very damaged and could come from old books that could no longer serve their purpose due to the extent of their deterioration. We can, therefore, assume that a devotee who owned several damaged books would ask a copyist and a bookbinder to reuse them by compiling a new volume. In the end, the text block was eventually enclosed in a new binding wrapper.[48] Arguably, any used books or remnants of books were still valuable to their owner and kept and reused as precious relics.

Fig. 24: Compilation of various devotional texts, Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs; Leiden, UBL, Or. 18.060; photo by Amélie Couvrat Desvergnes.

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48 In addition, the presence of quires, together with single folios assembled together by a stab sewing, partially visible in some places along the gutter, indicate that the present binding may be a repair structure.

Fig. 25: Guru Arjan Dev reading from a bound volume of scriptures, family workshop of Nainsukh of Guler, Punjab Hills, *c.* 1790; © London, Toor Collection.

7 Conclusion

All of the information above on the structure and function of the *guṭakās* is gathered in the miniature depicting Guru Arjan Dev (Toor Collection) (Fig. 25).[49] The fifth Sikh guru reads a bound volume of scripture as a group of disciples carrying dishes filled with offerings arrive in the courtyard, prostrating before him. The fully opened *guṭakā*, with an envelope flap and a cover of orange and red striped *mashru*, rests on a flat bolster in front of him.

While *guṭakās* echo the formal syncretism inherited from the pothi format with a strong reminiscence of Islamic binding, they represent a book form in their own right. What is also prevalent in the covers of the *guṭakās* is the diversity of materials and the personalisation of each book. Despite some predominant binding characteristics, the examples above highlight the uniqueness of each book, whether in its materials or its decorative details. This leads us to believe that each book was made on-demand, by a particular person and in a specific context. Perhaps we can see the intervention of the client who wanted to personalise the manual he or she ordered according to his or her tastes and the materials he or she brought or, simply, the creative imagination of the craftsman and the scribe. However, the general impression is that this diversity was related primarily to the availability of supplies and the skills of the craftsmen. Furthermore, the *guṭakās* reflect, in some ways, the 'democratisation' of book consumption which took place throughout the nineteenth century. While books were still reserved for a literate and wealthy readership who could afford on-demand production for personal use, *guṭakās*, nonetheless, embody the progressive development of book ownership made possible by small scale and cheap materials. The use of recycled materials, such as paper and textiles, the simple structure of the binding, the often limited palette and the modest but present illustrations arguably respond to a demand from a readership eager to read but also to possess books with which they can pray and meditate.

However, more studies need to be conducted using cross-cultural comparisons, textual analyses and the examination of large corpora to further contextualize and understand these features and to define the choices made by scribes and bookbinders regarding supplies and production methods better.

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49 Guru Arjan (1563–1606) wrote the *Ādi Granth*, the first compilation of religious texts, a reference book for the Sikhs. He built the Harimandir Sahib, the Golden Temple, in Amritsar and made the city a central place for the entire Sikh community.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

BL = British Library
BnF = Bibliothèque nationale de France
CUL = Cambridge University Library
FMB = Fondation Martin Bodmer
SC = The Schøyen Collection
TUB = Universitätsbibliothek, Tübingen
UBL = Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden

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Appendix: List of the *guṭakās* physically or digitally examined

Cambridge, CUL, MS Or. 2031
Contents: Bhagavadgītā and *Mahimnastotra*, a Śaiva hymn called by Puṣpa-danta
Format: horizontal *guṭakā* without flap
Covering material:
    Outside: white cloth with small blue flowers, two layers of cotton, woodblock-printed with large purple and red floral patterns
    Inside: western paper
Dimensions: 100 × 155 mm
Dating: 1917 Vikrama / 1859–1860 CE

Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 704
Contents: Bhagavadgītā and subsidiary texts to the worship of Viṣṇu: *Prayāgatīrthasnānasaṃkalpa*, *Apadoddhāraṇastotra*, *Pañcavaktrahanumat-kavaca*, *Stavarāja*
Format: horizontal *guṭakā* with flap
Covering material:
    Outside: red silk damask
    Inside: ditto and striped *mashru*; repurposed metal clasps
Dimensions: 75 × 125 mm
Dating: first half of the eighteenth century.
Other information: A partly readable note dated 29 August 1781 identifies the manuscript as a 'prayer book of a bramin [i.e. Brahmin]' given to the unidentified possessor of the manuscript 'on his departure from India'.

Cologny, FMB, Cod. Bodmer 709
Contents: Bhagavadgītā and other short excerpts related to the worship of Viṣṇu: *Śāntiparvan*, *Pāñcarātrika Sanatkumārasaṃhitā*, *Pāṇḍavagītāstotra*, *Gopālapaṭala*, *Gopālalaghupaddhati*, etc.
Format: horizontal *guṭakā* with flap
Covering material:
    Outside: purple sari of brocade silk
    Inside: modern addition craft paper and buckram
Dimensions: 93 × 145 mm

Dating / Origin: Written in Kashmir, in a monastery called Ahalyamath, in Saṃvat 1833 (1776 or 1777 CE) by a person called Gaṇeśa [bhaṭṭa?] Nandarāma

Leiden, UBL, Or. 18.060

Contents: compilation of texts dedicated to the worship of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa

Format: horizontal *guṭakā* with flap

Covering material:

> *Outside:* tapestry weave cotton with repetitive motives of a hand holding a small bouquet, umbrella and paisley
>
> *Inside:* resist dyed block-printed plain weaved cotton with a repetitive motif of stylised flowers

Dimensions: 150 × 105 mm

Origin: Kashmir?

Leiden, UBL, Or. 25.463

Contents: compilation of texts on the history of Kṛṣṇa

Format: horizontal *guṭakā* without flap

Covering material:

> *Outside:* woodblock-printed cotton with paisley patterns Inside: Indian paper

Dimensions: 91 × 53 mm

Leiden, UBL, Or. 25.464

Contents: Viṣṇusahasranāma and other excerpts related to the worship of Viṣṇu.

Format: horizontal *guṭakā* without flap

Covering material:

> *Outside:* pink and purple woodblock-printed cotton
>
> *Inside:* Indian paper

Dimensions: 125 × 82 mm

Origin: Kashmir

Leiden, UBL, Or. 27.616

Contents: compilation of unidentified religious texts

Format: horizontal *guṭakā* with flap

Covering material (outside and inside): coarse cotton cloth + woven cotton fabric with bands of zigzag patterns in red and black

Dimensions: 125 × 73 mm

London, BL, Or. 13682

> *Contents: Madhumālatīvārtā* and a miscellany of four others Rajasthani poems
> *Format:* horizontal *guṭakā* with flap and closing string
> *Covering material:* limp cover made of four pieces of brown leather stitched together
> *Dimensions:* 120 × 125 mm
> *Dating / Origin:* Saṃvat 1829–1832 / 1772–1775 CE, north-eastern Rajasthan (Mewar?)

Oslo, SC, MS 2099

> *Contents: Pañcaratnagītā* and the *Bhagavadgītā* with accompanying texts
> *Format:* horizontal *guṭakā* with flap
> *Covering material:*
>> *Outside:* yellow silk
>> *Inside:* woodblock-printed cotton
> *Dimensions:* 100 × 150 mm
> *Origin:* Kashmir

Paris, BnF, sanscrit 337

> *Contents: Bhagavadgītā, Viṣṇusahasranāma*
> *Format:* horizontal *guṭakā*
> *Covering material:* modern western binding
> *Dimensions:* 80 × 120 mm

Paris, BnF, sanscrit 338

> *Contents: Bhagavadgītā, Viṣṇusahasranāma Stavarāja, Anusmṛti, Gajendramokṣaṇa*
> *Format:* horizontal *guṭakā*
> *Covering material:* modern western binding
> *Dimensions:* 95 ×111 mm

Paris, BnF, sanscrit 341

> *Contents: Bhagavadgītā, Viṣṇusahasranāma*
> *Format:* horizontal *guṭakā* with flap
> *Covering material:* probably a restoration
>> *Outside:* red silk
>> *Inside:* green silk
> *Dimensions:* 95 × 111 mm

Paris, BnF, sanscrit 434

Contents: Jvālāmukhīsahasranāma
Format: vertical
Covering material: modern western binding (twentieth century)
Dimensions: 145 × 75 mm

Paris, BnF, indien 693

Contents: Pañj Granthī
Format: horizontal *guṭakā* with flap
Covering material (outside and inside): plain cotton cloth, pink fabric with hand-painted geometrical motives
Dimensions: 100 × 145 mm
Origin: Punjab

Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1824

Contents: short excerpts to the glory of the goddess Devī: *Devīkavaca*, *Argalastuti*, *Kīlaka*, *Devīmāhātmya*, *Prādhānikarahasya*, *Vaikṛtikarahasya*, *Mūrtirahasya*
Format: unknown (dismantled)
Covering material: repurposed wooden boards
Dimensions: 130 × 70 mm

Paris, BnF, sanscrit 1875

Contents: Bhagavadgītā, *Viṣṇusahasranāma* and other excerpts related to the worship of Viṣṇu
Format: horizontal *guṭakā* without flap
Covering material:
    Outside: plain cotton cloth
    Inside: modern addition, western marbled paper
Dimensions: 155 × 100 mm
Origin: Kashmir