

**DIE 1000
NAMEN
VISHNUS**
विष्णुसहस्रनाम

Sanskrit-Handschriften
aus der Sammlung
Heide und Wolfgang Voelter

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śrī	gaṇapataye namaḥ
	avighnam astu
14	texte
24	mythen
37	bilder
63	handschriften
	104 stiffter
113	ausstellungen
	117 werk

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GUṬAKĀS BETWEEN BOOK CULTURES.
THE VOELTER MANUSCRIPTS
IN THE TÜBINGEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Camillo A. Formigatti

1 Introduction

A few months ago, I received an unexpected email with a kind request for help from my colleague Frank Köhler. The last time I had seen him was almost a year before, and I was very pleased to hear from him again. He was writing to me because Wolfgang Voelter had donated to the Tübingen University Library two North Indian manuscripts with superb miniatures accompanying a rather baffling collection of Hindu devotional texts. When trying to make sense of the rationale behind the choice of texts included in the manuscripts, another Tübingen colleague, Heike Oberlin, had stumbled upon a manuscript kept in the Cambridge University Library (CUL) containing a similar collection of texts and miniatures. Since we had catalogued it only few years ago, they decided to contact me. This was just before the outbreak of coronavirus was declared a pandemic. When I agreed to give a presentation at the University of Tübingen and write a contribution for this volume, I could not possibly fathom what would have hit the world, otherwise I would have been more cautious, since the Voelter manuscripts belong to a typology of manuscripts which is, despite being quite common, still understudied. In order to better understand the textual, artistic, and ritual aspects of this type of manuscripts I believe it is of paramount importance to situate them in a wider cultural and geographical context. Accordingly, in an ideal situation I should have examined a wide range of manuscripts directly, but due to the dire world situation I had to rely only on digital reproductions available online. On the other hand, the silver lining is that against all odds, I was still able to carry out my research and contribute to this volume – precisely thanks to the massive effort of many institutions worldwide which in the last decades digitized, described, and made available online hundreds of thousands of manuscripts. Therefore, I believe it is not serendipitous that my involvement with this exhibition catalogue ultimately came to be thanks to a manuscript digitized in the Cambridge University Library, during a project in which I collaborated. On the contrary, it is a testament to the efficacy of digital humanities in creating new research networks and paths.

The CUL manuscript in question is MS Or.1818, an illuminated paper manuscript containing a collection of devotional works of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva affiliation.¹ As soon as I communicated my interest in examining the Voelter manuscripts to my colleagues Heike Oberlin and Frank Köhler, they provided me with access to digital reproductions of the manuscripts and their preliminary analysis of the content. Even at the first glance, I was immediately struck by the similarity of both manuscripts not only with CUL MS Or.1818, but also with other manuscripts I happened to examine (and in some cases catalogue) both in the Cambridge University Library as well as in the Bodleian Libraries. My first question to my colleagues in Tübingen was about the provenance of the Voelter manuscripts. I expected

them to originate from Northern India or the Himalayan range, and Heike Oberlin’s reply was that the benefactor acquired them in Pakistan (as we will see, this might explain some of the manuscripts’ physical features). In fact, all three manuscripts shared common features indicating that they might belong to a specific typology of manuscripts, “probably common in 19th-century North India, i.e. collections of devotional texts in codex format with illuminations and an ornate layout”.² Although fairly common in South Asian manuscripts collections, so far little attention has been devoted to these multi-text manuscripts. Accordingly, the context of their production and use is still rather unclear. As a matter of fact, I was able to find only two references to similar groupings of devotional texts – both describing printed books, not manuscripts. The first one is a short paragraph in a volume on translations of the *Bhagavadgītā*, mentioning the tradition of printing this text together with “other devotional books [...] or in the form of the Pañca-ratna Gītā, which gives five extracts of the M[ahā]bh[ārata], viz. B[hagavad]G[ītā] (with *Māhātmya*), *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma*, *Bhīṣma-stava-rāja*, *Anusmṛiti* and *Gajendra-moksha* (e.g. Indore, 1850)”, apparently with the specific aim “to make the Gītā more attractive to devotees” (Callewaert and Hemraj 1982, 44). Luckily, the second reference is more extensive and is found in a 1997 excellent article by Jürgen Hanneder, dealing with the ritual use of Vedic and Tantric mantras; this is the only publication which presents an analysis of the ritual use of this type of texts, albeit focusing on printed books (Hanneder 1997). Apparently, the situation has not changed much in the last two decades and if we exclude Hanneder’s own article and a master thesis (Cavazos 2016)³, his remark that “this type of mantra recitation common in present-day Hinduism has to my knowledge never been the object of scientific analysis”, still holds true (Hanneder 1997, 151). In order to shed some light on the Voelter manuscripts’ origin and function, I will therefore try and provide an analysis of their textual content and codicology. Since I am not an art historian, I will not attempt an analysis of the iconography of their copious miniatures. Besides, the few studies about this type of manuscripts have been devoted precisely to their artistic aspect, neglecting the textuality and codicology.⁴ Nevertheless, the miniatures are an integral part of the identity of these manuscripts, therefore I will offer a few tentative remarks about their importance for assessing the origin and purpose of the manuscripts. Needless to say, the conclusions we can draw from the examination of such a small sample ought to be considered only as a guide for future in-depth researches.

2 The Voelter Manuscripts and their Kin

2.1 Textual Content

As I have already mentioned, the choice of manuscripts to be analysed was limited by their accessibility in digital form, either in online catalogues or in the form of images already present on my hard drives. Therefore, I beg the readers for forgiveness: if the sample of manuscripts presented here is somehow random, it is not due to a conscious choice, but only to the circumstances. Nevertheless, I believe that precisely the randomness of this selection represents a confirmation of the popularity of such collections of devotional texts in 18th- and 19th-century South Asia. For this comparative research,

2 Ibidem.

3 In her thesis, Cavazos does not take into consideration at all the textual aspect of the manuscripts, obviously a major drawback in the analysis of a typology of manuscripts containing ritual texts. Moreover, as I will try and explain in the last section, she puts forward several hypotheses about the manuscripts’ function which are based on unfounded assumptions regarding some of their codicological aspects.

4 Alongside Cavazos’ master thesis, see for instance Stephan Hilmyer Levitt’s study of what he calls “*Bhagavadgītā* manuscripts” kept in American libraries, but in reality are *Gītāpañcaratna* manuscripts, as Levitt himself explains: “Not uncommonly, manuscripts of the *Bhagavadgītā* are followed by four short texts also found in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Viṣṇusahasranāman*, the *Bhīṣmastavarāja*, the *Anusmṛti*, and the *Gajendramokṣaṇa*, which together with the *Bhagavadgītā* are the *Pañcaratna*, or ‘Five Jewels [of the *Mahābhārata*]’ (Levitt 1991, 31).

1 Catalogued in the Cambridge Digital Library (<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OR-01818/1>).

I have examined eight manuscripts from four different libraries (cf. Table 1). All manuscripts taken into consideration – including the Voelter manuscripts – were written in the 18th or 19th century (cf. Table 12).

At this point, I must provide the readers with a trigger warning: this section of the article will be a rather dull reading, unless you share Umberto Eco’s passion for lists (Eco 2009). Unfortunately, in order to build a better understanding of the function of the Voelter manuscripts it is necessary to compare their content with that of other manuscripts which might have fulfilled similar purposes. The content of MS Voelter 1 (TUB MS Ma I 893) and MS Voelter 2 (TUB MS Ma I 894) has already been described in detail in other contributions to this volume, yet for the sake of comparability a list of the texts contained in both is provided in Table 2. Likewise, Tables 3–10 provide lists of the texts contained in the other manuscripts examined here. After a cursory glance at the tables, the first feature that stands out is the classification between manuscripts containing only – or largely – *vaiṣṇava* or *śaiva* texts and manuscripts containing a mixture of texts belonging to both religious traditions – as well as others, such as *śākta* and *saurya*. TUB MS Ma I 893 consists of only three texts, all belonging to the *vaiṣṇava* tradition. On the other hand, TUB MS Ma I 894 contains eleven texts, of which the first eight are excerpts from larger *vaiṣṇava* texts, while the last three belong to the *śaiva* tradition (Table 2). The two manuscripts have three texts in common: the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* (“Garland Mantra of the *Bhagavadgītā*”), the *Bhagavadgītā*, and a form of *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (“Thousand Names of Viṣṇu”). The *Bhagavadgītā* hardly needs any presentation, but the other two texts need to be contextualized, not least because they provide a first clue for the interpretation of the function of both manuscripts. The *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* is a short text containing instructions for the ritual recitation of the poem. The version of the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* contained in TUB MS Ma I 893 is a *Viṣṇusahasranāmāvalī*⁵, a simple string of detached epithets in the dative form, each of which is followed by the term *namaḥ*, for instance “Om! Homage to the Supreme Soul” (Skt. *om paramātmāne namaḥ*). The *Viṣṇusahasranāma* in TUB MS Ma I 894 is a hymn (Skt. *stotra*) to Viṣṇu which, like the *Bhagavadgītā*, is included in the *Mahābhārata*. As in the case of the *Viṣṇusahasranāmāvalī* in TUB MS Ma I 893, the *Viṣṇusahasranāmastotra* consists of a list of epithets, however in metrical form and thus in a more elaborated language (Mbh 13.135.1–121). In this version, the hero Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma several questions: who is the supreme deity, the one final refuge humankind should pray and sing to in order to attain bliss? Which *dharma* is reputed the best among all *dharmas*? What sacred formula should living beings utter to attain release from the bond of rebirth in the *saṃsāra*, the eternal cycle of life? Unsurprisingly, Bhīṣma answers that the supreme deity is Viṣṇu and one should extol his thousand names, which he then proceeds to list. However, in the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*, before Viṣṇu’s names are recited, four stanzas are found which were considered interpolations by the editors. These four stanzas are the *Viṣṇusahasranāmāmālāmantra* (Mbh 13.135.14a), a text with the same structure of the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*. But what are *mālāmantras*? Usually, a mantra is a “combination, or string of syllables [...] which, when known or recited, is believed to actualize

an instrumental, performative, and/or transformative power” (Johnson 2009, 198–99 s.v. *mantra*). Mantras can be extracted both from Vedic and Tantric texts, according to the religious affiliation of the devotee, and usually are very short sentences or just a series of sacred syllables with no semantic meaning. On the other hand, when a whole text like “for instance, the *Bhagavadgītā*, or one of the various *Sahasranāmastotras*, is used as a single long mantra” in a ritual recitation, it is considered a *mālāmantra* (Hanneder 1997, 151–55). In order to obtain religious merit or specific benefits in this life, devotees ritually recite the text in its completeness. According to Hanneder, “this liturgy is often only printed in recent editions or booklets for devotional use”, often without any bibliographical information (Hanneder 1997, 152 and fn. 25). Like the *Viṣṇusahasranāmāmālāmantra*, the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* is considered an interpolation of the *Bhagavadgītā* and consequently is printed as an appendix in the critical edition. The two texts have a similar structure and contain information and instructions for the ritual recitation of the text following them: the *ṛṣi* who heard the mantra (Vyāsa for both texts), the metre (*anuṣṭubh* for both), the deity (Kṛṣṇa for both), the so called *bīja*, “seed (of the mantra)” (a short text passage), its *śakti*, “power”, and so on. The *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* is followed by further detailed instructions for the reciter,

the so-called *karanyāsa*, the assignment of lines from the text as mantras to the fingers, then similarly to the *aṅgas*, i.e. heart, head, top-knot, and weapon. Having thus prepared the body ritually the practitioner proceeds to imagine the deity with the help of the meditation verse(s) (*dhyānaśloka*) that contains the iconographical details. After completing this introductory ritual the recitation of the text, here the *Bhagavadgītā*, may be undertaken (Hanneder 1997, 152–53).

Although the *Viṣṇusahasranāmāmālāmantra* is absent in TUB MS Ma I 893, its *Viṣṇusahasranāmāvalī* is preceded by a single stanza in the *mandākṛāntā* metre, akin to *maṅgala* verses, which merely suggests meditating on Viṣṇu (here already qualified with a series of epithets):

*śāntākāram bhujaḡaśayanam padmanābham sureśam
viśvādharam gaganasadṛśam meghavarṇam śubhāṅgam /
lakṣmīkāntam kamalanayanam yogibhir dhyānagamyam
vande viṣṇum bhavabhayaḡaram sarvalokaikanātham ||*

I worship Viṣṇu who destroys the fear of *saṃsāra*, the only Lord of the whole world, whose appearance is calm, who has a serpent as his bed, from whose navel a lotus grows, the lord of the gods, the support of the universe, who is (as all-pervading) as the sky, who has the colour of the clouds, who has handsome limbs, Lakṣmī’s husband, the lotus-eyed one, who can be discovered in meditation by the Yogins (Bühnemann 1988, 133–34).

This stanza occurs also in other devotional texts and in manuals of Vedic ritual, for instance the *Rḡvedīyabrahmakarmasamuccaya* used by Marathi Brahmins in the performance of the *pūjā* with sixteen

⁵ The title provided in the final rubric on folio 248 recto is actually *Viṣṇusahasranāmārcita*, “Offering of the Thousand Names of Viṣṇu”.

offerings or services (*śoḍaśopacārapūjā*) (Bühnemann 1988), or in the *pūjā* in honour of Viṣṇu in the form of Satyanārāyaṇa. It is found also in Tantric manuals such as the *Śāktapramoda*, a late text on the worship of the ten Mahāvidyās and the five main deities (*pañcadevatā*), i.e. Devī, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, and Viṣṇu. It was compiled by king Devānandasimha of Muzaffarpur and first printed in 1890 (Benard 1994, 23–24; Goudriaan and Gupta 1981, 147).⁶

Let us now turn to the texts contained only in TUB MS Ma I 894. As we have already seen, they belong to both the *vaiṣṇava* as well as the *śaiva* tradition. The *vaiṣṇava* texts include excerpts from the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, i.e. the *Bhīṣmastavarāja*, a hymn to the epic hero Bhīṣma, and the *Anusmṛti*; the *Gajendramokṣaṇa* from the *Viṣṇudharma*;⁷ the *Rāmagītā* from the *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*, in its turn a section of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, and finally the *Rāmahr̥daya-stotra* (also from the *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*).⁸ The three *śaiva* texts are the *Śivamahimnastotra*, a popular hymn by Puṣpadanta, the *Śiva-pañcākṣarastotra* from the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and the *Śivanāmastotra*.⁹ If we look at Table 11, we notice that the texts shared by most manuscripts are the first six transmitted in TUB MS Ma I 894. These texts are collectively known as the *Gītāpañcaratna* or *Mahābhāratapañcaratna*, “Five Jewels of the *Bhagavadgītā*/*Māhābhārata*”. An obvious question now comes to mind: how come they are six texts and yet they are called Five Jewels? The answer is simple, but slightly bewildering. In all the tables below, the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* is listed as an independent text; as we have seen, also in the critical edition it is not considered an integral part of the *Bhagavadgītā* herself. An exception is represented by the catalogue entry for SB Hs. or. 6954, in which the two texts are subsumed under one item with the definition “*Bhagavadgītā* with *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*”.¹⁰ It is more than probable that users of *Gītāpañcaratna* manuscripts considered the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* an integral part of the *Bhagavadgītā* herself, in the same way as the *Viṣṇusahasranāmamālāmantra* was undoubtedly part of the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*, being embedded after the thirteenth stanza. A manuscript transmitting the *Bhagavadgītā* alone with the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* would corroborate this assumption. CUL MS Or.2349 is a South Indian palm-leaf manuscript written in the Grantha script at the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century, transmitting precisely these two texts only.¹¹ Another example is a Nepalese manuscript kept in the National Archives in Kathmandu (NAK) and written in Devanāgarī script in Vikram Samvat 1913, i.e. 1856 CE (NAK 3/98, NGMPP reel no. A 904-3). Most probably, we could list dozens of similar manuscripts, but even only these two instances represent further confirmation that in the 18th and 19th century the tradition of considering these two texts a unity was widespread throughout the whole Indian subcontinent. On the other hand, the popularity of the Five Jewels as a devotional corpus seems to be limited to Kashmir and Northern India. If we compare the textual content of the Voelter manuscripts and of the eight others listed in Tables 4–10 with similar South Indian manuscripts of devotional texts, we observe that the function of *Mahābhāratapacaratna* manuscripts was apparently fulfilled by manuscripts of the *Devīmāhātmya* accompanied by different ancillary texts. For instance, CUL MS Or.2344 is a manuscript in Grantha script written in 1908 CE, between July 25th and August 5th, containing the

Devīmāhātmya together with other three texts. In this manuscript, the *Devīmāhātmya* is preceded by the *Devīmāhātmyapūrvabhāga*, a set of devotional texts recited before the *Devīmāhātmya* itself: the *Āvāhana*, *Nāmāni*, *Argala* (or *Argalastotra*), *Kīlaka* (or *Kīlakastotra*), *Hṛdaya* (or *Caṇḍikāhṛdaya*), *Dala*, *Dhyāna*, and *Kavaca*. Clearly, the *Devīmāhātmyapūrvabhāga* fulfilled the same function of the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*, something that becomes even more evident when we take into account that some of its parts listed above occur also in other liturgical and devotional texts.¹² For instance, according to Hanneder the *Argala*, *Kīlaka*, *Hṛdaya*, *Dhyāna*, and *Kavaca* form part of a ritual “pattern” that “has become a standard procedure for the ritual use of mantras in a large segment of later «Hinduism»” (Hanneder 1997, 154). In particular, the *Kavaca*, *Argala*, and *Kīlaka* parts occur also in several North Indian, Kashmirian, and Nepalese manuscripts, transmitted either as a devotional corpus in a single manuscript or as single texts in separate manuscripts. For instance, two manuscripts kept in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, MS Indicus 11 and Indicus 158, contain a *Devīkavaca*, an *Argalāstotra*, a *Kīlakastotra*, and a *Devīmāhātmya*.¹³ Another similar manuscript is kept in the National Archives, Kathmandu and contains the *Devīkavaca*, *Argalāstotra*, *Bhagavatikīlaka*, *Durgāsaptāśatī*, *Indrākṣīstotra*, *Devīstutiprakīrṇapadya*, and *Durgāsaptāśatīpāṭhavidhi* (reel no. A 1113-14, accession no. NAK 6/225, catalogued in the NGMCP with single descriptions for each text; in this manuscript the *Argalāstotra* is introduced by an *Argalāstotramantra*). An example of a *Devīkavaca* transmitted as a single text is CUL MS Add.1578¹⁴. Also Bodleian MS. Mill 112 contains four *kavacas*, albeit not dedicated to the worship of the Devī, but of other deities – Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Hanumān, in line with the preceding texts related to Rāma and other figures from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, such as his wife Sītā (praised in the *Jānakīsahasranāma*, see Table 6).

In our analysis so far, we have not considered two manuscripts, MGUL Indic MS 36 and CUL MS Or.2262.¹⁵ The former is the most varied from the viewpoint of the content, with thirty different devotional texts belonging to the *vaiṣṇava*, *śaiva*, *śākta*, and *saurya* traditions. It contains also hymns related to Kashmir in particular, such as the *Vitastāstotra*, a eulogy of the Jhelum river, called Vitastā in Sanskrit. Moreover, the *Viṣṇunāmasahasra* included in this manuscript is an excerpt from the *Padmapurāṇa* and not from the *Mahābhārata* – at least according to the final rubric. Finally, CUL MS Or.2262 is a manuscript containing fifteen texts, mostly of *śaiva* affiliation. Except for the usual suspects – the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* –, the great majority of its other texts are not of a devotional character. In particular, it contains also short works belonging to the *śaiva Pratyabhijñā* philosophical school, such as the *Spandakārikā*, the *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, and the *Śivasūtravimarśinī*; it contains also two excerpts from the *Amanaskayoga* and the *Bhusuṇḍopakhyāna*, the latter being a chapter from the *Mokṣopāya*, a unique Kashmirian philosophical work complemented with compelling narratives.¹⁶ Seemingly, these two manuscripts might create more confusion in our quest for a possible origin and function of the Voelter manuscripts. However, once we turn to their physical features and compare them with those of other manuscripts, I believe we can better answer some of our questions.

6 This *dhyāna* stanza opens the *Viṣṇutantra* section of the *Śāktapramoda* (Devānandasimha 1974, 553).

7 Interestingly, in the final rubrics of TUB MS Ma I 894 as well as in those of other manuscripts in which it is transmitted, the *Gajendramokṣaṇa* is said to be part of the *Mahābhārata*, despite not being found in the critical edition. According to De Simini, “the text transmitted in the Cambridge manuscript Or.1818 mostly corresponds to chapter 67 of the *Viṣṇudharma*” (De Simini 2017, 532 fn. 42).

8 ĀR 1.1.25-56; I thank Frank Köhler for this identification.

9 The final rubric in the manuscript claims that the text belongs to the *Padmapurāṇa*, however it is not included in the printed editions.

10 “*Bhagavadgītā* mit *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*”; this is the general praxis of the cataloguers of South Asian manuscripts in the *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (VOHD); other manuscripts containing the *Mahābhāratapañcaratna* and catalogued in a similar manner are Cod.Sanscr.465. BStB, München (VOHD 3825) and Cod.Ms.Sanscr.Madh. 177, SuUB Göttingen (VOHD 4622).

11 Catalogued in the Cambridge Digital Library (<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OR-02349/1>).

12 These are the *Rudraśāpavimocanavidhi*, the *Viṣṇusahasranāmastotra*, the *Sūryasahasranāma*, the *Śivasahasranāmastotra*, and the *Durgāsaptāśatī* (Hanneder 1997, 154 fn. 40).

13 In addition, MS Indicus 158 contains also an *Indrākṣīstotra* and a *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (Slaje 1990, 131–32).

14 Catalogued in the Cambridge Digital Library (<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01578/1>).

15 I would like to thank my friend and colleague Daniele Cuneo for drawing my attention to MGUL Indic MS 36 and insisting I include it in my analysis, despite the time constraints. This manuscript could almost be defined as the missing link between Kashmirian codices, *guṭakās*, and the wider North Indian manuscript culture from the 17th century onwards, as I will try to explain in the last section of this contribution.

16 An enjoyable introduction to this fascinating work and philosophy is found in Hanneder (2012).

2.2 Codicology

After a rather tedious section like the previous one, the readers might expect, if not an exhilarating, at least a more entertaining section. Unfortunately, I am afraid this section will be rather descriptive. On the upside, it will be accompanied by colourful images which will hopefully make up for the more technical parts. Since all manuscripts have been already described in various catalogues,¹⁷ I will provide here only a description of their features relevant for our purpose. For the sake of functionality, I have split the information between this section and Table 12.

Both Voelter manuscripts and the manuscripts in tables 3–6, 8, 9 are so-called *guṭakās*, while the manuscripts in table 7 (MS CUL Or.2262) and 10 (MGUL Indic MS 36) are codices. Strictly speaking, we might consider the *guṭakā* format a specific type of codex in landscape format “comparable to a western pocket-book or note-book” (Balbir 2006, vol. 1, 60). Nevertheless, I will use this term as opposed to codex, in order to distinguish it from the format of MS CUL Or.2262 and MGUL Indic MS 36, which resembles the common Western books in its ratio between height and width. Contrary to Cavazos’ claim that *guṭakās* were mostly produced in Kashmir for the ritual needs of the Hindu community¹⁸, this type of manuscript was widespread in Northern India as well, and examples of it are found in the Hindu, Jaina, and Sikh manuscript traditions. In the latter two traditions, they fulfilled several different purposes and were not limited to a ritual function¹⁹.

All manuscripts listed in Table 1 are written on what might be called South Asian handmade paper. In the case of manuscripts kept in the Cambridge University Library and the Bodleian Library, I was able to examine their paper directly, while I was able to examine only digital reproductions of the two Voelter manuscripts, the manuscripts in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin and in the McGill University Library. Nevertheless, it is still clear that their material is handmade

Fig. 1 CUL MS Or.1818. Inside back cover showing the decorated textile and the book flap. (Copyright: Cambridge University Library CC BY-NC 3.0)

Fig. 2 MS Voelter 1 and 2 (TUB MS Ma I 893 and TUB MS Ma I 894) stacked on each other and showing the outside cardboard cover with undecorated textile. (Copyright: Tübingen University Library)



paper, since even in the images it is still possible to distinguish the laid and chain lines.²⁰ The type of paper used for both Voelter manuscripts, CUL MS Or.1818, CUL MS Or.2031, Bodleian MS. Mill 111, and Bodleian MS. Mill 112 is very similar to the high-quality handmade paper used in the 19th century for the production of manuscripts of different traditions, for instance Jaina and Sikh manuscripts. This observation clashes with Cavazos’ unfounded conclusion that similar manuscripts in other collections were made with British machine-made paper²¹. Also not corroborated by facts is her claim that the excellent state of preservation of the Utah State University manuscript is clearly an indication that the paper was British machine-made²², for there are countless South Asian manuscripts on handmade paper in excellent condition kept in libraries worldwide. In 19th-century South Asia a thriving local paper industry produced different types of handmade paper with varying degree of quality, for different purposes, and using different types of plant fibres, so that it is possible to identify the geographical provenance of the paper by means of the analysis of these features.²³ Accordingly, likewise unfounded is Cavazos’ conclusion that “the absence of watermarks in the *gutkas* listed here possibly suggests their original owners were wealthy and could afford to have *gutka* makers cut the folios around the watermarks” (Cavazos 2016, 51).

The binding of all *guṭakās* examined in the present article consists of a cardboard enveloped in cloth, with or without floral patterns (fig. 1–4). In the case of CUL MS Or.1817 and CUL MS Or.1818, the binding is in the Persian style with book flap (fig. 1), while the binding of the Voelter manuscripts is more similar to the one of SB Hs. or. 6954, CUL MS Or.2031, and Bodleian MS. Mill 112, without the book flap²⁴ (fig. 2–4). A different case is represented by CUL MS Or.2262 and MGUL Indic MS 36, both codices bound in the traditional Kashmiri style – the former in a red leather cover with book flap, the latter in (probably) a cardboard cover enveloped in cloth (fig. 5). Although similar to Persian bindings (fig. 6), Kashmiri



17 CUL MS Or.1817, MS Or.1818, MS Or.2031, MS Or.2262 are described at <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/sanskrit/1>; Bodleian MS. Mill 111 and MS. Mill 112 are described in Aufrecht, Keith, and Winternitz (1864); SB Hs. or. 6954 at <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB00021D7E00000000>; MGUL Indic MS 36 is partially described in Poleman (1938, no. 930) and at <https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1028640933>.

18 “Largely produced in the Kashmir Valley during the mid-nineteenth century, *gutkas* are pocket-sized anthologies of texts, hymns, and prayers that a Hindu would recite in a sacred place in the home, usually near an altar” (Cavazos 2016, iv).

19 “A *guṭakā* is generally made of several individual texts, which may have something in common (e.g. Or. 13221 is a collection of basic texts or hymns common among Digambara circles). 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” (Balbir 2006, vol. 1, 60).

20 The Tübingen University Library conservators define the paper of the Voelter manuscripts as *papier vergé*, “laid paper”, handmade by means of sieves (personal communication by Heike Oberlin).

21 “The *gutka* housed in Utah State University’s Special Collections – hereafter known as the USU Gutka – contains more than 300 folios, most of which were probably made from Whatman and Balston paper. The *gutka* in the Smithsonian’s Freer/Sackler Collections (hereafter the Freer Gutka) and the *gutka* in the British Library Manuscript Collections (hereafter the British Library Gutka) are both also made with a British machine made [sic] paper, which is apparent when you hold the folios up to the light and see the horizontally even gradations impressed into their silvery surfaces” (Cavazos 2016, 7–8). My guess is that Cavazos’ “horizontally even gradations impressed into their silvery surfaces” must be the chain lines, which are precisely a characteristic of handmade paper (cf. for instance Gaskell 1995, 60–66).

22 “However, South Asian paper produced during this period was of such poor quality that most objects made with the materials have succumbed to South Asia’s climate, insect infestation, and unfortunate neglect” (Cavazos 2016, 49).

23 The most recent and up-to-date study of South Asian traditional papermaking is Konishi (2013) – apparently not known to Cavazos. I would like to thank my colleague Jasdip Dhillion (Oxford Conservation Consortium and Pothei Seva), who in the last two years guided me in the examination of the paper of several South Asian manuscripts in the Bodleian Libraries. I would not have been able to make these observations without his careful explanations of the different types of South Asian handmade paper.

24 Bodleian MS. Mill 111 has been rebound in modern times.



Fig. 3 SB Hs. or. 6954. Outside cardboard cover showing the decorated textile. (Copyright: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

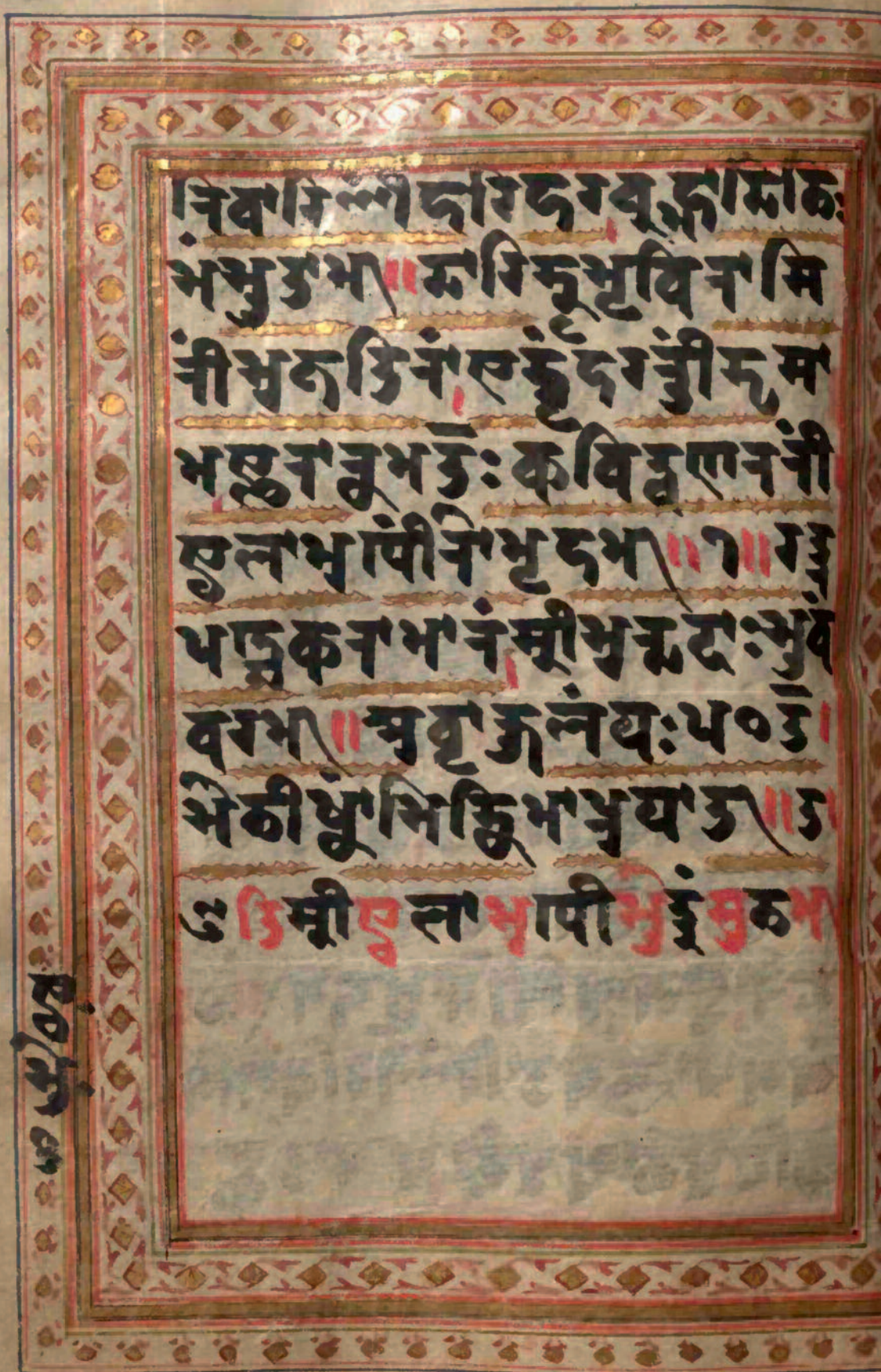
Fig. 4 CUL MS Or.2031. Outside cardboard cover showing the decorated textile. (Copyright: Cambridge University Library CC BY-NC 3.0)



Fig. 5 MGUL Indic MS 36. Binding with book flap in the position of Kashmirian manuscripts, cover enveloped in cloth. (Copyright: Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University)



Fig. 6 CUL MS Add.269. Persian binding with book flap from a richly illuminated almost complete copy of the epic poem *Šāhnāma*, probably copied in the 16th–17th century CE in South Asia. (Copyright: Cambridge University Library CC BY-NC 3.0)



bindings show some peculiar characteristics: they open like Western codices, the sewing style is different than the one in Persian manuscripts, and the flap is folded on top of the front board, not beneath it. In CUL MS Or.2262, the foliation on folio 45 has been cut, folios 97 and 98 (numbered 6 and 5 respectively) have been bound in the wrong order, and folio 122 is cut to a smaller size than the other folios. These features clearly indicate that CUL MS Or.2262 is a composite manuscript, in which quires from different manuscripts were first trimmed and then bound together again to create this unique collection of texts. Similarly, in MGUL Indic MS 36 the bifolium containing the *Jvālāmukhīstotra* is smaller than the folios of the preceding and following texts, a sign that most probably this manuscript too is composite (fig. 7).

In all manuscripts except CUL MS Or.2262 and MGUL Indic MS 36, the foliation is always in Devanāgarī numerals on the top left margin of the versos, under the abbreviated running marginal titles; moreover, the folios with miniatures and the protective folios following them are not foliated and not calculated in any foliation. In TUB MS Ma I 893, there is a single foliation for the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* and the *Bhagavadgītā* – however, only the first ten *adhyaṅgas* (chapters) are foliated (1–11); the foliation then restarts from 1 for the *Viṣṇusahasranāmāvalī*. In the case of TUB MS Ma I 894, the first text is foliated 1–2, then the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* and *Bhagavadgītā* are foliated continuously 1–137, but thereafter the foliation always restarts from 1 for each text. The Cambridge University Library manuscripts present a slightly different situation, for we can individuate specific groups of texts based on the foliation. In CUL MS Or.1817, the following texts or groups of texts are foliated continuously:

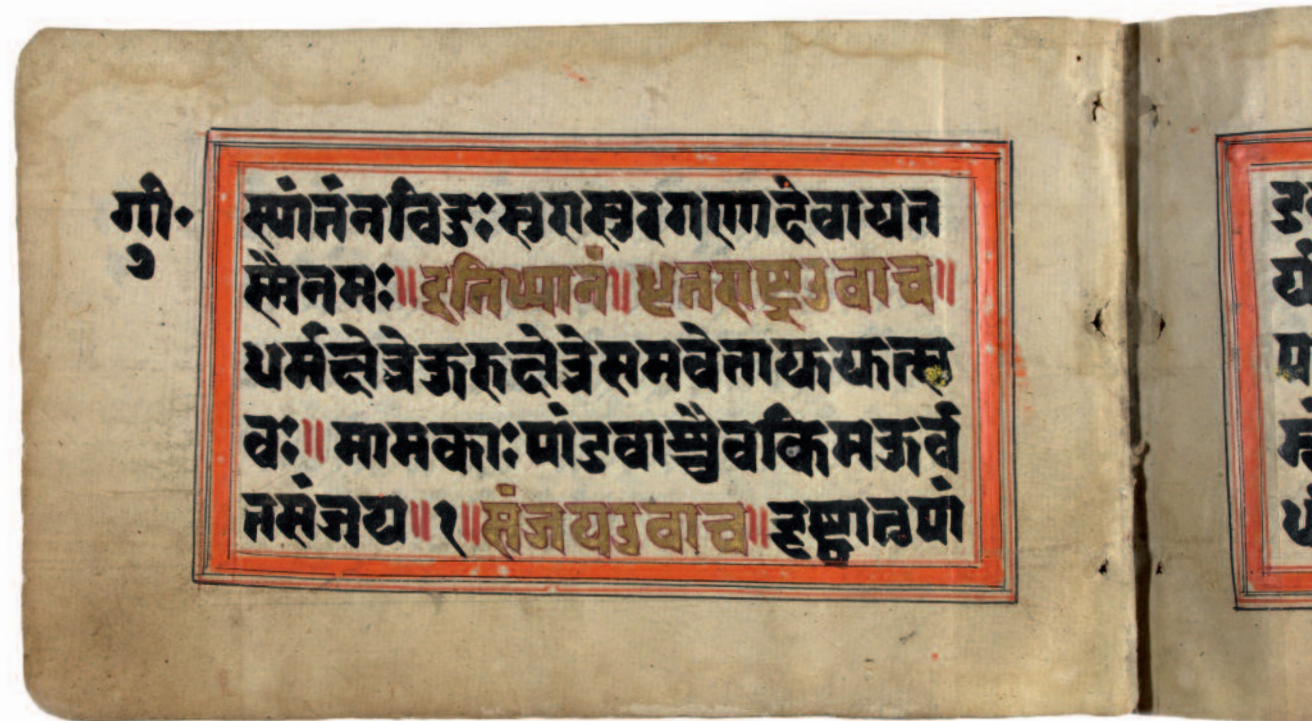
1. *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*, *Bhagavadgītā* and *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (1–132);
2. *Anusmṛti* (1–10);
3. *Rāmāgītā* and *Rāmāhṛdayastotra* (1–17);
4. *Nārāyaṇopaniṣad* (not foliated).

Similarly, in CUL MS Or.1818 the following groups of texts can be distinguished according to their continuous foliation:

1. *Gaṇeśastotra* (1–3);
2. *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* and *Bhagavadgītā* (1–136);
3. *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (1–32);
4. *Bhīṣmastavarāja* (1–24);
5. *Anusmṛti* (1–14);
6. *Gajendramokṣaṇa* (1–31);
7. *Śivastotra* (1–9);
8. *Gurugītāstotramantra*, *Gurugītā*, *Viṣṇupañjarastotra*, *Nārāyaṇopaniṣad*, and *Kālāgnirūdropaniṣad* (1–58);
9. *Ātmabodha* (1–12)
10. *Viṣṇumahimnastotra* (1–15).

As in the case of TUB MS Ma I 893, in CUL MS Or.2031 there is a single foliation for the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, then the foliation of the *Śivamahimnastotra* restarts from 1; moreover folio 12 of the *Bhagavadgītā* has been wrongly bound

Fig. 7 MGUL Indic MS 36. Folio 2 verso of the bifolium containing the *Jvālāmukhīstotra*. (Copyright: Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University)

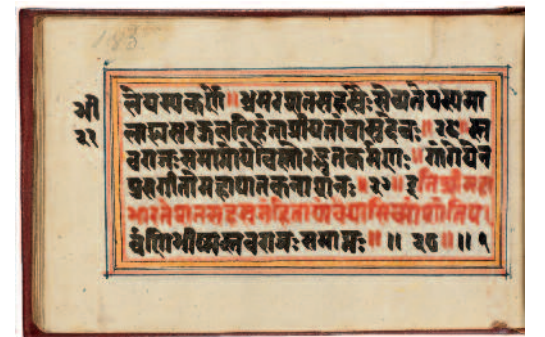
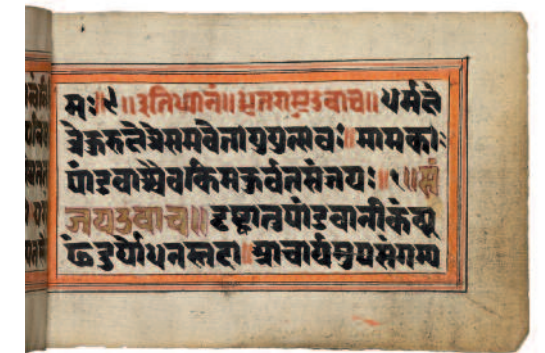


within the *Śivamahimanastotra*, after folio 4 of the latter. In MGUL Indic MS 36, according to the continuous foliation the texts might be grouped in the following sets:

1. *Snānavidhi*, *Sarvopamāna*, *Gaṇapatistava*, *Gaṇeśanāmāni*, and *Gaṇeśastotra* (1–30);
2. *Mahāgaṇapatistavarāja*, *Bhavanīnāmasahastrastavarāja*, *Indrākṣīstotra*, *Śārikāstotra*, and *Vīṭastāstotra* (1–49);
3. *Rudramantra*, *Gaurīśvaramantra*, *Bhairavastotra*, *Ratna-pāñcakanāmastotra*, *Śivamahimanastotra* (1–30);
4. *Pañcastava* and *Devīkavaca* (1–43);
5. *Jvālāmukhīstotra* (1–2);
6. *Jvālānāmasahasra* (44–63);
7. *Mukundamālāstotra* (1–8);
8. *Viṣṇunāmasahasra*, *Saptaślokiḡitā*, *Caturślokiḡhāgavata*, *Nārāyaṇopaniṣad*, and *Ṣaṭpadīhṛdayasāra* (1–39);
9. *Sūryastava* and *Sūryakavaca* (1–6);
10. *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* and *Bhagavadgītā* (1–96);
11. *Devīmāhātmya* (1–90).

As in the case of the *guṭakās*, also in this manuscript folios with miniatures and protective folios are not foliated and not calculated in any foliation. After the *Vīṭastāstotra* a new text begins, but only the first stanza is preserved, followed by protective folios and a miniature depicting Śiva and Pārvatī sitting on Nandin, evidently introducing the following set of texts, which focuses on the worship of Śiva and Pārvatī in various forms; moreover, the foliation of the *Jvālānāmasahasra* begins abruptly with 44. These two facts represent further evidence that MGUL Indic MS 36 is a composite manuscript.

All manuscripts except CUL MS Or.2262 present an ornate layout (fig. 7–12). Six are written in a bold, calligraphic script and although they differ in minor details, they all share a similar layout pattern (TUB MS Ma I 893 and TUB MS Ma I 894, CUL MS Or.1817, CUL MS Or.1818, CUL MS Or.2031, Bodleian MS. Mill 111, Bodleian MS. Mill 112, MGUL Indic MS 36). The writing frame is delineated by multiple lines in black and red ink with blank spaces coloured in orange (TUB MS Ma I 893 and TUB MS Ma I 894, CUL MS Or.1818, CUL MS Or.2031, Bodleian MS. Mill 112), yellow (CUL MS Or.1817, Bodleian MS. Mill 111), or gold (MGUL Indic MS 36). Similar strategies are employed in all manuscripts to mark different elements and sections of the texts, like punctuation (such as *daṇḍas*), names of speakers, beginnings of chapters, and final rubrics with titles. For instance, in CUL MS Or.1817 the incipits of new chapters are marked with alternating lines in red and black ink, while the names of speakers are written in red ink; in CUL MS Or.1818, *daṇḍas* and incipits are in red ink, while alternating *akṣaras* in red and black ink, or in red ink only, mark final rubrics and names of speakers. In some cases, like TUB MS Ma I 893 and CUL MS Or.2031, names of the speakers and final rubrics are written also in golden ink. TUB MS Ma I 894 presents a slightly less elaborated layout in that incipits, name of speakers, and final rubrics are written in black ink and highlighted with red powder. Finally, TUB MS Ma I 893, MS CUL Or.2031, and Bodleian MS. Mill 112 are endowed with title pages lavishly decorated with an elaborate painted frame with geometrical and floral pat-



- ◀ Fig. 8 TUB Ma I 893, folio 9 verso. End of the *dhyāna* section and beginning of the *Bhagavadgītā* with the word *dhyāna* and the name Dhṛtarāṣṭra written in golden ink. (Copyright: Tübingen University Library)
- ◀ Fig. 9 TUB Ma I 894, folio 11 verso. End of the *dhyāna* section and beginning of the *Bhagavadgītā* with the word *dhyāna* and the name Dhṛtarāṣṭra highlighted with red powder. (Copyright: Tübingen University Library)
- Fig. 10 CUL MS Or.1818, folio 5 recto. End of the *dhyāna* section and beginning of the *Bhagavadgītā* with the name Dhṛtarāṣṭra written with alternating characters in black and red ink. (Copyright: Cambridge University Library CC BY-NC 3.0)
- Fig. 11 CUL MS Or.2031, folio 7 recto. End of the *dhyāna* section and beginning of the *Bhagavadgītā* with the word *dhyāna* and the name Dhṛtarāṣṭra written in red ink and the name Sañjaya written in golden ink. (Copyright: Cambridge University Library CC BY-NC 3.0)
- Fig. 12 Bodleian MS. Mill 111, fol. 183 verso. Final rubric of the *Bhīṣmasastavarāja*. (Copyright: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford)



Fig. 13 TUB Ma I 893, folio 3 verso. Decorated first page of the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*. (Copyright: Tübingen University Library)

Fig. 14 MS CUL Or.2031, fol. 1 recto. Decorated first page of the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*. (Copyright: Cambridge University Library CC BY-NC 3.0)

► Fig. 15 Bodleian MS. Mill 112, fol. 1 recto. Decorated first page of the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*. (Copyright: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford)

Fig. 16 SB Hs. or. 6954, folio 10 verso. Beginning of the *Bhagavadgītā* with the name *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* highlighted with red powder. (Copyright: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)



terns at the beginning of each text (fig. 13–15), while MGUL Indic MS 36 presents decorated final pages (fig. 7). Among the *gūṭakās*, SB Hs. or. 6954 is an outlier in terms of script, layout, and decoration. The first difference is that, although well executed, the Devanāgarī employed in it is not the bold variant seen in the other exemplars, but of the more common type found in 18th and 19th century manuscripts. Also, rubrication is limited to *daṇḍas* and there are no decorated title pages. On the other hand, the square writing frame is heavily decorated with golden ink and polychrome floral patterns (fig. 16).

In this analysis, a last important aspect are later additions and corrections to the manuscripts, for they are strong evidence of usage. Chapter numbers for the *Bhagavadgītā* have been added on the lower right margin of the rectos of TUB MS Ma I 893, most probably by the same person who added numerous corrections²⁵. Among these, on folio 86 recto the second half of a stanza and the first half of the following stanza are missing and were later added on the margin²⁶. Other manuscripts containing later additions and corrections are CUL MS Or.1817, where the singular declension of the word *rāma* with explanations was added on folios 184 verso and 185 recto; CUL MS Or.1818 and CUL MS Or.2031, where in both cases the additions are probably made by two different individuals; SB Hs. or. 6954, where word-dividers in the form of little strokes were consistently added above the lines of the text of the *Bhagavadgītā*; finally, several texts of MGUL Indic MS 36 are also annotated by different hands.

²⁵ Corrections are found on ff. 27v, 28r, 30v, 31v (long corrections on the upper margin), 54r, 67v, 83v–84r–v, 86r, 90r, and 143v.

²⁶ The missing part is *Bhagavadgītā* 7.28cd–7.29ab.

3 Some Preliminary Conclusions

After the rather boring description of this wealth of material, even the head of the writer is spinning with confusion – how much more must be the head of the readers. In this section, I will try to summarise the salient points of the previous sections and put forward some hypotheses about function and origin of the Voelter manuscripts and their kin. From the analysis of the textual content it is beyond doubt that such manuscripts collecting devotional texts had a ritual function. The manuscripts’ owners recited the texts during private worship rituals performed in their homes, as clearly stated also in some colophons.²⁷ The only exception that does not fit into this picture is MS CUL Or.2262. As we have seen, this manuscript contains also philosophical texts, hardly recited during daily worship rituals. Moreover, texts with more devotional characters like the *Bhagavadgītā* are found at the end of the manuscript, while in most other cases they are found at the beginning of manuscripts, in accordance with their function as *mālāmantra*. It is not by chance that the only other manuscript in which the *Bhagavadgītā* is found towards the end is MGUL Indic MS 36. In fact, both MS CUL Or.2262 as well as MGUL Indic MS 36 set themselves apart also in terms of their physical features: both are codices written in the *Śāradā* script and in the case of MS CUL Or.2262, the only text embellished with miniatures is precisely the *Bhagavadgītā*. Moreover, they are both composite manuscripts without any doubt, in other words they consist of originally independent manuscripts bound together to form a single collection of different texts. Focusing on these contrasting features is important for our attempt to assess the origin of *guṭakās* like the Voelter manuscripts.

When I first looked at the images of the Voelter manuscripts, I thought that I was dealing with a single manuscript. I then wrote to Heike Oberlin and she explained to me that when Wolfgang Voelter donated the manuscripts to the Tübingen University Library, they were considered a single manuscript – the Voelter manuscript. However, upon further analysis, it turned out that they were two distinct objects. The layout of the two manuscripts is different and, above all, they both contain the *Bhagavadgītā* with the *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra*. Furthermore, the illustrations are obviously from different workshops, so it is highly likely that originally they were two distinct manuscripts. On the other hand, even though they were not bound together anymore, the two manuscripts were stacked together and protected by a cover that, as we have seen in the section on codicology, is similar to the covers of other *guṭakās*. This cover might have been prepared in Pakistan sometime during the 19th century. The first assumption was that at some point in their history they must have been bound together and this is why they arrived in the Tübingen University Library as a single object. However, after careful examination, the University Library conservators ruled out this possibility, since apparently the binding holes are not correctly aligned for the two manuscripts to have been bound together.²⁸ Even if we accept this conclusion, we would still have to answer rather puzzling questions: Why would the owner of the two *guṭakās* disbound them in the first place? Why then donate them as a single object? In order to find some answers, I believe we have to broaden our view a little and take



Fig. 17 Bodleian MS. Ind. Inst. Sansk. 72. Binding of the *Śikṣāpatrī*. (Copyright: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford)

into consideration manuscript traditions other than the one in which the two Voelter manuscripts were produced.

According to Nalini Balbir, in the Jaina manuscript tradition a *guṭakā* “may have originally been bound, but in most cases the folded sheets are placed inside a cover without binding” (Balbir 2006, vol. 1, 60). Maybe this practice was widespread also in the Hindu manuscript tradition, but we would need some hard proof in the form of a manuscript. Once again, the Cambridge University Library manuscript collections come to our help. CUL MS Corpus Christi 33.B.25.3 is a 19th-century paper manuscript of Puṣpadanta’s *Śivamahimnastotra* consisting simply of two loose quires, the first one with five bifolia and the second one with one bifolium²⁹. Maybe these quires were meant to be bound together with quires containing other similar works to form a composite, multi-text manuscript. This hypothesis gains even more plausibility if we bear in mind that in all *guṭakās* examined – as well as in the codex MGUL Indic MS 36 – the foliation restarts from 1 for each text or for specific groups of texts. For instance, in CUL MS Or.1817 the three texts related to Kṛṣṇa are foliated continuously, as well as the two texts related to Rāma; even more striking is the case of CUL MS Or.2031, which has a single foliation for the *Bhagavadgītā* with *Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra* and a new foliation precisely for the *Śivamahimnastotra*.

Another curious feature of the foliation of these manuscripts is that the folios with miniatures and the protective folios are not foliated. Could it be that the miniatures were added later and did not originally belong to the manuscripts? After all, they are not essential for the ritual recitation. In fact, in the Hindu manuscript tradition there is a typology of *guṭakās* used in ritual and devotional settings which are devoid of miniatures, of which the most famous example is perhaps the *Śikṣāpatrī* (Bodleian MS. Ind. Inst. Sansk. 72)³⁰. Although hundreds of manuscripts of this text exist, this exemplar is considered to be Swami Sahajānanda’s personal copy and thus holds a particular status within the Swaminarayan community, being venerated as a sacred relic. Bodleian MS. Ind. Inst. Sansk. 72 does not contain only Swami Sahajānanda’s *Śikṣāpatrī* with the Gujarati commentary (*ṭīkā*) by the author’s pupil Nityānanda Muni, but also Dīnanātha’s *Nārāyaṇamunistotra*, Śātānanda’s *Rādhākṛṣṇaṣṭaka*, and a Gujarati hymn by Muktānandamuni. Moreover, it is a composite manuscript consisting of two codicological units – in other words, the folios with the hymns were written in 1824 CE, six years before the folios with the *Śikṣāpatrī* (written in 1830 CE); only later were the two manuscripts bound together to form what is now the holy *Śikṣāpatrī* (fig. 17)³¹. Now, the *Śikṣāpatrī* is a text which nowadays Swaminarayan devotees still recite daily, in a similar way as the texts in the Voelter manuscripts.

27 For instance, Bodleian MS Mill 111, folio 229r: *śubham astu lekhaṇapāṭhakayoḥ* (“Let the scribe and the reciter be blessed!”); Bodleian MS Mill 112, folio 559v: *likhitam kaśmīramadhye Hāṭhapamḍita bhābhūrāmakti paṭhanārthī vaiṣṇavakaṣālyādāsavidyārthī śubham* (“Written in central Kashmir; Hāṭhapamḍita bhābhūrāmakti (?), a vaiṣṇava devotee and student of Kauśalyā, intends to recite [the texts]”).

28 See the article of Rachel Dipper in this volume.

29 This manuscript is catalogued on the Cambridge Digital Library (<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-CC-00033-B-00025-00003/1>).

30 A thorough analysis of the cultural importance of this manuscript, as well as an in-depth codicological description, is provided in Chag (2016). In the present article, I have adopted her terminology: “In the manuscript we find the spelling *Śikṣāpatrī*, which I have adopted in this article when referring to the manuscript specifically. Elsewhere, as the popular spelling is *Śikṣāpatrī* or *Shikṣāpatrī*, I use the term *Śikṣāpatrī* when referring to the text on its own” (ibidem, 170 fn. 1).

31 “[A]ll hymns belong to one single quire, which was first trimmed to fit a new binding and then wrapped around the single-quire kernel [...] The paper, writing and layout of the hymns are clearly different from those of the kernel, and the foliation of the *Śikṣāpatrī* with commentary starts again from 1. Moreover, two blank bifolia have been inserted between the two codicological units. Finally, the two colophons with two different dates further confirm this analysis. The most probable scenario is that the hymns were originally part of a separate *guṭako* written in 1824. (As the first two hymns are separated from the last one by yet another blank bifolium, which clearly belongs to the second unit, we cannot be sure whether the original *guṭako* also contained other hymns or not.) The bifolia with the hymns were then bound together with the *Śikṣāpatrī* with commentary at a later time” (Formigatti in Chag 2016, 184–85).

32 “The popularity of Rāma, the righteous hero and king par excellence, is confirmed by his inclusion in the *Dasam Granth*, a Sikh sacred text attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last spiritual leader of the Sikhs. It is a compilation of different texts, including hymns, Hindu mythological tales and autobiography. In the section entitled “The Twenty-four Avatars” (Panj. *Caubīs Avatār*) various incarnations of the Hindu god Viṣṇu are narrated, including Rāma’s tale” (Formigatti 2019, 98).



Fig. 18 Bodleian MS. Ind. Inst. Panj. 3, folio 1 recto of a 19th-century manuscript of the *Dasam Granth*. (Copyright: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford)

Fig. 19 Bodleian MS. Ind. Inst. Panj. 3, multicoloured textile binding with book flap of a 19th-century manuscript of the *Dasam Granth*. (Copyright: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford)

► **Fig. 20** CUL MS Add.269. Folio 4 recto of a manuscript the Persian epic poem *Šāhnāma*, (16th–17th century CE, South Asia), with layout similar to one of the *guṭakās* and MGUL Indic MS 36. (Copyright: Cambridge University Library CC BY-NC 3.0)

► **Fig. 21** CUL MS Add.269. Illuminated first page of a manuscript the Persian epic poem *Šāhnāma*, (16th–17th century CE, South Asia), with floral decoration similar to the one in the Voelter manuscripts. (Copyright: Cambridge University Library CC BY-NC 3.0)

Moreover, we find manuscripts of sacred texts recited ritually also in the Sikh tradition – above all, the *Ādi Granth*, but also the *Dasam Granth*.³² Manuscripts of these sacred Sikh scriptures are quite often codices of large dimensions, still they share several features with *guṭakās*, such as the type of paper, the layout, and the Persian-style binding with book flap and decorated textile cover (fig. 18–19). This should not come as a surprise, since the Sikh manuscript tradition originates from the Kashmirian tradition – for instance, the Gurmukhī script is an offspring of the Śāradā script. A particularly telling witness of this relationship is MGUL Indic MS 36, where not only the physical features such as the format, paper, layout, ad binding, but also the devotional character of the texts is akin to the *Dasam Granth* manuscript shown in figure 18 and 19. Furthermore, it is worth reminding here that the physical features of both manuscripts are similar to those of Persian manuscripts, for instance a *Šāhnāma* manuscript probably copied in the 16th–17th century CE in South Asia, a wonderful example of Indo-Persian book culture (fig. 20–21). Further confirmation of this relationship comes from the apparent origin of MGUL Indic MS 36, which according to a note pasted on the inside of the front cover is from 18th-century Jaipur.³³ If this is the case, it would mean that it was written by a Kashmiri scribe emigrated from the Kashmir Valley to Northern India.³⁴

It is within this rich and varied cultural environment that *guṭakās* were produced, used, and circulated. Finally, I would like to draw the attention to a printed version of the *Gītāpāncaratna*, edited by Bābūrāma and published in 1808 in Kolkata³⁵. This book is among the first Sanskrit books printed in South Asia with movable type and predates all three dated *guṭakās* examined in this article, i.e. TUB MS Ma I 894, Bodleian MS. Mill 112, and CUL MS Or.2031. This fact could lead us to conclude that these manuscripts might have been produced due to the influence of printed books of the *Gītāpāncaratna*. However, I think such a conclusion is not corroborated by enough evidence.

Coming back to the Voelter manuscripts, I believe we can now answer, at least tentatively, the question asked above: why disbound the two manuscripts – TUB MS Ma I 893 and MS Ma I 894 – in the first place? A likely scenario is that at some point in time the owner disbound them, stacked them together and added the cover of one



of the two on the top and bottom to protect what he now thought of as a unitary manuscript – let us call it MS Voelter 0. This hypothesis is less far-fetched than it might appear, after all we have seen that in the Jaina tradition *guṭakās* were often unbound manuscripts. Moreover, in our analysis we have also considered bound *guṭakās* and codices which are composite manuscripts, like the *Śikṣāpattrī*, CUL MS Or.2262 and MGUL Indic MS 36. Indeed, it was a unitary object, MS Voelter 0, that was donated to Wolfgang Voelter and subsequently to the Tübingen University Library, not the two distinct manuscripts now labelled TUB MS Ma I 893 and MS Ma I 894. However, difficult questions arise from this scenario: what with the two *Bhagavadgītās*? Did the owner recite this text twice? Or did MS Voelter 0 maybe fulfil a different purpose? In my opinion, in order to establish the origin and function of *guṭakās* like the Voelter manuscripts with more certainty, two lines of research should be pursued in the future. Firstly, we should prepare a census of as many *guṭakās* as possible to ascertain their oldest occurrence and trace their evolution through time. Only then we would be able to study them in the broader context of devotional movements in early modern South Asia across various religious traditions, hoping to gain more insight into their various usages.

32 “The popularity of Rāma, the righteous hero and king par excellence, is confirmed by his inclusion in the *Dasam Granth*, a Sikh sacred text attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last spiritual leader of the Sikhs. It is a compilation of different texts, including hymns, Hindu mythological tales and autobiography. In the section entitled “The Twenty-four Avatars” (Panj. *Caubīs Avatār*) various incarnations of the Hindu god Viṣṇu are narrated, including Rāma’s tale” (Formigatti 2019, 98).

33 The typewritten note recites thus: “SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPT | Bhagavad-Gita, ‘The Song of the Divine One’, Text-book of the worship of Krishna as Vishna [sic]. | Contains 47 full-page miniatures. The text is within gold and coloured rules. Bound in Indian fabric with outer flap cover. | XVIII century”. The note “Jaipur” between brackets is added in pencil after the last line.

34 Other examples of manuscripts written by Kashmiri scribes outside the valley are known; for instance, Bodleian MS. Sansk. e. 13 (R), a lavishly illuminated scroll of the *Adhyātmārāmāyaṇa*, was written in Vārāṇasī by the Kashmirian Pandit Ghāṣirāma (Formigatti 2019, 97).

35 I have examined the copy kept in the Bodleian Libraries, which is bound with other titles under the shelfmark (IND) 4 B 24/1.

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APPENDIX. TABLES

Table 1	
REPOSITORY	MANUSCRIPTS
Cambridge University Library (CUL)	MS Or.1817, MS Or.1818, MS Or.2031, MS Or.2262
Bodleian Libraries (Bod)	MS. Mill 111, MS. Mill 112
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (SB)	Hs. or. 6954
McGill University Library (MGUL)	Indic MS 36

Table 2	
TUB MS MA I 893	TUB MS MA I 894
1. Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra (f. 3v-9v)	1. [Unidentified karanyāsa (Gaṇeśastotra?) f. 1v–6v]
	2. Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra (f. 7r-11v)
2. Bhagavadgītā (f. 9v-192r)	3. Bhagavadgītā (f. 11v-147v)
3. Viṣṇusahasranāmāvali (f. 195v-248r)	4. Viṣṇusahasranāma (f. 151r-183r)
	5. Bhiṣmastavarāja (f. 185v-205v)
	6. Anusmṛti (f. 208r-220v)
	7. Gajendramokṣaṇa (f. 223r-252v)
	8. Rāmagītā (f. 256r-274r)
	9. Rāmaḥṛdayastotra (f. 277r-285v)
	10. Śivamahimnastotra (288r-301r)
	11. Śivapañcākṣarastotra (f. 303r-304v)
	12. Śivanāmastotra (?) (307r-355v)

Vaiṣṇava Multi-text Manuscripts

Table 3	SB Hs. or. 6954	Table 4	CUL MS Or.1817	Table 5	Bodleian MS. Mill 111
1.	Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra	1.	Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra	1.	Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra
2.	Bhagavadgītā	2.	Bhagavadgītā	2.	Bhagavadgītā
3.	Anusmṛti	3.	Viṣṇusahasranāma	3.	Viṣṇusahasranāma
4.	Gajendramokṣaṇa	4.	Anusmṛti	4.	Bhīṣmastavarāja
		5.	Rāmagītā	5.	Anusmṛti
		6.	Rāmahr̥dayastotra	6.	Gajendramokṣaṇa
		7.	Nārāyaṇopaniṣad		
Table 6	Bodleian MS. Mill 112				
1.	Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra	8.	Rāmagītā	14.	Rāmakavaca
2.	Bhagavadgītā	9.	Rāmamantrapāṭala	15.	Śākta prayers (Caṭikālagna?)
3.	Viṣṇusahasranāma	10.	Śrīrāmapaddhati	16.	Nārāyaṇavarmanāmādhyaḃya
4.	Bhīṣmastavarāja	11.	Rāmasahasranāmastotra	17.	Trailokyamohana-rāmakavaca
5.	Anusmṛti	12.	Jānakīsahasranāma	18.	Lakṣmaṇakavaca
6.	Gajendramokṣaṇa	13.	Gāyatrīmantra	19.	Pañcasukhihanumānakavaca
7.	Rāmacandrastavarājastotra				

Śaiva (?) Multi-text Manuscript

Table 7	CUL MS Or.2262		
1.	Spandakārikā	6.	Mahārthamañjarī
2.	Gāyatrīmantranirṇaya	7.	[Unindetified Vaiṣṇava Text]
3.	Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya	8.	Amanaska
4.	Viṣṇusahasranāma	9.	Bhusuṇḍopakhyāna
5.	Śivasūtravimarśinī	10.	Amanaska
		11.	Skandamaheśvarasaṃvāda
		12.	Nārāyaṇopaniṣad
		13.	Kālāgnirūdropaniṣad
		14.	Paramārthasāra
		15.	Bhagavadgītā

Śaiva–Vaiṣṇava Multi-text Manuscripts

Table 8	CUL MS Or.1818		
1.	Gaṇeśastotra	6.	Anusmṛti
2.	Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra	7.	Gajendramokṣaṇa
3.	Bhagavadgītā	8.	Śivastotra
4.	Viṣṇusahasranāma	9.	Gurugītāstotramantra
5.	Bhīṣmastavarāja	10.	Gurugītā
		11.	Viṣṇupañjarastotra
		12.	Nārāyaṇopaniṣad
		13.	Kālāgnirūdropaniṣad
		14.	Ātmabodha
		15.	Viṣṇumahimnastotra

Table 9	CUL MS Or.2031		
1.	Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra		
2.	Bhagavadgīta		
3.	Śivamahimnastotra		

Śaiva–Vaiṣṇava–Śākta Multi-text Manuscripts

Table 10	MGUL Indic MS 36		
1.	Snānavidhi	11.	Rudramantra
2.	Sarvopamāna	12.	Gaurīśvaramantra
3.	Gaṇapatistava	13.	Bhairavastotra
4.	Gaṇeśanāmāni	14.	Ratnapañcakanāmastotra
5.	Gaṇeśastotra	15.	Śivamahimnastotra
6.	Mahāgaṇapatistavarāja	16.	Pañcastava
7.	Bhavanīnāmasahastrastavarāja	17.	Devīkavaca
8.	Indrākṣīstotra	18.	Jvālāmukhistotra
9.	Śarikāstotra	19.	Jvālānāmasahasra
10.	Vitastāstotra	20.	Mukundamālāstotra
		21.	Viṣṇunāmasahasra
		22.	Saptaślokiḃgītā
		23.	Caturślokiḃhāgavata
		24.	Nārāyaṇopaniṣad
		25.	Ṣaṭpadihṛdayasāra
		26.	Sūryastava
		27.	Sūryakavaca
		28.	Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra
		29.	Bhagavadgītā
		30.	Devimahātmya

Table 11

Distribution of Works and Texts in the Manuscripts.
Texts in bold are contained in the Voelter manuscripts.

	SB Hs. or. 6954	CUL MS Or.1817	Bodleian MS. Mill 111	Bodleian MS. Mill 112	CUL MS Or.2262	CUL MS Or.1818	CUL MS Or.2031	MGUL Indic MS 36
Bhagavadgītāmālāmantra	•	•	•	•				•
Bhagavadgītā	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Viṣṇusahasranāmāvalī (TUB MS Ma I 893)								
Viṣṇusahasranāma (TUB MS Ma I 894)		•	•	•	•			
Bhīṣmastavarāja		•	•	•	•			
Anusmṛti	•	•	•	•	•			
Gajendramokṣaṇa	•	•	•	•	•			
Rāmagītā		•	•					
Rāmahr̥dayastotra		•						
Śivamahimnastotra							•	•
Śivapañcākṣarastotra								
Śivanāmastotra (?)								
Nārāyaṇopaniṣad		•			•	•		•
Kālāgnirūdropaniṣad					•	•		
Rāmacandrastavarājastotra				•				
Rāmamantrapāṭala				•				
Śrīrāmapaddhati				•				
Rāmasahasranāmastotra				•				
Jānakīsahasranāma				•				
Gāyatrīmantra				•				
Rāmakavaca				•				
Śākta prayers (Caṭikālagna?)				•				
Nārāyaṇavarmanāmādhyaḃya				•				
Trailokyamohanarāmakavaca				•				
Lakṣmaṇakavaca				•				
Pañcasukhihanumātkavaca				•				
Spandakārikā					•			
Gāyatrīmantranirṇaya					•			
Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya					•			
Śivasūtravimarśinī					•			
Mahārthamañjarī					•			
Amanaska					•			
Bhusuṇḍopakhyāna					•			
Skandamaheśvarasaṃvāda					•			
Paramārthasāra					•			
Gaṇeśastotra						•		•
Śivastotra						•		
Gurugītāstotramantra						•		
Gurugītā						•		
Viṣṇupañjarastotra						•		
Ātmabodha						•		
Viṣṇumahimnastotra						•		
Snānavidhi								•
Sarvopamāna								•
Gaṇapatistava								•
Gaṇeśanāmāni								•
Mahāgaṇapatistavarāja								•
Bhavanīnāmasahastrastavarāja								•
Indrākṣīstotra								•
Śarikāstotra								•
Vitastāstotra								•
Rudramantra								•
Gaurīśvaramantra								•
Bhairavastotra								•
Ratnapañcāḃkanāmastotra								•
Pañcastava								•
Devīkavaca								•
Jvālāmukhistotra								•
Jvālānāmasahasra								•
Mukundamālāstotra								•
Viṣṇunāmasahasra								•
Saptaślokiḃgītā								•
Caturślokiḃhāgavata								•
Ṣaṭpadihṛdayasāra								•
Sūryastava								•
Sūryakavaca								•
Devīmahātmya								•

Table 12 Tabular Physical Description of the Manuscripts

MANUSCRIPT	Date	Extent	Material	Dimension	Format	Script
TUB MS Ma I 893	19th c.	250	Paper	11.6 x 19 cm	gutako	Devanāgarī
TUB MS Ma I 894	1811 CE	355	Paper	11 x 18.7 cm	gutako	Devanāgarī
SB Hs. or. 6954	18th c.	237 ff.	Paper	?	guṭako	Devanāgarī
CUL MS Or.1817	18th–19th c.	187 ff.	Paper	7.3 x 11 cm	gutako	Devanāgarī
CUL MS Or.1818	18th–19th c.	379 ff.	Paper	9.4 x 14.5 cm	gutako	Devanāgarī
CUL MS Or.2031	1859–60 CE	239 ff.	Paper	10 x 15.5 cm	gutako	Devanāgarī
CUL MS Or.2262	18th–19th c.	250 ff.	Paper	?	codex	Śāradā
Bodleian MS. Mill 111	18th–19th c.	229 ff.	Paper	10.1 x 16.2 cm	gutako	Devanāgarī
Bodleian MS. Mill 112	1817 CE	559 ff.	Paper	9.8 × 14.6 cm	gutako	Devanāgarī
MGUL Indic MS 36	18th c.	547 ff.	Paper	20 x 14.2	codex	Śāradā