Muzaffar Alam | IN SEARCH OF A SACRED
KING: DĀRĀ SHUKOH
AND THE
*YOGAVĀSIṢṬHA*S OF
MUGHAL INDIA

Dārā Shukoh is a well-studied figure in Mughal Indian history. He has been portrayed as a saintly scholar, the beacon of Mughal nonsectarian political culture, particularly insofar as he was interested in the Muslim Sufi traditions as well as ancient Hindu religious scriptures. He had close connections with some of the most eminent Qadiri Sufis of his time, compiled two Sufi biographical/hagiographical dictionaries (*tazkira*s), wrote three significant treatises on intricate mystical doctrines, studied Indic philosophy and religious scriptures, and by undertaking to translate into Persian several Hindu texts from the original Sanskrit, he initiated a discussion of Islam's close relations with Hindu traditions.[1] Several modern historians, commenting on his pol-

[1] See, e.g., Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Munshiram & Manoharlal, 1982), 43–157 (for his works on Sufis and Sufism) and 174–292 (for works on Hindu traditions). For discussion of Prince Dārā Shukoh's individual treatises, see also A. Ary

itics, intellectual ambitions, and leadership qualities, have also highlighted his deficiencies as a military and political leader, thus explaining his failure and the triumph of his masterful brother Aurangzeb.[2] In some Mughal Indian records, too, his portrayal is contrasted with that of Aurangzeb.[3] My purpose in this article is not to take a position with regard to these various approaches. My concern, rather, lies with something more specific: I consider here an important scholarly work written by Dārā Shukoh, namely, his translation of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, which, even if it has received much attention, still deserves to be studied afresh.[4]

To bring the prince's involvement with this text more clearly into view as an event deserving of historical attention, I ask a series of questions: Why did the prince commission a new translation of the text, when over half a century earlier Niẓām Pānīpatī had already published a reasonably "accurate" and "faithful" translation, and other versions apart from this were also available to him? Did the prince see in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* something that was missing in the available Persian versions? Why is it that he chose to prepare or commission a new translation in a very late phase of his princely career, in 1655, the very year when he had not only established his image as a saint but also put into play his designs to claim the Mughal throne? Of course, Dārā Shukoh's

Roest Crollius, "Reflections on the Majma'-al-Bahrayn of Dara Shukoh," in *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*, ed. Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Vikas, 1982), 44–51; Louis Massignon, C. L. Huart, and Jean Filliozat's articles in English translation, in *On Becoming an Indian Muslim: French Essays on Aspects of Syncretism*, trans. and ed. M. Waseem (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 95–144. For some good recent studies, see Rajeev Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā: The Cultural Memory of Dārā Shekuh and the Mughal Public Sphere," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2 (2009): 165–93, and *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 240–85; Munis D. Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, *Vedanta*, and Imperial Succession in Mughal India," in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqui (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 30–64.

    [2] For a good recent discussion of this, see Munis Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 169–80; see also Kalika-Ranjan Qanungo, *Dārā Shukoh*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Sarkar, 1952), 1:62–66 and 269–74.

    [3] See, e.g., Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, 1656–1668*, rev. ed. based on Irving Brock's translation, by Archibald Constable (London: Oxford University Press, 1916; repr., Delhi: Chand, 1972), 6–7 and 10–11: "Dārā was not deficient in good qualities . . . but he entertained too exalted an opinion of himself; . . . spoke disdainfully of those who ventured to advise him, and thus deterred his sincerest friends." But Bernier writes about Aurangzeb that he "was devoid of that urbanity and engaging presence, so much admired in Dārā: but he possessed a sounder judgment, and was more skillful in selecting for confidantes such persons as were best qualified to serve him with faithfulness and ability."

    [4] Dārā Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, ed. Tara Chand and S. A. H. Abidi (Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University, 1968). For a recent study of Dārā Shukoh's interest in Indic traditions and the Persian *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, see Supriya Gandhi, "The Prince and the *Muvahhid*: Dara Shikoh and Mughal Engagements with *Vedanta*," in Dalmia and Faruqui, *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*, 65–101. The article draws on Gandhi's doctoral dissertation, "Mughal Self-Fashioning, Indic Self-Realization: Dara Shikoh and Persian Textual Cultures in Early Modern South Asia" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2011).

efforts, including his relationship with Hindu saints like Baba Lal, had precedents in earlier Mughal courts, but he went a step further than his forebears in that he found an element of truth in Indic texts.[5] Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether the significance of his involvement with the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* may have been bound up with concerns that became increasingly central to Dārā Shukoh's politics.

With these questions in mind, I seek to revisit the Mughal *Yogavāsiṣṭha*s, first briefly considering the reasons why Mughal scholars and their patrons chose this text and how they sought to present their visions of it in Persian. Thereafter, I consider Dārā Shukoh's translation, situating it in the larger context of Mughal political culture.

THE *YOGAVĀSIṢṬHA*

The book of Vasiṣṭha and his yoga (*Yogavāsiṣṭha*), also called *Mahā-Rāmāyaṇa*, or *Vāsiṣṭha-Rāmāyaṇa*, to list a few of its alternative titles, is a work of philosophical narratives.[6] The word *yoga* in the title, as the work clarifies, refers to a kind of philosophical knowledge (*jñāna*) and not to ascetic praxis.[7] The work is a long dialogue between the sage Vasiṣṭha (Vasiṣṭha Muni, transliterated as "Basisht" in Persian translations) and Prince Rāma (venerated as Śrī-Rāmacandra, or "Rām Chand" in Persian translations), comprising over 32,000 verses.

The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* has lived many lives, even in the relatively short time between its introduction as an innovative book in Kashmir titled *Mokṣopāya* (The means of freedom) sometime around the tenth century and its subsequent circulation as the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, with variations in the frame stories that introduce the book and certain changes in philosophical vocabulary. The variations amount to the nesting of this work in a frame more suited to a Brahmanical theological tradition and allowing much of the distinctive vocabulary of the text to be replaced by standard Vedāntic terms.[8] In between the exten-

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[5] Compare Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā."

[6] The compound *yogavāsiṣṭha* is more commonly translated as "Vasiṣṭha's Yoga." But the compound is perhaps best resolved, on the precedent of the title of Kālidāsa's *Abhijñāśākuntala*, as "the book related to Vasiṣṭha and his Yoga" (personal communication with Sonam Kachru, from a conversation with Victor D'Avella and Gary Tubb, South Asia Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago).

[7] See Walter Slaje, "Liberation from Intentionality and Involvement: On the Concept of *jīvanmukti* in the Mokṣopāya," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28 (2000): 171–94; see also Jürgen Hanneder, *Studies on the Mokṣopāya* (Wiesbaden: Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 2006), 57–59; see also S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 2:131.

[8] Walter Slaje, *Vom Mokṣopāya-Śāstra zum Yogavāsiṣṭha-Mahārāmāyaṇa: Philologische Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung- und Überlieferungsgeschichte eines indischen Lehrwerks mit Anspruch auf Heilsrelevanz* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994).

sive (*bṛhad*) texts there was a version of the work in 5,000 verses that came to be known as the *Concise Yogavāsiṣṭha* (*Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha*), perhaps once known as *The essence of the means to freedom* (*Mokṣopāyasāra*) attributed to Abhinanda of Kashmir, but of which neither the date nor the author are established with certainty. Some of the organizational changes introduced by the *Laghu* have, however, affected the later *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and also the arrangement of the chapters in the two Mughal Persian translations, those of Niẓām Pānīpatī and Dārā Shukoh. To be sure, there were several other versions that further abridged, or rerepresented, the pith and core of the philosophical doctrines of the text.[9]

These works are linked together by some important features, of which the first is the fact that the philosophical conversation between Rāma and Vasiṣṭha Muni is situated as an episode in the Rāmāyaṇa. The second is the use of philosophical narratives, many of which are unique to these texts (after which they traveled extensively) and are uniquely expressive of the philosophical aims of the text. The core of this philosophy concerns the nature of what is most real and the vision of freedom in life (*jīvanmukti*), stressing that a nonascetic freedom in action is not only possible but desirable on the basis of thought and the kind of rational inquiry exemplified in the work. It is not spiritual praxis, or ritual, or even meditation that promotes freedom but thought, which can, in principle, be engaged in by anyone, irrespective of social status, eligibility, or entitlement with respect to Brahmāṇical conceptions of norms. As the *Laghu* states: whether one is eligible (*adhikāra*) to receive instruction in the text depends solely on a desire to know, which in turn depends on not being someone who is utterly incapable of being taught or already possessed of knowledge. Social standing, considerations of ritual purity, and membership in a community simply do not serve as criteria for eligibility. And this is a significant feature of the book's overall philosophical outlook.[10]

A point that cannot be emphasized enough concerns the way in which this work was self-conscious about its function as a model for knowledge on the part of rulers caught between the conflicting demands of disenchantment and disengagement (*vairāgya*) from the values of power and pleasure on the one hand and the need to seemingly promote such values through their engage-

[9] For the variety of "short" versions of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, see the discussion and references cited in Hanneder, *Studies on the Mokṣopāya*, 10–13. See also Peter Thomi, "The Yogavāsiṣṭha in Its Longer and Shorter Version," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 11 (1983): 107–16.

[10] "Persons qualified to read this work called Vasistha . . . should neither be Ajnanis (the ignorant or the worldy wise), nor those Jivanmuktas (liberated ones), who have reached their Jnana-Atman, freeing themselves from all pain, but only those who, conscious of being under bondage, long after freedom from it, and are in that vacillating position, from which they contemplate attaining Moksha": K. Narayanaswami Aiyar, trans., *Laghu Yogavasishtha*, 1st ed. (Madras: Thomson, 1896), 42 (repr., Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1971), 1.

ment in the world on the other.[11] Notably, the dilemma of rulers caught between conflicting values is presented by the text as being a result of reasoned deliberation (*vicāra*)—an achievement, and not a symptom, of despondency or merely emotional confusion. The resolution of the dilemma, then, must similarly be rational and must lead kings back into the world through skillful and reasoned activity.

In stressing the role of this text as a model for the thought of kings, one can highlight first the frame story of the man who will become the ideal ruler, Rāma, who requires the philosophical conversation and narratives of the text to elucidate and confirm his awakening, to make him capable of ruling, but there is also the emphasis on kings in the philosophical narratives of the work to consider.[12] There is even a prophecy included in the book that depicts the work one day being read to King Yaśovarman of Kashmir by his ministers, and so efficacious are such philosophical conversations promoted by the work that overhearing such conversations between minsters and kings induces enlightenment. Or so the stories go.[13] And it is not the stories alone, for the use of the text in history seems to confirm the prophecy.[14] The subsequent history of the text confirms its being a "mirror for princes," we might say, following the Persian idiom. For example, it is worth noting how the *Mokṣopāya* is depicted as being used to alleviate the distress of Zain al-ʿĀbidīn of Kashmir at the end of that monarch's life.[15]

Dārā Shukoh, as we see below, saw this potential of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, a fact that also perhaps explains his dissatisfaction with earlier translations of the text. But before we look to the strategies of reading and translation that Dārā Shukoh encouraged, a few words are required to contextualize the Per-

[11] Jürgen Hanneder emphasizes this aspect of the text. On the use of the text in instructing those in power (*Kṣatriyas*), see Hanneder, *Studies on the Mokṣopāya*, 194.

[12] For a discussion of kingship as it is thought through in a few exemplary stories of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, see Wendy Doniger, *Dreams, Illusion and Other Realities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 132–34 and 135–43.

[13] For a translation of this story, see Swami Venkatesananda, *Vasistha's Yoga* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 169. Liberation through overhearing one's own story is of course a trope found in the frame story of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* clearly intends its own philosophical frames to be a model for, and a model of, future situations of self-realization. On the use of this trope in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and its reception in Kashmirian historiography, I am grateful to Sonam Kachru for pointing out how the *Mokṣopāya* is said to have been used to reveal to King Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn his own life story as it might be if the theories of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* were true. Sonam Kachru, "Of Forgetting and the Obscure Place of Dreams: How the Book of Dreaming Entered Kashmirian Historiography" (paper presented at the 41st Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October, 2012).

[14] See Hanneder's discussion of five historical cases from the tenth to the eighteenth century, including the Mughals, wherein the text has actually served this purpose (*Studies on the Mokṣopāya*, 132–33).

[15] On the *Mokṣopāya* in the court of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, see Luther Obrock, "History at the End of History: Śrīvara's *Jainat\taranginī*," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 50, no. 2 (2013): 221–36.

sian *Yogavāsiṣṭha*s that enjoyed currency both within and outside the world of the Mughal court.

There were three readily available versions in Persian before Dārā Shukoh's:[16] one from the age of Akbar (r. 1556–1605), prepared in 1597 under the patronage of his son and successor, Prince Salīm (better known as Jahāngīr; r. 1605–28), by one of the prince's associates (*kamtarin-i bandagan-i dargah*) Niẓām Pānīpatī.[17] There were two other versions from the reign of Jahāngīr: one by Ṣūfī Quṭb-i Jahānī, also known as Shaikh Ṣūfī Sharīf,[18] and another by Abū al-Qāsim Findiriskī (d. 1050/1640–41), a visiting Iranian philosopher.[19]

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[16] These three translations are available in print, and there also are numerous manuscripts at several Asian and European libraries. In addition, there is an illustrated manuscript of this text, prepared in 1602, preserved in Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, from which Wendy Doniger has reproduced fourteen paintings. Doniger says that it is the earliest extant manuscript of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, probably produced for Akbar (r. 1556–1605); cf. Doniger, *Dreams, Illusion and Other Realities*, 304. Gandhi, "Prince and the *Muvahhid*," cites a 2010 unpublished paper by Heike Franke in support of the manuscript having been prepared for Akbar. Again, when describing the Persian translations, Bikrama Jit Hasrat mentions one by Pandit Anandan, citing Ethe and Rieu; cf. Hasrat, *Dara Shikuh*, 234. I think Hasrat misreads Abhinandan as Bahanandan and supposes him to be "Anandan." The three works mentioned in the following six lines in the text are copies of Niẓām Pānīpatī's translation of Abhinandan's *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

[17] Niẓām al-Dīn Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht, Dar Falsafah va ʿirfān-i Hind*, ed. Saiyid Muhammad Riza Jalali Naini, and N. S. Shukla (Tehran: Eqbal, 1981). I have not come across any other reference about the translator. He may belong to the noted Chishti-Sabiri Sufi family of Panipat; cf. S. Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978–2002), 2:274–75, for this family.

[18] Ṣūfī Quṭb-i Jahānī, *Risāla-yi Aṭvār dar Ḥall-i Asrār*, published with three other treatises as *Majmūʿa-yi rasāʾil* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore, 1885). The text apparently is based on *Yogavāsiṣṭha-sāra*, a summarized selection from the *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha* by Quṭb-i Jahānī, the same text that Dārā Shukoh cites in the preface of his translation and that induces the vision he mentions. The colophon of an Aurangzeb-era manuscript, copied in Agra on Rabīʿ 7, 1070 (November 23, 1659), refers to the author as Shaikh Ṣūfī Sharīf, who dedicates the translation to Jahāngīr. The emperor is mentioned with high-flying adjectives like "ḥaqāʾiq va maʿārif-āgāh, vāqif-i asrār-i maʿdan-i ʿirfān va yaqīn." Ṣūfī Sharīf compiled another treatise, *Gharāʾib al-aṭvār fī kashf al-anvār*, containing the conversation between Mahādeva and Krishna (*Mukālama-yi Krishn Mahādev*), which, as its preface notes, took place on Mount Kailash, the abode of Mahādeva. Compare Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna, mss. 2081/2081 and 2082/2082. This text is also referred to as *Kashf al-Kunūz* and *Tuḥfa-yi Majlis*. Compare India Office ms. 1836, British Library, London; see also Chand and Abidi's introduction to the edition of Dārā's translation. Mojtabāʾī mentions an English translation, which unfortunately I could not access, and I am not sure whether this is the same *Yogavāsiṣṭha-sāra* that Quṭb-i Jahānī used.

[19] Mīr Abū al-Qāsim Findiriskī was a noted teacher of philosophy in Isfahan, and men like the famous Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Sarmad Kāshānī, the poet and a close companion of Dārā Shukoh, were among his pupils. Findiriskī was not a prolific writer. Among his writings is a small treatise, *Risāla-yi Ṣanāʿiyya*, on the aims of the arts, crafts, and sciences; a work in Arabic, *Risāla fī-l ḥaraka*; a mystico-philosophical *qaṣīdah*; and a number of *ghazal*s, *qiṭʿa*s, and *rubāʿī*s. He visited India several times, first in 1606 and then in 1611, and stayed there for a number of years. His connection with the noted Zoroastrian priest and author Āẕar Kaivān is

Pānīpatī's translation was a literal rendering of Abhinanda Kashmiri's *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha*, while Shaikh Ṣūfī Quṭb-i Jahānī's *Aṭvār dar Ḥall-i Asrār* is apparently based on the *Yogavāsiṣṭha-sāra* and was dedicated to the emperor Jahāngīr; the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* penned by Abū al-Qāsim Findiriskī is self-consciously a selection (*muntakhab*) rather than a continuous translation of a Sanskrit text.

THE *YOGAVĀSIṢṬHA* OF NIẒĀM PĀNĪPATĪ

Pānīpatī's translation begins, after the conventional praise of God and the Prophet, as follows:

The people of understanding and those who seek the correct path are not concerned with [lit. their attention is not directed to] this world (*ʿālam-i fānī*), but rather the world of eternity (*ʿālam-i baqāʾ*). Being separate from the earth and water and physical things of this world, their souls wander in the garden of the palace of the hidden. They are the opposite of [those who desire] the transitory pleasures of this world and those ignorant and oblivious to the realities who are consumed by these pleasures of the world and of the body. . . . Prince Salīm, . . . leaving aside carnal desires, is like those pious and God-knowing people and the Sufis; his attention is directed towards mysticism (*taṣavvuf*). Even if he is very busy with matters concerning state management (*mulk-dārī*), all his remaining hours are spent in attending to spiritual concerns and care for the poor and the knowledgeable. Scholars of Arabic and other sciences, experts in Persian poetry and prose, historians and Hindu pandits all assemble at his evening gatherings. Important books such as Maulānā Rūmī's *Maṣnavī*, the *Ẓafarnāmah*, *Vāqiʿāt-i Bābarī Jāmiʿ al-Ḥikāyat*, and other histories and stories comprising exhortations and admonitions are read out to him and discussed in his court. In this same period, he gave instructions that the *Jūgbasisht*, which consists of wonderful and valuable exhortations and advice derived from reliable books of the Brahmin philosophers of India, should be translated from Sanskrit into Persian. Accordingly, this ordinary slave of his court, Niẓām Pānīpatī, took charge of (*mutaṣaddī*) its translation. The contents and substance (*maẓmūn va mā ḥaṣal*) of this book were obtained from Patahan Mishra Jaipuri and Jagannat Mishra Banarasi, without any addition or interpolation. These were then translated into simple Persian.[20]

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also reported. He died in Iran; cf. Fathullah Mojtabāʾī's introduction to his edition of Abū al-Qāsim Findiriskī, *Muntakhab-i Jūg Basisht* [Selections from the *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*], ed. Fathullah Mojtabāʾī (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2006), 16–20. This edition is based on Mojtabāʾī's PhD dissertation, "*Muntakhab-i Jug Basasht*; or, Selections from the *Yoga-Vasistha* Attributed to Mir Abu'l-Qasim Findiriski" (Harvard University, 1976). Both Abidi and an editor of Niẓām Pānīpatī's translation, Jalali Naini, think that Findiriskī added commentary to the translation but did not have an independent text of his own. This impression is based on the manuscripts they respectively inspected. Abidi, however, is clearer on this point, whereas Naini seems confused, even with respect to determining the period in which Findiriskī wrote. My reading of this text is based on Mojtabāʾī's critical edition. In his view, Findiriskī's work is an independent text.

[20] Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 1–3.

Niẓām Pānīpatī projects Prince Salīm as someone who appreciated and displayed a yearning to learn the truth and was thus interested in scholarship. The work sustains a focus consistent with the prince's image. Given the presence of pandits in his court and his interest in stories, we can surmise that he was told of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in one of the assemblies described above, whence his desire for a translation of the text in Persian was born. Pānīpatī's portrait of the prince and the work in the preface qualifies the received image of Jahāngīr, often projected as someone fond of drink and who, when he ascended the throne, had little concern with the management of the state, which he handed over to his queen, Nūr Jahān. In Pānīpatī, we thus have valuable support for several recent studies about the emperor.[21] We know that Jahāngīr was interested in *taṣavvuf* and that he cultivated an interest in Indic traditions. We also know that Jahāngīr continued Akbar's policy of encouraging Hindus and Muslims to appreciate each other's traditions.[22]

The translator's preface is followed by a long introduction entitled "Muqaddamah-yi kitāb-i Jūgbasisht,"[23] which seems to adapt Abhinanda's introduction to his *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha*. Abhinanda, we noted above, prepared a shortened version of the extended *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, considering the latter to be dauntingly long; he divided his redaction into six chapters, with each chapter further subdivided into sections. The first section of the first chapter begins with the frame story, which contains the dialogue between the sage Bharadvāja and Vālmīki; it begins with Bharadvāja addressing Vālmīki, his master, thus:

O Perfect Master, it is not hidden from you that this world is a trap for animate beings, a place for the imprisonment of those who are oblivious. Be gracious enough to tell me in detail about Rām Chand. He, with all his many spiritual and physical per-

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[21] Compare Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12–37; Corinne Lefevre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r. 1605–27) in His Memoirs," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 4 (2007): 452–89, and "Pouvoir et noblesse dans l'Empire moghol: Perspectives du règne de Jahāngīr (1605–1627)," *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 62, no. 6 (2007): 1287–1312; Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 249–310.

[22] For Jahāngīr and the Sufis, see Nūr al-Dīn Jahāngīr, *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī* (Aligarh: Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh Muslim University, 2007), 27, 211, 212, 218, 239, 278, and 281; Abd al-Sattar bin Qasim Lahori, *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī and Mirʾāt al-Asrār*, ed. Arif Naushahi and Moʿeen Nizami (Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2006), 184–86, 221, and 226; Shaikh ʿAbd al-Rahmān Chishtī, *Mirʾāt al-Asrār*, British Museum Manuscripts, Or. 216, fols. 507b and 508a. For Jahāngīr's relations with Hindu saints, see *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī*, 175–76, 177, 279, and 281 (about Jadrup). For Akbar's interest in religious amity and understanding, see, e.g., Abū-l Faẓl's introduction to the Persian *Mahābhārata*, ed. S. M. Riza Jalali Naini and N. S. Shukla, trans. Mīr Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn ʿAlī Qazvīnī, vol. 1 (Tehran, 1979). For Jahāngīr's appreciation of and interest in maintaining Akbar's policy, see *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī*, 16.

[23] Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 5–10.

fections in this world, which is a prison for the ignorant and oblivious—how did he lead his life and in what manner did he live with the people of God and eventually, from this space of nothingness? How did he walk towards the realm of eternity (*ʿālam-i baqāʾ*)?[24]

The translation, in most of the manuscripts, concludes the sage Vasiṣṭha's advice as follows:

Know it for certain that the fortunate one who mobilizes all his strength and surrenders his heart to the remembrance of Truth, sitting in a corner, even if he appears to be destitute, acquires a stature which allows him to see all the things of the world, such as honor, status and wealth, as lower even than blades of grass. . . . This world, and whatever is visible in it, all are spectacles of the beauty of the Truth and manifestations of Absolute Being. You have seen the Hidden Light, reflected in so many forms and shapes and you have believed in this [false] knowledge of yours and have tied your heart to it. My last guidance and the substance of well-wishing for you is that so long as you say, "This is me, this is from me," you will remain imprisoned in toil and sorrow. Cross the boundaries of your own self. Consider yourself engrossed in the remembrance of Truth. Do not attribute any act to your own self. Be free from all toils and sorrows. That Hidden Beauty, that Absolute Existence which knows no bounds, that is so terse and without qualities, pure from all names and signs and attributions, and His Person, is above rising and setting, birth and dying, youth and old age, remains always in the same position. The complete and ultimate recognition of Him is that under no circumstance should one see one's own self, and in all circumstances one should surrender oneself to Him, to hide oneself from one's own eyes. After you have surrendered yourself and have given all your acts, speech, hearing, giving, taking—in sum, all your silences, your stillness, and your motion—to Him and know that everything is from Him, make this recognition of Him the achievement of yourself. This is the ultimate goal of those who know God.[25]

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[24] Ibid., 12.

[25] Ibid., 483. It should be noted, however, that not all manuscripts of Pānīpatī's work end here. One manuscript in fact continues beyond this point for several pages and ends in the following fashion:

"Basisht said, 'O Rām Chand, leave this task, and with full concentration and without any lust and desire, enter the business of the world (*kār o bār-i ʿalam*).'" Here the forty-second *sarga* of the *nivan prakaran* ends. "Bālmik said, 'O Bharadwāj, Vasista Rsi [*Vasiṣṭha ṛṣi*] narrated to Rām Chand this account of the wonders and miracles, which are like the boats of the ocean of the world, in eighteen days. To hear these stories which give you the recognition of God, so many *devatās, ṛṣis, siddhas, gandharvas*, Brahmins, and great kings assembled. All throughout these days, from the fountain that sprang from the mouth of Vasiṣṭha ṛṣi, they drank this elixir. Finally, they left for their own places.' Rām Chand, having heard these stories (like the ocean without waves and like flower petals falling the sky upon the head of Rām Chand, who himself was the form of Viṣṇu that had descended upon him), in this way acquired *jogabhyas* and *jnānrup* [*jñāna-rūpa*] and became desireless. After that, Rām Chand came to his father, Rāja Dasrat [*Rāja Daśaratha*] and to his brothers. He then paid his respects (*namaskār*) to Vāsiṣṭha ṛṣi and said to him, "O perfect preceptor, because of your attention

Thereafter, the benefits and many blessings that accrue from the reading of the text are listed.

Although Niẓām Pānīpatī's translation was produced in the court, it appears to have gained currency outside of the court as well. It is noteworthy, then, that Shaikh Quṭb-i Jahānī, within a short while of Pānīpatī's work being available, set about producing his preferred version of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, based on the *Yogavāsiṣṭha-sāra*. It begins thus: "This is a treatise titled *Aṭvār dar Ḥall-i Asrār*, [whose purpose is] to write the accomplishments of Basisht and Rām Chand, who achieved the search of gnosis and brought it out from behind the veil. It was translated into Persian and given another garb."[26] And this is how the first chapter, or way (*ṭaur*), begins:

Basisht says: I prostrate myself respectfully and sincerely to that steady Light which is eternally stable and fixed in one place. Restlessness does not find a path to it. He who is pure and free from any connections with all directions, peripheries, times, and places, about whom we cannot say that he is in the east or that he is in the west, or in the south or the north, whether above or below, in time or in space; there is no beginning or end for him. Instead, he is eternal, steady for all time, the one who is exact knowledge and gnosis, and the path to find him is nothing but the knowledge of one's own self. The *ḥadīth* "*Man ʿarafa nafsahu faqad ʿarafa rabbahu*" ("Verily he who knew his self knew his Lord") points to the same gnosis.

Basisht says: The addressee of these noble words and worthy of these subtle ways and conduct is the seeker of the path of investigation, the one who intends to liberate himself from the prison of this world, who emerges from "*kun wa makun*" ("be and not be") and who wants to manifest himself in oneness and colorlessness, freeing himself from whatever else exists.[27]

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and kindness, all the doubts that I had in my heart have now disappeared. My heart is now at peace, free from heat or cold, sorrow and happiness, good and evil. With your sunlight, you have removed the evil of the world (*moha*), which is a great darkness (*andhakār*)." Vasiṣṭha, hearing this from Rām Chand, was pleased. Then all the *devatā*s, *ṛṣi*s, *gandhārva*s and *siddha*s came and paid their respects to Rām Chand, saying, "O Rām Chand, with your grace and because of you, we heard this most perfect knowledge; and it is to you masters [i.e., Vasiṣṭha and Rām], who are the removers of the sorrows and evils of the world, that we pay our respects and take our leave." ' " (Ibid., editors' comments; epilogue, 488–89)

[26] Quṭb-i Jahānī, *Risāla-yi Aṭvār*, 47. The text proceeds to give a summary of its contents: "It comprises over ten *aṭvār*, or ways, alluding to various practices on the mystical path: the first is the description of *tajrīd*, celibacy; the second is the description of the fact that the world is just an illusion (*khayāl*); the third deals with liberation; the fourth—the bliss of the heart (*jamiʿīyat*); the fifth—the removal of desire; the sixth describes knowledge (*maʿrifat*) of the self; the seventh, knowledge of Truth; the eighth concerns the discovery of the self; the ninth treats knowledge of one's own condition; and the tenth deals with the perfection of the knowledge of Truth."

[27] Ibid., 47.

Quṭb-i Jahānī then begins the speech of Vasiṣṭha Muni as follows: "Basisht says: O Rām Chand, the attachments of the world are a terrible disease and its medicine is nothing but continuous thought: 'Who am I, and what is this world? From where did it emerge?'"[28] Nowhere in the text is there any mention of the many stories that abound in the original *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and that contribute to its distinctive message and means. The text thus does not give any sense of the framing story of Vālmīki and Bharadvāja, nor does it explain the reason why the discourse was given and recorded or for whom it was originally intended. Similarly, the text ends without any reference to what happened to Rāma after Vasiṣṭha's discourse.[29]

We may, perhaps, assume that this presentation of the text amounts to a substantial selection of the philosophy contained in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* already available in Persian translation by Pānīpatī rather than a continuous translation; however, the author gives the impression that he translated the work, not that he merely abstracted from any other translation. That this text is divided into ten chapters also does not support thinking it a selection prepared on the basis of a previous translation. Quṭb-i Jahānī dedicated the translation to Jahāngīr, but we do not know whether the translation was commissioned by the emperor.

ABŪ AL-QĀSIM FINDIRISKĪ (D. 1640–41)

An important example of the circulation of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in Mughal India can be found in Abū al-Qāsim Findiriskī's *Muntakhab-i Jūg Basisht* (Selections from the *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*). The manuscript that Fatḥullāh Mojtabā'ī used as a basis for his edition and translation of Findiriskī's *Muntakhab* says, on the front page, that the text was translated from the original Sanskrit into simple Persian ("Az zabān-i hindī tarjumah bi fārsī-yi sādah"). Then follow four verses in appreciation of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*:

> Hamchū āb ast īn sukhan bi jahān
> Pāk o dānish fazāī chūn Qur'ān

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[28] Ibid., 48.

[29] The text concludes as follows: "O Rām Chand, keep thinking that you are the exact truth. See, find out, and always bear in mind the following: I am that pure and subtle [reality] that has become manifest in several forms. This world is the [manifestation] of the plurality of my appearances (*libās*). I am all in service and also in control. I am pure and detached from everything. When you know this and act upon it, you will attain the exact truth in which there remains no trace of doubt, and it [this truth] will come to light through your actions. Whatever I have expressed to you, Rām Chand, if you regard yourself as one, you will be one. But if you regard yourself as many, you will be many. For one continuously appears to be many, just as the moon, which has only one existence, is seen in many pots [filled with water]. But, when you see it with the inner eye, you understand, and you find that all are one. There is absolutely no plurality and multiplicity" (ibid., 64).

Chūn zi Qurʾān guzashtī o akhbār
Nīst kas rā bi-dīn namaṭ guftār
Jāhil-ī kū shanīd īn sukhanān
Yā bi-dīd īn laṭīf sarvistān [var: Yā bi-dīd īn laṭīf sirr o bayān]
Juz bi-ṣūrat bi-dīn na payvandad
Zān ki bar rīsh-i khᵛīsh mī-khandad

This book/speech (*sukhan*) is for the world like water,
Pure and wisdom-giving like the Qurʾān
When you have passed through the Qurʾān and the traditions of the Prophet
From no one else is there a speech of this nature.
The ignorant who heard this speech
Or saw this fine garden of eucalyptus [var: Or saw this delicate secret and
     expression]
Sees only the appearance of it
And thus makes a fool of himself.[30]

Findiriskī's text is also a summary of sorts. In fact, it is not even divided into chapters like Quṭb-i Jahānī's text. It reads instead like a long essay or perhaps a commentary on selected themes of the philosophy of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. The first three pages are prefatory, beginning with the praise of God identified as *Brahm* (Sanskrit: *brahman*), who is absolute light, pure reason, joy embodied, which descended and thus left its absolute position to create the world of duality and plurality. It is on the fourth page of the edited text that the discussion begins: "Now I tell you about the Oneness of God and the emergence of plurality (*hālā sukhan dar vaḥdat . . . mī-kunam*), and thereby explain to you the reality of Creation, how that One person (*zāt*) with perfect attributes became several persons (*zāt-hā*), in what way He expressed himself into so many creatures."[31] In the following 120 pages, there are two or three more discussions of various subthemes, at each point indicated by variations of the phrase "Now I tell you."[32]

   More notably, unlike the previous Persian versions, nowhere is the sage Vasiṣṭha shown to be addressing or teaching Rām Chandra. Moreover, while in Quṭb-i Jahānī's text there are virtually no Sanskrit words, in Findiriskī's text, the critical Sanskrit technical terms are provided in their original form and are chosen by Findiriskī for further elaboration. Examples include such central terms of Indic theology as *Brahm* (*brahman*), *chidatman* (*cidātman*), *jivatman* (*jīvātman*), *pramatman* (*paramātman*), *jnan* (*jñāna*), *dhyan* (*dhyāna*), *ahankar* (*ahaṃkāra*), *muja* (*mokṣa*), and *kriya* (*kriyā*). This is perhaps the

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[30] Findiriskī, *Muntakhab*, 29. My translation is slightly different from Findiriskī's; cf. his introduction in English, 33.
[31] Ibid., 33.
[32] See, e.g., ibid., 87 and 90.

reason why Findiriskī has been referred to as the commentator (*shāriḥ*) of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

The text revolves around a few main themes, told and retold in a variety of metaphors and exhortations: one must, for example, first recognize that the foundation or basis for any reality is one, Brahm, and that all other entities derive from that one reality. Moreover, these forms or entities will themselves be destroyed, but the basis of reality, Brahm, will never perish. Second, one must recognize that mankind's own belief in independent existence is an illusion, and existence is merely a worldly imprisonment. The goal should always be to train the mind on that one from whom existence derives in order to find release from this imprisonment. The text, as can be discerned from these two themes, consistently ponders the question of illusion, deception, and the discernment of reality.[33]

One of the most characteristic features of this text is that it is interspersed throughout with Persian verses illustrating the themes mentioned above.[34] Most of these verses are by one Fānī, but there are also several verses from Rūmī, ʿAṭṭār, Niʿmat-Allāh Valī, and the like. Perhaps "Fānī" here names Findiriskī himself, given that he figures so prominently.[35]

Findiriskī thus used both prose and poetry in his version. While distinctive, it is yet clearly related to the Persian *Yogavāsiṣṭha*s we have considered above: the concluding statement appears virtually to be a verbatim repro-

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[33] For example, in a striking passage, Findiriskī insists that it is not the sky that is blue but rather the imperfection of the perceiver who believes it to be blue. This is, of course, the metaphor with which Vālmīki's response in the *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha* begins, choosing a metaphor often invoked in the *Mokṣopāya* and counseling its reader that "overlooking" the manifest color of the sky is an analogue to "overlooking" manifest facts about personal identity. See verse 6 in Vasudeva Sharma Panasikara, ed., *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha: Text with Sanskrit Commentary, Vāsiṣṭha-Candrikā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1937), 6; cf. Kachru, "Of Forgetting and the Obscure Place of Dreams." In other instances, Findiriskī exhorts the reader to learn how to distinguish a rope from a snake or to recognize that reality is like the water, not the waves that one perceives (*Muntakhab*, 27 and 105). For these metaphors (and other metaphors in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*), see the extended discussion in Doniger, *Dreams, Illusion and Other Realities*, 261–68. Findiriskī also describes the characteristics of Brahm in the following way: "He is calm, like water undisturbed by the wind" (*Muntakhab*, 35); "He is visible from everywhere, like the sky" (39); "He is timeless" (83).

[34] On this characteristic of translations of theological or works considered to be mystical, see Carl W. Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations of Indian Languages," *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 2 (June 2003): 173–95 and 183–84.

[35] Mojtabāʾī suggests that this Fānī is Fānī Isfahānī (d. 1807), who lived in the eighteenth century much after Findiriskī's death. These verses apropos Findiriskī's prose were interpolated by someone some time before 1816; cf. Mojtabāʾī, "Introduction," 44. My educated guess is that this could be Muḥsin Fānī Kashmīrī (d. 1671). Because Fānī Kashmīrī rose in fame and reputation during Shāhjahān's reign, he may not have been well known at the time that Findiriskī was in India. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate the verses that Findiriskī cites in Fānī Kashmīrī's published works; cf. *Dīvān-i Fānī* (Srinagar: Maṭbaʿ Maḥbūb-Shāhī, 1311/1893); *Maṣnaviyāt-i Fānī*, ed. S. A. H. Abidi (Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Arts, Culture, and Languages, 1964).

duction of the passages with which Niẓām Pānīpatī closes his translation, although refined and also studded with the following verses of Ḥāfiẓ:

> Ay gadā-yi khānqah, bāz ā, ki dar dair-i mughān,
> Mī-dahand āb-ī va dil-hā rā tavāngar mī-kunand

> O fakir of the Sufi hospice, come in
> Here in the temple of the fire-worshippers
> They serve a drink
> And make the hearts rich.

And ʿAṭṭar:

> Chūn hama chīzī-at farāmūsh shud
> Bar dil o jān bi-gushāyand rāh

> When all you possess is lost
> That is when the path opens in your heart and soul.[36]

Findiriskī was in India at a time when the Mughal policy of commissioning translations (or retranslations) of some major Indian religious and secular texts (like the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa, and the *Pañcatantra*) had encouraged a broad trend of comparative philosophical and gnostic investigations.[37] We may locate his interest in and translation of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in this social and intellectual milieu. There was also room to examine the points of commonality between different sects and traditions, with an eye toward minimizing the threat of conflict. Given the contemporaneous Safavid emphasis on strict adherence to a particular Shīʿa tradition and intolerance, finding a way to avoid conflict doubtless greatly appealed to Findiriskī. This may be apparent even in the way Findiriskī frames and presents the text, which is not as a projection of the Indic past or present but rather as something within the scope of Persian thought and writing. The profuse use of Persian poetry to illustrate certain points in his text, as well as the deliberately Persian-Sufi linguistic register, would have made a text that could otherwise be dismissed as alien and purely Indic acceptable within the textual horizons of the Persianate elite.

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[36] Findiriskī, *Muntakhab*, 126; my translation.

[37] For studies of translations in Mughal India and their social and cultural impact, see Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?"; Shankar Nair, "Sufism as Medium and Method of Translation: Mughal Translations of Hindu Texts Reconsidered," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 43, no. 3 (September 2014): 390–410; Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

THE *YOGAVĀSIṢṬHA* IN PERSIAN AS A SUFI TEXT

The first translation by Niẕām Pānīpatī from Akbar's era was literal, while the two from the age of Jahāngīr—Shaikh Ṣūfī Quṭb-i Jahānī's *Aṭvār dar Ḥall-i Asrār* and Abū al-Qāsim Findiriskī's *Muntakhab-i Jūg Basisht*—are interpretative to greater or lesser degrees. Despite these differences, in all the Persian versions of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* we see a heavier emphasis on the spiritual concerns of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* (i.e., an emphasis on the knowledge of being rather than on the connection between knowledge and action in the world made possible by knowledge). Indeed, the history of Findiriskī's version of the text is both part and proof of the fact that from Jahāngīr's time onward the text was primarily received as Sufi. Findiriskī, a traveler and newcomer to India who had learned Sanskrit, seems to have been so taken with Quṭb-i Jahānī's version of the text (since it bore clear filial ties to the philosophy of Ibn ʿArabī) that, when it came time to choose a text for his own translation project, he selected not the Upaniṣads or the Rāmāyaṇa but the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. Moreover, he not only improved and expanded on Quṭb-i Jahānī's version but seamlessly integrated Persian spiritual poetry into the text, creating a nuanced and deeply personal elucidation of his understanding of Hindu dharma from his Sufi poetic reading of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. As far as preparing the text as a Sufi work, Findiriskī's version represents in some ways an advance beyond Quṭb-i Jahānī's work, because of its explicit attention to showing how the ideas in the original text are continuous with, and directly comparable to, those in the Persian Sufi tradition.

It also appears from both Quṭb-i Jahānī's and Findiriskī's texts that, in the seventeenth century in certain circles at least, there was a serious effort to engage with the apparent similarities in different religious traditions; this trend, as we know, culminated in Dārā Shukoh's *Majmaʿ al-baḥrain* and *Sirr-i Akbar*.[38] In both interpretative versions of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, their exclusively spiritual concern is detectable even at the level of linguistic register. In this regard, the headings of various chapters in Quṭb-i Jahānī's text are instructive. Six of the ten chapters in the treatise (1, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) have distinctive Sufi overtones: "Tajrīd" (Celibacy), "Maʿrifat-i Nafs" (Knowledge of self), "Maʿrifat-i Ḥaqq" (Gnosis/knowledge of truth), "Yāft-i Nafs" (Discovery/experience of self), "Maʿrifat-i Ḥāl-i Khud" (Knowledge of one's

[38] This was, of course, not something completely new. Much earlier, as we know, Shaikh ʿAbd al-Quddus Gangohī (d. 1537) compiled the *Alakhbani* or *Rushdnāma*; cf. Simon Digby, "'Abd al-Quddus Gangohī (1456–1537 CE): The Personality and Attitudes of a Medieval Indian Sufi," *Medieval India: A Miscellany* 3 (1973): 1–66; Rizvi, *History of Sufism*, 1:336–49 and 359–62; Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 91–94; Carl Ernst, "Fayzi's Illuminationist Interpretation of Vedanta: The *Shariq al-maʿrifa*," in "The Indo-Persianate World," ed. Firoozeh Papan-Matin, special issue, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (2010): 356–64.

own state/condition), and "Kamāl-i Maʿrifat-i Ḥaqq" (Perfect knowledge of truth). Apart from such a striking emphasis at the outset, there is the case of recurring words in the text, like *ʿālam-i fānī* (transitory world), *zāt-i ḥaqq* (divine essence), and *ʿārif* (mystic, gnostic) as well as *sulūk* (treading the Sufi path), *murshid* (spiritual guide), and *ṭālib* (seeker), all of which are terms appropriate for a Sufi text.[39] This immersion in Sufi registers of thought and speech may be seen best, perhaps, in extended examples.

In chapter 5, Vasiṣṭha Muni advises Rāma in the following way:

Ay Rām Chand, chūn dar ṣuḥbat-i ahl-i sulūk khud rā bi-gumārī va dar muṭālaʿa-yi kutūb-i ʿilm-i ṣūfīya varzish namāʾī, maʿrifat-i nafs ki aṣl-i maṭlab ast zūd bi dast ārī na ki muddat-hā miḥnat namāʾī va ān maṭlab hargiz bi dast nayāyad.

[O Rām Chand, when you are in the company of the people of the Sufi path (*sulūk*), and struggle to study the books of the science of the *Ṣūfīya*, that is when you achieve quickly knowledge of the self (*maʿrifat-i nafs*), which is the prime objective, and which you can never achieve through the ages of hard work and effort.][40]

In chapter 6, Vasiṣṭha says:

Ay Rām Chand paydāʾī va nā-paydāʾī-yi ʿālam ki ʿibārat az baqāʾ va fanāʾ ast va qiyāmat va baʿs ishārat bar ān ast az nādānī va az nā-yāft-i tū-st. Chūn yāft-i ḥaqq dast dahad ʿālam nā-padīd gardad va nīst-i muṭlaq namāyad. Pas mansha'-i vujūd-i ʿālam nādānī ast va fanā-yi ān samara-yi maʿrifat.

[O Rām Chand, the appearance and the non-appearance of the world, which means eternity (*baqāʾ*) and transientness/mortality (*fanāʾ*), and the Day of Judgment (*qiyāmat*) and resurrection (*baʿs*), is because of your ignorance. When you discover *ḥaqq* (Truth), the world disappears and you see absolute nothingness. Thus, the source of the being/existence (*vujūd*) of the world (*ʿālam*) is ignorance, and its destruction is the fruit of gnosis (*maʿrifat*).][41]

Findiriskī also contributes to what we may term the creation of a Sufi register for the reception of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. Findiriskī's variation on the *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*, which we have seen to be interspersed with Persian poetry, can be

    [39] Quṭb-i Jahānī, *Risāla-yi Aṭvār*, 47, 48, and 49.
    [40] Ibid., 57.
    [41] Ibid., 58. One might also cite here the opening lines of chap. 7: "Ay Rām Chand har sanā va shukr-ī ki bi ẓuhūr mī-rasad az hama ḥaqq va bar ḥaqq ast ghair-i ḥaqq dīgar-ī kīst ki tavānad bi-dīn ṣifat ẓuhūr namūd. Pas ḥamīd va maḥmūd va ḥamd har sih ʿayn-i ʿilm-i maʿrifat ast va ẓuhūr-i ṣifat-i ūst balki ʿayn-i ū va ū khud dar hama va bi hama balki ʿayn-i hama va az hama bi niyāz va az hama judā" (O Rām Chand, whatever praise and thanks that emerge, they are all from God [ḥaqq] and are all for God [ḥaqq]. Except God, who else could possess this quality? Thus, the one who praises, and the one praised, and the praise itself—all three are the exact signs of *maʿrifat* and the appearance of his quality; exactly that and that itself, in all, without all, exactly all and independent and separate from all"; ibid.).

appropriately thought of as a Sufi commentary on the selected passages of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. The following verses of Fānī are noteworthy in this respect, elaborating on the idea of Brahm:

> Its nearness and its distance, its union and its separation,
> where is that?
> He himself is the sign of the universe,
> where is that sign?
> In His light, there is no space even for a small grain of dust.
> Everything is mortal, except His face.
> Know that in His various and countless forms, there is no manifestation (*zuhūr*) other than His own light. It is the same hidden light which manifests itself in a variety of colors and forms.[42]

Findiriskī also quotes the following verse, replete with Sufi tropes:

> We know no-one but God
> We know not ourselves different from Him
> All is He, yet we do not see Him
> We all are, yet we know not.[43]

And another instance:

> The heart came [as] the place of the appearance of the light of epiphany (*maẓhar-i nūr-i tajallī*).
> The heart came [as] the valley of Sinai for the mount of epiphany (*ṭūr-i tajallī*).[44]

These are but a few examples from a text brimming with Sufi tropes, in particular those offered in proof of the doctrine of the unity of being (*vaḥdat al-vujūd*). Such words as *ṣūfī*, *ṣafāʾ* (piety, purity), *fanāʾ*, and *baqāʾ* recur throughout the text. Vasiṣṭha's advice to Rāma is to walk on the path of *sulūk*.[45] Mojtabāʾī also points out that Findiriskī's translation is compatible in its style and register with his other works.[46]

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[42] Findiriskī, *Muntakhab*, 33. Later, Findiriskī, again in the words of Fānī, writes: "The essence of this appearance is one Existence / The others exist from this Existence / The multiplicity manifests from the same oneness / It appears one, and it also appears many / The appearance of multiplicity is not different from oneness / For in both the worlds there exists only one God" (ibid., 41). A further example of Findiriskī's Sufi register can be found in another iteration of his interpretation of Brahm: "The pure person (*ẕāt-i pāk*) of Brahm, in all these forms and manifestations (*maẓāhir*) is nothing but its own manifestation (*zuhūr*) / Whatever exists is nothing but the light of His beauty / You say yes (*balā*) and you ask, am I not (*alastu*)?" (ibid., 37).

[43] Ibid., 43.
[44] Ibid., 67.
[45] Ibid., 71.
[46] Mojtabāʾī, "Introduction."

It is these works, and this interpretive ambition, that form the background of what I will argue is Dārā Shukoh's distinctive translation and the horizon of its relevance and interpretation. For Dārā Shukoh did not simply produce yet one more Sufi *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

DĀRĀ SHUKOH'S TRANSLATION

Dārā Shukoh's translation, like that of Niẓām Pānīpatī's, follows Abhinanda's *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha*. Dārā Shukoh, however, leaves out several verses, abbreviates others, and in a number of cases adds a kind of explanatory note from other relevant texts, including some medieval commentaries on *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.[47]

The translation before the standard edition of Chand and Abidi was published twice in the nineteenth century. An Urdu translation, titled *Minhāj al-Sālikīn* (Path/practice of the Sufis) was also published in the nineteenth century.[48] The Urdu title suggests that its translator read Dārā's translation as a Sufi text, continuous with the horizons of the Persian *Yogavāsiṣṭha*s we saw above; arguably, such a reading of Dārā Shukoh was intended to relate his *Yogavāsiṣṭha* seamlessly with his other writings and was meant to be justified by his other works. This is not unusual. Chand and Abidi also emphasize the text's Vedāntic overtones and its continuity with Sufi registers of thought.[49] Yet Dārā Shukoh does not seem to regard the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* as an exclusively theological and religious work representative of the Hindu other, something to be used only for a project of comparative religion. To him such a reading was only a part, albeit a very important part, of this project. Instead, Dārā Shukoh saw fit to emphasize the political overtones of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

Dārā Shukoh embarked on his translation in 1655–56 (AH 1066). It is important to recall that by this point he had constructed and established his own self-image as an exemplary Sufi. Indeed, in the self-description found in his other works, he appeared to cast himself almost as a spiritual master, beyond even the rhetorical conventions of Sufi literature.[50] His break with the purely Sufi reception of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is then significant. To the historical context we must further add that, by this time, Dārā Shukoh had clearly articulated his political ambition for the Mughal throne and had begun various

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[47] See Chand and Abidi, "Introduction," 5 and 13.

[48] Compare Abu'l Hasan, *Minhaj al-Salikin, Tarjuma-i Jogbasisht* [*of Dara Shukoh*] (Lucknow: Naval Kishor, 1898; repr., Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1992).

[49] Compare Chand and Abidi's comments in their "Introduction." See also Gandhi, "Prince and the *Muvahhid*."

[50] See, e.g., Dārā Shukoh, *Sakīnat al-Auliyā*, ed. Tara Chand and S. M. Riza Jalali Naini (Tehran: Elmi, 1953), 5–6, and *Hasanat al-ʿārifīn*, ed. S. Makhdum Amin (Tehran: Taḥqīqāt va Intishārāt- i Wessman, 1973), 29. See also Qanungo, *Dārā Shukoh*, 1:113–15.

machinations to achieve this aim against the other claimants in the court.[51] It is in this dual context (i.e., a prince whose self-image was that of a Sufi and who now sought to establish his political claims to the throne) that we may best locate the significance of his turning to the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

There are several features of Dārā Shukoh's scholarly engagement with the text (and not only as a claimant for the throne) that reward close attention, from his production of a textual basis for the translation to the interpretive registers through which he sought to understand the work. For the prince, by his own account, seemed dissatisfied not simply with the existing translations or the way the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* had been interpreted, but even with the textual bases on which earlier translations had been prepared.[52] He therefore laid out new criteria by which his translation was undertaken, commissioning the production of a new source text before the translation was even begun. In this source text itself, he brought to bear other texts, including commentaries on the *Gītā*, the *Yogaśāstra*, and even the Purāṇas.[53]

The translation is not necessarily Dārā Shukoh's solitary achievement; indeed, there seem to have been several scholars involved in preparing the text that formed the basis of the translation, including several pandits who dictated the text to others who, in turn, transcribed it.[54] In this context, it should be noted that while the prince is referred to in the third person (as the person who requests or commands the translation to be prepared "under his auspices"), he is careful to emphasize that it is he who will confirm the research of the scholars under his supervision ("Mī-khᵛāham īn kitāb-i mustaṭāb rā bihtar az ān dar huẓūr-i mā tarjuma kunand va sukhanān-i īn ṭāʾifa rā muṭābiq-i taḥqīq ki dar aksar-i mauẓaʿ taqrīr kunam").[55] However, in what did his supervision consist? Does it imply that he contributed enough to be legitimately called the translator of the text? This is an ambiguous issue, since his reported command for the preparation of the text also includes evidence of his own research and interpretation.[56]

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[51] See Qanungo, *Dārā Shukoh*, 1:145–64; Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 169–80, for the circumstances leading to Shukoh's brothers' resentment and preparation for a fight after Shukoh's having been proclaimed the heir apparent (*walī-ʿahd*) with the high-sounding title of *Shāh-i Buland-Iqbāl* (king of high fortune) in 1656.

[52] Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 3.

[53] Ibid., 5.

[54] Chand and Abidi, on the basis of the manuscripts they have used, surmise that the translator may have been Banwali Das Wali, also known as Baba Wali Ram, the Persian translator of *Praboda Chand Uday* (*Prabodhacandrodaya*), since in some verses the translator gives his name as Wali. See Chand and Abidi, "Introduction."

[55] Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 3.

[56] It may be noted here that Dārā Shukoh preferred a similar method in his translation of the Upanishads, as well: Dārā Shukoh, *Sirr-i Akbar* (*Sirr-ul-Asrār*), ed. Tara Chand and S. M. Riza Jalali Naini (Tehran: Taban, 1957). For a recent discussion, see Svevo D'Onofrio, "A Persian Commentary to the Upanishads: Dara Sikoh's *Sirr-i akbar*," in *Muslim Cultures in the Indo-*

More generally, Dārā tries to internalize the message of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* within the Persianate world, without constantly marking the source text as a cultural Other. The editorial and workmanlike ways in which Dārā Shukoh attempts to render the text continuous with the horizons of literary Persian are of interest, precisely because here we may see Dārā at his most continuous, and yet distinctive, with respect to earlier works on the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. We return to the message in the next section, but here we focus on the details and the texture of his translation.

From the preface, it is clear that Dārā Shukoh wanted to be very lucid in this new translation about the Persian equivalents of the original Sanskrit terms. To avoid confusion, however, he advises that the first time a term occurs it should be translated or interpreted in Persian but in the course of the text, when the term occurs again, he wanted this interpretation to be repeated or even to use the original Sanskrit term, in order for the reader to become familiar with the term in both languages. (This is in accord with his other translated works to which he appended glossaries, like the *Majmaʿ al-Baḥrain*.)

More striking still are the lexical choices made in the story. For instance, when Rāma addresses Viśvāmitra, he calls him not *rikshir* or *rikshir-i kāmil*, an awkward borrowing found in Pānīpatī's work, but simply *ustād* (master), *dānā-yi buzurg* (the wise elder), *brahman-i hama-dān* (the all-knowing Brahmin), and *buzurg-i hama-dān* (the all-knowing elder).[57] Another example of such felicitous transcreation can be found in the episode in which Viśvāmitra approaches King Daśaratha with the demand that he allow Rāma leave to travel to the forest in order to destroy the demons. Dārā Shukoh translates the source of this evil with the generic Persian term *shayāṭīn* (devils), whereas Pānīpatī faithfully renders this with *rakshas* (demons, after the Sanskrit *rākṣasa*), even explaining them to be followers of Rāvaṇa.[58] Clearly, Dārā Shukoh's choice of terms was more attuned to the Persian ear.

This does not, however, mean that Dārā's text is more Persianized or Arabicized. On the contrary, in Niẓām Pānīpatī's text we see on occasion such heavily Persianized and Arabicized expressions as "bārak-Allāh" or "aḥsanta, aḥsanta,"[59] which are absent from Dārā Shukoh's version. Dārā Shukoh also tried to avoid unnecessary parenthetical interpolations, as exemplified by Pānīpatī's equivalents for the months of *Kunwar* and *Kartik*

Iranian World during the Early-Modern and Modern Periods, ed. D. Hermann and F. Speziale (Berlin: Schwarz, 2010), 533–63; see also Hasrat, *Dara Shikuh*, 275–85 and 212–15, for the prince's knowledge of Sanskrit and his contact with Sanskrit scholars; Qanungo, *Dārā Shukoh*, 211–12.

[57] Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 27 and 38; Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 18, 20, 21, 22, and 28.

[58] Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 19; Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 12.

[59] Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 55.

with Persian *Mihr* or *Ābān* or redundant phrases like "as it is written in the reliable texts of the people of Hind" (dar kutub-i muʿtabar-i ahl-i hind) and "according to Hindu belief" (dar iʿtiqād-i hunūd).[60]

Dārā Shukoh's attentiveness to the Persian literary palate goes even further. For example, the "Bairag Prakaran" (Chapter of disenchantment, or *vairāgya-prakaraṇa* in Sanskrit) follows the preface immediately in Dārā Shukoh's text, excising the preface of Abhinanda found in Pānīpatī's version. Certainly, this excision indicates Dārā Shukoh's relatively lesser dependence on Abhinanda's recension and his access to a wider set of Indic texts. However, in removing this preface, certain particularities pertaining to the "Hindu dharma" found in it, like the meanings of the words *avatāra* and *yuga*, are eliminated; it is as if Dārā Shukoh found them to be distractions from what he deemed to be the central message of the text. This conjecture is further supported by Dārā Shukoh's tactful avoidance of such concepts as the transmigration of souls, which are reported faithfully in Pānīpatī's version.[61] The prince clearly judged such concepts, which would only serve unnecessarily to distance Persian Muslim readers from the text, to be ancillary to the primary message.

Perhaps in these examples we may understand Dārā Shukoh's significant claim that earlier translators "could not raise the veil from the bride of nuanced ideas that resides in the book" (az chihra-yi ʿarūsān-i daqāʾiq-i ū parda bar-nadāshtand).[62] As part of his effort to unveil this bride, Dārā Shukoh significantly and intentionally simplified the text.

A comparison between Pānīpatī's text and Dārā Shukoh's translation can illustrate the extent to which Shukoh accomplished this. Thus, Pānīpatī's version is much longer than Dārā Shukoh's translation, following almost exactly Abhinanda's original text. Dārā Shukoh's text is significantly shorter, in spite of the fact that he brought in illuminating interpolations from other Indic texts, as we have shown above. This mechanical comparison aside, we must also ask for what purpose and how did the prince summarize the text? We have seen that, unlike Findiriskī and Quṭb-i Jahānī, Dārā Shukoh attaches importance to the stories themselves, reproducing them albeit in shortened form, but he does so selectively. Thus, Dārā Shukoh's dissatisfaction with Findiriskī's and Quṭb-i Jahānī's method of redaction was also because of their exclusive focus on philosophy, eliminating the valuable lessons that the stories provide. And yet Dārā Shukoh's text is precise and lucid. Rather than translating the stories verbatim, he describes them in a clear, uncluttered, and focused manner, avoiding the digressive details in the Sanskrit text. He does so because his intellectual concern in rendering this text into Persian was to

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[60] Ibid., 29, 35, 41, and 42.
[61] Ibid., 13, 29, and 53.
[62] Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 3.

keep it accessible and readable for a Persianate audience, without losing the substance of the work, including its use of stories.[63]

THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF DĀRĀ SHUKOH'S TEXT

We have so far examined Dārā Shukoh as a textual editor, facilitating the continuity and reception of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in Persianate literary culture. We may see this as one way in which his efforts sought to go beyond his predecessors, even while furthering their aims. But we must now attend to Dārā's political interpretation of the text, paying attention to the political context for his interest in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. A point worth noting here is that the prince is mentioned in hyperbolic terms, indicating that he is a king (*shāh*), a highly accomplished saintly figure, and also the perfect manifestation (*maẓhar-i atamm*) of virtuous conduct, with high ethical virtues (*makārim-i akhlāq*).[64]

Let us begin this analysis with one striking example of how Dārā Shukoh brings a larger universe of Indic texts into conversation with his translation, an episode in which the reasons for an erstwhile conflict between the sages Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra is given. Significant here is that while Niẓām Pānīpatī alludes to the conflict between the two sages and the sermon given to them by Brahma after resolving this conflict, he does not elaborate on this episode.[65] Dārā Shukoh, however, ensures that this episode is included and sets forth the actual circumstances of the conflict as depicted in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, including in his translation allusions that an Indic audience could have been expected to know. At the point in the narrative when this conflict is first mentioned, Viśvāmitra says to Vasiṣṭha:

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[63] A cursory comparison of one chapter in Dārā Shukoh's with Niẓām Pānīpatī's version of the text can show us this. For example, in Pānīpatī's version, before chap. 6 begins, there is a four-page preface explaining at length the topic, the number and names of the stories, and a summarized account of the philosophy of *Yoga*. This is totally absent in Dārā Shukoh's version. Following this preface, Pānīpatī further devotes four pages to a discussion of the philosophy of this chapter before the first story begins. This is reduced to a mere introductory paragraph in Dārā Shukoh's work, which plunges right into the first story (Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 287–90 and 291–94; Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 161). Again, while Niẓām Pānīpatī's final chapter is an intimidating 197 pages, Dārā Shukoh renders it into a concise fifty-six pages. This concision is achieved partly by summarizing the stories effectively: e.g., the first story of Busunda takes eighteen pages in Pānīpatī's and only nine in Dārā Shukoh's translation. Further, Dārā Shukoh eliminates certain stories altogether: e.g., after the story of Vasiṣṭha meeting with Mahādev and the discourse on true worship, on which Pānīpatī dilates largely through the lengthy descriptions of Mahādev, Dārā Shukoh's version goes straight from the story of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa to that of the kings Bhagīrath and Sukhdej; Pānīpatī's version has three intervening stories, spread over eight pages (Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 357–65). Niẓām Pānīpatī's expansive style is strikingly exemplified by his rendering of the story of Sukhdej that is spread over sixty-eight pages, which Dārā Shukoh provides in nineteen pages (Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 376–444; Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 227–46).

[64] Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 3.

[65] Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 55.

"Remember the time when there was enmity between us and we were ready to fight against each other. Brahma then came and forged an understanding between us. As a result, we were then freed from the stabbing reproaches against each other and the prideful nature of our conflict. It so happened that thereafter our enmity turned into our friendship and love. Tell Rām Chand the same things which Brahma told us then." When Viśvāmitra finished his speech, Vyas ["Vyāsa"] and Narad ["Nārada"], who were among those present in the audience, applauded him. Basisht then said, "O Viśvāmitra, it is wise on my part to accept your advice. Whatever Brahma had then said in order to remove the doubts and suspicions, I remember all those things completely."

In brief, the story of this enmity between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha is written here. Viśvāmitra was the son of Rāja Gadi. One day, when out on a hunt, he passed by the place of the worship of Vasiṣṭha, who requested him to grace his abode as a guest. Thereupon, Viśvāmitra laughed and said, "You are a *faqīr*, you are a *darvīsh*, what hospitality can you offer me?" Vasiṣṭha said, "Whatever comes to me, I will offer to you." Thereupon, he made arrangements for his guest, bringing him wonderful and copious amounts of food, sweetmeats, perfumes, and fresh fruit. In fact, he brought more even than what was necessary for the king's table. Viśvāmitra, seeing this, was astonished. One of his servants remarked that Vasiṣṭha keeps the Kamdin [i.e., Kāmadhenu, the wish-granting cow] in his house, and whatever one asks of her, she gives. Viśvāmitra, as he was leaving, asked Vasiṣṭha to give him this cow. Vasiṣṭha said, "If the cow is amenable, then take her." Viśvāmitra replied that if Vasiṣṭha gives him the cow, he would take it. In the meanwhile, Kamdin asked Vasiṣṭha, "What fault have I committed that you are throwing me out of your house?" Vasiṣṭha said, "I am not making you leave out of my own choice. King Viśvāmitra is taking you forcibly." Kamdin said, "If you are not giving me to him willingly, then I will take care of things myself." When Kamdin left Vasiṣṭha's house, on the way, from each drop of Kamdin's sweat which fell on the ground because of the hot wind, a brave man was born. These brave men then destroyed the army of Viśvāmitra in the blink of an eye. Viśvāmitra then alone fled, and Kamdin returned to Vasiṣṭha's house. Viśvāmitra, in a rage, invaded Vasiṣṭha's house several times and each time, Kamdin destroyed his whole army.

Finally, the defeated Viśvāmitra said, "Fie on the Chatri [*Kṣatriya*] and fie on his power! The Brahmin is the truly powerful." He then resolved to become a Brahmin. With this determination, he became engaged in ascetic mortifications (*riyāżāt va mujāhada*) for sixty thousand years, during which time Brahma visited him a couple of times and asked him, "What do you want?" Viśvāmitra replied, "I want to be a Brahmin." Brahma said, "Since you are of the Chatri lineage, become a Raj Rsi [rājarṣi]." A Raj Rsi is the king who has the power of rishis, the seers who have the knowledge of the past and the future. Viśvāmitra did not agree to this, and again immersed himself in ascetic mortifications. Eventually Brahma said, "If this is truly your desire, then become a Brahmin, a Brahm Rsi." Then Viśvāmitra said, "If Vasiṣṭha calls me a Brahm Rsi then only will I accept this status." At Brahma's request, Vasiṣṭha too agreed.[66]

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[66] Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 39–41.

After this, there is another story highlighting the meanings, significance, and demands of power of a Kṣatriya and a Brahmin. Why interpolate this story, in particular, and at such length? The full significance of such choices, I believe, cannot be seen unless we allow the political orientation and ramifications of both the stories and Dārā Shukoh's sensitivity to this aspect of the text to emerge clearly. The story of Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha is, after all, exemplary of a concern in Hindu mythology to understand and think through the connections between various forms of power—to think through the conditions under which varieties of power can be drawn on in a lifetime and that will then serve as authorities in turn. Dārā Shukoh was right, perhaps, to see that it is no accident that both Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha are present in the frame story of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, a text he recognized to be centrally concerned with the connections between royal power (to which he aspired) and spiritual truth (that he claimed to possess). The prince here is a step ahead of his great-grandfather Akbar, who could only aspire to Kṣatriya status, to claim his intimacy with the Rajputs of his domain.[67] Dārā Shukoh sought a much higher position: a combination of the powers of a "Raj Rsi" and a "Brahm Rsi." Again, a comparison between Pānīpatī and Dārā Shukoh in the introductory part of the text illustrates the prince's focus more substantively.

In the introductory section of Pānīpatī's text, where the frame story of Bharadvāja and Vālmīki is given, we have no explicit reference to Rāma's position as a ruler in the question Bharadvāja poses to Vālmīki.[68] It should be noted that Quṭb-i Jahānī and Findiriskī do not even allude to this frame story. This is very much in contrast with the way Dārā Shukoh presents the opening chapter of the "Bairag Prakaran":

There was one pupil of Bālmik named B[h]ardwāj. One day in solicitude and extreme humility, he asked the all-knowing master, Rām Chand, with perfect gnosis and deliverance which implied liberation in life (*jivan-mukt*), how he could manage the task of kingship and authority (*rāj* and *salṭanat*). "Please be kind and tell me this story." Bālmik said, "O son, I tell you what you ask for. From hearing this, you will be able to remove from yourself the darkness of ignorance. Rām Chand was a great king in India, endowed with perfect justice, bravery, munificence, and gnosis. The real purpose of writing this book is the narration of the divine realities and gnosis which will become clear in the context of the story of Rām Chand."[69]

This brief anecdote reveals clearly that the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is intended primarily to resolve the apparent contradiction between spiritual and temporal

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[67] Compare Norman P. Zeigler, "Rajput Loyalties during the Mughal Period," in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. John F. Richards (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 242–84.

[68] Pānīpatī, *Jug Basisht*, 12.

[69] Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 6–7.

power. This is the problem at the heart of Bharadvāja's question to Vālmīki regarding how Rāma could be king while having once achieved the highest stage of spiritual life (*jivanmukti*). Thus, Pānīpatī initially describes Rāma's predicament not as one of rulership but simply as living with God's creatures (*bā khalq-i khudā*), even as the *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha* has been often read as if the question concerned the more general "being in time as suffering" (*saṃsāra*) and not specifically political forms of activity. In contrast, Dārā Shukoh introduces from the very beginning his concerns with rule and power (*rāj* and *salṭanat*). But it is not simply that Dārā Shukoh is projecting his own concerns onto those of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. Abhinanda's *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha* also touches on not only how one can continue to engage in *saṃsāra*, the world described theologically, but, to use its own terms, how one can engage in the kind of action constitutive of political life ("rāmo vyavahṛto hy as-minkāruṇyād brūhi me guru"; verse 4). This emphasizes not an existential sense of being in time but rather the interaction between beings according to the norms of governance. It is more than possible that Dārā Shukoh is not translating in his concerns but emphasizing the salience of this dimension of Bharadvāja's question. After all, he does use both *saṃsāra* (the world conceived of as suffering through rebirth) and *vyavahāra* (the social world) to frame his question.[70]

It is therefore not surprising that Dārā Shukoh's translation displays a clear focus on the stories in which kings figure prominently and in which the concern of the story is to elucidate the nature of statecraft, even while keeping in mind the overarching spiritual concerns of the work.[71] Pānīpatī's book, being a complete translation, also abounds in stories of kings, but only as a matter of course. Dārā Shukoh renders the many exhortations meant for king Rāmacandra into crisp language and with greater stylistic impact than Pānīpatī.

An early example of how narratives in Dārā's *Yogavāsiṣṭha* emphasize kings and power is the story of King Janaka in which the focus is on how ignorance is the source of all suffering and on how knowledge enables the king to be free from ego-sense (*ahaṃkāra*) and to rule without being entangled in material concerns. Summarizing this tale, Vasiṣṭha says:

O Rām Chand, the Naiyāyikas claim that the world and reality are distinct, the Vedāntins claim that they are one, the followers of Patañjali claim that the world is in part a reality separate from the great reality of God. However, the essence of all three opinions returns to the same thing, like the waves of the sea, which, even if they appear different, eventually merge with the greater body of water. The essence of all

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[70] See Panasikara, *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha*, 5. I owe this reference to Sonam Kachru.
[71] See Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 130, 198, and 377, for such stories of kings.

these waves is the ocean. O Rām Chand, from all this research, it becomes clear that
you too should be detached from the world, and also be one with the world. Perform
the works of the world in appearance, but don't be polluted. You tell your acquain-
tances that so-and-so is your son and so-and-so is your brother, but consider them
all as one.[72]

This latter point seems to dovetail beautifully with Dārā Shukoh's long-
standing interest in the unity of different religious traditions, an interest that
was amply expressed in his work of reading and analyzing other Indic texts
too. Indeed, the title of one of his works, as we know, is *The Meeting of the
Oceans* (*Majma ʿ al-Baḥrain*). We also know that he prepared a long glos-
sary of Sanskrit terms with their equivalents in Persian. This same purpose
is manifest in this translation too. In the course of his teachings, Vasiṣṭha once
notes:

O Rām Chand, I present before you also the path of gnosis that Mahādev taught
me. At the time when I was worshipping on Mount Kailāsa, I kept before me aca-
demic books and beautiful flowers. It was the twentieth day of the month of Sawan,
and four *gharis* of the night had passed when I saw a light emerging from the dis-
tance. I saw Mahādev approaching with his hand placed over Pārvatī's shoulder. Im-
mediately, I picked up the flowers in my hand and moved forward to welcome him.
I placed the flowers and some water by his feet, and in all humility and respect, I
brought them to my hut. He sat for some time and then asked me, "Have you accom-
plished the level of worship which knows no division (*ʿibādat-i tafriqa*)? Has your
heart been relieved with Truth? Are you free from fear and apprehension?" I replied,
"The person who has been habituated to your memory, in him remains no division
(*tafriqa*) or fear. Is there any objective left that he has not achieved? Since you have
illumined this place with your coming, may I dare ask you, what is that worship of
god (*dev-pūja*) which contains in itself all the perfections and virtues?" Mahādev re-
plied, "Don't regard Viṣṇu, Brahma, Mahādev, and the other bodies and souls as God.
Dev [*deva*] is that which has no origin and no end, which has no form, no appearance,
and no resemblance, is neither born nor bred by anyone. Absolute and pure existence,
joy itself, and knowledge itself (*anand swarup va gyan swarup; ānandasvarūpa vā
jñānasvarūpa*). Perform prayer and worship (*pūja* and *ʿibādat*) for him. Let the others
worship the form. What I mean is as follows: since the people of the world find the
form closer and the meaning very far [from their understanding], the perfect masters
allowed them to have the form before them initially, so that their heart could remain at
peace. After that, step by step, attention is drawn away from the world of form and
guided to recognize the real target. Just as to one who has become tired of walking
and believes that his destination is very far, someone will say to him that the destina-
tion is only one short course away, so that he can imagine the destination is close and
thus walking will become less burdensome. O Basisht! Water, flowers, rice, sandal,
agarwood, and the lamp are all the requisites of worship of the imagined forms.

[72] Ibid., 168.

The requisites of the worship of the real God (*Dev*) are altogether different. The water required for him is knowledge, the flower is monotheism (*tauḥīd*), the rice is lawful livelihood, the *sandal* is the purity of the inner soul, and the agarwood is the heat of love, while the lamp is the light in the heart. If by any chance this God has a face, head, hand, or leg, then his form is the entire universe. His head is the pinnacle of the sky (*ākāśa*), his leg is the abyss of the underworld (*patal*), his hand extends to the furthest point in all directions. All eyes and all ears are his eyes and his ears. The wise man worships such a God. His worship is this: that he could be believed to be present in seeing, in hearing, in smelling, in tasting, in touching, in exhaling, in wakefulness, and in sleep; that is to say, the worshipper knows that he is the seer, the listener, the speaker, the taster, the one who touches, the one who breathes, the wakeful, and the dreamer are all he. A moment of his remembrance results in limitless fruit. If you re-member him for a full day, you become the perfect gnostic and arrive at the stage of release (*mukt* [*mukti*]). This is what *jog* [*yoga*] is, and this is what *Dev pūja* is. The best worship of him is that you look into your own self, you know your own self, and you consider him present in joy, grief, relief, in trouble; when you are rich and when you are destitute; and in all these conditions, you keep treading the same path, and in no condition do you forget him. O Basisht, when the guidance of the master sits in the heart of the people, divine gnosis emerges automatically." Having said this, Mahādev left. Basisht then said, "O Rām Chand, even today I worship in the same way that Mahādev guided me. I have no connections with anything whatsoever."[73]

Mahādev's instruction to Vasiṣṭha here demonstrates clearly Dārā Shukoh's own Sufic understanding of religious ritual and piety, and here he also sees something in the text that he shared with the earlier Persian translations of it and with his own readings of the other Hindu texts.[74] However, it is note-worthy that immediately after such a section, Dārā's text returns to political issues. In response to this speech, Rāma expressed his delight in his master's teaching and his desire to hear these things again and again. Vasiṣṭha then advised him to be free from all desire. On hearing this, Rāma asked him to tell him something for the further efflorescence of his heart, in response to which Vasiṣṭha alluded to the story of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna.

Starting with this most famous episode from the Mahābhārata, told here in the context of the correct channeling of desire, the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* presents a fascinating concatenation of stories of kings.[75] In the idiom of the *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*, the narrative runs thus: when Arjuna saw his relatives on the battle-field and balked at the prospect of killing them, Kṛṣṇa explained that these

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[73] Ibid., 214–17.

[74] See also *Sirr-i Akbar*, Dārā Shukoh's translation of the Upanishads.

[75] It is interesting to note that one of the ways in which desire may be channeled correctly is the cultivation of ethical norms in politics, which Dārā Shukoh translates tellingly as *taḥẕīb-i akhlāq*. As a device to ensure justice to their subjects, irrespective of their religious identity, the Mughals relied more heavily on *akhlāqī* norms than on the conventional *sharīʿa*. See Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 26–69.

were mere forms, illusions. Only the soul that is eternal and has no relation to any one person can never be killed. Death occurs only for the body, not the soul. Kṛṣṇa explains that since Arjuna has been born as a Kṣatriya, it was his duty to act in the battlefield: "To turn your face from the battlefield is the height of cowardice."[76] Of course, this story has deep personal resonance with Dārā's own political situation: the question of how a spiritually accomplished person, as both Arjuna was and Dārā claimed to be, could allow himself to engage in a war of succession against his own brothers haunts both Arjuna and Dārā.

Following this conventional redaction of the well-known story of the *Gītā*, the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* continues in a different vein, emphasizing the importance of steadiness and firmness in decision making; this point is further illustrated by the story of King Bhagīratha. Vasiṣṭha exhorts Rāma: "O Rām Chand, steady your own reasoning, so that whatever you encounter, [seemingly] good or bad, you still accomplish [your work]. Like Rāja Bhagīratha, be firm in carrying out your duty. This is how the difficult works which others cannot carry out will become easy for you."[77] After relating this exemplary story of King Bhagīratha, Vasiṣṭha continues, "O Rām Chand, with a steady heart and in a fully relaxed manner, sit in communion with the *pramatman* [*parātman*], like Rāja Sakraduj [Śikradhvāja]."[78] Vasiṣṭha then relates the story of this king. In this manner, Dārā Shukoh's text unfolds as a series of stories about kings in a more explicit, direct, and precise manner.

DĀRĀ'S DREAM RECONSIDERED

Before we conclude, we must return to the beginning of Dārā Shukoh's *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and note that his immediate inspiration for translating the text came from a dream that he experienced after reading Quṭb-i Jahānī's version:

After I read the translation of a selection from the book [*Yogavāsiṣṭha*] by Shaikh Ṣūfī, one night [in a dream] I saw (*vāqiʿ*) two persons: one elderly in appearance standing on a higher plinth, and another standing slightly lower. I realized that the person standing on the higher plinth was Basisht, and the other was Rām Chand. The difference in the appearance of these two respectable persons was that Basisht's beard and mustache (*maḥāsin*) had a few gray hairs, while the other had not even a single gray hair. Since I had benefitted enormously from this wise book, I could not help but approach Basisht, and paid my respects. Basisht showed me extraordinary kindness; he placed his hand on my back and said to Rāma, "O Rām Chand, he is the true extraordinary seeker. Embrace him." Rām Chand embraced me with great love. Then Basisht

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[76] Shukoh, *Jūgbashist*, 219.
[77] Ibid., 222.
[78] Ibid., 226.

gave Rām Chand a sweetmeat, and he offered it to me to eat with his own hands. I ate that sweetmeat. After seeing this in actuality (*wāqiʿ*), the yearning to have a new translation grew.[79]

Here we may pause to note something of importance: this is the reported dream of the prince, in which he not only finds himself in the company of Rāma and Vasiṣṭha but is recognized by them as of their kind—as a seeker of truth. Dreams are, of course, important both in Sufi and Indic traditions. In his own Sufi works as well, the prince claims to have seen unusual dreams.[80] Yet this dream of being recognized and placed in a genealogy of seekers of truth, fulfilling as it does the twin criteria of royal authority and spiritual virtues based on being a seeker of truth, deserves special attention, not least because of the central function of dreaming (as a vehicle and topic of stories) stressed by the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* itself.

One way to begin thinking about this striking dream is to recall the function of the frame story. Here Dārā Shukoh sees himself not at the inception of the book, which begins with the conversation between Vālmīki and Bharadvāja, but in a frame before the time of the book, as it were: he imagines himself a part of the conversations between Rāma and Vasiṣṭha, which Vālmīki recalls for us. Dārā Shukoh has thus envisioned himself in the time not of the book but of the events that the book presents to us and from which the book derives. By virtue of this dream, Dārā, who ostensibly lives long after the time depicted in the work, not to mention the work itself, has gone to the very source of its knowledge.

That there is a world in which multiple temporalities are possible, such that Rāma and Vālmīki are still present and enjoying the conversations that Vālmīki reports to us as having occurred in the past, is something that the message of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* itself might encourage us to believe. Dārā's dream then is a continuation, of a kind, of the form and message of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

But there is a striking convergence with the Sufi tradition as well. There is a well-known practice of Sufis to seek sanction for treating a subject not from a book but from the very person about whom the book is concerned, and this sanction comes in the form of a true vision disclosed by a dream. These visions disclose the always-contemporary character of historical ex-

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[79] Ibid., 4.

[80] Compare, e.g., *Sakīnat al-Auliyā*, in which Dārā Shukoh mentions an angel (*hātif*) telling him in a dream four times that God bestowed on him what no other king on earth did ever got (5). For dreams in Islamic and Sufi traditions, see Nile Green, "The Religious and Cultural Role of Dreams and Visions in Islam," *Journal of the Royal Society* 3 (2003): 287–313; Ozen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh, *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 181–296. We may also note a later Mughal prince's dreams in the eighteenth century in which interestingly this prince also envisions power in his dreams. Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*, 427–66, esp. 455–64.

emplars, even if such visions are only the preserve of a few, as Dārā Shukoh here presents himself to be. A more striking way to frame the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* as a Persianate work—and to accomplish the rapprochement of Indic and Islamic traditions—is hard to imagine.

CONCLUSION

Dārā Shukoh's translation represents a conscious break from the previous Mughal *Yogavāsiṣṭha*s: his version was a novel attempt to include an Indic text within the Muslim imagination, not just of mystical matters but of ideal kingship. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha*'s imaginaire, in which Rāma is depicted both as a spiritual master and also as an ideal king, had obvious resonances for Dārā Shukoh's own career and ambitions. The text thus also represents an important move on Dārā Shukoh's part to prepare for the ascension to the throne, by casting his future kingship in the model of the ideal Rāma.

However, we can also see that Dārā Shukoh's text was a plea to consider other sources for normative theories of kingship in the Mughal court. The Mughal search for such theories had been dominated by Perso-Islamic *akhlāq* literature, which drew on Greco-Hellenic traditions as gleaned through Arabic and Persian sources. We have a sort of a European mirror for princes compiled in Persian by the Jesuit Jeronimo Xavier and presented to the Jahāngīr, in which Xavier discusses the norms of governance (*ādāb-i salṭanat*), with illustrations from the stories of biblical, Roman, and also the medieval and early modern European kings.[81] All this is indicative of the Mughal rulers' quest for political theories and practices outside the boundaries of the *sharīʿa* and Islam. Akbar's interest in the Mahābhārata could be taken as a sign of his curiosity about India's political culture,[82] yet for him, there was not much urge to know and follow the Indic government norms.

In contrast, Dārā Shukoh's reading of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is a marked departure. He presents it as an Indic source for a normative theory of kingship suitable for the Mughal court. As such, this was a step in the direction of

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[81] I have seen two manuscripts of Jerome Xavier, one available in Rome at the Biblioteca Casanatense, ms no. 2018, dated Rabīʿ 23, 1018 (June 1609). It comprises over 267 folios. A second manuscript, no. 7030, very likely copied from the same original, is preserved in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Comprising over 286 folios, it is dated Ramaḍān 8, 1018 (December 5, 1609). For an analysis of this text, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Mediterranean Exemplars: Jesuit Political Lessons for a Mughal Emperor," in *Orientalizing Machiavelli: Western Political Thought, Islam and the East*, ed. Lucio Biasiori and Giuseppe Marcocci (New York: Macmillan, forthcoming). See also, Adel Sidarus, "A Western Mirror for Princes for an Eastern Potentate: The Ādāb al-salṭanat by Jerome Xavier SJ for the Mogul Emperor," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 63, nos. 1–2 (2011): 73–98. For Jerome Xavier, his works, and his engagement with the Mughal court, see Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*, 249–310.

[82] Compare Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*.

the indigenization of the state in Mughal India. Akbar integrated the local elites, including the Hindu Rajputs, into his government, to the extent that the Mughal-Rajput alliance has sometimes been seen as a Mughal-Rajput state.[83] But neither in Ṭūsī (d. 1274), the premier representative of the *akhlāq* tradition, nor in Jeronimo Xavier's iteration of the European tradition does one find that a saint can also be a king without violating the norms of one or the other. We may note here, however, a recent study, which shows how the early Mughals, pursuing their Central Asian ancestors and the Iranian rulers, projected themselves as sacred and saintly kings.[84] Nevertheless, I propose here that it is only in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* that Dārā Shukoh found a model for the Indian saint-king, on which presumably he would have gone on to build the moral foundations of his own reign. It is in the dream of Dārā, where, true to the teachings of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* concerning time and narrative, the prince finds himself in the company of a counterfactual genealogy, where Dārā is the younger brother of Rāma, his elder and contemporary.

Dārā Shukoh is thus not merely a Sufi scholar or Mughal prince; he is also a political theorist, in the timeless company—as seen in his dream—of the ideal ruler and seeker of truth, Rāma. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is a book of many worlds that exist alongside our own. Dārā Shukoh, perhaps, was alone in seeing the reality of the political dream it was possible to have on the basis of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, in which a Persian prince could find himself the successor of Rāma, with access to the possible reality of the ideal political forms, norms of conduct, and governance associated with Rāma. Whether this could only have been a dream—like Dārā's dream with which he began his *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, a dream of political hope inspired by the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*'s sense of possible worlds that we must narrate into existence—is another story.

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[83] Compare Shail Maya Ram, "The Mughal State Formation: The Mewati Counter Perspective," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 34, no. 2 (1997): 169–97, and *Against History, Against State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 97–125.
[84] Compare A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).