

The Guru as Śiva:  
Govinda Kaula's *Gurustutiratnāvalī* and a Lineage of Devotion in Kashmir

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## Abstract

This article introduces and analyzes the *Gurustutiratnāvalī*, a sophisticated eighteenth-century Sanskrit hymn composed by Govinda Kaula of Kashmir in praise of his teacher's teacher, the prolific author Sāhib Kaula. It evaluates the evidence for Govinda Kaula's dating, lineage, and literary activity and presents the first published edition and translation of select verses of his *Gurustutiratnāvalī* based on four manuscripts. The analysis of the hymn focuses on the ways the author equates a specific guru in his lineage—Sāhib Kaula—with the supreme deity Śiva. Using this hymn as a starting point, the article considers the history of guru-praise (*gurustuti*) and guru-devotion (*gurubhakti*) in Kashmir as well as in South Asia more broadly. Lastly, it suggests that further work on this lineage and the religious dynamics of the eighteenth and nineteenth century will prove crucial for helping us understand the emergence of what came to be popularly known as “Kashmir Śaivism.”

## Keywords

guru, hymn, *stotra*, *bhakti*, Kashmir, Śaivism

## Introduction

This article introduces and analyzes an eighteenth-century Sanskrit hymn in praise of the author's teacher's teacher. It presents the first published edition and translation of select verses of the text based on four manuscripts, at least one of which was scribed and signed by the poet himself. This author, Govinda Kaula, composed his *Necklace of Praise for the Guru* (*Gurustutiratnāvalī*) in sophisticated and poetic Sanskrit in celebration and worship of the prominent Śākta-Śaiva guru and author, Sāhib Kaula,<sup>1</sup> who lived in seventeenth-century Kashmir. As Alexis Sanderson has shown, Sāhib Kaula's writings reflect his East Indian Śākta heritage as well as his adaptation to the non-dualistic Śākta-Śaiva traditions of Kashmir.<sup>2</sup> Govinda Kaula was one of several authors in this tradition who composed hymns in praise of the guru, and Sāhib Kaula in particular.

This article emerges from ongoing work with my colleague Ben Williams to produce an edition and translation for several texts, including the *Gurustutiratnāvalī*. Here, I evaluate evidence for the dating of Govinda Kaula, present an edition and translation of key verses of

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<sup>1</sup> There are multiple spellings for this name. For consistency, I use “Sāhib Kaula” in this article, following Hanneder (2021a), who notes: “within his Stotras he calls himself *sāhibkaula*” (1fn5). This spelling is also found in many colophons for his texts. However, Govinda Kaula often represents the name as “Sāhibā Kaula.”

<sup>2</sup> On this author's lineage, Sanderson (2007) explains: “the Kauls, though subsequently integrated as a distinguished division of Kashmirian brahmin society, were Maithila Mādhyandīya Yajurvedins who had come to Kashmir from northern Bihar during the period of Muslim rule, probably after the incorporation of Kashmir in the Mughal empire in 1586; and it is very likely that it was they that brought in and sustained this new constellation of Kaula observance. Sāhib Kaul, though faithful to his East Indian heritage in his Paddhatis, venerated the Kashmirian goddess Śārikā as his lineage deity and wrote a number of devotional works in which the Śākta Śaiva tradition of his adopted homeland rooted in the non-dualistic doctrines of Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta is fully integrated” (409-410). See also Hanneder (2017), 234-237; Hanneder (2021a); and Stainton (2019), 91-94, 151-156, and 270-273.

the *Gurustutiratnāvalī*, and discuss the content of the hymn as a whole. I focus on the way the author equates a specific guru in his lineage—Sāhib Kaula—with the supreme deity Śiva, including how the poetic features of the text facilitate this theological position. In addition, I consider the history of guru-praise (*gurustuti*) and guru-devotion (*gurubhakti*) within this particular Kashmirian lineage as well as in South Asia more broadly.

Scholarship on Sanskrit religious literature in Kashmir often focuses on a relatively brief period of several centuries around the turn of the second millennium CE in which prominent and prolific authors like Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta produced works in multiple fields that continue to be influential across South Asia today.<sup>3</sup> While justified, this concentrated attention has meant that many later compositions, including some that are critical for the history of the transmission and reception of these earlier works in Kashmir, have often been overlooked. The present study contributes to the small but growing body of scholarship that considers the long history of religious and literary activity in Kashmir in Sanskrit.<sup>4</sup>

### Govinda Kaula: Evidence for His Dating, Lineage, and Literary Activity

To date, very little has been published on Govinda Kaula, and the details of his life have not been firmly established.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, I discuss evidence for his dating, lineage, and literary activity here at some length. These details are critical for understanding his compositions, since they foreground his lineage.

Govinda Kaula of Kashmir is the author of the *Gurustutiratnāvalī* and *Svacchandamaheśvarāṣṭaka*, and he is also credited with a commentary on the *Gurustotra* of Jyotiṣprakāśa.<sup>6</sup> As I discuss in detail below, the *Gurustutiratnāvalī* (henceforth GSR) praises

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Franco and Ratié (2016).

<sup>4</sup> For an early discussion of this issue, see Hanneder (2002), especially 301-303.

<sup>5</sup> For one of the first discussions, albeit brief, see Sanderson (2007), 410.

<sup>6</sup> There are also some stray lines attributed to him; e.g., SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 656v. For the key texts I discuss in this article, I have been able to consult high-quality images of the following manuscripts:

*Gurustutiratnāvalī* of Govinda Kaula: SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folios 251v-259v; SBB-PK Hs. Or. 11126 folios 43v-52v; DhT no. 5531-Gha (Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu), folios 2r-5r; DhT no. 5767 (Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu, no. 1307-Ka), folios 1-11

*Svacchandamaheśvarāṣṭaka* of Govinda Kaula: SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folios 318r-320r; DhT no. 5531-Gha (Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu), folios 5v-6r; DhT no. 5775 (Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu, no. 1315-Ka), folios 1r-4r

*Gurustotra* of Jyotiṣprakāśa: SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folios 142r-145r; DhT no. 5531-Gha (Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu), folios 1r-2r; DhT 5766 (Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu, no. 1306-Ka), folios 1-4 (the latter two manuscripts, both in Devanāgarī, list the title of the hymn as the synonymous *Gurustuti*)

*Gurubhaktistotra* of Cidrūpa Kaula: SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folios 213r-214v; BLO Chandra Shum Shere Collection no. 487 (e.264), Tantragranthādisaṅgraha/Tantric Collectanea, folios 290v-292r [511v-513r]

*Gurustuti* of Cidrūpa Kaula: BLO Chandra Shum Shere Collection no. 487 (e.264), Tantragranthādisaṅgraha/Tantric Collectanea, folios 292r-297v [513r-518v]

On the multi-text manuscript in the Bodleian Library that contains the two texts of Cidrūpa Kaula (as well as hymns by Gaṇeśa Bhaṭṭāraka, another of Sāhib Kaula's followers), see Aithal (1999), 82, 144-145, and 180-183. Relevant manuscripts that I have not yet been able to consult include:

and glorifies the guru Sāhib Kaula in sophisticated theological and poetic terms. After the thirty verses of the main hymn itself, Govinda Kaula says that it is offered with devotion at the lotus feet of Sāhib Kaula (v. 31), that Jyotiṣprakāśa, who obtained Sāhib Kaula's favor from worshipping his feet, is supreme (v. 32), and that he himself—a bee at the lotus feet of this master, referring back to Jyotiṣprakāśa—has offered this hymn (v. 33). Thus, the GSR indicates a lineage of Sāhib Kaula => Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula => Govinda Kaula. This is supported by further evidence from extant manuscripts, which is important for clarifying the time period of his literary activity.

In the colophons of texts that he composed, Govinda Kaula refers to himself as a “follower” or “dependent” (*anujīvin*, in the sense of either a student or descendent, or both),<sup>7</sup> as well as a bee (*indindira*),<sup>8</sup> at the lotus feet of Jyotiṣprakāśa. He also identifies himself as the scribe for a number of manuscripts collected along with his own compositions. After one colophon states that the *Śivajīvadaśaka* of Sāhib Kaula is concluded, we find a date (more on this below) and a statement that “this was scribed by me, Govinda Kaula, student (*anujīvin*) at the feet of Śrīmat Śrī Jyotiṣprakāśa.”<sup>9</sup> In other places, we find statements in a similar hand that certain texts have been scribed by Govinda Kaula, but without indicating a relationship with Jyotiṣprakāśa.<sup>10</sup> As for Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula, his *Gurustotra* expresses his

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*Svacchandamaheśvarāṣṭaka* of Govinda Kaula: SBB-PK Hs. Or. 11198

*Gurustotra* of Jyotiṣprakāśa with the partial commentary of Govinda Kaula: RASB 6815, Ms. 6086

[*Stavakavacasamgraha*], Sixth batch, folios 1-4A (however, the catalogue reproduces some of the verses from these texts, and I discuss one critical verse below). On the commentary, see also Sanderson (2007), 410.

*Gurubhaktistotra* of Cidrūpa Kaul: RASB 6815, Ms. 6086 [*Stavakavacasamgraha*], Sixth batch, folios 4B-5B

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 259r-259v and SBB-PK Hs. Or. 11126 folio 52r-52v.

<sup>8</sup> SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 320r: *iti*

*śrīmahāmāheśvarācāryajyotiṣprakāśānandanāthapādāravindamakarandendindiraśrīgovindakaulaviracitaṃ svacchandamaheśvarāṣṭakaṃ samāptam iti śivam*. This parallels the description in *Gurustutiratnāvalī* v. 33, where Govinda Kaula also describes himself as a bee at the lotus feet of Jyotiṣprakāśa (*asya viśveṣitūḥ pādāmbhojamadhuvrato*). In verse 9 of the *Svacchandamaheśvarāṣṭaka* he also describes himself as one who obtained the blessing of the lotus feet of the guru named Jyotiṣprakāśa (*jyotiṣprakāśāhvayagurucaraṇāmbhojalabdhaprasādaḥ*).

<sup>9</sup> SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 33r: *mayā śrīmacchrījyotiṣprakāśapādānujīvigovindakaulenedaṃ citritaṃ [...]* The manuscript here includes a correction of *-pādaunujīvi-* to *-pādānujīvi-*.

While the verbal participle *citrita* (from the denominative  $\sqrt{\text{citraya}}$ ) is not free from ambiguity in isolation, here and elsewhere, when the author of the preceding text already has been identified, it seems straightforward that it refers to scribal activities as opposed to authorship. In addition, *vilikhita* (‘scribed’) is also used; see the following footnote.

<sup>10</sup> See SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folios 45r, 60v, and 140r-140v. At 60v, Govinda Kaula identifies himself as the scribe (*mayā śrīmahāheśvaragovindakaulena śrīgrantho [']jyam vilikhitaḥ*) for the preceding text, the *Citsphārasārādvaya* of Sāhib Kaula. While he does not mention Jyotiṣprakāśa by name here, he does refer to himself as a student/descendent at the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Nātha (*śrīśrīnāthapādapadmopajīvinā*). It is reasonable to read this as a shortened version of the formulations he uses elsewhere when identifying himself as the student of Jyotiṣprakāśa (e.g.,

*śrīmahāmāheśvarācāryaśrīmacchrījyotiṣprakāśakaulānandanāthapādapadmānujīvi-*). However, *śrīnātha* could also refer to Sāhib Kaula himself. This is supported by evidence from the Devanāgarī multi-text codex DhT 5531-Gha, which includes two of Govinda Kaula's texts. The colophon to the GSR (folio 5r) refers to Govinda Kaula as a student or descendent (*anujīvin*) at the feet of Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula, but the colophon for the immediately following *Svacchandamaheśvarāṣṭaka* (folio 6r) describes him as an *anujīvin* at the lotus feet of

devotion to Sāhib Kaula (e.g., v. 18) and its most detailed colophon identifies him as a student or descendent (*anujīvin*) at the latter's lotus feet.<sup>11</sup> It has been suggested that he was also Sāhib Kaula's son, which is certainly possible, but I have not yet been able to find manuscript evidence for this.<sup>12</sup>

Of these authors, Sāhib Kaula is the most prolific and influential, and he is also the only one who has received much scholarly attention, most notably from Jürgen Hanneder and Alexis Sanderson.<sup>13</sup> He can confidently be said to have flourished in the mid-seventeenth century, but the precise dates of his life are not firmly established. The final verse of the *Devīnāmavilāsa* dates the completion of this work to 1666 CE (1723 Vikrama Samvat), and the editor Madhusūdan Kaul says that "while recording 1676 A.D. as the date of [...] another composition called Kalpavriksha, [Sāhib Kaula] says that he was forty-seven years old at the time" and thus concludes that he was born in 1629 CE.<sup>14</sup> However, he does not provide any additional information on this, and I have not yet been able to confirm this evidence independently.<sup>15</sup>

As for the dating of Govinda Kaula, there is no clarity in the few published accounts. Since no one, to the best of my knowledge, has published an overall evaluation of the evidence for the dating of his works, I will do so here in some detail. It is first important to note that there are multiple people with the same name. For example, M.A. Stein worked closely with a Kashmiri Pandit named Govind Kaul for many years.<sup>16</sup> As I established above, the Govinda Kaula who authored the GSR was almost certainly a student of Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula, who in turn was a student of Sāhib Kaula. This same Govinda Kaula was the scribe for multiple Śāradā manuscripts collected together and currently held in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. The catalogues (*Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* [VOHD]) for the two most important manuscripts (Hs. Or. 11126 and 12509) provide dates in their descriptions of these that are based on interpretations of dates provided in multiple colophons within these codices. The catalogue's description of Hs. Or. 11126 refers to one dating of samvat 23 on folio 27r and equates this with 1847 [CE].<sup>17</sup> The catalogue's description of Hs. Or. 12509 refers to folios

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Sāhib Kaula. This could mean simply that he is a descendent or follower of Sāhib Kaula, but at least theoretically he may have known his grand-teacher personally, a point first brought to my attention by Jürgen Hanneder. However, as the discussion of the relevant dates below will suggest, the overlap of their lives was likely very brief, if it occurred at all.

<sup>11</sup> SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 145r: *iti*

*śrīmahāmāheśvarācāryavaryasvāmīśrīsāhibakaulānandanāthapādanalinānujīviśrījyotiṣprakāśakaulaviracitaṃ śrīgurustotraṃ sampūrṇaṃ samāptaṃ.*

<sup>12</sup> In his introduction to the 1942 (reprinted 1989) publication of the *Devīnāmavilāsa*, Madhusūdan Kaul states that one of Sāhib Kaula's sons was named Jyotiṣprakāśa, but he does not provide any references to support this and I have not been able to verify it (3).

<sup>13</sup> See, in particular, Hanneder (2001, 2017, and 2020); Sanderson (2003–2004, 2007, and 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Alternatively, Sanderson (2003–2004) proposes 1636 CE as a possible year for his birth based on an interpretation of *Devīnāmavilāsa* 17.18 (364).

<sup>15</sup> Hanneder is currently preparing an edition of Sāhib Kaula's shorter works based on extensive manuscript work, so he may be able to provide more definitive information when that work is complete.

<sup>16</sup> See Stein's tribute to this Govind Kaul, published as the preface to Stein (1923).

<sup>17</sup> Ehlers (2006), 44.

33r, 45r, 60v, and 215r to provide four dates with conversions to the Common Era of saṃvat 33 (=1857), saṃvat 34 (=1858), saṃvat 44 (=1868), and saṃvat 46 (=1870).<sup>18</sup>

While the catalogues do not explain these conversions, one can assume they are based on the interpretation of these “saṃvat” dates as the final two digits of a date in the Saptarṣi era. This is a commonly used dating system in Kashmir, and it is also common for only the final two digits to be indicated. As Sanderson explains, “when years are given in Kashmir with the century omitted [...], they pertain to the Laukika era, also called Saptarṣi, which is counted from 3076 B.C.”<sup>19</sup> For the multi-text manuscripts under discussion, the cataloguers seem to have interpreted the missing century digits for these dates as 49 (thus, for example, Saptarṣi saṃvat [49]44 becomes 1868 CE by counting from 3076 BCE). I do not know for certain why the missing digits were thought to be 49. As far as I have been able to ascertain, there is nothing internal to these codices that points to this dating. But the missing digits may have been assumed to be 49 because some other Śāradā manuscripts held in the same collection do provide more specific dating, and these are sometimes dated to the 4900s of the Saptarṣi era (roughly 1824-1924 CE).<sup>20</sup> However, I believe that interpreting this century as the missing information for the two manuscripts of Govinda Kaula’s works is a mistake, and should be revised based on a more detailed discussion of the extant evidence.

As I established above, we have multiple pieces of evidence for a lineage of Sāhib Kaula => Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula => Govinda Kaula, and the latter authored texts closely associated with the two earlier figures and also was the scribe for a number of manuscripts. Multiple texts authored or scribed by Govinda Kaula provide dates. Most importantly, the final verse of the GSR itself provides information for a date in the Śaka era (I have put the key parts in bold):

*śrīśāke śrutināgatarkaśaśisamkhyāte* [']sya viśveśituh  
*pādāmbhojamadhuvrato madhusitāṣṭamyām saparyotsave* |  
*śrīgovinda upāharan navamañiśreṇīm imām tv anvaham*  
*ye dadhyus svagale śrayanti sudhiyas te bhogamokṣaśriyam* || GSR 33 ||

In the year 1684 of the Śaka era [=1762 CE],<sup>21</sup>  
during a festival of worship on the eighth day  
of the bright half of the lunar month of Madhu,<sup>22</sup>  
Śrī Govinda, a bee at the lotus feet of this universal master [Jyotiṣprakāśa],

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<sup>18</sup> Ehlers (2016), 13.

<sup>19</sup> Sanderson (2007), 411.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, the manuscript descriptions provided in Ehlers (2006), 36, 42, and 116.

<sup>21</sup> Śāka can refer either to the Śaka era or, when paired with another designation, to an “era” in general, such as *śāke vikramabhūbhṛto* [...] *hāyane*, “in the year [...] belonging to the era of King Vikrama” (*Devīnāmavilāsa* 17.18). Dates in the Śaka era are converted to the Common Era “by adding 78 or (for the dark half of Pauṣa and for Māgha and Phālguna) 79” (Salomon [1998], 184).

<sup>22</sup> In his 1924 book, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, Pandit Anand Koul provides a “list of festivals observed” in Appendix III. One finds there that the festival of “Durgā Asthami” is observed on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight of Chet [=Chaitra/Madhu, namely March-April],” for which “a fair is held at Khir Bhawāni (Tula Mulah)” (80).

offered this string of new praise-gems.<sup>23</sup>

Those wise ones who remember it day after day in their own throats  
partake of the glory of both enjoyment and liberation.

The date of Śaka 1684 is arrived at by following the conventions for representing numbers with words. In this interpretation, *śaśin* (“moon”) stands for the number one, *tarka* (“philosophical system”) for six, *nāga* (“snake” or “elephant”) for eight,<sup>24</sup> and *śruti* (the Vedas) for the number four. The resulting date, 1762 CE, puts Govinda Kaula at some temporal distance from Sāhib Kaula, but it is possible to reconcile these dates if the three relevant figures lived reasonably long lives. Thus, for example, we can imagine a hypothetical dating as follows: Sāhib Kaula (ca. 1629-1700\*) => Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula (ca. 1655-1725\*) => Govinda Kaula (ca. 1700-1770\*). This hypothetical dating allows for the possibility that Jyotiṣprakāśa was Sāhib’s son in addition to his student; that Govinda overlapped with Jyotiṣprakāśa for at least some of his adult years; and that the lifespan of each figure was long but reasonable, around 70 years. Most importantly, it accords with the available evidence for specific dates associated with Govinda Kaula, namely the 1762 CE date for the composition of the GSR (according to its verse 33) and the revised dates I propose for colophons in which Govinda Kaula is identified as the scribe:

[48]23 [Saptarṣi] saṃvat (=1747 CE)<sup>25</sup>

[48]33 [Saptarṣi] saṃvat (=1757 CE)<sup>26</sup>

[48]44 [Saptarṣi] saṃvat (=1768 CE)<sup>27</sup>

[48]46 [Saptarṣi] saṃvat (=1770 CE)<sup>28</sup>

For these dates, I have revised the approach suggested by the VOHD catalogue by supplying 48 as the missing century digits, rather than 49, based on the link established above between Sāhib Kaula, Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula, and Govinda Kaula, as well as the date in GSR v. 33.

In addition, some of the dates associated with Govinda Kaula provide information on more than just the year, and this can be used as an additional check to add weight to the revision of these dates.<sup>29</sup> In the colophon for one of Sāhib Kaula’s compositions, Govinda Kaula identifies himself as the scribe and gives the date saṃvat 44, on the first day of the dark fortnight of the month of Jyeṣṭha, which—critically—he mentions was a Tuesday

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<sup>23</sup> The compound *navamaṇiśreṇī* (“string of new praise-gems”) also suggests the well-known “nine precious gems” (*navaratna*) that are an ideal offering and form part of the title for various Sanskrit texts. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>24</sup> On this method of indicating numerals with words, see Salomon (1998), 183, and Kane (1958), 701-704. In this case, the numerals are relatively straightforward, except that *nāga* could also be seven if it means “mountain.” This, however, would only adjust the date from 1762 CE to 1752 CE and would not change the larger argument in this section, especially since we have other dates for his activity on either side of these two possibilities.

<sup>25</sup> SBB-PK Hs 11126 27r.

<sup>26</sup> SBB-PK Hs 12509 60v.

<sup>27</sup> SBB-PK Hs 12509 33r.

<sup>28</sup> SBB-PK Hs 12509 45r and also 140r-140v.

<sup>29</sup> On the “conversion and verification of specific dates,” see Salomon (1998), 177-178.

(*saṃvat 44 jye vati pratipadi maṅgaladine*).<sup>30</sup> If we interpret the date as [48]44 Saptarṣi saṃvat, this corresponds to May 31, 1768—a Tuesday.<sup>31</sup> This match lends support to the interpretation of the missing century digits as 48. Similarly, a colophon for the GSR mentions that it was copied in the year 46 on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhādra, a Saturday (*saṃvat 46 bhā śuti dvādaśyām sauradine vicitritam*).<sup>32</sup> Supplying the missing digits as [48]46 Saptarṣi, this lines up with the date of Saturday, September 1, 1770. One more example: in a colophon for the *Sadānandalāsyastotra* of Sadānanda Kaula, Govinda Kaula says that he scribed (*vicitrita*) the text on a Thursday, the third day of the bright fortnight of Bhādra in [48]46 [Saptarṣi] saṃvat, which matches up with Thursday, August 23, 1770.<sup>33</sup> With the support of such correspondences, I argue that the VOHD dates should be pushed back a century. Based on the evidence presented thus far, we can be reasonably confident that Govind Kaula—the one and the same author and scribe—was a disciple of Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula who lived a relatively long life and was active in Kashmir at least between 1747 and 1770 CE.

Further research remains to be done to flesh out the proposals I have made here, and perhaps to push these dates in either direction. I am also aware of one piece of potential counterevidence that should be noted. In *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Collections of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (Volume VIII, Part II: Tantra Manuscripts)*, there is a detailed listing for entry 6815, ms. 6086 [*Stavakavacasamgraha*] in Nāgara characters.<sup>34</sup> This consists of multiple batches of sheets bound in book form, containing various *kavacas* and hymns. The sixth batch contains the *Gurustotra* of Jyotiṣprakāśa, plus “what would appear to be the concluding verses of a commentary on the hymn by Govinda Kaula, disciple of Jyotiṣprakāśa,” and the *Gurubhaktistotra* of Cidrūpa Kaula, another student (*upajīvin*) of Sāhib Kaula.<sup>35</sup> One of the verses from the presumed commentary of Govinda Kaula seems to indicate that the commentary was completed in Śaka 1830 in the month of Phālguna (*tapasya*), which converts to 1909 CE.<sup>36</sup> This verse apparently led Chintaharan Chakravarti (editor of this volume of the Asiatic Society of Bengal’s catalogue) to speculate (mistakenly) in a later publication that a certain Sāhib Kaula “might have flourished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,” since there were hymns composed in his honor by Jyotiṣprakāśa and Cidrūpa, and the former’s hymn received a commentary “by his disciple Govinda Kaula in 1830 Ś.E. or 1908 A.D.”<sup>37</sup> Chakravarti’s remarks, in turn, are cited by the New Catalogus Catalogorum (NCC), which therefore assigns Govinda Kaula, student of Jyotiṣprakāśa and author of a commentary on

<sup>30</sup> SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 33r.

<sup>31</sup> This calculation, as well as the two that follow, relies on Pillai (1982 [1922]), 270.

<sup>32</sup> SBB-PK Hs. Or. folio 259v. However, *sauradine* is ambiguous: it could refer to Saturday, the day of the sun’s son Saturn; or it could refer to Sunday, the day related to the sun. On *bhā śuti*, see Kielhorn (1969), 149.

<sup>33</sup> SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 140: *iti śrīmahāmāheśvarācāryasvāmīsadānandakaulānandanāthaviracitam sadānandalāsyābhidham stotram samāptam | saṃvat 46 bhā śuti trtīyasyām gurudine śrīsadgurukṛpāy mayā śrīgovindakaulena vicitritam jñeyam jñeyavidbhir idam sadānandalāsyam [...]*

<sup>34</sup> Shāstrī (1940), 864–870.

<sup>35</sup> Shāstrī (1940), 869–870.

<sup>36</sup> *śākembarānaladhṛtipramite tapasye*; Shāstrī (1940), 869.

<sup>37</sup> Chakravarti (1963), 79. I can only assume the date of 1908 instead of 1909 is due to a lack of attention to the month indicated in the manuscript (*tapasya* = Phālguna). On the basic conversion of Śaka era dates, see Salomon (1998), 184.



his teacher's *Gurustotra*, a date of 1908 A.D. I have not yet been able to access the manuscript described in the Asiatic Society's catalogue, so I cannot definitively weigh in on what to make of this evidence. But in light of all the other witnesses above, I argue that Govinda Kaula, pupil of Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula and author of several works, flourished for several decades in the middle of the eighteenth century. The lack of clarity around his date across multiple sources, from the NCC to the VOHD, however, suggests that further work on this lineage remains to be done.

### **The Guru as Śiva: Govinda Kaula's *Necklace of Praise for the Guru***

Having established the key information about Govinda Kaula's immediate lineage, date, and literary activity, I turn now to the GSR. In this hymn of praise (*stotra*), Govinda Kaula lauds and honors the guru Sāhib Kaula, his teacher's teacher. In almost every verse, he uses first-person finite verbs to perform various verbal practices, such as offering praise, paying homage, performing worship, taking refuge, contemplating, and remembering (*vande*, *naumi*, *pūjayāmi*, *saṁśraye*, *bhāvaye*, *saṁsmare*, etc.). These are directed toward Sāhib Kaula who is described on one hand in all-encompassing terms as the supreme deity Śiva, the lord behind all cosmic activities, and on the other as an exceptional human guru, leader of the Kaulas, and head of their clan/community (*kula*).<sup>38</sup> Most of the hymn's verses establish and unpack the nature of this reality, often focusing on the paradoxes and wonder involved as well as the compassion of this embodied form. The first thirty verses of the poem constitute the hymn proper, ending with a statement of the amazing benefits of worshipping this guru's feet (e.g., a fool becomes wise; *saṁsāra* liberates). Verse 31 describes the preceding thirty verses as a jeweled necklace of praise offered with devotion to the great Śaiva teacher identical to Śiva. Verse 32 celebrates Jyotiṣprakāśa, who worshipped Sāhib Kaula and received his grace, and verse 33, translated and discussed above, closes the hymn by indicating its author, his relationship to the preceding figures, the date of its composition, and the benefit that accrues from reciting it regularly.

For this study, I have had access to all four of the manuscripts of the GSR currently known to me. Two of these are in the Śāradā script and date to the eighteenth century, while two are in Devanāgarī script and likely belong to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The manuscript sources and sigla used for the GSR verses edited in this article are as follows:

- Ś1      SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folios 251v-259v; paper, Śāradā script; part of a large, multi-text codex.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For a useful study of "the lord as guru" in the context of North India, see Gold (1987).

<sup>39</sup> For more on this codex, see Hanneder (2021a), especially 63-75. A high-quality scan of this codex by SBB-PK is available at <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001A3EF00000000> [Accessed June 15, 2021].

- Ś2 SBB-PK Hs. Or. 11126 folios 43v-52v; paper, Śāradā script; part of a large, multi-text codex.<sup>40</sup>
- D1 DhT no. 5531-Gha (Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu), folios 2r-5r; paper, Devanāgarī script; part of a multi-text codex.<sup>41</sup>
- D2 DhT no. 5767 (Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu, no. 1307-Ka), folios 1-11; paper, Devanāgarī script. This is a complete manuscript of just the *Gurustutiratnāvalī*.<sup>42</sup>

The edition of the verses in this article prioritizes the readings of Ś1, since this manuscript was scribed by the author himself, but it reports all readings whenever there are variants.<sup>43</sup>

The first verse of the GSR establishes the central non-dual thrust of the hymn: the author praises the specific guru in his lineage, Sāhib Kaula, as the supreme deity Śiva. It also embodies the literary sophistication of the text: not only is it composed in the elegant Śārdūlavikrīḍita meter and replete with alliteration and assonance, it also contains an acrostic that spells out the name Sāhib Kaula (noted below in bold; see also Fig. 1, which shows how a manuscript also highlights these syllables<sup>44</sup>):

*sākṣātkṛtya nijaṃ svarūpam amalāṃ yadbhānavipruṇmayāṃ  
hivā bhrāntimatiṃ maheśa iti yo devarṣimartyaiḥ stutaḥ |*

<sup>40</sup> A high-quality scan of this codex by SBB-PK is available at <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001A3E800000000> [Accessed June 15, 2021].

<sup>41</sup> This codex has been digitized by eGangotri and the high-quality images are available at <https://archive.org/details/ShivaJivaDashakamSahibKaul5531Alm25Shlf2GhaDevanagariTantraShastram/mod/e/2up> [Accessed June 15, 2021].

<sup>42</sup> This codex has been digitized by eGangotri and the high-quality images are available at <https://archive.org/details/ShriGuruStutiRatnavaliGovindKaulDiscipleOfSahibKaul57671307KaAlmira26Shlf1DevanagariTantra/mod/2up> [Accessed June 15, 2021].

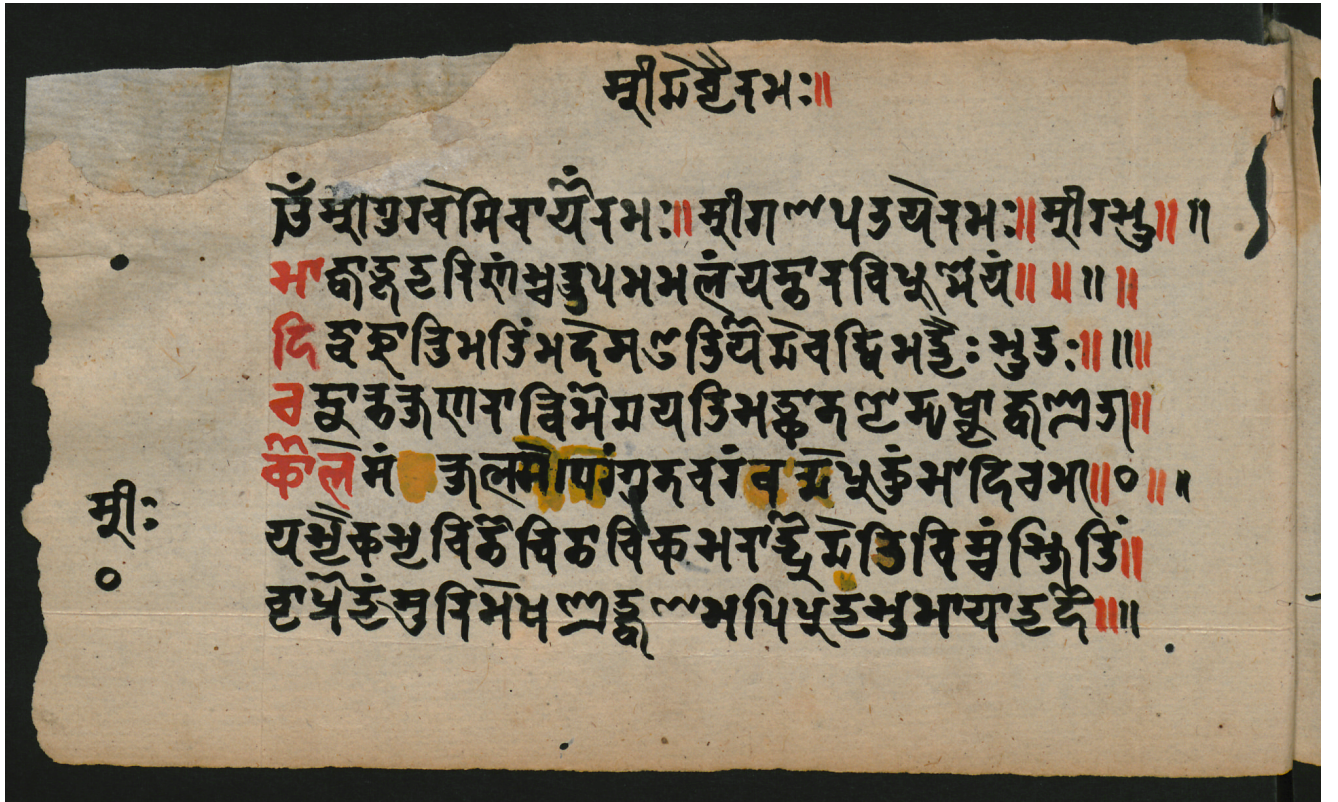
<sup>43</sup> However, it does not report variations in the use of *visargas* (e.g., *dadhyus svagale* vs. *dadhyuḥ svagale*) and *anusvāras* (e.g., *śrayanti* vs. *śrayamti*), the interchangeable letters *v* and *b* (e.g., *madhuvrato* vs. *madhubrato*), or the instances where the text is written over yellow ink used as “white-out” to correct an earlier marking, except for where the original is legible as well. The examples given here are all from the manuscript readings of GSR v. 33, and the most notable differences are between the pair of Śāradā manuscripts and the pair of Devanāgarī manuscripts.

In addition, my initial interest in this text was facilitated by the etext of the GSR created from Ś2 by the Muktabodha Indological Research Institute and made available on its digital library (<https://muktabodha.org/digital-library>). However, after I obtained access to the original manuscript used for this etext as well as three others, I did not work further with the etext. Nonetheless, I would like to acknowledge that such etexts, even when they inevitably contain a number of faulty readings due to the speed with which they are transcribed, are valuable in leading scholars to texts they may not have otherwise encountered and to the manuscripts themselves.

<sup>44</sup> Sāhib Kaula himself composed an astonishing text, the *Kalpavṛkṣa*, that was represented visually on large clothes within a grid, in which many ‘intexts’ were specially marked; see Hanneder (2021a). While far less ambitious, Govinda Kaula’s use of the acrostic here, and its visual marker in a different color ink in both Śāradā manuscripts, evokes the visual representation of Sāhib Kaula’s extraordinary *Kalpavṛkṣa*.

*baddhān bhaktajanān vimocayati satkāraṇyadr̥ṣṭyā kṣaṇāt*  
*kauleśaṃ kulaśekharaṃ guruvaraṃ vande vibhuṃ sāhibam* || GSR 1 ||<sup>45</sup>

After realizing that their own pure form is just a tiny part of his splendor<sup>46</sup>  
 (and) abandoning (their) misunderstanding,  
 gods, sages and mortals praise him as the great lord Maheśa.  
 In an instant, he liberates bound devotees with a look of true compassion.  
 I honor that leader of the Kaulas [= Kaula master],  
 the head of the clan (*kula*),  
 the best of gurus,  
 the lord,  
 Sāhib.



<sup>45</sup> GSR v. 1: *-bhāna-* Ś1Ś2 ] *-bhāta/bhāti* (there is an ambiguous correction that either fixes the *i* or deletes it) D1, *-bhāti-* D2; *-kāraṇya-* Ś1Ś2 ] *-kāraṇya-* D1D2; *vande vibhuṃ* Ś1 ] *vande prabhuṃ* Ś2, *dhyāyāmi taṃ* D1D2. In Ś1, the starting syllables of each quarter verse (*sā, hi, ba, kaul*) are specially marked with two different layered colors, first a reddish-orange and then a yellow. There is also a small errant mark above *rūpam* in *pāda* 1a, and a stray unattached vertical line in 1c: *baddhān bha | ktajanān*. Ś2 marks the starting syllables in reddish-orange ink only. D1 and D2 do not mark the acrostic intext of Sāhib Kaula's name with special ink.

<sup>46</sup> I thank Somadeva Vasudeva for suggesting this interpretation. Alternatively, this line could be interpreted to mean that the gods, sages, and mortals realize that what they perceive as Sāhib Kaula's form is just a tiny part of his true splendor.

Figure 1: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientalischen Handschriften 11126 folio 43v (PURL: <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001A3E800000000>), showing the specially marked initial syllables of the four lines in verse one of the *Gurustutiratnāvalī*

In Govinda Kaula's depiction here, Sāhib Kaula is praised as Śiva (Maheśa) by gods, sages, and mortals after they realize his all-encompassing splendor. His compassionate glance has the power to instantly liberate devotees. In the final line of the verse, the author reveres Sāhib who is described with several other terms that are also in the accusative: leader of the Kaulas / a Kaula master (*kauleśa*); head of the "clan," both in the sense of a lineage and a community (*kulaśekhara*); best of gurus (*guruvara*); and the powerful lord (*prabhu*). This functions as what I would call appositional theology, the deliberate listing of multiple items in grammatical apposition in order to establish a theological position of non-duality. In this case, it serves to identify the specific guru Sāhib as a Kaula master at the head of the Kaula family lineage and as the guru of that community—and also as the lord (*prabhu*) himself.

This latter point is developed throughout the hymn in the poetic and theological reflections of the verses and in the consistent appositional equations between Sāhib and Śiva. The second verse, for example, praises Sāhib as the free-willed, eternal, all-pervading Śiva who brings the universe into being, causes it to persist, and brings it to an end in an instant. The twelfth verse describes the guru Sāhib as lord Śaṅkara who has taken on the body of a human teacher and hidden his distinctive features, such as the crescent moon and his third eye. Some verses focus on establishing this Sāhib/Śiva as the one reality behind apparent multiplicity, as in verse 8:

*kartā tarkanaye vimuktapuruṣaḥ sāṅkhye jinas saugate  
śabdātmā dhvaniśāsane vidhiyutaṁ karmāyane jaimineḥ |  
brahmaikaṁ śrutimastake harir ayaṁ yo gīyate vaiṣṇave  
śaive śambhur aśeṣarūpam atulaṁ taṁ sāhibam saṁśraye || 8 ||*<sup>47</sup>

The agent in the logic system [=Nyāya];  
the liberated Puruṣa in Sāṅkhya;  
the Buddha in Buddhism;  
Word itself in the teachings of the grammarians;<sup>48</sup>  
the ritual action enjoined on Jaimini's path [=Mīmāṃsā];  
the singular Brahman in Vedānta;  
the one praised in song as Hari in the Vaiṣṇava (tradition);  
Śambhu in the Śaiva (tradition)—  
I resort to the one who has all these forms,  
the incomparable  
Sāhib.

<sup>47</sup> GSR v. 8: *brahmaikaṁ Ś1Ś2 | brasmaikaṁ D1D2; vaiṣṇave Ś1Ś2 | vaisnave D1D2; atulaṁ Ś1D1D2 | amalaṁ Ś2.*

<sup>48</sup> Alternatively, *dhvaniśāsane* could refer here instead to the teachings of the poetics, who (especially in Kashmir) adopted key vocabulary from the grammarians.



The rhetoric of this verse adapts what Elaine Fisher discusses as “a pervasive motif of Hindu religious thought: one particular God, revered by a community of devotees, encapsulates in his—or her—very being the entire scope of divinity.”<sup>49</sup> Her analysis of such verses (e.g., *Śivamahimnaḥstava* v. 7) shows that the implicit argument is “not for irenic tolerance or universalist pantheism, nor for the essential unity of all Hindu traditions,” but rather for the supremacy of one particularly deity and tradition as “the telos of all religious practice.”<sup>50</sup> What we find in Govinda Kaula’s verse, however, is not a particular deity as this telos, but a particular *guru*, and by extension the religious tradition of the lineage for which this guru is the head.

We find another clear example of this rhetoric later in the hymn, in a more personal appeal:

*śambhus tvam paraśaktimāms tu sakalakleśaikavaiśvānaraḥ  
saṁvartas tvam anāśyadānyagahane tvam kālakālo mahān |  
indras tvam varuṇānilau madhuripus sājjo [']py akhaṇḍātmakas  
tvām śrīsāhibam arcayāmi sakalottīrṇaṁ maheśaṁ gurum || 19 ||*<sup>51</sup>

You are benevolent Śambhu, the possessor of supreme power (*śakti*).  
You are the one fire for all afflictions and  
the world-ending storm cloud for the abyss of unending misery.  
You are mighty death unto death.  
You are Indra, Varuṇa and Wind.  
You are also Viṣṇu, enemy of Madhu,  
with the lotus and the conch.<sup>52</sup>  
Without dividing yourself, you are the very nature of all (these).<sup>53</sup>  
I worship you, respected Sāhib,  
the great lord who transcends all,  
the guru.

Once again, we see the *guru* as the real telos, the one identified with various deities starting here with Śambhu, another name for Śiva. While Śiva is still given pride of place as the “great lord” (*maheśa*, also a name for Śiva) near the end of the verse as the penultimate word, it is the *guru* who occupies the final position, both metaphorically and in the verse. It is the *guru-as-Śiva* who is identical to all these other deities and yet transcends them all (*sakalottīrṇa*).

There are sociological factors that might make this position particularly appealing for this Kaula lineage. Sanderson has shown that Sāhib Kaula belonged to a lineage of Maithila

<sup>49</sup> Fisher (2017), 32.

<sup>50</sup> Fisher (2017), 32; see also 191.

<sup>51</sup> GSR v. 19: *anāśya-* Ś1Ś2 | *anādyā-* D1D2.

<sup>52</sup> *abja* literally means ‘born in water’ and can refer to both a conch and a lotus. Since both are associated with Viṣṇu, I have translated the adjective twice.

<sup>53</sup> This line translates two different meanings for the compound *akhaṇḍātmakas*.

Brahmins who migrated to Kashmir; these Kauls, he shows, “maintained their own Śākta tradition; but they also integrated themselves into the religious world of their adopted homeland.”<sup>54</sup> Sāhib Kaula is notable for adhering to his East Indian Śākta heritage in his ritual manuals (*paddhatis*) but assimilating local traditions, from the non-dualistic Śaivism summarized in Kṣemarāja’s *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* to the veneration of the local Kashmirian goddess Śārikā as his lineage deity, in his literary and devotional works.<sup>55</sup> In this context, one way to interpret Sāhib Kaula’s prominence is to see him as the influential author and guru who unified disparate elements. Of course, there is a long history of non-dual Śākta-Śaivism in Kashmir, one which the Kaulas embraced wholeheartedly. But one might still consider it felicitous for the Kaulas to celebrate the guru, and specifically Sāhib Kaula, as the supreme reality behind various systems in the world when historically it seems that this specific guru did in fact combine diverse traditions in his own teaching, writing, and worship.

The ultimate identity shared by the guru and Śiva is developed throughout the GSR in a variety of ways. For instance, in verse 11 Govinda Kaula describes how one should visualize and meditate upon the guru:

*yanmūrtir bhuvane mahātmabhir alaṃ dhyeyā sahasracchade  
padme mūrdhni sitāmbarā trinayanā somāsanā somabhāḥ |  
cinmudrāvarapustakābhayakarā vāmārdhadevyāṅkitā  
bhaktānugrahatatparā paraśivaṃ taṃ sāhibam bhāvaye || 11 ||*

His form in the world should be well-visualized by the wise  
in the thousand-petaled lotus at (the top of) the head  
as dressed in white, having three eyes,  
on a lunar seat<sup>56</sup> and radiant like the moon,  
with hands in Cinmudrā,<sup>57</sup>  
(making the signs of giving) boons and dispelling fear,  
and holding a book,  
marked by the goddess on the left side,<sup>58</sup> (and)  
intent on (bestowing) grace for his devotees.  
I meditate on him, supreme Śiva, Sāhib.

This parallels the visualization (*dhyāna*) verses common to many religious texts in South Asia, which provide the instructions with iconographic details for visualizing and mediating

<sup>54</sup> Sanderson (2015), 125.

<sup>55</sup> Sanderson (2015), 124; Hanneder (2001 and 2020).

<sup>56</sup> *somāsanā* could also be translated as “seated with Umā.”

<sup>57</sup> *cinmudrā*: the gesture or “seal of consciousness.”

<sup>58</sup> In Tantric iconography, the goddess is often located on the left side of the male deity, either in his lap or as the left side of the body in the case of Ardhanārīśvara. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting the latter reading, as well as other helpful comments on this verse.

upon a chosen deity or other recipient of worship. Here we find once again the merging of the image of Śiva with the guru, Sāhib Kaula.<sup>59</sup>

There is a long and rich history of highly poetic hymns in Kashmir, and poets often used the poetic resources of Sanskrit literary culture to develop complex theological and rhetorical compositions.<sup>60</sup> Like earlier poets in Kashmir, from Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa to Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa to Sāhib Kaula himself, Govinda Kaula prioritizes the poetic features of his hymns. These features are instrumental in how the hymn functions. To illustrate this, let us consider verse five. Here, Govinda Kaula turns to what seems like the contradictory nature of his addressee to underscore his greatness:<sup>61</sup>

*tvam svātantryaruciś ca bhaktajanatādhīnātmakas tvam prabho  
tvam viśvāśrayatattvabhūtijanitā tvam tattvato ['Ināśritaḥ |  
tvam kṛtsnajñavidhātṛtādyavayavī tvam kañcukāntarhitas  
tvam kārūṇyanidhis tv apāramahimā śrīsāhibam tvām stuve || 5 ||*<sup>62</sup>

You enjoy total freedom, and [at the same time]  
you are compelled by your devotees, O powerful lord.  
You are the creator of the basic principles of reality  
that the world depends on, [and at the same time]  
in reality you are totally independent.  
You combine omniscience, omnipotence, and so on, [and at the same time]  
you are concealed by the coverings [such as limited knowledge].  
You are an ocean of compassion but your greatness has no shores.

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<sup>59</sup> The practice of visualizing the guru within one's own yogic body is not unique to this text. We can see parallels with a verse found in another text celebrating the guru, the *Gurugītā*. Copies of this composition (of which there are multiple versions of different lengths) circulated in Kashmir, and there are multiple extant Śāradā manuscripts of the text(s). A published edition and translation of verses visualizing the guru within can be found as verses 91 and 92 in the edition of *Śrī Guru Gītā* recited regularly in the contemporary Siddha Yoga tradition (SYDA Foundation [1990], 32):

“91. *Hṛdambuḥ karṇika-madhya-saṁsthe śiṅhāsane saṁsthita-divyamūrtim,  
Dhyāyed guruṁ candra-kalā-prakāśaṁ cit-pustakābhīṣṭavaraṁ dadhānam.*

Meditate on the divine form of the Guru seated on the throne situated in the center of the pericarp of the heart lotus, shining like the crescent of the moon, holding the book of knowledge and (the *mudra* that) bestows the desired boon.

92. *Śvetāmbaraṁ śveta-vilepa-puṣpaṁ muktā-vibhūṣaṁ muditaṁ dvinetram,  
Vāmāṅka-pīṭha-sthita-divyaśaktiṁ mandasmitaṁ sāndra-kṛpā-nidhānam.*

He has two eyes. He is clad in white garments. He is besmeared with white paste and is adorned with (garlands of) white flowers and pearls. He is joyous. He has a gentle smile. He is a treasure house of abundant grace. The divine Shakti is seated on the left side of his lap.”

<sup>60</sup> Stainton (2019). While I only briefly mention Govinda Kaula in this book, I discuss Sāhib Kaula and his poetry at some length.

<sup>61</sup> The poetic figure of *virodhābhāsa*, apparent contradiction, is particularly popular among non-dual Kashmirian poets. See Stainton (2019), e.g. 93-94, 116.

<sup>62</sup> GSR v. 5: *kañcukāntarhitas* Ś1Ś2 | *kañcukāntarpitās* D1D2; *tvām stuve* Ś1Ś2 | *tām stuve* D1D2. Ś2 includes an *avagraha* for 'nāśritaḥ, but it is small and cramped and seems to have been added after the surrounding syllables.

I praise you, respected Sāhib.

Once again we see Sāhib addressed as and equated with the lord, and here the lord who encompasses and transcends various contradictions—he is powerful and totally free, yet responds to his devotees; he is the foundation (*āśraya*) for the universe yet he is beyond all dependence (*anāśrita*); he has universal power and knowledge and yet he takes on limitations in order to manifest the limited world of multiplicity; and he is an ocean of compassion but his greatness has no shores. One way to interpret such verses is to see them as evoking wonder or amazement. Here we see Sāhib praised as truly extraordinary: identified with the supreme lord, he embodies and somehow resolves these most incomprehensible mysteries.

Examples of such poetic figures can be found throughout the hymn, and serve to intensify the meaning conveyed through its verse. Verse 14, for example, contains an extended pun (*śleṣa*) based on terms from astronomy (*jyotiḥśāstra*). In Verse 15, Govinda Kaula compares Sāhib Kaula's speech (*vāc*) to the Ganges river: both are capable of destroying the distress and defilement of supplicants, both are pure and honored by sages, both carry blessings, and so on. And just as speech flows from the guru, the Ganges flows from the top of Śiva's head, once again indicating the essential unity of Sāhib and Śiva.

Finally, let us consider several verses from near the end of the poem. These stress both the identity of the guru, and specifically Sāhib, as Śiva, and they also explore what it means to praise and worship such a figure. Verse 26 praises the true guru (*sadguru*) Sāhib Kaula as the abode of the three sources of light (namely, fire, the moon, and the sun), and glorifies the guru's shoes (*pādukā*):

*pāśaidhodahanam hṛdutpalasudhāśmim stuve tvāṃ mṛḍam  
dvaitadhwāntaraviṃ tridhāmadharaṇiṃ śrīśāhibam sadgurum |  
pūjyāṅghre [']śivapālanāt suduritadhvaṃsāc ca kāmyārpaṇāt  
smartīṇām triguṇādhīpā vijayate śrīpādukā te śubhā || 26 ||*<sup>63</sup>

You are the foundation of the three splendors—  
you are the fire for the fuel of (my) bonds,  
the gracious moon for the night-blooming lotus of (my) heart,  
the sun for the darkness of (my) duality.  
I praise you, illustrious Sāhib, the true guru.  
Your feet are to be worshipped!  
Your shoes protect from inauspiciousness (*aśiva*),  
destroy great dangers, and fulfill (all) desires.  
Thus, for those who remember (them), they are the master of the three qualities.  
These blessed shoes reign supreme!

<sup>63</sup> GSR v. 8: *dvaitadhwānta* Ś1Ś2 ] *dvaitādhvānta* D1D2; *-dhvaṃsāc ca* Ś1Ś2 (but of course the Śāradā *ś* and *c* are basically indistinguishable when part of a conjunct) ] *-dhvaṃsās ca* D1D2; *kāmyārpaṇāt* Ś1Ś2 ] *kāmyāṇṇāt* D1D2.



The description in the first half of the verse beautifully establishes the guru as the locus for the three *dhāmans* (lights or splendors). This identifies the guru with Śiva, who is commonly described in this way since the sun, moon, and fire are said to be his three eyes. In the second half of the verse, the description of the guru’s shoes or footwear as the “master of the three qualities” (*triguṇādhipā*) leads one to look at the previous clauses and interpret them as demonstrating mastery over the three *guṇas* or qualities: they protect auspiciousness = mastery of *sattva* (lucidity, goodness); they destroy great dangers = mastery of *tamas* (inertia, darkness); and they fulfill all desires = mastery of *rajas* (passion). Thus the guru, as Śiva, transcends and controls the mundane world.

While the GSR is full of praise and worship of the guru, and we saw a visualization of the guru’s form earlier in the hymn, near the end of the poem Govinda Kaula rhetorically questions the possibility of any such actions:

*kālākāradigādyakṛttavapuṣo dhyānaṃ nu kiṃ te vibho  
tvam viṣvagjagadarhitārthajanako [ ]py arcāvidhis te katham |  
ādikṣāntasuvārṇabhāsuratanoḥ kā te stutiḥ sāhibam  
satyaṃ śāntam anuttamaṃ guruvaraṃ tam tvāṃ prapadye prabhum || 28 ||*<sup>64</sup>

O pervasive lord, what visualization could there possibly be for you,  
whose body transcends time, form, space, etc.?  
You also create all objects in the universe fit (for use in worship),  
(so) how can there be ritual worship for you?  
What praise is there for you, who are the radiant embodiment  
of the syllables from A to KṢA?  
I take refuge in Sāhib,  
the truth, the quiescent, the highest,  
the best of gurus—you, the lord.<sup>65</sup>

This leads to the 29<sup>th</sup> verse in which Govinda Kaula describes the internalized worship of the guru:

*snātvādaṃ paśuddhabindusarasaś ciccandrasāndrāmṛtaiḥ  
prokṣyādhārādhārāṃ svabhāvakuṣumais turyāṭavīdyotitaiḥ |  
kṛtvānandasudhaughapūrṇaḥṛdayānarghārghyapātraṃ sadā  
tvāṃ devyā saha dehadevanilaye nāthārcaye sāhibam || 29 ||*<sup>66</sup>

Having first bathed with the rich nectars of the moon of consciousness  
from the lake of the pure point (*bindu*),  
(and then) having consecrated the earth (itself) as the support

<sup>64</sup> GSR v. 28: *viṣvag-* Ś1D1D2 | *viṣvak-* Ś2; *-jagadarhitārtha-* Ś1Ś2 | *-jagadat-hitārtha-* D1D2; *bhāsuratanoḥ* Ś1D1D2 | *bhāsvaratanoḥ* Ś2.

<sup>65</sup> On this theme, and how it is explored by *stotra* poets in Kashmir specifically, see Stainton (2019), Chapter 4.

<sup>66</sup> GSR v. 29: *hrdayānarghārghya-* Ś1Ś2 | *hrdayānarghārgha-* D1D2. Ś1 has an unattached vertical line in red in *pāda* a: *-sarasa* | *ściccandra-*. It appears to be covering over and thereby correcting a *visarga* in black ink.

with flowers of his own nature that appeared in the forest of the fourth (state),  
(and then) having made the priceless water offering  
by means of the heart overflowing with a flood of blissful nectar,  
I constantly worship you, O lord, Sāhib, along with the goddess,  
in the temple of the body!

Worship here is associated with nature, with the worshipper's own body, and with internal experiences and states. The verse offers a kind of response to the rhetorical questions in the previous verse, a response that promotes the kind of gnostic, transritual worship that goes back to perhaps the ninth century in Kashmir and has endured beyond the ritual systems originally associated with it, such as the Trika.<sup>67</sup>

The 30<sup>th</sup> verse concludes the hymn proper by celebrating the transformation that comes from worshipping the guru's shoes and offering praise to Sāhib as Śiva. As I discussed earlier, verses 31-33 describe the hymn as an offering at Sāhib Kaula's lotus feet (v. 31), celebrate this guru's disciple Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula (v. 32), and identify Govinda Kaula as the disciple of Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula and the author of the hymn (v. 33). This last verse also provides a date for this composition, discussed above.

### **Gurubhakti and the Lineage of Sāhib Kaula**

This analysis of the GSR and Govinda Kaula's literary activities serves as a useful starting point for thinking about the lineage of Sāhib Kaula and the emphasis it places on praise and devotion to the guru (*gurustuti* and *gurubhakti*). I describe this as a starting point in part because the history of Sanskrit literature in Kashmir from the time of Sāhib Kaula onward has hardly been charted,<sup>68</sup> and I am still collecting and working through the many manuscripts related to this lineage. Yet there are a number of observations and interpretations that can be made based on this examination of the GSR and closely related works.

It is notable how dramatically these hymns elevate one particular historical figure, the guru Sāhib Kaula, with similar poetic styles. Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula praises and glorifies his teacher Sāhib Kaula explicitly in his *Gurustotra*: all the central verses of the hymn (vv. 1-17) end with the line "I praise the master of the Kaulas, Sāhib, the guru, the lord" (*kaulādhīśaṃ sāhibam īde gurum īśam*). In the eighteenth verse of that hymn, Jyotiṣprakāśa says he composed this "praise for the true guru" (*sadguruvandana*) in the 13-syllable Mattamayūra ("drunken/excited peacock") meter, drunk on the nectar of devotion to Sāhib Kaula, just as an excited, dancing peacock calls out to the rain clouds.<sup>69</sup> Cidrūpa Kaula does

<sup>67</sup> See Sanderson (2007), 426 and 433-434.

<sup>68</sup> Once again, the work of Hanneder (e.g., 2021b) and Sanderson (e.g., 2015) leads the way here.

<sup>69</sup> *etat sadguruvandanaṃ pravidadhau kauleśvaraḥ kaulikaḥ padyair mattamayūravṛttaracitair jyotiṣprakāśābhidhaḥ | śrīmatasāhibapādabhaktisudhayā matto mayūro yathā nṛṭyan vāṣukameghagaṃ suraguruṃ kekābhir āvandate || Gurustotra v. 18 ||* The three manuscripts I have access to for this text agree on the first three quarters of the verse, but the two Devanāgarī manuscripts (DhT no. 5531-Gha and DhT no. 5766) are missing the fourth quarter. In SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 144v, *-meghagaṃ-* is an addition correcting the lightly crossed-out *-vāsavaṃ*. This Śāradā manuscript also includes a nineteenth *phalaśruti* verse not found in the two Devanāgarī manuscripts.

not mention Sāhib Kaula by name in his *Gurubhaktistotra*,<sup>70</sup> but almost every verse of the hymn ends with a line similar to the refrain in the *Gurustotra*—“I constantly praise the guru worthy of worship, the lineage master of the Kaulas” (*nityaṃ vande kaulakuleśaṃ gurum īḍyam*)<sup>71</sup>—and the colophon identifies Cidrūpa as Sāhib’s student/dependent (*upajīvin*).<sup>72</sup> Like the *Gurustotra*, Cidrūpa Kaula’s *Gurubhaktistotra* uses the Mattamayūra meter, and it offers a similar comparison between the poet affected by devotion to the guru and an excited peacock (v. 11). Govinda Kaula, for his part, shows his poetic ambition by offering a longer hymn in a mix of longer meters, with even more of an emphasis on Sāhib Kaula himself (as we see, for example, in the acrostic in verse one). For comparison:

<u>Author</u>	<u>Hymn</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Meters</u>
Cidrūpa Kaula	<i>Gurubhaktistotra</i>	12 verses	Mattamayūra (13-syllable meter)
Jyotiṣprakāśa Kaula	<i>Gurustotra</i>	19 verses	Mattamayūra, vv. 1-17 Śārdūlavikrīḍita v. 18 (19-syllable meter) Indravajrā, v. 19 (11-syllable meter)
Govinda Kaula	<i>Gurustutiratnāvalī</i>	33 verses	Śārdūlavikrīḍita, vv. 1-2, 4-33 Sragdharā, v. 3 (21-syllable meter)

There are other authors associated with this lineage, such as Sadānanda Kaula and Gaṇeśa Bhaṭṭāraka, and further research remains to be done. But in the present context, what is most important is that the authors in this lineage share a focus on praise for and devotion to the guru (and specifically Sāhib Kaula), they share literary styles as well as a general poetic sophistication, and the theological focus of these hymns is the equivalence of the guru and Śiva.

We can look both backward and forward in time from the GSR of Govinda Kaula to analyze the *gurustuti* and *gurubhakti* found in these hymns. On one hand, these hymns participate in a much broader South Asian tradition of *gurubhakti*, including devotion articulated in hymns of praise. For instance, *stotras* were popular among non-dual Krama authors in Kashmir, and sometimes these include deep reverence for the guru. The eleventh-

<sup>70</sup> He does refer specifically to Sāhib in his longer *Gurustuti* (29 verses), and its verses repeat themes found in the other texts under discussion here. However, since the only manuscript I have access to is badly damaged in several sections I have not discussed this hymn further in this context.

<sup>71</sup> Verses 1-9 end with this line; however, technically this is an assumption, since the manuscripts only include the beginning of the repeated line (*nityaṃ vande* or just *nityaṃ*) for verses 2-9. Verse 10 ends with the almost identical line: *vande tasmāt kaulakuleśaṃ gurum īḍyam*. The final two verses (11 and 12) switch to statements about the composition of the poem and the benefits of reciting it.

<sup>72</sup> *iti śrīmahāmāheśvarācāryavaryaśrīsāhibakaulānandanāthapādapadmopajīvicidrūpakaulaviracitaṃ gurubhaktistotraṃ sampūrṇam* (SBB-PK Hs. Or. 12509 folio 214v).

century poet Nāga, for example, begins his *Cittasaṃtoṣatrimśikā* by glorifying the extraordinary gaze of his guru.<sup>73</sup> In South India, Madhurāja composed a hymn in praise of Abhinavagupta, the *Gurunāthaparāmarśa*,<sup>74</sup> and of course we find various hymns attributed to Śaṅkarācārya that celebrate the guru. Most well-known among these is probably the *Dakṣiṇāmūrtistotra*, which praises the guru as the embodiment of Śiva. There are many other hymns in praise of the guru that are said to belong to various larger compositions like the *Skandapurāṇa* or *Rudrayāmalatantra*, or that have no known author but circulated independently. Thus, the guru-centred hymns of Sāhib Kaula’s followers participate in a long and widespread tradition of offering praise and devotion to the guru—both as a general ideal and, in some cases, as a specific individual.

On the other hand, these hymns also mark the unique position of Sāhib Kaula and his lineage. We do not find earlier examples in Kashmir of multiple generations of disciples composing poetic hymns in praise of historical teachers, even in the case of direct and prominent teacher-student relationships like Somānanda and Utpaladeva, or Abhinavagupta, Kṣemarāja, and Yogarāja.<sup>75</sup> I suggest that the hymns by Cidrūpa, Jyotiṣprakāśa, and Govinda Kaula mark Sāhib Kaula’s unique position as a teacher and author who, as Sanderson has argued, successfully adapted his family’s East Indian Śākta heritage with the non-dual Śaiva and Śākta traditions of Kashmir. In other words, Sāhib Kaula himself—as a guru and as a prolific author of texts that seem to have been successful in Kashmir—became key for this lineage’s self-understanding and position there.

Looking forward, this lineage remains prominent in Kashmir. It is important for the preservation and transmission of many manuscripts, as seen in Govinda Kaula’s scribal activities, and at least in one case to significant publication activities in the twentieth century. One of the editors of the widely influential Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies (KSTS), Madhusūdan Kaul, identifies himself as “the eight [sic] in descent from Sahib Kaula.”<sup>76</sup> Madhusūdan Kaul was highly prolific as an editor, and the KSTS continues to shape contemporary understandings of the religious history of Kashmir. In the twentieth century this series had a leading role in shaping Indian and international perceptions of what came to be called “Kashmir Śaivism,”<sup>77</sup> and I would argue that understanding the lineage of Sāhib Kaula is critical for charting the intellectual and religious background of the KSTS series, and thus the backstory of “Kashmir Śaivism” itself.<sup>78</sup> I would also argue that the type of praise and devotion we see toward the guru in Sāhib Kaula’s lineage is also found in the Kashmirian tradition of non-dual Śaivism taught by Swami Lakshman Joo in the twentieth century. *Gurubhakti* is central to this tradition, as I have argued elsewhere, and *stotras* are key to the repeated and deliberate association of Swami Lakshman Joo himself, as an embodiment of Śiva, with specific non-dual authors in Kashmir’s past—most notably,

<sup>73</sup> For a translation and discussion of this verse, see Stainton (2019), 137.

<sup>74</sup> On this text, see Williams (unpublished manuscript, 2021).

<sup>75</sup> We certainly find praise of their teachers within their texts, but we do not find the same tradition of composing independent hymns in devotional praise of their teachers.

<sup>76</sup> Kaul (1989 [1942]), 3.

<sup>77</sup> In fact, J.C. Chatterjee’s *Kashmir Shaivism* was published as one of the first volumes in the KSTS series. For a summary of the issues with the term “Kashmir Śaivism,” see Stainton (2019), 280-282.

<sup>78</sup> Investigating this backstory is part of my current research project and I plan on publishing more on it in the near future.

Abhinavagupta.<sup>79</sup> While Sāhib Kaula and his followers are not invoked in this tradition in the same way as earlier figures like Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, and Kṣemarāja, I suggest that the *gurustuti* and *gurubhakti* we find in their hymns is echoed in the twentieth-century praise and devotion toward Swami Lakshman Joo and earlier figures in his lineage. These include, for example, Makhanlal Kukiloo's praise poetry to Śrī Rām, also known as Swami Ram Joo, called *Śrī Gurustutiḥ Śaivācāryasya Śrīrāmasya*; the *Śrī Gurustuti* of Rameshvar Jha; and the *Śrī Gurupādukāstuti* of Jiya Lal Kaul.<sup>80</sup> Once again, we find a close identification between the guru and Śiva; a focus on particular gurus; a general separation between non-dual theology and initiatory Śaiva ritual systems;<sup>81</sup> and a practice of composing and reciting praise poetry to the guru as a central part of a particular community's religious activity.

## Conclusions

In this article, I have presented a first edition and translation of select verses from Govinda Kaula's *Gurustutiratnāvalī* based on four manuscripts, two in Śāradā and two in Devanāgarī, in anticipation of a full edition and translation currently under preparation for a larger project. I have also presented and analyzed evidence for Govinda Kaula's dates and lineage. My argument for dating his life and literary activity to the eighteenth century seeks to revise the nineteenth- and twentieth-century dates found, for example, in the VOHD and the NCC, and it clarifies the relationship between this author and his closely related predecessors. To conclude the analysis presented in this article, let me reflect on three ways I think the study of this text is significant.

First, the GSR itself is a sophisticated and poetic hymn. Govinda Kaula's verses are theologically rich and poetically ambitious. While one might debate how innovative they are as literature, they adhere to high literary standards and their literary qualities are integral to their praise of and theological reflection on the guru. I would argue, therefore, that we should interpret the GSR and other works composed during this time as part of a long history of literary activity and adaptation in Kashmir seen most notably in the history of Sanskrit hymns.<sup>82</sup> As I have discussed at length elsewhere, while the evidence suggests there may have been a contraction in literary production in Kashmir after the thirteenth century, there was also what I have called a kind of creative consolidation, with the *stotra* form in particular continuing as a site for innovation and literary expression.<sup>83</sup>

The GSR and Govinda Kaula's literary activity more broadly also cast light on Sāhib Kaula's lineage in Kashmir. From his compositions and scribal endeavors we learn about historical dates, the relationships between Sāhib Kaula's followers, the way they view Sāhib Kaula as a seminal figure, and the various texts available to them that they read and considered worthy of copying, studying, and engaging with in their religious lives. As I suggested above, I think further work on this lineage will prove crucial for helping us

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<sup>79</sup> Stainton (2019), 274-285.

<sup>80</sup> Kukiloo (n.d.); the latter two can be found in multiple places, including *Śrīgurustuti* (2000).

<sup>81</sup> On this trend, see Stainton (2019), 282-283.

<sup>82</sup> For detailed arguments about this history, see Stainton (2019).

<sup>83</sup> Stainton (2019), 226-230.

understand the religious dynamics leading up the twentieth century and the emergence of what came to be popularly known as “Kashmir Śaivism.”

Finally, this particular hymn by Govinda Kaula offers an interesting case study in the broad South Asian tradition of devotion and praise for the guru. It shares much with other hymns to and about the guru, such as the frequent identification of the guru with a deity. Yet the sustained focus on one historical figure, not just in this hymn but in multiple hymns by multiple authors, presents a contrast to many guru-centered hymns that focus more on the ideal, ahistorical guru.<sup>84</sup>

Overall, therefore, this article suggests how a detailed philological analysis can contribute to the study of a complex religious and literary context like Kashmir and also provide a case study and comparison for broader studies of religious traditions across South Asia.

### Acknowledgements

While I am the sole author of this article and any faults are mine alone, it is based on ongoing editing and translation work with Ben Williams. I thank Brendan Gillon, Michael Gollner, Jürgen Hanneder, Somadeva Vasudeva, Anna Lee White, and Ben Williams for comments on earlier drafts of this article, as well as the anonymous reviewers. I thank the School of Religious Studies at McGill University for sponsoring a Sanskrit and Tibetan translation workshop in 2019 at which I presented my first work on the *Gurustutiratnāvalī*, and specifically my colleague and co-organizer Lara Braitstein. This article also draws on research supported in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. In addition, it would not have been possible without the work done by the Muktabodha Indological Research Institute, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, and Chetan Pandey with eGangotri to make Sanskrit manuscripts freely accessible to the public through scans and searchable etexts. Finally, I offer my thanks to Jürgen Hanneder for discussing the Kaulas of Kashmir with me at length, and for sharing Sanskrit manuscripts as well as his forthcoming and unpublished work on this lineage.

### Abbreviations

BLO	Bodleian Library, Oxford
DhT	Dharmārtha Trust
GSR	<i>Gurustutiratnāvalī</i>
KSTS	Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies
NCC	New Catalogus Catalogorum
RASB	Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal
SBB-PK Hs. Or.	Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientalischen Handschriften

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<sup>84</sup> These comments are suggestive and far from comprehensive. There are, of course, specific historical figures like Śākyamuni Buddha who have received praise and adoration for centuries. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note the series of hymns about the guru Sāhib Kaula and the lack of such hymns to other figures in Kashmir in the same way.

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- DhT no. 5531-Gha, Raghunatha Temple Manuscripts Library, Jammu; paper, Devanāgarī script; large, multi-text codex; includes the *Gurustuti* [= *Gurustotra*] of Jyotiṣprakāśa, the *Gurustutiratnāvalī* (D1) and *Svacchandamaheśvarāṣṭaka* of Govinda Kaula, and works by Sāhib Kaula. Complete scan (112 pages) by eGangotri available at <https://archive.org/details/ShivaJivaDashakamSahibKaul5531Alm25Shlf2GhaDevanagariTantraShastram/mode/2up> [Accessed June 15, 2021].
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- SBB-PK Hs. Or. 11126; paper, primarily Śāradā script but some Devanāgarī as well; large, multi-text codex; scribed in part by Govinda Kaula; includes the *Gurustutiratnāvalī* (Ś2) of Govinda Kaula. Complete PDF file (1173 pages) available at <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001A3E800000000> [Accessed June 15, 2021].
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