

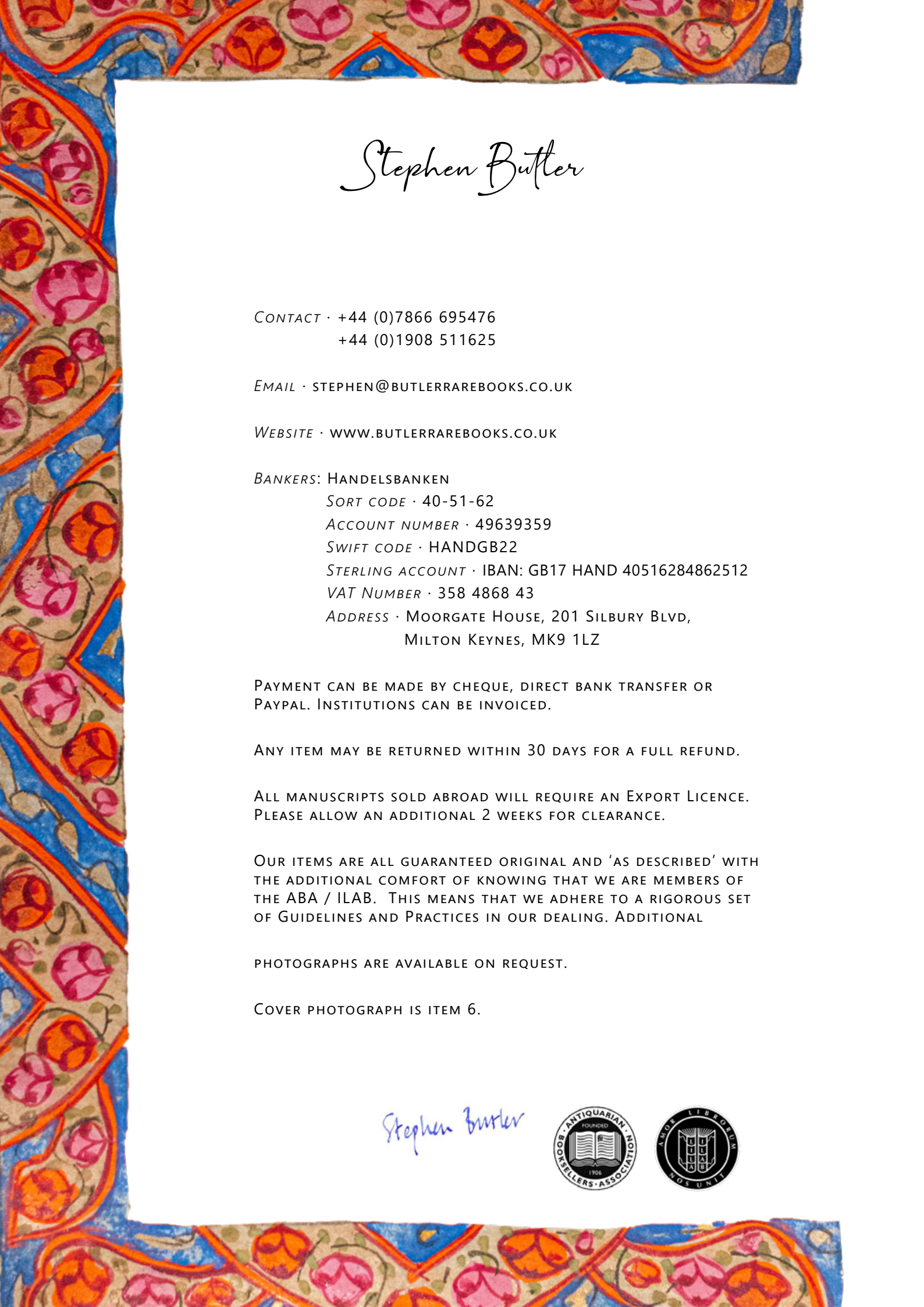
Stephen Butler

MANUSCRIPTS · ARTWORKS

INDIAN · ARABIC · ASIAN

AUTUMN 2025





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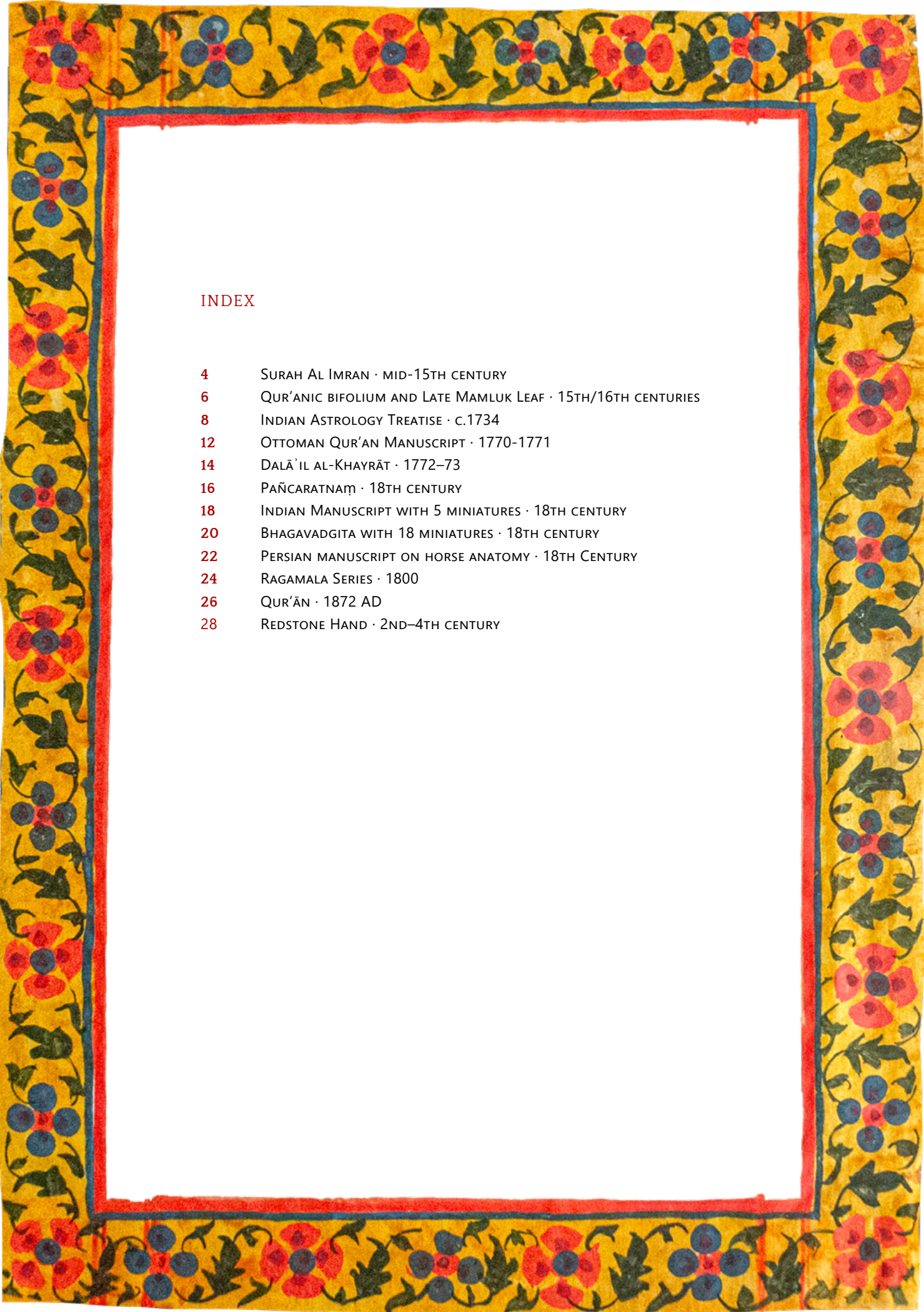
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A JEWEL OF AQ QOYUNLU QUR'ANIC ART: TIMURID MOTIFS IN THE DAWN OF SAFAVID AESTHETICS

1 **QUR'ANIC LEAF.** *Surah Al Imran (3:39-60).* *IRAN OR EASTERN ANATOLIA, LATE AQ QOYUNLU PERIOD (CIRCA MID-15TH CENTURY)*

DIMENSIONS

Large format 74 x 177 mm

DESCRIPTION

Single leaf.

14 lines per page in nesih script, written in soot-based ink on hammered Eastern paper.

The text is framed in gold, lapis lazuli, and Caledon, with surah and verse openings adorned with geometric gold and lapis embellishments. The recto features two, and the verso three Timurid-style floral medallions in orange ink, lapis lazuli and gold. The entire page is enriched with delicate floral motifs in gold.

TEXT

Qur'an, *Surah Al Imran* (3:39-60).

This Qur'anic leaf exemplifies a key transitional moment in Persian and Anatolian art, where Timurid motifs began to influence the visual language of Qur'anic illumination beyond their original borders



وَمَصَدَّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلِإِذْ لَكَ بِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ حِمَّةٌ عَلَىٰ
 نَجْمِكَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ
 فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَلَمَّا أَخَذَ عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكِتَابَ قَالَ
 أَتُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ أَتُحِبُّونَ النَّاسَ أَتُحِبُّونَ آبَاءَكُمْ وَأَهْلَكُمْ أَتُحِبُّونَ
 أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِرُسُلِهِ
 وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ أَتُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ أَتُحِبُّونَ النَّاسَ أَتُحِبُّونَ
 أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِرُسُلِهِ
 وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ أَتُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ أَتُحِبُّونَ النَّاسَ
 أَتُحِبُّونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي
 بِرُسُلِهِ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ أَتُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ أَتُحِبُّونَ
 النَّاسَ أَتُحِبُّونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ
 يَأْتِي بِرُسُلِهِ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ أَتُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ
 أَتُحِبُّونَ النَّاسَ أَتُحِبُّونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
 وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِرُسُلِهِ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

A RARE DUAL LEGACY OF QUR'ANIC CALLIGRAPHIC MASTERY

2 SEYH HAMDULLAH (ATTR.). *Composite Qur'anic bifolium and leaf of Late Mamluk Grace.*

Illuminated manuscripts on paper.

OTTOMAN, 15TH AND 16TH CENTURIES

DIMENSIONS

250 x 180 mm

An extraordinary composite Qur'anic bifolium, mounted on card for comparative study and display.

The recto features a Qur'an leaf attributed to Seyh Hamdullah, founder of the Ottoman calligraphic tradition. Executed in the early 16th century, the script exemplifies the pinnacle of Ottoman scriptoria, characterized by its elegant, proportional naskh style, with a beautifully executed surah heading, the basmala, and an illuminated hizb rosette at the centre. The careful illumination and detailed gold embellishment emphasise the aesthetic of early Ottoman calligraphy.

The verso presents a contrasting yet equally refined Qur'anic leaf from the late Mamluk period (15th century), crafted on traditional Eastern paper. This leaf embodies the rhythmic flow and grace of the late Mamluk aesthetic—a hallmark of the Cairo and Damascus scriptoria. The script is legible in the formal, flowing style characteristic of the period, with a delicate balance between formality and artistic rhythm, typical of the Mamluk courtly and religious establishments.

Together, these two panels exemplify a remarkable cross-period dialogue within Islamic calligraphy, illustrating the aesthetic and spiritual evolution from the Mamluk to the Ottoman tradition. A rare pairing of two great Islamic calligraphic legacies on a single sheet.



رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا
 وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طَابَمَاذَا خَلَوْهَا
 خَالِدِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا
 وَآوَرَّتْنا الْأَرْضُ نَجْوةً مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ هَيْثُ نَشَاءُ فَنِعْمَ
 أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾ وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِينَ
 مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ
 بَيْنَهُمُ بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

سورة النور

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 حم ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ
 غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيدِ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢﴾
 ذِي الطَّوْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ إِلَهُ الْمَصِيرِ ﴿٣﴾ مَا يُجَادِلُ
 فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَفَلَا تَعْرِضُكَ بَقَلْبُهُمْ
 فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿٤﴾ كَذَبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَالْأَحْرَابُ



كَتَبَهُ حَمْدُ اللَّهِ الْمَعْرُوفُ

عن

AN EXAMPLE OF HINDU ASTROLOGY WITH HELLENISTIC INFLUENCES

3 INDIAN ASTROLOGY TREATISE.

Sanskrit manuscript on laid paper.

NEPAL C. 1734

DIMENSIONS

Leaf 300 x 215 mm

Text panel c.230 x 150 mm

DESCRIPTION

The document spans 116 leaves, with some pages framed by decorative borders featuring violet, blue, and red flowers, while others are bordered simply with ochre bands edged in red.

Some leaves have been polished, and the manuscript features a combination of simple yet precise Devanāgarī script written in red and black ink. The text is arranged in single columns, with each page containing between 15 and 20 lines.

A few leaves have been rewritten by different hands, evident from the coarser script used in certain sections.

Preserved in good condition, despite minor signs of wear.

TEXT

Written in a variety of the Sanskrit *śloka* poetic metre, most probably composed in Northern India.

It belongs to the Janmapatrikā genre - meaning "nativity paper" or "horoscope scroll" - a form of astrological chart that records the date, lunar day, planetary configurations, and relative strengths at an individual's birth. The inner workings of the manuscript involve intricate relationships between planetary influences and personal destinies. The astrological variables address complex interactions that enable detailed predictions about an individual's life. These include not only natural predispositions based on planetary positions but also auspicious and inauspicious days, determined by planetary conjunctions which play a key role in determining optimal times.

ILLUSTRATIONS

The treatise is richly illustrated with diagrams and drawings, many labeled as *cakra* ("wheel") - a symbol central to Hindu astrology. The first notable diagram, labeled janmalagnam, depicts the positions of the twelve zodiac signs at the moment of birth, arranged in a pattern resembling a lotus flower. Throughout the manuscript, numerous schemes and painted images depict Hindu gods, divine planets (*graha*), and celestial phenomena.

Prominent figures include Ganesh (*Gaṇapati*), Sarasvati (goddess of speech and wisdom), the moon god Rāmacandra, the sun god Sūrya, and the planets Mars (*Bhaumā*), Mercury (*Budha*), Jupiter (*Gurū*), Venus (*Bhṛgu*), Saturn (*Śāni*), as well as Rahu and Ketu - enigmatic shadow planets associated with eclipses and celestial forces. Several figurative symbols represent core astrological concepts, such as the image of a large white cow (*Tanubhāva*), symbolizing a specific aspect of personality or life phase. The manuscript's diagrams also include schemes for astronomical calculations, like *laghna*, or the zodiacal houses used in horoscope creation.

INFLUENCES

It is evident that Hindu astrology, or *jyotiṣa*, has been influenced significantly by Greek and Hellenistic traditions. Many ancient Indian astrological terms are borrowed directly from Greek, such as *kendra* ("center of a circle"), and the earliest Sanskrit texts on astrology - like the *Yavanajātaka* ("Yavana" meaning Greek) - date back to around 150 CE. These texts mark the period when Indian astrology adopted the Greco-Roman planetary system and the seven-day week. Importing this calendrical system into India came via trade routes from the Roman Empire in the early fourth century CE. Its adoption allowed Indian astronomers and astrologers to calculate planetary positions with greater accuracy, enabling the creation of detailed horoscopes and precise astrological predictions. Inscriptions and sculptures from the period often show deities associated with specific weekdays, underscoring the correlation between planetary deities and the weekly cycle. In this manuscript, the zodiac signs are aligned with the Western 12-sign system, although in traditional Indian astrology, there are 27 *nakṣatras* (lunar mansions) instead of the 12 signs. Each sign is represented by abbreviation symbols derived from the Sanskrit names, and the sequence follows standard Western order.

॥ अथ चत्वारिंशत्स्थानकलम् ॥

स	न	मं	उ	ग	शु	वा	गृ
०	०	५	०	०	०	०	स्था
०	०	०	०	५	०	०	सोव
०	०	५	५	०	५	५	सो. नृ.
५	०	५	०	५	०	०	रा. दि.
५	०	५	५	१०	५	५	यो.
म	न	श्रे	म	उ	स	म	व.

लभेन्ननेचिनेयेदेहभावहोरायावैसपदाद्यसु
खेच देकाणोस्पास्त्रजेभावसौख्यसप्ताशति
मेतन्निपुत्रपौत्रे ॥ नूनंनवांशपकलनुभाव
स्यात्तद्वादवांशपित्तमात्सौख्यं त्रिंशपककष्ट
फलं विचिन्त्येव हिषट्कं अनुक्रमेण ॥ २ ॥

अथ होराफलं सूर्यस्य होराच युते हि मांशौ नरं प्र
सापं विविधं च सौख्यं च वाहु मात्मा जितचिन्तयु
ष्टि जाया प्रभावस्य मानि करोति होरायदाश
त्रियतिर्विषयेन दा प्रस्तुते सुखी न युष्ठां वं
मुहुर्चिन्तं सुखं कं शां गं पुत्रै विविधं च

॥ अथ होराफलम् ॥ ॥ लब्धेन वैरा ॥



अतसीकुसुमापमयकोतिममुनाकलक
वमध्यक्ती ॥ नवगापवधविलासशालीवत
मालीवितुनोतुमंगलानि ॥ श्रीकृष्ण
सादाहेष्टायुर्नवतिनराम् ॥ अथकलजन्म
पत्री ॥

॥ अथजन्मलक्षणम् ॥



अथकलमलकपम् ॥



वक्रोदक्षं करिगत्या यवान्ति प्रोध्य विविक्षते
 त्रिसप्ततः नित्यं वक्रो रङ्ग केतुने नु नित्यं
 श्रीघ्नोद्वयधौ तुल्यतुयो ॥ इति वचनात्
 शुभाशुभफलज्ञेयम्

॥ अथ हयचक्रम् ॥



॥ अथ गजचक्रम् ॥



॥ अथ रथचक्रम् ॥



QUR'AN MANUSCRIPT - OTTOMAN COURTLY CALLIGRAPHY

4 MEHMED EMİN 'ALÎ, AL-SAYYID. *Qur'an al-Karim*

Arabic manuscript on polished paper

COPIED IN ISTANBUL, AH 1184 / 1770–71 CE

DIMENSIONS

160 x 100 mm

DESCRIPTION

296 leaves, 15 lines per page in an elegant, refined *thuluth* script in black ink. The text opens with a magnificent double-page illumination in lapis, celadon, and gold, setting the tone for a manuscript of great devotional and visual richness. *Surah* headings appear in white on gold; verse markers and ruling throughout in gold. Division markers for *hizb* and *juz'* heightened with botanical lapis embellishments. Concluding pages illuminated with a brilliant palette of gold, blue, and white vegetal motifs.

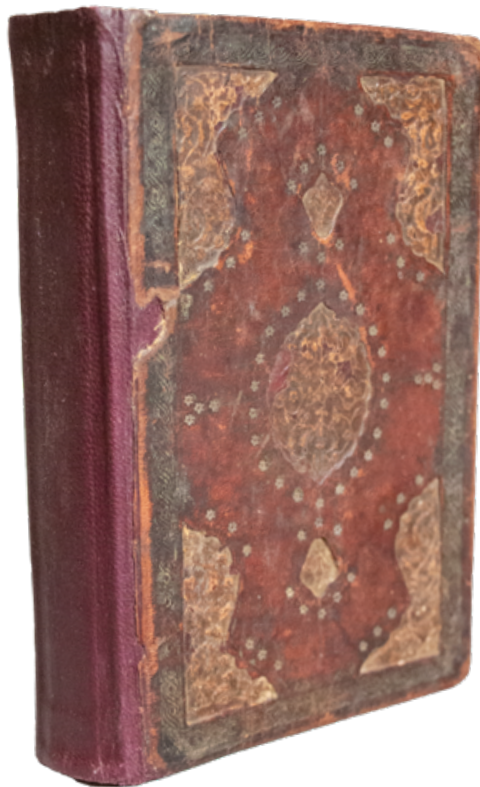
BINDING

Bound in its original Ottoman leather binding with fore-edge flap (*miklep*), elaborately gilt with central shamsa and cornerpieces; flap gilt with the title *Qur'an*. Spine later restored. Some softening of leaves from devotional use; otherwise, an exceptionally well-preserved and visually stunning manuscript.

An exquisite Ottoman Qur'an, penned by the distinguished court calligrapher *al-Sayyid Mehmed Emîn 'Alî*, in its original gilt-stamped binding with fore-edge flap.

Mehmed Emîn 'Alî (Ottoman court calligrapher, active c. 1770), son of the Grand Vizier Emin Pasha and student of the great calligrapher Eğrikapılı Mehmed Rasim Efendi, rose to the highest ranks of the Ottoman learned hierarchy, later honored with the title Rumeli Kazaskeri. He was not only a master of *sülüs* but also an accomplished *tuğrakeş*, designer of the imperial *tughra* of Sultan Abdülhamid I.

This manuscript epitomizes the refinement of late Ottoman Qur'anic production: calligraphic mastery, intricate illumination, and aristocratic provenance converge to form a jewel of Islamic devotional art. Manuscripts of this caliber, preserved in their original bindings, are exceptionally rare on the market.





A MAGNIFICENT 18TH-CENTURY OTTOMAN MANUSCRIPT

- 5 **AL-JAZULI, MUHAMMAD B. SULAYMAN.** *Dalā'il al-Khayrat wa-Shawariq al-Anwar fi Dhikr al-Salat 'ala al-Nabiyy al-Mukhtar, with Hizb al-A'zam, transcribed by 'Abd al-Qadir Zihn-i.*
OTTOMAN TURKEY, 1186 AH (1772–73 CE)

DIMENSIONS

170 x 110 mm

DESCRIPTION

85 folios (81 + 4 flyleaves).

11 lines per page of exceptionally elegant artistic thuluth script, carefully ruled with wide gold margins and double borders in red and gold ink around the main text. Fully illuminated margins with gold and red rules, decorated section breaks, and elaborate title and opening pages. Section breaks (*durak*) are ornamented with delicate floral designs painted in gold, while the sura and *hizb* headings are lavishly decorated in lapis, vegetal motifs, and illuminated script. The folio is richly adorned with floral and geometric ornamentation in gold and lapis, featuring the title *Hizb al-A'zam* in white gold. The final page includes hand-drawn botanical motifs in gold ink.

BINDING

Bound in its original crimson leather binding featuring tulip and rose motifs, this devotional manuscript shows some expected wear from age and use but remains in overall excellent condition.

Despite expected signs of wear from age and devotional use, the manuscript remains in overall very good condition.

A striking example of devotional literature from the late Ottoman period, featuring the popular liturgical text *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* by the 15th-century Moroccan Sufi master Muḥammad al-Jazūlī, together with the powerful supplication cycle *Hizb al-A'zam*. This manuscript was penned by 'Abd al-Qādir Zihnī, an accomplished scribe trained by Ḥocazāde Sayyid Aḥmed—one of the foremost calligraphers of his time.

TEXT

Known in Turkish-speaking lands as *Delā'il-i Şerif* or *Delā'il-i Hayrāt*, this foundational prayer book was authored by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Jazūlī, founder of the *Jazūliyya* branch of the *Shādhiliyya* order. The work, deeply rooted in Sufi practice, consists of a compilation of blessings (*ṣalawāt*) upon the Prophet Muḥammad, and has circulated widely across Islamic lands, inspiring countless manuscript copies. The text was not only central to the daily liturgy of Sufi orders such as the *Jazūliyya* and *Shādhiliyya* but was also read devotionally by Muslims of all backgrounds. The book is traditionally read in daily, alternate-day, four-day, or weekly cycles, with careful attention to ritual etiquette such as intentions (*niyya*), invocations (*istighfār*), and specific supplications.

Manuscripts of *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* are known to exist in several editorial traditions—some including additions and marginal annotations approved by al-Jazūlī's disciple Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Sahlī, which further attest to the text's evolution and deep reverence across generations.





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي دَعَانَا لِلْإِيمَانِ ○ وَهَدَانَا
بِالْقُرْآنِ ○ وَأَجَابَ دَعْوَتَنَا بِالْفَضْلِ
وَالْإِحْسَانِ ○ وَالصَّالَوَةِ وَالسَّلَامِ
عَلَى سَيِّدِ الْخَلْقِ ○ الَّذِي دَعَانَا إِلَى دَعْوَةِ الْحَقِّ
وَعَلَى الْإِلَهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَتَابِعِيهِ ○ وَخَزِيَرِهِ
الدُّعَاءَ إِلَى كَهْمَتِهِ ○ وَالرَّغَاةَ إِلَى مُنْتَهَى

فَمَنْتَهُ

فِي مَلِكِهِ ○ أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَيَقُولُ الْعَبْدُ الدَّاعِي
الرَّاجِي ○ مَغْفِرَةً رَبِّيَ الْبَارِي ○ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ
مُتَطَهَّرًا مِنَ الْقَارِي ○ سَدَّ عَيْنَهُمَا
وَعَفَّرَ ذُنُوبَهُمَا لَمَّا رَأَتْ بَعْضَ السَّالِكِينَ
يَتَعَلَّقُونَ بِأَوْرَادِ الْمَشَائِخِ الْمُعْتَبَرِينَ ○
وَيَاخُزِبُ الْعُلَمَاءُ الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ○
حَتَّى رَأَتْ بَعْضُهُمْ تَعَلُّقًا بِالْأَدْعَاءِ السَّيْفِي
وَالْأَرْبَعِينَ الْأَسْمَى ○ وَحَدَّثَتْ
بَعْضَ الْعَوَامِ بِتَقْيِيدُونَ بِقِرَّةٍ ○ دُعَاءِ
نَحْوِ الْقَدَحِ ○ وَتَذَكُّرُونَ فِي اسْتِئَاذِهِ
مَالَا شُبُهَةَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَضِيعِ وَالْمَنْجِ ○

A COMPLETE 18TH-CENTURY KASHMIRI ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT OF THE PAÑCARATNAM

6 ANONYMOUS. *Pañcaratnam* (*The Five Gems*).

Complete illuminated Sanskrit manuscript on paper.

KASHMIR, LATE 18TH CENTURY

DIMENSIONS

Leaves c. 90 x 150 mm

Text panel c. 55 x 110 mm

DESCRIPTION

307 leaves overall, with 9 illuminations.

Sanskrit text arranged in a 6-line single column in black ink, with verse separators as a pair of vertical strokes marked in light red, text executed in a bold, traditional Kashmiri-style *Devanāgarī* script—characterized by its thick strokes and robust form, consistent with the conventional styles used in the region.

Despite minor age-related wear—such as faint creases, slight abrasions, and some surface dirt—the manuscript remains in good condition, with the text and miniatures well-preserved.

BINDING

Cardboard binding covered by cloth.

The work encapsulates some of its most profound, poetic, and spiritually significant tales, collectively referred to as “The Five Gems” (*Pañcaratnam*).

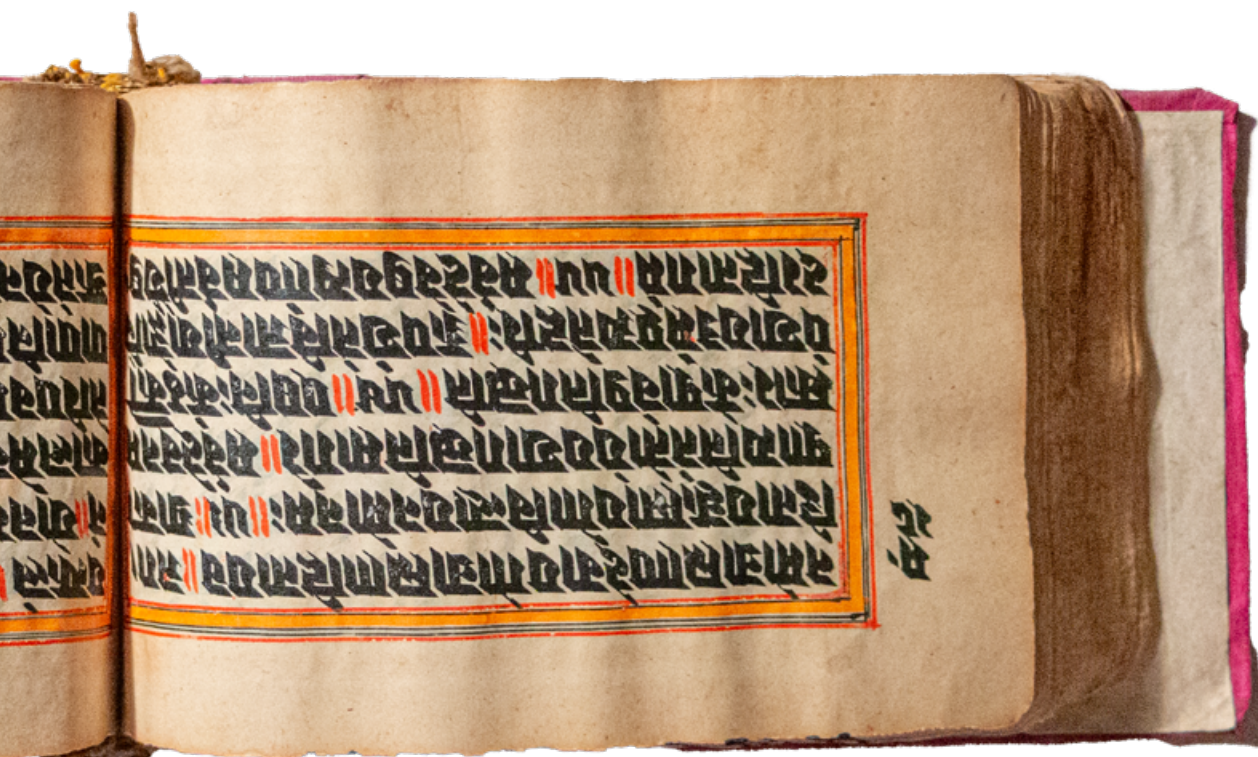
TEXT

The *Pañcaratnam* is an important work, a miscellaneous collection of poetic and philosophical extracts from the *Mahābhārata*, that serve as a spiritual guide, emphasizing dharma, devotion, and the philosophical depths of Indian spiritual thought. This manuscript was composed in Kashmir most likely during the late 18th century, about one century after the *Pañcaratnam* was established.

ILLUMINATION

The manuscript is illuminated with nine miniatures, scattered throughout the text and offers visual narration of the tales and teachings. These illustrations are executed in vibrant watercolours, enriched with gold leaf, and are highly detailed representations of key episodes from the *Mahābhārata*—from divine encounters to heroics and philosophical debates. The illustrations include depictions of divine figures, sages, and mythological motifs, each framed within simple borders that complement the script.





FIVE MINIATURES DEPICTING SCENES FROM THE STORIES OF VISHNU AND KRISHNA

7 INDIAN MANUSCRIPT with 5 miniatures.

Illuminated manuscript on paper.

INDIA, 18TH CENTURY

DIMENSIONS

Folio 110 x 185 mm

Writing surface 65 x 125 mm

DESCRIPTION

Composed of 39 cards, apparently complete.

The text is inscribed in elegant Devanagari calligraphy arranged in a single column of six lines per page, executed in black and red ink. The writing surface is enclosed in a double polychrome frame.

The decoration includes 5 full-page miniatures, painted in vivid colours and enhanced with gold leaf, depicting key episodes from Vishnu's and Krishna's divine incarnations, including scenes of Krishna's childhood pastimes, Vishnu's avatars, and divine acts of heroism.

The first miniature is a fragment, originally from another copy and glued onto a white paper.

BINDING

Bound in fabric-covered hardboard. Fairly good condition, light traces of humidity and abrasions.

TEXT

The thematic focus on Vishnu and Krishna aligns with traditional devotional practices in North and South India, where storytelling through illumination served both as a spiritual aid and as an artistic expression of divine narratives. The entire text focuses on the stories of Vishnu and Krishna, drawn from the *Mahābhārata*, emphasizing divine legends and theological themes central to Vaishnavism.

PROVENANCE

1. Marco del Monaco Collection with ex libris on the first card.





सवत्सरोदतोविश्रामोविश्वरतिणः॥६३॥
 विस्तारः स्यावरः स्याणः प्रमाणं वीजमय
 यं॥ अर्थो नर्थो महाकोशो महाभोगोम
 दाधनः॥६४॥ अनिर्विण्णः स्यविष्टो भूद्वर्म
 यूषो महासखः॥ न तत्र नेमिर्न तत्रीतमः
 तामः समीहनः॥६५॥ यत्तत्र ज्योमदेज्यश्च

8 BHAGAVADGITA. *Manuscript with 18 miniatures.*
KASHMIR 18TH/19TH CENTURIES

DIMENSIONS

Leaves 160 x 95 mm

Text panel 125 x 60 mm

DESCRIPTION

This complete codex comprises 269 leaves of thin, whitish paper, a total of 534 pages. It includes 25 blanks. Written in a dense, elegant Devanāgarī script using thick black ink, with some lines highlighted in light red and gold, especially at the beginning of each chapter. Single four-line column per page, with a decorated double leaf opening each chapter that contains a richly illustrated miniature.

18 highly detailed miniature watercolour paintings, portraying scenes from the life of Lord Krishna. They follow a consistent iconography and are set alongside intricately decorated borders, featuring lotus flowers, foliage, and arabesque patterns in bright colours.

The opening pages of each chapter are framed with elaborate blue and gold decorations, featuring cusped cartouches filled with stylized stems, buds, and flowing floral motifs. The text itself is framed within borders of pale yellow, with finely painted rules and fillets.

BINDING

Indian cardboard cover wrapped in red fabric.

Showing signs of age but overall in very good condition, with minor wormholes, water stains, and small tears.

Complete, illuminated Sanskrit manuscript of the *Bhagavadgita*, a 700-verse Sanskrit poem, which encapsulates the core doctrines of the Hindu religious philosophy of *Vāsudeva*, whose followers recognize it as a manifestation of the essence of the Divine.

The *Bhagavadgītā* was composed probably around two thousand years ago, and is part of the vast national epic poem *Mahābhārata* (Book VI, Chapters 24 to 42). The subject matter of the poem deals with the Kurukṣetra war.

This manuscript's shape resembles the traditional pothī format, and it is believed to have been created in the Kashmir region during the late 18th or early 19th century, though the exact origin remains uncertain.

TEXT

The manuscript is organized into eighteen chapters, each corresponding to one of the key sections of the *Bhagavadgita*, with each chapter beginning with a decorative chapter head. The introductory section features quotations from the poem most notably, the opening lines of Lord Krishna's teachings. This is followed by a short poetic commentary called *Gītā Dhyānaṃ*, which meditates on the divine wisdom being imparted.

From the third leaf onwards, the text of the *Bhagavadgita* begins in earnest. The various chapters span different themes and teachings, from the worldly to the spiritual.

The final page features a four-line colophon written in alternating red and black ink, expressing devotion and reverence for the poem's divine message.

ILLUSTRATIONS

The eighteen watercolour miniatures dramatize the key divine actions and incarnations of Lord Krishna, illustrating the spiritual essence of his divine descent. Each image corresponds to a chapter, following the order of the text:

The first miniature depicts young Krishna and his brother Balarama playing in a courtyard, with two women watching. Some overpainting suggests it once portrayed Krishna's childhood friends - an indication of the evolution of the illustration.

The second shows Vishnu in his Buddha avatar - acknowledging that in Hindu tradition, Buddha is considered Vishnu's ninth incarnation.

Subsequent illustrations include Vishnu's *Rāma* avatar, where he is seen with Sita and Hanuman, as well as scenes of Vishnu's other incarnations like *Narasimha*, *Matsya*, and *Varāha*, each showing him performing crucial acts of divine intervention.

Other images portray Krishna revealing his divine form to Arjuna on the battlefield, lifting the *Govardhana* hill to protect his devotees, and dancing with the *Gopīs*.

The final illustrations include Vishnu's *Kalki*, his future avatar who will destroy evil, and the scene where Krishna steals the clothes of bathing *Gopīs*, a well-known motif.

These illustrations are carefully crafted, revealing not only artistic skill but also deep spiritual symbolism. They visually narrate the divine actions associated with Krishna and Vishnu, emphasizing his incarnations and their significance in Hindu theology.



A RICHLY ILLUSTRATED PERSIAN MANUSCRIPT ON HORSE ANATOMY AND TAXONOMY

9 **RESALEH FORS NAMEH MOSSAVVAR.** *Persian manuscript on horse anatomy.*

Ink, watercolour and gouache on paper.

PERSIA, 18TH/19TH CENTURY

DIMENSIONS

210 x 140 mm

DESCRIPTION

82pp with 20 illustrations of horses in ink, watercolour and gouache.

Manuscript text in Farsi, in black and red nasta'liq script on paper. Some marginal annotations. In excellent condition, despite minor marginal repairs to some pages.

BINDING

Bound in full blind-stamped leather with 3 lozenges to front and rear boards.

An illustrated Persian manuscript dedicated to the anatomy, classification, and treatment of horses, written in elegant black and red nasta'liq script on cream-toned paper. This work, known as *Resaleh Fors Nameh Mossavvar*, is richly complemented by multiple miniature watercolour illustrations of various horse types, breeds, and coats, reflecting equine taxonomy as understood in Qajar-era veterinary science.

TEXT

The manuscript opens with textual sections outlining anatomical structure, traditional Persian veterinary care, and the symbolism of certain horse colours. Subsequent folios are adorned with naturalistic renderings of horses in side profile, identified with Persian captions. These detailed paintings suggest both artistic refinement and practical knowledge, likely intended for use by a noble stablemaster or in a royal court. The manuscript's context aligns with Qajar-era values, where the horse held vital societal, military, and ceremonial importance.

ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrated leaf shown here depicts two breeds of horses with striking coat patterns: one with chestnut patches on white, and the other bearing black dappled markings on a grey body. The delicacy of linework and careful application of pigment reflect a mature manuscript tradition in Qajar Persia.

TRADITION

Horse-related manuscripts formed an important genre of applied scientific literature in Persian culture. This piece belongs to a tradition that blended artistry with empirical observation, reflecting the elevated role of horses in military, ceremonial, and agricultural life. The care with which each horse is named and depicted suggests not only a taxonomic purpose but also an element of reverence for the animal's place in Persian royal and chivalric culture.

بنشد و را بنها دو کانه اسب باید که در از بود و پخت
 و بر بالازده و از گوشت کهنه آنگاه و کعبه های دو کانه
 چون از پس نگاه کنی بین و بزرگ بود و سه کعبه نیز باید
 که بزرگ بود و چنانکه نگاه کنی در وقت رفتن بر بالاسی رود
 مانند کعبه اشتر مرغ و آن کعبه تا بند خورده کاه در آید
 که بود و قوی از اسب و آن وی و خورده کاه باید که کوه بود
 و چون شعل سینه دارد اندک نه بسیار و ران چنان باید
 که در اندرون حفره بود تا بپایان ترند و سه پای اسب گور
 سه باید چون دست که یاد کردیم و کون اسب باید که
 شک بود و پیردن آمد چنانکه چون با هم گیر و مانند
 کون خود و پیشی و سه کعبه که آنگاه کوبک بود سه مانند
 سه کعبه چنانکه یک یک شایسته نمودن این سه نشان دو کانه
 دیگر من بجای خود با و کنیم که از اندام چهار پا و اسب گور
 که ام فرجه باید و کدام لایق و کدام در آید و کدام گور
 اکنون بدان که سه اسب لایق باید و دست و پای را



سر غلب



ایلیق زرد

A SET OF 5 LARGE SQUARE-FORMAT INDIAN PAINTINGS FROM THE RAGAMALA SERIES

10 RAGAMALA SERIES. 5 Illustrations.

On wasli paper.

INDIA, GUJARAT, c. 1800

DIMENSIONS

Each 280 x 265 mm

DESCRIPTION

5 illustrations from a Ragamala series, opaque pigments on wasli paper, each with the scene annotated in Devanagari script and surrounded by orange borders.

Some wear to corners affecting pigment or with very small loss, mount remains to head to verso.

ILLUSTRATIONS

This set of five illuminated manuscript cards presents devotional narratives dedicated to Vishnu and Krishna, exemplifying the confluence of text and image in 18th-century Vaishnava practice. Written in *Devanagari* script in black and red ink, the calligraphy demonstrates a fluid and balanced hand, designed for both legibility and ritual recitation. Each card incorporates miniature paintings, executed in vivid pigments with occasional touches of gold. The subjects depict episodes from Krishna's pastimes, Vishnu's avatars, and related mythological scenes, rendered in the bold linear style and saturated palette characteristic of regional manuscript workshops of the period. Figures are framed within double borders of red and orange, heightening their visual impact and creating a contained devotional space.

These illustrated leaves would have served both didactic and devotional purposes. The text guided recitation of sacred stories, while the images provided visual focus, embodying theological themes and reinforcing the spiritual message through narrative scenes. Such manuscripts often circulated among patrons and devotees, forming part of personal worship or communal storytelling traditions.

Despite minor abrasions and light wear, the folios remain in good condition, their inscriptions and imagery vivid and accessible. Their survival offers valuable insight into the material and spiritual culture of 18th-century India, where manuscripts combined scripture, art, and devotion into a unified practice of worship. The *Ragamala* series is a traditional Indian art form that combines visual art and musical inspiration, depicting various ragas through stylized images called ragamalas. These paintings typically illustrate different ragas (melodic modes) as poetic or symbolic representations, often portraying gods, mythological figures, or allegorical scenes associated with the mood and time of day that each raga evokes.





A FINELY ILLUMINATED 19TH-CENTURY PERSIAN QUR'AN

11 QUR'ĀN (KORAN).

In Arabic, illuminated manuscript on paper.

PERSIA, DATED 1289 AH (1872 AD)

DIMENSIONS

Leaves 101 x 60 mm

Text 73 x 35 mm

DESCRIPTION

242 leaves, complete.

Text in *Naskh* calligraphy on a single column of 21 lines in black ink.

The decoration elevates this Qur'an to a level of exceptional beauty. The opening pages feature a double illuminated frontispiece in gold and multi-coloured pigments, showcasing intricate geometric and floral designs typical of Persian book arts. Flanking the opening pages are two decorated pages with medallion motifs—intertwining gold, blue, and white—surrounded by flowing floral embellishments along the margins. Every sheet is bordered by a triple fillet of gold and black, framing the text and illumination and the interlines are filled in gold. At the top of each page, a phytomorphic vegetal motif in gold adorns the margin. The beginning of each Sura is marked by a distinctive gold cartouche with the *Sura* title inscribed in red ink.

Excellent condition of conservation, clean copy with wide margins.

BINDING

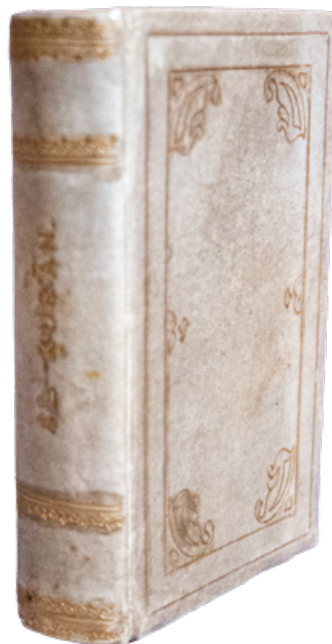
Parchment binding with gold decorations.

This finely illuminated pocket-sized Qur'an, produced in Persia in 1289 AH/ 1872 CE, exemplifies the refined manuscript tradition of the late Qajar period. Written in clear *Naskh* script, the text is arranged in a single column of 21 lines per page, executed in black ink with remarkable uniformity and precision. The interlinear spaces are delicately filled with liquid gold, producing a page of luminous balance and elegance.

Decoration is abundant and of high quality. The manuscript opens with a double illuminated frontispiece in gold and rich polychrome, preceded by two ornamental pages with paired medallions and marginal sprays of gold and blue floral motifs. Each subsequent page is framed within a triple border of gold and black fillets, while the upper margins are adorned with subtle phytomorphic motifs in gold. *Surah* headings are highlighted in red ink, enclosed within gilded cartouches, ensuring both clarity and visual richness.

The manuscript consists of 242 leaves, preserving the Qur'an in its entirety. The parchment binding, decorated in gold with traditional geometric and vegetal patterns, provides both protection and aesthetic harmony with the interior. The margins are unusually generous for a manuscript of this size, suggesting that it was created with both durability and display in mind.

This Qur'an is preserved in excellent condition, with clean, wide-margined pages and vibrant illumination intact. Its craftsmanship reflects the Persian devotion to both the sacred word of Islam and the art of the book, uniting calligraphy, ornament, and binding into a harmonious whole.





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ
إِذَا لَمْ تَسْأَلْهُ وَابَا السَّمْعِينَ
أَعَدَّ لَنَا الْهَلاَكَ الْمَشْهُورَ
الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ
الْمَشْكُورِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الظَّالِمِينَ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ
إِذَا لَمْ تَسْأَلْهُ وَابَا السَّمْعِينَ
أَعَدَّ لَنَا الْهَلاَكَ الْمَشْهُورَ
الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ
الْمَشْكُورِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الظَّالِمِينَ

GODDESS STATUE FRAGMENT

12 A MATHURA RED SANDSTONE HAND FROM A YAKSHI OR GODDESS.

INDIA, MATHURA REGION, KUSHAN–EARLY GUPTA PERIOD, 2ND–4TH CENTURY CE

DIMENSIONS

Length 160 mm

DESCRIPTION

Red (mottled) sandston.

Fragment as shown, with an old break at the wrist and losses to fingertip ends; surface weathering, pitting and mineral accretions consistent with burial; scattered edge chips; no evident modern recutting. Overall with honest wear and appealing, stable surfaces.

Carved as the right hand from a larger female figure, the dorsum detailed with a row of almond-shaped petals suggesting a hand-ornament (hathphul / hand-flower) or stylized floral/henna motifs. The four tapering fingers terminate in neatly incised triangular nails; at the wrist a stack of narrow ribbed bangles surmounts a broad beaded cuff with rosette repeats—an ornament vocabulary closely associated with Mathura female figures of the Kushan–early Gupta era. The stone exhibits the warm, quartz-flecked matrix typical of Mathura quarry material.

The material, jewelry scheme (stacked bangles above a beaded cuff), and modeling of the fingers point to a yakshi (female nature spirit) or richly adorned goddess/attendant from a temple or railing context. Hands of this quality and scale are comparatively uncommon survivals; the iconographic details and crisp jewelry enhance its sculptural presence.







Stephen Butler