

1 Courtly Disposition

To be a lofty man whose head reaches the stars, the loins of the soul of my son must truly become bound with a girdle of laudable qualities and praiseworthy abilities.¹

So wrote the Bahmani vizier and long-distance merchant Mahmud Gavan in a letter to his son Ali, who had recently inherited his father's title of Malik al-Tujjar (prince of merchants), and was leading a contingent in the sultan's army, marching towards the territory of the neighbouring Vijayanagara Empire. This letter, filled with paternal affection and concern, lays out Gavan's vision of a highly qualified individual, equipped with practical skills and personal characteristics that would enable him to negotiate the faction-filled, contemporary world of the court.

The question of how best to ensure the perpetuation of social rank and prestige for succeeding generations of one's own kinsmen was a perennial preoccupation among the elite, at a time when rank and power depended largely on proximity to the throne. Across the Persian Cosmopolis the anxiety generated over the issue of the correct education of children and young adults found voice in a wide range of literary genres, which, taken together, promoted the formation of what we might call a 'courtly disposition'.

This chapter investigates this 'courtly disposition', one which was shared and recognised across the Persian Cosmopolis. While conceding that the quest for knowledge was a life-long pursuit, this chapter suggests that certain key themes, subjects and texts were considered to be a crucial foundation for an individual aspiring to achieve success in the court societies of the Persian Cosmopolis. Through an analysis of a variety of ethical, philosophical and medical literature, both widely circulated classic texts, and works produced in the Deccan, I will make three arguments. Firstly, I will argue that the character of this general education was deliberately 'cosmopolitan'; based on a canon of texts, both literary and

¹ *RI*, p. 137.

scientific, the worth of which was recognised across the Persian Cosmopolis. Secondly, I will argue that the aim of this education was not mere knowledge acquisition, but rather the formation of a specific type of disposition within each individual. This disposition, like the world of the Persian Cosmopolis, was courtly in orientation and its widely shared nature enabled each individual to take up employment wherever opportunities rose: across the Persian Cosmopolis, and even beyond. More than just a basic education, the formation of this courtly disposition entailed both the mastery of a broad range of widely available classic texts along with the language practices that had emerged out of such texts, and the development of a particular orientation towards the court society and towards the self. Finally, I will argue that underlying the external traits of this courtly disposition was a widely shared medico-philosophical understanding of the connections between mind, body and soul and the way in which the perfection of one presupposed the engagement of the others.

At first glance it may seem that the courtly disposition which is the subject of this chapter was unaffected by the Indian environment of the medieval Deccan. Indeed, the lack of any regionally specific attributes in this courtly disposition actually enabled the movement of ambitious men across the Persian Cosmopolis, and their easy integration into new court societies upon arrival. Yet as the easy movement of men between the Deccani sultanates and the Vijayanagara Empire demonstrates, despite its apparent moorings in classical Persian literature and thought, this courtly disposition seems to have shared key elements with dispositions cultivated by courtly cultures moored in other cultural systems.² Moreover, as an orientation towards the world and the self rather than a programmatic set of skills to be acquired, this courtly disposition was only ever a foundation upon which an individual could build an edifice of more specific skills. In order to really succeed at any particular court, local political imperatives required each individual to make a significant engagement with the knowledges and practices of the vernacular environment, whether in terms of language, culture or cosmology.

² See Richard Maxwell Eaton and Phillip B Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), particularly chapter 5; Phillip B. Wagoner, 'Fortuitous Convergences and Essential Ambiguities: Transcultural Political Elites in the Medieval Deccan', *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 3(3) (1999), 241–64; Phillip B. Wagoner, 'In Amin Khan's Garden: Charitable Gardens in Qutb Shahi Andhra', in Daud Ali and Emma J. Flatt (eds.), *Garden and Landscape Practices in Precolonial India: Histories from the Deccan* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2012), pp. 98–126.

A 'Cosmopolitan' Education

Even a cursory glance at a wide range of literary genres produced across the Persian Cosmopolis suggests a concern with educating children. *Akhlaq* (ethical) treatises routinely dedicated a chapter to the subject and *insha* (epistolary) manuals regularly included model letters of advice from fathers to their sons.³ Historians framed their chronicles with accounts of rulers' childhoods and interspersed descriptions of political events with pithy quotes from moralistic literature: in the chronicle *Tārīkh-i Firīshṭah* (History of Firīshṭa), for example, a sultan's misspent childhood frequently foretold his later despotic rule, whilst a wise ruler had invariably undergone an exemplary education.⁴ Poets, too, frequently felt compelled to advise their offspring in their poems, particularly through the *masnavi* genre, following Nizami's model in the *Haft Paykar* (Seven Portraits, 1197).⁵

Underlying the concern for education was a long-standing anxiety about youth itself. A newly born infant was described as an 'uncut jewel devoid of any form or carving', which was so highly susceptible to perverse influences that it had to be disciplined and trained from the moment of weaning, lest 'destructive dispositions gain[ed] a hold'.⁶ The anxiety surrounding the volatile nature of youth is clearly reflected in the opening lines of the *Qābūs-nāmāh*'s chapter on 'Age and Youth':

Although you are young my son, be old in understanding. I do not demand that you shall not behave as a young man, but be a young man governed by self-restraint. Yet neither be a lack-lustre young man; it is well for a young man to be spirited, for as Aristotle says, 'Youth is a species of madness.' Be not foolhardy; no harm can come out of high spirits, but misfortune can come from foolhardy conduct. To the full extent of your powers enjoy the period of your youth, for when you reach old age you will be unable to achieve much.⁷

The contemporary solution to the perceived malleability of youthful characters was the provision of rigorous, disciplined, education. Education

³ See *RI*; Ishtiyāq Ahmad Zilli, 'Development of Insha Literature to the End of Akbar's Reign' in Muzaffar Alam, Françoise Nalini Delvoye, Marc Gaborieau (eds.), *The Making of Indo Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies* (Delhi: Manohar, 2000); Riyazul Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo Persian Relations 1500–1750* (Tehran: Iranian Culture Foundation and Institute of Central and West Asian studies, Karachi, 1979), vol. I.

⁴ *TF*.

⁵ Nizami Ganjavi, *The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance*, trans. and ed., Julie Scott Meisami (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁶ al-Ghazali, *On Disciplining the Soul, Kitāb Riyādat al-naḥs and On Breaking the Two Desires, Kitāb Kasr al-shahwatayn, Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences, Ihya' 'ulum al-Din*, trans. and ed., T. J. Winter (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995), p. 75.

⁷ *QN*, 49.

was imparted formally through madrasas, which focused on the so-called Islamic sciences; jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Quran and hadith and some ancillary fields like Arabic grammar and philology.⁸ Knowledge was also acquired through study with and discipleship to a Sufi *pir* (master). The formation of a courtly disposition, however, seems to have emerged from the study of literary, scientific and philosophical works, which was undertaken privately, or under the guidance of a personal tutor. Although the quest for knowledge was considered a life-long pursuit, mastering the key works of the Persian literary canon and those classical texts on science, mathematics and philosophy was considered a task to be completed as a child or young man.

We do not have contemporary curricula that reveal those texts considered compulsory; since this type of education was undertaken privately, there was obviously no official attempt at standardisation. By the fifteenth century, however, a certain canon had evolved with which educated men across the Persian Cosmopolis were expected to be familiar, forming a widely shared base that could be termed a 'cosmopolitan education'. Some information can also be deduced from the number of copies of certain manuscripts and their dispersal across the Persian Cosmopolis, particularly through the painstaking study of royal libraries.⁹ A reconstruction can also be attempted through hints found in dynastic histories, where a sultan's erudition is indicated by their mastery of certain texts, sometimes at a particularly early age, and by an examination of intertextual references in a range of literary sources.¹⁰

So what did this canon include? The importance of poetry in the education of erudite men is well known and has attracted much scholarly interest; the poetry of Anvari (d. 1189), Nizami Ganjavi (d. 1209), Attar (d. 1221), Sadi (d. 1291–2), Hafiz (d. 1389–90) and Jami (d. 1492) were particularly popular.¹¹ Prose works, particularly those known as *adab* or moral tales, such as Sadi's *Bāstān* (The Perfume Garden, 1257) and *Gulistān* (The Rose Garden, 1258) were also extremely important. Some of these, like the *Kalīlah va Dimnah* (Kalilah and Dimnah),

⁸ Christopher Melchert, 'Education iv: The Medieval Madrasa', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2011, available at www.iranicaonline.org (accessed 25 May 2015); Francis Robinson, 'Ottomans, Safavids, Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8(2) (1997), 151–84.

⁹ Keelan Overton, 'A Collector and His Portrait: Book Arts and Painting for Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur (c. 1580–1627)', PhD dissertation, University of California Los Angeles (2011), on Ibrahim Adil Shah's library.

¹⁰ See the list of works read to AA, vol. I, *Ain* no. 85.

¹¹ Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987).

a twelfth-century Persian version of Ibn Muqaffa's (d. 757) eponymous Arabic original, itself a translation of a Sanskrit text, the famous *Pancatantra*, drew on earlier works and other cultural traditions.¹²

A particularly influential genre within the Persian literary canon was 'advice literature', a term which incorporates several distinct genres including *nasīha* (advice), *adab* (rules of conduct), *hikām* (wisdom) and *vasīyya* (exhortation) – genres which often directly engaged with the realities of court life.¹³ Important texts of this type included the *Qābūs-nāmāh* of Unsur al-Muali Kaikaus (c. 1082–3); Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyāsat-nāmāh* (The Book of Government, c. 1086–91); and the *Chahār Maqālāh* of Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi (The Four Discourses, c. 1155–7). Although much advice literature was ostensibly addressed to the ruler or his heir, the topics covered in the books suggest that the intended audience was much wider: namely the courtly elite or those who aspired to be part of this elite. For example, the *Qābūs-nāmāh*, although written by Kaikaus, the Ziyarid prince of Gurgan and Tabaristan, for his son, the heir, includes chapters on the duties of a *nadīm* as well as advice on training as an artisan, a merchant and a secretary; topics which would have been more relevant for a courtier than a ruler. Even those topics which specifically addressed the ruler, such as the indispensability of a ruler's personal virtue, were explained in the context of the court society of which he was a member, albeit the most important individual within it. Like other forms of Persian literature, advice literature drew on an earlier tradition, originating in Pahlavi and Neoplatonic literature from the Sasanian and Hellenic periods. Thus, we see the persistence of certain exemplary figures, most notably the just and righteous king Anushirvan, the young ruler Sikander (Alexander) and the sagacious advisor Aristotle, as well as certain topics in advice literature written in the Persian Cosmopolis over a wide range of time. Common topics included the need for the ruler to uphold and abide by the law, to cultivate learning and patronise the learned, to solicit advice from scholars and sages, to control his temper and refrain from hasty judgements and to study the ways of past kings.¹⁴

Connected to these pragmatic and practical advice texts were philosophical and ethical works in both Persian and Arabic, like al-Farabi's *al-Madīna al-fāḍila* (The Virtuous City, c. tenth century), Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* (The Cultivation of Morals, c. eleventh century) and Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Akhlāq-i Naṣirī* (1292), which drew on Arabic translations of Hellenic and Neoplatonic sources, particularly the thought

¹² Dagmar Riedel, Mahmoud Omidsharar and Bernard O'Kane, 'Kalila wa Demna', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2010, online edition (accessed 25 May 2015).

¹³ See Louise Marlow, 'Advice and Advice Literature', *EI3* online, (accessed 25 May 2015).

¹⁴ Marlow, 'Advice'.

of Aristotle. Various works by al-Ghazali (d. 1111), including *Ihya' 'ulūm al-dīn*, (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) and the *Kīmīyā-yi sa'ādat* (The Alchemy of Happiness), were also extremely influential.¹⁵

Finally, epic and historical works played an important role in this cosmopolitan education.¹⁶ Both Arabic historiography, which initially arose from interest in the Prophet's life, and a wealth of Sassanian epic and historical traditions influenced medieval Persian historiography.¹⁷ In the Persian Cosmopolis, histories were written by a range of professionals, including court officials like viziers and secretaries, judges, ulama and physicians, who shared an understanding about the proper content and purpose of history. By the tenth century, several influential models had emerged, including universal histories, which incorporated pre-Islamic history as a prelude to the history of Islam, regional histories and dynastic histories.¹⁸ Certain works became perennially important literary models, from Firdausi's epic the *Shāh Nāmāh* (Book of Kings, c. 977–1010), which recounted the legends of pre-Islamic Iran, to universal world histories like al-Tabari's *Tārīkh al-rusul wa 'l-mulūk* (History of Prophets and Kings, c. 915), to the histories dedicated to specific rulers, like Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnāmāh* (The Book of Victory, c. 1424–8), a eulogy of the Central Asian ruler, Timur (1370–1405), which was particularly admired for its ornate style.

The enduring influence of these literary texts is seen from the multiple manuscript copies produced across the Persian Cosmopolis at a distance of both time and space from their original location and era of composition and their existence in royal and noble libraries of a later date. However, it is also seen through the production of multiple recensions, translations, re-workings and imitations of these works throughout the Persian Cosmopolis. Such productions are part of what can be termed shared 'language practices' including the ability to apply one's knowledge of appropriate genres for specific occasions and follow all the concomitant rules of each genre, the choice to imitate a particular model or text, or to cite a particular extract, in a particular set of circumstances, and so on.¹⁹

¹⁵ Muzaffar Alam, 'Akhlāqī Norms and Mughal Governance' in Muzaffar Alam, Françoise Nalini Delvoye, Marc Gaborieau (eds.), *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies* (Delhi: Manohar/Centre de Science Humaines, 2000) pp. 67–95.

¹⁶ See Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 45–53.

¹⁷ Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Meisami, *Historiography*.

¹⁹ On 'language practices', see Sheldon Pollock, 'The Sanskrit Cosmopolis 300–1300 CE: Transculturation, Vernacularisation and the Question of Ideology', in Jan E. M. Houben (ed.), *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit, Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), pp. 197–248.

It has long been noted, for example, that newly independent sultans frequently commissioned a production of the *Shāh Nāmāh*.²⁰ Often these were lavish copies, sometimes illustrated, of the original text, but in the case of the newly independent Bahmani sultanate, an ambitious imitation, the *Futūḥ al-Salāṭīn*, which recounted the history of Muslim rulers in India, in the same metre as Firdausi's original, was dedicated to Sultan Ala al-Din Hasan Bahman Shah by the author Isami, in 1350.²¹

A common technique amongst poets was the composition of a *javāb* (lit. response), a poem written in imitation of a great master.²² The *Khamsah* (Quintet, twelfth century) of Nizami Ganjavi was a particularly popular model for imitation; in the Deccan, a version was composed by the famous vizier of Golkonda, known by his title Mir-Jumlaḥ, who used the *takhallus* (pen-name) Ruh al-Amin, at the turn of the seventeenth century. Some classical texts like the *Gulistān*, commonly mentioned by contemporaries as a crucial text for the education of young men, were kept current by the compilation of expository literature: as its name suggests, the *Miftāḥ-i Gulistān* (Key to the Rose-Garden, 1494) was a lexicon, compiled for Sultan Mahmud Bahmani by Avais Ala, which endeavoured to explain obscure terms and phrases found in the *Gulistān*.²³ Others were reworked to fit with prevailing literary fashions, like Husain Vaiz Kashifi's reworking of the *Kalīlah va Dimnah* as the *Anvār-i Suhaylī* (The Lights of Canopus, late fifteenth century). Some of the re-workings of these canonical texts circulated as widely, or perhaps even more widely than the originals; such was certainly the case with two of the re-workings of the *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*: Jalal al-Din Davani's *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* (The Ethics of Jalal, c. 1467–77) and Husain Vaiz Kashifi's *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī* (The Ethics of Muḥsin, 1494–5), which became enduringly popular in India.²⁴ Other works drew from a variety of older sources and often had a more restricted circulation: the seventeenth-century *Mau'izah-i Jahāngirī* (Jahangir's Admonitions) was produced and circulated at the Mughal court; another, less famous volume on ethics known as *Tuḥfa-i Qutb Shāhī* (The Rarities of the Qutb Shahis)

²⁰ Barbara Brend, 'The British Library's Shāhnāma of 1438 as a Sultanate Manuscript', in Robert Skelton (ed.), *Facets of Indian Art* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1986), pp. 87–93. Brend argues that stylistic elements in this particular manuscript make Bidar under Ahmad Shah Bahmani a likely provenance for this manuscript.

²¹ Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing* (London: Luzac & Co., 1966), pp. 94–110.

²² Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1998).

²³ Avais Ala, *Miftāḥ-i Gulistān*, (1494), Gujarat Libraries Catalogue, No. 96, Noor Microfilm Centre, Iran House, Delhi.

²⁴ Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India 1200–1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), pp. 50–5, 58–9. On Davani's links to Mahmud Gavan see Chapter 4.

was produced for the Qutb Shahi kings by Ali bin Taifur al-Bistami in the seventeenth century.²⁵ Yet even these works were not solely repetitions of earlier materials but incorporated new ideas into a framework derived from older works. Thus, in the *Tuhfa-i Qutb Shāhī* an attempt was made to equate the Greek concept of ‘*namus*’ (reputation or honour) with the Islamic idea of sharia. As Alam points out, this demonstrates that the work of transposing and adapting Greek ideas into Islamic philosophy and statecraft was not confined to the early centuries of Islam, nor to the Islamic heartlands, but continued throughout the Islamic world even as late as the seventeenth century.²⁶

Familiarity with older works was also reinforced by a particular practice that emerged in Persian literature, the prolific use of intertextuality, both overt and covert. This practice, which came to pervade all genres of writing, presupposed a broad education on the part of both writer and reader. Over time the practice of intertextuality was brought to a high pitch of refinement; advice manuals and pedagogical texts poured scorn on those who misused or made clumsy intertextual references, whilst particularly clever references were admiringly cited as models for emulation.²⁷

It is less easy to piece together the ‘canon’ of scientific works with which educated men would have been familiar at this period. Arabic remained the language of prestige for scientific literature, although Persian summaries and commentaries on classic Arabic texts certainly abounded.²⁸ Arabic translations of Greek texts remained important, although as scholars have long emphasised, many of those texts described as ‘translations’ were actually re-workings in the light of contemporary knowledge, rather than close translations, whilst other texts were pseudo-epigraphic: new, but attributed by their anonymous authors to ancient sages, such as Ptolemy (Batlamīyus).²⁹ Some sense of the commonly studied scientific texts can be deduced from the twelfth-century advice manual *Chahār Maqālah*, which describes the four ‘essential servants of the king’, the secretary, poet, astrologer and the physician, and mentions some of the

²⁵ Ali bin Taifur al-Bistami, *Tuhfa-i Qutb Shāhī* (c. 1626–72), Bodleian Library, MS 1471, ff. 6b–71a, Oxford.

²⁶ Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam*, p. 60. ²⁷ See Chapter 4.

²⁸ Scholars have been slow to study these Persian texts, often dismissing them as derivative, and focusing instead on the Arabic ‘originals’. Speziale points out that the flourishing medical literature written in Persian in India has never been subjected to a close study. Fabrizio Speziale, *Soufisme, religion et médecine en Islam Indien* (Paris: Karthala, 2010), p. 6.

²⁹ Dmitri de Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ‘Abbāsīd Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)*, (London: Routledge, 1998); M. Plessner, ‘Batlamīyūs’, *EI2* online, (accessed 26 May 2015).

key books which those hoping for courtly success should master.³⁰ These included works on medicine and pharmacology, such as the *Qānūn* and the *Kitāb al-Shifā'* (Book of Healing) of Ibn Sina, which would have been supplemented by the works of Galen (Jalinus) and the *materia medica* of Dioscorides;³¹ works on astronomy and astrology like the *Almagest* (*al-Midjisti*) of Ptolemy, al-Biruni's *Kitāb al-Taḥḥīm fī ṣind'ati't-Tanjīm* (Explanation of the Science of Astronomy) and the work of Abu Maashar of Balkh;³² works on mathematics and geometry like Euclid, in the recension of Thabit ibn Qurra, the *Takmila* (Supplement) of Abu Mansur Baghdadi and the *Ṣad Bāb* (Hundred Chapters) of Ahmad ibn Abd al-Jalil al-Sajzi;³³ works on geography and cosmography by al-Masudi and al-Biruni;³⁴ and the related genre of 'wonders of creation', most notably Zakariyya b. Muhammad al-Qazvini's *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt wa ghārā'ib al-marwūdāt* (The Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existence). I will discuss the influence of some of these works on the formation of the 'courtly disposition' later in this chapter.

An Ethical Education

A moralising and instructive tone permeated much of the literary canon, found not just in those works explicitly recognised as 'advice literature', but also in various genres of poetry and prose, including philosophical texts and histories.³⁵ Meisami has demonstrated the ways in which Persian courtly poetry had a didactic and exemplary function, particularly *masnavis*.³⁶ Certain prose genres, like history and *insha* (epistolary literature), also became particularly popular vehicles for the reiteration of the ideals and norms of behaviour propagated by the authors of advice literature, either through the inclusion of direct quotes or through summaries of anecdotes and well-known maxims, playing an important part in the diffusion of these norms to an audience widely dispersed in time and space.

As early as 1966, Peter Hardy criticised the scholarly assumption that 'medieval Muslim histories need less "processing" than other varieties of historical evidence before they can be made to yield intelligible history'.³⁷ However, as Waldman and Meisami have noted, the tendency of modern

³⁰ *CM*, p. 12.

³¹ *CM*, p. 76. Neither Galen nor Dioscorides are mentioned in the *Chahār Maqālah*, but their influence is clear in Arabic medicine and pharmacology respectively. See Véronique Boudon-Millot, 'Galen', *EI3* online (accessed 26 May 2015). Leigh Chipman, 'Dioscorides', *EI3* online (accessed 26 May 2015).

³² *CM*, p. 62. ³³ *CM*, p. 62.

³⁴ Ahmad S. Maqbul and F. Taeschner, 'Djughrāfiyā', *EI2* online (accessed 26 May 2015).

³⁵ Marlow, 'Advice'. ³⁶ Meisami, *Poetry*. ³⁷ Hardy, *Historians*, p. 12.

scholars to view Persian chronicles and even epics ‘as unstructured, uninterpretive mines of factual information’ continues to obscure the didactic nature of much Persian historiography.³⁸ As Meisami has argued, the medieval Persian historian’s primary interest lay less in recording facts of history than in the construction of a meaningful narrative, and, I would add, in the construction of an ethical reader.³⁹ Histories were considered particularly good vehicles for imparting ethical messages, as well as fertile grounds for the display of the writer’s erudition through rhetorical and structural style. These stylistic dimensions of Persian historiography have frequently been dismissed as gratuitous and indeed complicit in distorting ‘historical truth’ by foregrounding style over facts, but as Meisami demonstrates, the rhetorical strategies of structure and embellishment were an integral part of a historian’s message.⁴⁰ Thus, by interspersing accounts of historical events with apposite poems, pithy versified aphorisms and recasting moral anecdotes drawn from a large store of classical literature, historians were able to build up a picture of an ideal man as a pedagogical tool to help form the character of the reader and to elucidate the merits and faults of later and geographically distant dynasties.

In order to clarify how this process worked, we can consider an example from the Deccani historian Muhammad Qasim Firishta’s *Tārīkh-i Firishtah* (1606–10).⁴¹ When recounting the reign of the Bahmani sultan Firuz (r. 1397–1422), Firishta emphasises how under Firuz, the courtly assembly (*majlīs*) had become a place where the sultan would be treated without form or ceremony and the courtiers,

might come in or go out whenever they wanted; and in the assembly each person might call for whatever he chose to eat or drink, and the servants of the court would make it appear, and they might speak about anything, with just two exceptions: and one of those about which no word should be spoken was worldly matters, which should be brought up at the time of the court assembly (*vāqt-i dīvāndāri*); and the other thing which should not be spoken, was slander and evil words against each other.⁴²

This innovative courtly custom sparked a discussion between one of the courtiers and the sultan:

³⁸ Marilyn Robinson Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography* (Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 1980), pp. 3–4; and Meisami, *Persian Historiography*.

³⁹ Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 3. ⁴⁰ Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 1–4.

⁴¹ There were two recensions of Firishta’s history: the first, entitled *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, dated 1015 (1606–7) and the second entitled *Tārīkh-i Nauras-nāmah*, dated 1018 (1609–10), now known as *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*. Peter Hardy, ‘Firishta’, *EI2* online (accessed 27 May 2015).

⁴² *TF*, vol. II, p. 324.

One day, Mullah Ishaq Sirhindi, who was a learned and cheerful man, observed to the sultan, that ‘obliging the courtiers (*ahl-i majlis*) to speak to him without etiquette was not appropriate for the temperament of sultans; and the story of Mahmud bin Sabuktigin and Abu Raihan, his astrologer, corroborates my assertion.’ . . . Sultan Firuz Shah, smiled, and observed, that ‘Such deeds could only come from emperors who did not possess knowledge or wisdom: May God forbid that such characteristics be implanted in my disposition.’ And the intelligent men who are familiar with the service of princes, and are accustomed to crowned assemblies, know that although it was claimed that Sultan Firuz Shah would be weakened by such characteristics, he actually excelled famous kings in his disposition.⁴³

Firishta’s depiction of Firuz as an exemplar is made more compelling by the intertextual references of this passage: the anecdote to which Mullah Ishak refers is found in one of the most popular volumes of courtly advice literature of the Persian Cosmopolis, the *Chahār Maqālah*.⁴⁴ Firishta does not mention the literary lineage of the anecdote, but, in keeping with contemporary understandings of the didactic role of the genre of history, he is determined to ensure that his audience cannot miss the implications of Firuz’s exemplary behaviour. Rather than assuming they are familiar with the story, he summarises it, using the words of Mullah Daud Bidari, a historian and courtier of Firuz Bahmani’s court.⁴⁵

The story, Firishta tells us, goes as follows: the astrologer Abu Raihan, who had already provoked the sultan by his self-confident expertise, enraged the sultan by correctly predicting the sultan’s deliberately misleading actions and was imprisoned. When the sultan was asked why he had punished the astrologer, rather than rewarding him for his two surprising predictions, he replied that:

this man may be skilled in the speculative sciences, but the perfect sage should also understand dispositions: emperors for example, are like children, so and one must speak appropriately for their character.⁴⁶

Thus, what begins as an account of the historical ruler Firuz Bahmani becomes the occasion for a meditation on accepted norms of courtly behaviour. Firuz Bahmani is depicted as an exemplar of a just sultan, and this anecdote presents an opportunity for the historian to impart some ethical advice to his readers, including his own patron, Ibrahim Adil Shah II. Sultans should be just in their dealings with their courtiers, whilst courtiers, unless they serve such an exceptionally just sultan as

⁴³ *TF*, vol. II, p. 324. ⁴⁴ *CM*, pp. 65–7.

⁴⁵ Mullah Daud Bidari’s history, the *Tuḥfat al-Ṣalāṭīn Bahmanī*, written 1397–1422, is no longer extant, but was one of the sources Firishta used for his own account of the early Bahmanis. *TF*, vol. II, p. 324.

⁴⁶ *TF*, vol. II, p. 326.

Firuz Bahmani, should be mindful of the capricious and easily offended nature of the sultan.

Insha (epistolary composition) was another literary genre that was particularly influential in the dispersal of shared behavioural models and ethical norms, not least because letters written in this genre were exchanged across the Persian Cosmopolis. As a genre that prized stylistic erudition, individual *insha* compositions were complex documents overflowing with intertextual references to earlier writings. I will discuss the genre of *insha* in Chapter 4, but here I want to focus more closely on the contents of the *Riyāz al-Inshā* ('Gardens of *Inshā*'), a collection of letters written in the Deccan by the Bahmani vizier Mahmud Gavan between 1475–7. This volume consists of 137 exemplary letters: some copies of actual letters and some intended as examples.⁴⁷ But, as the title of this treatise indicates, Gavan also intended this volume as a pedagogical tool: the word *riyāz* is both the plural of the Arabic word '*rauzat*,' meaning gardens or meadows, and a word meaning habitual training, practice and exercise. In his companion volume to the *Riyāz al-Inshā*, a manual on how to write letters, known as the *Manāẓīr al-Inshā* ('Aspects of *Insha*'), Gavan emphasises the importance of both form and meaning in epistolary compositions, implying that the contents of the letters in the *Riyāz* were integral to his pedagogical aim.⁴⁸ Many of the ideas expressed in these letters drew on widely accepted ideals about conduct and right action. For example, Gavan's letter to the new ruler of Gilan describes kingship in terms well known from the advice literature tradition: princes should study how their ancestors had acted, they should take the advice of wise counsellors, send only the best of their subjects as foreign ambassadors and employ the best men as officials. The basis of the right to rule, Gavan declared, was in the continued progress of the land; a ruler who indulged in excessive hunting and drinking or other such matters had no business to remain a king.⁴⁹

A significant proportion of the letters in the *Riyāz al-Inshā* were addressed to fellow courtiers and scholars, implying that letter writing was still seen as a necessary accomplishment for all courtiers, rather than a technical skill practised largely by the secretarial class employed in the

⁴⁷ One of Gavan's letters in the *Riyāz* to the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II has been found among Ottoman chancellery documents. H. K. Sherwani, *Mahmud Gawan: The Great Bahmani Wazir* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1942), pp. 223–6.

⁴⁸ MI, ff. 45b–46a, 82a.

⁴⁹ *RI(H)*, cxxxvi, quoted in Sherwani, *Gawan*, pp. 35–6. (Sherwani's references to the *Riyāz al-Inshā* refer to the Habibganj library, MS 50/136 manuscript numbering, which does not correspond to the printed edition.) See also Sherwani, *Gawan*, p. 125.

chancellery, as it became during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵⁰ In his letters, Gavan frequently juxtaposes familiar maxims about correct behaviour taken from advice literature with a discussion of contemporary events in the Bahmani sultanate and the Persian Cosmopolis. By advocating particular types of courtly behaviour in a letter-writing manual Gavan was not merely providing technical instruction in the art of *insha*, but also helping to disseminate a cosmopolitan understanding of courtly culture to an audience of aspiring courtiers, both slaves and free-men, in a territory with competing local traditions of courtly culture, located somewhat at the periphery of the Persian Cosmopolis.

A Courtly Disposition

The cumulative effect of education in this literary canon – of involvement in the associated language practices of emulating, re-working and quoting that canon in a wide variety of prose and poetic genres, and of reading contemporary works of poetry, history or *insha* informed by the shared ethical ideals of that canon – was the creation of a specific type of courtly disposition in individual readers, one which was shared widely across the Persian Cosmopolis. But what exactly were the traits of this courtly disposition? Two different accounts, both framed as paternal ‘advice to the son’ and both produced – albeit nearly 150 years apart – in the Deccan, demonstrate a remarkable continuity in the traits advocated by powerful men who had met with considerable success in their own courtly careers.

The first account is a letter, written some time between 1466 and 1477, from Mahmud Gavan to his son Ali, who had succeeded to Gavan’s previous position and its accompanying title of Malik al-Tujjar (prince of merchants) following Mahmud Gavan’s promotion to vizier, which had been accompanied by the award of a new title, Khvajah Jahan (lord of the world).⁵¹ Using a letter from a father to a son as a framing device for advice on comportment and etiquette was not unusual and by the sixteenth century seems to have been considered a required ‘type’ for every *insha* manual. However, compared to the letters from fathers to sons in later *insha* manuals, which focus on the specific education and technical skills necessary for a *munshi* (secretary), Gavan’s letter is courtly in its concerns.⁵² These concerns are strikingly similar to those of earlier

⁵⁰ See this volume, Chapter 4.

⁵¹ Gavan received the title Khvajah Jahan in 1466, so the letter must have been written after this date, and before the compilation of the volume in about 1477.

⁵² Compare Chandrabhan Brahman’s letter in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘The Making of a Munshī’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24(1) (2004), 61–72.

classics of advice literature, most particularly the *Qābūsnāmah*, which is also framed as advice from a father to son.

After profuse expressions of affection, Gavan, the ‘old man of intellect, who is master of the workshop of production’, whose ‘soul is filled to the fingertips with longing’ for his absent son, opens the letter by stating his intention:

It is necessary that . . . the pen of the painter draw a reflection on the leaf of the heart [of those] aspects of courtesy [which] are reflected in the mirror of attainment. . . . He [saw that it was] necessary that they turn him [Ali] from the assembly of the darkest night to the light of the lamp of the advice of the luminous ones. . . . It is necessary that that sublime brightness of the eye [. . . know] the requisites of the office of *amir* [commander] and understands the requirements and fundamentals of being a vizier, so that in the vision of people of literary attainments and government, that heart-wounding sword and executing pen become worthy.⁵³

I want to highlight two important points in this passage. Firstly, the necessary aspects of courtesy must be learned and count as ‘attainments’; as far as Gavan is concerned they are neither natural, nor inherited. This echoes Kai Kaus’ exhortation in the *Qābūsnāmah*: ‘Your hunting ground is this fleeting world and your quarry is knowledge and virtuous conduct.’⁵⁴ Secondly, neither military prowess nor literary skill is adequate by itself; a man requires a thorough understanding of the duties of the *amir* and the *vazir* to be considered worthy in the eyes of men of ‘literary attainments and government’. This advice underscores the nature of courtly service in sultanate Deccan; rather than a bureaucratic empire with a rigid separation between military and administrative service, the Bahmani sultanate was a court society in which every member would be expected to perform military or administrative tasks, as circumstances required at any particular moment.

Throughout this letter, Gavan establishes his authority by displaying his own literary attainments and erudition. His letter is filled with quotes from Quranic verses as well as apposite verses from Arabic and Persian poetry, some composed by himself and some by classical authors. His sentences are tortuously constructed with complicated allusions and untranslatable puns and filled with various literary artifices such as the use of rhyming prose and lengthy chains of multiple synonyms. In this way, Gavan used both the content and the form of the letter to make a pedagogical point; the literary attainments expected of a courtier, were on display in this very letter.

⁵³ *RI*, p. 136. ⁵⁴ *QN*, p. 3.

The advice that Gavan proceeds to give his son is both general and normative; in fact, the letter reads like a brief summary of the common elements of the Persian advice literature tradition: this is a prescriptive, rhetorical account, not a simple description of life in the Deccan. He commences by emphasising the importance of lineage: whilst forethought and prudence help forestall negligence and carelessness, it is equally important in this regard to learn from the actions of one's father and grandfather. Next there is a reference to the importance of military victory; the son should glorify the prince he serves by his bravery in battle.⁵⁵ In governance the son should always plan properly and keep control over indulgence and waste and ensure every action is well-regulated and methodical. A vizier must protect the rich and the poor from cruelty, tyranny and injustice and be sure to pay his dependants', troops' and attendants' salaries on time without delay or negligence.⁵⁶

Eloquence, rectitude and intellectual discernment are said to be the real signs of excellence in knowledge and the best ways to keep rebels under control:

People of distinction are adorned with rarities and marvels of knowledge . . . and they can tell the sight of civilised men of great magnanimity from the abundance of their knowledge and [their] vision [which is] replete with rectitude and by the proper manner in the complexion of their conversation [or epistolary correspondence] and by their essence, and a rebel and the hand of wickedness can be brought to the page of their vision by the sharpness of the sword of [their] intellect.⁵⁷

Mahmud Gavan also recommends that his son should be careful to reward nobles who may be serving under him with appropriate promotions and gradations of rank, to listen to their requests kindly, so that they remain happy and able to support their wives and dependants, and exercise clemency if a 'misfortune' occurs.⁵⁸ Gavan advises winning the hearts of the nobles and commoners by being liberal with his patronage: his courtesy, pleasant speech, cheerful countenance and radiant smile will symbolise his munificence.⁵⁹ Administration of a kingdom requires careful consideration, responsibility, ambition and self-control, Gavan argues. In order to improve a situation and to solve any problems, the son should use his own capacity to think and plan, and then consult with old, wise men and young ones of enlightened minds, so that conflict and contention will be controlled.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *RI*, p. 137. ⁵⁶ *RI*, p. 138. ⁵⁷ *RI*, p. 138. ⁵⁸ *RI*, p. 138. ⁵⁹ *RI*, p. 139.

⁶⁰ *RI*, p. 140.

In courtly gatherings, the son should be fully in control of himself, for drunk and cowardly men 'do not exhibit signs of respect or courtesy in their speech'.⁶¹ In all things the son should abandon his worldly attachment. Strength and activity should be considered to be the means to actual good fortune, honour and prestige. Gavan concludes by emphasising that martyrdom is far greater than a life of enjoyment.

What is striking about this letter is the extent to which the recommended behaviour is familiar from well-known classics of Persian advice literature and is unconcerned with the specific political or cultural environment of sultanate India in which it was written. Attainments in both military skills and literary education, achieved by hard work; a sense of responsibility and moderation and discernment in expenses, justice and personal conduct, balanced with liberal rewards to deserving parties; all dispensed with eloquent speech and a polite, smiling and pleasant demeanour, such were the traits that were valued. There is no mention here of negotiating cultural, religious or even environmental differences that animated the courtly world of the Deccan. No detail is provided of the requisite kinds of literary attainments, or the best forms of military training that were most appreciated at the Bahmani court.

The courtly disposition outlined in this letter finds echoes throughout Gavan's *insha* volumes. It is clear from many of his letters, for example, that Gavan conceived of the court as a place of opportunity for ambitious, well-educated and hardworking men. In a letter to his youngest son, Alaf Khan, Gavan argued that hard work, rather than mere dependence on an elevated lineage, was required to succeed at court:

those who take life in an easy manner are not to be seen among the great, while those with high ambitions who are also industrious sit with the kings and sultans. The crow and the kite are content with what they get and always look downwards and so they are seen as lowly and fit to be driven away, but the falcon has the courage to look up, he uses his wings with great industry, and suffers the hardships of hunger and fatigue, and so he is called the king of birds and deservedly sits on the hands of the high and mighty. On common sense depends the fulfilment of all objects, on knowledge the attainment of the highest station in life and on the general way of life the qualities of virtue and character.⁶²

In another letter, echoing Kai Kaus' admonition to his son, that 'until you have borne the drudgery of subordinate positions you will never attain to the comforts of high rank', Gavan warned the Sultan of Gilan that:

⁶¹ *RI*, p. 140. ⁶² *RI(H)*, xxv, f. 64, quoted in Sherwani, *Gawan*, p. 191.

those who of their own free will and without any compulsion act according to the principles of the Quran and the *Hadith* wear the turban of freedom, while those who put a cap of pride on their heads with the hand of denial fall from the steed of authority; again some pass the stage of subjection to elevated pedestals of high office and others through good fortune even sit on royal thrones.⁶³

A second account of this courtly disposition comes from a *masnavi*, entitled *Falak al-Burūj*, written by Ruh al-Amin, the *takhallus* (pen-name) of Mir Muhammad Amin Shahrastani (d. 1637). This poem was part of the *Khamsah* (quintet) of *masnavis* written by Ruh al-Amin in imitation of Nizami Ganjavi's famous twelfth-century collection known as the *Khamsah* (c. 1166–97).⁶⁴ Muhammad Amin, descended from a Sayyid family with close links to the Safavid court, was introduced to the Qutb Shahi court by Mir Mumin Astarabadi, and succeeded him as *mir-jumlah* (prime minister) of Golkonda between 1602–3 and 1612–3.⁶⁵

Falak al-Burūj, which was modelled on Nizami's *Haft Paykar*, drew on tales of the ancient kings of pre-Islamic Iran and the well-known traditions of advice literature. Like its model, Ruh al-Amin's poem concludes its introduction with an extended section entitled 'Advice to the son'. According to this poem the thrust of a courtly education in the Deccan seems to have been fourfold: mastering speech, behaving well towards your fellows, acquiring knowledge and skills and dedicating oneself to the search for God (*Haqq*). The paternal advice commences with a long discussion on the merits of discourse or speech followed by some concrete recommendations, which emphasise the acquisition of eloquence, fluency, restraint, and the faculty of discernment enabling one to moderate one's speech according to the person to be addressed:

⁶³ *QN*, pp. 195–6; *RI(H)*, xiii, f. 3, quoted in Sherwani, *Gawan*, p. 190. In another letter ostensibly written to a minister whilst campaigning in the Konkan, Gavan wrote: '... if one sends forth the arrows of endeavour and vigilance to the butt of the fulfilment of his objects by the strength of his own arms without the hope of any external help, for him there is an assurance of success'. *RI(H)*, xlvii, f. 96, quoted in Sherwani, *Gawan*, pp. 134–5.

⁶⁴ Imitating the *Khamsah* was a common undertaking for poets wishing to prove their skills. Famous versions include that of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi (c. 1298–1301) and that of Ali Shir Navai, in Chughtai Turkish (c. 1483–5). See J. T. P. de Bruijn, 'K̄hamsa', *EI2* online (accessed 7 June 2015).

⁶⁵ Hyder Reza Zabeth, 'The Role of Iranian Migrant Scholars in the Advancement of Sciences during the Qutb Shahi Period in Dakan', www.imamreza.net/old/eng/imamreza.php?id=3885 (accessed 7 June 2015). In 1612–3, he was dismissed by the new sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah, and moved first to Bijapur, then to the Safavid court, before finding a position in the Mughal Empire in 1617–18. See also Masashi Haneda, 'Emigration of Iranian Elites to India during the 16–18th Centuries', *Cahiers de Asie centrale*, 3/4, (1997), 129–43, available online at <http://asiacentrale.revues.org/480> (accessed 7 June 2015).

Since speech gives to a man means of sustenance,
 Success comes through [the art of] speech.
 Be an eloquent speaker, pupil of my eye,
 Be eloquent tongued, fresh speaking like the orators.
 [. . .]
 In a conversation be unmatched,
 But do not be talkative like the sea.
 Don't speak with the frivolous ones (*rindān*) no more, no less,
 Speak gainfully my dear one, with every breath.
 When you meet a learned man, speak eloquently to him,
 Speak with the tongue of the eyebrow.
 O son, be intelligent/prudent when you speak,
 Take your father as the standard.⁶⁶

The second general area addressed in the *masnavi* is the importance of behaviour in company and towards peers. Truthfulness, justice, humility, caution, compassion and patience should be embraced; vanity, oppression, injustice, drunkenness, impetuosity and jealousy should be eschewed. In all situations the son is expected to develop the faculties of moderation and of discernment, adapting his behaviour to the particular circumstances in which he finds himself:

Whether you live in Hind or Iran
 Adorn the assembly like the shining moon
 Scatter gold like the sun
 Move around the world and behave like the heaven.
 [. . .]
 Don't give intellect from your own hand as a means of living,
 Don't behave in the same manner in every place.
 At home, be the light of the eyes of the stars,
 In travelling, be the guide of the people on the way.
 [. . .]
 If you happen to need something in the bazaar,
 Whatever you carry [with you], bring that back [with you].
 If you pass by a planter be like the plain,
 Be a ship's captain when you go in the ship.
 If you become a soldier buy your arms,
 Never remove the coat of mail from your body.⁶⁷

The next series of verses focus on the importance of constant support towards the brotherhood and are infused with the ideas of *javanmardi* or young manliness, which will be discussed further in Chapter 6. These are followed by a series of verses on service to the sultan which emphasise humility and modesty, as well as absolute fidelity, but with the awareness of the practical rewards of this service:

⁶⁶ *FB*, ff. 71b–72a. ⁶⁷ *FB*, ff. 72a–b.

In order that your name may become great like the Sun,
 Always follow him like a shadow.
 When you hear his name mentioned by some speaker
 Pay regard to it like the name of God.
 Whether you are in your senses or you are intoxicated,
 Go before him like the sun worshipper.
 Hold your breath when he speaks to you,
 Do not be absent when he summons you.
 Boast of him if you have breath.
 Be happy with him [even] if you are grieving.
 [. . .]
 Whether you deal with the nobles or the commoners,
 It is he who directs all the affairs of the people.⁶⁸

The third aspect of Ruh al-Amin's advice focuses on the importance of acquiring skills. Skills rather than lineage or dress are deemed the mark of a true man. Playing on the rhymed pair *guhar/hunar* (ability/skill), a series of verses emphasise the fundamental importance of developing one's abilities to the fullest extent by acquiring a wide range of skills:

O son, you have many abilities,
 Your ability is like the shining moon.
 Spend your ability to acquire [some] skills,
 [If] you do not have skill, you [must] have ability.
 Try to [acquire] skills and set your heart on work,
 Show your ability like a gem.
 You have said that I have many skills,
 Your ability is made visible from skill.
 If you need some skill in a task,
 Never feel disgraced to acquire it.
 Try to acquire skills if you have ability,
 He who does not have ability is without skill.
 Do not look at the cloak and the turban,
 He who does not have skill, do not consider him a man.
 Try for [some] skill, if you have nobility/self respect,
 Take the pearl when you have the oyster.
 Be skilled and become dear to the world,
 The world is the spring; you will become the water of life.⁶⁹

It is noteworthy that Ruh al-Amin does not specify what kind of skills his son should acquire; it is important only that he acquires a skill, or even better, a range of generic skills, for then his true worth will be visible to all. After a long discussion on the importance of piety and seeking God (*Haqq*), the advice to the son concludes with a practical list of educational tasks that the son should accomplish. Here a Neoplatonic inheritance is

⁶⁸ *FB*, f. 74b. ⁶⁹ *FB*, ff. 74b–75a.

blended with classical poets of the Persian literary world; studying Plato, Galen, Unani scholars, Firdausi and Attar is recommended, as well as other masters of medieval and ancient learning:

Interpret the verses of spiritual love,
 After this, read the soul of Khaqani.
 Play more melodies on the rebab,
 Read twenty chapters of Anvari.
 Arithmetic, day and night should be the lancet,
 The soul is the key of the scholar.
 Do not read your lesson when you are weary and sorrowful,
 Be inclined towards Ptolemy.⁷⁰

In its orientation, Ruh al-Amin's paternal advice, like Gavan's, is remarkably lacking in regional specifics, and strikingly unconcerned with a specific programme of action. Beyond a quick summary of key classical authors who made up the foundations of a cosmopolitan education, there is no detailed advice on specific strategies, skills or bodies of knowledge, which will aid an individual's success. Rather, the focus is on the formation of a discerning, moderate and pragmatic man who knows how to act in any given situation and recognises the importance of acquiring a wide range of skills in order to achieve success in life.

The advice given by both Mahmud Gavan and Ruh-al-Amin was appropriate for any individual seeking courtly employment anywhere in the Persian Cosmopolis, and intentionally so. Gavan, and many of his protégés, including his own children, envisaged a world of courtly opportunities unbounded by the borders of a single sultanate, and were prepared to move vast distances in search of a liberal patron. Gavan himself had served the sultan of Gilan before finding a position at the Bahmani court, whilst his elder son, Abdullah, after spending his youth in India, returned to take up service in Gilan. One hundred and fifty years later, the Persian Cosmopolis was still a vast playing field in which ambitious men could seek opportunities, as the career of Ruh al-Amin, who moved from Iran to the Qutb Shahi sultanate to the Mughal Empire, demonstrates. The ability to move around such a vast geographical area, and take up employment wherever an opportunity arose, was predicated on a courtly education that was universally recognised and therefore regionally non-specific – what I am terming a cosmopolitan education. And yet, by itself, this education was not enough to guarantee success. Rather it formed a flexible and widely relevant courtly disposition, a base upon which ambitious men could build, acquiring and perfecting knowledge and

⁷⁰ *FB*, f. 79b.

skills. But what exactly did the term ‘knowledge’ mean to contemporaries, and why was it so prized?

Knowledge and Action

In classical Islamic thought *ilm* or knowledge held a particularly elevated place. The love of learning has been a leitmotiv of Islam from its earliest days; the Quran instructs the believer to ask the Lord to increase him in knowledge.⁷¹ In a classic essay, Rosenthal contends that the concept of *ilm* has so dominated Islam that there is ‘no branch of Muslim intellectual, religious and political and everyday life . . . untouched by the all-pervasive attitude to knowledge as something of supreme value . . .’⁷² In its earliest use in Islamic texts, *ilm* was equated with religious knowledge, but over time *ilm* became applied to other kinds of knowledge and the word *ulum*, the plural of *ilm*, began to be used. Although in some usages *ulum* seems to imply a range of independent knowledges, more commonly the various *ulum* are considered to be parts of the larger all-encompassing *ilm*.⁷³ This sense that all knowledge was connected and rooted in a larger knowledge about religious truth permeated the writings of many medieval scholars. A common tactic to gesture towards the religious aspects of any particular knowledge was the citing of hadiths in the opening remarks of an introduction. A Bijapuri treatise on perfume, for example, opens with various hadiths which demonstrate the Prophet’s fondness for perfumes.⁷⁴ A similar understanding of an underlying unity of knowledge, and of being, is seen in Gavan’s explanation of cultural and linguistic plurality in the contemporary Bahmani sultanate. Although he makes the pragmatic choice in *Riyāz al-Inshā’* to emphasise the cosmopolitan aspects of courtly culture, for reasons I will discuss later, this does not reflect of his ignorance of the diverse cultural and linguistic traditions which made up the courtly society of the Bahmani sultanate. Rather, he conceived of cultural and linguistic plurality as masking an underlying epistemological unity:

Know that existence (*vujūd*) is divided into four kinds. The first kind is the existence of special qualities (*vujūd-i khāṣṣiyat*), the second kind is intellectual existence (*vujūd-i ʿilmī*), the third kind is verbal existence (*vujūd-i lafẓī*) and the fourth is written existence (*vujūd-i khatī*). For seekers (*muḥaqqiqān*), the proof of knowing every script and everything that is the existence of the essence, is outside

⁷¹ Quran 20:114. See Ian Richard Netton, *Seek Knowledge: Thought and Travel in the House of Islam* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996.)

⁷² Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, Leiden, 1970), p. 2.

⁷³ Rosenthal, *Knowledge*. ⁷⁴ INS, f. 1v.

or inside the mind; beyond external and internal existence it has no other existence. And external and internal existences do not differ between peoples (*umam*) but verbal and written existence are different between peoples, for example Arabic vocabulary and especially the various [other] vocabularies (*lughāt*), and Arabic script and Frankish (*firangi*), Hindi and, especially, the various other scripts.⁷⁵

In medieval Islamic thought, *ilm*, knowledge, was also frequently paired with *amal*, action. The tenth-century thinker Abu Hasan al-Amiri argued that, ‘knowledge is the beginning of action and action is the end of knowledge; a beginning without an end is futile and an end without a beginning is absurd’.⁷⁶ Even religious knowledge was supposed to be translated into action, in the form of good deeds and proper action. More generally, knowledge was widely recognised to be a route to worldly success, although in practice it did not always manage to equal the claims of lineage or wealth. The close connection of knowledge with action meant that as well as being a theoretical and intellectual endeavour, the acquisition of knowledge frequently presupposed the simultaneous acquisition of a set of technical skills, or bodily practices. Given this background, Gavan’s insistence on ‘hard work’ as the main strategy for success at court and Ruh al-Amin’s focus on the son’s acquisition of *guhar/hunar*, ability and skill, begins to make more sense.

Courtly Bodies

At the base of this theory of knowledge and education outlined above, is a widely shared understanding of an intimate connection between the body and the soul, on the one hand, and between the body, the world and the cosmos, on the other. A wide range of theories emerged out of this shared understanding, and as they were elaborated, frequently diverged. The issue of the connection between body and soul was one that had long absorbed scholars in the Islamicate world, particularly following the translation of Aristotle’s *De Anima* into Arabic in the eighth century.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ MI, f. 82a. This quote is also clearly inflected with the prevailing Sufi conception of the interior and the exterior, discussed by Shahzad Bashir, which was mediated by the body. See the discussion below, and also Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), chapter 1. The suggestion that existence has multiple kinds but shares an underlying cosmic unity may also suggest Gavan’s adherence to philosophies propagated by individuals associated with the science of letters. See the discussion of Sa’in al-Din Turka’s *Risāla-yi Shaqq* in Ilker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) and Chapter 4.

⁷⁶ Rosenthal, *Knowledge*, p. 247.

⁷⁷ I use the term Islamicate world here (and elsewhere), rather than Persian Cosmopolis, to indicate that these issues were articulated across the geographical area where Muslims were culturally dominant and not just in the Persian-speaking lands.

In this regard, the arguments of the polymath Ibn Sina (d. 1037) were particularly influential, largely due to his unparalleled influence in philosophy and medicine, where his *Kitāb al-Qānūn fī'l-tibb* became the standard work on contemporary medical knowledge for at least six centuries.⁷⁸ In the *Kitāb al-Shifā'* (c. 1020–7), Ibn Sina posited a causal relationship between the body and the soul, arguing that the body and the soul originate simultaneously, and that the body and its sensory and imaginative faculties are crucial instruments, which serve to individuate the soul, and allow it to reach its 'first perfection'.⁷⁹

Ibn Sina's ideas exerted a strong influence on medieval Islamic ethics, most notably the Persian genre known as *akhlaq*.⁸⁰ Although conceding that some people were born better than others, philosophers like Ibn Miskawayh, al-Ghazali and Nasir al-din Tusi conceived of the soul as mutable, meaning that true virtue could be obtained, regardless of one's station in life.⁸¹ Drawing heavily on medical understandings of the four bodily humours, al-Ghazali posited the idea that the four cardinal virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance and justice, should be maintained in equilibrium since imbalance, through either deficiency or excess, would produce a sickness in the soul. In order to refine one's soul, al-Ghazali argued that the correct equilibrium of virtues should be acquired through habituation and constantly acting contrary to one's desires. Thus, an avaricious man could become generous by constantly forcing himself to give money until generosity became habitual to his character. Here the key techniques were *riyazat* (repetitive practice) and self-examination (*muhasabat*): techniques that were derived from both Greek philosophy and Islamic mysticism.⁸² Such techniques were also rooted in the daily carnal reality of Muslims, most particularly through the ritual of *taharat* or bodily purification. Theologically, the original purity of man is said to be affected through mere existence, since whatever the body eliminates is

⁷⁸ Robert Wisnovsky, 'Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition' in Peter Adamson and Richard C Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 92–136; Haskell D. Isaacs, 'Arabic Medical Literature' in M. J. L. Young, J. D. Latham and R. B. Serjeant (eds.), *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 342–63.

⁷⁹ Thérèse-Anne Druart, 'The Human Soul's Individuation and its Survival after the Body's Death: Avicenna on the Causal Relation between Body and Soul', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 10 (2000), 259–73.

⁸⁰ There were many other ways in which the work of Ibn Sina circulated in the Deccan: the Shi'ite theologian Shah Tahir (d. 1549), an influential advisor to Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar (r. 1510–53) wrote commentaries on Ibn Sina's *Metaphysics* and Ptolemy's *Almagest*. See Speziale, *Soufisme*, p. 82.

⁸¹ T. J. Winter, 'Introduction' in al-Ghazali, *On Disciplining the Soul*, pp. xlv–lviii.

⁸² Winter, 'Introduction', xxvi–iii.

impure, tarnishes the body, and invalidates the pillars of Islam.⁸³ Precise and rigorous purificatory techniques, which involve constant attention to the body, must be learned to achieve the state of purity. Hence, there developed an attitude of continuous self-observance of the slightest details of physiological life, a 'spying on one's own body', which required strict training in will and self-control, without falling into excess.⁸⁴ In the ethical writings of al-Ghazali and his followers, the techniques of *taharat* were not only transposed onto refinement of the soul, but *taharat* itself became a precondition of refinement, which was, in turn, a prerequisite in order to progress towards the fulfilment of man's aim in life: meeting God. Consequently, as the daily control of the body became essential to the control of the soul, a continuum between the carnal and spiritual parts of man was clearly established.

Writing more than a century after al-Ghazali, Tusi similarly emphasised the bodily nature of such techniques of ethical refinement, describing the body as '... a tool and an instrument for the soul, like the tools and the instruments used by artisans and craftsmen'.⁸⁵ Tusi then elaborates the practical consequences of this connection between the body and the soul. In order to acquire knowledge, an individual needed to engage in relevant physical or bodily practices. Rather than a result of the acquisition of knowledge therefore, practices actually constituted part of the process. By the repetitive practice of mundane skills with the aim of refining those skills, an individual gained mastery over a particular knowledge. Tusi recognised that this process required hard work and self-discipline:

... in the beginning the nature has an aversion to it [knowledge], it being acquired [only] by fortitude and discipline, perseverance and effort; but, once realized the revelation of its beauty and brilliance, of its nobility and virtue becomes evident; the pleasure beyond all pleasures shows itself and we behold its praiseworthy outcome and true ultimate end.⁸⁶

Moreover, by subjecting his body to the discipline of particular practices and techniques that were related to a specific knowledge, an individual conceived of himself as simultaneously engaged in perfecting his disposition⁸⁷ and, by extension, his soul:

⁸³ Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam*, trans., Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

⁸⁴ Bouhdiba, *Sexuality*, p. 49. ⁸⁵ Wickens, 'Introduction', in *NE*, p. 41. ⁸⁶ *NE*, p. 73.

⁸⁷ *NE*, p. 74, '... a person first elects an action by deliberation and reflection, then sets about it diligently, until (by repeated application to it and laborious effort) he becomes familiar therewith, and once complete familiarity is achieved, it proceeds from him easily and without deliberation, eventually becoming a disposition to him?'

Now, the perfection of everything lies in the procession from it, in the completest manner, of the act proper to it; and its deficiency consists in the failure of such procession from it, as we have mentioned in respect of the horse . . . which, if it be not the source whence proceeds its own particular property in the completest manner, is fit (like a donkey) for the transport of burdens . . . Moreover, the manifestation of the peculiar property of Man (which requires the procession from him of the acts proper to him, so that his existence may reach perfection) can be effected only by means of the discipline under discussion . . .⁸⁸

In establishing a particular kind of relationship with himself that perceives of his own body as malleable matter to be subjected to techniques of formation and refinement, the individual effectively rendered the pursuit of knowledge simultaneously a bodily practice and an essentially ethical endeavour. Against this theoretical background, Gavan's emphasis on 'hard work' and Ruh al-Amin's urging his son to acquire skills no longer appear mere parental sermonising but become ethical advice rooted in widely shared philosophical understandings.

Although influential, the *akhlaqi* understandings of the connection between body and soul were by no means the only important theorisation prevailing across the Persian Cosmopolis. Sufi understandings of bodies were also highly influential, particularly in courtly societies where many of the most influential members were explicitly linked to Sufi networks. These links include the prominence of the Nimatullahi *silsilah* (lineage) in the Bahmani sultanate, and the correspondence between Mahmud Gavan and influential members of the Naqshbandi *silsilah*, including Jami and Khvajah Ahrar.⁸⁹ In a persuasively argued intervention, Bashir suggests that it is useful to conceive of human bodies in Sufi contexts as 'doorways that connect the exterior and interior aspects of reality'.⁹⁰ The body is ambiguous, understood to be both the 'ultimate source of most problems, since its instinctive appetites restrict human beings from thinking beyond their immediate desires', but simultaneously the body is also 'a vital venue for theorisation and investigation because it enables human beings to transcend reality'.⁹¹ In Sufi thought, the spirit and the body are shown to be interdependent, although different theories emerged about how exactly they were related.⁹²

In much Sufi thought, as in *akhlaqi* thought, it was accepted that the body could impact the spirit, as well as the spirit impacting the body.

⁸⁸ *NE*, p. 78.

⁸⁹ Jean Aubin, 'De Kuhbanān ā Bidar: La Famille Nimatullahi', *Studia Iranica*, 20(2), (1991), 233–61. On the correspondence between Gavan, Jami and Khvajah Ahrar see Chapter 4.

⁹⁰ Bashir, *Bodies*, p. 27. ⁹¹ Bashir, *Bodies*, p. 28. ⁹² Bashir, *Bodies*, pp. 34–7.

Bashir posits a common Sufi conception of an ‘imaginal world’ situated between the world of bodies and spirits. Experience in this imaginal world is:

predicated on the presumed existence of an imaginal or corporeous body that is formed in the image of the physical body. Such a body is necessitated by the fact that describing experience requires the implicit presence of an experiencing body, although the actual physical body cannot have any access to the imaginal sphere.⁹³

Similarly, as the purification rituals mandated by *Shariah* and the common Sufi practice of *zikr* (remembrance of Allah) demonstrate, actions taken by the physical body were understood to play a crucial part in the refinement of the spirit.⁹⁴ I will explore this in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Attention was focused on the body in the courtly societies of the Persian Cosmopolis by another influential and long-established theory. This is the medico-philosophical theory of the four humours, which was also inherited from Greek thinkers, particularly Galen.⁹⁵ Galen’s work was informed by Aristotle’s understanding of the functioning of nature’s laws, according to which everything was structured around a series of oppositions and correspondences: the four elements, fire, air, water, earth, and their respective four sensible qualities, hot, wet, cold, dry. According to Greek analogical reasoning, the universe or macrocosm, was perfectly reflected in the microcosm of the human body. Thus, Galen conceived of the body as composed of its own hierarchy of oppositions and correspondences, known as the four humours (black bile, phlegm, yellow bile, blood), which had to be kept in balance to maintain a healthy body. Illness was caused by imbalance, the excess or deficiency of one humour, and could be managed by the application of the opposite type of humour.

Humoural medicine was conceived of as a preventative system, in which doctors were expected to identify the specific humoural balance that would keep an individual healthy and to provide instruction on how to maintain that balance.⁹⁶ An individual had to follow a careful regimen that took account of what were known as the ‘six non-naturals’: light and air, food and drink, work and rest, sleep and waking, excretions and secretions, dispositions and states of the soul. Thus, the body, all that

⁹³ Bashir, *Bodies*, p. 37. ⁹⁴ Bashir, *Bodies*, pp. 68–77.

⁹⁵ Greek medical thought was not merely adopted but rather was reworked and integrated into Arabic medical literature along with influences from Babylonian, Iranian, Indic traditions, Prophetic medicine (derived from the hadith) and the results of clinical practice and experimentation. See Seema Alavi, *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Medical Tradition, 1600–1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 2–25; Speziale, *Soufisme*, 83.

⁹⁶ Miri Shefer-Mossensohn, *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions 1500–1700* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), pp. 22–24.

was consumed by it and all that surrounded it, became the focus of constant scrutiny, an occasion for, and an object of, anxiety and concern.

Partly as a consequence of this broad definition of health, medicine became an important part of an elite education across the Persian Cosmopolis. Many courtiers took an active interest in medicine, writing commentaries on earlier works, translating Arabic treatises into Persian, making and illuminating copies of important treatises and composing their own works.⁹⁷ In India, the courtly authors of Indo-Persian medical writings 'codified elite social manners as health regimes', producing and circulating their writings together with works in the *akhlaq* genre, and embedding medical knowledge into discussions of manners and comportment.⁹⁸ Contemporary political philosophy frequently drew on the terminology of the Greek medical heritage to define political concepts like justice (*adl*).⁹⁹ Sufis, who were involved in both the transmission of medical knowledge and the practice of medicine (both Galenic and Prophetic), also drew on medical texts to elaborate their understanding of the human body and its links to the cosmos.¹⁰⁰

The widespread elite familiarity with humoural theories and the belief of the impact of environment, diet and climate on health spurred interest in other medical traditions as individuals travelled in search of employment or patronage. The Islamicate medical tradition had long drawn from translations of Indic treatises on drugs, treatments and surgery.¹⁰¹ With the establishment of the Delhi sultanate, however, authors trained in the Islamicate medical tradition, which came to be known as Unani in India, acquired first-hand experience in both the practical and textual traditions of Ayurveda which they incorporated into their writings.¹⁰²

In the Deccani sultanate of Bijapur, the historian Firishta wrote a compendium of Indian medicine entitled *Dastūr al-aṭibbā'* (Rules of the Physicians). In his introduction, Firishta framed his book as a guide for new immigrants to India, claiming that he wished to explain 'the rules and remedies in operation in India':

⁹⁷ An illuminated copy of the *Zakhira-yi Khwarazmshahi* was made in Golkonda in 1572, see Linda York Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library, Vol. 2, Paintings of the Deccan and Kashmir* (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995), p. 889 and Laura Weinstein, 'Variations on a Persian Theme: Adaptation and Innovation in Early Manuscripts from Golkonda', PhD dissertation, Columbia University (2011), pp. 61–78.

⁹⁸ Alavi, *Healing*, p. 3. ⁹⁹ Alavi, *Healing*, pp. 30–43; Alam, *Languages*, pp. 55, 59, 65.

¹⁰⁰ Bashir, *Bodies*, p. 32. In the malfuzat of the famous Deccan Sufi, Gisudaraz, for example, there are anecdotes about Hippocrates, Galen, Aristotle and Plato. Speziale, *Soufisme*, pp. 12, 77–95.

¹⁰¹ Alavi, *Healing*, p. 29. ¹⁰² Alavi, *Healing*, p. 29; Speziale, *Soufisme*, p. 77.

for the sake of those dear friends who are adorned with the gown of Islam and who are not well acquainted with the seasons and climate of that country, and do not know the practice of the physicians there.¹⁰³

In providing a handy compendium of Indic knowledge to new immigrants, Firishta is implying that the specifics of India: climate, environment, food, as well as diseases and remedies, would be best addressed by knowledge generated in India, rather than the received Islamicate tradition.

In his account of simple drugs and aliments used in India, Firishta therefore includes those drugs or foods, such as jackfruit and lotus, which were unfamiliar to immigrants from Iran or Central Asia, but highly prevalent in the local Deccan diet.¹⁰⁴ Rather than adopting a proto-ethnographic attitude, which classified unfamiliar aliments as the bizarre habits of a foreign population, Firishta gave practical advice. Thus, making no mention of the characteristics of jackfruit frequently noted by newcomers to India: its pungent aroma or the odd way it grew on the tree trunk rather than on branches, Firishta merely warned that the fruit's extreme acidity meant that 'eating jackfruit on an empty stomach or for breakfast was to be avoided'.¹⁰⁵

Reflecting the importance given in both the Unani and the Ayurvedic traditions to environment and climate as a factor in the health and treatment of individuals, Firishta also dedicates a section to explaining the physical and emotional characteristics of men born in several regional climatic zones, where the accessibility of water differs. For example:

Jāngal Dis is that province where there are wells ... Gujarat falls in this ... The men of that place are fierce and vigorous and strong and small-bellied and less lustful and in that land, trees are small ... and do not grow and lots of strong winds blow. *Anūp Dis* is the opposite of the aforesaid country. When they dig a little bit into the earth, water comes out. The province of Bangala and the Kuhkan (Konkan), which is the seashore, fall in this. It is because of that [water] that there are many moist trees and the men of that place have large stomachs and they are constipated and sickly. *Sādārān Dis* is where the water from

¹⁰³ DT, f. 2v. This passage is translated by Charles Wilkins, which is found on a loose leaf inside the cover of the manuscript.

¹⁰⁴ See the number of recipes for jackfruit in contemporary recipe books from the nearby region: Norah M. Titley (ed.), *The Ni'matnāma Manuscript of the Sultans of Mandu: The Sultan's Book of Delights* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005); S. N. Krishna Jois (ed.), Madhukar Konantambigi (trans.), *Culinary Traditions of Medieval Karnataka: the Soopa Shastra of Mangarasa III* (Delhi: Intangible Cultural Heritage Division, Indian National Trust for Art and Culture Heritage and B. R. Pub. Corp., 2012).

¹⁰⁵ DT, f. 63r. Firishta uses the Hindavi term *katahal* rather than the Sanskrit *panasa* or the Marathi *phanasa*. Compare the comments on jackfruit in Wheeler M. Thackston (ed. and trans.), *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), p. 345.

the bottom of the earth is near and subsequently it is a temperate [zone]. And there are trees and greenery . . . both small and large in those parts and the men of that place are also moderate (*mustavī*) in morals (*akhlaqat*) and healthy in body.¹⁰⁶

This passage draws on the Ayurvedic classification of geographic space into three types (dry, marshy or middle), each of which was thought to cause specific traits in both the land and the life it sustained, and to determine the therapeutic interventions that could be made.¹⁰⁷ Firishta's account departs from the earlier tradition by explicitly identifying known geographical regions with each type of land and follows the later commentarial tradition in elevating the *sadharana* because of its moderate qualities, rather than the earlier tradition which valorised the dry lands (*jangala*).¹⁰⁸ This interpretation coincides with the ideals of moderation and balance that structured theories of both *akhlaq* and Unani and are at the basis of Firishta's own ethical message in his historical chronicle, as will be discussed later.

In Firishta's medical treatise, the courtly focus on the body that is spurred by widely accepted Islamicate philosophical and medical theories thus becomes the occasion for a dynamic engagement with both the local environment of the Deccan and more broadly, with locally prevalent knowledge systems rooted in Indic cultural and intellectual traditions. Significantly, such an engagement is both intellectual, and bodily. It involves engaging with an unfamiliar knowledge system endowed with a venerable and theoretically complex textual tradition and subjecting one's physical body to locally specific practices and objects. That both Ayurveda and Unani shared a similar conception of the body and its relationship to the world around it enabled individuals with diverse philosophical and cultural inheritances to approach an unfamiliar tradition, find elements of it mutually comprehensible, and engage in processes of conceptual translation, both mental and practical.

As with any acquisition of knowledge, the courtly interest in medicine was not merely an intellectual pursuit but had practical outcomes too. These included the provision of hospitals and dispensaries, which, intersecting with ideas about benevolence, was considered a charitable duty. The Bahmani ruler Ala al-din II (r. 1436–58) established a hospital for the poor in Bidar, providing an endowment for its expenses, and employing both 'Muslim and Hindu physicians'.¹⁰⁹ The Dar al-Shifa' hospital and medical college was founded in 1595–6 as part of the construction of the

¹⁰⁶ Firishta, DT, f. 223r–224v.

¹⁰⁷ Francis Zimmerman, *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats: An Ecological Theme in Hindu Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

¹⁰⁸ Zimmerman, *Jungle*, pp. 18, 30, and fn. 27. ¹⁰⁹ TF, vol. II, p. 395.

new Qutb Shahi capital, Hyderabad, and endowments funded scholarships for medical students. Epigraphic evidence suggests that health benefits were also sometimes cited in the inscriptions recording the excavation of springs and wells or the building of garden complexes and caravan-sarais.¹¹⁰ Some individuals in the Deccan drew on more locally rooted paradigms to frame their charitable acts. Thus, the Qutb Shahi courtier Amin Khan established a charitable garden, which was described in a panegyric written by the Telugu poet Polikanti Teleganaraya as one of his *sapta-santānam*, ‘seven kinds of progeny’, a Telugu idiom for seven meritorious actions, thought to ‘bring the performer fame in this world and an auspicious condition in the next’.¹¹¹ Yet, like Firishta’s volume on Ayurvedic medicine and Ahmad Shah’s provision of physicians rooted in Indic and Islamicate medical systems, Amin Khan’s actions were, at some level, mutually intelligible to those educated in either the Sanskrit or the Persian Cosmopolis.¹¹²

Bodies and Objects

The foregoing discussion of the involvement of the body in the acquisition of knowledge highlights another important point. Despite the influence of the literary canon in the operation of the Persian Cosmopolis, and the language practices with which it was enmeshed, this was not exclusively a literary or linguistic formation. It was also a geographical area within which behavioural norms and bodily practices were widely shared. Many of these norms and practices were of course spread through the very same literary canon. However, as the work of Gordon on robes (*khil’at*) and robing has shown, norms and practices would also have been spread in various other ways, including the circulation of people and of objects, ranging from the paraphernalia of daily life to luxury objects and implements associated with specific activities.¹¹³ As each object moved, knowledge about its characteristics, its uses and the specific skills and practices in which it was implicated would also be shared and subjected to dynamic processes of negotiation and contestation with already existing, locally rooted webs of knowledge and practice, as Flood’s analysis of ‘objects of translation’ has shown.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Ziyauddin Desai, *Arabic, Persian and Urdu Inscriptions of West India: A Topographical List* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1999) nos. 160; 965; 1490.

¹¹¹ Wagoner, ‘Amin Khan’, 106–9.

¹¹² See also the bilingual inscription to a Bidar stepwell discussed in Ali and Flatt (eds.), *Garden*, Introduction, p. 7.

¹¹³ Stewart Gordon (ed.), *Robes of Honour: Khil’at in Pre-colonial and Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹¹⁴ Finbarr Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval ‘Hindu–Muslim’ Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Olfactants had long been considered an important item of long-distance trade in southern India, as epigraphic evidence makes clear.¹¹⁵ They also played an important part in elite and courtly culture, including in the Deccan sultanates, not merely as a frivolous adornment, but as an active constituent in sociability. Olfactants, as objects consumed by the body, were classified in both Ayurvedic and Unani systems in terms of their humoural properties and played as important a part in medical cures as they did in aesthetic regimes. The Persian word *itr*, frequently translated narrowly as perfume, often denotes both spices and medicines, and perfume-making manuals frequently detailed the medical benefits of individual olfactant or compound perfumes. According to Ibn Sina, certain fragrances, or exhilarants (*mufarrih*), would act physiologically upon the heart, causing it to expand, with direct ameliorating consequences for both the emotional state of a person and for their physical health.¹¹⁶ In his text *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī* (Medicine of the Prophet) the fourteenth-century scholar al-Jawziya, concurred that smells had a transformative effect on humans, arguing:

A sweet scent is the nourishment of the spirit and the spirit is the instrument of the faculties and the faculties increase with scent; for it is beneficial for brain and heart and the other internal organs, and makes the heart rejoice, pleases the soul and revitalises the spirit. It is the truest of all for the spirit and the most suitable for it; for there is a close relationship between scent and the good spirit.¹¹⁷

Trying to reconstitute the webs of knowledge and practice in which objects like olfactants were embedded is difficult, not least because of the ephemeral nature of olfactory commodities. Nevertheless, the production of textual knowledge around imported olfactants contains some important information about their characteristics, benefits and their usage, as the perfume treatise known as the *'Itr-i Nauras Shāhī* shows. Written in Bijapur by Nizam al-Din Mahmud, and dedicated to Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II, the discussion of perfumes is framed in the generic conventions of Islamicate medical treatises: the author opens the treatise with a Prophetic Hadith on the importance of perfume; the authorities he cites throughout the treatise are all figures from the Galenic medical

¹¹⁵ Burton Stein, *A History of India* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 121; Noboru Karashima, *A Concise History of South India: Issues and Interpretations* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 139–43; Yashoda Devi, *The History of Andhra Country, 1000–1500: Administration, Literature and Society* (Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1993), p. 43.

¹¹⁶ See the discussion in Ali Akbar Husain, *Scent in the Islamic Garden: A Study of Deccani Urdu Literary Sources* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 5.

¹¹⁷ Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Medicine of the Prophet*, trans., Penelope Johnstone (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1998), p. 199.

tradition and he frequently ends sections with the conventional phrase used in scientific manuscripts ‘... and God knows the Truth’. However, the title of this treatise hints at the dynamic processes of knowledge production that the compilation of this work involved. The word *Nauras* was a particularly resonant word, much in use during the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah II.¹¹⁸ In Sanskrit, *rasa* literally means flavour, juice or essence, but in the influential theory of aesthetics, the term *rasa* denotes a mental state, the emotional theme of a work of art, or the feeling evoked in the person experiencing it. *Nauras* could also be read as *Navras*, since the ‘u’ and the ‘v’ are interchangeable in Sanskrit, denoting ‘nine flavours’, the full set of *rasas* recognised by *Alamkarasastra* (poetics). The term also has Persian resonances; *nau* means new, so *Nauras* could either be a hybrid Perso-Sanskrit word meaning the ‘new flavour’ or, the Persian phrase *nau-ras*, ‘newly arrived’.

The entry in this treatise on musk, a highly prized olfactant derived from the preputial follicles of the musk deer, which inhabit the high mountains of southern Asia, suggests some of the webs of knowledge in which this olfactant was embedded in the Bijapur court.¹¹⁹ The long history of the prevalence of musk in both Indic and Islamicate perfuming traditions makes it likely that Nizam al-Din could assume a level of familiarity with the nature of musk and its preparation on the part of his readers. As a result, although he highlights the importance of musk in perfumery – musk, along with aloe, ambergris and camphor, is said to be at the base of all compounds – little detail is provided about the nature of musk according to Unani categories, or about preparing raw musk for use in perfumes.¹²⁰ Greater attention is paid to the medical benefits of musk. It is said to be beneficial for the heart, and brain, to eliminate phlegm and palpitations and to cure constipation and cold diseases, which affect the head. It is celebrated as a fortifier to all the limbs and a stimulant of virility. Further ills addressed by musk include swellings in the eye,

¹¹⁸ On *nauras*, see Deborah Hutton, *Art of the Court of Bijapur* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 110–11; Ibrahim Adil Shah II, *Kitāb-i Naurus*, trans., Nazir Ahmad (Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Kendra, 1956).

¹¹⁹ James McHugh, *Sandalwood and Carrion: Smell in Indian Religion and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Anya H. King, ‘The Musk Trade and the Near East in the Early Medieval Period’, PhD dissertation, Indiana University, (2007).

¹²⁰ INS, f. 3r. This is apparent when compared with the type of information that Nizam al-Din provides about the less familiar olfactant, civet, a relatively new olfactant that seems to have made an entry to multiple perfumery traditions in about the tenth century. See James McHugh, ‘The Disputed Civets and the Complexion of the God: Secretions and History in India’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 132(2) (2012), 245–73, and compare the lack of detailed knowledge about civet in the INS, f. 4r, 12r, 15r, 18r, 19r, 27r with the meticulous information on civet in the roughly contemporaneous *AA*, pp. 84–5.

halitosis, earache, paralysis and difficulties in copulation. Finally, a couple of recipes for musk-based medicants are given, including an electuary made of musk, *kevra*¹²¹ and rose, to be rubbed on the penis to assist in copulation, and a musk-based sherbet whose use is not specified, but which is attributed to a certain ‘*hakim*’ (physician), suggesting a Unani origin.¹²²

The section on musk ends with a lengthy and detailed discussion on the different varieties of musk available and their uses:

Moreover, the best kind of it is that which they bring from China. Its skin is extremely thin, and its pod will not be more or less than 20 dirams or 21 dirams [in weight]. Its smell is extremely pungent. And one *tank*¹²³ of this musk does the work [of] four *tanks* of Tibetan (*Tibetī*) musk and in compounds its smell remains for four years. Next is Tibetan musk, its pod is small, of not more or less than seven dirams and a half to 12 dirams and a half, and in the skin of this pod there are hairs, and its musk is sometimes yellow coloured and sometimes blackish. Next is Tusi musk and the hairs of this pod are white, and the musk is inclined to yellowness. The pod is not more or less than seven and a half dirams. Next is *Tibetālī* musk which they [also] bring from Tibet and they mostly sell this musk cooked, . . . In weight it is different, but its strength is near to that of Tibetan (*Tibetī*) musk. Next is *Khataī* musk, it is intensely delicate, and it is equal to Chinese musk. Next is *Tatārī* musk, its pod is two to four dirams. They use this sort of musk in compositions and they say to have this musk, [one] is not free from loss, and next is *Baharī* (lit. sea) musk; they bring it from the maritime route and due to its putridity, its effect is changed and its strength is lessened. But when other musk is not found, they use five dirams of this musk in lieu of one diram [of other musk]. And next is Kashmiri musk and this musk is least of all [in value] and its pod is all coiled.¹²⁴

At the same time, even Persian-speaking courtiers in Bijapur would also have had access to Indic understandings of this same olfactant, by virtue of Firishta’s roughly contemporaneous manual on Indian medicine, *Dastūr al-aṭibbā’*. In his short entry on musk, here called by its Sanskrit name *kasturi*, Firishta commences by characterising musk according to the Indic classification of tastes, and then moves on to its characteristics and benefits, which, unsurprisingly, are very similar to those recognised by the Islamicate tradition:

They say it is bitter and a little salty. It is cold, and accordingly it expels hot winds and phlegm. It stimulates semen and gives power to sexual intercourse/lust, and it is a little dry. And moreover, it produces semen, and takes away feverish shivers

¹²¹ Kevra is an extract made from the male flowers of the screw-pine tree, *Pandanus odoratissimus*, commonly used in Ayurveda.

¹²² INS, f. 3r, 3v.

¹²³ A *tank* (Hindi) is a weight of four *māshās* (a kind of bean): DU, p. 355.

¹²⁴ INS, f. 3v.

and takes away bad smell from the mouth and they say it is acid. It emboldens the heart and the brain. Camphor is its rectifier.¹²⁵

Despite the difference in etiological explanations for the influence of musk found in each manuscript, both the traditions upon which Nizam al-Din and Firishṭa drew, traditions which were already composite and heterogeneous, agreed that musk was effective in strengthening the heart and brain, in eliminating phlegm and halitosis, and in stimulating sexual intercourse. These similarities, whether due to the centuries of contact between prevailing medical traditions, to the respective internal processes of observation and experimentation within those traditions, or even to coincidence, allowed the differences to be more easily and pragmatically assumed into the heterogeneous webs of knowledge on which practices of perfuming and medical cures drew.

Careful attention to the olfactory metaphors used in contemporary literature written in the Deccan shows us how the underlying philosophies of practices described in technical treatises informed aesthetic choices in literature, and how literature acted to disperse such knowledge more widely. A description of the Farah Bakhsh (joy-bestowing) garden in the sultanate of Ahmadnagar is a good example:

the garden and its building were so heart-expanding (*dil kash*) and joy-bestowing. . . . The guile of the pictures of Mani found life from the delicacy of its spirit-increasing (*rāh-afzā*) air The life-prolonging fragrant breeze bestowed equilibrium (*i'tadāl*), the blossom-scented air and the 'abūr-scented odour of its *lakhlakhah* is the grief of the pod of *Tatārī* (musk).¹²⁶

Here the garden, like an olfactory exhilarant, works on the physical body of the visitor, expanding their heart and changing their mood, bestowing joy (*farah*). The fragrant garden breeze induces a state of *itadal* or equilibrium, the condition when bodily humours were in perfect balance. It is also clear that the chronicler had a detailed understanding of the specific techniques of perfume making and their diverse effects. Both *abir* and *lakhlakhah* are compound perfumes, which are made according to different processes and produce a different finished product; in the case of *abir*, a tablet, and in the case of *lakhlakhah*, a ball.¹²⁷ Both were understood to have beneficial healing properties that were appropriate to different parts of the body: *abir* gave strength to the heart, and *lakhlakhah* to

¹²⁵ DT, f. 56v. ¹²⁶ BM, p. 537.

¹²⁷ INS, ff. 11v–12r. Nizam al-Din recommends different techniques for preparing the various simples to be used in *lakhlakhah*, including pounding the amber and melting the camphor. Steingass defines *lakhlakhah* as 'an aromatic unguent; cephalic medicine; species of strong perfume . . .' PED, p. 1120.

the head.¹²⁸ Consequently the air of Farah Bakhsh is said to excel both *abir* and *lakhlakhah* because it combines the humoural properties, fragrances and healing effects of each.

Moreover, a key ingredient in both *abir* and *lakhlakhah* is musk. At first reading, the choice to specify the musk in this metaphorical description of a garden as *Tatari*, one of the lesser varieties, rather than the best sort of musk, Chinese musk, seems peculiar. However, as the *'Itr-i Nauras Shāhī*'s description of musk varieties shows, *Tatari* musk is the appropriate metaphor, because it is generally used for compound perfumes rather than the more expensive Chinese musk. Such metaphorical precision shows the way in which practice impacted literary choices and demonstrates the depth of familiarity that this chronicler had – and expected his readers to have – with the processes of perfume making. It is also what makes his prose an example of skilful courtly praise rather than obsequious flattery.

Of course, textual accounts are not the only sources for reconstructing practices; material objects also hold significant information, as Flood has shown.¹²⁹ Although there are few material objects associated with perfumery that can be conclusively dated to the sultanate Deccan, there is a scholarly consensus that the brass incense burners shaped like stylised peacocks are among the possible candidates (Figure 1.1). These burners have been dated to the sixteenth century, from a comparison with details in contemporary paintings and architecture as Figures 1.2–1.4 show.¹³⁰ Given the attribution of similar avian-shaped burners to ninth-century Mesopotamia and twelfth-century Spain and references to peacock incense burners in the Chalukyan text the *Mānasollāsa* (c. 1129), these Deccani burners clearly intersected with two older but complementary traditions of olfactory material culture: a South Indian tradition and a broadly shared 'Islamicate' tradition of zoomorphic incense burners.¹³¹

Peacocks were certainly polysemic objects with both Indic and Islamicate associations in sultanate India, including associations with royalty, and religious figures, from Sufis to the goddess Saraswati, the goddess of music and learning, who was much praised by Ibrahim Adil

¹²⁸ INS, f. 3r. ¹²⁹ Flood, *Objects*.

¹³⁰ Mark Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India* (London: Alexandria Press, 1997), pp. 95–110; Keelan Overton, 'Ibrahim Adil Shah II in Procession' in Navina Najat Haider and Marika Sarkar (eds.), *Sultans of Deccan India 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), pp. 124–5. I thank Dipti Khara (personal email communication 5 May 2015), for drawing my attention to the peacock sculptures on the Mehtar Mahal and allowing me to reproduce her photograph.

¹³¹ Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver and Bronze*, p. 96; Incense Section: *Vimśati* 3, *Adhyāya* 19, in G. K. Shrigondekar (ed.), *Mānasollāsa* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1961), vol. II, p. 144. I am grateful to James McHugh for pointing this out to me, personal email correspondence 7 April 2015.



Figure 1.1 Brass peacock incense burner, © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Shah II in his *Kitāb-i Nauras*.¹³² In Indic poetic traditions, particularly the *Barahmasa* (poem of the twelve months) genre, peacocks were also associated with a certain season and emotion: the season of the monsoon, which is the season of longing.¹³³ This connection is seen in various Deccani contexts too. In the sixteenth-century *Ragamala* paintings, peacocks both signal an impending storm and indicate the note on which the depicted *raga* should start, since according to the seminal important Sanskrit treatise on music, the *Saṅgītaratnākara*, the note *Sa* (*sadja* or *kharaḥ*), the first and fundamental note of the scale, is the voice of the peacock (see Figure 1.5).¹³⁴ An illustrated Dakani translation of this text, originally written by the Kashmiri pandit Sarngadeva for the Yadava king

¹³² Nile Green, 'Ostrich Eggs and Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam', *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean*, 18(1) (2006), 27–66.

¹³³ Charlotte Vaudeville, *Bārahmāsā in Indian Literatures* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986) and Francesca Orsini, 'Barahmasas in Hindi and Urdu' in Francesca Orsini (ed.), *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Cultures* (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010), pp. 142–77.

¹³⁴ Katherine Butler Schofield, 'Indian Music in the Persian Collections: The *Javāhir al-Mūsīqāt-i Muḥammadi* (Or.12857). Part 1', Asian and African Studies blogpost (2014) available online at <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2014/10/indian-music-in-the-persian-collections-the-javahir-al-musiqat-i-muhammadi-or12857-part-1.html#sthash.hcUM15FP.dpuf> (accessed 26 June 2015).

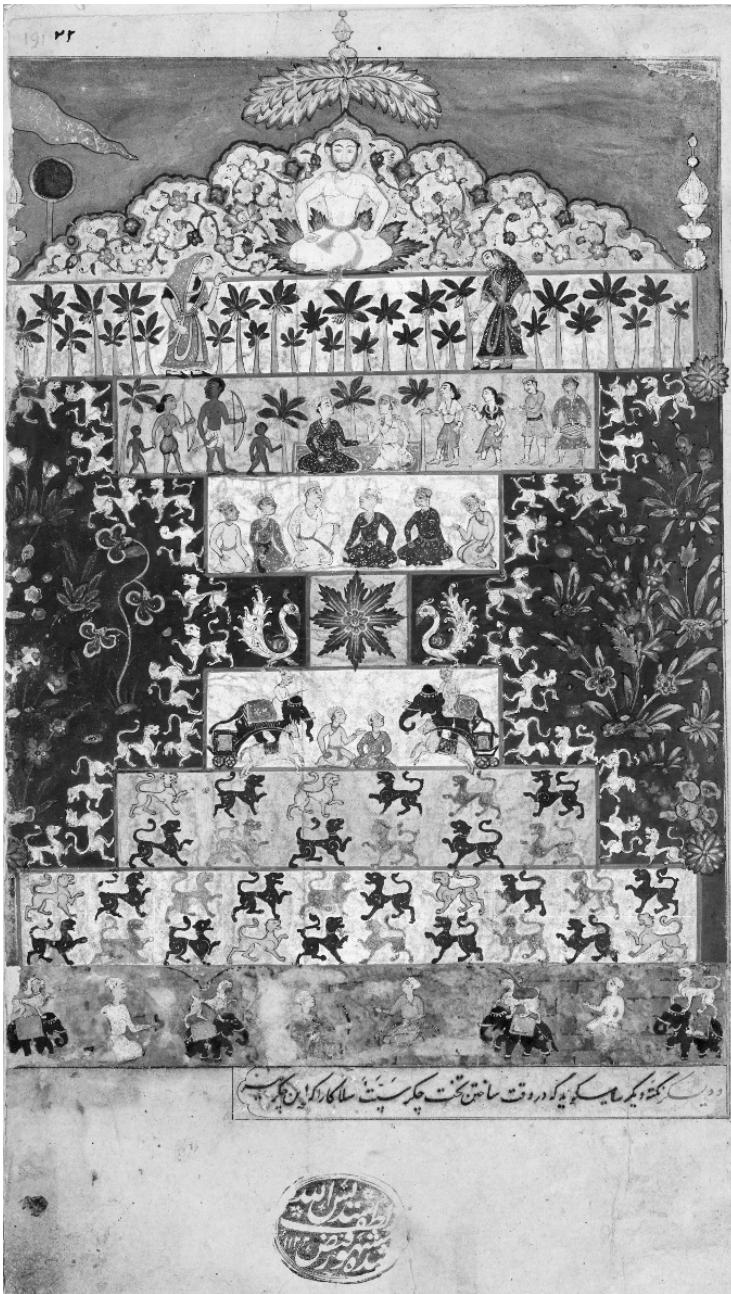


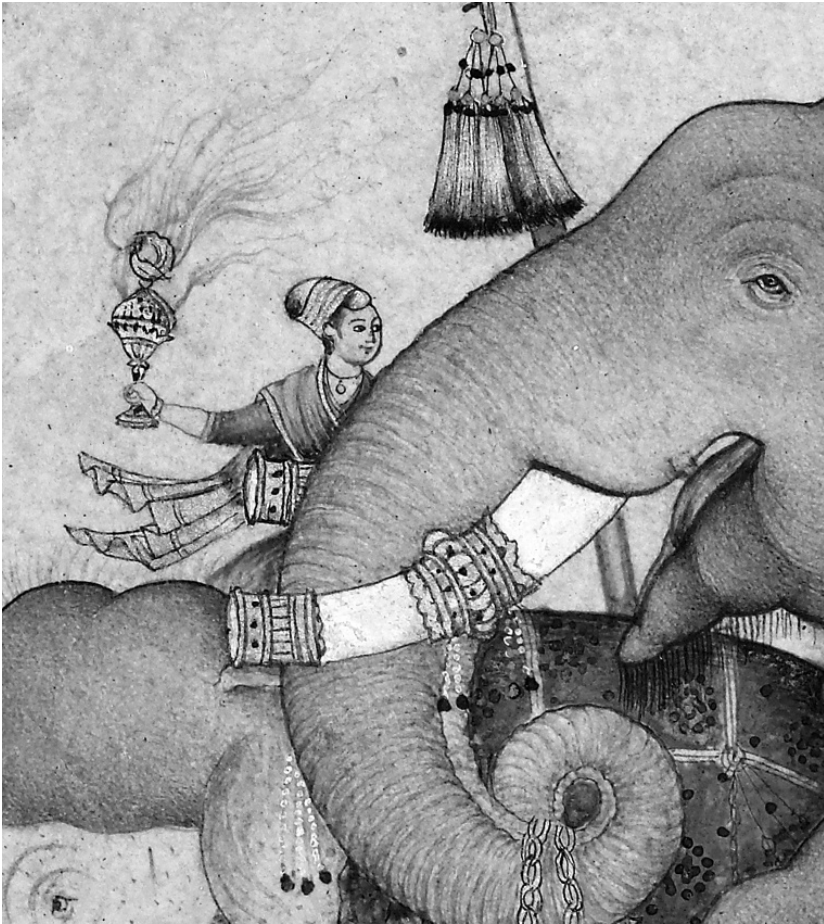
Figure 1.2 'The Lion Throne *Chakram*', *Nujūm al-'Ulūm*, © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, CBL In. 02, f. 191r.



Figure 1.3 (a) 'Royal Elephant Procession', © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Singhana (r. 1210–47) in Devagiri, was made in sixteenth-century Bijapur, probably for Ali Adil Shah.¹³⁵ The peacock's connection to

¹³⁵ Portions of this Dakani treatise are found in the *Javāhir al-Mūsīqāt-i Muḥammādī*, (Jewels/Essences of Music of Muhammad), a Persian translation of the *Saṅgītaratnākara* compiled



(b) 'Royal Elephant Procession' (detail), © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

separation and longing is also mentioned in the Bijapuri astrological encyclopaedia, the *Nujūm al-'Ulūm*, in a talisman intended to restore intimacy to a pair of friends separated by a quarrel.¹³⁶

These peacock-shaped incense burners would have conjured up similar associations to contemporaries, but they should also remind us of the

in about 1630 for Muhammad Adil Shah. Schofield suggests that an earlier Dakani treatise was split apart in 1630 by Shaikh Abd al-Karim and its paintings reused in a new Persian translation. See Schofield, 'Indian Music'.

¹³⁶ NU, f. 113r.



Figure 1.4 Peacocks on the Mehtar Mahal, © Dipti Khara.

visual aspect of perfuming practices. The smoke from the burning incense would have escaped through the little holes in the neck and back of the bird, creating tiny, feathery wisps of grey, or even coloured, smoke, giving the illusion that the bird was actually moving, rather like the marvellous automata that inspired *adbhuta* (wonder) in Sanskrit accounts of medieval courts.¹³⁷ Whilst peacocks are not associated with any particular olfactory characteristics themselves, their association with the monsoons links them to one of the most quintessentially Indian smells; that of rain-

¹³⁷ I am grateful to James McHugh for pointing out the similarity between these burners and automata. On automata see Daud Ali, 'Bhoja's Mechanical Garden: Translating Wonder Across the Indian Ocean, c. 800–1100', *History of Religions*, 55(4) (May 2016), 460–93. Books on automata were popular in Indo-Persian courts: Nimdihi reluctantly translated the *Kitāb al-Hiyāl* (Book of Ingenious Devices) of the Bani Musa for Sultan Mahmud Bahmani as discussed in Chapter 2.



Figure 1.5 ‘The Peacock as Note Sa’, © The British Library Board, *Ḥavāhir al-Mūsīqāt-i Muḥammadī*, OR. 12857, f. 39r.

soaked earth, a smell prized as far back as the *Athārvavēda*.¹³⁸ Although we do not know of specific earth-scented incense recipes, the incense burned at intimate courtly gatherings on hot summer nights would certainly have used ingredients understood to have a cooling effect on the courtiers.¹³⁹ Through this spectrum of associations from multiple traditions, these peacock incense burners contributed to the singing of certain

¹³⁸ McHugh, *Sandalwood*, pp. 69–70, 71.

¹³⁹ McHugh argues that the Kannauj perfumes that smell of rain-soaked earth (*mitti attar*) are probably a recent development. Cynthia Barnett, ‘Making Perfume from the Rain’, *The Atlantic*, 22 April 2015, available online at www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/making-perfume-from-the-rain/391011/ (accessed 22 April 2015), James McHugh, personal email communication (28 April 2015). For various types of incenses appropriate to different purposes see McHugh, *Sandalwood*.

ragas and the admiring of certain *Ragamala* paintings to foster, through their form and through their olfactory effect, the emotion of longing in the assembled company, and perhaps even – given the magical effects attributed to both smell and music – to conjure up the long-awaited rains.¹⁴⁰

Through the use of polysemic objects that resonated in multiple ways in multiple traditions, and whose function was predicated on broadly shared philosophical conceptions of the mutual influence of the body and the soul, and the potential for transforming each, objects played a crucial part in the acquisition, negotiation and dispersal of knowledge and practices in Deccani courtly societies. Taken together, these influential philosophical, ethical and medical theories, material objects and their associated knowledges and practices all led to a particular attitude towards the body among elite, educated men throughout the Persian Cosmopolis. Rather than the bounded self of the modern subject, contemporaries conceived of their bodies as ‘porous’: constantly subject to a wide range of powerful forces, which worked on the physical body and soul of the individual. These forces ranged from physical work in which the body was engaged; the objects consumed or even handled by the body; the physical environment, to the emotional and moral states of the people who surrounded them. The very multiplicity of the forces involved and the potential of becoming unconsciously subject to unwanted forces suggest that the body became a focus of both anxiety and control; an anxiety that structured daily life and ideas about ‘living well’ – in both the practical, and the Socratic sense.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered how a foundational education, widely shared across the Persian Cosmopolis, contributed to the creation of a particular disposition, one that conceived of the well-lived life as a search for the further acquisition and perfection of particular knowledge and skills through active bodily engagement. Underlying this disposition was a series of widely shared understandings of the courtly body which conceived of it as a porous self; constantly subject to a wide range of powerful influences, making the body a crucial focus for anxiety and control.

It was this shared cosmopolitan disposition, and the underlying understandings of the body that sustained it, which enabled the movement of

¹⁴⁰ On smell and magic, see Emma J. Flatt, ‘Spices, Smells and Spells: The Use of Olfactory Substances in the Conjuring of Spirits’, *South Asian Studies*, 21(1) (2016), 3–21. On the magical effects of *ragas* see Katherine Butler Schofield, ‘Music, Art and Power in Adil Shahi Bijapur, c. 1570–1630’ in Kavita Singh (ed.), *Scent Upon a Southern Breeze: Synaesthesia and the Arts of the Deccan* (Mumbai: The Marg Foundation, 2018).

individuals across the Persianate Cosmopolis and allowed them to find employment at various Deccani courts. Moreover, by the inculcation of a particular attitude towards the self as a malleable object to be improved through the acquisition of knowledge, this cosmopolitan courtly disposition actually permitted individuals not only to navigate the specific local knowledge, skills and practices that prevailed at the courts where they gained employment, but also to master those traditions, sometimes with striking success. I will discuss some examples of these knowledges and practices in detail in later chapters. In the next chapter, however, I will consider how individuals acquired, drew upon and expanded widespread familial, scholarly, mercantile, religious and friendly networks in order to move across the Persian Cosmopolis, and by means of which they sustained themselves, amidst the factions and rivalries of the networked courtly societies in which they found employment.