



Part Two

# Landscapes of Yoga



## Pilgrimage

15

Four folios from a *Kedara Kalpa*

Attributed to the workshop of Purkhu  
India, Himachal Pradesh, Kangra, ca. 1815  
Opaque watercolor on paper, approx. 36 × 49 cm

15A

*Himalayan Pilgrimage of the Five Siddhas*

Folio from the *Kedara Kalpa*  
Attributed to the workshop of Purkhu  
India, Himachal Pradesh, Kangra, ca. 1815  
Opaque watercolor on paper, 36.2 × 48.9 cm (folio),  
29.8 × 42.5 cm (image)  
Cynthia Hazen Polsky, New York, 8070 IP

15B

*Ascetics before the Shrine of the Goddess*

Folio from the *Kedara Kalpa*  
Attributed to the workshop of Purkhu  
India, Himachal Pradesh, Kangra, ca. 1815  
Opaque watercolor on paper, 36.5 × 49.2 cm (folio),  
30 × 42.2 cm (image)  
The Walters Art Museum, Gift of John and Berthe  
Ford, 2001, W. 859

15C

*Worship of Shiva*

Folio from the *Kedara Kalpa*  
Attributed to the workshop of Purkhu  
India, Himachal Pradesh, Kangra, ca. 1815  
Opaque watercolor on paper; 36.2 × 48.9 cm (folio),  
30 × 42.2 cm (image)  
Museum für Asiatische Kunst, MIK I 5733

15D

*Five Sages in Barren Icy Heights*

Folio from the *Kedara Kalpa*  
Attributed to the workshop of Purkhu  
India, Himachal Pradesh, Kangra, ca. 1815  
Opaque watercolor on paper; 36.2 × 48.3 cm (folio),  
35.7 × 48.1 cm (image)  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, The Arthur and  
Margaret Glasgow Fund, 85.1548

*Like the lotus that is never sullied by its surroundings, so is the pilgrim, he who treads the Great Path: no sins remain attached to him, no evil pursues him.*

These words are spoken by Shiva to his divine consort Parvati as they sit on Mount Kailash and occur in the *Kedara Kalpa*—that elusive and only recently identified Sanskrit text that extols the virtues of the Kedara pilgrimage. Different versions of this undated but late medieval text can be found, but they all consist of forty-four chapters, and speak of the greatness of the Kedara–Kailasha region and the unmatched merit of undertaking a pilgrimage to the icy abode of Shiva.<sup>1</sup> Two major series of paintings illustrating the *Kedara Kalpa* text are known; both are from painters' workshops active at Kangra in the Pahari region, with one somewhat older than the other and rendered by more skilled hands. But the works are now dispersed, and neither series is complete.

The paintings reproduced here belong to the earlier series, whose dispersal is more complete; there is at least a sizeable group from the lesser series, consisting of eleven paintings, in the National Museum of India. The scenes and episodes depicted in both series bear strong similarities: five *yogendras*—“eminent among yogis”—appear in folio after folio, almost always more than once within the same painting, as they traverse snow-clad mountains, worship at shrines, and bathe in sacred rivers.<sup>2</sup> Temptations are strewn in their path, for rulers of celestial domains offer them vast treasures, if only they would desist from proceeding further. But with single-minded purpose, the *sadhakas*—men with unwavering resolve—decline each enticement and keep moving on. Along the way, they turn old and young again, shave their bony heads, grow long beards, or change from one scanty animal-skin garment to another. What does not change is the firmness of their

resolve. The “five who had set themselves on the Great Path” finally reach their goal with their physical bodies intact, not as spirits that have already attained *moksha*—a state of eternal, solitary blessedness and awareness—and gain the blessed sight of Shiva seated majestically on Kailasha with his consort.

Early in the text, Shiva relates that the Kedara pilgrimage should begin with purifying rituals. The painter makes us witness the five *sadhaka-yogendras*, flesh barely stretched over bony frames, who bathe in the icy Mandakani stream after tonsure; bow low before the linga (emblem) of Shiva at Bhadreshwar, mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the text; immerse themselves again in a different stream; and then proceed out of the frame of the painting at top left (cat. 15a). The remarkably cool palette makes palpable the icy cold of the region, but the renunciants bear it as naturally as do the local Gaddi shepherds, one playing flute and another with a child in the basket slung on his back. Bright grassy patches, little birds flitting about a lushly blossoming tree, and a panting sheepdog, keeping eye on his flock of mountain goats, convey the relatively low altitude at which the pilgrimage begins.

In the fourteenth chapter, Shiva prescribes an elaborate ritual, identifying specific mantras to be recited for securing the blessings of the goddess Gauri (another name for Parvati), for whom a pilgrimage site near to Kedarnath is named (cat. 15b). As the painter envisions the scene, the ascetics look surprisingly old, with matted hair and long beards; yet they briskly cleanse themselves in a glacial stream before offering obeisance to the enshrined goddess. Then, under a flowering tree, they meditate all night with prayer beads in hand. Behind them looms a great mountain range, with deer and leopards almost hidden within its criss-crossing, pastel-colored peaks. In the foreground, darkly sinister crags rise from the stream



15a Himalayan  
Pilgrimage of the  
Five Siddhas



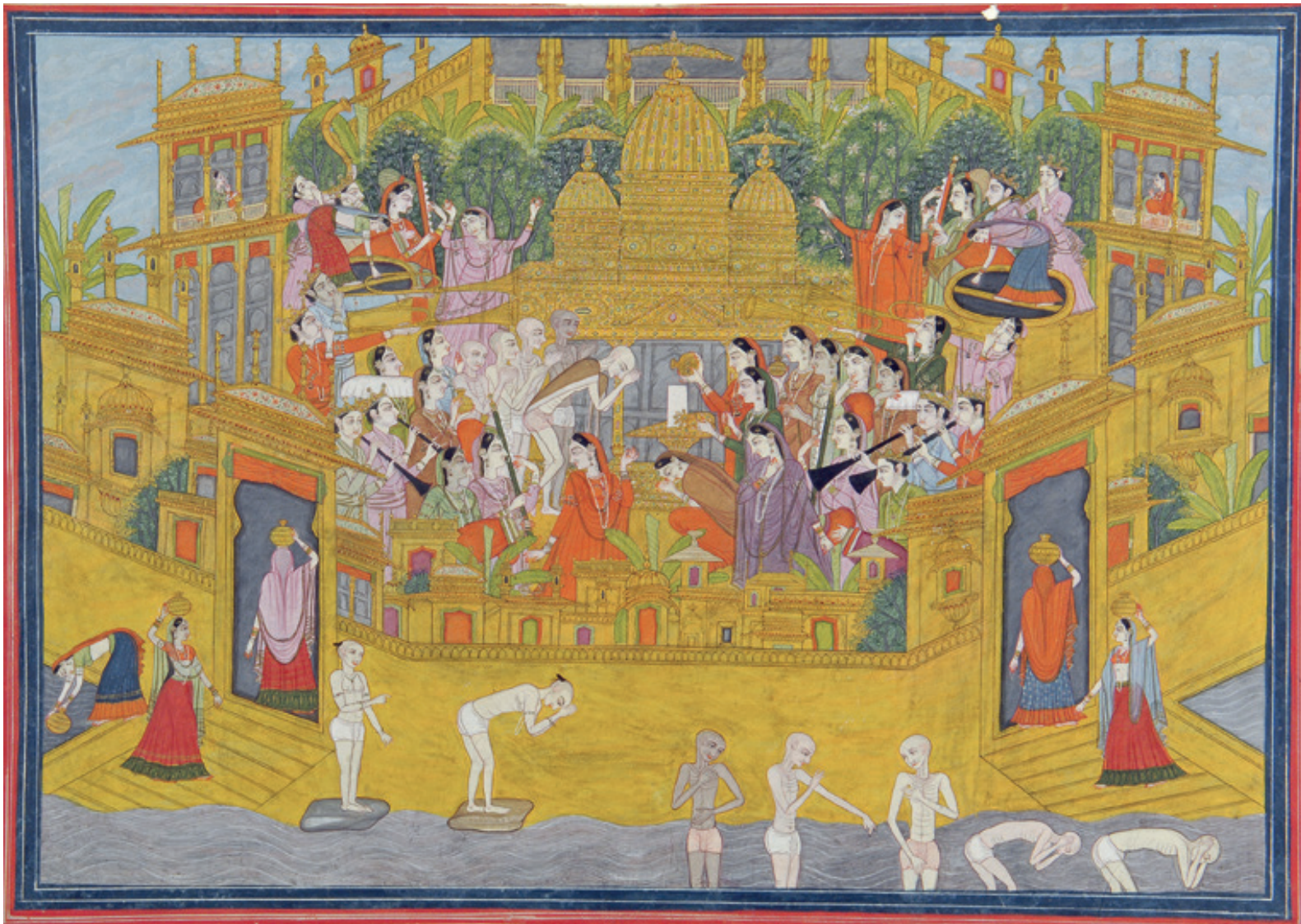
15b *Ascetics before the Shrine of the Goddess*

as if hinting at the dangers that lie in the pilgrims' path.

Among the wondrous sights that greet the *sadhaka-yogendras* in the barren, icy region are celestial cities. The five are dazzled when they come upon a kingdom with gem-studded walls of gold, possibly the one described in the twentieth chapter of the text (cat. 15c). Warmly welcomed by rulers of different domains along the path—King Shankhapal at one place, Queen Champa or Champika at another, and so on, all symbolizing hindrances on the way—they are invited to remain with offers of untold wealth, comely maidens, elephants, and palanquins. As the gaunt ascetics pay

homage to Shiva's *linga*, the air is unmistakably that of celebration. Exquisitely garbed celestial maidens pour sacred water over the emblem and dance to the music of sitars, trumpets, drums, and clarinets. Other women, much like those in a Himalayan village, draw water from a well, carry pitchers on their heads, or peer down curiously from balconies.

In a superbly rendered icy field, the mouth of a great cave yawns, and bluish rocks rise from the waters below like curious walruses (cat. 15d). Although dressed in the barest of clothing, the five *sadhaka-yogendras* look younger and seem supremely comfortable in the arctic air. Where a cave appears, they



take it to be nothing less than sacred and circumambulate it, the painter deftly obscuring the two at its other end. At higher altitude they come upon a crescent moon—although the text speaks only of a moon-shaped range—but take this emblem of Shiva as if it were the most natural of phenomena, making as if to lift it or feel its texture with their bare hands. Wonderstruck when they first entered the glacial plateau at the bottom right, they ultimately move off with firm steps along the bed of a very thin stream. The journey to still higher ranges continues; the Great Path is never abandoned.

The *Kedara Kalpa* can be attributed by style to the family workshop of Purkhu

of Kangra,<sup>2</sup> an ancient kingdom located in the Himalayan foothills, but quite far—more than 186 miles—from the Kedara pilgrimage circuit. The subject clearly touched off something within the painters. The manner in which they added visually to the text—depicting the pilgrims feeling or lifting the moon, introducing shepherds and village women, and giving each landscape its own exquisite light and palette—speaks of the exhilaration they must have experienced in taking a fresh text where no other painters from their region had gone. BNG

15c *Worship of Shiva*





15d *Five Sages in  
Barren Icy Heights*