

GULSHAN I RĀZ

CIRCA 1550

The Gulshan i Rāz by Maḥmūd i Shabistārī

SUBJECT AND ARRANGEMENT. This popular *maṣnavī* poem by Maḥmūd ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Yaḥyā al-Shabistārī, who died in 720 (1320), is a mystical treatise composed, according to the author, in 717 (1317) in great haste as a reply to some queries from an anonymous correspondent upon certain points in mystic doctrine. The work was edited and translated into German verse by J. von Hammer-Purgstall in 1838, and edited and translated into English verse by E. H. Whinfield in 1880. See further Ethé, *India Office Catalogue*, i, col. 995, no. 1814.

MEASUREMENTS, ETC. 23.2 × c. 15.0 cm.; the written surface measures 12.5 × 6.8 cm.; 2 columns of 13 lines; 37 folios.

WRITING AND PAPER. The writing is a *Nasta'liq* enclosed within gold, blue, and green rulings. The paper is polished and thin, set within margins of gold-sprinkled rose-coloured paper.

BINDING. The outside of the cover (which is later than the text) of dark brown leather with a flap has an inset panel covered with a scrollwork design in gold; the inside is of the original red-brown leather with an all-over floral design in gold in the field, a central medallion with two pendants, and corners of black tracery over blue and a gilt line and cord border.

DATE AND SCRIBE. The colophon is erased, but the manuscript was probably copied about 1550.

ILLUMINATIONS. On fol. 2 is an eight-cusped rosette of unusual design in lapis and gold of two tints in sixteenth-century style with the addition of red flowers. On fol. 2b, at the head of the poem, is an *'unwān* of similar technique embodying the title of the poem in gold script over white foliage scrolls on the lapis ground of the central medallion. The sub-titles are in gold script on lapis panels ornamented with foliage scrolls and there are similarly decorated triangular and square corner pieces.

SEALS AND INSCRIPTIONS. On foll. 2 and 35 are seals of ownership and various notes.

[E. B. and A. J. A.]