

Image : Entries for demon and bookstand from the Key of the Learned (Miftāḥ al-Fuḍalā) of Shadiyabadi (British Library Or. 3299, f. 223a). Reproduced with kind permission of the British Library.



An Aesthetic Education in Sultanate India: Sound and Wonder in The Key of the Learned of Shadiyabadi, ca. 1490

A talk by Vivek Gupta
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**3 pm, December 7, 2018,
Room 103, School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU**

All students know that we are more likely to learn from a teacher who excites us, stirs our curiosity, and indeed our passion for wonder. This lecture introduces a multilingual illustrated dictionary made in sultanate India that immersed its readers in an aesthetic education through the sounds and wonders of word and image. The illustrated manuscript of interest is the Key of the Learned (Miftāḥ al-Fuḍalā, British Library Or. 3299) attributed to Mandu circa 1490. Although the Key of the Learned contains quadruple the number of illustrations in comparison to Mandu's famed Book of Delights (Ni'matnāmah), it has received minimal scholarly attention. Its study thus opens up new vistas onto sultanate book culture and has broader implications for early modern Indian art well into the sixteenth century.

Vivek Gupta is completing his PhD at SOAS University of London in History of Art. His thesis, *Wonder Reoriented: Manuscripts and Experience in Islamicate Societies of South Asia (ca. 1450–1600)*, examines a corpus of illustrated compendia of wonders in Persian, Arabic, and vernacular Indic languages. His recent publications have appeared in *Archives of Asian Art* and *caa.reviews*. His research considers word and image, transculturation, Arabic in South Asia, and the relationship between contemporary and premodern practices.

