

Zoë High

Scholars have historically classified the *premakhyans* (love narratives) written by the seventeenth-century Braj poet Jan Kavi as “non-Sufi” in contrast to the *premakhyan* literature produced in Awadhi, which supposedly exhibits Sufi influence. Despite the presence of motifs commonly associated with Sufi metaphor in Jan Kavi’s works, they have traditionally been classified as *laukika* (worldly) because of Jan Kavi’s lack of reference to a particular religious lineage. The paper on which my poster is based seeks to complicate the common “Sufi/non-Sufi” distinction by making the claim that Jan Kavi’s works display a degree of Sufi influence. It also argues that the presence in his *premakhyans* of yogic imagery, such as instructions for meditative techniques, and the incorporation of natural imagery local to the North Indian environment demonstrates a blending of religious idioms. For example, in Jan Kavi’s “Katha-Rupamanjari,” a *premakhyan* based on the Puranic story of Usha and Aniruddha, the poet incorporates allegorical motifs similar to those used in the Awadhi *premakhyans* such as the *Padmavat* and the *Madhumalati*. These include the separation and union of the lovers, the *nakh-sikh* or head-to-toe description of the heroine, the presence of a friend or foil, and imagery of asceticism. The poster will contain a visual representation and close analysis of these motifs, highlighting the ways in which the “Katha-Rupamanjari” can be read as an allegory for the divine love between God and the devotee that is described in many Sufi texts.