Rosina Pastore

"Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind": An Indian Woman Commemorates King Edward VII in the Hindi Women's Periodical *Strī Darpaṇ*

Abstract. This chapter takes into consideration an untitled poem commemorating the British sovereign shortly after his demise. It was published in the June 1910 issue of the women's periodical *Strī Darpaṇ*, edited by Rameshwari Nehru. The aim of this paper is to show how this poem makes for an "exceptional normal" object of microhistorical enquiry. It will be demonstrated that, while the poem follows the general structure of other written expressions of condolences, its form and content may be seen especially as a reaction to the grief of Queen Alexandra. The mourning of the deceased's wife was, in fact, conveyed through her "Letter to the Nation" and indirectly by the media. The poem allows us to uncover the connections between people and rulers and occupies a space between historical and literary, official and unofficial, and public and private dimensions.

Keywords. periodicals, women, Edward VII, colonial, poetry

Introduction

This chapter deals with a piece of poetry published in a leading Hindi women's periodical called *Strī Darpaṇ*. This monthly journal, which ran from 1909 to 1928, was edited by Rameshwari Nehru (1886–1966), wife of Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin Brajlal Nehru, from Allahabad.[1] Therefore, from its beginnings it was connected to the political scene of twentieth-century North India. The title *Strī Darpaṇ* is often translated as "Mirror of Women"[2] or "Women's Mirror".[3] My view is closer to the latter option, as it is possible to render the title also as "Mirror for Women". The journal can be said to be both a mirror of twentieth-century wom-

1 See Mohan 2013 for an account of Nehru's life.
2 Orsini 2002: 264.
3 Nijhawan 2012: 37.

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en's role and condition in North India and a mirror belonging to women—like an instrument in their hands—to channel their struggles and aspirations. In this sense, it is also a mirror for women, dedicated to women, and at women's service, as their engagement in discussions and debates concerning Indian national identity was growing.[4]

As *Strī Darpaṇ* has been the object of several scholarly publications, this article refers to them for extended details about the other women's periodicals of the time and their mutual differences. These studies have investigated various facets of the interaction of women authors with an international dimension;[5] however, my contribution deals with these sources on a less beaten track, the relationship with British rule.[6] This topic will be addressed mainly through the translation of an untitled poem dedicated to the death of King Edward VII (1841–1910, r. 1901–1910), with the contention that it makes for an "exceptional normal" object of analysis.[7] It will be argued that the poem allows us to uncover how a North Indian woman imagined and projected herself as an imperial subject by participating in this occasion of mourning with her poetry. This poem is ordinary on the one hand, as it conforms to the conventions of the genre. Still, on the other hand, it is exceptional because the author builds through it a link of solidarity through womanhood with the widow of the late king, Queen Alexandra (1844–1925). In order to situate the poem in the context of mourning for the death of Edward VII, the following sections will first present briefly the contours of poetical expression in *Strī Darpaṇ*, and then a sample from the official messages sent to the royal family by the Indian kings and princes. The analysis of the poem following this background will shed light on the different facets of the composition about the death of the *śaihanśāh-e-hind* (the Emperor of India, lit. "king of kings") published in the Hindi periodical, paying attention to both literary and political dimensions.

4 Nijhawan 2012: 39–40.

5 See e.g. Nijhawan 2012; Orsini 2002 (esp. ch. 4).

6 This investigation is limited in scope as it considers only the issues of *Strī Darpaṇ* that were available to the author; namely, those published in January, February, March, April, and June 1910.

7 Ginzburg 1993: 33.

1 Poetry in *Strī Darpaṇ*

The poem concerning the *śaihanśāh-e-hind* can be better understood by looking at how it participates in the variety of the poetical forms in *Strī Darpaṇ*. Independent poetry appears in various formats, among which are the traditional prosodical arrangements of *caupāī*, *dohā*, *kavitta*, and *kavitta ghanākṣarī*.[8] The themes of such poetry reflect the political, social, and cultural atmosphere of the time. Free-standing poetry in *Strī Darpaṇ* testifies to the experimentation of forms, contents, and languages intending to produce literature that could be entertaining and useful at the same time.[9] In this sense, as far as the content of the poems goes, the exaltation of education and knowledge is predominant.[10]

On the issue of the function of poetry in the early twentieth century, the essays of the literary critic, editor, and author Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi (1864–1938) exemplify the discussions going on at the time. As the editor of the influential Hindi journal *Sarasvatī* (which ran from 1903 to 1920), he took upon himself the task of defining the canon of Hindi *sāhitya*, or Hindi literature; that is, its genres, contents, functions, and—significantly—language. Though his own position on the use of Khaṛī bolī over Urdu and Brajbhāṣā as languages of poetry was not clear-cut, depending also on the audience he was addressing, it can be safely said that Dwivedi thought that literature should benefit the general public; it should provide knowledge for the betterment of people's lives and should make people aware of their own cultural and historical heritage.[11]

As anticipated, several poems in the issues of *Strī Darpaṇ* I have consulted appear to adopt a similar didactic perspective and aim, and they are often normative concerning women's duties.[12] Yet they are also critical of the modern-day

8 See Nehru 1910a: 11–16 for a sample of compositions in these prosodical arrangements. Their language is a form of Brajbhāṣā tending towards Khaṛī bolī. English terms written according to Hindi spelling also appear in these poems, like *pleg* (plague), *faishan* (fashion), and *minaṭ* (minute).

9 Nijhawan 2012: 34 observes how the periodicals were expected to provide "suitable education" for women and achieved it by mixing old and new genres of writings, sometimes in the same article.

10 See e.g. a poem titled "Vidyā kī baḍāī" in Nehru 1910e: 278. See also a *caupāī* in Nehru 1910a: 11.

11 Several books and articles exist on the topic. For a nuanced treatment of Dwivedi's views on the connection between literature, language, and nation, see Mody 2018. For a synthetic version, see Mody 2012: 233–256. Nijhawan 2012: ch. 5 more specifically on the question on how the language of women periodicals related to the intellectual projects of Dwivedi and, before him, Bhartendu Harischandra (1850–1885).

12 See *strī dharma* through the figure of Sītā in a poem titled "Sītā Rāma ke prati" in Nehru 1910e: 279.

fashion-following "Babus".[13] They recur to references to the golden era of Bhārat, where the social role models are found in King Daśaratha's sons.[14] These poems can indeed be read as concise instantiations of the debates concerning Indian national identity voiced in an argumentative manner by the more extended essays published in the periodical.[15]

Another form in which we encounter poetry is quotation, preceding or embedded in the body of an article. In the issues examined, there are inaugural Sanskrit *ślokas* drawn from the Vedas and the *Bhagavadgītā*, and other verses incorporated in essays are from the *dharmaśāstra*s by Bhartṛhari (fifth to seventh century), Kātyāyana (seventh to eighth century), Vātsyāyana (third century), and Manu (second century).[16] The only early modern authority figuring sparsely in these volumes is Tulsīdās (second half of the sixteenth century). It is interesting to note that, similarly to the quotations from the juridical Sanskrit texts, the verses attributed to him are used not so much for their poetic or religious value but in a normative sense, to prove and consolidate arguments of social, moral, (and, broadly, historical) import.[17]

The poem analysed in this essay falls into the typology of free-standing poetry, but it is not in one of the traditional metrical formats mentioned above (*dohā*, *caupāī*, etc.). However, it does retain some of their features, like the ear-pleasing

13 See the section "Mātṛbhūmi kā īśvar se dukh kahnā" in a longer poem called "Prārthanā" by Shrimati Rampyari from Allahabad in Nehru 1910a: 14.

14 See e.g. "Viśvāmitra Daśaratha ke prati" by Mannan Dwivedi in Nehru 1910c: 117.

15 Nijhawan 2012: 312–315.

16 See Nehru 1910c: 122 where *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 12.13.1 is quoted (also Shastri 1983 for a modern edition of that work). See also Nehru 1910d: 199 for the *śloka* by Bhartṛhari; Nehru 1910e: 285 for one attributed to Manu, 288 for Kātyāyana's verse, and 289 for a quotation attributed to Vātsyāyana. The dates of these authors are indicative.

17 One is found in Nehru 1910d: 183, in an article dealing with the place of women in the development of the nation. I have not been able to retrace it in a precise work among Tulsī's. It is possible that the *dohā* is a reworking of several verses by the poet, rendered in a form grammatically leaning towards Khaṛī bolī: "tulasī mīṭhe vacana se sukha upajata cahuṁ aura / vaśī karaṇa eka mantra hai pariharu vacana kaṭhora //". It evokes in its tone a *dohā* in the dialogue between Daśaratha and his wife Kaikeyī in the *Ayodhyā kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmcaritmānas*. The king accepts making Bharata the heir apparent but tries to convince the woman not to force him to send Rāma in exile, at 2.32: "priyā hāsa risa pariharahi māgu bicāri bibeku / jehiṁ dekhau aba nayana bhari bharata rāja abhiṣeku //" (Dear, renounce to your mockery and resentment, ponder about your request with discrimination, so that I may see favourably Bharata's consecration as crown prince). Kaikeyī's words are defined throughout the passage as *kaṭu* "bitter, displeasing" (2.29.4, 2.34.2), while Daśaratha's speech is *mṛdu* "kind" (2.32.2). The second *dohā* is not explicitly attributed to Tulsī but reproduces almost verbatim *Rāmcaritmānas* 1.59kha. See Nehru 1910a: 24. The third instance is a *caupāī* employed to prove that the custom of *pardā* was absent in India before the Muslims' arrival in the subcontinent. See Nehru 1910e: 297. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

rhymes. Moreover, it shows a tendency towards chronicle as it does not bring the reader back to a distant past, which is sometimes contrasted with the present with an "old is gold" attitude, but interprets a contemporary event without an explicitly moralising tone.[18] This can be understood as a first element indicating the "exceptionality" of this poem among the other poetical expressions of the volumes.

2 Spaces of mourning

Edward VII died on 6 May 1910. Before and after his funeral on 20 May, tributes to the dead sovereign were continuously published by different outlets. They focused mainly on the role of the king's political persona as a "peacemaker" and on his philanthropic activities.[19] The *Illustrated London News* dedicated *A Special Funeral Number* to the passing of Queen Victoria's son.[20] British newspapers also reported on the reaction to the news of the king's death among the general public in India, with the city clearly identified in each contribution. They also offered a selection of obituaries in English from Indian newspapers.[21] The Indian princes were also ready to convey their condolences for the death of Edward VII, and indeed did so in a number of ways, for example through official messages.

2.1 Official messages

News of the death of the king generated a considerable number of telegrams and letters, the content of which shifted between expressing condolences and requesting instructions on how and for how long the king should be mourned.[22]

Nawab Sir Faiyaz Ali Khan (1851–1922) wrote the following to the private secretary of the viceroy from Jaipur in May 1910:

18 The "capacity to engage immediate issues of public interest" is a quality Nijhawan remarks upon in reference to the Hindi periodicals. See Nijhawan 2012: 5.

19 See "Edward VII" 1910: 420; also Cosby: 1910. In its 14 May 1910 issue *The Hospital* published a page titled "The Late King Edward VII: An Appreciation by One Who Knew Him", with sections about the king's "Sympathy for the Sick", "Wise Philanthropy", and "Influence on Charitable Work".

20 This was to be published on 24 May, announced the 21 May issue, which itself already contained a large section about the king's death, including pictures of doctors treating the monarch.

21 See e.g. the 28 May 1910 issue of *The Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*.

22 For example, a telegram from "Maharaja Tagore" proposing a day of mourning in Calcutta with "mass meeting, Maidan, prayers, poojahs, feeding poor". See *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 10, number 21.

My Dear Sir,

With feelings of profoundest regret I have received the most painful and unexpected news that our beloved King-Emperor has passed away.

All classes of community mourn the sudden and tragic death, which has cast a deep gloom over the whole of India.

May the departed soul rest in peace and may God support the Queen-Empress in her deepest affliction.

It is my earnest prayer that the Great God may grant long life and prosperity to our new King-Emperor.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) Faiyaz Ali Khan[23]

This message from the nawab exemplifies the expressions of sorrow sent by the Indian rulers. The texts first conveyed a sense of loss, which was extended to the whole of the Indian subcontinent. Interestingly, many then assured allegiance to the new King George V. The telegrams and letters were thus significant at a crucial point in the political history of Great Britain, which was then undergoing a parliamentary crisis.[24] However, their function was not unidirectional: by stating their loyalty, the Indian princes also demanded that the new king take an interest in India and grant it the stability enjoyed during his father's reign.[25] Mourning thus becomes a charged diplomatic and political event that, in this case, seeks the confirmation of belonging in a moment of transition.[26]

At the same time, the messages did not come only from kings but also from other groups engaged in social and political activities. For instance, a short telegram, dated 16 May 1910, was addressed from the viceroy to the secretary of state with a message from the Sanatum Dharam Hindu Community of Bharatpur.[27] Women's associations also figure in the collection of messages, as the viceroy informed the secretary of state that the president of the Meeting of Women of Bombay, Lady Jeejeebhoy, sent her condolences and confirmed her loyalty to the new sovereign.[28] According to Amelia Bonea's study, telegrams commenting political events had been published by Indian newspapers since the second half of

23 *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 15, number 31.

24 Wolffe 2003: 24–25.

25 For example, in his letter to the viceroy, the politician and future Indian Congress President, Rao Bahadur Madholkar (1857–1921), specifically mentioned the political reforms undertaken during Edward's reign, to which he referred to as "one of the truest friends of India". See *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 20, number 44.

26 See Saunders/Kamran 2005: 22–23. Mourning has not always been linked to the political sphere in scholarship. For an overview, see Keller Hirsch/McIvor 2019: xiv–xvii.

27 The English spelling of Sanatan Dharm. See *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 22, number 55.

28 *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 34, number 84.

the nineteenth century, and it is therefore possible that the telegrams mourning the death of Edward VII circulated widely in India as well.[29]

2.2 "Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind"

Another class of written documents that witnessed the performance of mourning in the regional languages of India are the long poems, biographies, and dramas that were regularly dedicated to the British royals. Though scholarship on this aspect of Edward's reign is still lacking, we know of several works of *belles lettres* that deal with Victoria's coronation or jubilee, or that were composed on the occasion of her death.[30]

The untitled poem, which I refer to as "Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind" (He is dead, the Emperor of India), was published in the June 1910 issue of *Strī Darpaṇ*. As mentioned above, the format does not follow one of the traditional prosodical patterns still frequent in the periodical, but the rhyming end of each couplet seem to imitate the *dohā*.[31] A few lines introduce the poem:

> On the occasion of the demise of King Edward VII, Misses Musharan wrote and sent us a poem, which is published [here]. The poem actually was written in Urdu, [but] for *Strī Darpaṇ* it has been rendered in Hindi.[32]

It is not possible to make out clearly the author's name—which I rendered as Musharan—and she does not appear to have published other pieces in the issues of the periodical available to me. At the same time, these few lines are interesting since they are connected with discourses about the language of literature. We can read in this informative statement *Strī Darpaṇ*'s position not only as a Hindi journal but also supportive of Hindi written in Devanāgarī script. However, the "rendered in Hindī" (hindī meṁ kar lī gaī hai, lit. "made it in Hindī") is not as

29 See Bonea 2016: 281.

30 The majority of papers presented at the online colloquium "Vernacular Victoria: The Queen in South Asian Languages", held 26–27 April 2021 and organised by Ashoka University, refer to or are based on a variety of sources in several Indian languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, and Oriya. Shraddha Kumbhojkar's paper, for example, mentions a Marathi obituary authored by a schoolmaster called Pandurang Govind in 1901. The poem commemorated Victoria and praised first of all the establishment of schools during her reign. The Marathi newspaper *Vijayī Marāṭhā* published also articles concerning Edward's visit to India when he was still prince. See Kumbhojkar 2021.

31 For examples of *dohā*, see footnote 17 above.

32 "mahārāj euvarḍ saptam ke svargavās hone par misej muśarān ne hamāre pās ek kavitā likhkar bhejī hai jo prākaśit kī jātī hai. Kavitā vāstav meṁ urdū meṁ likhī gaī thī strī darpaṇ ke liye hindī meṁ kar lī gaī hai". All citations of the untitled poem that follow can be found in Nehru 1910e: 268.

radical as one may think since the poem is not at all shorn of terms and idioms of Perso-Arabic origin. The operation seems to have just been one of transliteration and not strongly driven ideologically by opposing Hindi as the language of the Hindus, of Sanskritic origin, to Urdu as a Muslim language.[33]

Before considering the poem itself, let us take a look at the "Editorial" (*ṭip-paniyāṁ*, lit. "notes") since the piece of poetry following it presents a continuity of content and tone and is a sort of "crowning" of the prose tribute. The first theme treated extensively in the "Editorial" is the death of Edward VII. First it resumes the events surrounding the death of the king; then it comments on his political virtues and achievements. The last part extensively describes his life from birth to death, blending chronological narration with anecdotal recollection.

Akin to what was published by English periodicals and newspapers, the "Editorial" portrays the late king as a mine of virtues and a "peacemaker":[34]

> Your virtues were such that you were loved and respected in your reign and in all your capitals. Associating with all, being affectionate to all—these were long-time habits of yours. In the European countries you obtained the name of peacemaker.[35]

In Hindi, "peacemaker" is rendered as "mel karāne vāle", which—keeping in mind the English term—can be translated as "conciliator". The author attributes to Edward the habit of "associating with all" (*sab se mel rakhnā*). The use of almost the same expression, hinged to "mel", connects the political and public figure of the ruler with the intimate, private sphere. The description in the same line that he was affectionate to or loved everyone ("being affectionate to all", *har ek se prem karnā*) seems to convey the impression of knowing the sovereign personally, and he is later acknowledged to feel a "paternal love" (*paiṭṛk sneh*) for the people of Hindustan.[36] The dialectic between distance and proximity with the king is also expressed by a constant shift between the second- and third-person plural in the

33 The language employed by the authors published in *Strī Darpaṇ* was quite diverse and did not conform to a standardised version of Hindi. See Nijhawan 2012: 195–209.

34 Edward's role in British foreign politics has been amply debated, with positions shifting from denying his actions had any real political significance to exalting his savoir-faire as decisive from the diplomatic viewpoint. See Glencross 2015. See Robbins 2015 for a comparison of Victoria's and Edward's diplomatic approaches.

35 Nehru 1910e: 261: "āpke apne satguṇ aise the ki jinse āp apne deś aur apnī sārī rājdhānī meṁ prem aur ādar se dekhe jāte the. Sab se mel rakhnā, har ek se prem karna āpko sadā se ādat thi. Yūrop ke deśoṁ meṁ āpne mel karāne vale kā nām pāyā thā".

36 This conception of the sovereign in kinship terms was already alive with Queen Victoria (r. 1837–1901). On Queen Victoria as a mother figure and role model for women, see Taylor 2018: ch. 9.

use of pronouns and adjectives when addressing the monarch and his life.[37] Such an emphasis on the socialising, accessible character of the king can also be considered as responding to Indic ideals of kingship.[38]

Local conceptions of kingship are also evoked in the poem itself. After providing the text and translation of the poem, the analysis below will focus on how the author, “Musharan”, participates in the mourning of the ruler’s death and how, differently from the telegrams sent by Indian nobility, she expresses her pain and connects with the figure of the deceased’s wife, Queen Alexandra.

jhuk gayā aiḍvarḍ haftum āj kyoṁ jhanḍā terā,	Edward VII, why has your flag been lowered today?[39]
inḍiyā iṅglainḍoṁ yūrop kyoṁ mātam sarā.	India, England, Europe—why have they become a house of mourning?
mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind – śāh-e-dil ruyā,	“He is dead, the Emperor of India, the Emperor of hearts”, they lamented.[40]
jiske marne kā har ek choṭe baḍe ko g̲am huā.	His death has pained everyone, high and low.
marne se do roz pahile ye k̲h̲abar zāhir huī,	Two days before the death, this news was disclosed:
śaihanśā bīmār haiṁ dil meṁ fikar paidā huī.	“The emperor is ill”—in the hearts worry grew.
girjoṁ meṁ aur mandiroṁ meṁ masjidoṁ meṁ jā bajā,	In the churches, the temples, and the mosques—everywhere
jald hoṁ acche śaihanśā kar rahe the sab duā.	everyone was praying: “May the emperor be well.”
beasar thī sab duā bekām thī sārī davā,	All prayers were ineffectual, all remedies useless,

37 A sentence using the second plural: “āpkā dehānt aisā akasmāt huā ki āpkī bīmārī kā samācār bhī abhī logoṁ ke kān tak nahīṁ pahuṁcā”. In contrast, a sentence using the third plural (honorific): “in sab kāmoṁ ko yuvrāj va un kī patnī ne aisī acchī tarah nibhāyā ki”. Nehru 1910e: 261 and 263.

38 See Banerjee 2018: 82, 85. Coincidentally, the expression “mel karāne vāle” figures in the modern Hindi translation of the Gospel of Matthew 5.9 (available at https://www.bible.com/bible/1683/MAT.5.HINOVBSI): “dhanya haiṁ ve, jo mel karānevāle haiṁ, kyoṁki ve parameśvar ke putr kahlāeṁge” (Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God). This version of the Bible, published by the Bible Society of India, was translated from a mix of sources that are not clearly discernible (see https://www.bsind.org/our-history/). Earlier translations of the New Testament, for example from Greek, present expressions parallel to “mel karāne vāle”: for example, “dhanya ve jo mel karvaiye haiṁ kyoṁki ve īśvar ke santān kahāveṁge” (*Dharmpustak kā antbhāg* 1874: 10).

39 The “jhaṇḍā” is a triangular flag that, from the late sixteenth century, was among the exclusive symbols in possession of the Mughal emperor. See Gordon 1996: 240–242.

40 The verb in this sentence is not clearly readable. I have read it as “ruyā” and interpreted it as a perfective form akin to *royā* from Modern Standard Hindi *ronā*, perhaps adjusted as *ruyā* to rhyme with the verb of the following *pāda*, which is *huā*.

tīsre din maut kā paiġām ākhir ā gayā.	On the third day, the message of death finally arrived.
ye ḵẖabar sunte hī ġam kī thām ke dil rah gae,	Upon hearing this sad news, the hearts stopped [beating],
āṁsuoṁ kī śakl meṁ āṁkhoṁ se dariyā bah gae.	rivers flew from the eyes in the form of tears.
thī riāyā cain se is bādśāh ke rāj meṁ,	People lived peacefully during the reign of this emperor,
jaise sukh pāyā kuīn vikṭoriyā ke rāj meṁ.	in the same way they were at ease during the reign of Queen Victoria.
kuīn ailagzanḍrā terā kyā hāl ġam se ho gayā,	Queen Alexandra, what must be your condition, caused by suffering?!
hai qayāmat āj terā baḵẖt kaisā so gayā.	Today is doomsday; how has your fortune fallen asleep![41]
cāṁd se cehre pe tere abr hai chāyā huā,	Clouds dim your moon-like face,
phūl sā cehrā terā hai ġam se murjhāyā huā.	your flower-like face has withered because of sorrow.
kyā kareṁ dukh bojh hota bāṁṭ lete ham terā,	What can be done? Grief is a burden, and we share yours.
kyā kaheṁ ġam rāh hotī sāth dete ham terā.	What can be said? Sorrow is a path, and we accompany you.
kyā karūṁ izahār-e-ġam kuch kar madad merī qalam,	Shall I disclose the pain? O my pen, help out a little.
śāh kā marnā huā hāy sitam hāy sitam.	The King is dead, alas! Alas!
hai duā yah īśvar se svarg meṁ rakkheṁ unheṁ,	One prays to God to receive him in heaven,
mādar-e-murāfiq ke paihlū meṁ jagā deveṁ unheṁ.	May He let him wake up at the side of the benevolent mother.[42]
kuīn mairī-jaurj panjum ke liye haiṁ ye duā,	These prayers are for Queen Mary and George V.
ho mubārak rāj inko cain se rahveṁ sadā.	Hail the King! [May God] let him live in peace always.
īśvar se yah duā āziz viśan hai kar rahī,	[Vishan?][43] prays dearly to God:
śāh jīve sau baras sau sāl kī ho har ghaṛī.	may the King live a hundred years, may every moment last a hundred years!

41 The expression "terā baḵẖt kaisā so gayā" recalls the construction "baḵẖt-ḵẖufta" indicating "One whose fortune is asleep, unfortunate person". Therefore, it could also be translated as "how are you unfortunate!". See Platts 1884: 138.

42 The term employed is "mādar-e-murāfiq", which I have not been able to attest elsewhere. Platts' dictionary gives *marāfiq* as a masculine noun (plural form of *mirfaq*) "Things by which one profits, or gains advantage or benefit; appurtenances or conveniences of a house (as the kitchen, sink, water-closet, and the like); elbows, or elbow-joints" (Platts 1884: 1019). Therefore, I have interpreted the term as indicating the Virgin Mary's quality of being an intermediary between the believer and God.

43 The word is not readable.

The structure of this composition is similar to both the "Editorial" preceding it and to Faiyaz Ali Khan's telegram quoted in the previous section. These different forms of literary mourning seem to develop along the lines of the phrase, "The king is dead, long live the king"[44]: they first mourn the death of the current ruler, then pledge their allegiance to (or wish well) the next. In this poem the mourning part is rather long, going from the first line to "May He let him wake up at the side of the benevolent mother" (in my translation, twenty-four lines). The pledging allegiance/wishing well part unfolds over just the final four lines.

Interestingly, Edward is referred to as "śaihanśāh", a Persian-derived title for emperor (*śāhanśāh*), and not with the officially *Kaiser-i-Hind* officially assumed by Victoria in 1877. The title *Kaiser-i-Hind* was chosen since—in the view of the British—it did not show continuity with the Mughal rule, nor suggested a marked religious identity, but recalled the Roman Empire. The assumption by the queen was considered necessary to communicate that she was not "king among kings" but that her monarchy was singular in India, a country seen by the colonisers as more prone to be despotically governed. Accordingly, the Indian princes, kings, and nobles were assigned English titles to recreate a hierarchy subordinating them to the queen.[45] Notwithstanding the effort, the title of *Kaiser-i-Hind* does not appear to have enjoyed much popularity among the Indian public, who made use of other, locally inflected titles.[46] The use of "śaihanśāh" in the poem can be conceived as a way of domesticating imperial power.[47]

In the part about the death of the king, the author relates the collective reaction of the Indian people to the news, where the dimension of suffering is consistently highlighted by the use of terms such as "mātam sarā" (house of mourning), "g̱am" (suffering), "fikar" (worry), and "āṁsū" (tears). What else is noteworthy here are the six lines focusing on Queen Alexandra. While the telegrams and letters of condolences do mention the widow in passing, the editor of *Strī Darpaṇ* and the author of the poem make a point of manifesting solidarity with the queen, as did many other women. The "Editorial", in fact, reports that the Prayag Mahila Samiti from Allahabad sent a telegram expressing "sympathy" (*sahānubhūti*) with Ed-

44 A traditional proclamation made following the accession of a new monarch in various countries. The seemingly contradictory phrase simultaneously announces the death of the previous monarch and states continuity by saluting the new monarch.

45 See Knight 1968: 488–507. See also Banerjee 2018: Cohn 2012 [1983]: 165–209. On the nature of the British colonial enterprise in India, see Cannadine 2002: 41–57.

46 See Tyrrell 1901.

47 Milinda Banerjee understands the Bengali *caritas*, *kāvyas*, *nāṭakas*, and other poetic compositions depicting Victoria and her successors as just rulers as ways through which "colonial power was anthropomorphised to render it innocuous" (2018: 76). Calling the sovereign with similar expressions, such as "King of hearts" was not a novelty in itself in vernacular. The Bengali press also referred to George V, Edward's son, with such appellative. See Banerjee 2018: 88.

ward's wife.[48] The press had taken particular care in describing that the king's body was kept in the royal apartments for one week because of the queen's request and other elements which would normally be kept private, like her placing a rose in Edward's hands.[49] In the "Letter to the Nation", dated 10 May 1910, Edward's consort confessed that she "lost everything in him, my husband" and thanked the people, "high and low", for the sympathy shown to her through messages. She also asks that they "[g]ive me a thought in your prayers, which will comfort and sustain me in all I still have to go through". The short missive ends with a request to the people to show their support and devotion to the new sovereign, George V.[50]

"Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind" seems almost to respond to the letter Alexandra addressed to her subjects. The poem evokes the sentiment of the pity or compassion (*karuṇa rasa*) produced by suffering, and we have already remarked the preponderance of terms belonging to the same semantic field (*ġam* appears six times).[51] Moreover, the queen's sorrow itself is described in a way that makes sense to Indian poetic articulations of feminine suffering. First, the moon and flowers are classical terms of comparison for the beauty of a face, conjuring up the portraits of the "heroines" (*nayikā*s) of court poetry in North Indian languages.[52] Second, the inexorable sense of loss and despair is augmented by connecting the husband's death with the end of the wife's life (*qayāmat*), which resonates with traditional Indian conceptions of a woman's life as dependent on that of her male partner.[53] In addition, the author consolidates the connection with the queen by projecting herself and collectively Indian women as partakers of a wife's suffering.[54] The repetition of the interrogative pronoun *kyā* (what), accompanied by the verbs *kahnā* and *karnā* (to say and to do), conveys rhetorically a void in thoughts, words, and actions caused by grief. The enactment of lament, performed also through the *hāy sitām hāy sitām* (Alas! Alas!) gives an oral imprint to the written word, and can be

48 See Nehru 1910e: 262.

49 See Wolffe 2003: 27.

50 For a reproduction of the letter, see British Museum 1929.

51 The traditional text concerning the theory of *rasa*s, Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (fourth to sixth century), lists separation and death of a loved person among the main "causes" (*vibhāva*) for the manifestation of *karuṇa rasa*. See Ghosh 1951: 112.

52 See e.g. Busch 2011: 70. See also the descriptions of the state of separation (*vipralambha*) in the *nayikā* characterised by disease in Keśavdās's *Rasikapriyā* (1590). For the reference to obscuring clouds, see Bahadur 1972: 148–150, 181. Among the consequences (*anubhāva*) of the *karuṇa rasa*, according to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (6.61–63, 7.10–14), are changes in the colour of one's complexion, crying, and lamentation. See Ghosh 1951: 112, 122.

53 In this sense, she was seen as the "half" (*ardhāṅginī*) of her husband. However, in general this must not be understood exclusively in negative terms, or as a static and unchallenged idea. See Thapar-Björkert 1997: 493–504; Orsini 1999: 137–160.

54 Quoting from the poem: "kyā kareṁ dukh bojh hotā bāṁṭ lete hum terā, kyā kaheṁ ġam rāh hotī sāth dete hum terā".

a trace of the laments found in churches, mosques, and churches throughout the subcontinent. Furthermore, it distinguishes the poem from the official messages and telegrams, and further marks it as a site where personal mourning is made public.[55]

3 Concluding remarks

Comparing the poem with other sources than *Strī Darpaṇ*—albeit briefly—has served to determine the contours of "interactions between individual lives and great historical events"[56] in the specific case of King Edward's death. Poetry was a regular component of the Hindi periodicals, and it was employed to celebrate historical events like the births, coronations, and deaths of royal figures in general.[57] The singularity of "Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind" among the other forms of poetry in the consulted issues of *Strī Darpaṇ* stands, as anticipated, in the fact that it comments on a quasi-contemporary event. This chronicle-like aspect links it to the official messages of condolences, which, as has been shown, make their own political statement with respect to the crown.

The poem is also charged with such political statements but—unlike the official letters and telegrams—they are not spelled out explicitly. Aesthetic and rhetorical elements and established literary motives are instead deployed to communicate an additional layer of meaning. The author's mourning creates a connection with the crown, with the deceased King Edward and the future King George. Still, the poem's exceptionality lies in resorting to the figure of the queen. The poem creates an identification between the author and Alexandra, subverting the hierarchy and putting them on the same level based on the shared experience of being a woman. What seems to transpire is not only an affective and empathic dimension that erases the differences between Indian subject and British ruling queen,[58] but also the will and aspiration of an Indian woman—positioning herself as representative of *all* Indian women—to become visible on the political scene, on par with other political actors such as the Indian *rājas*. This poem thus demonstrates how commemoration was interpreted politically by educated and largely upper-caste Indian

55 Due to its subversive potential, public mourning came to be increasingly controlled not only by the colonial authorities but also by Indian reformers. See Mukta 1999: 25–47. Women's periodicals were subject to colonial scrutiny, though they sometimes evaded censorship. See Nijhawan 2012: 6–8.

56 De Vivo 2010: 390. See also Peltonen 2001: 359.

57 For example, Rudyard Kipling composed a poem titled "The Dead King" dedicated to Edward VII, published on 18 May 1910 by various newspapers. See Kipling 1910.

58 According to Nijhawan, women's periodicals also made a point of demonstrating similarity between their lives and those of Western women. See Nijhawan 2012: 174.

women in colonial times. Moreover, in a period where nationalist tendencies were still not fully translated into anti-colonial sentiments, it offers us a window into how the encounter with the empire took place and how different social groups negotiated British identity and indeed their own.

ORCID®

Rosina Pastore https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6594-4577

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