EARLY MODERN LITERATURES IN NORTH INDIA

Current Research 2022–2024

**Hiroko Nagasaki,
Monika Horstmann,
Kiyokazu Okita
(eds.)**

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in North India

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ORCID®
Hiroko Nagasaki ⓘD https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5339-2903
Monika Horstmann ⓘD https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4789-7842
Kiyokazu Okita ⓘD https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6752-2802

Cover illustration: Balwant Singh Seated Writing on a Camp-Bed.
Pahari region, *c.*1760. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya
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Hiroko Nagasaki, Monika Boehm-Tettelbach, Kiyokazu Okita
Osaka-Heidelberg-Tokyo, 2025

Note on Transliteration and Dates

Note on Transliteration

The following rules of transliteration have been applied:

- Original passages and individual words from Indic languages are transliterated from their original scripts into the Latin script according to the Report of the Transliteration Committee at the 10th Orientalist Congress in Geneva, 1894, which is reaffirmed in ISO 15919: 2001.
- The inherent 'a' (pronounced [ə] in Modern Standard Hindi) that is syncopated in unstressed open syllables in modern Indian languages is retained in the transliteration of Sanskrit and vernacular verses, but is often omitted from individual terms quoted in the main text.
- The final 'a' ([ə]) of Indic words is omitted in well-known names and places, following common conventions; for example, Sūrdās is used instead of Sūradāsa.
- Terms established in both Sanskrit and vernacular traditions are often transliterated according to Sanskrit conventions.
- For vernacular verses and terms, the notation specific to the language is followed. For instance, in the transliteration of Punjabi ś and ṣ represent allophonic variants of a postalveolar fricative phoneme / ś /. This also applies in tatsama words.
- Diacritics in the names of modern authors writing in Indian languages have been retained in bibliographical references.
- Well-known names, titles, and place-names have been used in their adapted English form in the body of the text.

Abbreviation for Calendrical term

vs   *Vikrama saṁvatsara*; 57 or 56 years before the common era, depending on the corresponding start of the year

Introduction

Hiroko Nagasaki ⓘ, Monika Horstmann ⓘ,
and Kiyokazu Okita ⓘ

This volume collects together the papers presented at the 14th session of the International Conferences on Early Modern Literatures in North India (ICEMLNI). In format, the conference represents a forum of current research without being restricted to a main theme. Nonetheless, the papers shared certain international academic issues and foci. Accordingly, grouped by categories, these are not rigid but fluid and thereby reflect the state of current academic debates. This introduction begins by delineating the widely shared topics, then briefly summarizes the individual contributions.

General Topics

Reviewing the scope of ICEMLNI

The thematic scope of ICEMLNI is loosely bounded by limits of time and region. The issues and scholarly approaches reflected in its proceedings over a little less than five decades have evolved, sharing developments in South Asian studies at large. One theme, however, has remained as a fairly constant focus, namely, manuscript studies. Accordingly, a self-conscious historical review of ICEMLNI which aims to re-adjust the orientation of future research calls for taking cognizance of its own history as well as the pivotal role of manuscript studies.

Cosmopolitanisms in the vernacular age

According to a seminal, much debated theory, the first millennium CE has been claimed as an age of Sanskrit cosmopolitanism embodying the aesthetic expression of courtly political power. This theory needs to be put into perspective by taking into account the non-Sanskrit literary traditions of the same period, which were carried over into the early modern period, characterized by the emergence of vernacular literatures, and further on to the modern period (Cort).[1] Only in this way can a truncated view of the literary history of South Asia be avoided and the grand system with its tributaries be adequately mapped.

Continuities

The heyday of the early modern vernacular literatures of North India span roughly the fifteenth to the turn of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century. This volume is an invitation to appreciate this huge range of time and literary production as also a dynamic trajectory from the previous period, with Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha whose themes it digested, into the modern literary period (Cort, Ravishankar, Pastore). Critical for literary modernity was the impact of print culture, the novel and quite diverse forms of audience emerging as readerships, and increased mobility in the dissemination of literature (Cort, Boccheti, Murphy). This was stimulated by the novel political and social challenges of the colonial period, which also accounted for the hardening of language boundaries and the intensification of conflicts involving one cultural profile pitched against another and the superiority of one language over another. The topics, literature, and ideologies of early modern literatures fertilized literary modernity. The period of early literary modernity in North India is therefore one of continuity backwards and forwards across the boundaries of time. Philosophical reasoning during this period engaged with classical concepts to find new answers (Ganeri 2011, Minkowski 2011), and this found expression also in the vernacular literatures, either in independent works (Murphy) or in translations (Ravishankar, Pastore).

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1   Names of authors not followed by a year refer to chapters in this volume.

Vernacular Vedānta

There has been a surge of interest in the field of Vedānta, especially the vernacular texts written in the Advaita tradition. Several articles in this volume (Ravishankar, Pastore, Murphy) implicitly or explicitly engage with the concept of 'Greater Advaita Vedānta' proposed by Michael Allen (2017, 2020, 2022), which has been pivotal in this context. One of the main roots of this concept was the *Sanskrit Knowledge Systems on the Eve of Colonialism* project led by Sheldon Pollock and others in the early 2000s.[2] This project inspired Classical Indologists, who generally had been occupied with the pre-Islamic period, to take seriously the Sanskrit texts produced in the early modern period (*c.*1550–1750). However, while the project explored a wide range of topics, the exploration of Vedānta was decidedly missing.

Christopher Minkowski (2011) was one of the first to address this lacuna. Minkowski's publication was also significant in his proposal to study the social history of Advaita. His seminal work further prompted a special issue of *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, edited by Michael Allen and Anand Venkatkrishnan (2017) which was based on a panel titled 'Advaita Vedānta on the Eve of Colonialism', and a special issue of *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, edited by Jonathan Peterson (2020), which explored multilingualism in the study of Advaita. Allen's concept of 'Greater Advaita Vedānta' is central in this current of scholarship. Critiquing the approach of 'Classical Advaita Vedānta' taken by earlier scholars who had focused on the canonical texts written in Sanskrit, Allen proposed expanding the study of Advaita by including: (1) vernacular texts; (2) non-philosophical texts such as dramas; and (3) Yogic, Tantric, and bhakti texts that blended Advaita teachings. Ravishankar's and Murphy's works in this volume exemplify (1) and (3) while Pastore's chapter falls under (2).

The Interaction of Literati and Audiences and New Ways of Disseminating Literature

Over the previous sessions of the ICEMLNI conference, attention has been increasingly given to the nexus of literarati and audiences, in many cases patron audiences, their shared habitats and intellectual cross-fertilization. Literature was as much produced for audiences as it was challenged and inspired by them (Cort). Religious or other issues expressed in literature were not layed out before their recipients to consume, but

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2 www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pollock/sks/, accessed 9 February 2025.

rather grew to a large extent out of interaction with these recipients (Cort). The nexus between literati and audiences could be specific to certain social or sectarian communities, but rather than being restricted by this, it expanded to cater to multiple audiences (Boccheti, Tekiela). Literatures leave the courts or inner-sectarian confines and come into dialogue with lay intellectuals. They reflect multiple cultural sensibilities and accordingly use multiple or polyvalid linguistic and stylistic registers. Production, performance, and reception of literature were thus also acts of negotiation about cultural preferences. Cultural coherence and divisiveness co-existed. Latent or overt cultural difference was not played down, but negotiated and sought to be contained in multiplicity.

Gender

For almost two decades, scholarship on early modern North India has made dramatic progress in retrieving female agency from the archives (Sahai 2006, Sreenivasan 2006, Thilak 2022, Schofield 2024), as well as from literature and painting (Cattoni 2019, Pauwels 2019). The literary and archival study of the court musician presented in this volume (Pauwels) fits squarely into this programme.

Sūrdās

This volume also takes up various debates which have continued at the ICEMLNI forum since its beginnings in the late 1970s. One concerns the figure of Sūrdās, whose poetry unfolded under Krishnaite auspices, as masterfully and comprehensively studied in its many facets by Bryant and Hawley (Bryant and Hawley 2015, Hawley 2016, to name only two conclusive publications). The volume goes beyond the construct of Sūrdās, the blind singer. One examines more multifocal hagiographical images of Sūrdās, or several Sūrdāses and their historical moorings (Nagasaki). Another contribution opens a robust perspective onto Sūrdās in the Sant tradition of Rajasthan, where he is represented by a huge corpus of poetry roughly coterminous with the earliest testimonies of the Krishnaite Sūrdās (Zrnic). Sūrdās is also, ironically, a marker of sharply divergent notions of intellectual property in traditional South Asia and in modern law (Hawley).

Rajasthan as Epicentre

The ICEMLNI took its origin with a manuscriptological focus on Rajasthan, mainly thanks to the tracing since the 1970s of a great number

of manuscripts in the libraries of Rajasthan and neighbouring states by Winand M. Callewaert. In this volume, Callewaert himself reminisces about his campaigns. One of the results of the study of the relevant manuscripts is an advanced insight into the enormous impact of the yogic tradition in Rajasthan and wider parts of western India. Its extent brings to mind P. D. Baṛthvāl's dictum that the Sant tradition was a specialized current of the yogic tradition (Baṛthvāl 2003: 75–6). Three essays bring this to attention (Ravishankar, Zrnic, Horstmann). Particular to Rajasthan is the literary idiom of Dingal with its *gīt* genre whose character and enormous proliferation rest on socio-historical circumstances calling for elucidation (Turek).

Genres

The vernacular literature of North India almost starts with the effulgence of the Sufi romance, which remains pervasive in written and oral form during the whole early modern period; this is also duly reflected in the previous volumes of the ICEMLNI and its predecessor format. In the present proceedings the issue follows this genre of literature in the context of multiple recipients and the polysemy of one of its central motifs (Boccheti, Tekiela). This approach hearkens back to the issue of the multiple audiences of early modern literature mentioned above.

Summary of Chapters

Addressing the topic of the history of ICEMLNI, the volume opens with a historical summary by **Danuta Stasik** which shows its gradual development from discourses on manuscriptology and the literary text mainly in the bhakti tradition, and in relative isolation from its conditions of production and reception, to literature of a broad spectrum shaping and reflecting its period, and mobilizing often interconnected networks of authors and audiences.

Crucial for the appreciation of the literary vernaculars of South Asia within the full spectrum of literary languages in the subcontinent has been Sheldon Pollock's theory of the cosmopolitan millenium of Sanskrit literature having been superseded by the rise of the vernaculars in the second millenium, which were implicitly no longer cosmopolitan but regionally oriented (a theory fully articulated in Pollock 2006). **John E. Cort** examines how communities of literati and intellectuals straddling the Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha, and vernacular literary languages defined and deployed cosmopolitanism. He reviews the

ongoing debate on and criticism of Pollock's theory. One of the objections raised against the theory is Pollock's narrow view of literature as wed to political power, thereby functioning as an aesthetic instrument of power, and his consequent neglect of non-courtly literature. This point was also made by scholars working with non-Sanskrit, multilanguage literature cultivated in multilanguage circles of literati and audiences. Cort argues from the vantage point of Jain literature, taking as a test case the Śvetāmbara text, Nemīcandra's Prakrit *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* of *c.*1200, whose fate in both Śvetāmabara and Digambara intellectual life he follows into the age of print. He examines the multilinguality of the several authors who apprehended the text in a number of ways. He shows the inextricable connection between the Sanskrit literary culture delineated by Pollock, and Jain intellectual culture, which had produced Sanskrit grammars since the sixth century and reflected on the appropriate use of linguistic idioms for distinct purposes. Jain culture has always been self-consciously multilingual. It flourished in networks of authors and patrons, typically represented by erudite Jain mendicants interacting with educated laymen. While Brahmanical culture, depending on court patronage, considered Sanskrit to be the only acceptable literary medium, Jain culture defined the ideal cosmopolitan intellectual as essentially multilingual. This is reflected in the Jain format of multilingual compositions giving rise to a distinct genre of performance. Consequently, Cort sees at work different notions of cosmopolitanism, of which Sanskrit cosmopolitanism is one and the multilingual is the other.

Akshara Ravishankar examines the Braj Bhasha adaptation of the *Bhagavadgītā* made by Teghnāth, a court poet at Gwalior, in 1500. Ravishankar focuses on elements of the original omitted by Teghnāth. She finds that these were a result of the author's leanings towards the Advaitic tradition, which led him to relegate to the background the debate about Vedic authority versus experiential knowledge. His monism is yogically coloured, so that physical practice and the reverence for the guru are emphasized without necessarily being warranted by the Sanskrit original. What Ravishankar remarks as omissions turn out to be the result of a yogically inspired change of perspective. In this way the author not only makes a contribution to the topic of the continuity of Sanskrit tradition, particularly the early modern phenomenon of a 'Greater Advaita', but also throws light on the prevalence of yogic thought in western India during the early modern period, a topic which also features in the essays by Zrnic and Horstmann.

Annalisa Boccheti examines the symbolism of painting in the *premākhyān Citrāvalī* by Usmān (1613 CE). Her contribution to the

premākhyān genre touches simultaneously upon a number of the general topics outlined above, namely, circulation of literature, multilinguality, and mixed audiences. While this kind of symbolism has been examined for Sanskrit and Persian literature, its function in vernacular literature has awaited appraisal. By identifying Islamic notions behind the tropes of painting and the picture gallery and taking stock of their parallels in the Indic tradition, Boccheti explains how the vernacular phrasing of Sufi principles was opened by Usmān to both Sufi and Advaita interpretation and thereby made accessible for Muslim and Hindu audiences alike. Usmān also exemplifies creativity and an idiom of its own kind incarnated from the widely circulating Perso-Arabic and Sanskrit tradition and the broad narrative lore of his day.

Rosina Pastore examines Bhūdev Dube's transcreation of the vastly influential *Prabodhacandrodaya* of Kṛṣṇamiśra (eleventh century), titled *Prabodhacandroday nāṭak* and published by the Naval Kishore Press in 1893. In doing so, she captures aspects of three of the general topics delineated above, namely, the continuity of themes through the centuries, the renewed interest since the early modern period in the Advaita tradition, and the changes in the dissemination of literature, setting in with print as it was cultivated by an influential publishing house. Dube translated into modern Hindi Brajvilās' Braj Bhasha translation of this work, bearing the same title, of 1760. Dube's published translation represents only a fragmented adaptation of Brajvilās' work; it nonetheless entirely reflects its underlying trends of thought. Pastore contrasts Dube's strategies with those of Bhāratendu Hariścandra, who also engaged with the *Prabodhacandrodaya*, and explains the intentions of both authors in the wider perspective of the relevant literary production of their period. Both represent literature which no longer depended on court patronage but envisaged an educated modern readership, a readership of citizens navigating the challenges of their time and the loosening of traditional moorings in the face of colonialism. While both authors took up these challenges, their foci differed starkly. Dube emphasized religio-philosophical reflections in an Advaita vein, while Bhāratendu sought to consolidate Hinduism as Vaishnavism.

The topic of 'Greater Advaita' links **Anne Murphy's** contribution on the role of 'Greater Advaita' in Gurmukhī script publications with the Ravishankar's contribution. Murphy's reference period is, however, the later nineteenth century, the fully developed age of print, almost four centuries after the period focused on by Ravishankar. On the evidence of Advaita literature in Gurmukhī in pre-print manuscripts and its continuity in print culture, she argues against the claim that the engagement with Advaita had its renaissance in the colonial period. The roots

of this she rather traces back to Vijayanagar and, after Vijayanagar culture dispersed into the regions, notably to Banaras. Udāsī and Nirmala intellectuals participated in non-sectarian Advaita discourses and in their turn had an impact on Banaras. She exemplifies this with the *Vicārmālā* of Anāthdās, the English translation of which appeared as early as 1886. Through print, this text made a considerable impact on Sikh education. In its terminology, the text itself is fluid in meaning and open to interpretation in various directions, including but not limited to Sikhs. This, then, is an example of texts connecting with multiple places and traditions. Murphy's contribution is thus relevant for the topics of continuity and the dissemination of literature varying with its media.

Heidi Pauwels studies the contribution to Hindi literature made by Rasikbihārī, also known as Banī-thanī, who was the concubine of Sāvant Singh, crown prince of Kishangarh and poet, known by the name of Nāgarīdās. Her contribution is relevant to the general topic of gender in that it addresses the case of a female artist of subaltern status by birth but risen to the status of a highly acknowledged aesthete and creative collaborator at court. It also addresses literary multilinguality in terms of a heteroglossia of poetic registers and its causes. Pauwels' aim is to trace Rasikbihārī's distinguished position and considerable recognition in the kaleidoscope of literature and bhakti religion, noble female and male literati–connoisseurs, and their mentor of religion at the court of that princely state. On the basis of archival and copious literary evidence, Rasikbihārī – who asserted her female voice in the guise of a male name – is examined as a partner in creativity with Nāgarīdās, their poetry often referring to and reflecting that of one another. The genius of that poetry Pauwels traces to the model literary culture of the Mughal court. In the context of Kishangarh, the aesthetic sophistication of this translates into a multilinguality comprising courtly and regional registers of poetry. In this, Braj Bhasha, Rekhtā, Punjabi, and Rajasthani idioms coexist and evoke respective aesthetic sentiments. Poetry and poetic performance are mutually reinforced by painting and bhakti practice so that the courtly ambience forms a complex frame of literary, visual, and devotional aesthetics.

Heleen De Jonckheere addresses the Hindu post-funerary ritual of *śrāddha* as it was seen by Jains. Reasoning strictly theologically, Jains would be expected to denounce this ritual, for in Jainism there is no transfer of merit from one person to another or from the living to the dead through Brahmanical mediation. This does not preclude that Jains have debated this ritual, which is at the heart of Hindu ideas of the fate of the ancestors and the principle of the efficacy of meritorious deeds. The author examines the treatment of the *śrāddha* ritual

in the *Dharmaparīkṣā* ('Examination of Religion') by the Digambara Jain Manohardās (1649), a work evolved from the composition by the same name of Amitagati (tenth century). Manohardās was a Khandelvāl merchant from Sanganer, a centre of Digambara Jain lay intellectuals of his period. His work is preserved in many manuscripts, a fact which points to its popularity. De Jonckheere positions this work in the lively Jain debate on that ritual topic. While arguing against the ritual in conformity with Jain religious principles, Manohardās displays a broad tableau of moral criticism on which Jains and Hindu alike would agree, and also draws on the wealth of folk literature. In sum, Manohardās does not sweepingly dismiss the ritual custom *per se* but the false hopes attached to, and the moral vices surrounding it, due to wrong belief.

John S. Hawley opens a series of three contributions on the topic of Sūrdās: his own and the subsequent one by Hiroko Nagasaki addressing the figure of Sūrdās in art and hagiography, respectively, while the third, by Biljana Zrnic, is dedicated to the corpus of poetry assigned to Sūrdās in the Sant tradition of Rajasthan making the transition to the topic of the Rajasthani manuscript tradition. Hawley points to the radical difference in the traditional versus contemporary perception of the right of an author over his or her product. He targets a dissonance that may arise between academia and its agents on the one hand, and tradition on the other. The case is that of the image of Sūrdās as it has appeared in India with modifications in publications or on a stamp for seven decades. It provides the iconic representation of Sūrdās, the blind singer, while the author of the original version of this image and all its later modifiers remain anonymous, though the respective images were freely circulated in Indian print and on the Internet without its copyright ever being claimed by anyone or copyright infringement being alleged. When Hawley tried to include the image in a book published by a US publishing house, this was denied to him for want of the copyright holder's permission. The absurdity of the problem led Hawley to trace the evolution of the Sūrdās icon in Indian print with the many nuances and their causes and, finally, to retrieve its most probable prototype, a miniature from Udaipur from around 1660, made by an anonymous painter.

Hiroko Nagasaki's essay follows up the hagiographical portrayal of Sūrdās which points to two or three poets who are mixed up in the critical editions. Nābhadās speaks in his *Bhaktamāl* of two distinct Sūrdāses, the blind Sūrdās and Surdās Madanmohan. His commentator Priyādās mentions only Surdās Madanmohan, supposedly because the Gauḍīya sect, of which Priyādās was a member, associates Sūrdās Madanmohan with this and makes the poet a disciple of Sanātan Gosvāmī. In

treating Sūrdās Madanmohan as a singular figure, it has a parallel in eighteenth-century Punjabi sources. As for Dādūpanthī hagiography, it mentions a separate figure, Bilvamaṅgal Sūrdās. Persian sources describe him as a singer at Akbar's court and point to his origin in Lucknow, whereas in later Punjabi sources he figures again as a single person. This shifting identity is fused in the single Sūrdās represented in the corpus of poetry in his name. However, it clearly emerges that the Krishnaite Sūrdās represents only one tradition, though this flourished and has continued flourishing, to an extent overshadowing other perspectives on that evasive figure.

Biljana Zrnic investigates the Sūrdās corpus transmitted in seventeenth-century Dādūpanthī manuscripts. Founded on a painstaking collation of seventeenth-century Dādūpanthī and closely related manuscripts, she provides evidence of the relatively small number of poems bearing the signature of Sūrdās shared with the critical edition of the poems transmitted by the Vaishnava Sūrdās tradition (Bryant and Hawley 2015). She proves that the continuous Dādūpanthī tradition, which is traceable back to practically the same time as the earliest manuscripts of the Vaishnava Sūrdās tradition, was independent from that tradition, and she also analyses the differences between the Sūrdās tradition in the various early Dādūpanthī codices and the manuscript material inspired by this. This analysis establishes that Dādūpanthī compilers of manuscripts drew from a pool more ancient than the earliest available manuscripts of their sect and that the Dādūpanthī tradition did not proliferate in the same way as the Vaishnava tradition. Modifying this overall picture, Zrnic also points to Sūrdās' poetry shared with the Vaishnava Sūrdās tradition, notably in a manuscript also otherwise open to the particularly Vaishnava tradition. Her analysis thereby reveals two clearly distinct traditions and their interaction, which indicates degrees of *local* interaction between the respective lines of tradition.

Monika Horstmann reflects on the relationship of Nāth Siddha yoga, laid down in Hindi compositions first transmitted exclusively by the Dādūpanth, and bhakti as it was understood in the Dādūpanthī and wider Sant tradition. Her test case is the Nāth Siddha author Prithīnāth of the second half of the sixteenth century. Tracing basic distinctions in the religious stance of yoga and bhakti, respectively, she subsequently reverses the gaze to capture the shared basic assumptions of yoga and bhakti. These she finds in the principle of enlightenment, the ultimate source of which is the guru, in terms of the actual religious teacher who is in reality identical with the single principle from which all phenomena originate. In the case of Prithīnāth, this is evidenced by a shifting

to and fro between yoga and bhakti. This suggests an appraisal of the yogic strands in Dādūpanthī bhakti – and Sant bhakti in general – as intrinsic, a perception also expressed in the early Dādūpanth's description of Dādū as the most accomplished yogi.

Radosław Tekiela's chapter addresses the significance of wandering as a narrative strategy as it is germane to the genre of romance. He analyses three poems by Jān Kavi (fl. 1614–1664), scion of the Qāyam Khānī dynasty of Fatehpur in Shekhavati, Rajasthan, which was originally comprised of Cauhān Rajputs who converted to Islam. Tekiela elucidates the suggestive potential of that narrative strategy. His point is that wandering – a motif running through entire compositions – operates at several levels and is accordingly appreciated by audiences associating the motif in ways which were shared but also different according to their own cultural backgrounds. Without being overtly religious, however, it converges with the notion of the Sufi pilgrim in pursuit of the divine. On the level of performance strategy, the motif provides for the narrative to meander through exciting adventures the hero has to endure and frequent pauses in the main action by which the audience is kept engaged in the narrative. Tekiela captures this aspect by the literary concept of 'tellability'. Tellability goes some way to conceal the religious message of the narrative, but operates to the satisfaction of connoisseurs of various backgrounds as well as fulfilling the particular religious expectations of Muslim listeners. Jān's compositions are thereby superbly suited for audiences at a court where thriving Muslim, Indic, and also specifically Hindu culture blended.

Aleksandra Turek addresses the Rajasthani genre and linguistic idiom of *Ḍiṅgal-gīt*, poetry of praise of battle and death in combat, commissioned to Cāraṇs by and for the Rajputs. The poetry treats as objects of profuse hyperbolic praise countless Rajputs, named as individuals and genealogically identified, asserting their superior land rights over contestant Rajputs. The genre is marked by a plethora of terms for battle, blood, and soil, and hypertrophic comparison of even the pettiest Rajput with epic heroes. While this makes for a remarkable wealth of lexical variance and displays the erudition of the Cāraṇ panegyrists, Turek is rather more interested in the social history of that culture of violence. She links the genre with the phenomenon of soldier–peasants in search of land and status. Their lifestyle is a violent contest for territory, migration in search of this, and displacement of rivals. This is expressed in the code of the Great Tradition. Its aesthetically specialized, artificial style is deployed for these pragmatic goals and presented in Cāraṇ performance to the respective clan members.

Winand M. Callewaert records the history of his search for manuscripts. His grand project began in the 1970s, with the aim of collecting vernacular manuscripts from the Rajasthani tradition in Rajasthan itself and widely across its borders, studying these himself or making them accessible to other scholars. The microfilm collection he compiled – the Callewaert Collection – has enabled academia to gain deepened insight into the religious and literary dynamics of the region. Almost half a century ago, the search for manuscripts and their retrieval was the same unpredictable and exciting adventure it will – hopefully – remain. Since then, however, manuscript repositories have changed, for better or worse. Incremental change has been made due to new instruments of copying and subsequent digitizing of manuscripts. None of this existed in the 1970s. Inscribed in his own intellectual biography, Callewaert records an important chapter in the history of the study of vernacular literatures of early modern North India.

ORCIDs®

Hiroko Nagasaki ⓘ https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5339-2903

Monika Horstmann ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4789-7842

Kiyokazu Okita ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6752-2802

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PART I
Reviewing the Scope of ICEMLNI

1
From Leuven 1979 to Osaka 2022, or a Note on the History of ICEMLNI

Danuta Stasik ⓘ

The series of International Conferences on Early Modern Literatures in North India is known either by its acronym as ICEMLNI or by its common earlier name as Bhakti conferences. It has had an interesting history spanning more than forty years of functioning as a forum for exchange among scholars from around the world working on early modern sources concerning North India. In the context of this volume, which is the outcome of the 14th ICEMLNI, held in Osaka between 15 and 19 July 2022, it seems to be worth giving some thought to the academic tradition from which this collection grows. The 14th ICEMLNI, the last conference of the series to date, scheduled originally for 2021 in Beijing, took place in Osaka after a four-year break, instead of the usual three years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[1] The Organizing Committee, led by Prof. Hiroko Nagasaki, had to face the many pandemic-related challenges but despite all the difficulties resulting from them, or perhaps precisely because of them (!), with new insights and experiences gained over that time, the committee managed to bring together researchers working on early modern literatures of North India, both online and on-site in Osaka.[2] The four years that followed the 13th ICEMLNI, held in 2018 in Warsaw, were a momentous time in

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1   For organizational reasons, the conference planned for 2006 did not take place after the usual three years. For details of conferences held, see Table 1.1.
2   Altogether, including students from Osaka, there were more than ninety on-site and online participants, of whom forty participants presented papers, keynotes, and addresses.

the full sense of the word. After an initial shock, experiencing isolation from the academic – but not only academic – world and a lack of direct interaction with it, over time all this appeared to increasingly reinforce the community's sense of the need to return to personal contacts and the direct exchange of ideas. At the same time, questions about the future have emerged – a fitting impetus to reflect on the journey that has taken the ICEMLNI community from the first meeting in 1979 in Leuven, Belgium, to the fourteenth meeting in 2022 in Osaka, Japan. The story of this journey, and in particular how it all began, also presented itself to both Imre Bangha and myself independently when we were working on the introduction to the 13th ICEMLNI volume (Bangha and Stasik 2024). At that time, it had been set aside for another occasion and was only partially recounted in the Osaka opening address. Such insights can work to enhance our collective awareness of the event we participate in by looking at what constitutes the history of our community and what marks milestones along the way. This may help us understand better the present research position and what the prospects for the future are, where we go from here. Such a reflection seems all the more relevant insofar as it can contribute more comprehensively to an understanding, within the ICEMLNI community and beyond, of the current state of early modern studies on North India, and where they are heading for and under what assumptions.

Before[3] the first gathering took place in Leuven, the few scholars concerned with North Indian early modern literature, mainly based in Western Europe, such as Charlotte Vaudeville (1918–2006)[4] and R. S. McGregor (or Stuart McGregor (1929–2013)[5] as he was generally known), as well as Vladimir Miltner (1933–1997) from Prague in the then Czechoslovakia,[6] worked in isolation, without the support of a kindred academic community that barely existed, and often against the expectations placed on them by their teachers and immediate academic setting. In the late 1970s, around 1978, Charlotte Vaudeville was approached by Monika Horstmann who wanted to switch from the oral traditions of Chotanagpur, which she had previously studied,[7] to

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3 This paragraph, in particular, owes much to Imre Bangha and our email exchange in May 2022, as well as to personal communication with Monika Horstmann (email of 19 June 2022).
4 By then, Vaudeville had published her path-breaking books: Vaudeville 1955, 1962, 1974, 1977.
5 By 1979, McGregor had published his PhD thesis (McGregor 1968).
6 See Miltner 1966.
7 See Jordan-Horstmann 1969 and Thiel-Horstmann 1978.

the Sant tradition, a new interest prompted by her encounters with Kabīrpanthīs in Bihar. Vaudeville, who was Winand Callewaert's PhD supervisor, put them in contact with each other and this became a source of mutual inspiration. On the one hand, they quickly agreed that Monika ji should continue focusing on Dādū, whose compositions she had barely started studying. On the other hand, Winand ji, who was working alone, without the support of his teacher or colleagues, decided to remedy this by inviting a group of Hindi scholars interested in manuscript studies. This materialized as the International Middle Hindī Bhakti Conference, organized in 1979,[8] which brought to Leuven fourteen scholars, mainly from Europe, but also from the USA and Canada. Among them were the gurus of early modern Hindi, Charlotte Vaudeville and Stuart McGregor, as well as younger scholars who had just risen or were rising into prominence.

In the preface to the first conference volume, in fact complaining, Callewaert (1980: vii) observed that:

> the study of the devotional literature in North India between the 12th and the 17th C. A.D. is often the scientific 'hobby' of scholars who are academically engaged in the study of Sanskrit or modern Hindi. This partly explains the lack of communication in the field of research on the so-called *bhakti* literature in North India.

It should also be mentioned that, by the late 1970s, pursuing his 'hobby', Callewaert had travelled extensively across North India[9] in search of manuscripts and, as Monika Horstmann noted, 'collected a myriad of manuscripts, and this is how he facilitated a wave of scholarship, especially on the Sants'.[10] It is significant to note in this context that Prof. Monika Horstmann serves as one of the first examples of this generous sharing by Prof. Winand Callewaert, which has continued to this day, also in the form of his publications, especially his *Dictionary of Bhakti* (Callewaert 2009).[11]

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8 Personal communication with Monika Horstmann (email of 19 June 2022).

9 Then and later, Winand Callewaert visited various institutional and private library collections mainly in Rajasthan (e.g., in Bikaner, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaipur), Punjab (Amritsar, Patiala), Uttar Pradesh (Varanasi, Kanpur). By photographing the manuscripts kept in them, he managed to amass a collection of film reels with ninety-four manuscripts. I would like to thank Prof. Callewaert for sharing with me a list of locations from which his collection originates.

10 Personal communication with Monika Horstmann (email of 19 June 2022).

11 In this context, at Winand ji's request, I would like to quote the last lines of his Preface to the dictionary: 'Finally, whoever will ever have use of this

The purpose of the Leuven conference was the sharing of research or, in the words of the organizer himself, 'to give a chance to scholars who are working on a section of the North Indian devotional literature to exchange information and queries regarding their research' (Callewaert 1980: vii). Thus the conference proceedings, meant as 'a forum on current research or primary sources relating to bhakti' (Entwistle and Mallison 1994: xi),[12] also include reports sent by twenty-five persons from all over the world, making the volume a comprehensive survey of the work done at the end of the 1970s. The need and usefulness of such a gathering of *sahṛdaya*s (Monika Horstmann's formulation) was best confirmed by the unanimous decision of the Leuven-conference participants to meet in three years in 1982, 'for the same purpose' (Callewaert 1980: vii); Monika Horstmann volunteered to convene the next meeting in Bonn and the proposal was accepted enthusiastically.[13]

As a result, the next conference – the Second International Conference on Early Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages – was held in 1982 in St. Augustin near Bonn in Germany. Let us note here a change in its name in comparison with the first conference. First, 'Middle Hindī' was replaced with 'New Indo-Aryan Languages' to represent the fact that from the beginning, it was not only the sources in Hindi in its many forms that were the focus of interest and discussion, but the New Indo-Aryan languages (with some occurrences of Old and Middle Indo-Aryan, as well as Dravidian sources at earlier conferences). Second, 'Bhakti' disappeared from its appellation as such, though it is present indirectly in the designation of 'devotional literature' and directly in the title of the conference volume as well as the volume itself (Thiel-Horstmann 1983). At the same time, one cannot fail to notice how quickly the conference became institutionalized. In the Editor's Preface to the volume, Monika Horstmann noted: 'In 1982 the participants of the conference decided to make this triennial meeting a permanent institution.' As can be seen forty years later, this was undoubtedly made possible by the energy and enthusiasm of those behind the origins of the conference, and above all their genuine willingness to share the results of their research, as well as a keen interest in the work of others, both established and beginner researchers. As a result, a line of

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dictionary owes a great debt to Mieke my wife. For many years she allowed me to indulge in my passion for this project and nursed my fatigue every evening till I finally completed the work at the age of sixty-six' (Callewaert 2009: x).

12 See also further in the article.

13 Personal communication with Monika Horstmann (email of 19 June 2022) and Winand Callewaert (Zoom meeting on 19 June 2022); cf. Callewaert 1980: vii.

tradition – *sahṛdaya paramparā* – could have been established. It may be noted here that the list of scholars 'who contributed to the conference by presenting papers and participating in the discussions or by doing either' comprises thirty-seven names (Thiel-Horstmann 1983: 443–5), which, compared to the meeting three years earlier, testifies to a significant increase in active participation and, above all, the scale of interest in the topic.

As agreed, after three years, the Third International Conference on Early Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages was held in 1985, in Noordwijkerhout near Leiden, in the Netherlands; its main organizer was G. H. Schokker (1929–2009) from the Kern Institute in Leiden. It is worth noting at this point that all the conferences, from the earliest to the most recent, have been followed by volumes containing the papers presented at them (see Table 1.2). In the case of the Leiden proceedings, however, for various reasons, it took a long fifteen years before they were published in 2000. This volume contains twenty-six papers (one of them co-authored), although some contributions had not been read out at the conference (Gautam and Schokker 2000: vi).

In 1988, it was R. S. McGregor who invited the conference participants to the Fourth Conference[14] on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages that took place in Cambridge. In his preface to the conference volume, including twenty-seven papers, McGregor observed that the study of 'the earlier literature of the modern South Asian languages… has in recent years made… [this] material much more accessible to scholarly study than in the past, and this has opened the way towards improved knowledge of the history of Indian religions in the last millennium' (McGregor 1992: xiii), evidencing thus the conference impact on boosting scholarship beyond language and literature.

In the proceedings of a subsequent conference, the Fifth Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, organized in 1991 in Paris at Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient by Françoise Mallison, its editors, Allan W. Entwistle (1949–1996) and Françoise Mallison, make an important statement about the conference evolution (1994: xi–xii):

> When the series began in Leuven twelve years ago, the aim was basically to establish a forum for reports on current research or primary sources relating to *bhakti*. By the time the conference appeared in its Parisian incarnation, the scope had broadened

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14 Note: the absence of the adjective 'International' in the name of this conference is not an oversight.

considerably, both in terms of the time-span and the types of source material considered. This confirms the impression gained at Cambridge that the study of devotional literature has expanded and diversified.

This also marks a decisive shift in the focus of the research field from bhakti devotional literature to the rich literary production of North India of various kinds – pertaining to different areas of knowledge, courtly, historical, Hindu, Jain, Sufi. It came about with the concept of 'early modernity', after Western historians of culture moved away from exclusively Eurocentric approaches and became more intensely concerned with early modernity in a broad comparative perspective (cf. Eisenstadt and Schluchter 1998: esp. 1–2). This new approach has been adopted by researchers involved with the conference and, in due course, it also became reflected in the renaming of the conference as the International Conference on Early Modern Literatures in North India (ICEMLNI). In this form, the name emerged in 2012 on the occasion of the only conference held in India so far, at the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies in Shimla, thanks to the organizational efforts of the younger generation from Columbia University, especially in the person of Tyler Williams.

As we can see, this shift was neither sudden nor altogether unpredictable, and resulted from a transformation in the way South Asia began to be understood and studied, taking into account – as John F. Richards put it – 'the notion of cumulative and accelerating change' in India between the fifteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries (Richards 1997: 208). An early forerunner of the 'early modern approach' noticeable in connection with the conference appeared somewhat hesitantly (?) and essentially out of context in the main title of the proceedings of the 6th Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages that was organized in 1994 in Seattle at the University of Washington, thanks to the untiring efforts of Alan Entwistle. Its volume, published in 1999, was entitled *Studies in Early Modern Indo-Aryan Languages, Literature and Culture* (Entwistle et al. 1999).

The early modern approach continued to mature for well over a decade. Thus, three subsequent conferences followed: the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth International Conferences on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, organized, respectively, in 1997 in Venice, 2000 in Leuven, and 2003 in Heidelberg (for details see Table 1.1), but with no direct reference to early modernity in either their names or the titles of their proceedings. The conference due in India in 2006

unfortunately could not take place and it was the next meeting, organized by Imre Bangha, in 2009 at the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, in Miercurea Ciuc in Romania, when this approach was articulated both in its name – the Tenth International Bhakti Conference: Early Modern Literatures in North India – and the title of its volume, *Bhakti beyond the Forest: Current Research on Early Modern Literatures in North India, 2003–2009* (Bangha 2013), yet with bhakti coming to the fore.

As mentioned, early modernity was fully and explicitly embraced in the name of the Eleventh ICEMLNI in 2012 in Shimla. Since then, the last three conferences have been held under this appellation, namely, the Twelfth ICEMLNI in 2015 in Lausanne, the Thirteenth ICEMLNI in 2018 in Warsaw, and the Fourteenth ICEMLNI in 2022 in Osaka (for more details see Table 1.1). The early modernity has also been captured in the titles of the resulting volumes, *Text and Tradition in Early Modern North India* (2018), *Early Modern India: Literatures and Images, Texts and Languages* (2019), and *Literary Cultures in Early Modern North India* (for more details see Table 1.2). All this, and especially the contents of the conference volumes, not only clearly underline the shift and broadening of the field of research but, at the same time, also the possibility, indeed the necessity, of considering sources from a transdisciplinary perspective. This new understanding would not have been possible in its present form without the groundbreaking primary research carried out by scholars of early vernacular literatures, who were also active participants in the previous conferences. It is their research presented in the conference proceedings that has contributed significantly to clarifying the notion of early modernity. Of course, research and publications on early modern cultures in India have come not only from the ICEMLNI circles. The exchange of ideas and research has also taken place outside this forum, contributing much to our understanding of early modernity not only in North India.[15]

One more point worth noting is that the ICEMLNI conferences, from the outset, in addition to their scholarly dimension, have also acted as an important means of integrating the community of scholars of North Indian early modernity, both established and newcomers. Over time, however, it became apparent that these triennial meetings were not

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15 In addition to the works on the subject referred to in Bangha and Stasik (2024) and Cort (2024), cf. such volumes with first-rate contributions published at the time as: O'Hanlon and Washbrook 2012; de Bruijn and Busch 2014; Orsini and Sheikh 2014; Minkowski and O'Hanlon 2015; and Orsini and Schofield 2016.

enough for their participants, that there was a great need for (joint) guided reading of source texts, especially the lesser known and / or difficult to access. Thus, ICEMLNI-related events, in the form of annual or biennial workshops-cum-retreats, have emerged as a new feature of community interaction, and this was made possible through the initiative of Imre Bangha, who organized the Brajbhasha and Early Hindi Retreat cum Workshop in Miercurea Ciuc in 2011. Up to the present, it has taken on ten incarnations: in Warsaw in 2012, Bansko in 2014, Třešť in 2016, Bansko in 2017, Saint Petersburg / Gatchina in 2019, Brijuni in 2023, Procida 2024, and due to the Covid-19 pandemic, three online workshops in 2020, 2021, and 2022.[16] An event that grew out of early Hindi meetings was one Rajasthani workshop that took place in 2015 in Warsaw. Last but not least, there are also middle Bengali retreats, the first and second of which were held in Miercurea Ciuc in 2016 and 2017, with later meetings in Deer Park (Himachal Pradesh, India) in 2018, and Bab Zouina (Morocco) in 2019, while the retreat planned for 2020 had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.[17] Workshops and retreats significantly increased the community outreach by including more research students and, after going online, especially many participants from India, for whom this format has become more accessible than in-person meetings.

In conclusion, one cannot fail to mention that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought the conference and related events to a pivotal moment, initiating the diversification of our practice. Paradoxically, it has opened up new vistas barely imaginable before 2020, changing the rhythm and formats established over the years. The Osaka conference, in a hybrid format, held mainly online but with considerable on-site participation, was an important practical lesson in how ICEMLNI may operate in the future. Especially under the new conditions, it has become apparent that the conference series continues to exist not only because of those willing to share the results of their research. For this to be possible, the community needs those who are willing to volunteer their time and effort for the benefit of others, that is, the organizers, all those thanks to whom the past conferences have taken place, and those who are yet to organize them.

The *paramparā* will go on: in Osaka, the offer of Christopher Diamond from the Australian National University in Canberra to organize the 2025 ICEMLNI was most welcomed. Let us get ready for it in whatever format reality dictates!

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16 For the history and details of past Early Hindi Workshops, please visit: https://earlyhindibrajbhashaworkshop.wordpress.com, accessed 9 February 2025.

17 For more details of Middle Bengali Workshops, please visit: https://voices.uchicago.edu/middlebengali, accessed 9 February 2025.

Table 1.1 Details of Conferences for 1979–2022

No.	Date	Organizer	Name of the conference
1	31 March – 1 April 1979	Winand M. Callewaert, KU Leuven (Belgium)	International Middle Hindī Bhakti Conference
2	19–21 March 1982	Monika Thiel-Horstmann, University of Bonn (Germany)	2nd International Conference on Early Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages
3	12–15 December 1985	G. H. Schokker, Leiden University (the Netherlands)	3rd International Conference on Devotional Literature in the New Indo-Aryan Languages
4	1–4 April 1988	R. S. McGregor, Cambridge University (UK)	4th Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages
5	9–12 July 1991	Françoise Mallison, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (Paris, France)	5th Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages
6	7–9 July 1994	Alan W. Entwistle, University of Washington (Seattle, USA)	6th Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages
7	6–8 August 1997	Mariola Offredi, University of Venice (Italy)	7th International Conference on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages
8	23–26 August 2000	Winand M. Callewaert and Dieter Taillieu, KU Leuven (Belgium)	8th International Conference on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages
9	23–26 August 2003	Monika Horstmann, University of Heidelberg (Germany)	9th International Conference on Early Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages
10	22–24 July 2009	Imre Bangha, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania (Miercurea Ciuc, Romania)	10th International Bhakti Conference: Early Modern Literatures in North India
11	3–6 August 2012	Tyler Williams, Columbia University / Indian Institute of Advanced Study (India)	11th International Conference on Early Modern Literatures in North India (ICEMLNI)

Table 1.1 *(continued)*

No.	Date	Organizer	Name of the conference
12	15–19 July 2015	Maya Burger and Nadia Cattoni, University of Lausanne (Switzerland)	12th ICEMLNI
13	18–22 July 2018	Danuta Stasik and Aleksandra Turek, University of Warsaw (Poland)	13th ICEMLNI
14	15–19 July 2022	Hiroko Nagasaki and Eijiro Doyama, University of Osaka (Japan)	14th ICEMLNI

Table 1.2 Bibliographical Details of Conference Volumes for 1979–2022

Place and year of conference	Bibliographical details of volume
Leuven 1979	Winand M. Callewaert (ed.). 1980. *Early Hindī Devotional Literature in Current Research: Proceedings of the International Middle Hindī Bhakti Conference (April 1979) Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 8). Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek KUL.
Bonn 1982	Monika Thiel-Horstmann (ed.). 1983. *Bhakti in Current Research, 1979–1982. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Early Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, St. Augustin, 19–21 March 1982* (Collectanea Instituti Anthropos 30). Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
Leiden 1985	M. K. Gautam and G. H. Schokker (eds). 2000. *Bhakti in Current Research, 1982–85: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Devotional Literature in the New Indo-Aryan Languages, Noordwijkerhout, 1985* (Kern Institute Miscellanea 10). Lucknow, Ghaziabad, Delhi: Indo-European Publishers.
Cambridge 1988	R. S. McGregor (ed.). 1992. *Devotional Literature in South Asia. Current Research, 1985–1988: Papers of the Fourth Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Held at Wolfson College, Cambridge, 1–4 September 1988* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 46). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Table 1.2 *(continued)*

Place and year of conference	Bibliographical details of volume
Paris 1991	Alan W. Entwistle and Françoise Mallison (eds). 1994. *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature: Research Papers, 1988–1991, presented at the Fifth Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, held at Paris – Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 9–12 July 1991.* New Delhi: Manohar & Paris: EFEO.
Seattle 1994	Alan W. Entwistle and Carol Salomon, with Heidi Pauwels and Michael Shapiro (eds). 1999. *Studies in Early Modern Indo-Aryan Languages, Literature and Culture: Research Papers, 1992–1994, Presented at the Sixth Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Held at Seattle, University of Washington, 7–9 July 1994.* New Delhi: Manohar.
Venice 1997	Mariola Offredi (ed.). 2000. *The Banyan Tree: Essays on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages (Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Venice, 1997).* 2 vols. New Delhi: Manohar & Venezia: Università degli Studi di Venezia. Dipartimento di Studi Eurasiatici.
Leuven 2000	Winand M. Callewaert and Dieter Taillieu (eds). 2000. *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research, 1997–2000. Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Leuven, 23–26 August, 2000.* New Delhi: Manohar.
Heidelberg 2003	Monika Horstmann (ed.). 2003. *Bhakti in Current Research, 2001–2003: Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Early Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Heidelberg, 23–26 July 2003.* New Delhi: Manohar.
Miercurea Ciuc 2009	Imre Bangha (ed.). 2013. *Bhakti beyond the Forest: Current Research on Early Modern Literatures in North India, 2003–2009: Papers Presented at the Tenth International Bhakti Conference: Early Modern Literatures in North India held at Sapientia, Hungarian University of Transylvania, Miercurea Ciuc, Romania between 22–24 July 2009.* New Delhi: Manohar.
Shimla 2012	Tyler Williams, Anshu Malhotra, and John Stratton Hawley (eds). 2018. *Text and Tradition in Early Modern North India.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
Lausanne 2015	Maya Burger and Nadia Cattoni (eds). 2019. *Early Modern India: Literatures and Images, Texts and Languages.* Heidelberg, Berlin: CrossAsia-eBooks.

Table 1.2 *(continued)*

Place and year of conference	Bibliographical details of volume
Warsaw 2018	Imre Bangha and Danuta Stasik (eds). 2024. *Literary Cultures in Early Modern North India: Current Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Osaka 2022	Hiroko Nagasaki, Monika Horstmann, Kiyokazu Okita (eds). 2025. *Early Modern Literatures in North India – Current Research, 2022–2024*. Heidelberg: Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing.

Acknowledgements

ORCID®

Danuta Stasik https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6885-9714

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PART II
Cosmopolitanisms in the Vernacular Age

2
Jain Multiple Language Use and Cosmopolitanism

John E. Cort

Abstract   An important development in the study of South Asia in recent years, and a development of direct importance to the ICEMLNI project, has been the extensive renewed attention to multiple language use in South Asia. We all owe a big thanks to Sheldon Pollock. His monumental 2006 *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* and the related 2003 edited volume *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* have done much to generate research and theorization on this topic. Extensive subsequent scholarship, in some cases in direct response to Pollock's work, and in other cases independent of it, has moved the discussion beyond Pollock's in important ways. This chapter brings Jain literary history into the conversation. The vibrant use of multiple languages by Jain authors throughout the history of the tradition provides an important contribution to our understanding of language use in South Asian literary history. The Jains have long been committed to writing in multiple languages, so much so that many Jain authors have written in two, three, four, and even six languages. Jains have not privileged Sanskrit as the only cosmopolitan language; on the contrary, to be a cosmopolitan Jain author has involved being able to write in multiple languages.

Sheldon Pollock on the Sanskrit and Vernacular Millennia

Let me first summarize Pollock's grand theory – for it is indeed grand in scale. My discussion here unavoidably assumes some prior knowledge of his argument, and in the interests of space will be very brief – in the eyes of some readers, no doubt, too brief.

Around the beginning of the first millennium CE, Sanskrit rose to a position of hegemony in South Asia as the principal language suitable for literature *(kāvya)*. This development happened not in Brahmanical Vedic ritual circles, but in royal courts. Pollock (2006: 67) identifies the area of northwest India dominated by peoples newly immigrated from central Asia, in particular the Śakas and the Kuṣāṇas, as a major location of the 'radical reinvention of Sanskrit culture' in the early centuries CE. These were people only slightly touched by Brahmanical Vedic ritual culture, so the rise of Sanskrit to primacy was not a matter of the expansion into literature of Brahmanical Vedic theological presuppositions that Sanskrit was the eternal language undergirding the divine order. Instead, these immigrant groups first adopted Sanskrit for 'public political purposes' (Pollock 2006: 72). The primacy of Sanskrit then expanded from Sanskrit being seen as the ideal language for inscriptions and other government records to its use as the ideal language for literature, which was also largely a courtly and political activity. Over what Pollock terms the 'Sanskrit millennium', the hegemonic position of Sanskrit spread from the Hindu Kush to Indonesia, and from the Himalayas to the southern tip of India. This large area was united into what he terms the 'Sanskrit cosmopolis', in which Sanskrit reigned supreme. Sanskrit was a language of power: it was both the medium through which power was expressed and its usage was itself an act of cultural power. Pollock (2006: 14) has clarified: 'The work Sanskrit did do was beyond the quotidian and the instrumental; it was directed above all toward articulating a form of political consciousness and culture, politics not as transaction of material power – the power of recording deeds, contracts, tax records, and the like – but as celebration of aesthetic power.'

This monopoly position in what Andrew Ollett (2017) has aptly called the 'language order' of South Asia began to be undermined around the turn of the second millennium CE with the rise of vernacular languages to the status of languages in which literature could be written. While earlier scholars have generally attributed the rise of vernacular languages and literatures to religious motivations, especially the rise of bhakti theologies, Pollock argues that it was a courtly development. Over the course of the second millennium CE, vernacular languages throughout India gradually came to supplant Sanskrit as the language of choice for the production of literature.

Pollock's theory has come in for extensive discussion, critique, and criticism. His identification of the first millennium CE as the Sanskrit millennium minimizes the extent to which Prakrit (Ollett 2017) and

Apabhramsha,[1] even if they didn't have as broad a reach as Sanskrit nor the same density of usage, were also pan-Indian cosmopolitan languages,[2] and Pali was a pan-Southeast Asian cosmopolitan language. He also pays insufficient attention to the importance in South Asia of Persian and Arabic as alternative cosmopolitan languages in the second millennium CE. The Persian and Arabic ecumenes tied large parts of South Asia to even larger cultural and literary spheres than the Sanskrit cosmopolis (Eaton 2019; Jha 2019: xxvi; Ricci 2011).

Second, he explicitly downplays the role of religious authors and texts in the development of vernacular literatures, and argues for the centrality of courtly locales. Heidi Pauwels has recently questioned the extent to which Pollock seems to take an either / or approach to the rise of the vernaculars. The existing literary archive from medieval India is very haphazard, with the result that 'what happens to be attested is what happened to escape destruction or decomposition, depending on the vagaries of history' (2021: 146). Asking whether courtly or religious vernacular literature occurred first may therefore be a relatively fruitless question, and instead scholars should ask about the courtly *and* religious factors that led to the popularity of vernacular literary production in different regions of South Asia.

Third, Pauwels (2021: 146) also argues that Pollock employs a definition of 'literature' that is far too narrow. His insistence that literature in South Asia consists solely of *belles lettres* or *kāvya* (Pollock 2006: 2–3) allows him to exclude from literature a large number of other genres. I would add that here he is following a distinctly Brahmanical definition of literature, and so he ends up following Brahmans in denying the practice of literature to other literary actors. This again, says Pauwels, results in a circular argument in which his conclusions are to a large extent predetermined by the way he has framed his questions. Pollock's restrictive definition of literature results in his thesis pertaining to only a narrow range of literature, and does not adequately address multilingual use in the full range of written genres. Whether we define literature narrowly as *belles lettres* or broadly as written works makes a huge difference.[3]

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1 We sorely need a social history of Apabhramsha on a par with Ollett's path-breaking survey of Prakrit.

2 See also Balbir (2014) on some of the ways that Sanskrit and Prakrit poetry existed in a polysemic relationship.

3 A fourth criticism is simply that his 'millennium-by-millennium paradigm', of a Sanskrit millennium followed by a vernacular one, is over-determined and even simplistic (Jha 2019: 51).

A number of authors have shown that Pollock's argument that vernacular literature emerged only in courtly settings doesn't work in the cases of specific languages. To the cases in which scholars have directly addressed and critiqued Pollock we can add other studies of the rise of vernacular literatures that upon close reading also problematize his theory. The list of such sources is extensive, so I here list only a few representative citations: for Bengali, Knutson (2014) and Manring (2019); for Gujarati, Bhayani (1999), Koṭhārī (1993), and Yashaschandra (2003); for Hindi, Bangha (2018 and forthcoming) and Williams (2024); for Kannada, Ben-Herut (2018), Gurevitch (2020 and 2022), and Taylor (2016 and 2020); for Marathi, Keune (2015), Nemec (2007), and Novetzke (2016); for Maru-Gurjar, Bangha (2018 and forthcoming), Dundas (2020), and Miśra (1989–1999: Vol. 1, 1–21); for Telugu, Fisher (2018); for Tamil, Akeyipapornchai (2019) and Shulman (2016); and for South India as a whole, Shulman (2007).[4]

Given the extent of these explicit and implicit problematizations of Pollock's thesis concerning vernacularization, one is struck by the comment of Michael S. Dodson in his review (2007: 481) of *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*: 'The question that will engage scholars over the next years, therefore, will be whether such problems substantially undermine the theoretical framework and the detailed points that Pollock makes here, or whether they stand as minor qualifications to an otherwise impressive piece of scholarship.' Dodson's question is still valid.

Multilingual Literary History in South Asia

Pollock's model tends to be a binary one: first there was Sanskrit, then there were the vernaculars. Recent works by Francesca Orsini (2012), and Eva De Clercq and Heidi Pauwels (2020),[5] among others, explore multiple language use in specific times and places that problematize an either / or approach. They show that in Sultanate and Sufi socio-cultural locations in early modern North India we find

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4   Jha (2019) is a valuable extended discussion of multilingual literary production in early modern North India that stands as a sustained response to Pollock's thesis in general.

5   In addition to Pauwels' (2020) introduction, see the other articles in the special issue (Vol. 11, Issue 1, 2020) of *South Asian History and Culture* edited by De Clercq and Pauwels on multireligious literary production in multiple languages (Apabhramsha, Arabic, Hindi, Persian, and Sanskrit) in early modern Gwalior.

Persian–Bhasha[6] bilingualism. In orthodox Islamic locations, we find Arabic added to the mix. In Rajput and other courtly locations, we find Sanskrit–Bhasha bilingualism. In Digambar Jain locations, we find Apabhramsha–Bhasha bilingualism. In the public sphere of bhakti, we find an emphasis on Bhasha. I would add to the examples advanced by these authors that in Śvetāmbar Jain locations, as we see below, we find Bhasha–Prakrit–Sanskrit trilingualism, and sometimes Bhasha–Prakrit–Sanskrit–Apabhramsha quadralingualism. In many locations, Bhasha is present in multiple registers. All of these 'language continua' (to borrow a term from Pollock [2006: 415]) could appear in the same city or region.

In this chapter I move beyond the work of Orsini, De Clercq, Pauwels, and their collaborators. Their studies emphasize multilingual settings, but in a manner that focuses largely on individual authors, each of whom writes usually in one language, with the aggregate of authors creating a multilingual climate. In some ways the picture they paint is of multiple simultaneous and coterminous monolingualisms that together create multilingualism. I investigate a different expression of multilingualism. In his recent book on the multilingual Vidyāpati in fifteenth-century Mithila, Pankaj Jha (2019: 69) says 'we do not have too many extent instances' of individual authors who practiced multilingualism by composing texts in more than one language. He does then allow that the extant examples of such multilingual practice are 'not as few as generally believed'. If he had turned his attention to the Jains he would have found a literary culture in which multilingual authors were more the expected norm than the exception.

Looking at Jain material, we find that from very early in the tradition there has been an emphasis on, and even valorization of, individual authors using multiple languages, sometimes in separate texts, sometimes in the same text.[7] To explore Jain multilingualism more

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6 I use the term Bhasha to refer to what some scholars call Maru-Gurjar, and others either Old Gujarati or Old Rajasthani, depending in large part on whether the scholar lives in Gujarat or Rajasthan and studies Gujarati or Rajasthani literature and language. As Bhogīlāl Sāṇḍesarā (1953: 4) says, in a comment echoed by most other scholars of western Indian languages and literature of the period, 'For the period of the sixteenth century [vs] and before, the terms 'Old Gujarati' and 'Old Western Rajasthani' are used to describe the same thing'. The extensive overlap between 'Old Gujarati and 'Old Rajasthani' or 'Old Hindi' is seen in that many of the authors and texts I discuss are found in both Deśāī and Koṭhārī's *Jain Gūrjar kavio* (1986–1997) and Miśra's *Hindī Jain sāhitya kā bṛhad itihās* (1989–1999).

7 The same argument has been made by Gregory Clines (2022: 107) in relation to the fifteenth-century Digambara author Brahma Jinadāsa, who wrote in

thoroughly, I have chosen to follow the life of one text, the *c.*1200 CE Prakrit *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* by Nemicandra Bhaṇḍārī, through a large number of other languages – arguably as many as nine, although the fuzzy boundaries among different vernaculars in medieval and early modern western India make it difficult to differentiate individual languages with great precision – during its 800-year history. The languages into which the original Prakrit *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* has been rendered include Maru-Gurjar, Sanskrit, Old Rajasthani / Marwari, Old Gujarati, Dhundhari, Braj Bhasha, Old and Modern Standard Hindi, Modern Marathi, and Modern Gujarati.[8] Even though the text was never rendered in Apabhramsha, Nemicandra and some of the other relevant authors did write in Apabhramsha, so I add that language to the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* text tradition.

Text Traditions and Multilingualism

In this chapter I adopt the approach of following a text through multiple languages and multiple centuries, what has been called a 'text tradition' by Deven Patel. This he defines as 'sets of textual and scholarly practices that grow up around a root or source text … an ongoing set of self-aware text-critical and aesthetic engagements with a powerful literary object that span centuries' (Patel 2014: 4). Patel uses this concept to explore the movement of the twelfth-century *Naiṣadhīyacarita* from its original Sanskrit into Gujarati and Telugu. The concept was adopted by Heleen De Jonckheere (2020), who uses it to study the movement of the tenth-century Jain *Dharmaparīkṣā* from Apabhramsha into Sanskrit, Kannada, Old Hindi, Braj Bhasha, Rajasthani, and Gujarati.[9] Other authors have followed a similar approach of tracing the multilingual biography of a single text, even if they don't use Patel's specific term. A good example is Ronit Ricci (2011), who follows the *Book of*

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both Sanskrit and Bhasha: 'The truth of the matter, particularly for Jain communities, is that *bhāṣā* and Sanskrit text production continued alongside one another during the early modern period. The fact that Jinadāsa wrote in both languages is not the exception for Jain authors, but, rather, the rule.'

8 In this list I have chosen, for rhetorical effect, to disaggregate Bhasha into multiple vernacular languages.

9 It is possible that the *ur*-text of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* text tradition was in Prakrit, but if so it has been lost (De Jonckheere 2020: 41 n.114). Even if there is not an extant Prakrit *Dharmaparīkṣā*, several of the authors in the *Dharmaparīkṣā* tradition either wrote in Prakrit or wrote commentaries on Prakrit texts, so we can add Prakrit as a participating language in this text tradition.

One Thousand Questions from Arabic through Latin, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Javanese, Tamil, Malay, and Buginese.

I apply this approach to the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* or '160 Verses', a Prakrit text by the Śvetāmbara Kharatara Gaccha layman Nemicandra Bhaṇḍārī that was composed in the middle of the thirteenth century vs.[10] Where I move beyond the earlier studies of text traditions is that at a number of points along the way I stop to show that many of the authors who wrote commentaries and translations of the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* were themselves multilingual authors, or at the very least were members of literary circles in which authors composed in multiple languages. It was the rare Jain author who was monolingual, in either Sanskrit or a vernacular.

Nemicandra Bhaṇḍārī and his *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*

Nemicandra (also Nemicand) Bhaṇḍārī was a Jain layman who lived in Maroth in eastern Marwar (about midway between present-day Jaipur and Nagaur) in the thirteenth century vs.[11] The Kharatara Gaccha is a Śvetāmbara mendicant lineage that emerged in the early centuries of the second millennium CE as a Śvetāmbara reform movement. It emphasized strict mendicant practice, in contrast to the perceived laxity of the majority of contemporary Śvetāmbara mendicants. Nemicandra Bhaṇḍārī was evidently dissatisfied with the state of Śvetāmbara mendicancy as he experienced it in Marwar, and heard about the reformist work of Jinapatisūri, then head of the Kharatara Gaccha. In vs 1253 Nemicandra went to meet Jinapatisūri in the Caulukya imperial capital of Patan, where he was staying for the four-month rainy-season retreat. In 1256, Nemicandra accepted Jinapatisūri as his guru, and took the vows *(vrata)* of an orthoprax layman from Jinapatisūri in Patan.[12]

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10 Unless specifically indicated otherwise, I use vs (Vikram Samvat) instead of CE (Gregorian dates) throughout this chapter. In many cases it is not clear if the vs dates for a text or person are according to the North Indian or Gujarati version of the Vikram calendar. The two start six months apart, and so for a rough conversion to a Gregorian date one should subtract 57 from the Vikram year if using the North Indian calendar, and 56 if using the Gujarati calendar (see Johnson 1938). Using vs dates, therefore, provides for greater accuracy.

11 Information on Nemicandra comes from several Kharatara Gaccha chronicles, several of the Bhasha *bālāvabodh*s that I discuss below, and Vinayasāgar 2005.

12 The connection between Nemicandra and Jinapatisūri went much deeper. Nemicandra brought with him his young son Ambaḍa, who in 1255 vs was initiated as a Kharatara Gaccha mendicant at the age of ten with the name

Nemicandra wrote three texts under the tutelage of Jinapatisūri. He wrote a short nine-verse Prakrit *stotra* to Pārśvanātha, and a thirty-five-verse Apabhramsha hymn of praise of Jinavallabhasūri. The latter was a twelfth-century vs Kharatara Gaccha mendicant and copious author who was famous for his trenchant criticism of the lax conduct of his contemporaries, and who was an inspiration to Nemicandra.[13] He referred directly to Jinavallabhasūri thrice in the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*. Nemicandra's most famous text is his 160-verse Prakrit *Saṭṭhisaya* (Sanskrit *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*).[14]

This text is an incisive description of the correct conduct of an orthodox Jain mendicant, and the orthodox Jain layman who accepts such a mendicant as his guru. Nemicandra harshly criticized the conduct of the lax mendicants and their lay supporters. Whether or not mendicants were following orthodox conduct has been a matter of concern for Jains throughout the past millennium, and for this reason the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* has continued to be a popular text. There are many manuscripts of it in Jain libraries throughout western India; the large libraries at Koba and Patan, for example, have more than 120 copies. Many of these manuscripts contain only the Prakrit root text, but many others contain commentaries and translations in various languages, as I discuss below. Its popularity and relevance are also seen in the text tradition I outline here. In addition to the seventeen versions in Sanskrit and Bhasha for which we know the authors, there are a number of anonymous versions in these languages in the Jain libraries of western and northern India.

Kharatara Gaccha Multilingualism

Nemicandra wrote a hymn in Apabhramsha in addition to his two Prakrit texts. So while Apabhramsha is not directly in the text tradition

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Vīraprabha. In 1278, upon the death of Jinapatisūri, Vīraprabha became head of the lineage with the name Jineśvarasūri, and lived until 1331. He was a prolific author in four languages: Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha, and Bhasha.

13 Jinapatisūri wrote a commentary on Jinavallabhasūri's *Saṅghapaṭṭaka* while he was in Patan, so it is quite likely that he and Nemicandra read the text together. In their *Bālāvabodh*s (pp. 1 and 3 respectively), both Somasundara and Merusundara asserted that Nemicandra based his *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* on Jinavallabhasūri's texts. Some manuscripts and manuscript catalogues even misattribute Nemicandra's *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* to Jinavallabhasūri.

14 In conformity with standard Jain practice (Jaini 1979: 47 n.11), I use the Sanskrit title of the text. Both Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras have long referred to both Prakrit and Apabhramsha texts by Sanskritized versions of the titles. This is yet another expression of multilingualism in Jain intellectual culture.

Table 2.1 Compositions by Language by Heads of the Kharatara Gaccha (Main Branch), vs Eleventh through Fifteenth Centuries.

Author	Years as Head of Gaccha	Sanskrit	Prakrit	Sanskrit–Prakrit mix	Apabhramsha	Bhasha
Vardhamāna	d. after *c.*1080	3	2	0	0	0
Jineśvara	d. between 1108 and 1120	2	10	1	0	0
Jinacandra	*fl.* 1125	0	7	0	0	0
Abhayadeva	*fl.* 1120–1128	10	18	0	1	0
Jinavallabha	1167–1167	21	25	1	2	0
Jinadatta	1169–1211	9	17	0	4	0
Jinacandra	1211–1223	1	2	0	0	0
Jinapati	1223–1277	20	2	0	1	0
Jineśvara	1278–1331	9	5	0	5	2
Jinaprabodha	1331–1341	4	0	0	0	0
Jinacandra	1341–1376	7	1	0	1	0
Jinakuśala	1377–1389	12	2	0	2	0
Jinapadma	1390–1400	8	3	1	3	0
Jinalabdhi	1400–1406	5	0	0	0	0
Jinacandra	1406–1415	0	0	0	0	0
Jinodaya	1415–1432	0	1	0	1	0
Jinarāja	1432–1461	2	0	0	1	1

of the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*, it is part of the larger Jain tradition of multilingualism that surrounds this text. It is also an example of the significant use of Apabhramsha by medieval Kharatara Gaccha authors for at least three centuries. Most scholarship on Apabhramsha has focused on Digambara texts, and paid insufficient attention to its significant role in medieval Kharatara Gaccha literary culture.

Part of the cultural power of the Kharatara Gaccha was that many of the mendicants in the lineage were prolific authors (Cort 2009). Textual production helped establish the orthodox bona fides of the mendicants in the eyes of important laymen such as Nemicandra, and also gave them cultural power in the many royal courts the mendicants have frequented over the centuries. Kharatara Gaccha chronicles and hagiographies credit many mendicants with convincing kings of the truth of Jainism, and converting merchant and warrior castes to Jainism (Babb 2004: 141–84). The Kharatara Gaccha mendicants amplified the cultural power that came from composing texts in several languages. Whereas Brahman competitors for royal and caste support usually wrote in Sanskrit, and the bards who were patronized by royalty and caste leaders usually wrote in Bhasha, Jain mendicants wrote in multiple languages. The cultural power achieved by such performance skills cannot be overestimated. A survey of the extant texts written by heads of the Kharatara Gaccha over four centuries from the vs mid-eleventh century to the mid-fifteenth century indicates just how important composition in several languages was to the Kharatara Gaccha (see Table 2.1).[15] By writing in two languages, Nemicandra participated in this multilingual literary culture, and the life of his *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* in the ensuing centuries also shows the Kharatara Gaccha preference for composing in multiple languages.

The *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* Text Tradition

There are no extant dated commentaries or translations of the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* from the first two centuries after Nemicandra composed it. Over the next two centuries eleven commentaries, with known authors and approximate dates, appeared, and there are other anonymous and / or undated versions in the Jain libraries of western India. Nine of these were by Kharatara Gaccha authors, but two were by authors in the rival Tapā Gaccha, so it had a trans-sectarian appeal. The Tapā Gaccha was the other major Śvetāmbara reformist lineage in medieval and early modern western India, and for most of the period was the major competitor with the Kharatara Gaccha among Śvetāmbara lineages. Many Tapā Gaccha authors throughout its history exhibited a similar concern that mendicant gurus observe proper practice, and that the laity only follow such orthoprax gurus.[16]

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15 Information on textual production is from Vinayasāgar 2006.

16 Thorough investigation into all of the authors who wrote commentaries on and translations of the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* indicates that most of them were involved

The first extant and dated version of the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* was written by a Tapā Gaccha author. It was written in Bhasha, and preceded the first extant and dated Sanskrit version by five years. In other words, Sanskrit and Bhasha in medieval and early modern western India did not exist in a temporal sequencing, but thrived in the very same temporal and geographical literary space. Somasundarasūri wrote his *Ṣaṣṭiśataka bālāvabodh* in vs 1496. Somasundara was head of the Tapā Gaccha from 1457 to 1499. He was a prolific author, who wrote twenty-two extant texts in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Bhasha.[17] He helped popularize the genre of the *bālāvabodh*. Seven of his *bālāvabodh*s are extant.

A *bālāvabodh* was a vernacular prose hybrid translation–commentary of a Sanskrit, Prakrit, Bhasha, or, rarely, Apabhramsha text. In some cases it added edifying stories – a common feature of commentaries in South Asia – and, as is the case with Somasundarasūri's *Bālāvabodh* on the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*, information about the author of the original text. The earliest extant *bālāvabodh* is the *Ṣaḍāvaśyaka bālāvabodh* by the Kharatara Gaccha author Taruṇaprabhasūri, which he finished in vs 1411 (Pandit 1976). The range of possible content and style in these texts was vast; they ranged 'from word-to-word paraphrases, often equivalent to translations, to extensive and in-depth discussions bringing in innovative material' (Balbir 2020: 775). While *bāl* literally means 'child', Bhogīlāl Sāṇḍesarā (1953: 7–8; 2001: 276–7) explains that it refers not to physical age, but to level of education and understanding. For this reason, Sitamshu Yashaschandra (2003: 577 n.18) labels the genre 'handbook for students' and 'handbook for beginners'.[18] In other words, a *bālāvabodh* was an introductory textbook. Harivallabh Bhāyāṇī (1980: 5) expands on this, when he says that they served as textbooks to teach basic information on the principles of Jainism to both newly initiated mendicants and to laity. When one remembers that the majority of mendicants were initiated at a very young age, usually between the ages of five and ten, one sees that the term *bāl* is quite appropriate here. Later the genre morphed into the overlapping genre known as *stabaka* (Skt.), *ṭabo* (Guj.), and

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in criticisms of contemporary lax mendicancy and in efforts to promote Jain mendicant and lay orthopraxy. A fuller discussion will have to await another occasion.

17 He also wrote one six-language *(ṣaḍbhāṣā)* hymn; I discuss this genre below. Information on Somasundara's writings comes from Śivprasād (2000: 15)

18 I find Yashaschandra's English translation of *bālāvabodh* preferable to that of Nalini Balbir (2020: 775); Balbir's 'instruction for the ignorant' seems harshly judgmental to my ear, and misses the extensive role these texts played as textbooks for both young mendicants and laypeople.

ṭabā (Hindi), 'Meaning'. Balbir (2020: 775) points out, as we see with abundant clarity in the materials in this essay, that the vernacular commentarial tradition existed side-by-side with the Sanskrit commentarial tradition, and many authors wrote commentaries in both Sanskrit and the vernacular.[19]

As we see in Table 2.2, Kharatara Gaccha authors wrote nine commentaries and translations on the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* over the next two centuries. This number of texts is actually low, as manuscript catalogues of Jain libraries in Gujarat and Rajasthan list many anonymous commentaries and translations in Bhasha and Sanskrit.[20] This is a remarkable history of extensive interaction with a single text. Four of the versions were in Bhasha, and four in Sanskrit, with the last of the nine being in what is recognizably Rajasthani, showing that the literary interaction with the text was very much a bilingual Sanskrit and Bhasha one. Given that the original text was in Prakrit, we can safely term this a trilingual Kharatara Gaccha text tradition during this period. Only in the vs eighteenth century do we find another version with a named Tapā Gaccha author, the *ṭabo* by Paṇḍit Jaysomgaṇi, which he composed in Masuda (in contemporary Ajmer district).[21] By this time he wrote in what is recognizably an older version of Gujarati. The final Śvetāmbar version of the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* comes from an otherwise unknown Osvāl layman from Ahmedabad named Mohan or Mohanlāl. Sometime before vs 1930 – i.e., the first printing of his *bālāvabodh* – he

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19 See also Tyler Williams' important 2018 article on the significant overlap between the genres of commentary and translation in early modern literature. I extend this argument to the Jain textual tradition in Cort (2025).

20 In his introduction *(prastāvnā)* to his edition to three *bālāvabodh*s on the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*, Bhogīlāl Saṇḍesarā (1953: 22–4) records that in 1950 CE, with the assistance of Muni Puṇyavijay, he was able to inspect the Jain libraries in Jaisalmer. There he studied the seventeenth century vs manuscript of an anonymous *bālāvabodh* in Marwari. He added that he knew of other versions in the Jain libraries of Jaisalmer and Bikaner.

21 The dating of this text poses a problem. The other four known texts by Jaysom date from vs 1703 to 1723 (for two of them we also know the place of composition: one was composed in Jaisalmer, and one in Agra), and we have other records of his activities between vs 1710 and 1718. The vs 1761 date therefore seems suspicious to me, unless Jaysom was extremely long-lived, and composed his *Ṣaṣṭiśataka ṭabo* in his old age. But the vs 1761 date for the composition of his *ṭabo* comes from the colophon of a manuscript copied by Jaysom himself (Punyavijaya 1978: 80), whereas no other manuscript of his *Ṣaṣṭiśataka ṭabo* gives a date for the composition of the text. This manuscript is available online: www.ldindology.org/manuscripts/listing-page-of-manuscripts/33849. accessed 9 February 2025.

Table 2.2 Commentaries / Translations of the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka / Upadeśa siddhānta ratnamālā* with Known Authors

Date (all vs)	Text	Author(s)	Language
1496	*Bālāvabodh*	TG Somasundara	Bhasha
1501	*Ṭīkā*	KhG Taporatna and Guṇaratna	Sanskrit
1501	*Bālāvabodh*	KhG Jinasāgara	Bhasha
*c.*1515	*Bālāvabodh*	KhG Dharmadeva	Bhasha
1527	*Bālāvabodh*	KhG Merusundara	Bhasha
*c.*1570	*Ṭippaṇa*	KhG Bhaktilābha	Sanskrit
1579	*Ṭīkā*	KhG Rājahaṁsa	Sanskrit
*c.*1580	*Avacūri*	KhG Gajasāra	Sanskrit
16ᵗʰ century	*Bālāvabodh*	KhG Dharmanandana	Bhasha
fl. 1652–90	*Bālāvabodh*	KhG Vimalakīrti	Rajasthani
fl. 1703–23 (or 1761?)	*Ṭabo*	TG Jaysom	Gujarati
1796	*Bhāṣā*	D Devīsiṁh Chābṛā	Dhundhari
1912	*Bhāṣa vacanikā*	D Bhāgcand	Old Hindi / Braj Bhasha
*c.*1930	*Bhāṣā*	Śv Mohan	Hindi
1946 (print)	*Bhāṣā-Ṭīkā*	D Pannālāl Bāklīvāl	Hindi
1955 (print)	*Bhāṣā-Ṭīkā*	D Pannālāl Bāklīvāl	Marathi
1964	*Bhāṣā*	D Bābā Dulīcand	Hindi

Abbreviations: D: Digambara; KhG: Khartara Gaccha; Śv: Śvetāmbara; TG: Tapā Gaccha

translated the text into Gujarati verse, accompanied by a Gujarati prose gloss.[22]

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22 Mohanlāl, like his Digambara contemporary Bhāgcand whom I discuss below, did not know Prakrit and so relied on a Sanskrit commentary, in this case the one by Taporatna and Guṇaratna (whom he misattributes as Guṇasundara). (Colophon to *Ṣaṣṭiśataka dohā and Bālāvabodh* of Mohan, in *Prakaraṇ ratnākar*, vol. 2, p. 698.)

Table 2.3 shows that almost all of the authors who wrote versions of the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* wrote other texts in Bhasha and or Sanskrit, and four wrote texts either in Prakrit or a Sanskrit–Prakrit mix. They were bilingual and trilingual authors. The table shows the decline in Prakrit among medieval Śvetāmbara authors, as few of them wrote a text solely in Prakrit. But even if Śvetāmbara authors rarely composed in Prakrit, the language was still a vital part of Śvetāmbara literary culture. Almost every one of the authors wrote commentaries on or translations of other Prakrit texts besides the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*, so we can identify the Śvetāmbara text tradition as trilingual: Prakrit, Sanskrit, and Bhasha.[23]

Table 2.3 Languages of Texts by Śvetāmbar Authors in *Ṣaṣṭiśataka* Tradition

Name	Year of ṢŚ version (VS)	Sanskrit	Prakrit	Sanskrit–Prakrit mix	Bhasha
Somasundara	1496	10	2	1	9
Taporatna and Guṇaratna	1501	2	0	0	0
Jinasāgara	1501	2	0	0	2
Dharmadeva	*c.*1515	0	0	0	1
Merusundara	1527	8	0	0	24
Bhaktilābha	*c.*1570	6	0	1	8
Rājahaṁsa	1579	4	1	0	0
Gajasāra	*c.*1580	3	0	1	0
Dharmanan-dana	16th century	1	0	0	1
Vimalakīrti	*fl.* 1652/1690	3	0	0	19
Jaysom	1761	0	0	0	5
Mohan	*c.*1930	0	0	0	1

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23 Information on the Kharatara Gaccha authors comes from Vinayasāgar (2006), on Somasundara from Śivprasād (2000: 15), and on Jaysom from various manuscript catalogues.

The Digambara *Upadeśa siddhānta ratnamālā* Text Tradition

One of the many needs in Jain Studies is a better understanding of the ways that ideas, doctrines, ritual practices, and texts have been shared by Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras throughout Jain history. Contemporary Digambara and Śvetāmbara intellectual communities tend to be largely ignorant of each other. To a large extent, Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras live in different parts of India; even in towns and cities with populations of both, they tend to belong to different castes, and in other ways not to intermingle. But we need to be careful not to project the contemporary intellectual divide into the past in a blanket fashion, as a careful investigation of Jain history shows that the boundaries between the two sectarian traditions have been much more porous than most scholarship indicates. The processes of this interaction and sharing, however, remain largely opaque.

Nemicandra's text is a good example of this. So far I have discussed the continuing life of his text in Śvetāmbara (and largely Kharatara Gaccha) intellectual culture, where it was known as the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*. Nemicandra himself did not give a name to his text – in his colophon he simply said that he had spoken in verse form so that faithful people could study and come to understand the correct ritual path that leads to liberation.[24] The earliest commentators, however, all called it the *Ṣaṣṭiśataka*.

Since at least the vs late-eighteenth century Nemicandra's text has also had a presence in North Indian Digambara Jain intellectual culture, where it is known by the alternate name of *Upadeśa siddhānta ratnamālā* (Jewel-Garland of Teachings on the Doctrine). It is also found under several similar names: *Siddhāntasāra* (Essence of the Doctrine) and *Dharmopadeśa ratnamālā* (Jewel-Garland of Teachings on the Dharma). Rarely does one find just the Prakrit text; it is usually accompanied by a Sanskrit commentary, or at a minimum a Sanskrit word-for-word gloss; in some manuscripts it is accompanied by a vernacular prose commentary, a genre known in Digambara circles as a *bhāṣā vacanikā*.

There are three known Bhasha translations and commentaries of the *Upadeśa siddhānta ratnamālā*: by Devīsiṁh Chābṛā in Jaipur (vs 1796), by Bhāgcand (vs 1912) in Gwalior, and by Bābā Dulīcand in Jaipur (vs 1964). In addition, Paṇḍit Ṭoḍarmal (Bhārill 1973) of Jaipur quoted or

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24 *evaṁ bhaṁḍāria nemicaṁdaraïyāo kaïvi gāhāo /*
   vihimaggarayā bhavvā paḍhantu jāṇaṁtu jaṁtu sivaṁ //
   Ṣaṣṭiśataka 161. I follow Saṇḍesarā's edition.

cited nine verses of the *Upadeśa siddhānta ratnamālā*, eight with full quotation, in his *Mokṣamārg prakāśak* (Light on the Path to Liberation), which was left unfinished at his death (vs 1823 or 1824).[25]

The Digambar literary culture of early modern North India was not as robustly multilingual as earlier Digambara literary cultures; for example, in medieval Karnataka we find Apabhramsha, Kannada, Prakrit, and Sanskrit all in use in close proximity by Digambara authors. Nor did it match the medieval Śvetāmbara literary cultures described above. The active use of Prakrit disappeared, and even the ability to read it seems to have been limited to a small number of intellectuals. For example, Bhāgcand implied that he could not read the original Prakrit. He was unable to find a Sanskrit commentary, so he had to rely on a Sanskrit gloss, and as a result he was sure that there were mistakes in his version, although none of them contravened the correct Digambara tradition.[26] But the early modern North Indian Digambara literary tradition was not a monolingual vernacular one. Devīsiṁh wrote Dhundhari versions of two Prakrit texts, most likely through Sanskrit commentaries. Ṭoḍarmal also wrote only in Dhundhari, but his extensive commentaries on and quotations from Prakrit and Sanskrit texts tell us that he was comfortable in both languages, and there are some indications that he may have been able to read Kannada script as well. Almost all of Bhāgcand's texts were in what one author called 'old Hindi, with the influences of Braj Bhasha' (Paramānand 1956: 17). Three of his texts were *bhāṣā vacanikā*s on Sanskrit texts, his version of the *Upadeśa siddhānta ratnamālā* relied upon a Sanskrit gloss, and he composed an independent Sanskrit text, his popular *Mahāvīrāṣṭaka*

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25 Ṭoḍarmal knew that the *Upadeśa siddhānta ratnamālā* was a Śvetāmbara text. He expressly defended his extensive use of a text by a sectarian tradition he elsewhere excoriated as false, saying that Nemicandra criticized the lax Śvetāmbar *caityavāsī*s in ways very similar to and supportive of Ṭoḍarmal's criticisms of the Digambara *bhaṭṭāraka*s. But not all Digambara authors were aware of the text's origins. Agarcand Nāhṭā (1981) points out that Bhāgcand was ignorant that Nemicandra was Śvetāmbara, and so seriously misread the text in places where Nemicandra praised his Kharatara Gaccha guru Jina-vallabhasūri. Nor was Bhāgcand aware of the many Sanskrit and Bhasha commentaries on the text. It would appear that few of the commentaries accompanied the root text as it crossed the Śvetāmbara–Digambara divide.

26 *isa granthi kī saṁskṛta ṭīkā to thī nahīṁ parantu kichū ṭippaṇa thā tātai vidhi milāya merī buddhi maiṁ pratibhāsyā taisā artha liṣyā hai // kahīṁ bhuli avaśya hoyagī so buddhivān sodha lījyo // āmnāya viruddha artha to maiṁ naiṁ liṣyānāṁ hī parantu gāthā ke karttā kā abhiprāya aura bhī hoya to samajhi lījyo // Bhāgcand, Upadeśa siddhānta ratnamālā vacanikā* (Jaipur ms. of vs 1912), folio 44b.

stotra. Another Sanskrit text, the *Jinatāḍava*, may also be by him (Premī 1911: 50). Dulīcand wrote only in Hindi, but he wrote three translations from Prakrit and two from Sanskrit. None of these authors was as solidly tri- or quadrilingual as earlier Śvetāmbara examples in the sense of being able to compose in all these languages, but they were to varying degrees bilingual in both Sanskrit and the vernacular, and Prakrit played a role in their authorial activities.

Print

Nemicandra's text, in both its Śvetāmbara and Digambara iterations, made its way into print in the late nineteenth century CE, even while manuscript copies of it were still being made, and before Bābā Dulīcand's translation which exists only in manuscript form. The earliest known Śvetāmbara version, and the earliest known print version, is in Volume 2 of the *Prakaraṇ ratnākar*, a massive anthology edited and published in 1876 CE by the Śvetāmbara layman Bhīmsiṁh Māṇak in Bombay. This included Mohan's Gujarati verse translation. The earliest known Digambara version was published in 1889 CE. The Terāpanth layman Jaicand Sītārām Saitvāl of Wardha (in present-day Maharashtra) published a Hindi translation–commentary *(Ṭīkā)* by Paṇḍit Pannālāl Bāklīvāl of Sujangarh, Rajasthan (Jain and Agravāl 1958: 108).[27]

There have been at least eight subsequent publications of the text with commentaries and translations, three from Digambara publishers, three from Śvetāmbara publishers, and two from scholarly publishers. The transition to print involved bringing modern standard Gujarati, Hindi, and Marathi into the list of languages in which the text has appeared. To date no version has appeared in English, but I expect this is only a matter of time.

Jain Philosophy of Language and Multilingualism

Before concluding, I want to point out two other directions this inquiry could have taken to support the argument that Jains for two millennia have been committed to multilingualism, and that to be a cosmopolitan Jain author meant that one was a multilingual author. One of these involves Jain theories of language, and the other the Jain production of multiple language texts.

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27 I have not seen Saitvāl's publication.

The Brahmanical tradition famously viewed Sanskrit as not just a language, but as *the* language. In the eyes of some Brahmanical theological and philosophic schools it was even more: Sanskrit was ultimate reality itself. All other languages were human creations that exhibited the limitations of human fallibility. Johannes Bronkhorst (2015: 85–6) has described the Brahmanical claims for Sanskrit as follows:

> Brahmans knew and preserved the Veda and the language of the Veda, Sanskrit. From the point of view of the Brahmans, Sanskrit was not *a* language but rather *the only correct language*, all other languages being corruptions of Sanskrit. The relation between Sanskrit and reality was also close, a presumed fact that explained the efficacy of mantras (which are in Sanskrit). The reliability of the Veda, furthermore, is directly related to the fact that it is in Sanskrit. As a matter of fact, the Veda is a pure expression of the Sanskrit language, in the formation of which no authors played a role. The possession of this unique literary document gave Brahmanism the authority it claimed. From the Brahmanical point of view, the literary traditions of other currents of thought could not but be inferior, because they had nothing like the Veda.

When the Jains did take to writing in Sanskrit beginning in the middle of the first millennium CE, they did so because it was the language used by other philosophical and soteriological schools with whom they wanted to debate, not because they accorded it any special status. To further their own use of Sanskrit, Jains from the time of Pūjyapāda (*c*.500 CE) produced their own Sanskrit grammars, and did not privilege the Brahmanical grammatical texts. As we have seen, they composed extensively in all the languages of South Asia, and viewed all of them as equally capable as Sanskrit of communicating fully.[28]

We see the Jain decentring of Sanskrit, and acceptance of multilingualism, most clearly in the depictions of the *divyadhvani*, the sacred sound by which the sermons of the enlightened Jinas were delivered (Bronkhorst 2015; Dundas 1996: 141–2). There have been disagreements as to what the *divyadhvani* is but there has been almost unanimous agreement that it is not Sanskrit.

Digambaras say that it is a miraculous sound. It is something like *oṁ*, but there is disagreement as to whether or not it consists of syllables. According to the Digambaras the Jina upon attaining omniscience

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28 See Dundas (1996, 2020) for fuller discussions of Jain attitudes toward language and Sanskrit.

ceases to have any bodily functions, so he does not physically speak the *divyadhvani*. Rather, it emanates from his body, with some Digambaras saying that the locus of this emanation is the Jina's mouth. Some Digambaras say that the *divyadhvani* contains all the 18 major and 170 minor languages. Another source says it is one language, while yet another says that it is half Ardhamāgadhī and half all the other languages. Whatever it is, the *gaṇadhara*s, the chief disciples of a Jina who are close to omniscience and will attain liberation at the end of this lifetime, have the ability to comprehend the meaning of this sound which is otherwise unintelligible to humans. They then transmit the teachings, using human languages.

Śvetāmbaras view the omniscient but still embodied and not yet liberated Jina as more human than the Digambaras, and he exhibits all the normal human functions and activities, albeit in a subtle fashion (Dundas 1985). According to the Śvetāmbara canonical *Aupapātika sūtra* (quoted in Dundas 1996: 141), the Jina preaches to an assembly of gods and humans, with the humans including Aryans and Non-Aryans. (Later sources include animals.) His speech extends for over a league, and is 'in Ardhamāgadhī' and at the same time 'conform[s] to all languages'. This speech, then, in the ultimate act of simultaneous translation, transforms itself into all the languages of all the beings in attendance. Presumably Sanskrit is among these other languages, but it was the rare Jain intellectual who thought that Sanskrit was anything other than one among many human languages.[29]

These Jain theories of language decentre Sanskrit. They give equal priority to all other languages, and posit that full communication can happen in any of them. Just as the Jina was able to speak simultaneously in all languages, the cosmopolitan Jain author should be able to write in more than one language. Anything less was to restrict communication and prevent many people from encountering the Jina's message.

Six-language Jain Texts

So far I have been addressing two modes of multilingualism. One, as described by Orsini, and De Clercq and Pauwels, among others, is a socio-cultural milieu in which different authors use different languages. While some of the authors may themselves be multilingual, this is not

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29 See also Dundas (1998) on Jain theory of *mantra*. In contrast to Brahmans who insisted that *mantra*s can only be in Sanskrit, Jains have insisted that Prakrit can also serve as a language for *mantra*s.

necessarily the case, and so this form of multilingualism could, in theory, be composed of multiple monolingual authors living in the same time and place.[30] The second mode has been my main focus: authors who write texts in two, three, or four languages. Each text is generally in one language, and so the author must choose which language he uses for any given text according to the audience and other contextualizing factors (Cort 2010). Jains have also practiced a third form of multilingualism: using multiple languages in one text.

One obvious example of such multilingual texts is commentary (Balbir 2020). The earliest level of commentaries on the Śvetāmbara Jain scriptures consisted of multiple registers of Prakrit, usually a Maharashtri Prakrit commentary on an Ardhamāgadhī Prakrit root text. In the middle of the first millennium CE, the Śvetāmbaras started using Sanskrit extensively for commentaries, so any one text would contain layers of three languages: two Prakrits and Sanskrit. In the second millennium, with the development of the *bālāvabodh* genre, the number of languages expanded in some cases to four with the addition of Bhasha.

A second example is the genre of six-language *(ṣaḍbhāṣā)* texts, which almost always were hymns *(stotra*s*)* (Balbir 2007; Schubring 1957; Vose 2016). In some bravura performances they were even expanded to eight languages *(aṣṭabhāṣā).* The six languages in Jain texts usually were Maharashtri Prakrit, Shauraseni Prakrit, Magadhi or Ardhamāgadhī Prakrit, Paishaci Prakrit, Chulika-Paisachi Prakrit, and Apabhramsha. Sanskrit usually 'bookended' the text (Vose 2016: 329), and was not counted among the six; these were really seven-language texts. The Jains probably did not invent this genre. The first known reference to it is in the *Kāvyālaṅkāra*, a text on aesthetics by the early-ninth-century Kashmiri author Rudraṭa (Ollett 2017: 138–9; Pollock 2006: 94). Writing two centuries later, Bhoja in his *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* indicated that the ability to compose in six languages marked a truly cosmopolitan author. After describing the six languages, he said that the author 'who can compose in them all is the most successful, the very king, of poets'[31] (quoted in Pollock 2006: 584). Rudraṭa and Bhoja gave a slightly different list of the six than we find in the Jain six-language *stotra*s: Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha, Paishaci, Shauraseni, and Magadhi. Andrew Ollett (2017: 139) notes that the twelfth-century Jain author Hemacandra in his *Siddhahema* grammar listed the same six as Rudraṭa

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30 A Jain variant of this are the many multiple-text manuscripts in Jain libraries, most of which contain texts in multiple languages (Balbir 2019).

31 *nirbaddhā yasteṣāṁ sa iha kavirājo vijayate //*

and Bhoja, and said, 'For most authors after Hemacandra, that there were six languages was common knowledge'.

The Jains seem to have been the main practitioners of the genre.[32] As we have seen, they had no ideological objections to composing in multiple languages. The six-language hymn is clearly a performance genre, and Jain chronicles are replete with accounts of Jain monk-authors performing in royal courts to demonstrate their cosmopolitan literary skills and thereby awakening the ruler to the truth of Jainism. No doubt the ability to perform a six-language text also impressed leading merchants, and medieval Jain monks were known for their ability to convince entire caste lineages *(gotra)* to become their followers.

Jain Cosmopolitanism and Multiple Language Use

Throughout this essay I have been using the term 'cosmopolitan', which is central to Pollock's thesis. I find it a very useful term to describe attitudes toward literature, and the institutions that support literary production. My argument is that Jain authors for 2,000 years have also been cosmopolitan, but not in the same way that Sanskrit authors have been.

Pollock defines the term in an overly narrow way. For him it applies to brahmanical literary culture, but he does not acknowledge that there have been multiple and conflicting ways in which South Asian authors throughout history have been cosmopolitan.

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32 Jains were not the only practitioners of six-language composition, however. Dalpat Singh Rājpurohit (2022b: 188–95) briefly discusses several references to six-language texts by Bhasha poets. The seventeenth-century Dādūpanthī poet Bhīkhan listed the same six languages as did Rudraṭa. Given the prominent role of Jain writers in what is now Rajasthan, one wonders whether Bhīkhan might not have been influenced by, or at least aware of, the Jain practice of six-language poems. But it is less likely that the thirteenth-century Maithili author Jyotīśvara Kaviśekhara, who listed the same six languages in his *Varṇaratnākara* (Jha 2018: 194), was influenced by the Jains. The poet and Braj Bhasha theoretician Bhikhārīdās (1721–1799 CE) in his 1746 CE *Kāvyan-irṇay* gave a different list, showing how the concept of six languages moved beyond the original list of only Indo-European classical languages. His six were Sanskrit, Persian, Braj Bhasha, Magadhi Prakrit, Avadhi, and 'Eastern' (Purvi), although Busch (2011: 119–20) says that it is not fully clear whether Bhikhārīdās refered to Avadhi or Apabhramsha. (See also Jha [2019: 60–1] on Bhikhārīdās.) The continued valorization of being able to compose in six languages is seen in the Charan poet Sūryamall Mīsaṇ (1815–1868 CE) of Bundi, for whom the six languages included Persian and English (Rajpurohit 2022a: 385).

Pollock defines the intertwined terms 'cosmopolis' and 'cosmopolitan' based on etymology.[33] *Cosmo* refers to the supraregional. It is not local or even regional, and therefore certainly not vernacular. *Cosmo* 'directs attention toward the expansive nature of the formation' (2006: 12). The second half of the term, *polis*, he says, points to 'the prominence given to the political dimension', and brings the factor of power to the fore. A *cosmopolis*, therefore, is a 'transregional culture-power sphere', and to be *cosmopolitan* is to be a participant in such a transregional culture-power sphere, in this case one that is defined by the privileging of Sanskrit as the dominant language of literature and therefore other genres of elite and prestige writing.

This is not the only way to define 'cosmopolitan'. Rather than seek for a single definition of the term to apply in a hegemonic manner to all of South Asian culture, we should see the term as a contested one. Different communities in different times and places have advanced their own definitions of what it meant to be cosmopolitan. This very approach was advocated in an article co-written by Pollock just a few years before *The Language of the Gods*. In the introduction to a special issue of the journal *Public Culture* in 2000, that was reissued as the book *Cosmopolitanism* in 2002, Pollock and his co-authors acknowledged the plural nature of the term by referring to cosmopolitanisms, and wrote: 'As a historical category, the cosmopolitan should be considered entirely open, and not pregiven or foreclosed by the definition of any particular society or discourse' (Pollock et al. 2002: 1).

The first definition of cosmopolitan in the Oxford English Dictionary is simply 'Belonging to all parts of the world; not restricted to any one country or its inhabitants'. A person is cosmopolitan who is not local, but at ease in multiple situations. Cosmopolitan in this sense is to a large extent synonymous with sophisticated. I am not disputing that for many Brahmanical authors, to be cosmopolitan was to write literature in Sanskrit, and therefore to participate in the Sanskrit cosmopolis, a 'transregional culture-power sphere' that stretched from Central Asia to Indonesia. But that was not what it meant for a Jain author to be cosmopolitan. A cosmopolitan Jain author has been someone who is not limited to writing in just one language, whether that one language be transregional Sanskrit or regional Bhasha.[34] By demonstrating his

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33 I leave aside here a criticism based on the 'etymological fallacy'. See Cort (2002: 61–2) for a discussion of this fallacy in terms of bhakti, another mega-category of analysis of South Asian history.

34 We see this criticism of Brahmanical Sanskrit monolingualism in the trenchant comment by the seventeenth-century Kannada Jain author Bhaṭṭākalaṅkadeva,

compositional skills in multiple languages he shows himself to have transcended the local and regional, and thus to be cosmopolitan. At the same time, his ability to write in multiple languages demonstrates his ability to function simultaneously in multiple locales and cultural registers.

Concluding Observations

As I stated at the outset of this essay, the subject of South Asian multilingualism is an increasingly important and fruitful one. Recent scholarship in the area is extensive, as seen in the bibliography. The ICEMLNI project has always involved the study of multiple languages, and even with its proclaimed focus on vernacular languages has done so with constant awareness of the classical languages – Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Prakrit, Apabhramsha – that have existed side-by-side with the vernaculars. Recent scholarship asks us to consider whether the authors and literary traditions we study have existed in monolingual isolation from each other (rarely if ever!), or have vibrantly interacted with other languages in the same time and place. It asks us to consider more deeply the readily apparent multilingualism of South Asia. How did authors situate themselves within this multilingual literary terrain? When did they choose to be vernacular, tied to a particular region? When did they choose to be cosmopolitan, writing in a manner that transcended the local? Jain authors for two millennia have chosen to write within multilingual literary environments, and for them this was what it meant to be cosmopolitan. This leaves me with a final question that I address to scholars of other literary traditions in South Asia: to what extent is Jain multilingual cosmopolitanism something that is distinctly Jain, and to what extent do we see something similar in other literary traditions?

Acknowledgements

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who in his grammar of Kannada defended the language from the 'pseudo-intellectuals, who are afflicted by the disease that is the obstinacy for Sanskrit' (quoted by Gurevitch 2022: 242).

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PART III
Vernacular Vedānta

3
Hidden Meanings for World-Weary Princes

Omission as Interpretive Strategy in Theghnāth's *Gītā bhāṣā*

Akshara Ravishankar ⓘD

Introduction

The *Bhagavadgītā* has a long and rich history of being approached as a philosophical, or scholastic, text in premodern India, beginning with the earliest extant commentary by Śaṅkara in the eighth century CE. In premodern South Asia, the Sanskrit commentary exemplified the act of scholastic, religious reading – a genre which was hyper-conscious of its place and predecessors in its circumscribed traditions of reading. The commentary mediated canon-creation, fixed meaning through negotiating prior and opposing interpretations, and imbued the text with authority while simultaneously keeping it in a state of constant dialogic confrontation, always exhaustive but never completely stable. In early modern North India, the emergence of practices of commentary, adaptation, and translation in early Hindi reveals a range of protocols of transmission, allowing texts to reach newer, often non-specialist audiences.[1]

This chapter will examine one such rendition of the *Bhagavadgītā* composed in 1500 CE in the Gwalior court, the *Gītā bhāṣā*, written by

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1 See, for just a few examples of recent scholarship on vernacular adaptation and translation, of scholastic and literary texts in North India and early Hindi: Allen 2022; Williams 2018; Cort 2015; Patel 2011.

an author named Theghnāth. Theghnāth claimed to have been writing the work for the benefit of his patron, Bhānu, the son of Kīrti Singh, and uncle to Mānsingh Tomar, who reigned in Gwalior at the time. In considering Theghnāth's remarkably faithful rendition of the *Gītā*, I attend, in this chapter, to his moments of silence and absences in transmission, asking why, and how, he omits concepts from his source text. I argue that omission, in the case of Theghnāth's text, should be understood as a self-conscious interpretive strategy for vernacular adaptation, and further sheds light on what the act of vernacular translation allowed writers like Theghnāth to do with Sanskrit texts. I suggest that Theghnāth employs this strategy to point outside the text, using the logic of the hidden meaning, and the need for spiritual and intellectual mediation, to tacitly highlight or leave space for alternative religious authorities and commitments.

Theghnāth's Text in Context

A single manuscript of the *Gītā bhāṣā* is housed in the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā (NPS) in Banaras.[2] Theghnāth's text is remarkable for a few reasons. First, while there is not a great deal of information to be found about Theghnāth, his own introduction to the work gives us a fair amount of information about the circumstances of the text's composition, including the location of its production, his patrons, and the process of how he came to produce the text. Second, Theghnāth's protocols of translation are significant, since he translates each Sanskrit verse into *bhāṣā*, in sequence, allowing us a closer understanding of his own interventions in the text. Finally, Theghnāth's *Gītā* affords us a glimpse into the culture of vernacular writing that was emerging in the Gwalior court during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, widely acknowledged to have been a significant period and site for the efflorescence of early Hindi literature, due to the patronage of Mānsingh Tomar, as well as broader trends for literary production in the region. This text is likely to be one of the earliest extant renditions of the *Gītā* in early Hindi. The Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā's catalogue claims that it was in fact *the* earliest *bhāṣā Gītā*, though it would be difficult to confirm this with any certainty.[3]

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2   NPS 783/11. All references following this will refer only to folio numbers. The manuscript is described in an NPS catalogue (Mishra 1944–46: 406–7).

3   Callewaert and Hemraj attest to at least a few earlier translations, including a Braj poetical rendition by Viṣṇusvāmī based on the Jñāneśvarī, dated 1320 CE (Callewaert and Hemraj 1982: 166).

While this text has not been studied in detail, it was nevertheless considered by Harihar Nivas Dvivedi to be a useful source on both the Gwalior court and on sixteenth-century Gwaliyari Hindi.[4] Radheśyām Dvivedī's *Hindī bhāṣā aur sāhitya meṁ Gvāliyar kṣetr kā yogdān* (The Contribution of Gwalior to Hindi Language and Literature) contains a detailed description of sections of this work, suggesting that it is about *nīti* (statecraft) and *dharma,* and that Theghnāth provided, for those who are still attached to *saṁsāra,* simple directions to the *śāśvat mārg,* or the eternal path. He states that Theghnāth's composition was valuable because it addressed *kṣātra dharma* and the destruction of delusion, at a time when Rajputs were enduring and fighting attacks on Hindu culture and needed to be reminded of the Kurukṣetra war and a past *dharmayuddha.*[5] This may tell us more about Dvivedi's concerns than Theghnāth's, however; Heidi Pauwels has argued against the idea that Gwaliyari martial chronicles are to be connected to a new awareness of Hindu *dharma* in the face of Muslim rule. Citing influential scholars like R. S. McGregor and Harihar Nivas Dvivedi, she notes the tendency to interpret these works as the assertion of Hindu identity in the context of Islamicate rule.[6] For the moment it would be useful to note Pauwels' conclusion that 'a micro-historical approach proves fruitful to understand the complexities of vernacular epic retellings', particularly as we go on to consider the potential functions of Theghnāth's rendition of the *Gītā* through the lens of his own, very particular, protocols of translation.[7]

I propose in what follows that the nuances of Theghnāth's writing, its emphases and, equally significant, its omissions, come far more clearly into relief when his text is understood in the context of existing interpretive traditions surrounding the *Bhagavadgītā*, forms of epic vernacular production that were prevalent during this time and in this region, and his own possible sectarian position, to the extent that these can be recovered. How, then, may we understand Theghnāth's protocols of transmission in the context of what he was trying to do with the *Bhagavadgītā*? Theghnāth's own introduction is detailed and extremely helpful in understanding and contextualizing his translation: he describes not only the details of where, when, and for whom the text was written, but also lays out in some detail his reasons for writing about the *Bhagavadgītā* for his particular audience. Theghnāth, within the first few verses, refers to his work as both *kabitu* and *kathā.* In the

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4   Dvivedi 1976: 146; see also Dvivedi 1955: 185–90.
5   Dvivedi 1972: 165.
6   Pauwels 2020: 23.
7   Ibid.: 35.

first instance, he frames his text as a sort of poetic composition, or simply a verse rendering of the root text: 'I meditate upon the feet of guru Rāmdas / through whose blessing [I] completed this poem [*kabitu*].'[1][8] He also goes on to further characterize his work as a *kathā*, for the *sants*.[9] While a deeper engagement with the questions of genre that these terms raise is outside the scope of the present essay, we may note here that he does not appear in his introduction to be explicitly positioning his work as *ṭīkā* or commentary.

Theghnāth tells us that he wrote his text in vs 1557/1500 or 1501 CE, at the fort in Gopāñcal.[10] He goes on to praise Mānsingh Tomar, saying that he resides in Gopāñcal like Indra in Amarāvatī, the first of many comparisons employed in his text to praise royal figures in Gwalior.[11] Importantly, the fifteenth-century court in Gwalior was also the site of composition for Viṣṇudās' vernacular *Mahābhārata*, the *Pāṇḍavcarit*. Imre Bangha has written at length about Viṣṇudās' adaptations of both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, noting in particular the relationship of these vernacular epics to the genre of *khyāti* or chronicles of praise. He talks about Viṣṇudās' choice to identify his patrons with the heroes of these epics, 'twisting the epic tale to suit contemporary, local concerns'.[12]

Theghnāth appears to employ very similar strategies in his descriptions of his patrons, though arguably, towards a modified end. While epic narratives tended to emphasize battle contexts, the *Gītā* here is a different sort of text, and his descriptions of his patrons tend to reflect this. Mānsingh here is not a fierce warrior, as in Viṣṇudās' treatment of his ancestor Dūṅgarendra Singh, or even really a connoisseur of literature as in Dhrupad songs, as described by Heidi Pauwels and Eva De Clercq.[13] Theghnāth describes him as having been born to protect the earth,[14] in a manner recognizably like the claims Kṛṣṇa makes of himself in the *Bhagavadgītā*, a point surely not lost on the audience of his text, which likely included Mānsingh himself. Bhānu, Theghnāth's patron, is described in even more detail: 'In that house there is the great warrior Bhānu, who is like Bhīṣma in Hastināpura.'[15] He is also likened to Yudhiṣṭhira: 'He knows the secret of what is good and bad.

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8 *rāmadāsa guru dhyāū pāi | jā prasāda yaha kabitu sirāi ||* [2] ff. 1a.

9 *taise santa leha tuma jāni | mai ju kathā yaha kahai bakhāni ||* [6] Ibid.

10 *padmasau sattāvanu ānu | gaḍhu gopācala uttama ṭhānu ||* [7] Ibid.

11 *mānasāhi tiha durgga niriṁdu | janu amarāvati so hai īnda ||* [8] Ibid.

12 Bangha 2014: 369.

13 De Clercq and Pauwels, 2020: 12.

14 *nīta punna sauṁ guna āgarau| basudhā rākhana kau avatarau||* [9] ff. 1a.

15 *tā ghara bhānu mahābharu tisai | hathanāpura mahi bhīṣama jise ||* [14] Ibid.

Bhānukumār is like another dharma[rājā].'[16] His identification with Yudhiṣṭhira is particularly significant in the context of Bhānu's own impetus to study the *Gītā*, particularly as Theghnāth anticipates the crisis to come: after all, this is *kaliyuga*, and the world is filled with avarice.[17] Bhānu is described as being knowledgeable about the six *darśana*s, merciful, generous, and accomplished in *tantra* and *yoga*, but what truly qualifies him to hear the *Gītā* is that he is deeply conflicted. He recognizes the transitoriness of his worldly connections: the world of family ties is identified as illusory, part of the net of *māyā*, since everyone eventually dies.[18] As a result of this dismal realization, Bhānu places a heavy responsibility on Theghnāth's shoulders: '"Tell me that tale quickly", said the prince, "from which the essence and the non-essence are understood".'[19]

Theghnāth agrees to teach Bhānu, with the resources at his disposal, namely his devotion to Kṛṣṇa and the teachings of his guru. This is a significant point: the *Gītā* here is cited as a possible resolution to the tension between worldly demands and the demands of *vairāgya*, world-weariness or detachment.[20] This, then, as in the text's epic context, allows it to be understood as directly pertaining to the problems of a royal personality who has a tendency towards asceticism.

Theghnāth, then, allows us a fair amount of insight into the immediate courtly context of production of his *Gītā bhāṣā*, but his location in the sectarian landscape of his time is somewhat less clear. Harihar Nivas Dvivedi has suggested that Theghnāth may have been an ascetic of the Nāth *panth*, which, he claims, had a presence in sixteenth-century Gwalior, suggesting additionally that Theghnāth was an important figure in the Nāth *sampradāy* in Gwalior.[21] However, the extent to which Nāth lineages can be said to have been institutionalized during this time remains far from certain.[22] Imre Bangha and Heidi Pauwels have both discussed the difficulty surrounding claims of a Nāth identity in

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16 *bhale bure kau jānai marma | bhānu kubaru janu dūjai dharma ||* [25] ff. 1b.
17 *ihi kalijuga mai hai saba koī/ | dina dina lobha cauganau hoi ||* [26] Everyone is in this age of Kali, and avarice increases fourfold, day by day. Ibid.
18 *mātā pitā putra saṁsāru | yahi saba dīsai māyājāru ||* [50] Ibid.
19 *yāte samajhai sāru asāru/ vega kathā kari kahai kumāru.* [55] Ibid.
20 See Pauwels 2020 on the importance of *vairāgya*, which she translates as 'world-weariness,' in Tomar epic narratives.
21 Dvivedi 1976: 90.
22 Though the Nāth tradition traces itself as far back as the ninth and twelfth centuries through the figures of Matsyendranāth and Gorakhnāth respectively, the Nāth *sampradāy* as a distinct and organized entity probably did not come into being until the seventeenth century (Mallinson 2011: 409). Dvivedi's claims seem to arise at least partly from mentions of *siddha*s in Gvālīpa in Gopāñcal,

fifteenth-century Gwalior in the case of Viṣṇudās, who was also claimed to have been a Nāth by Dvivedi, as well as by R. S. McGregor.[23] As will become clear through this chapter's analysis of Theghnāth's choices in emphasis in his rendition of the *Gītā*, however, his work clearly displays an interest in bodily practices, *yoga*, and the figure of the guru. As Patton Burchett has recently suggested:

> The social, political, and cultural conditions of thirteenth- to fifteenth-century North India generated a religious environment characterized in part by a shared grammar of asceticism that often superseded sectarian religious boundaries. In this context, Sufis, tāntrikas, and yoga practitioners of all stripes interacted with and borrowed from each other.[24]

Equally significantly, Burchett points to the extent to which Vedānta and Nāth traditions assimilated each other's practices and concerns in early modern North India.[25]

Another significant lens through which we may contextualize Theghnāth's writing is that of Michael Allen's conception of 'Greater Advaita Vedānta', which emphasizes, in contrast to what he calls 'Classical Advaita Vedānta', 'a much more expansive and less clearly defined tradition, embracing works not usually included in the classical canon'.[26] Allen classifies Greater Advaita Vedānta into three broad categories: '(1) vernacular works, (2) nonphilosophical works (e.g. narratives and dramas), and (3) "eclectic" works in which Vedantic teachings are blended with Yoga, Tantra, *bhakti*, etc.'[27] I suggest that Theghnāth's work fits well into the first and third categories delineated here. Indeed, the openness of the question of genre in his text may qualify him for the second as well. Theghnāth's choice to write this work, as well as the details he furnishes of its contexts of production, provides a significant site within which to better understand the range of genres and texts that participated in developments in vernacular Vedānta traditions in the early modern period in North India.

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as described in Khadgaray's *Gopācal-ākhyān*, for example, as Bangha also notes (Dvivedi 1980: 57–9; Bangha 2014: 370).

23 Dvivedi 1980: 59; Pauwels 2021: 237 n.3.
24 Burchett 2019: 170.
25 Ibid.: 179.
26 Allen 2022: 8.
27 Ibid.

Theghnāth's Use of *bhāṣā*

Unlike modern receptions of the text, there is little scholarship about vernacular, in particular early Hindi, receptions of the *Gītā* during this period, and the purposes for which it was read and disseminated. Yet around and following this time, we do see the emergence of commentarial literature in Hindi which was often actively drawing from Sanskrit commentarial traditions, or from specific commentaries in Sanskrit, both formally and substantively. Theghnāth's work needs to be understood in the dual context of a scholastic tendency in *Gītā* interpretation prevalent during his time, as well as his own audience in the Gwalior court who were likely to have been familiar with vernacular retellings of epic narrative. Early vernacular *Mahābhārata*s often left out the *Gītā*, rendering it at best briefly.[28] Viṣṇudās' *Pāṇḍavcarit* glosses over it, focusing entirely on the battle, although Kṛṣṇa takes a moment to talk about the importance of *jñāna* and *dharma.* R. S. McGregor suggests that this likely points to his reliance on Jain epic versions, which would have excluded the *Gītā* as well.[29] As McGregor describes, the *Pāṇḍavcarit* draws primarily from the themes of the first few books of the *Mahābhārata*, and in his *Rāmāyaṇkathā* as well, Viṣṇudās tends to focus on the narrative aspect of Vālmīki's story, 'reducing or discarding expository passages'.[30] The *Gītā*'s exclusion, or compression, in vernacular *Mahābhārata*s, then, raises important questions about the presumed functions of these compositions, and about the status of the *Gītā* itself. In particular, the fact that its exposition was often excluded from vernacular epics suggests a self-conscious cleaving of the *Gītā* from its broader epic context, as well as, perhaps, an awareness of its role in scholastic circles. This makes Theghnāth's choice to render the *Gītā* in full for Bhānu even more intriguing. He raises the question of his writing in *bhāṣā* fairly late in the text: perhaps this was following what he believed to be a particularly difficult section of the *Gītā* – specifically following the eighth *adhyāya* – and called for a reminder of his endeavour to make it more comprehensible or accessible to his audience. Yet it is noteworthy that Theghnāth does not, at the outset of his work, perform humility with respect to his choice to write in the vernacular. This is apparently in contrast with writers like Tulsīdās who, in the introductory section of the *Rāmcaritmānas*, declared his work to be worthy of ridicule, because of his use of *bhāṣā* and his feeble

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28 See Pillai 2024: 77–81.
29 McGregor 2003: 913.
30 Ibid.

intellect.[31] Such modesty was common, if frequently disingenuous. For Theghnāth, the brief discussion here of *bhāṣā* is an opportunity to talk about the difficulty of the *Gītā*'s message on the one hand, and to talk about his own interventions on the other, returning to the context of his being asked to produce the text.

Theghnāth uses a familiar formulation, when he describes his decision to write the *Gītā* in *bhāṣā.* Pointing to the absence of a strict terminology for translation in premodern South Asia, John Cort points to this extremely common formulation, in the context of Jain authors, who 'simply said that they were "making it vernacular," using the noun *bhasha (bhāṣā)* and a form of the verb *kar*'.[32] Here, it seems likely that Theghnāth raises the question of language choice, not simply to introduce the fact of the vernacular being used, but also to show what he was *doing* with it. He says:

> All eighteen of the *adhyāya*s in the *Gītā* are said to be difficult;
> Taking up Bhānukumār's challenge, Theghnāth recited it,
>   making it into *bhāṣā.*[33]

> The essence of the *Gītā* that is in it is inexhaustible, says Theghu.
> Only a person with experiential knowledge has the ability to
>   know its secrets.[34]

> The meaning of all its matters do not arise at once in my song.
> Whoever is embraced by the *satguru* understands it.[35]

31 *bhāṣā bhaniti bhori mati morī | haṁsibe joga haṁse nahiṁ khorī ||* Poddar 1956: 40.

32 Cort 2015: 97. Other scholars have considered alternatives to the term 'translation', in the context of interlingual iterations of texts during this period. One significant example is the term 'transcreation'. For example, the editors of a journal issue on 'Transcreating the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*' argue that the term illuminates the extent to which authors of these different iterations 'mean to achieve a new text'. Horstmann and Mishra 2018: 3.

33 I read *vīrā* here as *bīḍā*, betel leaf. On this reading, *vīrā lahai* is here referring to the act of accepting a betel leaf or *pān* as taking up a request or challenge.

34 Here I read *anabhaya* as a *tadbhava* form of *anubhava*, and *anabhaya puruṣa* as referring to a person with experiential or mystical knowledge. Callawaert and Swapna Sharma 2009: 67. Callawaert here cites an attestation from Raidās. Callawaert and de Beek 2021: 427.

35 *Gītā jite aṭhārahi dhyāi|| durlabha savai kahyau ko jāi||*
Bhānu kuvaru ko vīrā lahai|| thegunātha bhāṣā kari kahai||
tāhu mahi jo gītā sāru|| theghu tāko lahai na pāru||
koī anabhaya puruṣa jo hoī|| vā ke maramahi janai soī||
vā mahi savai ata jhapara vātā|| artha na upajai mere gātā||

Here, Theghnāth uses familiar tropes from the emerging vernacular textual landscape in professing the limitations of his own work. There are a range of issues we may fruitfully unpack here. First is the description of the *Gītā* as *durlabha,* hard to obtain or understand. Theghnāth may here be drawing from formulaic ways of describing the text and pitching his own reading as alleviating some of this difficulty while simultaneously highlighting the ambitiousness of both his project and his patron's motivations.

Śaṅkara's eighth-century Sanskrit commentary on the *Gītā* refers to the text as *durvijñeyārtham* – whose meaning is difficult to ascertain, and whose meaning is understood by people in general as extremely contradictory.[36] Śaṅkara proposes his 'brief explanation' of the text as a way of alleviating this problem of understanding.[37] He also suggests that it contains the essence of the Vedas. Ānandagiri, in his subcommentary on Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya*, clarifies this statement, saying that it dispels the idea of the *Gītā* as being unobtainable, and demonstrates the need for its explication. Ānandagiri further, in glossing Śaṅkara's characterization of the text as difficult, raises the possible objection that the *Gītā*'s meaning is obtainable just from its *akṣara*s or syllables. Why, then, is any further explanation necessary? Here he raises traditional definitions of the functions of commentary, before establishing that the position which is the object of Śaṅkara's critiques – *jñānakarmasamuccayavāda*, the idea that the *Gītā* recommends both action and knowledge – is held by those unfamiliar with the text.[38] All this is not to suggest that Theghnāth may have had precisely this section in mind; I suggest rather that his interjection of this verse here was likely participating

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jākoṁ sataguru bhaiṭaiṁ āī|| tau vaha vāta kahai samajhāī||
ff. 16b.

36 Śaṅkara's authorship of many texts attributed to him have come under question, but there is relative consensus among scholars regarding his authorship of the *Gītābhāṣya.* See Mayeda 1965.

37 *tad idam gītāśāstram samastavedārthasārasaṅgrahabhūtaṁ durvijñeyārthaṁ tadarthāviṣkaraṇāyānekair vivṛtapadapadārthavākyārthanyāyam api atyantaviruddhānekārthavatvena laukikair gṛhyamāṇam upalabhya ahaṁ vivekato 'rthanirdhāraṇārthaṁ saṅkṣepato vivaraṇaṁ kariṣyāmi|*
This *Gītā śāstra,* which brings together the essence of the meaning of the entire Veda, is difficult to understand. Even though many have explained its meanings *pada* by *pada,* the meaning of its utterances, and its logic, for the purpose of making its meaning clear, it is understood by people as having extremely contradictory, multiple meanings; understanding this, I will compose a brief explanation, in order to ascertain its meaning through discrimination.

38 *gītāśāstrasyānāptapraṇītatvam apākṛtya vyākhyeyatvam upapāditam upasaṁharati|.*

in exegetical conventions in which the act of writing an explication of a text was defended through an appeal to its need for an interpretation. Here, Theghnāth raises the difficulty of the text in the context of his patron, Bhānu, and links it to his decision to write it in, or as, *bhāṣā.*

He asserts, then, that this work contains the *gītā sāra*, or the essence of the *Gītā*, while once more emphasizing its difficulty with another familiar formulation: the idea that the *Gītā*'s essence is inexhaustible, but also that it is contained within his *bhāṣā* work. In the end, he points outside the text, taking recourse to the figure of the *satguru.* His claims about the depth of the *Gītā*'s essence, its presence in his rendition, and the necessity of the guru in understanding it, strongly suggest a statement of an act of interpretation in this work, while also suggesting the existence of ideas beyond what is explicitly presented. The ideas in the *Gītā*, as expressed in Theghnāth's work, cannot be understood all at once, and both the *satguru*'s intervention, and mystical, experiential knowledge, are required to understand its hidden depths.[39]

Omission as Interpretation

The text of the *Gītā*, in Theghnāth's hands, is rendered verse by verse, largely following the sequence of the verses in Sanskrit. Within these formal boundaries, however, Theghnāth finds space for intervention, and makes significant choices in what he transmits to his patron and broader audience. Large sections of this work are fairly close renditions of the Sanskrit text, using glosses, synonyms, and *tadbhava* forms, and appear, at least on the surface, to be what we might call 'iconic translations'. John Cort notes that 'the practice of faithful iconic translation would appear to have been rare' in premodern Indian literary practice, even as practices are seen to have existed which we would now understand to be acts of translation.[40] In transmitting the 'content' of the *Bhagavadgītā*, then, Theghnāth follows both the structure and, in several instances, stays exceptionally close to the syntax and vocabulary of the verses of his source text, as he renders them in *bhāṣā.*

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39 I thank the anonymous reviewer of this paper for their clarifying comments on this section.

40 Cort 2015: 115. Cort in using these terms follows A. K. Ramanujan, who in turn borrows them from Charles Sanders Pierce. An 'iconic' translation is one in which the texts in question are said to bear a 'geometrical resemblance'. In an 'indexical' translation, the plot and structure of one text is used only minimally by the other, while details and contexts are altered. See Ramanujan 1992: 22–49.

However, a closer reading of how Theghnāth renders the text makes its possible characterization as an 'iconic' translation somewhat slippery and insufficient. There are several instances in which portions and aspects of the Sanskrit text are simply not included in Theghnāth's *Gītā*, or glossed over in favour of foregrounding broader issues in the text. In this section, I examine some brief but significant instances in which Theghnāth appears to be actively omitting sections of the source material which involve ideas specific to the *Gītā*'s own contexts. My focus here will be primarily on examining the protocols of rendering that we can see in Theghnāth's text, and on reading his strategies of making the text intelligible to his patron and larger potential audience. I suggest that looking at what is *left out* of renditions like Theghnāth's can be a useful tool in understanding, on the one hand, what the purpose and audience of a particular translation may have been, and, on the other hand, the relationship between translation and exegesis or interpretation that this may point to. The practice of omission, moreover, is not limited to Theghnāth, or even to writers in the early modern vernaculars – indeed, choices about what to leave out in interpreting a text are central to practices of both commentary and adaptation, broadly construed. For instance, the earliest extant commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śaṅkara's *Gītābhāṣya*, itself displays a wide range of choices in omission – some sections of the text are not commented upon, and some doctrinal aspects of the work are elided through the very act of commentary. Omission in interpretation – in adaptation, translation, or commentary – is therefore a common, because effective, strategy, and yet is often overlooked in analyses of what these forms allowed interpreters to do with the text. In the case of Theghnāth's *Gītā bhāṣā*, for instance, the Sanskrit root text of the *Gītā* is not included in the manuscript, providing Theghnāth with the opportunity to reframe the text of the *Gītā* through the lens of his reading in *bhāṣā.* While it is uncontroversial to say that an act of adaptation is indeed an act of interpretation, and that the boundaries between commentary, translation, adaptation, and even editorial practices in premodern South Asia were often porous, it remains unclear just what the act of rendering a text like the *Gītā* from Sanskrit allowed vernacular writers to do. Can we think about this form of adaptation, for instance, as an interpretive strategy, reworking and redefining what the source text *is*?[41]

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41 Karen Emmerich asks precisely this question in her insightful study of modern translation practices, questioning the very idea of the 'stable "source"', and arguing that practices of translation, rather than edit an already existing

Theghnāth's approach to translation, as I have mentioned above, tends to follow the Sanskrit source text verse-by-verse in the majority of instances, with some exceptions in which he deviates significantly from the source, seemingly in order to prioritize explicating certain verses or ideas over following the *Gītā*'s verse schemes. In the *Gītā*'s second *adhyāya*, Kṛṣṇa talks about those with *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi*, or insight which is of the nature of discrimination or resoluteness. He compares such people favourably with those whose insight is irresolute and many-branched *(bahuśākhāḥ)*, referring, most likely, to the different branches of the Veda.[42] This is meant, quite clearly, to connect to the next verse, in which the target of the section's emphasis on ignorance is introduced – people who proclaim flowery words and who delight in the Veda, recognizing nothing else:

> Ignorant people speak these flowery words;
> Pārtha, they delight in the words of the Veda, saying 'there is
>   nothing else'.[43]

The next few verses (2.43–2.46) elaborate on this theme, describing these Veda-obsessed people: the primary quarrel with them here is that they perform acts with a view to *bhoga* and *aiśvarya*, possessing desire and falling repeatedly into rebirth as a result of their actions, in what Angelika Malinar has called 'a critical summary of the ritualistic worldview'.[44] This section ends with a verse that is taken up variously by Sanskrit commentators seeking to negotiate the *Gītā*'s seeming indictment of the Vedas:

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stable work, in fact 'further the iterative growth of a work in new languages'. Emmerich 2017: 11.

42 *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kurunandana|*
bahuśākhā hy anantāś ca buddhayo 'vyavasāyinām ||2.41||
This is a single resolute insight, descendant of the Kurus
While the insight of those who are irresolute is many-branched and endless.
(van Buitenen 1981: 77). Only the Sanskrit text here is from the van Buitenen edition. All translations are my own, unless otherwise specified.

43 *yām imaṁ puṣpitāṁ vācaṁ pravadanty avipaścitaḥ|*
vedavādaratāḥ pārtha nānyad astīti vādinaḥ||2.42|| Ibid.: 79.

44 *kāmātmānaḥ svargaparā janmakarmaphalapradām|*
kriyāviśeṣabahulāṁ bhogaiśvaryagatiṁ prati||2.43||
They are constituted by desire, taking heaven as their goal; [these words] offer up rebirth as the result of acts;
Full of different kinds of rituals aimed at pleasure and power. Ibid.
See Malinar 2007: 72.

As much use as there is in a well when there is water flowing
everywhere,
That much is there in the Vedas for the *brāhmaṇa* who knows.[45]

Van Buitenen tells us of this verse that it is 'a metaphor for the pleni-
tude of spiritual experience transcending the ephemeral consequences
of a strict Vedic ritualism'.[46] This is a complex verse, with some debate
as to its meaning, and a survey even of its modern renderings serves
as an important reminder of the fundamentally interpretive nature
of translation, and how choices in translation underlie high doctrinal
stakes.[47] Malinar provides a succinct and detailed analysis of both the
implications of this verse and of what other scholars have made of it.
She notes that some scholars of the *Gītā*, including Jacobi, Garbe, and
Deussen, read this verse as approving of the Vedas, understanding it
to mean that a wise Brahman collects wisdom from the Vedas as one
would collect water from a pond being *filled from* all directions. Others,
like Schraeder, Zaehner, and Edgerton, have noted that this verse in
fact suggests the opposite – while not a wholesale rejection of Vedic
knowledge, it suggests that such knowledge is only useful insofar as
one lacks true wisdom.[48] Drawing from Schrader's work, Malinar sug-
gests that this verse can be located in the context of discussions in the
Sanatsujātīya in the *Mahābhārata* and in Buddhist texts about who can
truly claim to be a Brahman, and whether this should be on the basis
of inherited texts.[49] Ultimately, Malinar concludes that verse 2.46 is in
fact meant to be a critique of those who rely too heavily on the Vedas –
this is quite clearly in keeping with the verses that occur immediately
prior, which are more obviously critical of those who follow the Veda.
Additionally, as Malinar also notes, Arjuna in these verses is tacitly
being accused of being one of these people himself, after a fashion,
since he is concerned with the fruits of acts: this is then clearly laid
out in the following verse, 2.47.[50]

A closer reading of some canonical commentaries on this verse
in the non-dualist tradition gives us a more nuanced picture of how

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45 *yāvān artha udapāne sarvataḥ saṃplutodake|*
    tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ||2.46|| van Buitenen 1981: 79.
46 Ibid.: 163.
47 See Malinar 1996: 141–2, for an extended discussion on the history of trans-
    lation and interpretation of this verse.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.: 143.
50 *karmaṇy evādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana| mā karmaphalahetur bhūr mā*
    te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi|| (van Buitenen 1981: 79).

premodern thinkers negotiated the *Gītā*'s position on Vedic texts. For Śaṅkara, writing the *Gītābhāṣya* around the eighth century CE, a *brāhmaṇa* who renounces has access to the fruits of the rituals in the Vedas, but a performer only of ritual cannot access the knowledge of the renunciant, just as the utility of a well is contained within an overflowing body of water, but not vice-versa.[51] This is an argument for the performance of *karma* only by those not yet qualified for *jñāna,* in keeping with Śaṅkara's broader argument in his *Bhāṣya* that the *Gītā* recommends the path of knowledge alone as superior, with ritual activity only prescribed for those who are not qualified for renunciation.[52] In Śaṅkara's reading, then, the verse sets up a hierarchy between Vedic ritual practice and Upanisadic knowledge – the knowledge of the Vedas is represented by water in a well, whereas the knowledge of ultimate reality is like flowing water, in that the Vedas are useful, but limited relative to Upanisadic wisdom. Śrīdhara Svāmin and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, writing around the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively, follow Śaṅkara's argument closely. Śrīdhara clarifies that a single well may not meet all of one's needs, and one may have to go to several smaller sources of water. But a vast source of water that is overflowing meets all of one's needs. Similarly, the bliss of *brahman* is so

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51 *yathā loke kūpataḍāgādyanekasmin udapāne paricchinnodake yāvān yāvat parimāṇaḥ snānapānādiḥ arthaḥ phalaṃ prayojanaṃ sa sarvaḥ arthaḥ sarvataḥ samplutodake 'pi yaḥ arthaḥ tāvān eva sampadyate tatra antarbhavatītyarthaḥ | evaṃ tāvān tāvatparimāṇa eva sampadyate sarveṣu vedeṣu vedokteṣu karmasu yaḥ arthaḥ yatkarmaphalaṃ saḥ arthaḥ brahmaṇasya saṃnyāsinaḥ paramārthatattvaṃ vijānataḥ yaḥ arthaḥ yat vijñānaphalaṃ sarvataḥsamplutodakasthānīyaṃ tasmin tāvān eva sampadyate tatraivāntarbhavatītyarthaḥ |*

Just as in the worldly sphere, as much use as there is – the extent of use that there is, for things like drinking and bathing and so on – in a well or a tank and other such places where water is confined, that much use is there in flowing water as well, since the value of the former is included in the latter. In the same way, the value contained in all the Vedas – the value which is the fruit of the rituals given in the Vedas – exists for the renunciant *brāhmaṇa* who has knowledge of ultimate reality, the fruits of knowledge, represented (in the verse) by flowing water. The fruits of the Vedas are thus contained within the fruits of knowledge. Paṇaśīkara 2012: 105–7.

52 Śaṅkara makes this explicit as he introduces the next verse:
tasmāt prāk jñānaniṣṭhādhikāraprāpteḥ karmaṇy adhikṛtena kūpataḍāgādyarthasthānīyam api karma kartavyam |

Therefore, before being qualified for being established in knowledge, acts are to be performed by one who is qualified for action, even though these acts are [merely] equivalent to the value contained in a well or a tank [as opposed to flowing water]. Ibid.

vast as to contain the lesser bliss of ritual action.[53] Madhusūdana takes this analogy further, saying: 'Just as mountain streams flow everywhere but meet at a single valley, there the function of the water of each one comes together and becomes much more, because all the streams are part of one lake.'[54] Here, the implication of prior commentators persists, but with a slight shift in the terms of the analogy. The Vedas – here specifically the *karma kāṇḍa*, ritual texts – whose knowledge is limited, are represented by smaller mountain streams, flowing *into* the source of supreme knowledge. Here, the hierarchy of sources of knowledge is made abundantly clear, as is the idea that, while *karma* can be said to have some value, its results are ultimately contained within *jñāna.*

Theghnāth renders this section as follows:

Arjuna, bear firm insight in your mind; do not agitate your
    mind.
Know all this to be one; understand knowledge which is the
    essence. [2.41]

Arjuna, there will never be accomplishment from bad insight.
As many indiscriminate fools as there are, there are that many
    false words that they will speak. [2.42]

Acts which are born of desire [*kāmya karma*] result in being
    born again and again in a body.
If the mind [*mana*] remains with enjoyment and pleasure, the
    mind [*citta*] wanders, says Nārāyaṇa. [2.43]

These people do not attain *samādhi* anywhere, the Lord says to
    Arjuna.
Arjuna, listen to me – obtain understanding of your body. [2.44]

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53 *evaṁ yāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu tattatkarmaphalarūpo'rthas tāvān sarvo'pi vijānato vyavasāyātmikābuddhiyuktasya brāhmaṇasya brahmaniṣṭhasya bhavaty eva brahmānande kṣudrānandānām antarbhāvāt.*

Similarly, the value contained in all the Vedas – the fruits of this or that ritual – *all* that value exists for a *brāhmaṇa* who knows, who is established in *brahman,* who possesses resolute insight. This is because lower blisses are contained in the bliss of *brahman.* Ibid.

54 *yathā hi parvatanirjharāḥ sarvataḥ sravantaḥ kvacid upatyakāyām ekatra milanti tatra pratyekaṁ jāyamānam udakaprayojanaṁ samudite sutarāṁ bhavati sarveṣām nirjharāṇām ekatraiva kāsāre 'ntarbhāvāt.* Ibid.

When you have your mind on action born of desire, then how,
Partha, will you be released? Abandon happiness and sor-
row, brave Pārtha – know this well, who it is that bears the
body. [2.44]

Give up the objects of the three *guṇa*s, leaving aside duality,
bear one thing in your mind.
One thing is the essence in all things; know the rest to be just
worldly activity. [2.45]

Arjuna, as much *dharma* as a man performs, he should surren-
der all those acts.
Then he will not be reborn; surrendering acts is the way to lib-
eration. [2.45]

Wells, stepwells, lakes, and reservoirs are all filled with water,
says the Lord.
As streams arise, Arjuna, it absorbs them. [2.46][55]

Seemingly here Theghnāth manages to encapsulate the sense of '*puṣpi-
tām vācaṁ*' or 'flowery speech' in addition to the sense of non-discrimi-
nating thought as being 'many-branched'. What is notable, however, in
Theghnāth's treatment of this entire section, is the complete absence of
the Vedas themselves as the primary issue or site of concern in which
the section is rooted. In the verse just referred to, then, this is glossed

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55 *arjanu niścala budhi citu dharahi‖ caṁcala mana jina kā ū karahi‖*
    tū saba yaha ekai kari jāni‖ samajhāvai tihi sāra gayāni‖
    arjana jo ya dukhati dukha buddhi‖ tāte kabahu hoi na siddhi‖
    abibekī mūrakha hai jite‖ jhūṭho bādu karahige tite‖
    kāmya karma jete barabīra‖ janma janma phala deha sarīra‖
    bhoga vilāsa lāgi mana rahai‖ hāṁṭai citta nārāyani kahai‖
    lahai samādhi na kisahūṁ thāna‖ arjana sarisa kahai bhagavān‖
    arjana sunahi hamārī bāta‖ lījai samajha āpane gāta‖
    jau tū kāma karma budhi karahi‖ paṁthani tūṁ kaū nistarahi‖
    sukha dukha chāḍi paṁtha barabīra‖ bhalī budhi kin dharahi sarīra‖
    tīno gunani viṣayani paraharai‖ chāḍi du dae ekai cita dharai‖
    ekai bāta sabana mahi sāru‖ dūsarī bāta jāni vyauhāru‖
    arjanu jite dharma naru karai‖ te sava karma samarpanu karai‖
    tau vahurau nāhī avatāru‖ karma samarpaiṁ mokha duvāru‖
    kuvā bāvarī tāli nivāna‖ sava jala bharai kahai bhagavāna‖
    jāi asargahi āṁvai jite‖ arjanu lai so varatte tite‖
    ff. 5b.

as a general condemnation of those who speak false words. The same is true of verse 2.45, where the *Gītā* in Sanskrit explicitly states:

> The scope of the Vedas is the three *guṇa*s; be free of them, Arjuna.
> Free of oppositions, fixed in constant purity, free from acquisition and preservation, and self-possessed.[56]

Here, Theghnāth both extends this to two verses, and removes the referent for the compound *traiguṇyaviṣayā,* leaving behind a slightly modified exhortation to avoid the objects of the *guṇa*s. He then seems to gloss the second half of the verse, simply by reiterating that the essence of all things is one, and that everything else is worldly activity, or *vyavahāra.* Finally, we see that in his rendering of verse 2.46, he takes up the metaphor of the well and the reservoir, but omits some critical context – namely, again, the matter of the Vedas. Yet his rendering of the second half of the verse appears to be in keeping with his emphasis on oneness in the prior verses, and the assertion that all things have a single essence. Theghnāth here, as in other parts of the text, effectively does away with the Vedas as the object of the *Gītā*'s discussion, choosing instead to focus on the larger question of desire and oneness. What, in the tradition of non-dualist Sanskrit commentaries on the *Gītā*, is understood firmly as a discussion on the relative values of knowledge and specifically ritual action, is broadened in Theghnāth's text to provide a critique of worldly action and desire, generally speaking. Relatedly, in the absence of a reference to the Vedas, it is unclear whether Theghnāth's audience would have understood *kāmya karma* in the context of ritual actions based on desire. Theghnāth's use of the metaphor of water is, therefore, similarly fascinating – he emphasizes a common essence, without the argument of a hierarchy between forms of knowledge.

This is just one example of a strategy Theghnāth uses frequently in the text, particularly in portions of the *Gītā* which are theologically loaded or, notably, some of those dealing with Sāṃkhya ideas, even in sections where he appears to at least be aware of prior interpretive interventions. Theghnāth often skips these sections entirely, in favour of reiterating the values of detachment, the problems of action and desire, and emphasizing bodily practice. Gregory Clines, in his work on Jain Rāma

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56 *traiguṇyaviṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna |*
nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān ||2.45|| van Buitenen 1981: 79.

narratives, points to 'multiple strategies of abridgment' in Jinadāsa's fifteenth-century retelling of Ravisena's seventh-century *Padmapurāṇa*. In particular, he notes that Jinadās makes explicit a shift of genre in his project – he moves from *kāvya* to *kathā* or *ākhyāna*, and part of this process involves a range of strategies, including reformulating the text's structure, using simpler language, and discarding wholesale any content from the original that he deems too complex and repetitive.[57] Yet, Clines rightly notes that 'it is not enough simply to point out that Raviṣeṇa's and Jinadāsa's texts belong to different traditional literary genres. The importance of this analysis lies in the fact that these two literary genres anticipate different consumers.'[58]

In the case of his omission of the reference to the Vedas in the section of the text just discussed, it is possible that Theghnāth was reluctant to gloss what may have sounded like a condemnation of either the Vedas as texts, or of ritual more generally. While commentaries as a genre allowed scholars to finesse a qualified critique of the Vedas, the limitations of a verse-by-verse rendition like Theghnāth's, may have been less forgiving. Alternatively, however, we may also consider the very real possibility that Theghnāth did not believe it necessary to provide such a context for his readers, and chose, instead, to focus on these broader questions, for what may have been a courtly, knowledgeable, but nevertheless non-specialist audience. What kind of interpretive move is Theghnāth making in these sections of the text? In leaving behind some of the specificities of the *Gītā*'s arguments, Theghnāth is clearly making choices in transmission. Yet, the act of translation allows him to reframe what he thinks the text is really saying, and then provide further explanations based on this reframed source text.

Theghnāth's Textual Interventions

While Theghnāth's instances of omission as illustrated above are noteworthy, there are instances in which he appears to add to the text of the *Gītā*, subtly suggesting alternative commitments in reading the work. Theghnāth's engagements with the *Gītā* afford us opportunities to consider what his doctrinal commitments may have been, and how they may have impacted his reading and transmission of the text. While caution around reading a coherent Nāth identity into Theghnāth's work is certainly warranted, it is nevertheless worth

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57 Clines 2019: 355.
58 Ibid.

considering aspects of Theghnāth's rendition of the *Gītā* that gesture towards the kinds of practices and commitments he may have been bringing into the work. Given how closely Theghnāth follows the text of the *Gītā*, and his reticence in adding substantial material to the text, indications as to his doctrinal and sectarian commitments are necessarily inconclusive. As we will see briefly below, Theghnāth repeatedly interpolates the figure of the guru into the root text. This is not unusual, given the emphasis on the figure of the guru in premodern Hindi literatures more generally, in addition to the suggestion that the intervention of the figure of the guru is necessitated, as we saw above, by the nature of the text, and the difficulty of obtaining its secrets. In the remainder of this section, I will briefly consider a few instances in which Theghnāth brings vocabularies to the *Gītā* which suggest further acts of explication or exegesis.

Theghnāth repeatedly renders verses in ways that suggest that he highlights the role of the body through addition of the words *sarīra* and *gāta* in the text. He does not necessarily do so in ways that are introducing new ideas to the text – indeed, the choices may be purely stylistic, as he uses them most frequently to rhyme with words like *barabīra* and *bāta,* respectively. Yet, the frequency with which these instances come up are noteworthy, particularly when seen against the backdrop of the ideas he introduces into the text from the larger world of premodern Hindi *sant* poetry. When Kṛṣṇa first responds to Arjuna in what roughly corresponds to verse 2.11, he says:

> Your body should not despair, now.
> Listen to the knowledge I speak about.
> When a man has *ahaṁkāra* (egotism),
> Sorrow and delusion are produced.

Furthermore, in an extension of 2.11:

> Be without sorrow, brave Arjuna.
> Know this well; you are not the body.
> When you want to take up the *paramārtha*,
> Then there is nobody who belongs to anybody.[59]

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59 *abahi viṣāda karai jina gāta | mopai sunahi gyāna kī bāta ||*
   ahaṁkāru naru koṁ bhaiṁ jabahi | soka moha e upaje tabahi ||
   tū asoca bhau arjanu bīra | bhalī vudhi tuhi nāhi sarīra ||
   jaba paramāratha lījai cāhi | kāhū ko taba koī nāhi || ff. 4a.
   The Sanskrit is as follows:

These are just a few examples of the numerous instances in which terms denoting the body, like *śarīra* and *gāta*, are interpolated in the text, in verses that do not, in the Sanskrit, explicitly mention the body, even as the body is arguably a locus of many of the *Gītā*'s teachings.

Indeed, the importance of 2.11 in traditions of reading the *Gītā* can hardly be overstated – most Advaitan commentators following Śaṅkara reference this verse at the very start of their commentaries, and Śaṅkara himself only begins his analysis here, suggesting that 2.11 was considered the beginning of the *Gītā*'s real argument. It is noteworthy that Theghnāth expands this verse into two, and adds an additional layer of interpretation to this important verse. It appears that for Theghnāth, the body is an important site for the tensions that the *Gītā* lays out, and the locus for much of what it has to say about renunciation and practice.

However, it is significant that sections of the *Gītā*'s eighteenth *adhyāya*, which engage with ideas of the body, in particular Sāṃkhya ideas of the body, are largely sidestepped by Theghnāth. For instance, verses 18.13–17 discuss the factors that determine action – this has a strong bearing on the Gītā's understanding of the agency of the self, identified in 18.13 as belonging to Sāṃkhya. Theghnāth says:

> Great armed one, listen to the factors.
> I explain these five matters to you.
> That which is said by the *sāṃkhya veda*,
> Only the wise know, and understand the body.[60]

The Sanskrit verse that follows lays out the factors, namely – *adhiṣṭhānaṁ* (material basis), *kartā* (agent), *karaṇa* (instruments), *ceṣṭā* (motions), and *daivam* (fate). This was, by all accounts, an important site of interpretation for numerous commentators in Sanskrit, who glossed these various terms differently, depending on their different commitments. Theghnāth, however, does not engage with the substantive matter of these distinctions – he simply says:

> The senses, Brave Pārtha,
> Of various kinds, fill the body.

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aśocyān anvaśocas tvaṁ prajñāvādāṁś ca bhāṣase|
gatāsūn agatāsūṁś ca na anuśocanti paṇḍitaḥ||
You mourn that which is not to be mourned and you speak words of discrimination.
The wise do not mourn those who are dead and alive (van Buitenen 1981: 75).

60 *Mahābāhu kāruna suni leha | paṁca bāta samajhāū eha ||*
sāṁkha beda kahī jo bāta | budhina hī jānai samajhai gāta || ff. 29a.

Those people understand all these matters,
Whose guru shows it to them.[61]

Theghnāth, therefore, does not list the factors from the Sanskrit, leaving the question of the 'senses' largely open in terms of their content. His intervention once more points the reader outside the text, to the teachings of a guru. This continues through the next two verses:

When you walk, talk, perform acts,
In truth the senses perform these acts.
One to whom this is explained
Obtains knowledge within.
There are five sense-objects; as for the self,
Know it, Arjuna, to be a non-agent.
He who obtains the secret of the guru's favour
Does not obtain foolishness, and is called a god.[62]

In these two verses as well, Theghnāth stays close to the general sense of the verse, while interpolating the material about the guru. This is significant both in terms of what Theghnāth chooses to leave out, as well as what he chooses to add to the text, namely the identification of the guru as an important source for knowledge, specifically of the body. Is Theghnāth reserving comment on the *Gītā*'s understanding of the senses, in favour of a more personal, or esoteric, practice? Theghnāth's protocols of rendering and transmitting the ideas of the *Gītā*, additionally, served to open up the text, allowing the possibility of populating it with other kinds of meaning.

This may be related to Theghnāth's own commitments: if he was indeed an ascetic of the Nāth *panth*, as Dvivedi has suggested, this may perhaps indicate a reference to yogic or other practices.[63] Yet, while Theghnāth does not explicitly indicate specific bodily practices, it is nevertheless telling that his sparse additions to the text of the *Gītā* draws from conventions specific to premodern Hindi poetry, as for instance when Arjuna describes his crisis to Kṛṣṇa:

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61 *indriyana paṁtha barabīra | nānā vidhi bhari rahī sarīra ||*
   e saba bātai samajhai tāhi | guru hai bāṭa dikhāī jāhi || Ibid.
62 *bolai calai karai jo karma | yaha satya īdrī karai ju karma||*
   yaha jāko samajhāvahi gyāna | tihi abhyantara pāyau gyāna || (18.15)
   paṁca viṣai ātmā jo āhi | arjanu jāni akarttā tāhi ||
   guru pasāi jo liye bheu | durmati lahai na volai deu || (18.16)
   Ibid.
63 Dvivedi 1976: 146.

I worry a great deal about my body,
Like a fish in shallow water.[64]

Verses 2.4–8 in the root text of the *Gītā* present Arjuna's statement of his dilemma. He does not know whether it is better to kill his teachers and elders, or to be vanquished by them. He complains that his *svabhāva,* or nature, is overwhelmed by *kārpaṇyadośa,* or the flaw of despair or pity, and that his senses are overwhelmed by grief. Theghnāth renders these verses but expands on them a little. Just preceding the verse cited above, Arjuna says, in Theghnāth's version, that he is confused by two paths *(moko duhu pathya sandehu),* and uses the imagery of a fish in water. This is a common image in *sant* poetry, often used to evoke the idea of worldly bondage. Sundardās, on at least one occasion, uses a similar image of a fish in water, thinking of its own well-being but oblivious to the more profound dangers of death, in the form of a heron waiting to eat it.[65] Theghnāth's interest in highlighting the problems of *vairāgya* – to the exclusion, perhaps, of some specificities of the *Gītā*'s doctrinal and textual contexts – enable him to frame Arjuna's dilemma, and refocus the root text for his world-weary prince.

Conclusion

If it is indeed true, as many scholars have asserted, that premodern readers and audiences of the *Bhagavadgītā* tended to be in large part scholastic readers intent on understanding the *Gītā* as a theological, soteriological text, we begin to see, in the early modern period, a shift not only in the *Gītā*'s audiences through increased vernacular production, and shifts in doctrinal emphasis, but also in its presumed functions. In Theghnāth's case his location within emerging conventions of epic literary production in classical Hindi allows him to draw literary resources from this specific local context, even as he engages with the *Gītā* as a work dealing with *vairāgya.* We have seen in our brief analysis of Theghnāth's introduction that he frames his readership through the figure of Prince Bhānu – an elite reader, described as scholarly and devout, yet not, perhaps, at home with the scholastic audiences of

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64 *moko cintā bahuta sarīra | janu ki macharī ūṁchai nīra ||* ff. 4a.
65 *sundar macharī nīra maiṁ bicarata apane khyāla | bagulā leta uṭhāī kai toi grasai yauṁ kāla ||*
    The *bagulā,* heron, often refers to a false devotee or hypocrite. Callawaert and de Beek 2021: 520.

Sanskrit commentaries. He was keenly aware, in Theghnāth's telling, of both the *Gītā*'s difficulty and its promise. He characterizes the text as a source of discrimination, and explicitly as a guide to his conflicts, yet requires clarification through Theghnāth's act of textual production. It seems likely, then, that Bhānu, and Theghnāth's audience more broadly conceived, anticipated certain shifts in meaning and emphasis through Theghnāth's performance of writing the text.[66]

Theghnāth's modes of transmission, then, must be understood through the lens of these shifts in genre, and the likelihood that he was speaking to a knowing, or informed audience. I have chosen the term 'omission' here to describe what I have argued is a self-conscious strategy of interpretation. For this reason, I have chosen not to characterize Theghnāth's interpretive strategies in terms of loss in translation, or even as a selective rewriting of the *Bhagavadgītā*. As previously mentioned, it is not remarkable to suggest that there is an editorial or interpretive aspect to practices of interlingual transmission more generally. Yet, as I have argued, Theghnāth's acts of omission, coupled with evidence of his own interpolations in the text, suggest a more self-conscious approach to the act of *leaving out* sections of the text, or ideas contained within it, which function to highlight external sources of authority, through the presence of a guru, or the obtaining of mystical knowledge. I suggest, further, that such attention to the idea of the hidden – to absences, or silences – in vernacular transmission, in addition to asking what *is* transmitted by these texts, can be a helpful tool in more clearly understanding the functions and stakes of acts of vernacular transmission of canonical texts in early modern South Asia. In the case of the *Gītā*, whose role in the textual landscape of modern India has been widely discussed, attention to early modern strategies of reading additionally enables us to conceive of alternative genealogies of these receptions.

Acknowledgements

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66 Here, Linda Hutcheon's conception of the 'knowing', as opposed to the 'learned' or 'competent' audience, is instructive, in trying to understand an audience's relationship to an adaptation and its source texts, and accounting for both the receiver's ability to 'fill in any gaps' with some knowledge of the original, as well as the adapter's reliance on the receiver's possessing this ability. Hutcheon 2012: 121.

their helpful feedback and comments. I also thank Whitney Cox, Tyler Williams, Anand Venkatkrishnan, Gary Tubb, John Cort, and Imre Bangha for reading and providing their invaluable input on versions of this paper.

ORCID®

Akshara Ravishankar ⓘD https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3066-5066

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4
The World Is a Masterpiece

The Symbolism of Painting in the
Citrāvalī by Usmān (1613 CE)

Annalisa Bocchetti ⓘ

Introduction

Usmān of Ghazipur composed his *Citrāvalī* (1613 CE) during the reign of the Mughal emperor Jahāngīr (1605–27). It is a Sufi allegorical love story that falls into the genre of *premakathās* or *premākhyāna*s, mystical tales in the Avadhi language. It is only from Usmān's own literary work that we have a limited amount of information about him. In the prologue to his poem, he describes the members of his family, mentioning his father, Sheikh Husain, and his five brothers. Additionally, he praises Bābā Hāzī as his spiritual guide *(pīr),* as well as the saint Shāh Niẓām Chishtī of Narnaul, which gives us a hint as to his possible affiliation with the Chishti order (*Citrāvalī* vv. 22, 27).

Through the narration of the love story between Prince Sujān and Princess Citrāvalī, Usmān develops original aesthetic and theological elements in his poem that still partakes in the allegorical and literary frame of the Sufi *premākhyāna* genre. *Citrāvalī*'s originality lies in its symbolism built on artistic terminology and semantics. Indeed, the poem revolves around the motif of the picture or painting *(citra),* through which the poet explores complex Sufi ontological concepts.

The *premākhyāna* tradition was probably initiated by Maulānā Dāʿūd, who composed his *Cāndāyan* at the court of Dalmau in the fourteenth century (Behl and Doniger 2016: 59). Dāʿūd's composition laid the foundation for a Sufi regional culture at a time when the Turco-Afghan courts had already established themselves across North India.

His work inspired generations of Sufi authors who continued to develop mystical themes in their works, thus leading to the creation of innovative narratives like Usmān's *Citrāvalī*, despite the intervening centuries (Digby 2004: 339–43). In his *Citrāvalī*, Usmān implicitly claims a place within the historical chain of authors of the genre, as he demonstrates knowledge and familiarity with their literary works. In the section of the poem about beauty, *rūpa*, Usmān references three well-known Sufi *premākhyāna*s: Jāyasī's *Padmāvat* (1540 CE), Mañjhan's *Madhumālatī* (1545 CE), and Quṭban's *Mṛgavatī* (1503 CE). This allows him to situate his poem in a specific narrative tradition, and to demonstrate his ability to create intertextual parallelisms.[1]

The inauguration of the Sufi *premākhyāna*s represents a cultural milestone in the history of the Indian subcontinent, as these narratives not only mark the emergence of a new Indo-Islamic literary genre, but also signify the re-imagining of Islamic traditions on the Indian landscape. By introducing local forms and imagery to the court's cultivated audience, the Sufi poets shaped a new literary and linguistic tradition that was consolidated during the Mughal dynasty (1526–1857 CE). As a result of their choice to convey their mystical message through sophisticated aesthetic compositions in a spoken language of North India, the Sufis facilitated the committing of Avadhi to writing, allowing for the creation of new literate communities. In the course of their circulation and reception, these compositions helped create new understandings and meanings among the composite public of Islamicate India. Their complexity and versatility made them suitable for both formal and informal settings, such as courts *(darbār*s*)*, Sufi shrines *(dargāh*s*)* and lodges *(khānqāh*s*)*, mosques *(masjīd*s*)*, as well as markets *(bazār*s*)* and domestic spaces (Behl and Doniger 2016: 26, 324). These compositions were performed at several locations and were designed to communicate with various audiences simultaneously. The multireferential nature of the works enabled them to appeal to a wide range of interpretive audiences, which resulted in a variety of responses.

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1 *Mṛgāvalī mukha rūpa baserā, Rājakuṁara bhayo prema aherā*
   Siṁghala Padumāvati bho rūpā, prema kiyo hai Citaura bhūpā
   Madhumālati hoi rūpa dekhāvā, prema Manohara hoi tahaṁ āvā.

   '*Rūpa* dwelled on the face of Mṛgavatī and [prince] Rājkumar* became the prey of her love;
   rūpa was in Padmāvatī from Siṁghal who loved the king of Chittaur;
   rūpa disclosed in Madhumalatī and Manohar came for her love.
   (*Citrāvalī*: v. 30).
   *I kept the anusvāra as *ṁ* to reflect its written form in Devanagari. कुंअर

While these poets engaged the early modern public by including heroic, romantic, and fairy-tale elements (Behl and Doniger 2016: 80–2), the Sufi poets also infused their works with mystical content, which required attentive listeners or readers to discern and comprehend the layers of poetic meaning embedded in their works (Behl 2016: 30–1). Also referred to as 'quest narratives', their poems explore the theme of the mystical journey towards God, which the authors depict in the form of a romantic quest (Behl and Doniger 2016: 75, 81). The heroes of these poems are imaginatively portrayed as princes disguised as yogis who give up their royal status to search their beloved thereby representing the Sufi seekers. Hence, the love relationship between the lovers in the *premākhyāna*s may be interpreted as the mystical bond uniting humankind and God. When examined closely, these Sufi compositions reveal an elaborate interplay between aesthetics, metaphysics, and mysticism that converge to express the core Sufi principle of existential unity *(waḥdat al-wujūd)* (Behl and Doniger 2016: 45, 234, 304). By drawing upon Persian and Indian aesthetic and religious imagery, the Sufi poets evoke perceptions of form and beauty *(rūpa),* love and eroticism *(prema* and *śṛṅgāra),* and emotion *(rasa),* through which the reader gains the mystical message (Behl and Doniger 2016: 32–3).

By expanding upon the motif of the picture in his poem, it is not unlikely that Usmān was influenced by the Mughal tradition of painting and portraiture alongside the various aesthetic theories and literary compositions on the subject that had originated in the Indo-Islamic world. His possible exposure to the art culture of the Mughals is even more likely if we put his composition in the context of Jahāngīr's reign (r. 1605–1627). Although Usmān praises Jahāngīr for his justice and majesty, the Mughal emperor was particularly known for his patronage of the arts and his particular interest in naturalistic paintings and individual portraits, which he used to collect in the courtly atelier *(kitābkhāna)* inherited from his father, Akbar (r. 1556–1605) (Okada 1992: 11–12). The emperor also commissioned paintings to accompany his autobiographical essay, the *Jahāngīrnāma*, where he affirms his predilection for painting and ability to recognize artists behind their art (Thackston 1999: 281). Further, Usmān follows convention by eulogizing Jahāngīr through a description of his court, and by adding elements that enhance his royal image. Interestingly, the poet portrays Jahāngīr's court during the Nawrūz *(Navaroza),* a popular Persian festivity that marks the onset of spring and the new year. On this occasion, Usmān depicts the interior of the royal tent *(dalabādala)* as a recreation of the sky with frescoes of the sun, moon, constellations, as well as the twelve signs of the zodiac *(bāraha rāsi)* and the planetary conjunctions (*Citrāvalī* v. 18). While

there is no direct evidence of Usmān's association with the court of Jahāngīr, still his courtly imagination reflects motifs that became prominent in Mughal aesthetics. Indeed, in Mughal art and architecture, the use of cosmological elements, especially solar motifs, reinforced the idea of the emperor's divine right to rule.[2] To the poet, the court is a 'treasury of delights' *(rahasa-nidhāna)*, where Jahāngīr enthroned looks more powerful *(balavandu)* than the god Indra (*Citrāvalī* v. 18).

The theme of painting and, more specifically, portraiture has been discretely treated both in Persian and old Indian classical literature. Saunders, for instance, points out that the portrait element occurs often in Sanskrit plays, where it serves as a multifunctional literary device, serving different aims in the dramatic context (Saunders 1919). Just to mention a few literary examples: the portrait becomes a means for uniting lovers in the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* ('The Recognition of Śakuntalā') by Kālidāsa (fourth–fifth centuries) or even an alternative way to get them married in their absence in Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadatta* ('The Dream of Vāsavadattā'), while in the *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* ('The Carved Statue of a Woman') by Rājaśekhara (tenth century) it represents one among other means of encountering the lover, ultimately symbolizing the different levels of access to reality (Granoff 2001: 65, 68 n.10).

In the Indo-Persian world too, portraits were a symbol of imperial power and political self-representation, especially during the Mughal dynasty influenced by European models (Natif 2018: 2016; Koch 2011). The portrait acquired a metaphorical significance within the aesthetic and narrative dimensions of Persian mystical literature. In one of the most popular allegorical stories of the *Khamsa* ('Quintet') by Niẓāmī-ye Ganjavī (1140–1209 CE), *Shīrīn-va-Khusro*, the Armenian princess falls in love with the portrait of Khusro, which the artist Shapur had painted to catch her attention. Pellò (2017) analyses the role of painting and portraits *(naqsh)* and the corresponding terminology in Indo-Persian literature, in particular in the works by Nāṣir 'Alī Sirhindī (1638–1696) and Mīrzā Bīdil (1644–1729), demonstrating how the theme of painting is embedded within complex aesthetic and religious considerations. In both ancient Indian and Persian literary cultures, then, narrators used portraits to depict living people, replace them in important ceremonies, and to foster imagination and knowledge.

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2   For an analysis of solar symbolism in Mughal thrones and its connection with imperial ideology, see Malecka (1999). With specific reference to Jahāngīr, he is famous for issuing coins *(sikkah)* featuring Zodiac signs. In his memoirs, he claims credit for introducing astrological themes in coin production (Thackston 1999: 260).

Vernacular Indian narratives, however, are understudied in this regard. The subject of painting and portraiture in the Indo-Islamic literature of the early modern period is not comprehensively addressed, particularly the Sufi literary tradition of the Avadhi *premākhyāna*s has been neglected. The authors of these literary compositions integrated and adapted poetic motifs and idioms from both the Indian and Persian literatures in order to appeal to the tastes of local audiences. This chapter is the first exploration of the poetic and allegorical nature of the portrait within the context of this regional Sufi literary culture. It investigates how Usmān recreated in his vernacular narrative mystical aesthetic terminologies related to portraiture and, in general, art in order to convey complex Sufi concepts and ideas to the socio-literary communities of seventeeth-century North India. For my analysis of the text, I rely on the 1912 edition of Jaganmohan Varmā compiled at the request of the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā; it represents the *editio princeps* of the *Citrāvalī*.[3] Apart from Varmā's edition, throughout the twentieth century Indian scholars have made other attempts to edit the text; however, their efforts have resulted in partial editions that frequently rely on the *editio princeps*. Moreover, none of these editions presents a systematic study accomplished by comparing other surviving manuscripts of the *Citrāvalī*. This chapter consists of two main sections: the first is devoted to an explanation of the symbolism of the Divine Painter in the *Citrāvalī*, and the second treats the development of love and desire of union through viewing the lover's portrait.

Narrating the Art of Creation: Usmān's Metaphor of the Divine Painter

In the various sections of the prologue to his poem, Usmān praises God, the Prophet Muḥammad, and the first four caliphs (*Citrāvalī* vv. 1–12). Although the sections of praise *(stutikhaṇḍas)* introducing the text are

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3   For his edition, Varmā refers to a handwritten and illustrated manuscript copy in Kaithī script dating back to 1745 CE, which seems to be the earliest and only manuscript to date. According to the editor, it is preserved in the private library of the Mahārājā of Benares, at the Ramnagar Fort, although it has never surfaced. In the preface, Varmā affirms that the copy of the manuscript was commissioned to Fakīr Cand Śrīvāstava, a member of the scribe community *(kāyasth)* of Kara-Manikpur, by Hazārī Ajab Singh of the Baheliyā family of the Chunar Fort, during the reign of Muhammad Shāh. The manuscript was unknown until 1904, when Bābū Amīr Singh discovered it in the private library of the Mahārāja of Benares (Varmā 1912: 9–10).

conventional to the genre, in his *Citrāvalī* Usmān imagines God as the Supreme Painter *(citerā),* invoking the Quranic designation *al-Muṣaw-wir*, the Artisan or the Painter, as in Islam God is considered to be the only one capable of producing images and giving forms (Quran 59:24). By using the metaphor of a painting to illustrate Sufi metaphysical concepts, the *Citrāvalī* sets itself apart from other works of its kind. The passage below shows how painting functions as an allegory to illustrate the story of Creation in the Sufi narrative:

1 *ādi bakhānauṁ soī citerā, yaha jaga citra kīnha jehi kerā*
2 *kīnhesi citra puruṣa au nārī, ko jala para asa sakai saṁvārī*
3 *kīnhesi joti sūra sasi tārā, ko asa joti sakai jaga pārā*
4 *kīnhesi bacana beda jehi sīkhā, ko asa citra pavana para līkhā*
5 *asa vicitra likhi jānai soī vohi binu meṭa sakai nahi koī*
6 *kīnhesi raṅga syāma au setā, rātā pīta aura jaga jetā*
7 *kīnhesi rūpa barana jahaṁ tāīṁ āpu abarana arūpa gusāīṁ*
8 *agini pavana raja pāni ke bhāṁti bhāṁti byohāra*
9 *āpu rahā saba māṁhi mili, ko nigarāvai pāra*

1 First, I will describe the Painter who crafted the picture of this world.
2 He made pictures of the man and the woman, who [else] could fashion [them] in such a manner on the water?
3 He created the sun, the moon, and the stars out of light. Who else could bring such light to the world?[4]
4 From the word He created the Vedas, from which one learns. Who [else] could paint such a picture in the wind?
5 Except for the one who can paint such wonderful [paintings], no one can erase them.
6 He created colours, such as black, white, red and yellow and as many as there are in the world.
7 Although He created colours and forms, the Supreme Himself is formless and colourless.
8 He made the air, the fire, the dust, and the water, all exist in different ways.

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4 There are two possible interpretations of this verse. The word *jaga pārā* means 'liberation from rebirth', and, accordingly, the verse could be translated as 'who else could [grant] liberation with such light?'. Alternatively, the term *pārā* can be understood as the past participle of the verb *pārnā* ('to throw', 'to pour') (Śyāmsundardās1965–75, s.v. *pārnā*). I prefer the second possible interpretation for this passage, in which God is portrayed as 'having thrown light into the world' after creating the luminous celestial bodies.

9 In all of them, He can be found, so who can separate Him
   from Creation?
   (*Citrāvalī* v. 1)

In these first lines of his *Citrāvalī*, Usmān delineates philosophical notions connected with the visual semantic field, providing us with aesthetic descriptions charged with mystical meanings. Drawing from Chishti philosophy, the author describes the ontological structure of the universe, introducing the belief of the divine manifesting in every aspect of the multiform cosmos while reaffirming the idea of God's ultimate oneness *(tawḥīd).* This concept evokes the Sufi tenet of 'unity of existence' *(waḥdat al-wujūd)* as it was formulated in the monistic ideology of Ibn 'Arabī (1165–1240 CE), influencing the doctrine of other Sufi orders making their way into the subcontinent (Chittick 1989: 79–80). Thus, Usmān enhances the paradoxical principle of the simultaneous existence of multiple colours and forms emerging from the absolute God, who is without colour and form. In this way, through the symbolism of artistic vocabulary, Usmān attempts a verbal representation of the allegory of Creation and the complex dynamics of reality traversing both the material and transcendental realms.

Aside from *citra* (picture), the poet also employs other terms to describe the complex relationship of God with the world. For instance, further in the prologue, Usmān praises God for having created the 'form of the world' *(jaga rūpa)* and its constituent figures *(mūrti),* and yet, 'He is invisible and figureless' *(alakha amūrata)* (*Citrāvalī* v. 1). The term *mūrti* can refer to 'body' or form' as well as 'embodiment' or 'manifestation'. *Rūpa* as well may designate any 'form' or 'image'. Historically, both the terms have been employed differently in South Asian traditions for their philosophical implications.[5] In his analysis of Quṭban's *Mṛgāvatī*, a main text of the genre, Aditya Behl, a pioneer in the study of the narrative tradition of the Sufi *premākhyāna*s, comments on the asethetic and theological significance of the term *rūpa* employed in the context of the Sufi *premākhyāna*s 'as a calque for the Arabic *jamāl*, beauty or grace', that represents 'one of the attributes of Allāh' (Behl 2012: 34, 204). Therefore, the Sufi poet elaborates the opening passage of his poem of mystical love by emphasizing the dialectics of the outward *(ẓāhir)* and inward *(bāṭin)* aspects of reality, as he affirms that the divine resides in both the manifest *(pargaṭa)* and hidden *(gupta)* aspects of the universe (*Citrāvalī* v. 1). Within a context

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5 For a comprehensive explanation of this terminology in a philosophical context, see Colas 2019.

of dialogue and negotiation, the Sufi authors convey through their Avadhi poems notions of Sufi metaphysics in a language and vocabulary of paradoxes that resonate with the Advaita Vedānta (non-dualism) school that excludes individual differences from the level of absolute reality *(brahman)* (Bartley 2018). Therefore, Usmān poetically describes Creation as divine artwork, drawing attention to the interconnectedness and complexity of reality throughout his poem, as evidenced by the metaphor of art.

In association with notions of beauty, colour, and form, Usmān privileges Avadhi expressions that acquire specific meanings within his poem's mystical framework. Therefore, in the opening schema derived from the prologue *(ḥamd)* of the Persian *maṣnavī*, he conventionally uses the verbal formula *kinhesi* or *kīnha* to list all the things and beings that God has created in the world (Behl 2012: 42). To further enhance the theme of divine artistry, Usmān adds the verbal expression *likhā*, to refer to the act of drawing or painting the universe.[6] In this way, the poet like his predecessors adapts the typical praise sections of the Persian romance to the poetic context of the *premākhyāna* in order to promote concepts of Sufi theology in the North Indian multireligious context. Likewise, he refers to God not as Allāh, but rather by appellations common to indigenous traditions. Therefore, apart from the more original *citerā* (Painter), he identifies God as *kartā* (Maker), *vidhātā* or *vidhi* (Creator), as well as *sirajanahāra* (from the Sanskrit root √*sṛj*, 'the One who spreads life' [Monier-Williams 1899]) and *antarajāmī* (Omniscient).[7]

Although Usmān introduces other appellations for God and visual elements into his story, it is clear that he places the painting at the heart of the philosophical and mystical discourse of his poem. In the following stanza, the poet describes the role of the picture from an ontological perspective, aligning it with the metaphor of the ocean:

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6   The verb *likhnā* in Hindi-Urdu encompasses both writing and drawing, and in association with colors, extends to the act of painting (Śyāmsundardās, 1965–75: s.v. *likhnā).* Within the mystical and poetic context of Usmān's poem, it metaphorically describes the process of divine creation, portraying God as the ultimate painter who 'paints' His attributes onto the canvas of existence.

7   In this regard, Varmā adds an interesting gloss in Farsī (unfortunately without informing us about its source) as a commentary to the term *antarajāmī.* It says 'reaching to the heart is better than [going on] the ḥajj [pilgrimage], a heart is better than thousand ka'abas' *(del be-dast ke ḥajj akbar ast, āz hazārān ka'abe yekdel behtar ast)* assuming that God knows the real intentions of the heart which is worth more than a ritual act (Varmā 1912: 67).

citrahi maham̐ so āhi citerā, nirmala diṣṭi pāu so herā
jaisem̐ būm̐d mām̐ha dadhi hoī, guru lakhāva tau jānai koī
ja kaham̐ guru na pantha dekhāvā, so andhā cārihum̐ disi dhāvā
mūrakha so jo citra mana lāvai, Semara suā jaise pachatāvai

Only by acquiring pure sight you can see the Painter in the
    picture.
It is similar to the ocean contained in a drop; one gets to know
    it when the guru illustrates it.
As long as the guru does not show the path, one is like a blind
    man who is running in all directions [without seeing where
    he is going].
The one who takes in his heart the picture [alone] is a fool, like
    a parrot
that repents [having indulged in] the Semar's flowers.[8]
(*Citrāvalī* v. 167)

The expression *nirmala diṣṭi* reflects the role mystical vision plays in
obtaining divine knowledge. This is in line with the concept of spiri-
tual insight *(ma'rifat),* a form of spiritual understanding that is more
intuitive and direct (Chittick 1989: 1489). In the passage above, Usmān
informs us about the importance of the guru's guidance to acquire *nir-
mala diṣṭi* and being able to see the path with clarity, emphasizing the
role of the Sufi teacher in the seeker's spiritual journey. Throughout
the poem, the poet often refers to vision or gaze, suggesting a connec-
tion between vision and mystical insight, especially in the prologue,
where he already uses the metaphor of the ocean. In the poet's words,
only by seeing the ocean with the 'eyes of wisdom' *(jñāna naina)* can
one realize that waves do not exist without it (*Citrāvalī* v. 2). In the
same way that a wave merges with the ocean, the Sufi gnostic under-
stands that the individual self is not separate from the divine self.

The motifs of the painting and the ocean perfectly illustrate the onto-
logical principle of the unity-of-being *(waḥdat al-wujūd),* which stress
the concepts of divine immanence and oneness. While a drop shares
some of the ocean's characteristics, it is still different from the entire
ocean, and the painting is still not the same as the artist. By explor-
ing the subtle meanings of these metaphors, the poem offers a unique

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8   Usmān refers to the cotton-silk *(semar)* tree drawing from Indian imagery. In
    this verse, he describes the parrot attracted to the semar flowers because of
    their radiant colour, mistaking them for fruits, symbolizing the human soul's
    confusion over the external world.

perspective of Sufi thought. Usmān's text illustrates the relationship between the world and God through continuous metaphorical parallelisms, as when the association between a picture and its painter is equated with that between a drop and the ocean. The Persian mystical tradition includes imagery of the ocean, which in Sufi romantic poetics is conceived as 'the ocean of divine love' in which the devotee dissolves himself and merges with God (Schimmel 1975: 284–5).[9]

The sufis sought to overcome local differences and oppositions by embracing a non-dichotomous view of the universe which helped them negotiate with the complex socio-religious climate of early modern North India. Thus, the authors of the *premākhyāna*s articulated their mystical message through literary expressions of divine truth and love that could be understood and appreciated by local society, and thereby secured patronage and audiences. Muzaffar Alam argues that the Sufis' contact with local modes of religious and cultural expression was part of their attempt to root Sufi monotheism in the country. Sufi monotheistic beliefs could be adapted to Indian non-dual philosophy, to which different religious groups of India have contributed in different ways, but all adhering to the pursuit of ontological truth *(ḥaqā'iq)* (Alam 1989: 40). By establishing contact with competing religious traditions, the Sufis were able to use indigenous symbols, mythologies, religious practices, as well as deities in order to express their own sense of devotion to Allāh in a competitive atmosphere. With their verses, these poets attempted to convey a sense of their message of Sufi monotheism that was understandable to the Indian audiences amidst the polytheistic cultural landscape of early modern India (Behl and Doniger 2016: 146, 176).

When the Eyes Meet the Beloved's Portrait: The Dynamics of the *citra-darśana*

The religious aesthetics of the *Citrāvalī*, which is based on painting symbolism, are what forms the basis of the conceptual interpretation of the whole narrative. Indeed, Usmān names his poem after the female protagonist of the story, Citrāvalī, whom he chooses to represent as an artist or a paintress *(citriṇī),* drawing upon the Indian traditional classification of women into four categories.[10] His choice

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9 The imagery of drop and ocean can be found with similar mystical tones in Kabīr's *sākhī*s. See, for instance, Hess and Singh 2002: 96.

10 The differentiation of women *(nāyikā-bheda)* into categories, according to their occupation, physical characteristics, and emotional states, is a conventional

of an artist woman as the heroine model *(nāyikā)* for his story adds innovative aesthetic, social, and theological aspects to the *premākhyāna* genre. He prefers the *citriṇī* heroine over the *padminī*, who occupies the highest position in the classification provided by the Indian classical aesthetic treatises. Moreover, his selection of the *citriṇī* woman is strategic to the storyline of his Sufi tale. In the Sufi romances, the heroines are conventionally considered to reflect divine beauty and light (Behl and Doniger 2016: 29, 64, 164). As in the specific context of Usmān's romance, there is a focus on the *citriṇī*'s talent in painting, it is worthwhile to observe how the poet is able to create a clear and symbolic link between the artist heroine's aspect of divinity and the concept of the artist God. In Usmān's text, we get a sketch of the general category of *citriṇī nāyikā*, enhancing her physical and intellectual features. For instance, he describes her as an attractive woman *(kamini)* with a leaf-like body and a soft *(mṛdula)* waist, with tresses like black-bees and a voice similar to the sound produced by the anklets *(sabada maṁjora).* Among her talents *(caturāī),* she can paint *(citra likhai)* and play the *vīṇā (bajāvai bīnā)* (*Citrāvalī* v. 553). In particular, Princess Citrāvalī owns a space dedicated to painting inside her royal palace, a picture gallery *(citrasāri),* where she stores her tools and exhibits her paintings:

1. *tehi mahaṁ Citrāvali guna gyānī, āpuna citra likhai asa jānī*
2. *jau lauṁ sakhī darasa nahiṁ pāvahiṁ, bhorahiṁ āi sīsa tehi nāvahiṁ*
3. *aura jo citra ahahiṁ tehi māhīṁ, so Citrāvali kī parchāṁhīṁ*
4. *asa vicitra kehi lāvoṁ jorī, astuti joga jībha nahiṁ morī*
5. *vahī raṅga apne raṅga māhīṁ, ohi ke raṅga aura kou nāhīṁ*
6. *sauṁha na jāi citra mukha herā, dhana so citra au dhana so citerā*

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topic of Sanskrit treatises on poetics that is also found in vernacular literature. In the *Kāmasūtra* by Vātsyāyana we find a standard four-category classification: the *padminī* (lotus-woman) at the top, followed by *citriṇī* (artist woman), the *śaṅkhinī* (shell-woman), and the *hastinī* (elephant-woman) (KS 2.1.1–2; 2.1.3–71). Apart from Vātsyāyana's treatise, which is the oldest text to mention this type of classification, other works of the Kāmaśāstra literature mention the *citriṇī* among the various *nāyikā*s, such as Kokkoka's *Ratirahasya* ('Love's secrets', twelfth–thirteenth centuries) (Koka 1.1–10, 11–16) and Kalyāṇamalla's *Anaṅgaraṅga* ('The Perfumed Garden', fifteenth-century) (1.6–13). An example of vernacular text providing a similar aesthetic categorization (including *citriṇī*) is the *Rasikapriyā* by Keśavadās (1591 CE), written in Braj Bhasha (3. 1–13).

7 *mānuṣa kahā so dekhai pāvaiṁ, devatā jāhiṁ johāre āveṁ*
8 *koṭi citra citasārī mahaṁ, dekhata ekau nāhiṁ*
9 *jauṁ dinkara uddota hī, naṣata sabai chipi jāhiṁ*

1 In that [pavilion lives] Citrāvalī, having gained knowledge of virtues, she has painted her self-portrait as she knows it.
2 Her friend who could not see her came early in the morning and lowered the mirror.
3 All the pictures in the pavilion are shadows of Citrāvalī.
4 How shall I describe her amazing [pictures]? My tongue is unworthy of even praising her.
5 The colour of her beauty belongs to her only. No one else owns that colour.
6 No one can see her face in front of the picture. The painting is venerable, and so is the Painter.
7 How could the men see what the deities greeted with reverence?
8 In the pavilion there are thousands of pictures, but [that] one, [Citrāvalī herself], cannot be seen.
9 It seems like the constellations start to hide as soon as the sun rises in the sky.
(*Citrāvalī* v. 161)

Usmān brings into his story a magical form of encounter of lovers that is the sighting of the beloved's portrait *(citra-darśana),* which is described in the corpus of Indian treatises classifying love meetings according to their modalities and locations *(milana-sthāna).*[11] Indeed, the first meeting between Sujān and Citrāvalī occurs in the princess' picture gallery, where the prince is immediately captivated by her picture matchless in beauty *(apurba)* (*Citrāvalī* vv. 82–3). His overwhelming desire to meet the princess leads him to paint his own picture next to hers. Usmān, thus, emphasizes the vivid colours the prince uses to portray his picture with the princess' painting tools:

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11 Other types of meeting are the in-person meeting *(sākṣāt-darśana),* the meeting in a dream *(svapna-darśana),* and the meeting through hearing the beloved's voice or the description of her beauty *(śrāvaṇa-darśana).* Keśavdās' *Rasikapriyā* references the divine couple, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, using their story as an example of how to meet one's beloved, including the meeting through the portrait *(citra-darśana)* (4.1–16).

2 *dekhā āhi likhai kara sājū, jāte hoi citra kara kājū*
  (...)
8 *sāṁvara aruna pīta au harā, jo raṅga cāhiya so saba dharā* (...)
9 *sāji so mūrati āpanī, lai saba raṅga vahi kera*

2 'As soon as he saw the painting tools, he started painting his picture.
  (...)
8 He decorated it with red, yellow, and green, using all the colours he wanted.
9 He drew his figure, taking all her colours.'
  (*Citrāvalī* v. 86)

In the *Citrāvalī* the colours are given a new dimension, infused with spiritual aesthetics.

The prologue in praise of the Divine Painter *(citerā)* also features colours that God incorporates in Creation, although Usmān points out that the Creator transcends colour and form. In both instances, the poet seems to refer to the sphere of primary colours as listed in Indian classical treatises on painting *(citrasūtras),* amounting to five: white *(sita),* black *(syāma),* red *(rakta),* green *(harita),* and yellow *(pīta),* indicating that these colours hold significance both in divine artwork and the painting of the self-portraits in the picture gallery.[12] In stanza 161, the poet implies Citrāvalī's identification with unique colours, which is closely linked to the aesthetics of divine beauty and light, further enhancing the divine attributes inherent in the heroine's character.

The picture gallery plays a crucial role in the allegorical context of the Sufi tales, as it evokes the 'world of images' or the 'world of analogies' and, by extension, of imagination *('alam al-mithāl),* forming an integral part of the Sufi hierarchical cosmology (Behl and Weightman 2000: 266). Affirming the 'world of images' as an ontologically real dimension that exists on a separate level of existence from the material world, Ibn 'Arabī refers to it as *barzakh* ('in-between realm'), an intermediary realm that connects the physical and the spiritual worlds. In the following section, Usmān gives a detailed description of the picture gallery:

1 *o puni jahaṁ māṁjha phulvārī, tahaṁ Citrāvalī kī citrasārī*
2 *candana meda kapūra milāvā, inha tihuṁ mili kai kīnha gilāvā*
3 *hīrā īṁṭa lagāi uncāī, dekhata banai barani nahiṁ jāī*

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12 For a critical analysis of the *Citrasūtras*, see Nardi 2006.

4 *cunī cūri kai kīnho khohā, motī cūri gaśa jaga mohā*
5 *ati nirmala jasa darpana kīnhā, tahāṁ jāi puni āpu na cīnhā*
6 *mandira eka tahaṁ cāri duārī, nagina jarī puni lāgu kevārī*
7 *kanaka khamba tahaṁ cāri banāe, hīrā ratana padārtha lāe*

1 The picture pavilion of Citrāvalī is built in the middle of the flower garden.
2 Clay was mixed with sandalwood, musk, and perfumed oils to construct it.
3 You cannot help but watch it, yet you won't be able to describe it. It was built high with diamond stones.
4 A gallery was built by crushing selected [pearls]: the world is enchanted by the pearl mixture.
5 A polished mirror was built there. You will not recognize yourself if you stand in front of it.
6 There is a temple with four doors adorned with precious gems.
7 Four golden pillars were built there with joint diamonds and gems.
(*Citrāvalī* v. 160)

Within the allegorical setting of Citrāvalī's picture gallery, represented as the fulcrum of the palace, the prince's recognition of the divine qualities in the woman's self-portrait and his painting of his own picture using her colours can, thus, be considered an early stage of the seeker's mystical experience. According to Ibn 'Arabī, the 'world of images' can only be accessed through a higher level of perception identified with the active imagination *(khayāl)* (Chittick 1989: 30, 134, 181; Dobie 2010: 47). Concerned with the ontological status of imagination, for Ibn 'Arabī the '*alam al-mithāl* represents the intersection between the visible and the invisible, the tangible and the intangible, the sensible and the intelligible, insofar as imagination perceives the formless through form (Chittick 1998: 331–2). The picture gallery, then, represents a magical realm that the prince temporarily accesses when he is transported asleep by the forest deities. Here he recognizes the transcendental beauty of the princess in the portrait, assuming that she is a celestial nymph of Indra (*Citrāvalī* v. 83). Therefore, the first encounter, which occurs through the medium of painting, suggests a visionary experience of the divine beauty that can only take place on the plane of the '*alam al-mithāl*. As the prince awakens in the forest temple the following morning after being carried back by the deities, he initially believes that the picture gallery moment was part of a dream. His clothes, however, have colour spots that confirm his

memories, making him even more eager to meet the princess of the portrait (*Citrāvalī* v. 89).

As a consequence of finding the prince's portrait in her gallery, the princess is overcome with the pain of separation *(viraha)* and longs to unite with him. Sufi poets have transformed the notion of *viraha* (or *hijr* in Persian poetics) into a positive image, since they see it as fueling the spiritual desire of the devotee who strives to achieve the mystical union (de Bruijn 2012: 104). In Behl's interpretation, the nostalgic condition of *viraha* is 'the other side of *prema* or *'ishq'* (love) which builds the thematic frame of Sufi literature, as it vividly expresses the human soul's yearning for God that is central to Chishti soteriology (Behl and Doniger 2016: 105). The experience of *viraha*, often associated with fire, is ultimately a process of necessary purification that the Sufi mystic undergoes in preparation for union with God. By taking up images from the Nāth alchemical tradition and integrating them into Sufi mystical asethetics, Usmān associates *viraha* with the process of the refinement and purification of gold. In particular, the eyes of Citrāvalī are compared to the touchstone *(kasauṭī)* that tests gold *(kañcana),* whereas she embodies pure gold itself *(kundana).* Thus, the burning fire of separation from the beloved involves a journey of transformation that makes the lover acquire a pure body (*Citrāvalī* v. 279).

Although doubting the real existence of the subject in the picture, both Sujān and Citrāvalī wish to meet directly after gazing at their respective portraits. The character of the paintress able to paint portraits of people in perfect likeness is, for instance, already found in Sanskrit works such as the *Kathāsaritsāgara* by Somadeva (eleventh century), and Rājaśekhara's *Viddhaśālabhañjikā*, where, interestingly, the figure of the woman painter is particularly noted for painting her lifelike self-portraits (Mukherji 2016: 75–6).[13]

As Usmān proceeds through his narrative with the theme of the beloved's quest, the nature of the portrait is questioned since it seems to no longer be accurate in revealing the divine woman's essence:

citrahiṁ kahaṁ joti chabi ātī vaha sajīva yaha binu jiu jotī
citra abola hoi janu gūṁgā vohi ka bola jasa mānika mūṁgā

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13 These Sanskrit stories specifically refer to female painters as *śilpinī*s. Sivaramamurti (1970) explains that these women were specialized in drawing portraits of young men and women that were exchanged during marriage proposals (p. 15).

citra kaṭāccha bhāva binu nainā vohi ka naina saba mohana
sainā
citra aḍola na ḍola ḍolāvā vohi gaunata janu haṁsa sohāvā

Where is the radiance of the light in the picture? She is animate,
while [the picture] has a lifeless light.
The picture utters no word as if it was dumb, while her words
are like rubies and corals.
The picture's eyes are an emotionless gaze, while her eyes
enchant everyone with their movements.
The picture is motionless and cannot be moved, while she has
the graceful gait of a lovely swan.
(*Citrāvalī* v. 168)

In the story of Sujān's spiritual–romantic journey to Citrāvalī, in ad-
dition to the portrait, the poet introduces other visual items that refer
to different levels of reality and stages of mystical experience, explor-
ing the tension between materiality and immateriality, immanence
and transcendence, and visibility and invisibility. Significantly, Usmān
brings the mirror *(darpaṇa)* into his Sufi story, a key motif of Sufi meta-
physics which finds extensive articulation in Persian mystical poetry,
as well as Sant literature.[14] For instance, the mirror already appears
in the description of the picture gallery, serving as more than just an
ornamental element. If we consider the picture gallery as a symbolic
representation of the *'alam al-mithāl*, then why would Usmān decide
to place a mirror there? The answer can be found in a later episode of
the story, in which the mirror plays a crucial role in Sujān's advanc-
ing quest for uniting with Citrāvalī. In the narrative storyline of the
Citrāvalī, at a certain point, the princess sends the prince a mirror via
her messenger with precise instructions, requesting that the prince
meet her in the temple by means of the mirror:

au puni āpana darpana dīnhā kahesi dihehu lai yaha mora cīnhā
kahehu rākhu lai hiradai lāī, māṁjata rahaba parai nahiṁ koī

Then, she gave him her mirror saying, 'Give it to him as my
sign.

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14 For instance, in one of his *sākhī*s, Kabīr says: 'Make the guru your burnisher.
Polish, polish your mind. Scour, scour with the word. Make consciousness
a mirror' (Hess and Singh 2002: 107–8).

Tell him to guard it in his heart and to keep polishing it [so]
    nothing falls on it.'
(*Citrāvalī* v. 159)

In stanza 168, Usmān makes clear that the picture has its limitations. Because the picture lacks transparency, it cannot reflect like a mirror. However, the mirror can both reveal and deceive, depending on whether it is clean or dirty. If the mirror is dirty, it will distort and blur the reflection, causing a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of reality. A key concept of mystical literature is the idea that the human heart is a mirror that must be continually polished to reflect divine light. Thus, the verse hints at the spiritual practice of a Sufi devotee to purify his heart so that he can reflect divine light as a perfected human *(insān-i kāmil)* (Chittick 1992: 114). This metaphor builds on the theory of divine self-manifestation *(tajallī)* elaborated by 'Ibn Arabī, through which he tried to solve the dilemma of the absolute God amidst the plurality of the universe. In Arabī's view, the world is a theophany, a mirror in which the divine reflects itself and contemplates its own beauty (Chittick 1989: 196, 216). Being both the instrument and the effect of divine revelation, humankind is witness to divine beauty and glory (Behl and Doniger 2016: 230). The author of the *Citrāvalī*, alongside the picture *(citra),* deals symbolically with the notions of mirror and its related terms, such as light *(jotī),* shadow *(chāyā),* and reflection *(parchāyā).* All these terms interact with each other in the poem, that becomes a narrative infused with Sufi metaphysics, addressing different aspects of existence and stages of divine encounter. To illustrate this further, at one stage of the prince's journey towards meeting the princess, she asks him to keep his eyes fixed on the mirror so he can see her reflected beauty, because her 'image is like light equal to the twelve rays of the sun', too intense for him to see directly. The princess herself compares the experience of seeing her in person to Moses witnessing God's presence through an angel in the form of a burning thorn bush on Mount Horeb (Tūra).[15] Light imagery is central to Sufi metaphysics, which finds expression in vernacular Sufi aesthetics, particularly through the idea of divine light manifested in the heroine's beauty. The moment the prince grasps the divine light reflected by the

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15 *Naina lāi rahu darpana māṁhīṁ pahile dekhu rūpa parichāhīṁ*
   ekahi bāra jo sanamukha dekhā, hoi Tūra para Mūsaka lekhā.

   [Tell him] to keep his eyes fixed on the mirror and to look first at the reflected image.
   He who sees me in person once is like Moses on Mount Horeb. (*Citrāvalī* v. 160)

princess in the mirror, he temporarily falls unconscious to the ground, as he has beheld the manifestation of divine beauty. In this regard, the prince admits that he is not capable of bearing the fire of her vision *(sahi na sakā darśana kī āṁcā)* (*Citrāvalī* v. 279). Usmān compares the prince to a cotton thread that gets burned by the princess' divine light. The poet draws on a traditional textile image from Sufi poetry, alluding to the popular belief that cotton or linen wears out under the moonlight that is reflected in the beloved's face (Schimmel 1992: 225, 294).[16] Likewise, the heroine of the Sufi *premākhyāna*s is often compared to the moon for her divine beauty and radiance (de Bruijn 2012: 251–2) For instance, Usmān describes Citrāvalī as the moon incarnated *(sasi otari)* or the woman with a moon-like face *(canda-badana)* (*Citrāvalī* v. 168), while also contrasting her flawless face with the spotted surface of the moon (*Citrāvalī* v. 169). After seeing the heroine's light through the mirror and regaining consciousness, Citrāvalī's messenger informs the prince that he shouldn't avoid the direct vision of her face *(sanamukahu),* a reference to the climax of the divine encounter (*Citrāvalī* v. 279). Therefore, Prince Sujān symbolizes the perfected human capable of truly recognizing divine reality through attaining 'pure sight', the mystical vision that comes with realizing the truth of divine unity. By pursuing divine love, the Sufi hero has rendered his heart a mirror that reflects the manifestation of the divine presence in the world.

In light of this, how should we interpret the portrait or, more generally, the picture in the *Citrāvalī*? It is essential that we consider the significance of the divine woman's self-portrait in the hero's contemplation. In Usmān's composition, the picture serves to induce a desire *(shauq)* for mystical union in the hero as a vehicle to contemplate the divine woman's beauty. The hero becomes aware of what is being represented in the portrait, as the *citriṇī* makes herself known through her self-portrait, in the same way as the Sufi disciples are encouraged to acknowledge God in the creation.

As we place the *Citrāvalī* in its Sufi cultural and religious context, it is important to remember the role visualization plays in eliciting a particular mystical aesthetic experience. The tradition of illustrated

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16 *Darpana māṁha kuṁara dekhi chāyā gayau murachi sudhi rahī na kāyā*
    sūra joti darpana mahaṁ ūī yahi duhuṁ bīca kuṁara bhā rūī.

    [When] the prince saw her shadow in the mirror, he fainted, no consciousness was left in his body.
    The divine light arose into the mirror, and between these two, the prince became like [a mound of] cotton. (*Citrāvalī* v. 277)

manuscripts on the wonders of creation *('ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt)* largely produced in Arabic and Persian between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries across the Islamic world sets a perfect example of the crucial function of image and painting in the viewer's perception of the beauty of divine creation.[17] In these manuscripts, the painted images are meant to inspire wonder at God's creation, helping the viewer contemplate the things God has created (Berlekamp 2011: 15). A wondrous image captures the viewer's imagination and elicits spiritual sensibility, having an emotional and psychological impact.

Usmān has been able to adapt motifs and images from the classical Indian and Persian traditions to the mystical aesthetics of the *premākhyāna*. By blending literary traditions, his work demonstrates remarkable levels of intercultural understanding, creating a truly unique narrative. While absorbing much from the 'high' traditions, these narratives represent autonomous literary spaces where the Sufis combine their poetic sensibilities with the 'taste for the spiritual' *(zauq)* (Behl and Doniger 2016: 6). As a result of the original use of the symbol of the painting *(citra)* to express the idea of the universe being God's canvas on which he paints his art, the poem represents a unique interpretation of artistic imagery among Indo-Islamic texts. By employing the picture and the mirror as prominent symbols in his poem, Usmān highlights the importance of visual representation and reflection in understanding and experiencing the divine. The narrative shows the spiritual dynamics at work in the Sufi love story as they progress from portrait to mirror, representing the levels of intimacy and proximity with the divine beloved. The transition from portrait to mirror represents the evolution of human knowledge of God on the soteriological path. The portrait reproduces the heroine's physical attributes in a static and two-dimensional manner, whereas a mirror allows for a deeper revelation of her divine qualities. Besides reinforcing the need for introspection, the metaphor of the mirror also suggests that as the Sufi seeker delves deeper into the mystical journey, his understanding and perception of divine reality also evolve, allowing him to witness the divine in a higher form.

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17 Zakarīyā Ibn-Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī's (d. 682/1283) *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūd* ('The Wonders of Creation and Oddities of Existence') is a source of inspiration for the premodern Islamic genre of manuscripts of wonders-of-creation. It is an encyclopedic resource on Islamic cosmology, covering everything from stones and minerals up to the heavens, describing angels, fantastic creatures, and bizarre beasts.

Through the analysis of the metaphorical language of art used in the *Citrāvalī*, this chapter has attempted to provide a glimpse into the complex relationship between religious and aesthetic expressions in vernacular Sufi literature. The author has illustrated his model of creation and mystical relationship with God in an unparalleled way in his devotional fiction, making critical points of the Sufi doctrine accessible to a diverse religious and cultural communities sharing permeable geographies and aesthetic affinities. By weaving in elements of Hinduism, as well as other spiritual traditions, Usmān is able to create a narrative that is both relatable and understandable across diverse literary and religious cultures. He has contributed to shaping the cosmopolitan contours of an Indo-Islamic narrative tradition in the vernacular, displaying his cross-cultural competencies. Like other *premākhyāna*s, the *Citrāvalī* witnesses past forms of Indo-Muslim literacy that travelled across religious and cultural networks of South Asia. Usmān has shown extraordinary creativity and skill in combining Perso-Arabic and Sanskrit sources, resulting in an original literary work that revolutionizes our understanding of how linguistic and literary practices evolved in early modern India through cultural diversity.

ORCID®

Annalisa Bocchetti ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0603-5848

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5
'For the Benefit of People'
Bhuvdev Dube's (Nineteenth-Century) Hindi Translation of Brajvāsīdās' Braj Bhasha *Prabodhacandrodaya nāṭaka* (1760)

Rosina Pastore ⓘ

Abstract   The late nineteenth century saw a proliferation of translations of earlier literature into Hindi, Urdu, and Persian, published, among others, by the notable Lucknow publisher Naval Kishore Press. This chapter examines the *Prabodhacandrodaya* drama translated by Bhuvdev Dube (abbreviated below as 'DPC') and published in 1893 by the Lucknow house. Bhuvdev Dube did not translate from the Sanskrit *Prabodhacandrodaya*, composed by Kṛṣṇamiśra in the eleventh century, but rather from Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya nāṭaka*, written in 1760 in Braj Bhasha. My analysis places the text in the Prabodhacandrodaya tradition; then in the debates concerning Hindi language and script by considering the preface attached to the translation. Subsequently, the chapter investigates the ways Dube reworked his source. It identifies the main translation strategies adopted by the author as selection and abridgement of the subject matter. It shows that Dube's preoccupations and goals were distinct from those of Bhāratendu Hariścandra, who had also adapted the third act of the *nāṭaka* slightly earlier. These elements demonstrate the multiplicity of 'modern needs' (Dalmia 2015) that almost contemporary authors were addressing by retelling the same story in the form of drama.

The Prabodhacandrodaya Tradition in Hindi

This chapter explores the *Prabodhacandrodaya* drama translated by Bhuvdev Dube and published in 1893 by Naval Kishore Press.[1] I came across this text while researching Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya* and, since it is part of its reception, I decided to investigate the relationship between the two texts. Dube's work retells a story whose better-known version was composed by Kr̥ṣṇamiśra in the eleventh century in Sanskrit. The latter has long been considered the chief representative of allegorical theatre in India. It was written to celebrate the victory of king Kīrtivarman Candella of Jejākabhukti (1060–1100) over his enemy, the Cedi sovereign Karṇa (r. 1041–1073), and to inspire the emergence of peaceful sentiments *(śāntarasa)* in the ruler after the war (Kapstein 2009: 5–13).

However, the Sanskrit drama was by no means unique, as the tale was retold multiple times from the thirteenth century onwards in Sanskrit and several different Indian languages. The story elicited interest and prompted reflection of a chiefly religious and philosophical nature: the process to *mukti* (liberation) thanks to which an individual recognizes its identity or unity with *brahman*. Although it is generally seen as a story propagating Advaita Vedānta and *bhakti* (Nambiar 1971: 11–35), it also became a vehicle for different religious and philosophical convictions.[2]

In the field of Hindi literature, there are multiple versions in Braj Bhasha, still largely understudied.[3] Notable is the retelling composed by king Jasvant Siṁh of Mārvāḍ (b. 1626 – d. 1678).[4] His *Prabodha nāṭaka* conveys Vedantic ideas, yet it does without *bhakti* personified as goddess and replaces her with Āsatikatā (Skt. *āstikatā*), a significant difference from Kr̥ṣṇamiśra's telling.[5] Moreover, although the ruler of Jodhpur does not mention Kr̥ṣṇamiśra, we can glimpse a continuity in

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1   I thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions and comments; all remaining errors are mine.

2   For instance, the Śvetāmbara Jaina retelling by Yaśaḥpāla (Leclère 2013).

3   An overview of the Hindi tradition is Agravāl 1962. A more recent reconsideration of the tradition is the PhD thesis by Siṁh (2020).

4   The date of composition is unknown, but the earliest manuscript employed in the critical edition dates to 1715 vs / 1658 CE. See Siṁh (1972: 21).

5   Āsatikatā, seems to personify 'Affirmer-ness', in the sense of orthodoxy . In the story, the āstikas defend the Vedas as the ultimate source of knowledge, believe in an eternal self—distinct from the body—and in the efficacy of sacrifice. For a more extended analysis see Pastore (forthcoming 2025). Jasvant Siṁh's works have been critically edited and published in a volume by Viśvanāthprasād Miśra. For his *Prabodha nāṭaka,* see Siṁh (1972: 81–113).

the circulation of the story – in various versions – in royal contexts. It is useful to remember that the intrigue centres on how Discrimination *(viveka)* sets out to save his father Mind (Skt. *manas*) and, in doing so, fights his half-brother Bewilderment *(moha).* Mind is subjugated by Bewilderment's party, made up of Kāma (Desire), Krodha (Anger), Lobha (Greed), and so on. Since Mind is a king and Discrimination and Bewilderment are his princely sons, the Prabodhacandrodaya *kathā* itself puts into question kingship and *dharma*.

As such it is uncontroversial to acknowledge the success of its story as being due to its broad similarity with the *Mahābhārata.* The connection with the *Mahābhārata* is made evident by the case of Keśavdās and his retelling, the *Vijñānagītā* (Praise of Knowledge, 1610 CE). A court-poet of Orchā, Keśavdās composed not only the first *rītigranthas* in Braj Bhasha but also works connected with the historical and political context of the times. As Stefania Cavaliere has shown, the *Vijñānagītā* is both a synthesis of different philosophical strands and a discourse about kingship involving references to the epic attributed to Vyāsa, as well as to Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (Cavaliere 2020: 66–9).

As with the *Vijñānagītā*, the connections with the Rāma *kathā* are also important for Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya nāṭaka*, source of Bhuvdev Dube's own drama. Brajvāsīdās composed his retelling in Braj Bhasha in eighteenth-century North India, adaptively reusing Tulsīdās' *Rāmcaritmānas*. Brajvāsīdās is a relatively lesser known author who resided in Vrindavan and was initiated in the Vallabha *sampradāy* (McGregor 1984: 159). He composed two works, the allegorical drama and the *Brajvilās* (*c.*1770), a retelling of Kṛṣṇa's life inspired by both the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Sūrdās' padas* (Brajvāsīdās 1873). His *Prabodhacandrodaya nāṭaka* constitutes a crucial example of how vernacular literary authorities progressively gained importance and were considered on the same level as Sanskrit ones, to the point of becoming references even in the field of Vedānta philosophies (Pastore 2024).

Importantly, the *Vijñānagītā* and Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya nāṭaka* are not literal translations *(anuvāda)* of the play by Kṛṣṇamiśra, but hold complex, multilayered relationships both among themselves and with other texts outside the *paramparā* itself. Cavaliere remarks how the *Vijñānagītā* can be interpreted as an independent text in its own right, as it draws considerably from the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, among others, and develops the story, usually divided into six acts, into twenty-one. While the first twelve acts relate the conflict between Discrimination and Bewilderment, the rest explore a larger array of philosophical themes (Cavaliere 2018: 175). In turn, Brajvāsīdās – apart from implicitly reusing the *Rāmcaritmānas* – refers in the opening

of his *Prabodhacandrodaya nāṭaka* to the *Gulzār-ī Ḥal* (The Rose Garden of Ecstasy),[6] the Persian Sufi rendering of the story composed by Banvālīdās (d. 1667/8; see Gandhi 2020). Later on, Ayodhyāprasād Caudharī, probably a younger contemporary of Bhāratendu Hariścandra, composed a reworking in prose inspired in structure and content by the *Vijñānagītā*, published in 1884/5 (Agravāl 1962: 243). Nevertheless, although Bhāratendu Hariścandra was a Vallabhite as was Brajvāsīdās, his *Pākhaṇḍ viḍamban* does not betray any literary connection with Brajvāsī's work but follows rather faithfully Kṛṣṇamiśra's Sanskrit text. We will return to this briefly in the next paragraphs.

With the aim of uncovering another segment of the history of transmission and circulation of the Prabodhacandrodaya *kathā*, the rest of this chapter explores the main features of the relationship between DPC and Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya*. Moreover, I will occasionally refer to Hariścandra's *Pākhaṇḍ viḍamban*. Even if Bhāratendu's drama retells only Act 3 of the story and Acts 1 and 2 of DPC, the comparison is relevant since the influential intellectual from Benares reflected on the necessity and characteristics of Modern Hindi drama. In addition, his play helps us gain a better understanding of DPC in the broader context of its time.

Dube's *Prabodhacandrodaya,* the Naval Kishore Project, and Hindi as National Language

Ulrike Stark has shown that the Naval Kishore Press started its journey in Hindi publishing in the 1860s with titles that could elicit interest from the public. This strategy, based on market demand, meant simultaneously publishing classics and new books. Among the genres published was religious literature in Braj Bhasha and Avadhi, such as Sūrdās' *Sūrsāgar* and Tulsīdās' *Rāmcaritmānas* (Stark 2007: 385–91).

The publication of dramas began somewhat later, for instance Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya*, among the first in the genre of *nāṭaka*, appeared in 1875 (Stark 2007: 421).[7] The printing of DPC was part of this editorial strategy, but unfortunately we know little about Pandit Bhuvdev Dube and what part he could have played in it other than translating the *Prabodhacandrodaya*. The preface to the Naval

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6   Cf. Brajvāsīdās 1875: 3, v. 18.

7   It had been published one year earlier (1874) by the Benares Light Press. This ignores the publication of the scripts of folk dramas, that is the *saṁgīt*s of Nauṭaṁkī and Svāṁg in North India. See Hansen 1992: chapter 4.

Kishore lithograph mentions that Dube was a resident of Garhakota, in the district of Sagar in Madhya Pradesh.[8] It is not clear exactly when he composed his *Prabodhacandrodaya* and it appears that it has not otherwise been printed either before or since.

It is worth looking more closely at what the cover page of Dube's drama says:

> For the entertainment of those who possess a taste for dramatic sentiments *(nāṭyaras rasik),* Pandit Bhuvdev Dube, resident of Garhakota, has made [the *Prabodhacandrodaya*] extremely charming in the language of the place (for the first time).[9]

The brief explanation is a hint to the publishing venture's involvement in a revival of local literary traditions and connections with the past through Hindi. Ulrike Stark has demonstrated that Naval Kishore did not show an overt preference for Hindi over Urdu or between the Devanāgarī and Nastaliq / Perso-Arabic scripts. Their publications used Nastaliq / Perso-Arabic script not just for Persian and Islamic texts but for Hindu texts as well.[10] Bilingual and trilingual editions juxtaposing a Sanskrit text with a commentary in Hindi and a transliteration of it in Urdu were also published (Stark 2007: 329–30). At the same time, the preface following the cover page of DPC is slightly more ideological and supports Stark's study which shows how the Naval Kishore Press manifested partiality towards Hindi from around the time of its founder's death in 1895. Stark points out how the introduction to a Hindi translation of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* published in 1896 posthumously represents Naval Kishore as an advocate of Hindi who wanted to elevate his mother tongue by sponsoring the translation (Stark 2007: 437).

Certainly, the preface to DPC does not refer to Hindi as Naval Kishore's mother tongue; however, it does make the point that the head of the press commissioned the translations for the benefit of people *(lok ke upakārārth)* and the uplifting of the Hindi language *(hindī bhāṣā kī unnati ke liye).*[11] Simultaneously, it still portrays him as someone who cared particularly about the *dharma* described in the *śāstra*s and other

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8 Garhakota (Gaṛhākoṭā) is now in the district of Sagar in Madhya Pradesh and part of the Bundelkhand region (see the cover page of Dube 1893).

9 *nāṭyarasarasik puruṣoṁ ke cittavinodārth paṇḍit bhuvdev dube gaṛhākoṭāsāgar nivāsi ne deśbhāṣā meṁ atilalit banāyā hai (pratham bār).*

10 They published at least one version of Brajvāsīdās' *Brajvilās* transliterated into Perso-Arabic script, dated 1886 (Stark 2007: 438).

11 Dube 1893, the three pages of the preface are not numbered.

sacred books,[12] which would be of immense use to those who follow the *sanātana dharma (sanātandharmāvalambin)*.[13] Thus, the preface appears to make Naval Kishore's project a specific Hindu mission, identifying 'the people' *(lok)* with the Hindus as *sanātanadharmin*s. In addition, it ties the publication to Hindi and the Devanāgarī script, stating that since younger people do not know Sanskrit – the language of the *dharm granth*s – he had the idea that translations should be done in the *nāgarī* language, which is a mine of good qualities *(sakal guṇ āgarī nāgarī bhāṣā meṁ)*.[14] In this way, younger people can learn about their *dharma* and other topics linked to it 'only through the knowledge of Devanāgarī syllables full of simplicity'.[15]

From 1874 onwards, Bhāratendu discussed the need of Hindi as a national language and he progressively excluded Urdu in his essays about *deśbhāṣā*. In an elegy to Urdu, seen as the idiom of Islam, he identified the progress of the language with that of the nation (Dalmia 1997: 202). Notwithstanding his own difficulty in defining such a language as Hindi, similar to what was advocated in the preface of the DPC, Hariścandra too wished for a 'pure, simple vernacular understood by the public'.[16] As Dalmia observes, in his vision this was necessary to produce homogenization, and in turn a sense of solidarity, the basis for the political and economic advancement of the *deś* (Dalmia 1997: 217). The issue was of course of wide interest, with several intellectuals maintaining that the tradition holding value and potential for the nation was uniquely that transmitted in the Hindu *śāstra*s, which had suffered the blow of Persian and Urdu (Dalmia 1997: 222–3).

Returning to Bhāratendu's views on language and literature, and specifically theatre, in his essay *Nāṭak*, he critiqued the dramas written in Braj Bhasha and other regional languages since they did not follow the conventions of Sanskrit drama; they were just long poems, *nāṭaka*s

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12 *apne dharm ko atyant śocne ke yogya daśā meṁ dekhkar paramakāruṇik dharmdhurīn bhārgavbaṁśāvatams muṁśī naval kiśor ne* [...] *yathārth anuvād karākar* [...] *mūl sahit mudrit karāyā hai.*

13 On the adoption by Indian reformers and nationalists of the term *sanātana dharma* to indicate Hindu traditions as a uniform whole, as in contrast with other religions like Christianity, see Halbfass 1990: 344–8.

14 The term *'nāgarī'* language could well mean 'Hindi language', since at the beginning of the twentieth century 'Hindi' and 'Nagari' were often employed interchangeably. Cf. Trivedi 2003: 967.

15 *yah log saralatā pūrvak devanāgarī akṣaroṁ ke jānnehī mātra se dharm granthoṁ ko* [...] *jān jāyeṅge.* Cf. also the preface authored by Pandit Durgāprasād to his Hindi translation of the *Liṅga purāṇa* in 1881 in Stark 2009: 196.

16 Passage quoted and translated in Dalmia 1997: 209.

only by name.[17] It is in such derogatory terms that he mentions Brajvāsī's *Prabodha* in his essay. Therefore, we can see how the paratext to Bhuvdev Dube's work witnesses that the Prabodhacandrodaya story was made to figure in the controversies around the construction of the national canon of literature and we may hypothesize that the debates of the period may have had implications for how Dube reworked Brajvāsī's drama.

Dube's Selection of the Translated Matter

Bhuvdev Dube adapted Brajvāsī's *Prabodhacandrodaya* in subtle ways. The first element is of course the fact that his retelling consists of only two acts out of six. It is possible that the publishing house was willing to publish translations of other acts if the first two sold well, but we have no evidence of this. The selection seems quite arbitrary as the intrigue is practically cut short without reaching its conclusion, that is, Viveka and Upaniṣad defeating Moha and saving Manas thanks to the birth of Vidyā (Knowledge) and Prabodhacandra (Wisdom Moon).

This choice differs from that of Bhāratendu. The *Pākhaṇḍ viḍamban* can be considered part of his project of unifying Vaiṣṇava traditions. Hariścandra carried out this aim first with the foundation of the Tadīya Samāj in 1873. Through its activities, he intended to assimilate Hinduism with Vaiṣṇava faith and to attribute pan-Indian value to Vaiṣṇava texts and doctrines (Dalmia 1997: 370–1). Moreover, he opposed the monism of Advaita Vedānta and supported *bhakti* for a personal god (Dalmia 2006: 52).[18] Avoiding the strong illusionistic tendencies of Kṛṣṇamiśra's play and reworking its intellectual *bhakti* exclusively dedicated to Viṣṇu would have proved more complicated had he tackled the other acts (Nambiar 1971: 56–7). Maybe one reason why Bhāratendu chose to retell this specific portion of the tale is that he was not trying to differentiate between the *sampradāy*s.[19] We can see that the focus

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17 Cf. Hariścandra 1987a: 575: ...*nāṭak ke nām se abhihit haiṁ kintu in saboṁ kī racnā kāvya kī bhāṁti hai arthāt nāṭak rītyanusār pātrapraveś ityādi kuch nahiṁ hai.* This judgement has remained influential among the critics of Hindi drama. One of the few scholars trying to go beyond the comparison with Sanskrit dramas and attempting instead to find connections between later *bhāṣā* plays and folk theatre is Tivārī 1959: chapter 3.

18 In his *Vaiṣṇava sarvasva* (1876) he attacked several religious beliefs, including the Buddhists and Jainas, referring to Śaṅkara's Advaita as an evil doctrine *(daitya mata).* See Dalmia 1997: 380.

19 Cf. Dalmia 2006: 52. Buddhists, Jainas, and Kāpālikas are the object of the satire of Act 3 of Kṛṣṇamiśra's play.

on religious and social satire allowed him to privilege the Sanskritic model he sought to adapt to modern needs. The urgency in this case was denouncing 'the pretensions and hypocrisy of the various orders of mendicants and ascetics in the subcontinent' (Dalmia 2006: 50).

In contrast, we can guess that the focus for Dube was distinct, as in reworking Acts I and II of Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya*, he gave ample space to particular philosophical and religious reflections. An instance of this is in Act I, when the First Actor *(naṭa)* explains to the actress that a voice from the sky ordered the performance of the drama for king Kīrtivarman, renamed as Kīratabrahman. The supernatural order came from *brahman* itself, which is praised at length as the cosmic Self *(puruṣa).* Dube keeps the whole passage, albeit modifying the style from poetry to prose (Dube 1893: 2–3).

Dube's Translation Strategies

Some other instances of translation betray an interest in transmitting philosophical and religious knowledge. A significant example is the presentation of the character of Viṣṇubhakti in Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodha-candrodaya* 2.96. The verses, structured as a long *chanda* (Brajvāsīdās 1875: 38–9), are spoken by the Materialist (Cārvāka), who confesses to Moha the danger constituted by Viṣṇubhakti: where the goddess resides, among the four *varṇa*s, even Kaliyuga's power is ineffectual.[20] To paraphrase further, Bewilderment's ally portrays her as an attitude of mental concentration, identified with love felt towards a *saguṇa* form of the god. Then there's a reference to how Parabhraman assumes a personal form and a name, either Kṛṣṇa or Rāma, according to the need of the moment.[21] Subsequently, the *devī* is described as creating an image *(pratimā)* of *brahman* in her mind, paying homage to it, and concentrating on it. She dances in front of it and forgets the condition of the body, tied to the god through the threads of love *(prema dhāge).*

As mentioned, I understand this statement to refer to Viṣṇubhakti. The grammatical subject is *vai*, which should correspond to Hindi *vah,*

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20 Paraphrasing Brajvāsīdās 1875: 38: *abai jā sadana maiṁ biśunabhakti rājai / baraṇa cārihū maiṁ nahīṁ jora chājai //.* There is no extended passage on Viṣṇubhakti in Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodaya* (Kapstein 2009: 76–7).

21 Multiple episodes of the *carita*s of the two embodiments are evoked through epithets. Among them, Govinda, Giridhara, Murārī for Kṛṣṇa; while the expressions *cāpa khaṇḍana, śilā śāpa mocana* refer respectively to Rāma breaking Śiva's bow at Sītā's *svayaṁvara* and saving Ahalyā who, seduced by Indra, was transformed into a stone due to her husband's curse, the *ṛṣi* Gautama.

the third person singular pronoun (Dās 1965–75: 4614). However, the verbs are conjugated once in the third person plural,[22] while the rest of the verses are in the singular, in keeping with the *vai*.[23] In my interpretation, Viṣṇubhakti is the subject, as the plural verb, indicated only by the nasalization, could be an honorific manner of addressing a crucial figure in its first appearance or even be a scribal misunderstanding.[24] Supporting the fact that the topic in the Braj text is Viṣṇubhakti is the reply by Moha. He declares that the way *(rīta)* – in the sense of behaviour – of Viṣṇubhakti was always inimical to him (Brajvāsīdās 1875: 39, v. 98).

Interestingly, Dube interprets the verbs as referring not to the female character but to the four *varṇa*s *(baraṇa cārihū),* as in Hindi he translates the verbs in the masculine plural: (...) *ve... arcan bandan kar nāmkīrtan karte haiṁ aur ... nṛtya karte haiṁ.*[25] This leads us to question his intention. His reading attributes these actions from an individual to a collectivity. It can be considered a narrative strategy to project – and, at the same time, to create – a timeless uniformity among the four traditional social classes, encouraging a *bhakti* progressively centred around Kṛṣṇa and Rāma and explicitly gesturing towards upper-caste Sanskritic traditions grounded in the Purāṇas.[26]

In this context, other translation strategies adopted in DPC may disclose the wish to simplify philosophical and religious knowledge. In the *Prabodhacandrodaya* by Brajvāsīdās, an important philosophical term is *pauruṣa.* Its context of usage is crucial inasmuch as it explains the relationship between king Mind *(mana*; Skt. *manas),* also called Individual Self *(jīvātama puruṣa),* and the Supreme Self *(paramātama*

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22 *rahaiṁ vai sadā mitta soṁ citta joraiṁ | liye prema ko saṅga dṛrhatā baṭoraiṁ //* She always stays united with [her] allies, she joins Firmness together with Love.

23 As an example: *karai kīratana nāma antara na rakhai | dṛgana mitra kī mādhurī rūpa cākhai //* She sings and does not hold distinction [among *brahman*'s] names; she relishes the form, the beauty of [her] friend [with her] eyes.

24 The manuscripts I consulted did not offer a solution to this issue. They are MS 14008 (dated vs 1908) and MS 17098 (n.d.) kept at the Vrindavan Research Institute in Vrindavan.

25 Moha's response to the Materialist's statement in Dube confirms that when Viṣṇubhakti is referred to, the verbs are in the feminine gender. Therefore the insertion of verbs in the masculine plural seems intentional. (Dube 1893: 38): ... *vah sadaiva kāl se aisī śatrutā ham se māntī āī hai* (...). She has always manifested holding such enmity against us.

26 *arcana, vandana,* and *kīrtana* are among the practices of *navadhā bhakti* laid out in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 7.5.23.

puruṣa).[27] The introduction in the plot of Individual Self as Mind's father and the partial overlapping of their identities, as a body and its shadow,[28] is an innovation by the eighteenth-century author. According to Brajvāsī, Jīvātama is the firstborn of Paramātama and Māyā (Illusion / Material Nature) and he is *pauruṣa*; that means that he participates in Paramātama Puruṣa's *saccidānanda* nature or belongs to Puruṣa (Brajvāsīdās 1875: 17, v. 117).[29] This does not appear to be an easy concept to grasp without resorting to its etymological meaning as a derivative of *puruṣa* and being able to connect it to the whole story, where the passages dealing with metaphysics are scattered. In fact, Dube decides to avoid *pauruṣa* and employs *svarūp* or *rūp* ('own / intrinsic form, form'; Dube 1893: 14), terms decidedly more recognizable.

Another attempt to make the philosophical teaching more accessible is found in the description of Viveka's ministers. They are eight, as in his source (Brajvāsī's text), since they are modeled on the limbs of *aṣṭāṅgayoga*: *yama*, *nema* (Skt. *niyama*), *sama*,[30] *prāṇāyāma*, *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna*, *samādhi*. The features of each of Viveka's close allies are then described (Brajvāsīdās 1875: 11–12). Dube's drama makes them easier to determine as both the ministers and then their respective qualities are numbered (Dube 1893: 8–9). The evident systematization applied also to spiritual knowledge seems to respond to contemporary preoccupations concerning the association of literature *(sāhitya)* with knowledge *(gyān).* That literature should be the vehicle of knowledge had been considered crucial since the turn of the century and, after Hariścandra, was developed further by another pivotal figure of Modern Hindi, Mahāvīrprasād Dvivedī (1864–1938; Mody 2012: 239). In addition, the accessibility of the texts was a fundamental factor also for publishers like Naval Kishore: the texts could now be read individually, which implied the production of glosses and other structural devices that could facilitate the unmediated comprehension and engagement by non-specialists. (Stark 2009: 200; Orsini 2004: 117).

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27 *Tadbhava*s of Skt. *jīvātman* and *paramātman puruṣa*.

28 For this image, see Brajvāsīdās 1875: 14, v. 96.

29 *Pauruṣa* may mean both *puruṣatva*, 'the state of being Puruṣa', and *puruṣa sambandhī*, 'belonging / connected to Puruṣa' (Dās 1965–75: 3125). *Pauruṣa* as 'manhood, virility' is not relevant in this context, since we are dealing with ontology. Cf. also verse 17 in Act 6, where Paramātama Puruṣa will say that the individual selves *(jīvās)* all 'come / are' from his own self, but they are made unaware of this because of Māyā and her power to bind them to materiality.

30 As the physical balance brought about by posture *(āsana),* which in turn brings about also mental steadiness.

Accessibility could also take the shape of shorter or abridged versions of earlier texts. Naval Kishore brought out a condensed version of Brajvāsīdās' second work, the *Brajvilās*, published in 1898 in Kanpur and authored by a Govarddhandās.[31] In the field of drama, Hariścandra lamented their wordiness (Dalmia 2006: 39). This can be seen as another reason why he did not draw from Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya*, which expands considerably the subject matter.

Dube, however, tackled his source differently, at the level of structure. Brajvāsīdās' *nāṭaka* possesses a three-level framework: an extradiegetic level, an intradiegetic level, and the diegetic level, that is, the level of narration of the fight between Viveka and Moha. The extradiegetic level opens the drama, with eight *dohā*s (rhyming couplets) in which Brajvāsī praises the community of *sant*s and Hari and later explains to us how he got to know about the story of the Prabodhacandrodaya during *satsaṅga*. He attributes the story to Kṛṣṇadās Bhaṭṭ, probably Kṛṣṇamiśra, who composed it for a disciple in order to teach him Vedānta[32] and consolidate *bhakti*, *jñāna*, and *vairāgya* (Brajvāsīdās 1875: 2). Then comes the intradiegetic level, the frame story, where Kṛṣṇadās tells the story to his disciple; and then the actual story, the diegetic level. The intradiegetic level recurs at the end and the beginning of each of the six acts, while the extradiegetic level reappears only at the end of the drama. In DPC, the first two levels are omitted: there is only a brief indication of the characters appearing in the act (Dube 1893: 2). At the same time, Dube was not following Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodaya* either: the Sanskrit play opens with a *nandī* to the impersonal *brahman* and then to Śiva the yogin (Kapstein 2009: 4–5), then different characters introduce each act. Although we do not know if DPC was ever performed, we may see it again as an adaptation to the practices of the time: the introductory dramatic conventions informing the reader about the circumstances of the play's composition and sponsorship were omitted by Hariścandra as well. They were made

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31 Govarddhandās pays obeisance to Vallabha and Viṭṭhālnāth at the beginning of his work (Govarddhandās 1898: 1, v. 1). The cover page of the lithograph mentions Govarddhandās as the son *(ātmaja)* of Īśvarīprasād Siṁh (1822–1889) of the Bhārgava dynasty, that seems to point to the king of Benares. However, Govarddhandās writes that he is the son of Īśvarī Siṁh, but from the village of Bhoyaḍe and belongs to a merchant lineage *(dhūsara)* (Govarddhandās 1898: 2, v. 10). It doesn't seem straightforward, then, to identify Govarddhandās with Īśvarīprasād Siṁh's only (adopted) son, Prabhu Nārāyaṇ Siṁh (1855–1931).

32 Here the meaning of the term *vedānta* is literal, to be understood as the Upaniṣads, which form a central part of the didactic content of the Prabodhacandrodaya story.

known and distributed in programme notes printed separately at the time of performance (Dalmia 2006: 39).

Abridgement was a preoccupation for the author, as he transformed almost all the verses of his source into prose. The initial location of the first act is King Kīratibrahma's *sabhā*, with the entry of the First Actor who takes the floor. In Brajvāsīdās' *Prabodhacandrodaya*, we find here two *dohā*s (Brajvāsīdās 1875: 4):

chinaka nirtta kari naṭa kahyo, bhujā uṭhāi pukāra |
tanaka ḍhola ko thāmbhikai, cupa kījo saba yāra || 1.30

jaba saba gāvana te thāmbhe, rahigo tantrī nāda |
taba bidagdha naṭa naṭī prati, karana lagyo sambāda || 1.31[33]

Dube's rendering is much more concise (Dube 1893: 2):

naṭa – *(bhujā uṭhākar kahtā hai)* aho samast tantrīgaṇ ho kiñcit
    samay paryant yantroṁ ko maun karke śravaṇ karo
(phir nij strī se kahtā hai)[34]

Bhuvdev puts stage directions between brackets: *(bhujā uṭhākar kahtā hai)* for the first line of *dohā* 1.30 and *(phir nij strī se kahtā hai)* summarizes the second line of *dohā* 1.31.

To be sure, these verses also point towards Sanskritization. This is visible, on the one hand, by his lexical choices, as he employs Sanskritic adjectives *(maun)* and adverbs *(samast, kiñcit,* and *paryant).* On the other hand, we can detect a degree of imitation of Sanskrit dramas. If the verbs in Brajvāsī's scene directions are all in the past tense, in a narrative form,[35] in Dube's text many of them are conjugated in the present tense, like *dohā* 1.31 which is extremely compressed. If we look

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33 'After dancing for a moment, raising [his] arm, he called: "Friends, stop the *ḍhola*s a little and all be quiet!"' 1.30; 'When they stopped singing, [only] the sound of the instruments could be heard. Then, the expert [First] Actor started talking with the Actress.'1.31. *te thāmbhe* may be amended to *te thābe*, as the *dohā* requires a short–long syllable cadence at the half line. At the same time, this cadence is not respected for the second line of 1.31 where the half line terminates with two short syllables *(prati).*

34 'Actor (raising an arm): "O musicians, stop playing for some time, and listen!" (Then he addresses his wife).'

35 This is not unprecedented: in an article about Kavikarṇapūra's Sanskrit *Caitanyacandrodaya* (1572 ᴄᴇ), Gary Tubb notes that stage directions are sometimes in the past tense, signaling a descriptive function rather than a utilitarian one, and the poet often develops them by adding details. See Tubb (2014).

at Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodaya*, the indications are short and in the gerundive, present, or in an adjectival form: *tataḥ praviśati rāja viveko matiś ca.*[36] We can think of this as a strategy of abridgement with the concurrent aim of recalling the style of Sanskrit dramas. These details, albeit minimal, are not trivial, as they have the potential to disclose the literary, religious, and philosophical paradigms with which the authors were negotiating.

Final Reflections

This exploration has begun to show that the transmission of the story in the Prabodhacandrodaya *paramparā* is a complex phenomenon which often involved more than translating from a Sanskrit precedent: several Hindi authors retold their version of the story by drawing from another Braj Bhasha retelling, or from texts outside the tradition.[37] It has also been observed how the Prabodhacandrodaya story was sometimes connected to a royal or imperial milieu, as a narrative serving to discuss and define the relationship between power and spirituality. During the colonial period actual political power was no longer held by local rulers and religious and philosophical traditions began to be subject to scrutiny. Several Indian intellectuals participated in such debates and held different positions.[38]

The Prabodhacandrodaya provides us with an instance to investigate such tensions. Dube's work was composed possibly 100 years later than Brajvāsī's *Prabodhacandrodaya* then published about twenty years later by the same publisher, Naval Kishore. On the one hand, the analysis of its text confirms that even when the return to Sanskrit models was strongly defended in the domain of theatre, such a process was not univocal but mediated through more familiar languages, such as Braj Bhasha (Dalmia 2015: 318). On the other hand, the practical difference between the two *nāṭaka*s can be considered as signaling a shift in the

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36 'Then enter King Intuition with Intelligence', text and translation from Kṛṣṇamiśra 2009: 34–5.

37 Although this needs more careful study (outside the scope of this chapter), Jasvant Siṁh's *Prabodha Nāṭaka* appears to rely significantly on Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodaya*. Cf. Siṁh (1972: 81–113). On the difficulties surrounding the definition of clearcut typologies of translation (including 'iconic / literal') for the Indian context, specifically based on a Jaina corpus, see Cort (2016).

38 For example, Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) and Hariścandra, whose opinions concerning issues such as iconic worship and Hinduism as a monotheistic faith contrasted sharply (Dalmia 1997: 381–90).

conception of what a Hindi drama should be. The reduced format of Dube's work may be seen as responding to a demand that a text should be short enough to be read quickly yet still be entertaining by retaining a dramatic form.

At the same time, the analysis has demonstrated that adapting the drama to 'modern needs' did not mean the same thing for every cultural actor, as two different retellings could practically coexist, Bhuvdev Dube's and Bhāratendu's. While some features of the two plays overlap, like the omission of the introductory blessings, it is clear that the respective retellings had different intentions. Hariścandra took it as an occasion to critique religious authority through satire, with arguably a parallel aim of creating solidarity among the Vaiṣṇavas by disparaging the Buddhists, Jainas, and Śaivas. In contrast, Dube wanted to provide – for Hindus and in Hindi – actual ethical and moral edification, almost conceived as a separate domain of knowledge among other branches. As hinted by the preface attached to his *Prabodhacandrodaya*, Dube engaged with the project of democratizing religious and philosophical knowledge, in the sense of broadening the basis of the communities reading and interpreting religious and philosophical works (Stark 2009: 201). His simplifications and abridgements – whether successful or not – show us practically what it meant to bring the Prabodhacandrodaya story to the *deś*.

ORCID®

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

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6
Assessing Gurmukhi Textual Production in the Late Early Modern Period

Anne Murphy 🆔

Abstract   This exploratory chapter examines the great diversity of literary production in the Gurmukhi script in the early modern period, only a subset of which has received significant scholarly attention. One domain in which Gurmukhi materials invite consideration is in what Michael Allen (2017: 291) has called the field of 'Greater Advaita Vedānta', which incorporated vernacular works, non-philosophical works, and works that integrated with diverse traditions such as bhakti, Sikhism, and yoga. This was a part of the proliferation of Advaita thought across diverse languages and scripts in North India, and its influence in Gurmukhi philosophical and literary domains has been considerable; Jvala Singh's new work on the *Sūraj Prakāś*, by Santokh Singh, provides crucial new details on this dynamic. The *Vicārmālā* attributed to Anāthadās / Anāthapurī can be put in this category of 'Greater Advaita': composed in vs 1726/1669 CE, it was published in print as early as 1876 CE in Devanāgarī with Hindi commentary – and perhaps earlier – and later into Gurmukhi; it was later translated into English, on the basis of the 1876 commentary by Lala Sreeram (Calcutta, 1886). In addition to being well represented in Gurmukhi manuscript collections, the *Vicārmālā* was thus also a popular text for replication and commentary in the burgeoning print culture of colonial North India – and in Punjab. It was therefore clearly a well-known text over an extended time in Punjab, in Gurmukhi, in both manuscript and print. This paper will consider this text in preliminary terms, as an example of the field of Greater Advaita Vedanta in the Punjab context, to suggest the diversity of texts available in Gurmukhi script that invite our attention.

The Diversity in Gurmukhi Script[1]

There is great diversity in the textual production in the Gurmukhi script in the early modern period, only a subset of which has received significant scholarly attention. The material that has received more attention either (1) also exists in Devanagari, the script associated most prominently with Hindi and Sanskrit, or other scripts, and is examined more in those scripts, without full recognition of Gurmukhi iterations, or (2) directly relates to the historical unfolding and textual forma-tions of the Sikh tradition. Yet, there is more to think about with the range of Gurmukhi manuscripts, as well as in print, and the goal of this exploratory essay is to think through some ways of pursuing this train of thought. This work is aligned with the recent work of Purnima Dhavan and Heidi Pauwels (2015), which has explored the emergence of *Rekhtā* (an early literary form of what later came to be known as Urdu) across different locations as well as scripts; work by Francesca Orsini (2019, 2023) on multilingual literary production in and between different kinds of urban centres; the late Allison Busch's (2011) work on Braj (what she calls 'classical Hindi', but which is best discussed not as a form of 'Hindi', but as a fully independent linguistic form that was adopted broadly for literature in the early modern period, as will be discussed below) in the Mughal court and in more peripheral court contexts; and the important work of Julie Vig (2020, 2022) that explores Braj literature in Sikh contexts and, within this, the ways in which Vaiṣṇava tropes function in Sikh Braj texts. This existing work

demonstrates the diversity of contexts that hosted vernacular literary production in multiple linguistic and scriptal registers, and the ability of languages and their literatures to move and take on different scriptal and other forms. This is a broad characteristic of the early modern period: in this time, as Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (2014: 22) have argued: 'Script was an indicator of circulation rather than of the intrinsic nature of the text.' This insight is fitting to the case of Punjabi: Punjabi as a language is not only found in Gurmukhi, and Gurmukhi texts are linguistically diverse, as will be discussed below. The significance of this offers much to our understanding of Punjabi religious formations in the early modern period, and the diverse ways in which languages and literatures intersected with them. Indeed, as Orsini (2023: 160) has recently noted, 'the intrinsic connection between script and language', which has become normalized in the last century, has 'denied the history of multiscriptualism in northern India, a history that meant… that the same text circulated among different reading communities and that different registers could be part of the same language, accessible to the same person'. The life of texts in Gurmukhi reflects this history.

Broad comparison of some exemplary Gurmukhi manuscript collections – the Wellcome Collection (London, UK), Bhāśā[2] Vibhāg (Patiala, Punjab, India), and The British Library (London, UK) – reveals the diversity of materials in the Gurmukhi script. The contents of the 'Punjabi' (defined in a particular way, as discussed below) manuscript holdings in the Wellcome Collection are instructive in this regard, reflecting both the particular histories of collections acquired during Henry Wellcome's lifetime, as well as broader histories of manuscript production and circulation in early modern North India.[3] According to the as-of-yet unpublished guide to the Wellcome Collection's Punjabi manuscripts skillfully prepared by Dr. Peter Friedlander, which is the basis for the analysis presented here, most of the Punjabi manuscripts were collected – as were most of the South Asian manuscripts in the Collection overall – by Dr. Paira Mall, who acted as an agent of Henry Wellcome and engaged in purchases of manuscripts between 1911 and 1921. Dr. Mall was specifically charged with the purchase of medical manuscripts, but judging from the resulting collection (which is augmented by some additional purchases in India and London), it is clear that, as Dr. Friedlander puts it in his introduction to the Punjabi

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2   Diacritics here follow those required for Punjabi: *bhāśā* not *bhāṣā.*
3   Sincere thanks to Adrian Plau of the Wellcome Collection for sharing the unpublished catalog of Punjabi manuscripts with me.

Collection, Dr. Mall 'interpreted his brief somewhat broadly' (Friedlander n.d.). This accounts for the striking diversity of the Wellcome Collection manuscripts, which reflect a wide range of religious, literary, and utilitarian interests.[4] It is also important to note their linguistic diversity: these manuscripts here are not grouped so much by language as by script: Gurmukhi is the main script used, and is the grounds for the definition of the manuscripts as 'Punjabi'. They are, however, linguistically diverse, and Braj is prominent among them; the 'Punjabi collection' is therefore not defined in linguistic terms, but instead by script.[5] Friedlander (n.d.) notes a striking distinction between the Wellcome Collection body of Punjabi manuscripts and those in the British Library: those in the latter are generally more elaborate and designed for public use, while those in the Wellcome Collection are smaller and less elaborate, and designed for private use. The Bhāśā Vibhāg (Language Department) collection in Patiala (Punjab, India) – one of the most extensive collections of manuscripts in the Indian Punjab – parallels the Wellcome Collection in this regard, housing a large number of smaller manuscripts; only three of the manuscripts in the Wellcome Collection are illustrated (Mss. 255, 256, 259). The earliest dated manuscript in the Wellcome Collection is 1791 CE (Mss. 257) and the remainder of the dated manuscripts hail from the nineteenth century (Friedlander n.d.). Some of the undated manuscripts may date from as early as the seventeenth century, Dr. Friedlander notes, based on orthography.

It is of course not surprising that in a large collection of Gurmukhi texts of this sort, a large number are specifically Sikh in content, given the strong association of the Gurmukhi script with Sikh tradition. A large body of the texts represented in the collection feature

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4   I discuss specific texts, not manuscripts, since most of the 261 manuscripts represent compilations of numerous texts. In addition to the major categories of texts discussed here, there are five texts on prosody, and a Gurmukhi version of Bihārīlāl's *Satsaī*, nine *qissā* texts (six Sassi Punnu and two Hīr Rāñjhā) and three manuscripts with the work of Bulhe Shāh, from the nineteenth century. There are also six unidentified manuscripts, with loose folios; also fifteen miscellaneous devotional works that do not fall into the broad categories outlined here, and seventeen miscellaneous late (early twentieth century) *parachai* of miscellaneous saints. I have not yet had the opportunity to examine these texts.

5   Punjabi texts in the early modern and modern periods were commonly written in Shahmukhi (a Punjabi term for the Urdu / modified Persian script, which is commonly used in the Pakistani Punjab and among its diaspora communities today. 'Shahmukhi' as a term may be a modern term; I am not aware of evidence of its use before the modern period and Amarjit Chandan has suggested this periodization, personal communication 2014.

selections of the *Gurū graṅth sāhib*, the canonical scripture of Sikh tradition. There are 145 texts of this sort. Two collections of text, Manuscripts 23 and 31, comprised of a total of twenty-one texts between them, approximate the final contents of the *Dasam graṅth*,[6] which was fluid until the modern period, as Jeevan Deol (2001) demonstrated in an analysis of *Dasam graṅth* manuscripts. Otherwise there are thirty-five sections of the *Dasam graṅth* scattered through various manuscripts, appearing in isolation or with one other text associated with the *Dasam graṅth,* but not the entire corpus now generally understood to constitute that text. There are seventeen texts of what we can call 'Panthic historiography', to utilize a phrase used by Sukhwinder Gill (2020) in his study of the *Vār*s of Bhāī Gurdās. This category of texts includes the *Janamsākhī*s, which are well represented in this collection, as well as the *Gurbilās* tradition. Three copies of the *Nasīhatnāmā*, which is said to be a discourse by Guru Nanak to the King of Medina, are available; this is also available in manuscript form in single copies, each, in the Bhāśā Vibhāg collection (mss. 245) and the British Library.[7] This too is something that has been unstudied in a substantial way in the literature on the Sikh tradition. The Collection also features three manuscripts of the collected works of Bhāī Gurdās; the Bhāśā Vibhāg collection includes more, inviting further study to enhance the late Dr. Rahuldeep Singh Gill's important 2016 work on the manuscripts of the *Vār*s of Bhāī Gurdās (dated generally to the late sixteenth / early seventeenth century).

More than 100 of the works in Gurmukhi might be broadly conceived to fall within 'Hindu' devotional / religious domains, with full appreciation of the relative lack of specificity of that designation in the early modern period, when in Punjab we commonly see 'Hindu' being used in a contrastive sense as 'non-Muslim', rather than as a content-laden term that designates a specific set of religious and cultural attributes (Lorenzen 1999: 639–40; Murphy 2012: 106–7; Murphy forthcoming 2). This contrasts with the formulation developing in scholarly and Sanskrit-dominant environments where a cohesive tradition was conceptualized, although more so, according to Michael Allen (Allen 2022: 194) and Shankar Nair (2020: 14–15), in the idea of a 'Vedic', rather than 'Hindu' tradition (cf. Nicholson 2010). The diversity of these

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6   The diacritics here, *Graṅth*, are used to indicate the use of a nasalization marker *(tippi / bindi),* which is used widely in Punjab over the use of conjunct nasalization.

7   *Janamsākhī nasīhat nāmā bābe nānak jī kā*, PanjB41, India Office Collections, British Library.

texts exceeds my ability to discuss them all in the confines of this short chapter, so I note here some of their notable features. If we speak more accurately about specific traditions and lineages, rather than largely anachronistic broader religious categories such as 'Hindu', we can see significant representation of Vaiṣṇava traditions in the Wellcome Collection: a large representation of Braj renditions of the story of Rām (such as Braj Gurmukhi versions of the *Hanumān nāṭak*), and numerous Braj versions of the *Bhagavadgītā* (as well as one in Sanskrit, in the Gurmukhi script, Mss 102). We also see works based on the *Mahābhārata,* and several Braj Gurmukhi versions of sections of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha vairāgya prakaraṇam*. Most are preliminarily dated to the nineteenth century. There is a huge number of parallel texts in the Bhāśā Vibhāg collection, with a similar range of themes and texts represented, in the Gurmukhi script.

Gurmukhi Domains of Advaita Vedānta

Seventeen Gurmukhi texts in the Wellcome Collection signal a particularly neglected area of exploration in Gurmukhi domains: Advaita Vedānta, a philosophical, intellectual, and religious tradition with deep historical roots as well as enduring relevance today. The field of Advaita Vedānta is important for two reasons that are contradictory in an important way: first, because it represented a meeting place of many different traditions in the early modern period and, second, because of its significance going forward, but in less plural terms: both of these dimensions are relevant to our discussion. Advaita Vedānta becomes a central feature of an emergent idea of Hinduism that coalesces in the late early modern, and then later the modern, period, as discussed below. The contradictory element here is that it clearly was not fully within that category earlier; it was both important in what would become Hinduism in modern terms, but also widely influential and a site for interreligious exchange and capacious breadth in the early modern period. This is not meant to suggest this acts as a syncretic domain; the concept of syncretism has been ably critiqued in recent scholarship and has largely ceased to offer much in its favour.[8] Instead, as I have argued elsewhere, we can consider such domains of activity as a meeting place for allied intellectual and personal interests

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8   The definitive critique is Stewart, 2001; see also de Bruijn 2018. For wider discussion, see Stewart and Shaw 1994.

and practices, a place that need not require sameness to allow shared exchange and experience (Murphy 2020; forthcoming 2).

Brian Hatcher's (2007: 299) work on the 'the elite, textual, and spiritualized model of Hinduism that had become normative by the middle of the twentieth century' has drawn attention to the 'special interplay of nationalism, romanticism, and orientalism in the this [sic] Vedānta-based paradigm of Hinduism'. As Hatcher (2007: 302) notes, with reference to famed reformer Bengali Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833; founder of the Brahmo Sabhā, a precursor of the Brahmo Samāj), and Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), who was an important voice on the international stage in representing modern Hinduism, among others, '[t]hese and a host of lesser-known philosophers and swamis helped to enshrine Vedānta as the veritable essence of Hinduism'. In the hands of Ram Mohan Roy, for instance, this represented a part of a larger effort 'to promulgate a more rational and humane religion' in the broadest sense, following a 'method of *conscious* selection, a method imbued with intention and purpose' (Hatcher 1999: 32, 9). The Brahmo Samāj advocated for a rejection of Vedic ritual, belief in reincarnation, and image worship, and embraced congregational worship and monotheism; this task was later taken up by the Tattvabodhinī Sabhā, which Hatcher examines at length. Advaita Vedānta thus was mobilized in modern articulations of Hindu identity.

But it would be wrong to see these modern forms as developing *ex nihilo*, and both the continuities as well as the disjunctures in the 'life' of Advaita Vedānta from the early modern to the modern period are important to account for (Madaio 2017). Advaita ('non-dualist') Vedānta developed in relation to a complex set of institutionalizing practices in the early modern period; at the same time, it also moved outside of them. The field of Vedānta was particularly productive across communities in the early modern period when, as Christopher Minkowski (2011: 205) notes: 'a lot was written about non-dualism, often at great length and sometimes with great intellectual and polemical force.' This led, in part, to the compilation of catalogues and surveys that explored a variety of Advaitan positions in a synthesizing mode, 'towards the generalization of regional arguments and arrangements in religious matters' (Minkowski 2011: 212, 222 for quote). Minkowski (2011: 218–19) notes that in the early modern period, Advaitan activities were concentrated in the South, largely in association with the Sṛṅgerī and Kāñcīpuram *maṭh*s (monasteries), which developed with the support of the Vijayanagara state. Later Benares, also known as Kāśī or Vārāṇasi, evolved as a major centre, one that provided for the learning and rise of Niścaldās (*c.*1791–1863), whose vernacular *Ocean*

of Inquiry (Vicār-sāgar) contributed to a 'Greater Advaita Vedānta', described by Michael Allen (2017: 291; 2022: 7–8), which incorporated vernacular works, non-philosophical works, and works that integrated with diverse traditions such as bhakti, Sikhism, and yoga. This was a part of the proliferation of Advaita thought across languages and scripts in present-day northern India / Pakistan – as Supriya Gandhi's (2020) important work on Vedānta articulations in Persian shows. Its influence in Gurmukhi domains has been considerable, if underexamined; Jvala Singh's work on the early nineteenth-century text the *Gurpratāp sūraj graṅth*, by Santokh Singh, is particularly important in this regard, detailing how this major work that focuses on Sikh history also reflects a transregional network of Advaita Vedānta thought and intellectual investigation (J. Singh 2022; 2023: 157; 2024). The Nirmala and Udāsī communities, generally Sikh-affiliated intellectual groups in Punjab and beyond – who were also active in Benares – provided one of the contexts for the emergence of the *Sūraj graṅth*; they were in general strongly influenced by Advaita thought. Jvala Singh (2024) argues cogently, however, for not limiting Advaita Vedānta to one intellectual domain in the Punjabi and Sikh context, and for recognition of the central role of Advaita-oriented texts in Sikh intellectual traditions in the early modern period. Indeed, Nirbhai Singh has argued that we can see in the compositions of Sikh Gurus the effort 'to reconcile both the personal and the impersonal views of reality without surpressing either one… [such that] (t)he non-dualistic concept of Being dealt within the Sikh scriptures, Guru-bāṇī, is in harmony with the Advaita doctrine' (Balasubramanian 2000: 603). Such a statement may not accord with some modern interpretations of Sikh thought and practice, as discussed below. Regardless of one's position on the consonance between Gurbāṇī and Advaita Vedānta, however, the historical evidence of Sikh engagement with Advaita thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is significant.

Before continuing with a specific textual example that attests to the life of Vedānta in Gurmukhi, it is important to note some observations about the Gurmukhi collections discussed above, and what a bird's-eye view of these collections tells us. First, we can see that Gurmukhi was a commitment of Sikh tradition, but also far beyond it. This does not adhere to the conventional narrative regarding Gurmukhi, and Punjabi, where 'Hindu texts' are associated with Devanāgarī, and Gurmukhi is seen to be a special commitment of Sikhs. Clearly that was not the case. Farina Mir's (2010) work demonstrates this for the colonial period: cultural production in the colonial period was expressed in multiple scripts by diverse authors, and Punjabi-language literary production

did not adhere to identitarian configurations. So this is not news, for the period of print. But to note it at this scale in manuscripts, before the advent of print, is significant, and deserves attention, given the tenaciousness of popular assumptions about the use of Gurmukhi. Second, the array of texts preserved in these collections gives us a sense of a reading public that was capacious, and moved not only across script and language, but also across ideas. Our exploration of the text that is at focus here allows us to see this. We also see in these collections as a whole the great diversity of work hailing from Punjab, in the Gurmukhi script, and in diverse linguistic forms: this is a diversity that speaks to the capacious cultural moorings of Punjabi religious cultures of diverse kinds, and moves across them. The importance of Gurmukhi as a regional, and not religiously marked script (contrary to its general representation today) stands out from such a vantage point, and suggests a new history of the script that remains to be written.

As the seventeen Advaita-oriented manuscripts in the Wellcome collection and the many more in the Bhāśā Vibhāg Collection demonstrate, Vedānta mattered across communities, and across scripts, in the early modern period. The use of the Gurmukhi script in this context tells us something important about circulation, and about communities of reception and production of texts and ideas in different locations. This has significance in how we conceptualize religious dynamics in this period. The ascendancy of 'Greater Advaita' in this period did not entail exclusivity or simple consolidation; nor did it entail the problematic idea of 'syncretism' – in which the supposed 'mixing' of traditions requires the reification of the traditions that are being mixed as somehow quintessentially 'unmixed', regardless of the genealogy and dynamism of these traditions themselves.[9] Instead, it indicates a diversity of engagements with Vedantic thought that spoke across traditions. Niścaldās, the author of the popular Hindavi Vedānta text the *Vicār-sāgar*, was positioned, Michael Allen (2017: 278) has argued, as a 'popularizer [who] must be understood against the backdrop of the pre-existent popularity of Advaita Vedānta', a popularity that accounts for later figures such as Vivekananda, who drew upon the vibrancy of Advaita Vedānta in the early modern and into the modern periods to argue for a particular kind of universal 'tolerance' (Harris 2022: 277–97; Madaio 2017). This speaks to Sikh intellectual work in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its diverse moorings, as Jvala Singh (2022; 2023: 157; 2024) shows in his work on the early-nineteenth-century *Sūraj granth* by Santokh Singh. This parallels early

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9   See discussion in Murphy 2020.

modern convergences that emerged between Sufi and Yogic mutual embrace of body- and mind-transforming practices, and significant interest on both sides in common concerns and techniques – a set of parallels seen across communities that build on commonalities and shared understanding and practices, not equation or mixing.

A bird's-eye view of Gurmukhi-script manuscript collections helps us to see these connections: the Bhāśā Vibhāg collection in Gurmukhi holds four versions of the works of Sundardās (1596–1689), follower of Dādū Dayāl (d. 1604), a major figure in early modern religions of what is now Rajasthan and a proponent of a Sant or *nirguṇ,* non-representational, understanding of divinity that bears strong resonances with Sikh thought (Mss. 89, 114, 172, 173; on Sundardās, see Allen 2020; Horstmann 2021; Williams 2022: 299–300, 321–2). The Dādūpanth (the community founded by Dādū) was clearly in conversation with Sikh traditions, as historical exploration of eighteenth-century Dādū textual production reveals; it also had strong and complex affinities with Vaiṣṇava religious formations, as well as Vedānta.[10] Michael Allen (2020) argues Sundardās 'should be credited for his originality': not only did he "Vedānticize" the Dādūpanth, he "Dādūized" Vedānta'. Sundardās also, it must be noted, wrote on Yoga, integrating bhakti or devotionalism with yogic practices, representing another Guru-centred tradition that resonates with the content of the *Vicārmālā* as we will see (Horstmann 2021: 177–82). In so doing, Horstmann (2021: 182) notes, Sundardās 'mediates between the wide gamut of attitudes prevailing among Dādūpanthīs of the mid-seventeenth century'.

The *Vicārmālā*

We can put in this category of 'Greater Advaita' the *Vicārmālā* attributed to Anāthadās or Anāthapurī, which declares itself to have been composed in vs 1726/1669 ce, in the month of Māgh.[11] This makes Anāthadās a younger contemporary of Sundardās, the great Dādūpanthī synthesizer of Vedānta discussed above, thus situating this text in the larger dialogue on Vedānta of which Sundardās was part, although

10 On Dādū–Sikh connections, see Vig 2020: 184–91, Hastings 2002 and Williams 2024.

11 The date for the text is provided by Blumhardt (1899: 51), and this corresponds with four of the five manuscripts available on the Panjab Digital library, see below; see, for example, MN-000120, p. 72; MN000296 is missing the date of the text, and overall is incomplete.

Anāthadās' work is far less elaborate and lengthy than the works that have made Sundardās prominent, such as his doctrinal work, the *Jñān-samudra*, 'Ocean of Knowledge' (Allen 2020: 52). Anāthadās' text is far humbler in length and complexity: comprised of eight sections, the text provides a broad overview of Vedantic ideas in the form of a dialogue between one seeking guidance and that seeker's Guru, with a focus on the role of the Guru as model and guide, the path required to allow the student to still the mind and ego and achieve the qualities of the enlightened, and the identity of the individual self with the ultimate. As translator Sreeram notes in his 1886 introduction to the text and commentary, it is designed for the 'beginner': 'All metaphysical disquisitions and subtle arguments which can only reach the comprehension of the more advanced student have been purposely abstained from' (1886: I).

The *Vicārmālā* is extant in manuscript form in the Wellcome Collection in the UK, and numerous copies – a total of seventeen – are also present in the Bhāśā Vibhāg ('Languages Department') Collection in Patiala, Punjab (India); five are available on the Punjab Digital Library website by Anāthapurī; another manuscript in Gurmukhi script is held in the British Library, also by Anāthapurī (according to the text itself), although the catalogue lists the author as Anāthadās, who also is understood to have authored the *Sarvasāra-upadeśa* from 1671 CE (Blumhardt 1899: 51).[12] The presence of the *Vicārmālā* in these collections – the Wellcome Collection, the Punjab Digital Library, the Bhāśā Vibhāg Collection, and the British Library – tells us that it had significant reach in the late early modern period, prior to the imposition of British rule; as Tyler Williams has helpfully noted, it is also well attested in manuscripts and manuscript collections associated with the Nirañjanī and Dādūpanthī communities, two early modern sant or *nirguṇ* religious communities in what is now Rajasthan (India), organized around a formless notion of the divine that could be experienced through mystical practice.[13] The text is also well attested in print in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The text was available in print form in 1876 with a commentary by Govind

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12 British Library India Office Collection Or2763. As of 28 April 2024, eleven manuscripts are listed under the name *Vicārmālā* in the Punjabi Digital Library. Six are not this text (ID: MN-000001, MN-001854 by a Tara Singh; MN-000811; MN-000295, MN-000794, MN-000788); five are this text by Anatha Puri: MN-000120, MN-000296 (the scan begins on the twelfth verse), MN-000591, MN-000588, and MN-000157 (this copy is dated to vs 1867; other copies are undated).

13 Email communication, Tyler Williams, University of Chicago, 6 May 2022.

Dās in Devanāgarī, and, according to Blumhardt's catalog (1899: 51), in Gurmukhi by 1891.[14] The text and Govind Dās' commentary – which names the author as Anāthadās – were translated by Lala Sreeram (1886) and published from Calcutta. These were not the only printed versions of the text, and commentary on it, produced in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the work was widely printed in the period of British rule, when the field of print became a dynamic and diverse one in the Punjab, as Farina Mir's important work has shown. Print technology was introduced in Punjab in the early nineteenth century by missionaries – a phenomenon paralleled elsewhere in South Asia – during the period of the Lahore State of the greater Punjab, ruled by Ranjit Singh. (The first press was established in Ludhiana in 1836 [Mir 2010: 32].) After annexation by the East India Company in 1849, by the 1870s 'Punjabi print culture was thriving' (Mir 2010: 12). On the one hand, this inaugurated a period of extensive publication of agonistic and reformist religious treatises, as the religious landscape of the region became politically fraught in the context of British colonial administrative practices that politicized religious identity by basing nascent representative political institutions on religious identity (Jones 1981; Mandair 2009). On the other hand, this was not the full story: Mir (2010: 19, 21 for quote) demonstrates that agonistic positions did not dominate in the Punjabi print environment, certainly not in book publishing but even to a lesser degree in periodical publishing, as they did in Hindi and Urdu, although she also allows that 'the reform organizations all employed print to promote their own movements, and print served as a particularly fertile medium for attacking other communities'. The Punjabi print environment therefore demonstrated striking diversity and broad reach, often maintaining traditional themes and genres that did not adhere to religiously divided community definitions promoted by some reformist organizations (Mir 2010; Murphy 2018).

This is the broader domain in which we can locate the Gurmukhi-script colonial-period print editions of the *Vicārmālā*. In these printed forms, the work was not only made available for a larger public, but was also engaged with by multiple commentators in the vernacular – and in both Hindi and Punjabi, in Devanagari and Gurmukhi. According to

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14 Two versions of Govind Dās' version of the text, with commentary, were available for this essay, both in Devanāgarī: one through the Punjab Digital Library (PDL) (Dasa 1881; PDL ID BK006228-0024), and one through the Internet Archive (Digital Library of India Item 2015.315564), which claims a date of 1832. The PDL version is used primarily here, but is damaged, requiring reference to the Internet Archive version.

Blumbardt's catalogue of Hindi, Punjabi, and Hindustani manuscripts, it was a popular work, 'published from several native presses': mention has already been made of the Hindi language / Devanāgarī version by the Dādūpanthī Govind Dās, published from Bombay in 1876, that later became the basis for Lala Sreeram's 1886 translation; a Gurmukhi version was, according to Blumhardt (1899: 51), published from Lahore in 1891.[15] An example of a particularly Punjabi (in location) engagement with the *Vicārmālā*, in Gurmukhi, is a commentary by Bishan Singh, a scholar *(giānī)* of Khalsa College, Amritsar – an institution of higher learning founded in 1892 specifically to further the interests and educations of Sikhs in the context of British rule – which was published in 1911 by Bhai Chatar Singh & Jivan Singh of Amrtisar, a prominent publisher in that city. A later commentary was done in Gurmukhi by Svargvāsī (the late) Paṇḍit Svāmī Gur Prasād, which was accessioned by the India Office Library in 1938 (and is otherwise undated); further information about this author (such as his scholarly and religious affiliations) is unavailable.[16] These are only examples, but give a sense of the breadth of linguistic and scriptal engagements with the text.

The *Vicārmālā* and Its Commentaries: A Brief Exploration

The *Vicārmālā* in both manuscript and print form, and its late-nineteenth-century translation, offers the opportunity to tell a wider story of the role of Advaita Vedānta in vernacular contexts in Punjab and beyond, from the early modern period into the modern, and can help us to discern the networks that brought together thinkers and practitioners of diverse traditions from the early modern period and into the colonial. The range of texts in manuscript, print, and translation allows us to see how distribution, and multiple readings, of the text reflected both converging religious and philosophical interests, as well as diverse religious affiliations. The core text itself is linguistically complex, at times with affinities to Braj, and at other times moving towards a simpler, *Sadhukkaṛī* linguistic form. It is not marked by Punjabi linguistic elements. In this way, it bridges linguistic communities active in the literary landscape of early modern present-day

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15 The version available on the Punjab Digital Library is from 1881: Dās 1881.

16 For the first, see British Library, India Office Library collection PanjD210 and 14162.bb.5; for the 1938 text, see Panj D1215. At this time, I only have access to the first two sections of Panj D1215.

northern India / Pakistan. Govind Dās' and others' commentaries – and Sreeram's English late-nineteenth-century translation – can be seen as part of the broader exchange around Vedānta in the late nineteenth century that Hatcher explores, which (in the case of the translation in particular) may be indicative also of a complex late-nineteenth-century congruence between Indian and British thinkers on modes of religious engagement in the context of Theosophy, for example, as well as *bhakti*, or devotionalism (Pinch 2003). The introduction provided by the translator of the text, which is quite formal in tone, provides a cogent and thoughtful description of Vedantic thought, in concise form, in keeping with the orientation of the *Vicārmālā* itself, which the translator notes is marked by its 'simplicity' and 'cogency of arguments', although the *Vicārmālā* is far less explicit in meaning and less verbose than the translation (in keeping with poetic norms in this genre of formulaic, recited text) (Sreeram 1886: 1). In his introduction – which does not correspond to an original in the Govind Dās commentary, at least in the versions of the Hindi commentary available to the author at this time – Sreeram indicates the core orientation of the original work: 'Knowledge alone is the one and only means for the destruction of ignorance which envelopes the self and prevents cognition of his natural felicity' (1886: vi). He then provides a full translation of the text in English, with extensive commentary in English, translating both the core text and the Hindi commentary provided by Govind Dās. Here I discuss the text in preliminary terms, with reference to the versions mentioned thus far: manuscript MN-000120 from the Punjab Digital Library, which is an undated manuscript but appears stylistically to be the oldest among those available on the website, (see footnote 12); the Govind Dās printed text and commentary (Dās 1881; see footnote 14 regarding versions); the published Sree Lam translation from 1886; the Bishan Singh commentary and version of the text from 1911 (Singh 1911; British Library PanjD210); and the version by Pandit Svāmī Gur Prasād (Gur Prasād n.d.; British Library D1215), which was accessioned by the India Office Library in 1938 (and is otherwise undated). As has been noted, there are many other published versions and manuscripts of the text. Given the constraints of space in this publication, we examine only a few exemplary lines; fuller investigation is forthcoming, drawing on a greater range of texts.

The Govind Dās printed version, as well as Shree Ram's translation, opens with an invocational *dohā* that is included neither in the manuscripts available through the Panjab Digital Library and the British Library, nor in the printed Gurmukhi commentary and text by Bishan Singh (1911). The Gur Prasād (n.d.) version includes its own *doharā* (as,

the author tells us, a *maṅgalacaraṇa*) that is not the same as that given in the Govind Dās version, and the Sree Ram translation. This Gurmukhi version is strikingly different from the tenor of the Govind Dās version (and its translation), which are oriented at their opening towards reverence to Gaṇapati, and other deities. After this, the text turns to reverence to the Guru. Gur Prasād's four-line, opening commentary is from the beginning oriented towards the Guru: '*vār vār vaṅdana karūṁ. Satigur ke pad pūj. Jāsu pratāp pragaṭe. anabhai ātama sūjh* I salute, again and again, worshipping the feet of the Guru. To whom [the Guru's] glory radiates will realize the inner self without fear' (Gur Prasād n.d.: 1). The commentary also refers to Gur Prasād himself, as author. Both manuscripts (BL Or2763 and PDL MN 000120) open also with *sati gur prasādi*, a Sikh invocation, before the invocation of Ganesh.

The core text that follows the commentarial verse is parallel among the versions: it opens with the invocation of Rām: '*namo namo srī rāma jū sata cita ānaṅda rūpa* Hail, hail to Ram, whose form is truth, thought and bliss'. At the outset, it is important to recognize that the Rām referenced here is not necessarily Rām, the hero of the Rāmāyaṇa and *avatār* (incarnation) of Viṣṇu. There is of course much more to be said about this, but at this juncture it is sufficient to note that the term 'Rām' – like allied terms, such as 'Harī', which can be used as an epithet of Kṛṣṇa – has multiple, quite dramatically different valences in different traditions. The term 'Harī', for example, is very commonly utilized as a term for the divine in the *Gurū graṅth sāhib*, where divinity is not expressed in personal terms, and maintains a *nirguṇ* (literally, 'without attribute' or 'without quality'), or non-personal / immaterial, imaginary that is significant here.[17] This verse continues to describe the impact of this Guru – from knowing the Guru, ignorance and darkness, as deep as a well, are dispelled like the world waking from a dream.

The second verse of the text reveals similar vocabulary for the divine / ultimate, but with more ambiguity than is visible in the commentaries. '*Rāma mayā satigura dayā sādhusaṅga jaba hoi | tab prāṇī jānai kachhū rahio bikhai ras bhoi*'.[18] Here we see the idea of someone

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17 There are discrepancies in the versions in the second half of the opening line; in Gur Prasād and Govind Dās, we have in the final part of the line: *nāsata bhrama tama kūpa*, whereas in Singh 1911, we have *nāsa prabha tama kūp*. The PDL manscripts are consistent with the printed versions (with *nāsai* instead of *nāsata*); the Singh 1911 is an outlier here.

18 *sādhusaṅga* appears in Dās (1881), but not in Singh 1911, PDL ID MN-000120, British Library Or2783, or Gur Prasād n.d. We provide Govind Dās' reading to accord with metrical requirement. Thank you to the anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

being '*Rāma mayā*' or 'full of Ram': that person is the 'Satiguru', the compassionate *(dayā)* true Guru – this is of course a term *(satigura)* that is used extensively in Sikh tradition, but also resonates beyond it. When one is in good company *(sādhusaṅga jaba hoi)*, the text tells us, then one knows the breath of life *(tab prāṇī jānai kachhū)*; otherwise one remains *(rahio)* drenched *(bhoi)* in pleasure *(ras)* and worldly enjoyments *(bikhai)*.[19] A wide variety of terms continue in this text – the divine is called 'Murārī', an epithet of Kṛṣṇa, in verse 3. The 1911 commentary by Bishan Singh does not, in his discussion of this line, mention any deities in the conventional sense at all, and he maintains focus on the Guru, whom he describes as being joyful. The 1886 translation of the core text and commentary notes the use of these terms, but cautions about their meaning: 'The author… pays his respects to Siva and Kṛṣṇa apparently, but in the sense of Impersonality', Sreeram's (1886: 4) rendering of Govind Dās' '*nirguṇa brahmakūṅ namaskar karke*' (Dās 1881: 6). At the same time, the translator notes the use of 'Murārī' as 'the personal aspect of Brahma' (Sreeram 1886: 4), from Govind Dās' '*saguṇa brahmanaiṅhī dhāraṇa karī hai*'. The pre-1938 commentary by Gur Prasād is less circumspect: in the discussion of line 2, with reference to 'Rām', that text refers to 'Ram Candra', a more direct reference to the personal deity known to us as Ram in the Rāmāyaṇa (Gur Prasād n.d.: 2). Still, the same commentary, in analysis of line 3, notes the primacy of '*Nirguṇa Briham vidiyā*', knowledge of the formless Brahma, in our understanding of the Guru. So, there is some consonance among the three, with some change in emphasis.

The author of the core text asserts that the explication *('barnana')* of this text is linked to the holding of it in the heart – which also refers to the *mālā*, garland, a reference to the title of the text – and of a kind of silence that is directly linked to knowledge (verse 3).[20] This is upheld among all the commentators. While one line of text is missing from the translation, it is present in both the 1911 and 1938 commentaries and in Dās (1881), and focuses on moving past 'me' and 'mine', ownership and differentiation, and dwelling fully within silence (verse 4). It is noted in the 1911 commentary that '*ih cup rahan dā kāran hai, bhāv cup vic hī mast rahe* The reason for this is remaining silent. Only in

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19 Dās 1881 differs from Singh 1911 in this line: instead of *rahio bikhai ras bhoi*, which corresponds with PDL ID MN-000120, Dās (1881) has *rahio biṣayaras bhoya.* This can be seen as a spelling variation, but also can have semantic implications, with *bikhai* as 'poison' instead of 'subject' or, here, 'worldly enjoyment'. We take the latter meaning here.

20 Thank you to the anonymous reviewer for this observation regarding the double meaning of this line.

silence can one enjoy full experience [of this kind of non-duality]'. The text moves on, to an assertion about the primacy of the Guru above all (Singh 1911: 5). As described in the 1938 commentary: '*vaha mātā pitā bhāī piāre dost gur rājā ate āpṇe priāṇāṅ nāloṅ bhī piyāre han* That one is more beloved than even one's mother, father, brother, close friends, guru, king, and one's own life' (Gur Prasād n.d.: 3). It is not surprising that this kind of statement would resonate in Sikh contexts; *Gur Sobhā* by Sainapati (*c*.1711) makes a similar declaration, calling the Guru the mother and father of the devotee, and the Guru is held as paramount (Murphy 2007: 357).

The Guru is central to the text. Without the Guru, the text tells us, one falls into illusion, like a dog barking without discrimination, or like a lion who sees his mother and father reflected in a well, without realizing it is his own reflection (verse 8). One who faces the Guru can discern, and then achieve experience (*anbhava* Singh 1911, *anubhava* Dās 1881, Gur Prasād n.d.) that is expansive (*bisāl* [Singh 1911]; *visāl* [Dās 1881]; *viśāl* [Gur Prasād n.d.]) (verse 11). The language of 'Gurmukh' in Anāthadās' text is striking here. A Gurmukh, in Sikh tradition, is one who faces, or turns to the Guru – specifically, the Sikh Gurus – that is, who has abandoned self-willed action and has oriented the self towards the Guru. Clearly there is a strong resonance here with Sikh ideas, and the word *"sikh"* is used in association with this discernment (there is however no mention of the Sikh Gurus). And indeed, later interpretation does not render this verse in specifically Sikh terms, in the available commentaries: in all three commentaries by Dās (1881), Singh (1911), and Gur Prasād (n.d.), the focus in this line is on *darśan*, sight of the Guru, which brings knowledge (see also Sreeram 1886: 9). The terminology is, however, striking. In the next line, we see the Guru described as *dīna-dayāla*, the protector or cherisher of the poor or meek (verse 12). This is a general epithet for the Guru, and is also an epithet of God. This is the case across religious traditions: there was a broad shared vocabulary across northern India / Pakistan, across communities. Indeed, the term 'Khalsa', generally associated with the orthopraxic form of Sikh identity initiated in the very end of the seventeenth century and developed more fully in the eighteenth century, was used as a description for sadhus associated with the Dādūpanth, for example, and the term *ikk onkar* – utilized in Sikh contexts for 'the ultimate / divine' – was also utilized widely in Hindavi texts from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries (Hastings 2002: 43; Behl 2012: 40). There was much that was shared, and it is a set of ideas that were being utilized in diverse contexts among religions in early modern South Asia that we see expressed here.

Overall, the text describes the greatness of the Guru, the need for the Guru's guidance, and the consequences of lack of the Guru (which is equivalent to a state of ignorance, since the Guru is the only way to achieve knowledge). Hope or desire *(āśā),* craving *(triśnā),*[21] and worry *(ciṅtā)* are thus described as demonesses *(ḍāin)* that torment the speaker – this is life without the Guru as guide (verse 14). Sometimes there are good thoughts, and sometimes one is subservient to bad – and so one suffers, the same way the husband of two wives suffers (*kabahū sumati prakāsa cit, kabahū kumati ādhīn | bibanārī ke kaṅta jiu, rahata sadā ati dīn*, verse 15).[22]

Placing the *Vicārmālā*

The preliminary analysis of the opening lines of the *Vicārmālā* pursued here is sufficient for some initial conclusions. Resonances with Sikh tradition are in particular valuable to pursue. Arvind Mandair (2009) has developed a trenchant critique of modern interpretation of Sikh thought that is relevant here. In Mandair's argument, modern Sikhism has been constructed as a form of monotheism within the context of colonial translation, where Sikhs were compelled by the power differentials of colonial rule to make themselves knowable to the British through the religious categories available to them. As Mandair (2006: 654) puts it in an early article along these lines, Bhai Vir Singh (1872–1957), who had a formative influence on the evolution of modern Sikh thought, was in his interpretation of Sikh scripture forced to transform the 'middle ground' of Sikhism, a set of 'idioms, practices, forms, and strata of experience that are different from but also broadly continuous with those of the wider North Indian devotional traditions'. Contrary to the theologically driven understanding of Sikhism that thus emerged, Mandair (2006: 653) argues, Sikh thought embraces 'the nonduality of the Absolute' that is 'grounded in a state of existence that has realized this nonduality by relinquishing the individuality of the ego and merging itself into the Other'.[23] It is well established that there was a significant disjuncture between South Asian ways of imagining reli-

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21 Here I take the spelling in the Gurmukhi versions, which do not feature a retroflex sibilant.

22 Here I follow the text from PDL MN-000120; later printed versions feature variations.

23 Nirbhai Singh's discussion of the integration within Sikhi or Sikh thought of both the personal and impersonal, referenced above, is relevant here.

gious subjectivity and identity and those common in the British (and more broadly European) context. In the religious histories specific to Europe (and, in terms of the powerful influence in India, in Britain), religious difference was understood in agonistic terms, and interstitial positions between religious identities were deemed impossible: one might identify with and consider oneself a connoisseur of both classical and baroque music, but it is generally seen as impossible to evince affinities as both a Catholic and a Protestant, for example. In this discursive environment, Mandair (2009: 236) argues, 'what changes in the colonial period is the way in which identity was conceived', so as not to allow for articulations of commonality and shared religious affinities.

It is therefore important to see the logic of Sikh interest in the *Vicārmālā* – as evidenced by Sikh commentary on it, as well as the large number of manuscript copies of the text in Gurmukhi, which as has been noted does not require a Sikh readership but suggests a diverse audience for Gurmukhi texts, and one that (given the Sikh invocation on the two manuscripts examined) likely included Sikhs. It has been noted that personalized deities are de-emphasized in the 1911 commentary by our Khalsa College commentator: congruences consistent with Sikh thought are emphasized. But there are many other such congruences: we see resonances in the emphasis on non-duality, on oneness, on the need to dispel ignorance as a core practice, and specific vocabulary that coincides with core Sikh ideas, such as the idea of 'Gurmukh', or the one turned towards the Guru.

At the same time, the *Vicārmālā* is not a text that today is generally included within the corpus of 'Sikh texts', and Sikh religious affiliations are not foregrounded in Govind Dās' commentary, or Sreeram's late-nineteenth-century translation of it. The text seems by that time to be moving out of a Sikh domain, at least for some. And yet, at the same time, the 1911 commentary on the text by a Sikh author affiliated with a Sikh-oriented institution of higher learning suggests that a movement along such lines was still incomplete at that time. Indeed, its staying power suggests that earlier scholarship that saw the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as closing down the diversity of the Sikh community, such as Harjot Oberoi's widely read *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* (1994), spoke perhaps a bit too soon. The text has continued to be published in Punjab, in the Gurmukhi script, with strong Sikh – as well as Nirmala, and other – affinities.[24] There is a longer story to this text that bears telling, just as there is a broader history to Gurmukhi textual production, across manuscripts and print, that remains to be accounted for.

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24 See the 1998 edition of the text, Singh "Nirmala" 1998.

Concluding Thoughts

The use of both Devanagari and Gurmukhi gives us some sense about the range of publics that collected and consumed texts like *Vicārmālā*, but do not allow us to define these publics in specific religious terms. The printed versions tell us a bit more: we see Calcutta – the location of the publication of the translation, which is part of a larger history of Bengal-based theological development that embraced Vedānta, such as we see in the figure of Vivekananda. We see Amritsar, the location of Khalsa College and of one of the presses that published a commentary on the text, together with the core text. (The location of the author of the 1938 commentary is not indicated in the version available.) The location of the publication of this (and similar) texts in the urban centres of colonial Punjab (and beyond) forms one part of our understanding of the communities of both production and reception of the text. This is where both collections of manuscripts and producers of printed texts come in contact. We've heard mention of the city of Benaras as an early modern centre for Vedānta thought. This has concrete connections to the later production of literature in Braj, and the emergence of both Hindi and Punjabi in modern forms, at the end of the nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth centuries, when printed versions of the *Vicārmālā* proliferated.[25] In a brilliant essay, Valerie Ritter (2010) has highlighted the complexity of the communities of association that brought together people in support of Hindi language production in the nineteenth century, in Benares and beyond. She describes the social positions of many such individuals: 'small zamindars, teachers, *qanungos* (registrars of landed property in a subdivision of a district), Brahmans, and Agarwal merchants' (Ritter 2010: 250) as 'Braj Bhasha poetry came to inhabit a mixed oral and print culture with metamorphosing definitions of the literary public' (Ritter 2010: 251) where 'poets of Braj Bhasha considered it a unifying poetic mode across other inexorably widening divisions' (Ritter 2010: 253) as religious identity came to be politicized in colonial India. Key to this was the city of Benaras, where intellectuals received training, shared work, and then carried their ideas to smaller urban centres across the region (present-day North India / Pakistan); this had been a locus for Sikh intellectual traditions, as well as others. Francesca Orsini (2019) has detailed the complexity of connections among urban centres in this period, moving across diverse languages (Braj, Hindi,

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25 As Orsini (2019: 73) notes, Benares also became a 'node, if not a center' of Persian cultural production in the eighteenth century, under Company rule.

Urdu, Persian), and moving across the region of Awadh and its capital of Lucknow and many small *qasba* or small garrison towns; Benares; and Calcutta (the East India Company centre, in the early nineteenth century). Punjabi centres can be added to the latticework of 'local courts' that proliferated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to produce a range of small, local centres of power, that patronized literature of different kinds, and often in the vernacular.

Ritter's (2010) work presents the figure of Sumer Singh Sahibzade (1847–1903), who published widely across subjects both Sikh (such as a commentary on the initial composition of the Sikh scriptural text the *Gurū graṅth sāhib*, entitled *Japjī sāhib*) and non-Sikh (such as on poetic ornament and commentaries on non-Sikh literary works). Sumer Singh, Ritter (2010: 260) argues, 'moved fluidly between and within regions' – and multiple urban centres, such as Patna, Varanasi, and Nizamabad – 'and in varying social circles, ranging from the wealthy city merchant class of Varanasi, Brahmans in the districts, and English sahibs'. Across these complex urban and social contexts, 'Sikh / nirguṇ 'progressive' ideas dovetailed with both elite Vedantic movements and liberal ideological agendas inherent in British colonialism' (Ritter 2010: 261). Within a few decades, she shows us, the religiously plural positions that were allowed to exist within and travel among these urban spaces, however, began to disappear, to be replaced in the twentieth century by more religiously divided positions (and institutions) that were no less urban, but far less plural. At the same time, they remained marked by the need to distinguish and to confront, so in a sense they too are marked by religious contact and diversity, albeit in conflict.

Works like the *Vicārmālā* – read and reproduced in conversation and in contact, across religions – have much to do with how we can understand human networks that coalesce in locations of dense inhabitation, sharing, and knowledge production and reproduction. These texts may emerge within intellectual, literary networks among urban centres, particularly smaller ones within a larger, often imperial, map – reflecting perhaps what Faisal Devji (2012: 19) has usefully called 'an empire of distinctions', where diversity was the norm. In this case, we have neither a dominant discourse, nor a fully sub-altern one, but rather a discourse that persists perhaps because of its in-between-ness, and its connection to multiple places and traditions. Its movement in the twentieth century, away from this multi-locatedness and plurality, reflects its coming under a more centralizing drive that sought to homogenize and clarify the intellectual maps that had once joined places and people in a more haphazard, disorganized, and less-regulated – and thus more capacious, open, and shared – exchange.

ORCID®

Anne Murphy https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0171-6003

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Female Contribution
to the Court Literature

7
Forgotten Colloquies
Synergy of Eighteenth-Century Kishangarhi Authors

Heidi Pauwels ⓘ

Abstract   This chapter seeks to contribute to expanding the canon of classical Hindi literature in three ways. First, it introduces the voice of a woman author who was a domestic slave in a royal Rajput household. Second, it moves away from the author as solitary male genius by foregrounding collaborative and dialogic modes of literary and other artistic production. Finally, it highlights the diversity of registers accessed within early modern 'Hindi' beyond what is often called 'Braj' and the affective work accomplished in doing so.

The chapter presents a case study of mid-eighteenth-century 'Braj' literary production from the small Rajasthani principality of Kishangarh, focusing on the synergy of the author–pair Sāvant Singh, the crown prince, and Banī-ṭhanī, one of his concubines. He sponsored paintings of the Kishangarhi school and she was the purported model for the distinctive traits of its portrayal of feminine types. While he is a star in the firmament of Braj literature under his pen name Nāgarīdās (Nāgrīdās), her literary work that carried the signature *(chāp)* Rasikbihārī is often overlooked. On the basis of newly discovered manuscript material, this chapter introduces her poems and brings them into conversation with his. First, it articulates methodological considerations, interrelating literary dialogic interaction of his and her poetry with visual art production. It further expands the dialogic approach to encompass response poems from their broader circle, including the powerful Nimbarkan abbot Vṛndāvandev Ācārya. Since the group shared poems in different idioms, the chapter reflects on the social milieus in which such 'heteroglossia' occurred and identifies emotional vectors carried by each register.

Beyond the Canon of Great Men:
The Forgotten Voice of a Woman Poet

One of the great poets in the canon of Hindi literature is Nāgarīdās, nom de plume of Sāvant Singh (1699–1764), the Rajput prince of Kishangarh-Rupnagar. He is best known in Hindi literature for his Braj Bhasha poetry in praise of the love play of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. His importance is evidenced by the hefty two-volume edition of his oeuvre by the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā (Gupta 1965). He is also well-known in the Indian art world, as he had several of his own poems illustrated by his favourite painter, Nihālcand, who was instrumental in shaping the Kishangarh school of painting (Haidar 2011). The distinctive traits of the figure of Rādhā in this school are often said to be inspired by those of one of his concubines known as Banī-ṭhanī, or Miss Made-up (a theory first ventured in Dickinson and Khandalavala 1956). Before she became the prince's mistress, she was a slave-girl, purchased in 1727 (vs 1784) and appointed within a few years as singer *(gāyan)* in the retinue of Nāgarīdās' stepmother, the Kishangarhi queen known by her patronym as Bāṅkāvatī (Khān 2015: 377). Not only did Banī-ṭhanī perform at court, but she also composed her own songs. Compared to her much-debated role in the development of the Kishangarhi paintings' distinctive traits, very little interest has been shown in her poetry. An example from the influential volume on Kishangarhi painting by Mohinder Singh and Doris Schreier Randhawa reads thus:

> Bani Thani... was a beautiful girl who also professed interest in Hindi poetry. She became Sawant Singh's mistress. It is conjectured that the bloom of her youth and beauty not only roused unholy thoughts in the hearts of men who saw her, but also provided inspiration to the Kishangarh artists, to whom credit is given for the invention of the Kishangarh facial formula (Randhawa and Randhawa 1980: 9–10).

While the authors mention Banī-ṭhanī's interest in poetry in passing, they foreground her beauty as what inspired the dazzling Kishangarhi court culture. The Randhawas are just one example of an art-historical discourse which resulted in Banī-ṭhanī's fame as 'India's Mona Lisa', while her literary output was neglected. The argument of this chapter is that it was not just her looks but also Rasikbihārī's creative output that stirred the prince and his retinue. Her performances must have been very moving – and on top of that, she composed her own songs, which he appreciated, as evidenced by his including them in

his anthologies. The consequence was that not just his but also her poems were performed in temple worship, and their songs are till today often sung together.

If the prince included her poems in his oeuvre, how come they have been neglected? A major factor may well have been the first lithograph edition of his collected works in 1898, where her poems were excised from the anthologies in which he had included them. To be sure, they were gathered in a separate section, but at the very end and without explanation as to the identity of this mysterious author who signed as Rasikbihārī. Unfortunately, this separation of the couple's poems ended up both obscuring her talent and the interrelation of her songs with his. I have been engaged in a project to collect these and other songs by Rasikbihārī and recover the dynamic interrelation with matching songs by Nāgarīdās. The material presented here draws examples from that more encompassing work *(The Voice of India's Mona Lisa).*

Methodological Reflection on Intertextuality

How to reconstruct the colloquies between the prince and his con-cubine? The easiest, more direct way, is context-wise, going back to the manuscript evidence of his anthologies and identify where their songs are paired together. Nāgarīdās' collection of the calendrical cy-cle, *Utsav-mālā (UM),* and his more thematically organized *Pad-muk-tāvalī (PMĀ),* are particularly productive from this perspective. For the former I have been able to consult an undated manuscript from the Mathurā Janmabhūmi Library (Kṛṣṇa Śodhpīṭh Pustakālay 13254-365138, henceforth *MJB*), the colophon of which states it was a gift by the abbot of Salemabad, the Nimbarkan monastery near Kishangarh (*salemābada kā mahanta kī bheṁṭa havo*, fol. 40r).[1] For the latter, a manuscript that contains a colophon with the date 1746 (vs 1803) was obtained from Bābā Raṇchoṛdās from the temple of Śrī Kalyāṇ Rāy in Kishangarh (henceforth *Kh*; for a description, see Khān 2015: 35 ff. and plate 2). This manuscript contains poems that were added later. Perhaps after Sāvant Singh was exiled from his hometown in 1748, he recycled it because he lacked access to new paper on the road, or he simply found it handier to squeeze in new poems in the existing anthology. This is supplemented with the newly discovered

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1   Undated, but the abbot likely was Vṛndāvandev Ācārya, who was close to the Kishangarh royal house and recognized guru of the then-queen, Bāṅkāvatī, Sāvant Singh's stepmother.

undated manuscript of Rasikbihārī's own songs, a performance diary *(bayāz)* that was produced by or for her during the last part of her life and in which she pairs her own songs with his and others (henceforth *RB:* full description in the appendix of my book).

In addition to this contemporaneous evidence, sometimes later collections group poems that may not be connected in the earlier ones, yet represent links that singers made, possibly from memory. The same holds true for contemporary performances by temple singers as recorded by ethno-musicologists (e.g., Beck 2011).

To determine matching pairs of poems, the contextual placement is complemented with content-analysis. Interchange between pairs thus is supported with evidence from within the text of the songs themselves. Matching songs often share the same theme, related to a specific time of day or of the season. Indicative of paired composition is common use of particular tropes and key words, further reinforced by technical elements, such as the melodic and rhythmic patterns *(rāg* and *tāl).* Often meter and rhyme are shared, as well as the linguistic register, marked by grammatical shibboleths. While some of these traits may be generically typical for the shared theme, the greater the density of such common features and the more unusual the choice of words the poems have in common, the stronger the evidence for the connection.

In addition, more subtle associations can be detected among poems related to particular visual representations, even if only Nāgarīdās' song is associated explicitly with a painting, its counterpart by Rasikbihārī may be interrelated with it through the visual description. There is now documentation that paintings were displayed as poetic compositions were performed. For Kishangarhi paintings we have concrete evidence from the aforementioned Bābā Raṇchoṛdās manuscript *(Kh),* which includes a stray folio bound with the rest that starts with instructions for a performance:

> *māna ke citrapaṭānusāra krama likhyate. Prathama citra ke darasaṇa hota pahlaĩ kāphī rāga kī alāpacāranaĩ pāñca dohā... ādi. Prathama pada gāvanau (yah): ... tathā... yā pada ko bhona dayai pīchai citra paṭa kau darasaṇa hoya, taba e dai pada gāvanai... so yā dutiya pada maĩ dainai ye...* (*Kh* fol.165v)

> Here is written the sequence for canvases with images that depict 'pique' *(mān).* Before observing the first image, come five *dohās* for *ālāp* of *rāg* Kāfī (quotes the first line of a *dohā*), etc. First song to sing is this: (quotes the first line of a song) and also (quotes

Table 7.1 Evidence for Exchanges between Nāgarīdās' and Rasikbihārī's Pairs of Poems

Content-wise: from within text	Context-wise: placement of text
Theme Time: time of day / season Key words and tropes	Nāgarīdās' anthologies *Utsav-mālā (UM)* and *Pad-muktāvalī (PMĀ)*
	Rasikbihārī's own songs with his in her performance diary or *Bayāz* (RB), undated
	Associations with paintings
Rhyme Meter	Later collections
Rāg (melodic pattern) *Tāl* (rhythmic pattern)	
Register (linguistic shibboleths)	

the first line of another song). After presenting his song, there is a viewing of the canvas with picture. Then intone this song for singing (quotes the first line of another song), and the second song to present is (quotes fully yet another song).

This continues on the next folio recto, about mid-page:

ye do(hā) dayaĩ pīchai dūsarā citra paṭa kau darasaṇa hoya, taba pada tau vahī gãyai jāvanau... tā mai phiri daine ye dohā.... (Bābā Raṇchoṛdās manuscript folio numbered 166r)

After giving these *dohās*, there is viewing of a second canvas with an image. Then this song is to be sung (quotes the first line of a song), and then again these *dohās* to be given... (*Kh* fol. 165v and 166r).

The specifics of the documentation of the painting on the theme of *mān* ('pique') are difficult to trace. The main point of note is that from these instructions that survive in the page bound together with manuscript *Kh,* it is evident that Nāgarīdās organized soirées for which he scripted the sequence of paintings to be shown and matching compositions to be sung. We know his own poetry was penned on the back of some paintings (Pauwels 2015: 156–73). While the limited fragment does not

quote any of his or Rasikbihārī's songs, it is reasonable to assume his and hers were thus composed to be sung for similar soirées, as images were displayed. The evidence used to establish exchanges between pairs of poems is systematized in Table 7.1.

Applications from the Calendrical Cycle

Some beautiful examples of such forgotten interchanges come from the cycle of poems for the autumnal festival of Sāñjhī, when prepubescent girls make flower designs for the goddess of that name in order to obtain good husbands. Nāgarīdās himself has been closely associated with this festival as celebrated in Vrindavan. According to the early-nineteenth-century poet Gopālkavi, he started a fair at Brahmakund in Vrindavan, during which his own and others' Sāñjhī poems were recited in front of Rādhā–Kṛṣṇa images (Haidar 1995: 121; Entwistle 1987: 412–13). His oeuvre contains several such poems, including longer ones used as the basis of a performance for the festival, still performed at the Rādhāvallabh temple in Vrindavan.[2] The plot involves Kṛṣṇa dressing up as young girl in order to infiltrate Rādhā's group of friends engaged in the rites. The reaction when they meet each other is lovingly described in this seasonal poem from the prince's pen:

> *Rāga Pūrvī ikatāla*
> *rahe dou badana nihāri nihāri*
> *phūlana bīnata syāma sakhī uta, ita śyāmā sukuvāri*
> *latā karani me rahi gaï ita, uta sakaiṁ kauna niravāri*
> *nāgariyā mili naina duhuni ke, baḍe ṭhagani ṭhagavāri* (*UM* 54)

Enthralled, both of them stare at each other's face.
One is a dark 'girl-friend', picking flowers, the other is young Śyāmā.
One has frozen, garland in hand, the other wondering how to release her.[3]
Nāgariyā: as their eyes met, the master trickster was tricked!

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2 *Sāñjhī-phūl-bīnani-samaï-saṁvād*, 'Dialogue for the Occasion of Flower Gathering for Sāñjhī' (Gupta 1965: 2.85–8).
3 Or: 'puzzled who "she" may be'.

The poem matches well one of the famous paintings of the Kishangarh school depicting Rādhā's party gathering flowers (Dickinson and Khandalavala 1959: 32–3, plate 7).[4] The poet has zoomed in on the right side of the painting where Rādhā is enthroned. The cross-dressed dark-complexioned Kṛṣṇa appears before her, offering a garland in a basket. As his eyes meet hers, he appears mesmerized in fascination. Nāgarīdās concludes that the master trickster was tricked, or more literally, the great cheat (ṭhag) was himself tricked, that is, completely taken in by Rādhā's beauty.

What has not been appreciated thus far is that Rasikbihārī actually wrote a response for the same season, in the same rhythmical cycle (iktāl), with a very similar rhyme -ārī (just lengthened last syllable) and metre (16 + 11/12 mātrās, due to lengthening of the last syllable). Nāgarīdās was excited enough about her response that he included it in the seasonal anthology under the section of Sāñjhī, right after his own:

Ikatāla
khelaiṁ sāṁjhī sāṁjha py__ārī__
gopa kuṁvāri sāthaṇi liyāṁ sāthe, cāva so catura siṁg__ārī__
ph__ūla__ bharī phiraiṁ ph__ūla__ leṇa jyauṁ, ph__ūla__ rahī ph__ulavārī__
rahyāṁ __ṭhag__yā lakhi rūpa lālacī, prītama rasika bih__ārī__
(*UM* 55)

The darling girl plays Sāñjhī at dusk.
She gathers the young milkmaids around her, decked out
   smartly.
Arms full of flowers, they wander to pick yet more: flowerbeds
   seem to keep blooming.
Staring, dearest Rasika Bihārī, a lecher for beauty, was tricked
   himself.

The detail Rasikbihārī provides is different from Nāgarīdās'. Her attention turns to the smartly dressed milkmaids. The description perfectly fits the painting's loving detail of the girls' outfits, as does her drawing attention to their merging into the flowerbeds in the next line. In her last line, she too zooms into the right side of the painting, where the pair stands face to face, and she clearly responds to the prince's poem, using the same image of the deceiver deceived. Surely,

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4   This painting can be viewed on the internet at www.goloka.com/docs/gallery/
    kishangarh/01kishangarh/02-sanjlila-large.html, accessed 2 February 2025.

Nāgarīdās meant for his audience to enjoy the similarities and contrasts between this set of poems, including how both bring out different aspects of the painting.

Applications with Matching Keywords

The theme of Kṛṣṇa as the trickster *(ṭhag)* may well have been a favorite trope the pair shared. It shows up also in another set of matching songs, when Rādhā is taking in Kṛṣṇa's bewitching beauty, described as *ṭhagārau,* with reference again to the deceiver, the trickster. The following is classified in Nāgarīdās' thematic anthology under the section *Raina rūpārasa* (The Passion of the Night's Beauty).

> *Rāga Soraṭha kā khyāla, ikatāla*
> *re **sāṁvaliyau** sājana <u>mhāṁrau</u>*
> *rūpa **ṭhagārau kāmaṇagārau**, mohai mana sagalāṁ <u>rau</u>*
> *hiya maiṁ **basiyau** rasiyau lobhī, madana mantra bai<u>ṇāṁ</u> <u>rau</u>*
> *nāgarīdāsa huvau mana ceḍo, matavālā nai<u>ṇāṁ</u> <u>rau</u> (PMĀ 529;*
>   *Kh fol. 138)*

> 'O my dark handsome lover.
> Your enchanting, bewitching beauty enchants my heart
>   wholesale.
> Dwell in my heart, you eager lover, with the maddening spell of
>   your utterances.'
> Nāgarīdās [says]: 'My heart has become the slave of your intox-
>   icating eyes.'

In this case, Nāgarīdās did not include Rasikbihārī's poem in his anthology, but in her performance diary we can locate one that overlaps in wording and in register:

> *saiṇa raṁgīlā **sāṁvalā**, ho mana mohana pīva*
> *ākhiyāṁ āgaiṁ hī rahau, pala pala vārauṁ jīva*
> *<u>mhārau</u> jiya <u>thāṁmaiṁ</u> **basaiṁ**, prītama parama anūpa*
> *rasika bihārī mana **ṭhagyo, kāṁmaṇagārau** rūpa (RB 6)*

> Your secret signs signal passion. Dark One, you are my love, my
>   heart's enchanter.
> Remain within my sight. For every blink of the eye, I give up my
>   life.

My heart belongs with you, my dearest, my incomparable love
Rasika Bihārī, my heart was waylaid by your bewitching
    beauty.

Both poems share not just the common epithet *sāṁvalā* for Kṛṣṇa, but also both play with expressions for the heart to belong, using the verb *bas-* 'to dwell, to settle', he in the imperative, speaking as Rādhā, encouraging Kṛṣṇa to dwell in her heart *(hiya maiṁ basiyau),* she asserting as Rādhā that her heart dwells with Kṛṣṇa *(mhārau jiya thāṁmaiṁ basaiṁ).* But the clincher that gives away the interrelation between the poems is the reinforcing of the theme of enchantment by means of a shared rare keyword, *kāmaṇagārau,* meaning 'bewitching'. The word is rare enough to warrant a gloss by the editor Kiśorīlāl Gupta.[5]

Fascinatingly, this unusual term also shows up in the oeuvre of Rasikbihārī's patroness' guru, the abbot of the aforementioned nearby Nimbarkan monastery of Salemabad, Vṛndāvandev Ācārya. His works, collected as *Gītāmṛta-gaṅgā (GGĀ)* include this song:

> *pyārā lāgo chojī pyārā the to mhāṁnaiṁ (pyārā)*
> *mhāṁ kī cālai to thāṁneṁ chātī sauṁ, kade karāṁ nahīṁ nyārā*
> *sūrati thāṁharī kāmaṇagārī...*
> *thāṁharī chāṁjī araja karāṁ chāṁ, darasaṇa dejyau dhūtārāṁ*
> *śrī vṛndāvana prabhu ḍarāṁ lāgāṁ sauṁ, nahiṁ to cālāṁ thākī lārāṁ*
> *(GGĀ* 13.26, p. 161)

You look so sweet, you always are dear to me.
If I had my way, would I let you leave my chest? Not ever will
    I let you part.
Your face is bewitching...
I am yours, I beg you to give me a rendez-vous, you cheat.
Vrindāban's Lord, I'm afraid [of what people say], otherwise,
    I would have come to you.

Here, the guru too uses Rādhā's voice describing her fascination with Kṛṣṇa's handsome appearance, calling him a trickster *(dhūtārāṁ).* Their relation here is obviously further evolved, in terms of intimacy as well as her experience with his cheating. Yet, she remains mesmerized with her lover, as if bewitched by his beauty *(kāmaṇagārī).* The conversation around that term seems to have extended beyond the

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5   Gupta 1965: 1.424 (and 1.414) fn.

composer pair. One may well surmise that the guru held forth on the unusual term *kāmaṇagārī*, which led them all to compose around it *ex-tempore.*

There is yet another shared feature between the three poems, which becomes noticeable especially in the exaggerated display of regional idiomatic features seen in the guru's poem. Vṛndāvandev Ācārya has Rādhā speak here in a strong Rajasthani register, as is clear from the pronominal forms and verbal conjugation throughout (underlined in the poem above). The editors of *Gītāmṛta-gaṅgā* have made this explicit by marking the poem as 'Marvāḍī'. This draws our attention to something else that Rasikbihārī's and Nāgarīdās' poems have in common: they too included some Rajasthani shibboleths in their songs (also underlined above). The link between the poems is strengthened by the guru's rhyme on *-ārā(ṁ),* which matches closely that of Nāgarīdās on *-āṁ rau.* The latter is more Braji, but the guru's more Rajasthani, especially the last rhyme word *lārāṁ,* which is a Rajasthani perfective used adverbially.

Perhaps the king and his concubine were inspired by the guru's composing in a Rajasthani register. Or might it have been the other way around? Was Rasikbihārī perhaps first to compose in the idiom of the women's quarters in Kishangarh, deemed fitting for Rādhā's confessing to her confidantes about her fascination for Kṛṣṇa? This case of the three matching poems is a good example of how such interactions, lost when the poems are separated in distinct editions for each poet's oeuvre, can be reconstructed through close attention to the dialogic aspects of composition. Such recovered colloquies allow us to savour forgotten delights of poetic interchange in a social and performative context.

Broadening the Conversation

To grasp the significance of this broadening of the circle of composition, it is pertinent to introduce Vṛndāvandev Ācārya. He had been the abbot of the Salemabad monastery near Kishangarh from 1697 and would remain so till his death in 1740. He was not a provincial ascetic, but an influential counselor of Jai Singh II, founder of Jaipur, whom he assisted in his religious reform projects to promote orthodoxy. While his religious and political role is known to historians, the testimony of his poetry in its interrelation with that of the Kishangarh crown prince and his concubine reveals a hitherto unknown, more private side of this important historical figure. Gurus of this type often had strong personal connections with local rulers, but their relations with

the *zanānā* women – mothers, stepmothers, wives, and concubines of the rulers – is often overlooked or downplayed in historical writing, even if there are archival traces.

In this case, the abbot had a strong bond with the Bāṅkāvatī queen 'Brajdāsī' of Kishangarh. According to her own testimony, he had in fact brokered her marriage to Sāvant Singh's father, which took place in Vrindavan on Cīr Ghāṭ, probably in Jai Singh II's headquarters there.[6] Once ensconced in Kishangarh, the new queen maintained close links with Vṛndāvandev Ācārya, whom she herself professed in her later translation of *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* to be her guru.[7] There are records that document in detail his 1725 extended visit to the then-capital Rupnagar.[8] He was received by the king and the women outside the city gates and stayed for an extended period. Such important religious occasions were often commemorated in painting: perhaps this one is referenced in a Kishangarhi image preserved in the Berlin Museum für Asiatische Kunst.[9] It depicts in the upper half the arrival in town of a naked, long-haired, blue-skinned holy man, being greeted outside the city gate at the banks of the lake by the palace women as well as by a separate delegation of the king and his courtiers. In the lower half of the painting, the same holy man is seen instructing the king, his courtiers, and a group of holy men. Such scenes are often interpreted as a mythical *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* recitation by the composer Śukadeva Muni, but may well be intended to commemorate an actual such recitation ceremony, where the reciter was hailed as a Śukadeva. The prominent presence of the ladies and the queen in the welcoming party suggests the Bāṅkāvatī queen's role in the event.

Vṛndāvandev Ācārya is often regarded as one of the teachers of Nāgarīdās. He is portrayed teaching music to the young prince and other disciples in a painting on the wall in the abbot of Salemabad's

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6 Śarmā 1996: 1.12 and 1.14–15. Also Clémentin-Ojha 1999: 86–8. The area now called Jai Singh Gherā is adjacent to the Yamuna at Cīr Ghāṭ (Case 2000: 13–14).

7 Śarmā 1996: 1. 31–2; BDBh 1.1.1–6 and 12.13.48–50.

8 This visit is described with precise dates (from vs 1782 the fourth day of the dark half of Māgh till the last day of the dark half of Cait), registration of gifts, and full calculation of expenses in a historical document preserved in the Kishangarh archives, dated 1725 (vs 1782 *Ittilāq bahī*), cited by Śaraṇ 1966: 14 n.1.

9 The image is not dated. The Museum estimates its creation around c. 1780. If so, it may be a later copy of an earlier commemorative original. The image can be viewed at: Sukadeva-Muni Kommt Nach Kishangarh Und Wird von Allen Bewohnern Empfangen. Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Kunstsammlung Süd-, Südost- und Zentralasien, SMB. https://jstor.org/stable/community.15719138, accessed 10 February 2025.

living quarters (reproduced in Pauwels 2017: 46, fig. 2.3).[10] In the picture, he is reading from his collected works, *Gītāmṛta-gaṅgā*, which in its current edition includes at the very end, as the fourteenth chapter *(ghāṭ),* a musical instructional piece (1998: 189–92). This work is an abbreviated generic description of the basics of Hindustani music, intended to be learned by heart by young students. While no women are present in the image, one may well surmise that as guru of the Bāṅkāvatī queen, he also taught the women in the *zanānā*. It is very likely he knew Banī-ṭhanī well: a poem of his mentioning her name as the rhyme word is conspicuous that way:

> *Rāga Kānharau Darbārī*
> *dhani dhani āju kī gharī pyārī, padhārī piya paiṁ* **bani ṭhani**
> *baḍhī chavi dūna rī cūnarī pahirai, cūni aṁgiyā kasi bāṁdhī tani*
>   *tani*
> *nakha sikha rūpa bharī vidhi āpa, karī kara ati kamanī mani*
> *vṛndāvana prabhu āi dhai aṁka bharī, līnī kīnī rasa bhīnī surata*
>   *raṁgani* (*GGĀ* 7. 18).

> Blessed is today's moment, as the sweet girl has joined her lover,
>   all dressed-up *(banī-ṭhanī).*
> Her beauty is magnified by the shawl she wears, which matches
>   her tightly tied bodice.
> From top to toe she has decked-out herself expertly, fixing gor-
>   geous jewels on her arm.
> Vrindāban's Lord has come running to embrace her, holding
>   her tight in passionate love play.

This poem seems to fit very well the stylized portrait, popularly known as 'India's Mona Lisa', for which Banī-ṭhanī supposedly was the model.[11] That famous painting has been identified as a *nāyikā* of the type *vāsaka-sajjā*: 'All dressed up *(sajjā),* awaiting her lover in her room

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10 While the painting is modern, it is based on an older work preserved in Śrī Jī Kuñj in Vrindavan. Śaraṇ provides a sketch of it (1966: page facing 38).

11 The official title is 'Portrait of Radha'; it is estimated to date to *c.*1740 (opaque watercolour and gold on paper. 48.2 × 35.2 cm, kept in the Royal Collection). It was first published in Dickinson 1950: 35, more accessibly in Dickinson and Khandalavala 1959: plate IV, and reproduced as a print distributed by Lalit Kala Akademi. It is widely reproduced in print and on the internet, accessible via wikimedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bani_Thani#/media/File:4_Radha_(Bani_Thani),_Kishangarh,_ca._1750,_National_Museum_New_Delhi.jpg, accessed 20 December 2020.

(vāsaka)' (Dickinson 1950: 35). In Vṛndāvandev Ācārya's description, the shawl *(cūnarī),* tight bodice *(aṁgiyā),* and arm ornaments match the painted portrait. The final line of his poem takes the logical next step with the arrival of the long-awaited lover. If the portrait was indeed modeled after Banī-ṭhanī, it seems quite possible that the guru's poem was intended as a double-entendre, the reference to the portrait of the divine Rādhā, while simultaneously pointing to the flesh-and-blood concubine of the prince.

In discovering Vṛndāvandev Ācārya's exchanges with Rasikbihārī's and Nāgarīdās' poetry, it has been possible to widen the circle of engagement and the milieus of these exchanges, in particular the role of music and painting in the creation of their songs. In other words, they were not the products of devotion in isolation, but of lively exchanges in social gatherings of the type documented above by the folio with a script for such soirées.

Applications with Matching Registers

The echoes between the abbot's and Rasikbihārī's poetry are not limited to the isolated instance cited above. Elsewhere too, the guru's compositions in regional style matched Rasikbihārī's. For descriptions of strong *viraha*, 'love in separation', the guru occasionally used a distinct Punjabi register (shibboleths underlined):

> *hāy mainūṁ choḍi gayā mahabūb*
> **bhauṁha kamāna** *driga bāṇa amā,* **ghāyala** *kari gayā khūba*
> *ghūṁghara vālī julaphaiṁ mainūṁ (maiṁḍā), vāṁdhi kulapha*
>   *kītī kāma*
> *vrindāvana prabhu prema dī ḍorī, lāma gayā bekāma* (*GGĀ* 4.60)

> Alas, my lover has left me.
> The bow of his brows, the arrow of his glances, o my, wounded
>   me deeply.
> With his curly hair tresses, he tied me up, what need would he
>   have for locks?
> Vrindāban's Lord with just a rope of love halted the vanguard's
>   advance.

Rasikbihārī responded in kind, peppering her poem similarly with Punjabi shibboleths (underlined), further emphasized by her choice of one such for her rhyme word:

Titāla
tīkhe naiṁna kanhāī <u>taiṁ</u>*ḍe, pala pale khūna kara*<u>ṁde</u>
bhauṁhaiṁ *tau* **kamāṁna** *tanīṁ, palakaiṁ tīra para*<u>ṁde</u>
<u>kitte</u> **ghāyala** *pare karāhaiṁ, dila nahīṁ dhīra dhara*<u>ṁde</u>
rasika bihārī nitti vāra kara<u>ṁde</u>*, ṭāre nahīṁ ṭara*<u>ṁde</u> (*PMĀ* 596,
   Kh fol. 151r)

Kanhāī, your sharp eyes draw blood with each batting of your
   eyelids.
Your brows are strung like bows, your eyelids strike like
   arrows.
So many fall down, wounded, groaning. Their hearts fail to
   keep up.
Rasika Bihārī keeps attacking relentlessly, even if you brush
   them aside, they don't budge.

The shared keywords of these Punjabi-register songs 'brows like bows'
and 'wounded' refer to a more violent expression of the *viraha* theme,
in a comparison with battlefield scenarios. The Persianate etymology
of the words as well as the images resonate with the newly popular
Rekhtā poetry. Perhaps we should speak of *firāq* rather than *viraha*.
One can see here a contrast with the theme that, as we saw earlier, was
deemed fit for a Rajasthani register, namely confidences expressed
in women's speech. This points to the affective work accomplished
in adopting different registers. In the more Persianate universe, the
beloved typically does not reciprocate the lover's feelings, and behaves
heartlessly, even cruelly. This is quite distinct from the more domestic
world of Braj. Central in Rekhtā is the urbanite *majlis,* where liaisons
are made, hearts broken, and lovers left bleeding on the floor. By con-
trast, Kṛṣṇa may be accused of breaking hearts, but he does not typ-
ically plant daggers in his victims' chests. Even when his passionate
love-making is compared to violent battle, he tends not to leave his con-
quests wounded to moan among those abandoned on the battlefield.

   Were the poets here inspired by the new rage for Rekhtā poetry
in Delhi? The Kishangarh house maintained a residence in Shahjah-
anabad where the family frequently sojourned during Muhammad
Shāh's reign.[12] The Bāṅkāvatī queen seems to have stayed in the cap-
ital regularly with her retinue. It has been documented that in 1732

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12 H. H. Mahārāj Brajrāj Singh, personal communication 25 July 2011; 'Kishan-
   garh Rāja's House' is located on the lower right on the map of 1857 in Hearn
   1906: facing p. 172.

(vs 1789), she hosted there a special religious function for her personal deity *(arcā samāroh)* to which were invited singers and ascetics from Salemabad, as well as others from the pilgrimage town of Vrindavan in the Braj area (Śarmā 1972: 281). The Kishangarhi family and its associates partook in the vibrant local cultural scene. Shahjahanabad's multiple festivals, literary gatherings, and musical soirées are well-known thanks to the description popularly referred to as 'Marvels of Delhi', *Muraqqa'-e Dehlī*.[13] This Persian report of the mid-century Delhi entertainment scene revealed also the musical fashions of the time being *kabitt*[14] and *khayāl*, which were performed at the 'colorful' imperial court of Muhammad Shāh 'Rangīlā', as well as at noblemen's gatherings, and in the city's less lofty entertainment settings.[15] These cosmopolitan fashions influenced the visitors from Kishangarh. The Bāṅkāvatī queen 'Brajdāsī', Rasikbihārī, and Nāgarīdās all composed poetry marked as '*kabitta*' and '*khyāl*'.[16] Some of the latter poems were in a more Urdu or Punjabi register. One may well envisage the fashions from these urban social milieu to have carried over to the provincial court, where they mixed with the more domestic, rural ones of Braj, preferred in pilgrimage circles.

Conclusion

This chapter has contributed to diversifying the canon of Hindi poets by introducing a neglected voice of a woman, Banī-ṭhanī, nom de plume Rasikbihārī. While she was celebrated for her physical features, her poetry has been too often bypassed, even though it was inspiring in its own right. Studying her case also works to push beyond the canon of individual literary geniuses, revealing the dialogic intertextuality of some of the better-known celebrated male poets' oeuvre, in particular her patron, Nāgarīdās.

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13 The Deccani official Navāb Dargāh Qulī Ḳhān Bahādur Sālar Jang authored it during his sojourn in the capital on a diplomatic mission that lasted from 1737 until 1741. An (abbreviated) English translation was published by Shekhar and Chenoy 1989.

14 *Muraqqa'-e Dehlī*, Shekhar and Chenoy 1989: 78–9, 83–4, 93, 98, 102, 123; see also Trivedī 2012: 115–16 and Brown 2010: 163.

15 Du Perron 2010. For a short history of *khayāl* in Delhi, see Trivedi 2012: 112–15.

16 The queen is on record as having composed a *Khyāl-sangrah* 'Collection of *khayāl* compositions' (Śāstrī 1972: 279–85). For Rasikbihārī, see her *Bayāz* fols 43r, 48r, 78r, 89r, and *Khyāl Mārvāḍī* on fol. 101r.

The multiple synergies between the prince and his concubine can be recovered by reconstructing forgotten colloquies of the author–couple, carefully selecting poetic responses on intertextual as well as contextual grounds. The circle of interchanges was broadened to involve the Nimbarkan abbot of the Salemabad monastery near Kishangarh, Vṛndāvandev Ācārya, who is documented to have had a strong bond with Sāvant Singh's stepmother, the Bankāvatī queen, who was also Banī-ṭhanī's patroness.

The mixed-gender poetic dialogues thus disclosed also highlight the diversity of registers accessed within early modern 'Hindi'. Beyond what is often denoted by the term 'Braj', classical devotional poetry for Kṛṣṇa included songs in Rekhtā, Punjabi, and Rajasthani idioms. The adoption of (or gesturing towards) each register had less to do with the regional origin of the poets, or even the place of performance. Nor was it gender-limited. Instead, it accomplishes affective work, notably evocation of the language of the *zanānā*, women's quarters, in the case of regional Rajasthani, and of the Persianate Sufi idiom of *firāq*, the violent pain of separation from a cruel beloved, with respect to Rekhtā and Punjabi. Poets of different regions and genders were able to contribute to this linguistic diversity, while performing at the capital, in a regional court or monastery, or in a place of pilgrimage.

How to denote this phenomenon of code-switching or code-signaling? 'Multilinguality' sounds clumsy and presupposes an anachronistic notion that there is one national language, whether Hindi or Urdu. 'Linguistic variation' also presumes a uniform standardized idiom by which variants are to be measured. It furthermore implies randomness, whereas the mobilization of different registers seems quite intentional. Perhaps we can apply here elements of Michail Bakhtin's 'heteroglossia', which is closely associated with socio-ideological linguistic phenomena (Hirschkop 2021).

Sociologically, the data would indicate an aspiration of sophistication underlying the use of these new genres from the Mughal capital, elegant Shahjahanabad, by this up-and-coming provincial court.[17] Such shifting in and out of multiple poetic worlds, with bhakti acquiring Persianate connotations seems connected with a particular musical genre, that of *khyāl*, which has been strongly associated with the court of Muhammad Shāh (du Perron 2010). Clearly the provincial composers

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17 The goal here is not to add to the extensive body of theoretical engagement with Bakhtin, but to repurpose the term stressing some of its associations to which he drew attention.

were signaling their cosmopolitanism, displaying their virtuoso skills at inhabiting a wider world.

At Kishangarh, such musical performances were often accompanied with display of illustrations directly related to the poetry sung. The Kishangarhi court thus developed an intricate web of synaesthetic experiences activated in heteroglossic performances, all the more powerful as they were shared in broader social circles. Rather than stemming from a single male genius, the celebrated Kishangarhi culture was produced in vibrant exchange of musicians, theologians, painters, and composers, some of whom were women. Hopefully this case study inspires the discovery of more such instances where women performers played an important role in new literary developments beyond the written letters on the page.

Acknowledgements

ORCID®

Heidi Pauwels ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0919-0774

Abbreviations

Kh	ms. dated 1746 (vs 1803) obtained from Bābā Raṇchoṛdās from the temple of Śrī Kalyāṇ Rāy in Kishangarh
GGĀ	*Gītāmṛta gaṅgā* (Vṛndāvandev Ācārya 1998)
PMĀ	*Padmuktāvalī* (Gupta 1965)
RB	Rasikbihārī's Bayāz, undated ms. in the Kishangarh Royal Collection
UM	*Utsav-mālā* (Gupta 1965)

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Reflections of Hinduism in Jain Thought

8
'Let Me Tell You about the Origin of Śrāddha'
An Early-modern Jain Narrative Argumentation Concerning Death Rituals

Heleen De Jonckheere ⓘ

Abstract Funerary rituals have held an ambiguous position in the history of the Jains with doctrinal literature refuting their efficacy, while other evidence testifies to their widespread performance. On the critical side, Jain theorists argue that the transition from death into the next stage, either a new life or liberation, is instant, and that no fruits of an action by one person can benefit another person. At least as important are the socially oriented critiques against specifically Hindu forms of funerals, directed against the dominance of Brahmanical groups. This chapter focuses on early modern Jain views regarding rituals at death, in particular on how the Hindu *śrāddha* ritual has been narrated in the Old Hindi *Dharmaparīkṣā* ('Examination of Religion') by the Digambara Jain Manohardās (seventeenth century). This ritual at the conclusion of the funerary rites involves the offering of gifts and food to the ancestors and priests so that it may benefit the deceased into his next life, as well as the donor. The narrative argument by Manohardās is innovative in the way it embeds its critique into an episode of a merchant's life as well as an origination story of *śrāddha* about a gander and a crow that is not found elsewhere. In order to evaluate Manohardās' depiction of the Hindu ritual, the chapter engages with other discussions of *śrāddha*, most importantly Somasena's contemporary *Traivarṇikācāra* (Dundas 2011). It is suggested that Manohardās' early modern narrative about ancestral ritual is not just a continuation of a time-honoured topic, but instead a reframed engagement with the multireligious past, as well as the early modern lay-focused present.

Stories entertain, inform, inspire; they work as a looking glass reflecting the tangles of society, often with a moralizing effect, and thus provide the historian with hints about the beliefs and practices of the society presented in the story. This chapter treats a small substory from the Old Hindi *Dharmaparīkṣā*, an adaptation – one may even use the term translation (see De Jonckheere 2023) – of the Sanskrit *Dharmaparīkṣā* by the eleventh-century Digambara author Amitagati. While I use the term 'Old Hindi' to denote the vernacular language of this adaptation, I must note that there is no incontestable term to denominate the early vernacular languages of North India. The language variant of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* discussed in this chapter can be described more precisely as open-ended Braj Bhasha with Rajasthani influences. I prefer the term 'Old Hindi' because it facilitates literary comparison across the language variants of early modern North India.[1]

The *Dharmaparīkṣā* tells the story of two semi-magical beings, two *vidyādharas*, who travel to earth to discuss with Brahmans in the town of Pāṭaliputra. Their goal is to refute the beliefs of the Brahmans, including those about the puranic gods, and to relate the proper behaviour of a righteous (i.e., Jain) person. For that reason, the text presents some critiques against specific Brahmanical practices and uses stories to argue for them. The *Dharmaparīkṣā* by Amitagati is not the oldest version of this narrative: the 'Examination' has existed at least since the tenth century and was rewritten before the twentieth century in several languages.[2] The version I draw from in this chapter was composed by a Jain layman called Manohardās in 1649 CE. He came from the Khandelvāl merchant caste in Sanganer near Jaipur and wrote several texts that fit into the trends of Jain literature at that time, namely writing on spirituality and 'vernacularizing' from Sanskrit into Old Hindi.[3] His *Dharmaparīkṣā* is his most often copied work according

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1   Old Hindi is the preferred term among contemporary scholars of North Indian early modern literature. The language of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* here under discussion resembles Braj Bhasha as described by Snell (1991), as well the language of the Sants as analysed in Strnad's grammar based on Kabīr *vāṇī* poems (2013). While there is a definite closeness between what I call Old Hindi and Old Gujarati, I distinguish the latter because, especially in its earliest (Jain) form, Old Gujarati is much closer to Apabhramsha or Maru-Gurjar.

2   Details of the earlier and later versions of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* and a detailed paraphrase of the story will be published in my forthcoming book. Readers may at present resort to De Jonckheere 2019 and 2023.

3   The writings of Manohardās show influences of the spiritual movements which in Agra led to the establishment of *adhyātma*. The Adhyātmika group, of which Manohardās seems not to have been part directly, translated and

to Jain manuscript libraries today. Since there are no critical editions of this text, I have collated specific paragraphs of several manuscripts (specified in the Bibliography) for my analysis.

The substory I present here is unique to the adaptation by Manohardās. It claims to tell the origin of *śrāddha*, the ancestor rite connected to Hindu death rituals in which rice-balls are offered at specific times, ending with the ceremonial feeding of invited Brahmans.[4] The mention of *śrāddha* in the Old Hindi *Dharmaparīkṣā* is not entirely exceptional, since the text by Amitagati also refers to and censures offering food to ancestors (16.91). The ancestor rite can be seen as particularly problematic because it involves a form of merit transfer from one person to another which Jain karmic theory rejects, as well as a certain time lapse for the soul between the moment of death and rebirth.[5] Jain philosophers argue that rebirth is instantaneous, in contrast to Hindus and Buddhists. As a consequence, there are no actions or non-actions after death that could have an impact on the deceased Jain's next life. From that perspective, the complex funerary rite in which Hindus offer food, usually in the form of rice-balls, to reach and benefit the ancestors so that the deceased person may access the ancestral world, is unacceptable. Nevertheless, Jains have engaged in funerary practices which involved an underlying idea of merit transfer since at least the beginning of the common era. This has been pointed out by Cort (2003) who concludes that such seemingly contradictory stances should be acknowledged to exist side by side in different Jain genres.

The story told by Manohardās uses traditional arguments and tropes to make its point against *śrāddha* and interlaces these within a folk story that also elucidates some of the practices seemingly involved in the funerary ritual. In what follows, I will render a translation and analysis of the Old Hindi 'origin of *śrāddha*'-narrative in the context of

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read the texts of the philosopher Kundakunda (see Cort 2015). There is no scholarly agreement on the dates or identity of Kundakunda (between second and eighth century CE; see Soni 2020 and Balcerowicz 2023). The works ascribed to him, most importantly the *Pravacanasāra* and the *Samayasāra*, represent a focus on the self, applied in a religious practice that concentrates on an inward experience of self-knowledge.

4 A short introduction is found in Schömbucher-Kusterer 2018. Knipe 1977 offers a more detailed description of the rite including a discussion of the series of bodily constructions for the deceased to enter into the world of the ancestors.

5 See Jaini 1980 for more detailed discussions on these issues in doctrinal texts. Jaini mentions the *Dvātriṁśika* by another Amitagati, who would have been the predecessor of the eleventh-century *Dharmaparīkṣā* author, in this context (1980: 235). See also Cort 2003, who nuances Jaini (1980) by referring to inscriptions, mortuary rituals, and narrative literature.

earlier Jain literature, and in particular in relation to the relatively rare description of funeral ritual by Manohardās' contemporary Somasena in his *Traivarṇikācāra* (Dundas 2011). The discussion will give insight into how early modern Jain popular culture in its dialogue with religious principles results in a heterogeneous presentation of Jain lay ideals by drawing on multiple paradigms of doctrinal, ethical, and social values.

Jain Perspectives on the *Śrāddha* Rite

The ritual of *śrāddha* is mentioned in the *Dharmaparīkṣā* in the context of an absurd frame story related to food, told by the two protagonists as an invented life event. The two *vidyādharas* present themselves to the Brahmans of Pāṭaliputra as brothers who were once asked by their father to herd the sheep in a field. While letting the sheep graze, they become hungry and the eldest decides to cut off his head so that he can throw it into a tree full of wood apples and fill his belly. Satisfied, he lets his head descend from the tree and reattaches it to his trunk. The Brahmans, hearing this impossible account, challenge Manovega to explain how this could be true. In response, the *vidyādhara* compares his account to the ritual in which Brahmans are fed so that the ancestors would be happy. Implied in the comparison is a criticism of the idea of merit transfer, in the form of food, behind the *śrāddha* ritual: just as a belly cannot enjoy the food eaten by a severed head, so also the ancestors cannot enjoy the food eaten by the Brahmans. The critique is relatively common in Jain literature. First, the same disapproval is expressed in the tenth-century Apabhramsha *Dhammaparikkha* by Hariṣeṇa.[6] Further, the critique of *śrāddha* has several precedents and reiterations in the centuries around the composition of the earliest *Dharmaparīkṣā* texts. These texts include:

1) the *Varāṅgacarita*, supposedly written by Jaṭāsiṁhanandi in the seventh century (Upadhye 1938: 8–19 and Warder 1983: 148). This narrative about prince Varāṅga introduces Jain ethics and brings up several points of polemics. One questions how the ancestors could be honoured by giving dairy products to

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6 v. 9.11 in Bhāskar 1990, my translation:
   iha loï vippaṁ bhoyaṇu karaṁti | para-loe piyara kahi dihi dharaṁti ||
   In this world, food is offered to Brahmans. In the other world the ancestors are satisfied.

Brahmans so that the gods would be pleased, while the poor people who farm these cows keep suffering and do not receive any benefits from the gods (24.60–63). The focus of the criticism seems to be on some sort of social inequality, and there is no explicit reference to merit transfer.

2) the *Yaśastilakacampū* by Somadeva from the tenth century. This Sanskrit story of king Yaśodhara is full of narrated information of the literary, social, and political aspects of Somadeva's time. It resembles the *Dharmaparīkṣā* in that it contains many points of advice for Jain laity and thus relates *śrāvakācāra* ('principles of Jain lay conduct'). The text disagrees that ancestors who have acquired their dwelling (rebirth) based on virtue would need a yearly offering of rice-balls that are offered to Brahmans and crows. Its main argument against *śrāddha* is that merit collected during one's life cannot be transferred through rituals. Instead, transmigration of an ancestor is only affected by the ripening of his own *karman* acquired from previous actions (4.88–90).

3) the *Syādvāda Mañjarī* by Malliṣeṇa, written in 1292 CE (according to Jaini 1963). This is a commentary on Hemacandra's *Anyayoga Vyavacchedikā*, which is 'a cluster of 32 verses repudiating the absolutist *(ekānta-vāda)* tenets of the orthodox schools of Indian philosophy' (Jaini 1963: 47). In his elaboration of Hemacandra's critique, Malliṣeṇa ardently argues against the violent sacrifices of the Brahmans (specifically of Mīmāṁsakas) and in this context refutes *srāddha*. Again, one of the main arguments against *śrāddha* is the impossibility of merit transfer between Brahmans and dead ancestors ('only in the Brahman do we see the fattened bellies'). Interestingly, Malliṣeṇa also refutes the idea that feeding a Brahman who is 'as good as dead' is in vain (Thomas 1960: 70). With this, he implies that even if a Brahman is very close to the realm of death, where the ancestors reside, he cannot transfer merit to them. Malliṣeṇa seems to refer in this statement to the Jain perspective that rebirth is instantaneous and results from the *karman* one has built up during one's life.

4) For the sake of completeness, other shorter yet critical references are included in the *Bhāvasaṁgraha* by Devasena (tenth century, Handiqui 1968: 360); the *Jasaharacariu* by Puṣpadanta (tenth century); and the story of Ambikā in the *Vividhatīrthakalpa* by Jinaprabhāsūri (fourteenth century, see Granoff 1990: 182–4). Early references to the ritual in Jain sources are found in the *Nisīhacunni* (Sen 1975: 121) and the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* (2.6.43–44).

The texts enumerated above are all, in some way, involved in criticizing Brahmanical perspectives. These critiques are directed against certain philosophical principles – in this case the possibility of merit transfer – but perhaps even more so argue against the actions that result from those principles. Indeed, many of the texts mentioned are meant to inform and to create a lay audience, that during the medieval period was increasingly understood as essential to the continuation of the Jain community. Making sure that the laity exhibited proper Jain conduct, called *śrāvakācāra*, was therefore a prominent element in the production of texts from that period onwards. The mere fact that all these texts refer to the *śrāddha* ritual suggests that Jain *śrāvakācāra* also involved the correct dealing with death or those who have died. This, as also Paul Dundas has noted, is something that Robert Williams (1963) – to this day the main author on Jain *śrāvakācāra* – seems to have overlooked (2011: 100).[7] Dundas (2011) has used this lacuna to relate in detail the description of a death ritual by the seventeenth-century author Somasena in his *Traivarṇikācāra*, a text included by Williams as a final example of *śrāvakācāra* texts. This text, in fact, gives its own description of *śrāddha* without implicating the complex support and merit transfer to the ancestors as found in the Hindu ritual (Dundas 2011: 133). I want to use the opportunity pointed out by Dundas to look at a contemporary narrative text that refutes the ideas behind the Brahmanical *śrāddha*, but in doing so, suggests certain conventions around death at the time.

The 'Origin of *Śrāddha*' Story

Manohardās introduces the ritual of *śrāddha* in a way similar to earlier Jain authors, namely by problematizing it. He continues the dialogue between the two *vidyādhara*s acting like brothers and the Brahmans with the following critical response by the *vidyādhara* Manovega:

'When one gives food to a Brahman, his ancestor receives its juice.' Those who have heard this, hold it in their hearts, the dull-headed ones! (1752)

When food is given to you, will a dead person be satisfied? Will a lamp that is extinguished burn again simply by oil? Tell me the truth! (1753)

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7   Williams focuses on *sallekhanā* as one of the supplementary vows (1963: 166–72).

Your [ancestral] father sitting [in heaven] looks fixedly upon you, while you are seated [here] enjoying flavoursome food. [But] his belly does not fill at all! Even if the Creator sends it up. (1754)

During your life, the costs beat you on the head like a shoe. You do not meet the expenses; and the price isn't small! Your dhoti is torn, your bed is broken, the entrance-door full of holes. (1755)

Whether you are eating good-smelling or bad-smelling food, you are enjoying what has been given [for you] to eat. Listen! While you are alive you enjoy such sufferings. How is the body of a dead one nurtured? (1756)

... Living, he does not consider his mother and father, for him *dharma* remains unknowable. After he has died, his head is shaven bald, just like the back of a donkey. (1758)

A *vimāna* is made for the dead person. His head is exposed to all people. The body is not the essence of life. Running and running kills everyone. (1759)

[Once,] a *śrāvaka* (layman) did the *śrāddha* ritual. In an invited meal he fed a Brahman-Sādhu. He gave two copper coins as a fee and took the merit from his human birth. (1760)[8]

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8   All translations are my own. They translate my edited collation of the four manuscripts of Manohardās' *Dharmaparīkṣā* described in the Bibliography. The verse numbers reflect the verse numbers used in Ms. G-24:
bāṁbhaṇa ko bhojana diye | pitra lahai rasa tāhi | aisi suni hiradai dharai | te mūrakha sira āhiṁ || 1752
mūva tirapati hota hai. bhojana diyā tohi | bujyau dīpa phuni tela sauṁ | balai sati kaho mohi || 1753
ṣatarasa bhojana bhuṁjai āpa | baiṭhyau ṭakaṭaka dekai bāpa | bāko udara naika nahi bharai | yadapi vidhātā ūpari karai || 1754
jīvata sira ṭhokai paijāra | ṣaraca na milai na dāma lagāra | phāṭī dhovatī ṭūṭī khāṭa | paḍyau pauli vici bāraha bāṭa | pauli bici bāraha bāta || 1755
vāsyo kūsyo bhojana khāi | suna khāsi rame de de jāi | jīvata aisī dukha bhoga-vai | mūvai kahā te tana poṣavai || 1756
(...)
jīvata māta pitā nahī mānai | tiha ko dharma aleṣai | mūvā pāchai muṇḍa muḍāvai | gadahaḍī ke leṣai || 1758
mūvo vimāṇa baṇāī | mūḍa nughāḍe sakala jana | jīvata sāra na kāī | dhai dhāi mārai sakala || 1759
eka sarāvaga karyau sarādha | nyoti jimāe bāṁbhaṇa-sādha | ṭaka doi dakṣaṇa kā diyā | manuṣa janama kā lāhā liyā || 1760

So far, Manohardās' account remains within the framework of how we commonly understand the ritual and the Jain attitude towards it. His argument against *śrāddha* is based upon the impossibility of merit transfer, and we encounter the same simile of the lamp and its oil as found in the text by Malliṣeṇa (Thomas 1960: 69). The concern with money in verses 1755 and 1760 is a recurring trope in Manohardās' text, as well as in other, particularly vernacular, Jain literature.[9] Its occurrence here may suggest an additional motivation in criticising *śrāddha* stimulated by tensions concerning the social and socio-economic power of Brahmans. In verse 1756 Manohardās further points out the irony between the belief that life is suffering and that one can delight in death, and he criticizes in verse 1758 the idea that one would not care for his parents during their lives but that he would when they have passed away. We also learn that the head of a dead person was usually shaved and seems to have been exposed while being carried on the palanquin *(vimāna)* to the place of cremation. Somasena describes in his text how the face of the deceased should be uncovered for a moment to sprinkle water on it (Dundas 2011: 118). We might, for this reason, presume that Manohardās' description also envisions exposing the head only momentary or that it refers to the fact that the head is shaved bald. On the other hand, the following comment that the body is not the essence of life seems to suggest that ritual concerns about the body do not, in fact, matter and that perhaps the deceased person's exposed head helps to remind people of the mortality of the body in contrast to the soul. The use of a palanquin denominated as *vimāna* is also attested in the text by Somasena (Dundas 2011: 118).[10] Further, it is interesting to learn that custom prescribed a fee of two copper coins to give to a Brahman for his services.

Manohardās' narration continues by evoking certain superstitions that might have existed around the feeding of the Brahmans more specifically.

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9 Several Jain narratives tell of the adventures of merchants, such as the famous *Vāsudevahiṇḍī* or the *Kuvalayamālā* in Prakrit, and in that context involve reflections on wealth. In Old Hindi, Banārsīdās, who, like many Jains, is from a merchant background, describes several financial affairs in his personal environment in his *Ardhakathānaka* (2009). His text seems to illustrate an openness to talk about personal or personally framed money issues in early modern vernacular literature, which we also find in the text by Manohardās.

10 Flügel (2017) presents an overview of death practices in Jainism.

Then this excellent merchant had the following thought: '[My father's] ghost is sitting at my door.' So he invited a Brahman, and talked to him to clarify something. (1761)

'Today my father appeared in my dream, [saying]: "You have satisfied the Brahmans completely. I am very blessed, my reliable Śāh.[11] You should [now] feed the Brahmans, my son."' (1762)

'... Give a Brahman – in your heart – tens of sweet rice-balls, my boy. There is no wrong in that. Then my suffering will disappear.' (1766)

[The *śrāvaka* continued:] 'Therefore, o Brahman, please fill yourself with the ten rice-balls, I beg you in mind, speech and body.' After hearing these words from the merchant, the Brahman was struck as if by fear of lightning. (1767)[12]

It seems that the appearance of a ghost frightens the Brahman, and after the merchant's request, the Brahman simply remains silent. The merchant is surprised by this reaction and challenges the Brahman to either admit the falsity of the ritual or to leave the city. After challenging the priest, the merchant gives his own explanation of the origin of *śrāddha* by telling a fable. This fable about a crow and a gander, typically symbolizing vice and virtue, narrates how the reciprocity between host and guest that is central to Indic culture turns into a trick by the crow and corruption by the rulers of the crow's city:

'Listen, I will tell you the origin of *śrāddha*. Since then [as follows], merchants perform *śrāddha*: Between a crow and a gander there was friendship that was created by the creator as befits *karma*. (1771)

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11 *Śāh* means 'merchant', but the word is also commonly used to denominate a Jain, since Jains are often of merchant castes.

12 *phuṇi vaṇivara ika mato vicāra | malina vadana baiṭhau daravāra | phuni tina bāṁbhaṇa liyau bulāya | tina sauṁ bāta kahī samajhāya || 1761*
āja pitā mohi supano diyau | bāṁbhaṇa jāya tripati tai kiyau | dhani dhani mere sāha sadhīra | tuṁ bāṁbhaṇa bhugatāvai vīra || 1762
(...)
bāṁbhaṇa hiradai māhi | daśadaśa gula de bālakai | yā mai mithyā nāṁhi | to merī pīḍā bhajai || 1766
tātai daśadasagula duja-rāi | khaïye bali jāūṁ mana-vaca-kāya | aisai vacana vani ke sunai | jānu ki bhaye vajra ke haneṁ || 1767

Regularly, the crow went to the house of the gander and ate dishes of different types. The town where the crow had set up his house was filled with bad people. (1772)

The gander said to the crow very affectionately: "Show me your house [too]." But the crow replied to the gander: "What do you actually want in my house?" (1773)

The crow noticed the goose in the house and with politeness and affection, he took them [both] to his house. He brought different types of fruits and put honey in front of them. (1774)

Then, in order to test the city [and its inhabitants], the crow-king arranged a play of pretence. No one does such a work! If you hear of it, you will be greatly surprised! (1775)

Walking around, the crow-king said to the gander, curtseying: "This goose is mine, brother. Give what is mine to me." (1776)

Having heard these words of the crow, the gander beat his head in desperation. If someone is in the companion of a low person, their entire wealth disappears. (1777)

"Oh crow, all this you are asking for is impossible. A female goose in the house of a crow, that is never heard of!" The gander [then] went to the Panchayat and said: "Give him [only] what is rightly his." (1778)

[But] the crow had gone to the Panchayat before. Without showing respect he spoke [to them]: "Accept my lie, dear brothers, and tell it [as I say], if you want to prosper. (1779)

Everything of yours will be great today. Come and I will show it in mind and speech, dear lords." [said the crow.] After taking their promise, he went to the gander. Quarrelling and quarrelling they stood in the town. (1780)

Having gone to the Panchayat, they [the crow and the gander] said: "Give us a solution for our dispute." In the minds of the Panchayat arose greed. [So] they gave the goose to the crow. (1781)

The poor gander was sobbing: "Now I saw the justice of the Panchayat applied." The crow [also] said to the gander: "You have now seen the justice of this town, brother." (1782)

[Then] the crow gave the goose back to the gander. The crow said then to him: "Look, my friend, at this logic. In a lie-ridden city, a thief is king.'" (1783)[13]

Up to this point, the story presents its main moral: this world is full of liars – not least among the powerful – and greed is a vice of many people. Such messages are common in Jain and Indian literature. They may be related to the vows of truthfulness *(satya)* and non-possessiveness *(aparigraha)* which are central to all Indic traditions, but would as well reflect a general ethics present in most fables and other folk stories. Manohardās continues the fable by connecting the corruption of the Panchayat to the origin of *śrāddha*:

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13 *sunai śrāddha kī utapati kahūṁ | tava tai śrāddha karata hai sahū | vāyasa haṁsa mitratā bhaī | karma yogya vidhinā niramaī | 1771*
haṁsa ke ghara vāyasa nita jāi | bhojana nānā bhāṁti karāi | vāyasa jiha pura mai ghara karyau | so pura duṣṭa-manuṣa syauṁ bharyau | 1772
haṁsa vāyasa sauṁ kahi vahu bhāya | hama kauṁ apaṇau geha diṣāi | vāyasa phiri haṁsā sauṁ kahai | mere ghara pai kā yauṁ cahai || 1773
vāyasa haṁsani graha deṣiyo | bhāva bhagati kari ghari le gayo | nānā bhāṁti ke phala vahu lyāi | mahuḍā āgai milho āi || 1774
phuni tiha nagara parikṣa kāja | eka tamāso kīnau rāja | aise kāma karai navi koï | suni tai vaḍau acaṁbho hoi || 1775
calatā haṁsa sau kāga-pati | bolyau vinai karei | yaha haṁsani merī bhayā | merī mo kūṁ dei || 1776
aisī bāta kāga kī suni | hāi hāi kari mūṁḍī dhunī | nīca puruṣa soṁ karisī saṁga | tiha ko jāsī aratha abhaṁga || 1777
are kāga saba pūchata hunī | haṁsanī kāga ghari kabahūṁ na sunī | calyau paṁca pe haṁsa sau kahīṁ | tāhī dei tāhī kī sahī || 1778
kāga paṁca pai pahilai gayau | binā bhagati kari soṁ boliyau | jhūṭha hamārai liyau bhrāta | bolau jo cāho kuśalāta || 1779
baḍe tumhāre sagale āja | jāi diṣāūṁ mana vaca rāja | kaula lei haṁsa pai gayau | jhagaḍata jhagaḍata pura majhi ṭhayau || 1780
bāta kahī paṁcani soṁ jāi | hamarau jhagaḍo dehu cukāya | paṁcana mana mai lobha upāya | haṁsī kāga kau dīnī jāi || 1781
haṁsa vicārau vilaṣau bhayau | paṁca nyāya phuni juta deṣiyau | kāga kahai haṁsā soṁ bāta | nyāya nagara ko deṣyau bhrāta || 1782
kāga haṁsanī haṁsa ko daī | phuni bātī vāyasa-naiṁ caī | aho mitra tuma deṣau nyāu | jūṭhī nagarī carapaṭa rāu || 1783

Then the crow came there where the Panchayat of the city was seated. "You have kept your word [about] what I have told you. That your [dead] fathers also saw. (1785)

I will show you your fathers." Know this in mind and speech, o people: a person who carries out what he has promised, that person is excellent. (1786)

… The Panchayat stood up and went with him most enthusiastic in the mind and enchanted to see their fathers. There is nothing untrue in that. (1788)

He [the crow] went where there are lines of hellworms, and pointed them out with his hand laughing: "Your forefathers are here. Will you now [still] perform some worship? (1789)

O Panchayat, these are your forefathers. There is nothing wrong in that. Because they spoke lies, they received this [minute] life-form. Understand and see it in your mind." (1790)

'Then the Panchayat said: "Listen, o crow. Please be compassionate to us in some sort of way. Save them! Even though you are a crow, you are the essence in every way." (1793)

[The crow replied:] "Fill the beaks of all these [crows here], and I will take [the food] among the gods. If you feed my family, there is no fault in that. (1794)

Know that when the month of Aśvin comes, on the auspicious fifteenth day, it is said to give that food to my family and invite the Brahmans along."[14] (1795)

They prepared all these things. The crow left and returned home.'

[Then] the merchant [said]: Śūdras, Kṣatriyas, Brahmans, and Vaiśyas, they all began to make offerings. From then onwards,

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14 Puranic literature associates different dates of the calendar with the funerary rites of *śrāddha* (see Underhill 1921: 112–13). However, custom seems to prefer either the dark fortnight of the Bhādrapada month according to the Amānta calendar of South and West India, or the dark fortnight of the Aśvin month according to the Pūrṇimānta calendar of North India.

this peculiarity became *śrāddha*. Know this in mind and speech, oh Brahman.' [Thus the merchant] explained this great sin that is said to be the beginning of *śrāddha*.' (1796–1797)[15]

While we have learned already about the maliciousness of untruthful people, in this 'consequential' part of the fable we learn more precisely that the karmic consequence of lying is such that it leads to a rebirth as a minute creature in hell (v. 1789). The members of the Panchayat discover to their horror that this is what happened to their ancestors, because they, indeed, as leaders of the city had been liars up until then. This narrative element may be read as a contemporary social critique too.

In fact, all beings can be seduced into corruption, although they should not be. As the *Dharmaparīkṣā* reveals many times, even the gods are not exempt from indulging in trickery and unrightful behaviour. This reflection on the deities is found in another version of the story of the gander and the crow that was collected in the beginning of the twentieth century by William Crooke and Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube. The colonial folklorist and Pandit Chaube recorded the story as it was told by a certain Bansidhar, a schoolmaster of Bah in the Agra district.[16]

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15 *phiri kari vāyasa āyo tahāṁ | paṁca nagara ke baiṭha jahāṁ | pālyau vacana kahyau mai tohi | pitra tumhāre deṣai johi || 1785*
pitra diṣāūṁ tāharai | mana vaca jānau loi | bolau niravāhai puruṣa | uttama hoi ju koi || 1786
...
paṁca cale te sātha uṭha | ati uchāha mana māṁhi | pitra deṣi kau mohaṇā. yā mai mithyā nāṁhi || 1788
jahāṁ naraka-kīḍā kī rāśi | jai diṣāye kari vahu hāsi | baḍe tumhāre tiṣṭai ehu | ava tuma seva karoge kehu || 1789
e paṁca tuhāre baḍe ha |. yā mai mithyā nāhi. jūṭha katheṁ yahu gati bhaī | samajhi deṣi mana māhi || 1790
...
boleṁ paṁca taba suni re kāga | aba hama upari kari anurāga | kisī bhāṁti ina kau udhāra | hoi kāga tuma saba vidhi sāra || 1793
inahi sabana kau cauṁca bhari | le melhau sura māṁhi | bhojana jau dehi mohi kula | ya meṁ mithyā nāhi | 1794
asuna māsa lāgata hī jāni | panarai ithi śubha kahī vaṣāni | bhojana hama kula kau dehu vahū | aura brāhamaṇai nyautau sahū || 1795
sakala bāta tina āreṁ karī | vāyasa nija uṭhi āyau gharī | vanika śūdra kṣatrī brahmana vaisya | dekari kau laga esa visesa || 1796
taba tai bhayau sarādha | mana vaca jānau māhanā | kahyau baḍau aparādha | kahai kanāgata ādi hai || 1797
16 The story was first published in *Indian Antiquary* 1925, vol. 54; all the stories were collected in Crooke and Chaube 2002.

Bansidhar's story equally tells of a gander and his wife who were hosted by a crow for several days, and how the crow claimed the goose upon their departing, arguing that she was his wife in a previous life. They call together the Panchayat of crows who had been bribed to give the goose to the crow. When this Panchayat decides to grant her indeed to the crow, the gander calls upon Indra. However, Indra too succumbs to the bribe of the crow who promises to grant him immortality. In the end, the crow gives the goose back to the gander and points out the corruption of both men and gods. The attestation of the same story in oral lore more than 200 years later is suggestive of the register that Manohardās applied in making his Old Hindi translation.[17] I believe that our author took the narrative from oral tradition, because of the lack of textual attestations elsewhere and the fact that Manohardās is not an author referred to in other early modern vernacular sources. The story at least suggests a stronger turn towards the popular in vernacularizations of Sanskrit texts. Against this, one might argue that the *Dharmaparīkṣā*-story itself exists as a compilation of several folk stories, which is indeed true.[18] However, the unique addition of a fable reorients Manohardās' vernacular adaptation to the people of his time and region. First, it is probable that the crow–gander story was told in Manohardās' surroundings and not necessarily in that of the earlier authors. Second, it is the only story that humanizes animals, the other substories of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* all portray human lives. They are parables, this is a fable. This uniqueness signals how the Old Hindi author understood the genre-characteristics of the *Dharmaparīkṣā*.

In Jain discussions of the narrative genre, parables and fables are both included under the category of *kappiya* ('fiction'), but they seem to have a different function. While stories of animals in dialogue (fables) are not commonly used to teach religious principles, metaphorical narratives that are about humans (parables) are (Balbir 1995: 238). Manohardās' inclusion of a fable and subsequent conscious or unconscious conflation of the two types of *kappiya* suggests that he envisioned the *Dharmaparīkṣā* as a collection of fictional stories, albeit with an overarching religious message, rather than as a religious frame story illustrated by focused narrative teachings.[19] The story of the crow and

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17 I have elaborated on the stylistic elements that express orality in Manohardās' text elsewhere (2023).

18 Most substories of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* bear characteristics similar to stories described in the Thompson Motif Index (1885–1976).

19 Balbir (1995) describes in detail the subcategories of *kathā* ('narrative') in Jain literature. One distinction made by Jain literary theorists is between *cariya*

the gander is also not followed by an explicit moral in the frame story. Furthermore, the fable puts the moral teachings in the mouth of an animal, while the pedagogical role in the other substories is reserved for either the virtuous *vidyādhara*, or a Jain monk. Manohardās thus plays with the ethical imagery of animals. The gander (or goose), usually associated with virtue, is easily tricked, while the crow, who is seen as malicious, is also smart and cunning.[20] It is the crow who eventually points out the corruption of the Panchayat (v. 1782). Nevertheless, his dubious character makes the gift of rice-balls to his crow family far from virtuous.

On Crows and Rice-balls

The comparison of Manohardās' story with an orally attested folk story is insightful, but it has not led us further in our discussion of the *śrāddha* ritual. To understand why Manohardās links the *śrāddha* rites with crows, I here re-examine earlier Jain literature and also look at an account of Jain praxis.

In the *Yaśastilaka campū* by Somadeva (v. 4.88) it is said that the rice-balls offered to a deceased person are actually eaten by Brahmans and crows. A similar sentence is found in the older *Varāṅgacarita* by Jāṭasiṁhanandi: 'If the food that should satisfy the dead ancestors in another world is eaten by Brahmans and crows, [then] that which was acquired earlier by those ancestors, pleasant or unpleasant, is spoiled because of this ritual.' (v. 25.64). Also the *Vajjālagam*, a Prakrit anthology by Jagadvallabha, describes how a housewife commonly offers food daily to her favourite crow, but chases the crow, a sign of death, away not wanting to believe that her lover has passed away (vv. 459–460).[21] These texts make clear that crows were associated with hospitality and with death in medieval India. In fact, they still are today.

('non-fiction') and *kappiya* ('fiction'), which can be further subcategorized, although these categories are not clearly distinguishable.

20 The Sanskrit *Dharmaparīkṣā* by Amitagati makes the negative perception of crows explicit: 'Just like dancing to a blind man, singing to a deaf man, purity to a crow, eating to a dead man, or a wife to a eunuch is useless, in the same way a blissful gift to a fool [is useless].' (4.90)

21 Hemacandra in his Prakrit grammar cites a similar poetic Apabhramsha verse expressing *viraha* of a wife: 'As the lover was suddenly sighted by a lady who was driving away the crows, half of her bracelets dropped down on the earth and the (rest) half cracked with a noise' (4.352; translated in Schwarzschild 1961: 43).

Rice-balls are traditionally offered not only to Brahmans within the Hindu *śrāddha*, but also to crows. Often, it is believed that the crows represent the ancestors or that they are the messengers bringing the rice-balls to the ancestors. A range of explanations exist and the custom of offering to the crows is found in many communities all over South-Asia. Jains too were accustomed to this tradition. Besides the critical literature just mentioned, or the *Traivarṇikācāra*, which supports the offering of rice-balls (Dundas 2011: 130 f.), Sharma attests that Jains in Karnataka 'burn the dead, throw the ashes on the third day into the river, and even offer rice-balls to the crows on the tenth day, and feed relatives and caste-fellows on the twelfth and thirteenth days' (1940: 161) He sees this as an accretion from Hinduism. Perhaps we may read the same critique in the *Dharmaparīkṣā* by Manohardās. The author indeed states that *śrāddha* is wrong and merely based on [a faulty] tradition supported by misconceptions about merit transfer, be it through Brahmans or crows. Nevertheless, his main argument is against the special treatment of the Brahmans. At the end of the story, Manohardās does not extend his criticism of the ritual, but instead focuses on the Brahman to whom the merchant talks in the beginning of the story. This one becomes a *śrāvaka*, which involves being calm in the mind, giving daily donations and eating after doing *pūjā*. I, therefore, argue that the purpose of the story of the merchant preparing a *śrāddha* and telling the crow–gander story is primarily, in line with the *Dharmaparīkṣā* tradition, to subvert the power of dominant Hindu groups, and secondarily to add local flavour to the text.

Conclusion

To conclude my exploration of this vernacular Jain narrative, I want to ask what we may learn from this folk story about ancestral or death rituals and the perception thereof among early modern Digambara Jains. In his analysis of Somasena's *Traivarṇikācāra*, Dundas argues that the description by Somasena of the performance of a *śrāddha* should be separated from doctrinal interpretations and religious necessity of such practice. In contrast to Hindus, Jains never formulated any principles to validate *śrāddha*, but that did not mean that they did not accept ceremonial aspects accompanying the commemoration of a deceased person (Dundas 2011: 132).[22] Similarly, I believe that Manohardās did

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22 In fact, Dundas (2011: 140) suggests that also within Hinduism *śrāddha* may have become undetermined in meaning and function.

not intend to attack the funerary ceremonies or the honouring of the ancestors with rice-balls in itself, but rather he criticized the meaning-seeking interpretations of these practices. His repetition of the time-honoured argument against merit transfer in the beginning, and the reaffirmation of the superiority of Jain values at the end, frame his narrative detour by which Jain laity can consider their practices in dealing with the dead as well as the morality of society, understanding the underlying current that resurfaces throughout the *Dharmaparīkṣā*, that true value lies in internal and spiritual righteousness. This final analysis can lead us to acknowledge the strength of the narrative form in conveying religious knowledge, since it allows Manohardās to comprehensively reflect on the multiple values and paradigms connected to funerary rites, including the Jains' literary history of rejecting *śrāddha* based on the impossibility of merit transfer, a critique of the social power of Brahmans and the misuse of power in general, and an engagement with the oral tradition that accompanies such rites.

ORCID®

Heleen De Jonckheere ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9714-0250

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PART VI
Sūrdās

9
Poetic Selfhood and the Copyright Raj

John Stratton Hawley ⓘ

A fair chunk of my scholarly life has been spent discovering how a sixteenth-century poet lived for many centuries after the time of his own death. I speak of Sūrdās. We do not know exactly when his death occurred, though various dates have been claimed in recent times. Nor do we know the date of his birth. Such things fit the requirements of modern systems of knowledge, but they apparently mattered not at all to the persons who first began to spin out a biography for this great poet back in the seventeenth century. Indeed, the boundaries of his own biological life were powerless to contain the ocean of poetry that has been attributed to him from the sixteenth century to our own. It can clearly be demonstrated that poem after poem continued to be added to the *Sūrsāgar* – Sūr's Ocean – long after the sixteenth century was at an end. If you composed a poem in the language and style you thought of as characterizing Sūrdās, then the oral signature you affixed to the poem was his name, not your own.

With this sort of poet in mind, you can imagine how confounding it was to find that international copyright laws take for granted a very different sort of authorship – indeed, the laws demand it. This came to a head in two Internet-available images with which I chose to begin my essay 'The Iconic Sūrdās', a chapter in a volume called *Devotional Visualities*, edited by Karen Pechilis and Amy-Ruth Holt and published by Bloomsbury Academic. If I intended to reproduce an image of the famed blind poet, Karen told me, I must secure permission to do so from the person who holds the copyright associated with this image in the first place. Otherwise the publisher would be liable to a lawsuit on behalf
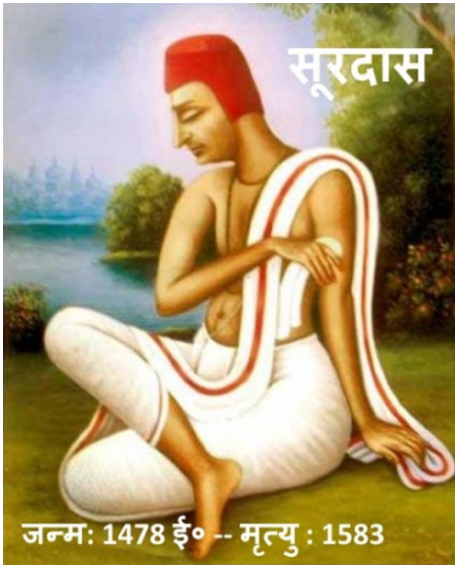
Figure 9.1 Contemplative Sūrdās, 'Image A', as seen in multiple Internet locales.

of the aggrieved person or the press who represented her or him.[1] This was so even if the image itself appeared without attribution or a hint of copyright, as so often happens on the Internet. How the initiating poet of the Sūrdās tradition would have laughed! But I didn't, and here's why.

The image with which I wanted to start that essay – let's call it Image A – is one of a cluster of four or five that come up immediately if one undertakes a straightforward Google search for Sūrdās (Figure 9.1).

This image appears on the search entirely without attribution, or at least it did so in various intervals from 2019 to 2022. Additional clicks may give you a chance to see one or more articles where the image appears, for instance सूरदास सहृदयता, भावुकता, चतुरता, वाग्विदग्धता, posted on 16 October 2021 to https://saralmaterials.blogspot.com/#gsc.tab=0. But nothing is ever said about where the image came from in the first place. All we get is a display of similar such locales. Nonetheless I was firmly told by Bloomsbury and my editor that I could not reproduce the image in question without ascertaining the identity of its copyright holder and securing that person's permission for me to publish the image. Since no copyright holder was ever claimed, where did I find myself? Up a blind alley? Not entirely, for as it turned out, this image does have a traceable past – just not the sort the publisher was demanding. I hinted at that past in the caption I wanted to supply, saying, 'it

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1   For India, the general conditions governing copyright infringement were set out in the Copyright Act of 1957, subsequently emended six times so far.

Figure 9.2 Four-anna postage stamp issued by the Government of India on 1 October 1952, with Sūrdās' name written in Devanagari letters beneath the dates ascribed to him, 1479–1586. Wikipedia Commons.

connects closely to the illustration adopted for a 40-anna postage stamp issued by the Government of India on October 1, 1952.' That stamp (Figure 9.2) is also visible on the Web thanks to the Indian Postal Service. You might think we're making progress, but remember, it was not this relatively more hidden image that I wanted to reproduce but the Sūrdās icon so easily available today. And there are important differences between the long-ago stamp and the readily available Google image, as we can easily see (Figure 9.1)

Let's begin with the dates that appear so prominently in each. According to the stamp, Sūrdās lived from 1479 to 1586, but since that time an unknown actor has decided it was actually 1478–1583. And the image itself has been adjusted. The postage stamp showed only the poet's head and upper torso; a full-body, more lifelike figure was evidently required for the Internet. The stamp made no suggestion that Sūrdās wore a *janeo*, the twice-borns' sacred thread. But it is widely believed that Sūrdās was a Brahman, so the latter-day image supplies the thread. And the postal Sūrdās was thinner and more elongated than his Internet cousin, possibly in conformity to the shape of the stamp itself. Colour, too, had to be considered, for the stamp is merely cast in black and white against a background of purplish blue.

Obviously some adjustments had to be made to get us from the 1952 stamp to its Internet cousin, and Bloomsbury demanded to know who was responsible. What if the person involved came forward and claimed copyright and I had failed to secure his or her permission to

reproduce? Bloomsbury feared the Press would be held liable on that account, despite the fact that article 52 of the Indian Copyright Act specifically allows for 'a fair dealing, not being a computer programme, for the purposes of... criticism or review, whether of that or of any other work'. A representative of the Press explained things as follows:

> In my previous company (Pearson), we used some images from the web (where we couldn't establish who the copyright holder was) and were hit quite hard financially when the copyright holder challenged us and demanded a fee for publishing without permission. We therefore consequently never published an image where we couldn't identify copyright hold and gain permission.

Surely such an individual exists in this case, Karen emphasized. 'Even if Image A is based on a postage stamp', she said, 'someone did create the copy.'[2]

So let's follow whatever paper trail we can reconstruct. My own collection of books about Sūrdās contains more than a dozen volumes – published in India from 1955 to 2009 – that feature pictures of the poet on their covers. The authors and publishers offer not a single bit of information about who the illustrator involved in producing the covers for their books might have been. Evidently these publishers felt no obligation to credit earlier versions of such images. Instead, they wanted to project their own version of an image that was already well known to the reading public – a fresh version of one that would be recognized immediately as showing what Sūrdās looked like. They may indeed have wanted to present a cover illustration that would be pleasing to the eye, perhaps one that would have some new twist and therefore be a bit intriguing, but they had zero interest in asserting that this was a unique work of art by a specific, present-day artist. Quite the contrary, like the poets who added new compositions to the amorphous body of work attributed to Sūrdās, these artists were making their own contributions to a familiar image whose value lay in its very familiarity. All this is exactly opposite to the model of Bloomsbury Academic's copyright Raj.

A string of images is useful to study. The first post-1952 book-cover image of Sūr that I possess was published by the renowned Gita Press in 1955, not long after the postage stamp had been introduced. Gita Press produced a six-volume collection of Sūr's poetry that was restricted to poems concerning Kṛṣṇa – the great majority of the oeuvre

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2   Karen Pechilis, email communication, 15 July 2021, including the quote from her (anonymous) Bloomsbury editor.

9.3a

9.3b

Figure 9.3a *Śrīsūrdāsjī racit Śrī Kṛṣṇa bāl mādhurī*, 'The Charm of Kṛṣṇa's Childhood as Composed by Sūrdās', vs 2012 [1955], cover.
Figure 9.3b *Śrīsūrdāsjī racit Viraha-padāvalī*, 'Poems of Longing Composed by Sūrdās', vs 2016 [1959], cover.
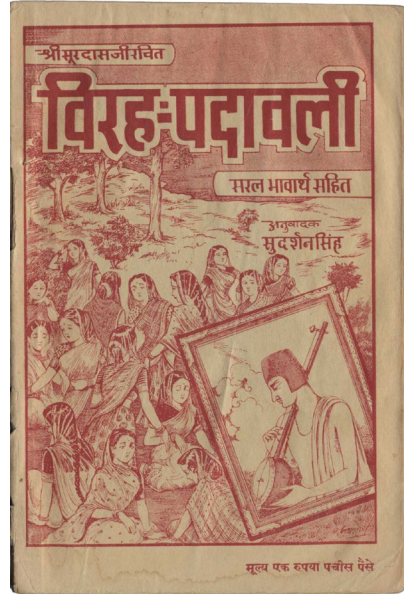
attributed to Sūr – and organized these poems according to Kṛṣṇa's life story (Figure 9.3).

The first of these is *Śrīsūrdāsjī racit Śrī Kṛṣṇa bāl mādhurī*, 'The Charm of Kṛṣṇa's Childhood as Composed by Sūrdās'. The last is *Śrīsūrdāsjī racit Viraha-padāvalī*, 'Poems of Longing Composed by Sūrdās', that is, the longing of the women of Braj for Kṛṣṇa when he is absent. In each case, interestingly, a smaller version of what appears on the cover – with the exception of the price listed at the lower right – appears as the first page of the printed book. This means that in a striking way the cover image becomes part of the text itself, yet the illustrator goes unnamed. Only the translator *(anuvādak)* is identified – the person who created the gloss in simple modern Hindi, one Sudarśan Siṁh.

The Gita Press cover images are fascinating. In each case we have not just an envisioning of the stage of Kṛṣṇa's life upon which the volume in question focuses but an image of the poet as well. The life-story pictures change; that of the poet does not. Usually the figures who inhabit the narrative images are turned slightly in the direction of the poet. In the first volume this is particularly striking. Charmingly, we see the child Kṛṣṇa crawling across the cover with a ball of butter

in his hand, apparently looking at a portrait of Sūrdās. In subsequent volumes the connection is less intimate, yet in each case the poet's portrait is unchanged. Sūr's image has its own integrity: it appears in a frame of its own. It is not exactly what we see in the postage stamp, but the similarities are clear. The poet is shown in left profile, he wears the same hat, his blind gaze is fixed downward at the same angle, and the end of his upper garment falls across his left shoulder in a similar way. There are, however, changes: a vague background of clouds has been provided, the poet's necklace has been rendered more simply, and now he holds a musical instrument. It's the one-stringed *ektār* by which he is so often identified in other images that have come down to us from this post-Independence era. But let us not forget the most striking change of all: the poet himself is literally framed – framed as if this were a painting to be hung on a wall. The basic pattern persists across the entire set, as we can see in its final volume. Here the gopis seem to crowd around the poet (volume 6), but a distance, too, is maintained.

The Sūrdās we see here persists entirely recognizable on the covers of many Sūrdās books published in Hindi across the decades that separate the 1950s from our own time. In my personal collection the next of these little volumes dates to 1957 (Figure 9.4).

Here the cover image pertains to a different collection of poetry from the *Sūrsāgar*, a text called the *Sūr-sārāvalī* (Mathura: Agravāl Press), for which the much-published scholar Prabhudayāl Mītal provides a substantial introduction. Mītal is wrong, I believe, in thinking 'our' Sūrdās composed this work, but you would never know it from the way he looks on the cover. It's substantially our same Gita Press Sūrdās, this time flipped and with a shrine containing Kṛṣṇa as Śrīnāthjī in the background, which is no surprise considering that Prabhudayāl Mītal belonged to the Vallabha Sampradāy.

So the cover is of interest in several ways, but even more interesting for our purposes is a colour image that appears within the book itself. It is reproduced on slightly higher-quality paper than the printed pages that surround it, and has been inserted right in the centre, between the introduction and the text itself, where a new pagination starts (Figure 9.5).

Here we come by far the closest to the image that appears in our Google search as Image A. Only the position accorded to the poet's left hand is appreciably different – that and the fact that his dhoti is given a red border in the Internet image. Also, the background scenery is absent in this 1957 book. Sūr sits on a flat expanse of grass, as if to underscore the fact of his solitary contemplation. Strikingly, he is making no music. Once again a frame is provided, as in the Gita Press examples, but this time it looks as if it might have been photographed
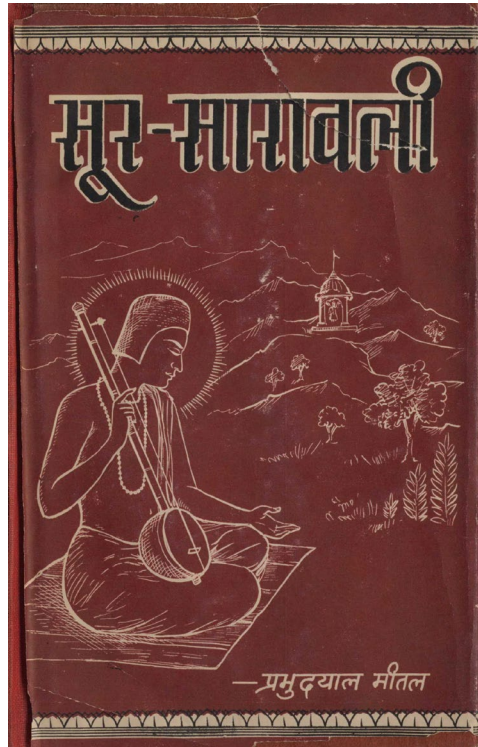
Figure 9.4 Prabhudayāl Mītal, *Sūr-sārāvalī* 1957, cover.
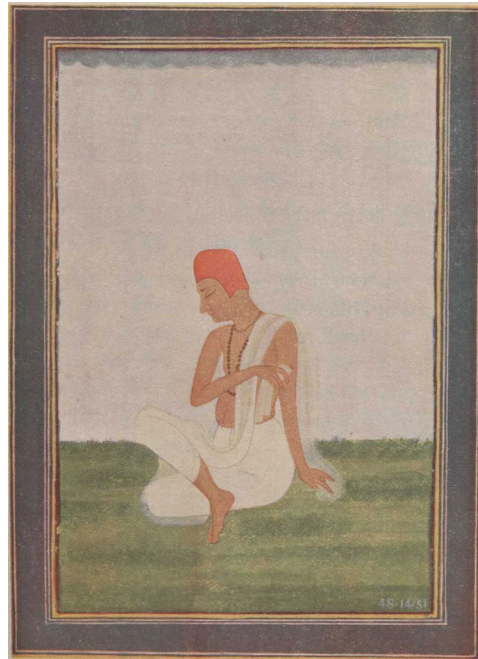
Figure 9.5 Prabhudayāl Mītal, *Sūr-sārāvalī* 1957, opposite page 64, image only.

सूर-सारावली

सूरदास
[जन्म सं॰ १५३५ :: देहावसान सं॰ १६४०]
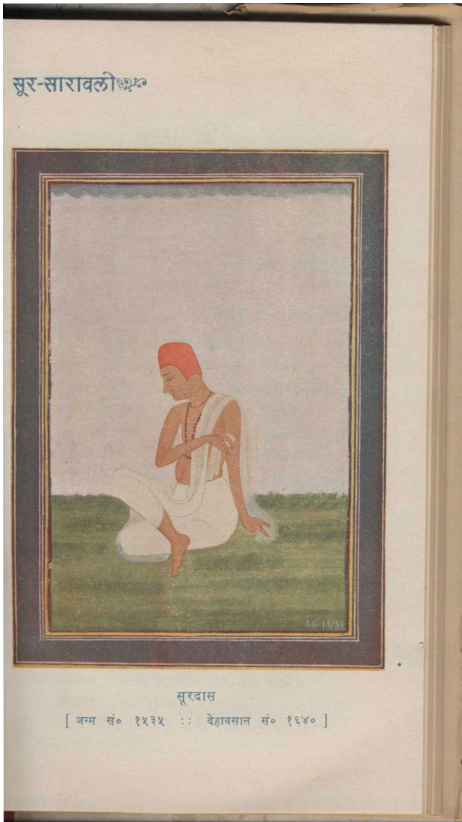
Figure 9.6 Prabhudayāl Mītal,
Sūr-sārāvalī 1957, opposite
page 64, with text.

along with the image itself, as if this portrait actually existed in some-
one's collection before it made its way into the book. Most fascinating
of all, we see a set of numbers in the lower righthand corner – 48.14/51 –
as if this were the accession number of a painting that belonged to
a museum. On that supposition the year of acquisition would presum-
ably have been 1948. Museums and archives familiarly shorten dates
in that way, and the use of white ink is intended to do as little damage
to the work of art as possible. The title *Sūr-sārāvalī* has been added at
the top as this image enters the book, as if to adapt it to a new use, and
the dates of the poet's life are given at the bottom (Figure 9.6).

     Once again these dates – 1535–1640 – diverge from any we have seen
so far. Historically speaking, Sūr seems to have been a moving target.
Evidently he lived to an even riper ripe old age than in earlier estima-
tions, and roughly a century later than what we had so far been led to
believe. But visually speaking far less so. It's definitely the same poet we
are seeing. I suspect that the date 1640 was supplied because it is also
to be found in the oldest full account of Sūrdās' life, the *Sūrdās kī vārtā*
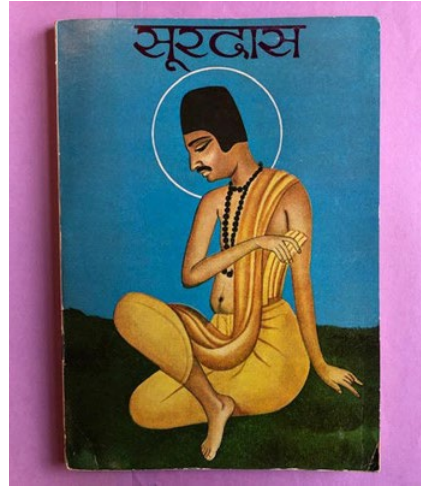
Figure 9.7 Anon., ed., *Sūrdās: ek viśleṣaṇ* 1966, cover.

attributed to Gokulnāth, of which there is a manuscript dated 1640 (vs 1697) in the Sarasvatī Bhaṇḍār library of the Vallabhite community at Kankrauli in Rajasthan. Mītal knew this fact well. If Sūrdās could be considered to have died in 1640, that would consolidate the sectarian Vallabhite conception of him. It would mean that the community who revered him as an initiate of their own guru Vallabha wanted to remember his life story as having been generated in the very year he died, lending it utter authenticity. No intervening time would have dulled the memory, and indeed the imagined author, Gokulnāth, portrays himself as having known the poet in person. Mītal is helping him along.

Versions of one or the other of the images supplied in connection with Mītal's *Sūr-sārāvalī* continued to appear on a regular basis – either in his own publications, as in the case of another work attributed to Sūrdās, the *Sāhitya-laharī* (Mathura: Sāhitya-Sansthān, 1961), or in publications for which he served as one of several contributors, such as the *Sūrdās: ek viśleṣaṇ* ('A Glimpse of Sūrdās') released by the Government of India's Publication Department in 1966. Here the artist responsible for the cover changes the colour of the poet's cap to black, provides him with a nice black moustache, and dyes his white dhoti yellow, but otherwise the image remains as we have seen it before (Figure 9.7).

Interestingly, once again, we find ourselves in Delhi and in the hands of the central government, as we did in the instance of the stamp. Not surprisingly, considering its low cost and its governmental system of distribution, the book received many reprintings. My own copy dates to 1978.

One of the most fascinating contributions to this ongoing lineage of Sūrdās images belonging to the postage-stamp family, if we may call it

so, is provided by Krishna P. Bahadur, who takes us across the line from Hindi to English in his *The Poems of Sūrdāsa,* published in New Delhi by Abhinav Publications in 1999. Here for the first time we encounter in the prefatory material a notice of the type Bloomsbury anticipates:

Normally such a prohibition would not include the book jacket, since that is frequently reproduced in advertising on the part of other agents than the original publisher – and very much in the publisher's interest. It's either to review books or to sell them. In this case the matter is of particular interest, since the cover of this Abhinav publication makes use of exactly the same image that we first find in Prabhudayāl Mītal's *Sūr-sārāvalī,* right down to the number 48.14/51, which is once again written in white ink in the lower righthand corner. Neither Mītal nor his publisher is given credit for the reuse of the image published back in 1957, however. Mītal's *Sūr-sārāvalī* does not even appear in Bahadur's bibliography.

What are we to conclude? Does Bloomsbury have the right to prevent me from reproducing an Internet image that is clearly recognizable as this same image, simply because I am unable to trace the artist who has provided it with its most recent twists? And is that person in turn violating copyright privileges owed posthumously to Prabhudayāl Mītal or the artist whose work he incorporates, despite the fact that Mītal does not give us his name? Is Mītal's publisher also due some financial reparation? Clearly it's a hall of mirrors, and the bureaucratic setting makes us know that Franz Kafka would have found himself at home.

Perhaps we can go a little deeper. Let's return to the postage-stamp Sūrdās of 1952 (Figure 9.2a) and reconsider its relationship to the more complete scene given us by Mītal in 1957 (Figure 9.4). Two facts are important here. The first is that this postage stamp is one in a series. The Sūr we see belongs to a set of six literary figures, each in a different colour and each on a stamp with a different value, ranging from a single anna to a dozen.[3] The dates appropriate to each are given in Arabic numerals and according to the Julian calendar, but the poets' names

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3 Four pais or *paise* constituted an anna before the system decimalized in stages; 16 annas made a rupee.

Figure 9.8 Postage stamp issued by the Government of India on 1 October 1952, as displayed at www.hipstamp.com/listing/india-scott-237-342-mh/39064135, accessed 2 February 2025.

are written in Devanagari. The Devanagari shows that this was a series intended for domestic mail (Figure 9.8).

I love the company in which he is now placed. Following the order given on the website Hipstamp, and reading from left to right, we see Kabīr, Tulsīdās, Mīrābāī, Sūrdās, Gālib (i.e., Ghālib), and Rabīndranāth Ṭhākur (i.e., Tagore), with their ascribed lifespans leading from the fifteenth century all the way up to 1941. The bhakti movement, with an official 'stamp'? Maybe, and with no citations and perhaps no fees paid to anyone for the purpose of marshaling them as such. Not up to Bloomsbury's standards – but if you think that's of any help to me, I have news for you.

One day, as I mulled all this over, stewing self-righteously in my *sāgar*-ish juices, I looked again at an image of Sūr that I had long known (Figure 9.9). It is said to have been made in Udaipur sometime about 1660, depicting a Sūrdās poem bearing the refrain *sīṣanī saṣaranī caḍa ṭera suṇāyo*, 'Peacocks have mounted whatever peak they can'.[4] This image

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4   Compare Bryant 226 (Bryant and Hawley 2015: 388–9), *Nāgarīpracāriṇi Sabhā* 3946 ('Ratnākar' et al. 1976: 354). Circa 1660, 27.3 × 20.9 cm. Private collection, photograph © Christie's Images Ltd. 2012. The entire poem, with translation, appears in Hawley 2018: 215. The date given above has been disputed, and with it the claim that this painting could have been prepared by Sāhibdīn himself, though clear memories of his style would have persevered in the royal ateliers at Udaipur. Catherine Glynn Benkaim points out that the muted palette contrasts to the array of primary colours we see in paintings clearly attributable to Sāhibdīn; she refers specifically to the lavender hue that caps the mountains at the upper left. Benkaim associates this painting with the court of Amar Singh II (1698–1710). Email communication, 1 November 2022. While there is no exact analogy, I would point to some of the colours used by Sāhibdīn in his *Gītagovinda* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* paintings of 1629 and 1648, as shown in Topsfield 2001, figs. 33, 39 on pp. 64, 69. See also Topsfield 2000: 26–40, where, again, there is no precise analogy.

Figure 9.9 'Peacocks have mounted whatever peak they can', illustration to *sīṣanī saṣaranī caḍa ṭera suṇāyo* (compare Bryant 226, NPS 3946). Circa 1660, 27.3 × 20.9 cm. Private collection, copyright Christie's Images Limited, 2012.

of Sūr contrasts broadly to all but one other image that emerged in the veritable *sāgar* of Sūr images – some 150 are extant – that gushed forth in Udaipur (and nowhere else!) in the course of the next sixty or seventy years.[5] Stylistically it bears marks of the school of the famous painter Sāhibdīn, and it has sometimes been thought that he was the actual painter.

Check out this Sūr. Doesn't he look familiar? (Figure 9.10) There's that elaborate string of *tulsī* beads, that red cap (though of a different shape), the left-facing profile, the positioning of his arms and legs. There are differences too, of course. The dhoti is yellow, not white, and

5   For the comparable image, see Hawley 2018: 225.

Figure 9.10 'Peacocks have mounted whatever peak they can', detail showing Sūrdās. Private collection, copyright Christie's Images Limited, 2012.

the back arm rests not on the ground but on an ascetic's stick *(yoga-daṇḍa).* Still, look at the other arm: it seems so convincingly the same. In a way better. The position of the poet's right hand is now justified by the fact that he fondles some *tulsī* beads. Somehow this Sūrdās, painted in Mewar as early as the mid-seventeenth century, has spawned an image of himself in the mid-twentieth. (Figure 9.1). The scene he surveys is not a childhood scene. Rather, it depicts the ravages of the monsoon, when one's lover – one's Kṛṣṇa – is gone and one has to face that intimate time alone. The mood is sad, reflective, even threatened. No wonder the poet seems lost in contemplation.

This was Sūr before he became the archetypal *vātsalya* poet, that is, the one most gifted at perceiving Krishna's childhood. It's closer to the early corpus of Sūr's poetry as a whole. In that way it really does look more 'authentic'. But how in the world did this image leap into the twentieth century? Who saw him? Who rubbed out the scene he 'saw', excerpting the poet himself and thus giving us the version we saw in that mysterious 1948 'gallery' that preceded the postage stamp version? Was it someone who saw it when it still belonged to the Maharana of Mewar? Or someone who saw it in the possession of a private collector who bought it when a sale was discretely made – someone Indian? I wish I could reconstruct that provenance trail, but so far I can't. All I can tell you is who I think ultimately deserves the copyright, if anyone does. It's no one who would be of interest to Bloomsbury Academic. It's Sāhibdīn.

ORCID®

John Stratton Hawley ⓘ https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6771-0275

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10
The Many Identities of Sūrdās

Hiroko Nagasaki ⓘ

Sūrdās (or Sūr, for short) is one of the early Hindi poets who have drawn much attention from scholars of bhakti literature. A well-known story about Sūrdās states that he was of Brahman origin, however, due to his blindness, he faced cruel treatment. As a result, he sought refuge with Vallabhācārya, a founder of the Viṣṇu Kṛṣṇa faith in the city of Vrindavan. The primary source of this story is the *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā*,[1] a biography of saints associated with the sect. In this work, Sūrdās is revered as one of the celebrated eight poets, known as *aṣṭachāp* or 'eight seals'. This biography describes his early life, his encounter with Vallabhācārya, his realization of the divine play, and his performance of various miracles.

However, as more and more progress had been made in manuscript studies and other investigations[2], it has become challenging to ascertain the authenticity of the poems in the *Sūrsāgar* (Sūr's Ocean), as is the case with other early Hindi poetry. It is entirely plausible that some of the poems attributed to Sūr were composed by others. On this note, the *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* mentions that the Mughal emperor Akbar searched for *pad*s (poems with a loose moraic metre) created by Sūrdās and purchased these poems against gold and silver coins.

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1 There are two hagiographies associated with the Vallabha Sampradāy sect: the *Story of Eighty-Four Disciples (Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā)* and the *Two Hundred and Fifty-Two Disciples (Do sau bāvan vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā).* The former describes the disciples of Vallabha (Vallabhācārya), while the latter focuses on the disciples of Viṭṭhalnāth, Vallabha's son. The compilation is attributed either to Gokulnāth, Viṭṭhalnāth's son, or to Harirāy, who inserted his commentary into the original text.
2 The edition *Sur's Ocean*, edited by Kenneth E. Bryant and translated by John Stratton Hawley, is one of them.

Tempted by the lure of these coins, Pandit Kavīśvar faked a *pad* of Sūrdās and brought it to Akbar. In an ordeal, when Akbar submerged the *pad*s in water, the counterfeit *pad* became sodden, while the paper bearing Sūrdās' genuine *pad* remained dry (*Vārtā* 3–4).[3] This story implies that some *pad*s were indeed written by individuals other than Sūrdās. Taking into account the self-praise aspect of the sect's lineage, Akbar's ordeal of the *pad*s can be interpreted as a sign that Vallabha Sampradāy tried to obscure the fact that poems by authors other than Sūr had been incorporated into the *Sūrsāgar*. Interpolations seem to have occurred in the period when this hagiography was composed in the seventeenth century.[4]

This chapter investigates the evolving attribution to the poet Sūrdās over time. Through an analysis of the shifting portrayals of Sūrdās in early Hindi hagiographies, the study points out that a lesser-known poet might have been merged with the more renowned figure of Sūrdās. This melding might reveal a strategy employed by religious sects to elevate the stature of their poets. There are two possible interpretations of this phenomenon: either the more recognized poet overshadowed and assimilated the lesser-known one, or the lesser-known poet purposefully associated his work with Sūrdās to ensure broader readership, capitalizing on the fame of the renowned poet. Ultimately, this chapter aims to analyse to what extent the hagiographical tradition may have played a role in shaping the evolution of the Sūr corpus, by teasing apart the poetry of at least two different Sūrdāses whose poems are mixed up in the critical editions.

Two Sūrdāses Described in the *Bhaktmāl*

Around the year 1600, Nābhādās composed the *Bhaktmāl* (The Garland of Devotees), one of the early hagiographies written in Braj Bhasha. In this work, he employed a six-line poem format, known as *chappay*, to depict not only his contemporaneous saints but also legendary saints and poets. Renowned figures like Tulsīdās, Kabīr, and Mīrābāī were featured in his hagiography, attesting to their widespread fame during his era. As Nābhādās is believed to have resided in Vrindavan around

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3 Parīkh vs 2005: 443–8.
4 The earliest manuscript of the *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* dating to 1640 is mentioned by Hawley (2015: 365 n.105). This manuscript predates the supposed composition date of this hagiography suggested by Barz. According to Barz (1976: 102), Harirāy's ordering of the *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* is supposed to have been composed around 1696 CE.

the sixteenth century, his accounts of saints from that period are considered reliable. He referred to Sūr in *chappay* 73:

1 *Sūra kabita suni kauna kabi, jo nahiṁ sira cālana karai.*
2 *ukti, coja anuprāsa, barana asthiti, ati bhārī.*
3 *bacana prīti nirbāha, artha adbhuta tuka dhārī.*
4 *pratibiṁbita dibi diṣṭi hṛdaya hari līlā bhāsī.*
5 *janama karama guna rūpa sabai rasanā parakāsī.*
6 *bimala buddhi guna aura kī, jo yaha gunaśravanani dharai.* 73

1 Having heard the *kabit* of Sūr, which poet would not bow his head?
2 His speech, witty remarks, alliteration, and status of description, are incredibly profound.
3 He accomplished the words and love, and made wonderful meanings and rhymes.
4 Reflecting the divine sight in his heart, the play of Hari was made splendid [by him].
5 His speech showed all of Kṛṣṇa's birth, deeds, quality, and form.
6 Those who obtain the listening of this quality, their knowledge and quality will become pure.

In this poem, *pratibiṁbita dibi diṣṭi hṛdaya* (divine sight was reflected in his heart) can be interpreted as an allusion to Sūr's blindness, emphasizing his inner vision. *Hari līlā* could refer to Kṛṣṇa līlā. The praise highlighting Sūr's renown among fellow poets for his poetical skill seems fitting for someone who holds the title of *aṣṭachāp* in the Vallabh sect. However, what's most intriguing is not just the content of this *chappay*, but the fact that Nābhādās composed another *chappay* dedicated to Sūr.

The following *chappay* no. 126 describes Sūrdās.

1 *gāna kāvya guna rāsi suhṛda sahacari avatārī.*
2 *rādhākṛṣṇa upāsa rahasi suhka kau ādhikārī.*
3 *navarasa mukhya śṛṅgāra vividha bhāntina kari gāyo.*
4 *vadana ucārata vera sahasa pāṁyani hvai dhāyo.*
5 *aṅgīkārakī avadhi yaha, jo ākhyā bhrātājamala.*
6 *śrīmadanamohana sūradāsakī, nāmaśṛṅkhalā jurī aṭala.* 126

1 He is blessed with the talent of poetry and recitation, has a beautiful heart, and is an incarnation of the attendant [of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa].

2 Worshiping Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, he had the authority of secret
happiness.

3 He composed many poems with nine emotions, in which
śṛṅgār ras played a central role.

4 When he uttered poetry, it took thousands of feet and ran (it
became famous immediately).

5 It is the highest honour that he was called the twin brother
[of god].

6 The names Holy Madanmohan and Sūrdās are tightly linked.

This brief curtsy to Sūrdās describes that he was a master of the *śṛṅgār
ras*, had already gained significant fame, and was revered as either
an incarnation of one of Rādhā–Kṛṣṇa or as a twin brother of Kṛṣṇa.
The last line emphasizes his deep association with Madanmohan (or
Madanamohana), one of the names of Kṛṣṇa.[5]

It is intriguing to think that Nābhādās might have created two
distinct *chappay*s for the renowned poet Sūr. Yet, a more plausible
explanation could be the existence of another Sūrdās, also a Kṛṣṇa
devotee. However, due to the significant similarities between the two
*chappay*s (such as poetic prowess and devotion to Kṛṣṇa), it becomes
difficult to distinguish them based solely on Nābhādās' descriptions.
This is especially so when considering the difference in the name of
the god to whom each of two Sūrdās was devoted: Hari in one case,
and Rādhā–Kṛṣṇa and Madanmohan in the other.[6]

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5   Hawley noted that the signature of Sūrdās Madanmohan apparently came to
light for the first time at the end of the manuscript dated vs 1681 (Hindi MS
no. 157, Anup Sanskrit Library, Bikaner). However, even in this instance, the
poems attributed to Sūrdās Madanmohan are treated as a kind of appendix.
See Hawley (1984: 23).

6   The challenges in differentiating between Hari and Kṛṣṇa, or indeed between
other names like Govinda and Nandanandana, do not necessarily clarify the
distinctions between the two Sūrdāses. However, an insightful reference from
a reviewer introduces a nuance: the role of Rādhā. This reviewer references
the work of Måns Broo, who highlights that in the early Gauḍīya texts, such as
the *Haribhaktivilās* by Sanātan Gosvāmī, there is either no mention of Rādhā
or she is not emphasized. Consequently, references to Rādhā–Krishṇa might
indicate the Gauḍīya affiliation of the second Sūr. Additionally, Madanmohan
alludes to one of the three principal Kṛṣṇa images in the Gauḍīya tradition,
as the fourth episode of Priyādas suggests.

Sūrdās Described in the *Bhaktirasbodhinī*

Nearly a century later, Priyādas gave a concrete image to this ambiguous Sūr described by Nābhādas. In his commentary of the *Bhaktmāl,* titled *Bhaktirasbodhinī* – which is printed alongside *Bhaktmāl* in contemporary editions – Priyādas gave details of *chappay* 126. This detailed account of Sūrdās-Madanmohan includes the following four stories:[7]

1 The Tax Collector Sūrdās and the Sugar

The first story refers to his original name, Sūr, his official position as *amīna* (tax collector) of Saṇḍīlā, and his devotion to Madangopāl. He bought expensive sugar and sent it for preparing food offerings for Kṛṣṇa. Priyādas described the poet's eyes as resembling lotuses, implying that this Sūr was not blind.

2 Guardian of the Adherents' Shoes

The second story refers to him as the 'guardian of the adherent's shoes'.[8] One devotee, having heard that the poet had mentioned this role in one of his *pad*s, decided to test him. True to the claim, he indeed kept the shoes of one sadhu and refused to go inside the temple even when Gusāin called him twice. He explained: 'I was entrusted with the shoes, so I was focusing on people's feet.'

3 Mishandling of Akbar's Money

The third story narrates that Sūr spent all the collected revenue on feeding sadhus. When the emperor's man came to collect the money, he filled the box with stones and ran away to Vrindavan. A courtier, Todar Mal, urged Akbar to arrest him. When subjected to torture by the cruel official Daśatam, Sūr sent a *dohā* (a couplet) to emperor Akbar:

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7 For a modern Hindi commentary, see Nābhājī (2011: 745–50).

8 Evidence of his composition, '*sūradāsa madanamohana janama janama gāūṁ. santana kī pānahīṁ kau racchaka kahāūṁ*' (Sūrdās Madanmohan will sing in every life, calling himself a guardian of the adherent's shoes), is cited. Nāgarīdās, in his *Pada-prasaṅga-mālā* 47, references the same line in the story of Sūrdās Madanmohan. This line is identical to the concluding line of verse number 2 in Mītal's edition. S. M. 2 bears resemblances to verse number 166 of the *Sūrsāgar*, though its final line is totally different as '*sūra kūra āṁdharau maiṁ dvāra paryau gāūṁ*' (Shall I, Sūr, who is cruelly blind, stand at the doorway and sing?). The phrase 'the guardian of the adherent's shoes' appears exclusively in the works attributed to Sūrdās Madanmohan.

ika tama aṁdhiyāro karai, śūnya daī puni tāhi.
daśatamate rakṣā karo, dinamaṇi akabara śāhi.

With one darkness [the world] will be darkened. [You] have
    given emptiness on top of it.
O Akbar the Great, the Sun! Save [me] from [the cruel man]
    Daśatam.

Moved by this couplet, Akbar was pleased and declared: 'Go to
that place (Vrindavan). All the wealth I have consecrated to you.'
Akbar mercifully set him free.

4 The Grace of God
The fourth story highlights his devotional life in Vrindavan. He
was cherished by both Madanmohan and Mahāprabhu. When
he composed a poem, it reached up to one hundred *yojana*s
[away].

While Nābhādās simply referred to the fame of this poet as a master
of the *śṛṅgār ras*, who was revered as an incarnation of an attendant
of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Priyādās' commentary differs in many aspects from
Nābhādās' description. The shared themes between Nābhādās' and
Priyādās' depictions are the immediate spread of the poet's works and
his divine connection as a twin to a deity. According to Priyādās, this
Sūr was not a renowned poet of the Vallabha Sampradāy.

Now our question is: who was this 'Sūrdās Madanmohan'? He
was a tax collector, a sincere devotee, and an embezzler of Mughal
emperor Akbar's funds on behalf of the sadhus. The references to
Akbar and his minister Todar Mal provide clues about his era, likely
the late sixteenth century. This portrayal does not coincide with the
conventional image of Sūrdās that we are familiar with. The problem
here is that while detailing 'Sūrdās Madanmohan', Priyādās omitted
commentary on *chappay* 73, where Nābhādās referred to 'Vallabha
Sūrdās'.

The reasons behind Priyādās' focus on 'Sūrdās Madanmohan', who
is lesser-known, and his omission of the more renowned 'Vallabha
Sūrdās', remain ambiguous. A potential explanation could lie in the
purported association between Priyādās and Sūrdās Madanmohan with
Caitanya or Mahāprabhu. Given that the god espoused by Gauḍīya
(Caitanya) Sampradāy was Madanmohan, Sūrdās Madanmohan is
considered to have belonged to Gauḍīya Sampradāy. Furthermore,
Sūrdās Madanmohan is said have been a pupil of the theologian

Sanātan Gosvāmī (1488–1558), who himself was a disciple of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.[9]

Although there is no evidence or reference in the text, the link between the deity Madanmohan, whose temple was established by Sanātan Gosvāmī, and the pen name of this poet suggests that Sūrdās Madanmohan was a disciple of Sanātan Gosvāmī. According to Rāmcandra Śukla, the period of Sūrdās Madanmohan's composition was between vs 1590 and 1600. One of the reasons behind Priyādās' focus on 'Sūrdās Madanmohan' could be that Priyādās, driven by solidarity within the same sect, described this person in detail and provided insights into a follower of his sect.

Image of Sūrdās in Dādūpanthī Hagiography

There are other early sources to consider. Rāghavdās of the Dādūpanthī sect is said to have composed his *Bhaktmāl* dated 1660 (vs 1717). This text is chronologically placed between the *Bhaktmāl* of Nābhādās and the commentary of Priyādās. Rāghavdās referred to 'Sūrdās Madanmohan' along with 'Sūr, the author of *Sūrsāgar*', with descriptions seemingly derived from Nābhādās' *Bhaktmāl*.[10] He explained that the names of Sūr and Madanmohan are linked and that Sūrdās Madanmohan's *śṛṅgār ras* was beautiful. Providing specific place names such as Dwarka, he emphasized the widespread influence of Sūrdās Madanmohan's poetry, echoing Nābhādās' narrative. Rāghavdās introduced a new angle,

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9 R. S. McGregor (1984: 94–5), Śukla (1990: 102–3), and, notably, Aimbak (1979) have sought to analyse the influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava bhakti on Sūrdās Madanmohan. The reviewer of this paper graciously provided me with a Gauḍīya source on Sūrdās Madanmohan found in Haridās Dās' *Śrī Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇav Abhidhān.* In this text, Sūrdās Madanmohan, a disciple of Sanātan Gosvāmī, is distinctly recognized as a separate poet from the blind Sūrdās. The episodes closely align with Priyādās' commentary, including details such as Sūrdās, originally named Sūrdhvaja, being an official during Akbar's rule. He sent a cart-full of grain (or sugar) to Vrindavan for Lord Madanmohan and, after being motivated by a dream, organized a grand feast and donated generously from Akbar's coffers to sadhus. He moved to Vrindavan, served Ṭhākur, and composed the *Suhṛdvāṇī*, a collection of 105 padas in Braj Bhasha, known for its lyrical brilliance (Haridās Dās 1957: 1403).

10 While Rāghavdās composed two stanzas (236–237) about Madanmohansūr (equivalent to Sūrdās Madanmohan) and Caturdās provided commentary on these (361–365), two other stanzas (263–264) by Rāghavdās dedicated to 'Sūrdās the author of the *Sūrsāgar*', did not receive commentary in the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute edition.

revealing that while Sūrdās Madanmohan was primarily a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, he sang praise of Rāma.[11] The commentary on this text by Caturdās dated 1800 gave almost the same story about Sūrdās Madanmohan as that given by Priyādās, which is mentioned above.

Interestingly, after providing a brief note on 'Sūr, the author of the *Sūrsāgar*', this edition offers insights about the saint Bilvamaṅgal about whom Rāghavdās composed one stanza (265), on which Caturdās gave an extended commentary (403–413). In the commentary, Brahman Bilvamaṅgal becomes infatuated with a courtesan named Cintāmani, but is spiritually awakened to God by her words. After visiting her during heavy rain, using a snake as a rope to ascend to her house, Cintāmani rebukes him, emphasizing that her body is nothing but skin and bones.[12] This narrative bears a resemblance to Priyādās' account of Tulsīdās.[13] In Rāghavdās' *Bhaktmāl*, while the name Sūrdās is not explicitly attached to Bilvamaṅgal, the critical edition labels him as 'Bilvamaṅgal Sūrdās'. This is possibly due to Bilvamaṅgal's blindness, a condition he inflicted upon himself by piercing his own eyes with a needle. Rāghavdās' commentary on 'Sūrdās, the author of the *Sūrsāgar*' doesn't state outright that he was blind but emphasizes Bilvamaṅgal's blindness. Thus, Bilvamaṅgal emerges as the third Sūrdās. For example, the Sikh tradition melds three identities: 'Sūrdās, the author of the *Sūrsāgar*', 'Sūrdās Madanmohan', and 'Bilvamaṅgal the blind (Sūrdās)'. Further details will be explored later, particularly in Punjabi sources regarding Sūr.

Description of Sūrdās in Persian Sources

The Persian sources that reference Sūrdās provide additional information. The *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* describes how Rāmdās, a resident of Gwalior, and his son Sūrdās were singers at the court of Akbar.[14] The *Muntakhab-*

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11 The parallels are evident when observing Tulsīdās, who, despite being a follower of Rāma, wrote verses about Kṛṣṇa.

12 The tale of Bilvamaṅgal in Bengal, which slightly differs from the narrative presented in the *Bhaktamāl* of Rāghavdās, see Chakrabarti 2024.

13 I.e., in Priyādās' commentary, *Bhaktirasabochinī*. The repetition of the Bilvamaṅgal tale by Caturdās, where he is referred to not as Bilvamaṅgal but rather as Bilvamaṅgal Sūrdās, suggests two possibilities: either the title 'Sūrdās' was conferred upon him subsequently, leading to similarities in anecdotes with Tulsīdās, or the story predated the bestowal of the name 'Sūrdās'.

14 Sūrdās is mentioned in *The Ā'īn i Akbarī by Abul Fazl 'Āllāmī*, translated in Blochmann (1873): 612, Ā'īn 30, as the nineteenth of thirty-six musicians: 'Sūr Dās, son of Bābū Rām Dās, a singer'.

al-Tavārīkh identifies his father Rāmdās as a resident of Lucknow.[15] The *Inshaa-i Abu'l Fazl* (The letters of Abu'l Fazl) explains that Sūrdās was invited to meet Akbar in a letter from Abu'l Fazl.[16] While it is possible that these records might be discussing a third or fourth distinct Sūrdās, I am inclined to believe that they refer to Sūrdās Madanmohan. The Sūrdās depicted in these Persian documents shares similarities, particularly regarding his role at Akbar's court, with the Sūrdās Madanmohan as described by Priyādās. Based on these accounts, we could suppose that the singer Sūrdās Madanmohan and his father Rāmdās lived in Lucknow. Subsequently, Sūrdās Madanmohan might have taken on the role of a *dīvān* (government official) of Saṇḍīlā, a location not distant from Lucknow.[17]

Description of Sūrdās in Punjabi Sources

In regarding to Punjabi sources, Jeevan Deol pointed out that there is a single line *(chāḍi mana hari bimukhana ko sanga)* attributed to Sūrdās in the Sāranga *rāga* section of the *Ādi granth*, which is found as an entire *pad* in some manuscript traditions.[18] The hymn by Sūrdās in

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15 *The Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh of 'Abd al-Qādir bin-i-Malik Shāh al-Badāonī, Badā'ūnī,* ed. W. N. Lees, Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad, and Aḥmad 'Alī 1865–1869: vol. 2, p. 42. For English translation, see Lowe 1973: 37. I am grateful to Dr. Kazuyo Sakaki for the Persian source.

16 Mītal (1958: 5) presents a narrative regarding an invitation from Akbar, but does not cite any sources. The authenticity of this claim remains unverified.

17 Hawley (2009: 21–4) gives the details of the Persian sources.

18 As for the hymn of Sūrdās, Deol (2000: 184–90) gives the critical text of the *pada* based on the Patna recension. He says that the printed *Ādi granth* text might be a variant of this recension.
   chhāḍi mana hari bimukhana ko sanga.
   kahā bhae pīpāi piāe bikhu na tajai bhuianga. 1. rahāu
   kāgā kahā kapūra chugāe suāna navāiai ganga.
   khara kaü kahā agara ko lepanu marakaṭa bhūkhana anga. 1.
   pāhana patita bāna nahī bedhe rīte hohi nikhanga.
   sūradāsa oi kārī kamarī chaṛata na dūje ranga. 2.

   Mind, leave the company of those who have turned away from Hari;
   Does a snake ever lose its venom from being given milk? (1) *rahāu*
   Why feed crows camphor? Why bathe a dog in the Ganges?
   What use is a paste of perfume on a jackass or jewels on a monkey's arm? (1)
   A spent arrow can't piece a stone even if quivers are emptied.
   Sūradās, a black blanket can never have a different hue. (2)
   Translated by Jeevan Deol.

the *Ādi granth* resembles a *pad* attributed to the poet 'Vallabha Sūr' in the *Sūrsāgar*. While there exists a connection between the *Ādi granth* and Sūrdās of the Vallabha Sampradāy, it is interesting to note that post-eighteenth-century Sikh hagiography created an image of Sūrdās by mixing not just the blind Sūrdās and Sūrdās Madanmohan, who was a *dīvān* at the imperial court, but also Bilvamaṅgal. For example, the *Pothī Harijasa* by Darbārī Dās in vs 1860 provides an account of Sūrdās in the following manner: Kṛṣṇa cursed a cowherd named Guālī for having looked at a *gopī* with lustful eyes. Consequently, Guālī was reborn as Sūrdās, the blind son of a Kāyastha serving as a *dīvān* at the imperial court. Sūr was given a *jāgīr* and administered it. He was asked to praise the emperor, but he refused. In this story, the blind Sūrdās and the court official Sūrdās Madanmohan became one. Furthermore, due to the misinterpretation of Bilvamaṅgal in Caturdās' commentary on Rāghavdās' *Bhaktmāl*, the curse for having looked at a woman with lustful eyes was incorporated into the story of a single Sūrdās.[19]

Eighteenth-century Sources

In contrast, two eighteenth-century hagiographies explicitly describe Sūrdās Madanmohan. The first, by Nāgarīdās of Kishangarh, introduces four stories, which bear similarities to the account provided by

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This resembles the following *pada* attributed to Sūradās (probably of Vallabha Sampradāy) in the *Sūrsāgar* (332) of Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā.

tajau mana, hari-bimukhani kau saṅga.
jinakaiṁ saṅga kumati upajati hai, parata bhajana maiṁ bhaṅga.
kahā hota paya-pāna karāeṁ, biṣa nahiṁ tajata bhujaṅga.
kāgahiṁ kahā kapūra cugāeṁ, svāna nhavāeṁ gaṅga.
khara kauṁ kahā aragajā-lepana, marakaṭa bhūṣaṇa-aṅga.
gaja kauṁ kahā sarita anhabāeṁ, bahuri dharai vaha ḍhaṅga.
pāhana patita bāna nahiṁ bedhata, rītau karata niṣaṅga.
sūradāsa kārī kāmari pai, caḍhata na dūjau raṅga.

Mind, leave the company of those who have turned away from Hari,
Meeting, whom bad intentions are produced and worship is interrupted
Why feed milk to a snake who never abandons poison?
Why feed crows camphor? Why bathe a dog in the Gangā?
Why use a paste of perfume on a jackass or jewels on a monkey's arm?
Why bathe an elephant in a river? Just go back to own way (of getting covered in dust).
A spent arrow can't piece a stone even if quivers are emptied.
Sūradās says, a black blanket can never have another hue.

19 Deol 2000: 175–6, f.15.

Priyādās. Embezzlement, guardian of the shoes for the devotees, and the popularity of his poems echo the narrative by Priyādās. Along with it, a new story emerges about a jewelry theft in the Keśavrāy temple in Mathura. Sūrdās Madanmohan composed a poem describing how the *ṭhākur* (Kṛṣṇa) went to the house of his in-laws and his wife's female relatives took his jewelry according to the local custom.[20]

The second is the Marathi hagiography, the *Bhaktavijaya,* composed by Mahipati. His portrayal of Sūrdās Madanmohan is both longer and more important than his description of 'Sūrdās the blind' as the avatar of Akrūr. His reference to Sūrdās Madanmohan closely mirrors the account by Priyādās. However, he puts great emphasis on the fact that each character has a completely sincere duty of his own. Sūrdās Madanmohan believed he was born to feed the sadhus and consumed Akbar's money, knowing that he might be executed. Yet, Akbar also has a religious mind in that he was delighted by this action and did not mete out any punishment.[21]

In this regard, how many Sūrdās there were depends on whether we consider the Sūrdās in Persian sources to be a different person. The Sūrdās at Akbar's court is commonly identified with Sūrdās Madanmohan, as previously discussed. Thus, these details highlight that alongside the Sūrdās of the Vallabha Sampradāy, who stands as the central figure in hagiography, the identity of Sūrdās Madanmohan also received notable recognition in the eighteenth century. This underscores the presence of multiple Sūrdās figures within early hagiographies across different traditions and sects. Does the prominence of the Sūrdās of the Vallabha Sampradāy suggest that his recognition overshadowed that of another Sūrdās figure depicted at a similar level in early hagiography? In other words, did the Vallabha Sampradāy Sūrdās prevail to such an extent that it erased the recognition of other Sūrdās figures, despite their acknowledgment across sects up to the present day? Or, instead of outright erasure, could it be a case of assimilation of multiple Sūrdāses into the Sūr corpus? At least, the nineteenth-century Punjabi hagiography suggests that over time, confusion may have led to the amalgamation of multiple character identities into the contemporary portrayal of Sūrdās.

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20 Pauwels 2017: 135–7.
21 The depiction of Sūrdās Madanmohan and Vallabha Sūrdās in Mahipati's Bhaktavijaya is based on the translation by Abbott and Godbole (1982: 41–51).

Assimilation of Verses

A more complicated aspect is the assimilation of verses, particularly the authorship of the Sūrdās' poems. Several researchers have pointed out the fact that poems by saints other than 'Vallabha Sūrdās' are included in the collection, especially concerning Sūrdās Madanmohan. A prominent Hindi scholar, Rāmcandra Śukla, noted that even though there is no well-known book by Sūrdās Madanmohan, his verses are full of *ras* (essence or taste). As a result, many of them have been incorporated into the *Sūrsāgar*. He quoted the following two *pad*s of Sūrdās Madanmohan in his book *Hindī Sāhitya kā itishās*, but the second *pad* is almost the same as *pad* 1306 in the *Sūrsāgar* of the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā edition.

1) *madhu ke matavāre syāma! kholauṁ pyāre palakaiṁ.*
   sīsa mukuṭa laṭā chuṭī aura chuṭī alakaiṁ
   sura nara muni dvāra ṭhāḍhe, darasa hetu kalakaiṁ.
   nāsikā ke motī sohai bīca lāla lalakaiṁ.
   kaṭi pītāmbra muralī kara śravana kuṇḍala jhalakaiṁ.
   sūradāsa madanamohana darasa daihauṁ bhala kai.
   Oh Syām, who is intoxicated in honey, open your pretty eyelids.
   On your crowned head, hair is scattered, and a lock of hair is unraveled.
   Oh god, oh man, oh saint, I hope you will stand at the door and reveal yourself to me.
   The pearl of your nose is beautiful, and I regret to see a beloved one on the way.
   Yellow cloth on your waist, a flute in your hands, and earrings on your ears shine.
   Sūrdās Madanmohan says, please give a glimpse.

2) *navala kisora navala nāgariyā.*
   apanī bhujā syāma bhuja ūpara, syāma bhujā apane ura dhariyā.
   karata vinoda tarani-tanayā taṭa, syāmā syāma umagi rasa bhariyā.
   yauṁ lapaṭai rahe ura antara marakata mani kañcana jyauṁ jariyā.
   upamā ko ghana dāminī nāhīṁ, kaṁdarapa koṭi vārane kariyā.
   sūra madanamohana bali jorī nandanandana vṛṣabhānu dulariyā.
   A young man (Kṛṣṇa) and a young girl (Rādhā).
   Put her arm in his arm, and she pulled his arm on her chest.

> On the shore of the Yamuna River, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā overflowed
> lusciously, having amusement, they embraced each other like
> an emerald embedded in gold.
> The cloud and lightning defy all metaphor; even millions of
> Kāmas may sacrifice themselves in vain.
> Sūr Madanmohan offers himself to the couple – the son of
> Nanda and the beloved daughter of Vṛṣabhānu.

Since both Sūrdāses composed hymns dedicated to Kṛṣṇa in the
same dialect of Hindi, Braj Bhasha, the verses bear a striking resemblance. How, then, can we confirm that the *pad*s in the *Sūrsāgar* were
composed by Sūrdās Madanmohan? Śukla says that more of Sūrdās
Madanmohan's poetry is known to people, but in this confusing situation, only a handful scholars have endeavoured to compile or edit the
*pad*s of Sūrdās Madanmohan. The following attempts are worth noting:

1) Nāgarīdās referred to Sūrdās Madanmohan and quoted four of
   his *pad*s in his *Pad prasaṅg mālā* (1748/vs 1805).
2) Viyogī Hari gave fourteen *pad*s in his *Brajmādhurīsār* (1923/vs
   1980).[22]
3) Sarayūprasād Agravāl gave twelve *pad*s in his *Akbarī darbār ke
   hindī-kavi* (1950/vs 2007).[23]
4) Bābā Kṛṣṇadās of Gauḍīya Sampradāy collected 105 *pad*s of
   Sūrdās Madanmohan (1943/vs 2000).[24]
5) The Sarasvatī Bhaṇḍār in Kankroli, Rajasthan, collected 126 *pad*s
   into one booklet.[25]
6) According to Haridās Dās' *Gauḍīya vaiṣṇav abhidhān* in 1957,
   Sūrdās Madanmohan composed a *padāvalī* titled the *Suhṛdvāṇī*,
   which contains 105 *pad*s.[26]
7) Prabhudayāl Mītal published the *Sūrdās Madanmohan: jīvanī aur
   padāvalī* in 1958/vs 2015, in which 185 *pad*s are included. Mītal
   edited them based on the four books (Viyogī Hari, Sarayūprasād
   Agravāl, Bābā Kṛṣṇadās and the Sarasvatī Bhaṇḍār) mentioned
   above.

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22 Hari (1933 [1923]): 100–7. Another book by Viyogī Hari (1930) contains five
   verses of Sūrdās Madanmohan which are the same verses as in the 1933
   edition.
23 Agravāl 1950: 447–50.
24 This book is no longer available (Mītal 1958: ग).
25 According to Mītal (1958: ग-ड), his edition is mainly based on this collection.
26 There are no further details available beyond the title and the number of *pad*s
   (Haridās Dās 1957: 1403).

Quotations from Sūrdās Madanmohan's verses given in this chapter are based on Mītal's edition in which 185 *pad*s are included.

Regarding literary themes, Sūrdās Madanmohan' verses do not exhibit any distinct stylistic characteristics. His preferred subjects include the meeting of lovers, the pain of separation *(viraha),* and the description of Kṛṣṇa's beauty, in which young Rādhā–Kṛṣṇa are portrayed. In addition, several poems focus on the play of young Kṛṣṇa *(bāl-līlā),* and there is one *pad* on the butter tax *(dān-līlā).* These subjects are typical of the poetry of devotion to Kṛṣṇa. However, as Nābhādās described that Sūrdās Madanmohan was a master of *śṛṅgār ras*, his poems are indeed full of amorous passion of the *gopī*s towards Kṛṣṇa. In one of his verses, a heroine ardently expresses her hope that Kṛṣṇa will come to her, saying:

> *hirade kau thāra karūṁ naina-prāna tāmaiṁ dharūṁ, tana-mana nyauchāvari karūṁ, hoya jyauṁ āvana.* (*Sūrdās Madanmohan padāvalī* of the Mītal edition (S. M.) 94)

> I will make my heart a tray on which I will put my eyes and life.
> If he comes, I will sacrifice my body and soul.

In his PhD dissertation (1979), Aimbak attempted to trace the influence of the Gauḍīya Sampradāy in some phrases of Sūrdās Madanmohan's poems. However, Sūrdās Madanmohan did not explicitly describe the sectarian theory of the Gauḍīya Sampradāy. It is reasonable to state that the religious thought of his poems was not remarkably different from that of other poems of Kṛṣṇa devotion.[27]

The Verses Common to the Mītal Edition of 'Sūrdās Madanmohan' and the *Sūrsāgar* Attributed to 'Vallabha Sūrdās' (Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā Edition)

Regarding verses found in both editions, Mītal pointed out that 24 out of the 185 *pad*s attributed to Sūrdās Madanmohan can also be found in the *Sūrsāgar*. By compiling and comparing electronic versions of the *Sūrsāgar* from Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā and the Sūrdās Madanmohan from the Mītal edition, I identified an additional four *pad*s beyond those noted by Mītal, as well as several shared phrases. In total, at

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27 Aimbak 1979: 167.

least twenty-eight *pad*s proved indeterminate regarding their original authorship.

These shared *pad*s can be categorized based on the extent of their similarities. Notably, no *pad* perfectly matches in both editions. Among the types of partial match, I discounted *pad*s that only shared a few words between editions, reasoning that they did not meet the criteria for consideration. For instance, there are *pad*s that start with three common words *(Jasodā, jhulāvai, halarāvai),* a type of partial alignment I generally opted to ignore. Nevertheless, I would like to introduce them here to highlight the unique characteristics of each poet. While both poets touched upon the theme of mother Yaśodā's affection for baby Kṛṣṇa, they expressed it in a distinct manner.

> ***Jasodā*** *hari pālanaiṁ **jhulāvai**.*
> ***halarāvai**, dularāi malhāvai, joi-soi kachu gāvai.*
> *mere lāla kauṁ āu nindariyā, kāhaiṁ na āni suvāvai.*
> *tū kāhaiṁ nahiṁ begihiṁ āvai, tokauṁ kānha bulāvai.*
> *kabahuˇ palaka hari mū̃di leta haiṁ kabahuˇ adhara*
> * pharakāvai.*
> *sovata jāni mauna hvai kai rahi, kari-kari saina batāvai.*
> *ihi antara akulāi uṭhe hari, jasumati madhuraiṁ gāvai.*
> *jo sukha sūra amara-muni duralabha, so nanda-bhāmini pāvai.*
> (Sūrsāgar 661)

Mother Yaśodā rocks a cradle for Hari (Kṛṣṇa).
Rocking, shaking, making a kissing sound, she sings something
  or another.
Come to my baby, sleepyhead! Why don't you come to let him
  sleep?
Why won't you come soon? Kānha (Kṛṣṇa) calls you.
Sometimes he closes his eyelids, and sometimes his lips quiver.
When she knows he has fallen asleep, she stays still and silent,
  then tells [the others] that he has fallen asleep.
[But] during this time, Hari (Kṛṣṇa) restlessly wakes up, and
  Yaśodā sings softly.
Sūrdās says, the happiness of Nanda's wife is difficult to obtain
  even for divine beings and sages.

In depicting the same scene of rocking a child, Yaśodā in the *Sūrsāgar* softly sings *(jasumati madhuraiṁ gāvai)* to lull Kṛṣṇa to sleep. In contrast, Sūrdās Madanmohan employs numerous onomatopoeia and *ya-*

maka. While a distinguishing characteristic of the *Sūrsāgar* is its sense of stillness, that of Sūrdās Madanmohan is its euphony.

> **Jasodā** *maiyā lāla kauṁ* **jhulāvai.**
> *āche bāre kānha kauṁ* **hularāvai.**
> *kaniyāṁ̌- kaniyāṁ̌ aīyāṁ̌ - aīyāṁ̌ yauṁ kahi lāḍa laḍāvai.*
> <u>*hulululu*</u> <u>*hulululu*</u> <u>*hāṁ- hāṁ- hāṁ*</u> *kahi goda lieṁ khilāvai.*
> *dou kara pakari jasodā rānī, ṭhumakī pāṁ̌ya dharāvai.*
> <u>*ghananana*</u> *ghananana ghuṁ̌gharū bājaiṁ, jhāṁ̌jhariyā*
> > *jhamakāvai.*
> *Sūradāsa madanamohana kauṁ, yāhī bhāṁ̌ti rijhāvai.*
> <u>*maṁ maṁ maṁ maṁ*</u> <u>*pap pap pap pap pap*</u> <u>*cac cac cac cac*</u> *tat*
> > *tātheī,*
> *yā bidhi lāḍa laḍāvai.* (S. M. 5)

Mother Yaśodā swings her baby (Kṛṣṇa),
Rocking the good child kānha (Kṛṣṇa).
Having said, 'Come Kaniyāṁ̌', she caresses,
Having said 'hulululu hululu hāṁ- hāṁ- hāṁ', she hugs [her
    son] to her breast and feeds him.
Grabbing him by the hand, Mother Yaśodā makes him toddle.
ghuṁ̌gharū make sound ghananana- ghananana and its tin-
    kling shines.
Sūrdās Madanmohan says she delighted Madanamohan (Kṛṣṇa).
By 'maṁ maṁ maṁ maṁ pap pap pap pap pap cac cac cac cac
    tat', she caresses in this way.

This *pad* exemplifies Sūrdās Madanmohan's onomatopoeia and *yama-ka (kaniyāṁ̌- kaniyāṁ̌ aīyāṁ̌ – aīyāṁ̌)* as characteristics of his composition. In relation to this, McGregor (1984: 95) observed that his *pad*s are musical and rhythmical.
    Here is an example of a *pad* that shares numerous common phrases:

> *mayā kariai* **kṛpāla, pratipāla, saṁsāra udadhi jañjāla**
> > **parauṁ pāra.**
> **kāhū ke** *brahmā,* **kāhū ke mahesa, prabhu mere tau tumahīṁ**
> > **adhāra.**
> **dīna** *ke* **dayāla** *hari, kṛpā mokauṁ kari,* **kahi-kahi** *loṭata*
> > *bāra-bāra.*
> **sūra**s*yāma* **antarajāmī svāmī jagata** *ke kahā kahauṁ karau*
> > *niravāra.* (Sūrsāgar 870)

Oh passionate one and protector, please feel compassion, by
    which I can cross over the snares of the world's ocean.
Someone's shelter is Brahmā, someone's Śiva. You are the shel-
    ter for me.
'Oh Hari, who is merciful to the poor, please show grace to me.'
    I roll saying it many times.
'Oh Syām of Sūr, you know from within and are a master of the
    world. What else can I say? Please disentangle me.'

mayā kariyai kṛpāla, pratipāla, saṁsāra-udadhi-jañjāla **taiṁ**
    pāraṁpāra.
kāhū kaiṁ *caṇḍikā,* **kāhū kaiṁ mahesa,** *kāhū kaiṁ naresa,*
    desa eka kaiṁ, **prabhu! mere tau tuma hī** *ho* **ādhāra.**
dīna dayāla dayā *kariyai jiya, vaha aparādha agādha, jāsai*
    mere saba dukkha dūra hohiṁ bikāra.
'Sūradāsa madanamohana' piya tuma **antarajāmī,** *jagata ke*
    svāmī sauṁ **kahā kahaiṁ bāraṁbāra.** (S. M. 1)

Oh passionate one and protector, please feel compassion, by
    which I can cross over the snares of the world ocean.
Someone's shelter is Durgā, someone's Śiva, and someone's king
    in the same country. You are the shelter for me.
'Oh one who is merciful to the poor, please feel compassion for
    the life of an infinitely guilty person, by which all my pains
    and agitation will go away.'
Sūrdās Madanmohan says, the beloved you know from within,
    and are a master of the world.
What else may I say many times?

By the fact that the poems are almost identical, with only a slight variation
in the third line, the two can be considered the same composition. While
each line of the *Sūrsāgar* is composed of roughly thirty-six moras with an
internal pause, the Sūrdās Madanmohan's *pad* does not adhere to a strict
metrical rhythm. The *Sūrsāgar* verse appears more refined than Sūrdās
Madanmohan's in terms of prosody. In other words, it might be more apt
to suggest that the editors of the *Sūrsāgar* had superior editorial skills.
    The following example clearly shows that the verse of the *Sūrsāgar*
was revised based on that by Sūrdās Madanmohan.

māī rī, jhūlata haiṁ raṅga <u>hiṇḍoraiṁ, sobhā tana syāma-goraiṁ,</u>
<u>*nīla-pīta paṭa ghana-dāminī ke bhauraiṁ.*</u>
<u>*gopījana cahuṁ auraiṁ jhulāvati thoraiṁ-thoraiṁ,*</u>

pabana gamana āvai sauṁdhe kī jhakoraiṁ.
sobhā-sindhu mana boraiṁ, nainana sauṁ nainā joraiṁ,
rījhi- rījhi prana bārata, chabi para tṛna toraiṁ.
'Sūradāsa madanamohana' cita coryau muralī kī ghora,
dhuni suni sura-badhū sīsa ḍhoraiṁ. (S. M. 181)

Just look at the joyful swing and the beauty of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.
The yellow cloth on his dark body is like lightning in the cloud
    in the dawn.

Wives of cowherds rock the swing a little from all sides
When the wind blows, the fragrance sways.
The ocean of beauty drowned the mind, looking eye to eye.
They are delighted to sacrifice their lives – Ward off evil eyes on
    this beauty.
Sūrdās Madanmohan says, the sound of the flute stole the
    heart.
Hearing the sound, the celestial nymph shakes her head.

lalanā jhūlaiṁ hiḍoraiṁ sobhā tanu goraiṁ.
nīla pīta paṭa ghana dāminī kauṁ bhoraiṁ.
sobhā-sindhu mana boraiṁ gopī cahuṁ oraiṁ
nainani naina joraiṁ jhūlaiṁ thoraiṁ thoraiṁ
pavana gavana āvai sauṁdhe kī jhakoraiṁ.
tana mana bāraiṁ yā chabi para tṛna toraiṁ
'sūra' prabhu cita coryaiṁ naiku aṁga moraiṁ.
suni murali ghoraiṁ surabadhu sīsa ḍhoraiṁ. (Sūrsāgar 3457)

An attractive woman swings the swing. Her fair body shines.
The yellow cloth on his dark body is like lightning in the cloud
    at the dawn.
The ocean of beauty drowned the mind of wives of cowherds
    on all sides.
Looking eye to eye, they swing the swing a little.
When the wind blows, the fragrance sways.
On this beauty, sacrifice the body and soul and ward off evil
    eyes.
Master of Sūr stole the heart and body just for a moment.
Hearing the resounding of the flute, the celestial nymph shakes
    her head.

This *pad* can be categorized as a 'corrected type'. The words and phrases in both are nearly identical. A rough-hewn *pad* by Sūrdās Madanmohan has been rearranged into a more refined version with better-rhyming word order in the *Sūrsāgar*. The longer *pad*, which had over forty moras in each line, has been rearranged into the shorter one with around twenty moras per line. The *Sūrsāgar* version features the end rhyme *-oraiṁ (goraiṁ, bhoraiṁ, oraiṁ, thoraiṁ, jhakoraiṁ, toraiṁ, moraiṁ, ḍhoraiṁ)* in all the lines. As the principle of 'lectio difficilior potior' implies, it is difficult to conceive that the elegantly written poem in the *Sūrsāgar* would be deliberately reworded in a naive fashion by Sūrdās Madanmohan.

The Problems of Mora

Concerning the issue of mora, while the *Sūrsāgar* consistently adheres to metrical rules, Sūrdās Madanmohan does not. In fact, the poet's name is difficult to handle in terms of the metre, due to its extensive syllabic count. The poet's name, Sū-ra-dā-sa -˘- ˘ Ma-da-na-mo-ha-na ˘ ˘ ˘ - ˘ ˘, consists of ten syllables and thirteen moras. Occasionally, the poet employs this penname to fit twelve moras, counting 'o' as a single mora:

> *madanamohana kī yā chabi ūpara, sūradāsa balihārī.* (S. M.166)
> ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
> To this beauty of Madanmohan, I Sūrdās Madanamohan offer
>   myself as a sacrifice.

This is evidenced by the following corresponding phrase in the *Sūrsāgar*, in which *nanda-suvana*, corresponding to *madanamohana*, has six moras' value.

> *Nanda-suvana ko yā chabi ūpara, sūradāsa balihārī.* (Sūrsāgar
>   707)
> – ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
> Upon this beauty of Nanda's son, I Sūrdās offer myself as
>   a sacrifice.

Nanda-suvana has six moras, so 'mo' of *madanamohana* should be scanned as a light syllable having one mora. The problem of the hypermetric line is eliminated by changing the word *madanamohana*

(seven moras) into *manamohana* (six moras), which is another epithet of Kṛṣṇa in the *Sūrsāgar*.

> *Sūradāsa* ura basahu nirantara *madanamohana* abhirāma rī.
>   (S. M. 61)
> Sūrdās Madanmohan says, oh beautiful Madanamohan, dwell
>   in my heart.

> *Sūradāsa* ura basahu nirantara *manamohana* abhirāma.
>   (Sūrsāgar 1822)
> Sūrdās says, oh beautiful Manamohan, dwell in my heart.

The modification from *madanamohana* to *manamohana* not only reduces the number of moras by one, but also complicates the identification of a piece as Sūrdās Madanmohan's work. It is natural for Sūrdās to worship Manamohan (Kṛṣṇa). Furthermore, the distance between the positions of *Sūradāsa* and *Madanmohana (Manamohana)* raises an ambiguity: is 'Madanmohan' an integral part of the poet's name, or is 'Sūrdās the blind' venerating Manamohan Kṛṣṇa? Although the comparison of both works suggests the presence of distinct poets, the overwhelming similarities caution us. Relying solely on the verses from Mītal's edition for arguments is precarious, as the poems therein cannot always be definitively attributed to Sūrdās Madanmohan.

Conclusion

The hagiographies and *pad*s ascribed to Sūrdās Madanmohan give us a clear indication that there was one Sūr, who was a government official, as well as a poet whose penname was Sūrdās Madanmohan, a master of *śṛṅgār ras*. His work, which was not bound by traditional metrical rules, appears to be intermingled with the *Sūrsāgar,* attributed to 'Sūrdās the blind' – a saint of the Vallabha Sampradāy. Many poems, with phrases common to both the *Sūrsāgar* and the edition of Sūrdās Madanmohan, seem to either be the work of Sūrdās Madanmohan or Sūrdās Madanmohan's adaptations of the poems of 'Vallabha Sūrdās', the latter suggested by the *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā*. However, it is essential to emphasize that these amalgamations were not solely the work of the poet himself but rather interventions by later editors. The insistence of the *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* on the authenticity of the *Sūrsāgar* while discrediting other poets who claim

the name Sūr creates an impression of favouritism toward the Vallabha Sūr over Sūrdās Madanmohan, implying an inferior status for the latter. However, early hagiographies like the *Bhaktmāl* hold Sūrdās Madanmohan in reverence, contradicting this notion. This suggests the possibility that editors associated with this sect were responsible for refining and incorporating the works of other poets, including Sūrdās Madanmohan, into the *Sūrsāgar*, thereby masking their true origins. If you read between the lines, the narratives presented in the *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* may have been intended to obscure this aspect of editorial intervention, consequently raising doubts about the purity of the *Sūrsāgar*. In an era where authorship recognition was low, editors commonly incorporated elements from the works of poets from different sects, especially when they shared the same language and worshipped the same deity. This practice was not unique to Sūrdās but rather a common occurrence, where editors would utilize the favourable aspects of such poems.[28]

Finally, I want to return to the fact that Priyādās ignored 'Sūrdās the blind', one of the *aṣṭachāp* poets of the Vallabha Sampradāy. While Priyādās provided extensive details about the tax collector Sūrdās Madanmohan, why did he remain silent on Vallabha's Sūrdās? Hawley[29] and Pauwels[30] suggest that the well-known stories of Sūrdās in the Vallabhan hagiography may be a late development. Thus, Priyādās' silence might indicate his ignorance of the celebrated poet Sūrdās. However, given that he detailed other contemporary poets including Tulsīdās, Mīrābāī, it's curious that Priyādās didn't mention 'Vallabha Sūr', especially when the Dādūpanthī Rāghavdās had done so just a few years before. Why could Priyādās not do the same? Priyādās' portrayal of Vallabha saints was somewhat restrained. For instance, when Nābhādās characterized Vallabha as a Viṣṇusvāmī Sampradāy member in the *Bhaktmāl*,[31] Priyādās' commentary was unremarkable.[32]

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28 De Brujin's concept (2014: 139–59) helps in understanding this phenomenon: 'the generalization of literary material can be seen as a mechanism that is built into the genre and is not dependent on the individual authorship of a historical poet.' I would like to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewer for their valuable insight into the idea presented in this annotation.

29 Hawley 1984: 3–22.

30 Pauwels 2017: 134.

31 Hare (2011: 61 fn. 166) highlighted the potential interpolation of the *chappay* dedicated to Vallabha in the *Bhaktmāl*. Nābhādās mentioned the establishment of four *sampradāy*s by Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, and Viṣṇusvāmī. About the relationship between Viṣṇusvāmī and Vallabha, see Hawley (2011: 28–51).

32 In *chappay* 48 composed by Nābhādās, Vallabha is mentioned with Jñāndev, Nāmdev, Trilocan for the Viṣṇusvāmī Sampradāy.

Similarly, while Nābhādās referred to Giridhara and Gokulanāth, sons of Viṭṭhalnāth and grandsons of Vallabha as belonging to the lineage of Vallabha (*chappay* 130–3), Priyādās' commentary remained simple. In contrast, Priyādās' depiction of Sūrdās Madanmohan is elaborate and detailed. This could hint at a possible sectarian bias or rivalry, with Priyādās favouring the Gauḍīyas over the Vallabhites. Perhaps, foreseeing Sūrdās Madanmohan's impending assimilation into Vallabha Sūrdās, Priyādās subtly championed the lesser-known poet. Future manuscripts might shed more light on this speculation, especially if they reveal Priyādās' commentary on Sūr (*chappay* 73) in Nābhādās' *Bhaktmāl*.

ORCID®

Hiroko Nagasaki ⓘ https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5339-2903

Abbreviation

S. M.   *Sūrdās Madanmohan padāvalī* of the Mītal edition

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11
Towards a Critical Edition of Sūr Poems in MS Sharma 3190 and Other Dādūpanthī Codices

Biljana Zrnic ⓘD

Abstract   The chapter relates to the upcoming critical edition of poems with attribution to Sūrdās recorded in the Dādūpanth. The edition takes the earliest extant Dādūpanthī manuscript compiled between 1615 and 1621 CE (MS Sharma 3190) as the base manuscript and includes a total of seven Dādūpanthī codices predating 1700 CE (in addition to MS 3190, the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab*, the *Sarvāṅgī of Gopāldās*, VB 34, DM 2, VB 12, and AMR 875). The poems on each page presented in the original Braj Bhasha are accompanied by my translation into English and provided with variant readings found in other compilations. MS Sharma 3190 is the second oldest dated collection of Sūr poems and unexamined in previous studies on Sūrdās. The Dādūpanthī strand represents an independent branch of the Sūrdās tradition not accounted for in the 2015 critical edition of the *Sūrsāgar* by Bryant and Hawley. A considerable number of compositions ascribed to Sūrdās in the Dādūpanth are not included in *Poems from the Early Tradition*. In this chapter, I look into the connections between the manuscripts and examine the profile of the Dādūpanthī codices by presenting the *pad*s included in these manuscripts not found in MS Sharma 3190. The cross-examination of manuscripts used for the critical edition includes MS Fatehpur, the earliest anthology with Sūr poems consisting of three different sections, probably copied from three earlier short collections. The section containing predominantly poems of *vinay* genre is compared with *pad*s common to MS Sharma 3190.

The edition of the early poems ascribed to the sixteenth-century bhakti poet Sūrdās compiled by Kenneth Bryant and Jack Hawley and published in 2015 deserves respect and praise.[1] It distilled the collection of almost 5,000 poems ascribed to Sūrdās in the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā (NPS) edition of the *Sūrsāgar* by presenting 433 *pad*s in circulation in the early sixteenth century, collected in thirteen Vaiṣṇava manuscripts that Kenneth Bryant divided into two families (western and eastern branches). Bryant presented the two families as independent descendants from a common ancestor, and the earliest anthology with Sūr *pad*s (MS Fatehpur, 1582 CE) as sometimes mediating between the two but being closer to the western branch.[2] Bryant made a good start when he later added to these two families a separate Dādūpanthī strand, but he related it to the eastern or Braj branch and citing a manuscript dated 1724 CE as its oldest member.[3] The earliest extant Dādūpanthī codex (MS Sharma 3190, 1615–21 CE), and the second oldest dated collection with Sūr *pad*s, was not available to him. The codices compiled in the Dādūpanthī monastic milieus in Rajasthan before 1700 CE do not appear in Bryant's genealogical tree, and the *pad*s they include are not accounted for in his critical edition.

My edition includes seven Dādūpanthī manuscripts predating 1700 CE: MS Sharma 3190 (1615–21 CE); the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab* (*c.*1620 CE, abbr. RajS); the *Sarvāṅgī of Gopāldās* (1628 CE, abbr. GopS); VB 34 (Vidyābhūṣaṇ Collection no. 34, 1659 CE); DM 2 (Dādū Mahāvidyālay no. 2, 1676 CE); VB 12 (Vidyābhūṣaṇ Collection no. 12, 1684–6 CE); and AMR 875 (Guru Nanak Dev University Library, Amritsar no. 875, 1675 CE), and will bring to light 138 *pad*s collected in MS Sharma 3190 and 63 poems collected in other codices.[4] Three of the codices used for my edition (MS Sharma 3190, the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab*, and the *Sarvāṅgī of Gopāldās*) predate both or one of the oldest representatives of Bryant's western and eastern branches. The Dādūpanthī manuscripts form an independent strand of the manuscript families, as indicated by their strict selection of poems and a number of important variant

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1   The term Sūrdās in this chapter refers to the persona(s) who composed poems under the name Sūrdās.

2   See Bryant 1984: xiv–xvii and 1980: 10–12.

3   See Bryant 1991: 132.

4   The date of the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab* has been taken from Callewaert et al. 2000. The dates of MS Sharma 3190, GopS, VB 34, and DM 2 have been taken from Horstmann 2021.

readings when compared with the Vaiṣṇava manuscripts.[5] Sūr poems recorded in the Dādūpanth are predominantly of the *vinay* type. About 20 per cent of the remaining *pad*s belong to *virah* bhakti. MS Sharma 3190 contains the largest number of Sūr poems compared to other Dādūpanthī codices. The manuscript is a bound *pothī* consisting of 671 folios, with filmed portions starting from fol. 188 *verso*. One hundred and forty-one Sūr *pad*s found on the available folios of the microfilm copy of MS Sharma 3190 are arranged in a block entitled *sūrjī kā pad* on folios 451a–471b, with one folio missing from the microfilm reel (fol. 470).[6] The manuscript contains three located colophons inserted in different parts of the *pothī*, providing different dates.[7] The part of the codex where the Sūr section is included belongs to the block closed by the colophon providing the date 1621 CE. If we assume that this date refers to Sūr poems, the *pad*s collected in the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab* (*c*.1620 CE) might be the earliest example of Sūr poetry in the Dādūpanth. In contrast to other Dādūpanthī collections, the Sūrdās section in MS Sharma 3190 includes three poems, each repeated twice in different parts of the Sūrdās section. All reveal scribal or redactional intentions to remove the repeated poems and rearrange the material included.[8] In the two *Sarvāṅgī*s and other Dādūpanthī manuscripts in which Sūr poems form a block, not a single *pad* is repeated twice.

All the compositions ascribed to Sūrdās in the Dādūpanth are *pad*s, except for one line with Sūr *bhaṇitā* quoted among the *sākhī*s in the *Guṇagañjanāmā* (1676 CE)[9], ascribed to the Dādūpanthī Jagannāth.[10]

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5 For the elaborate discussion on manuscript families and the Dādūpanthī strand, see Zrnic 2024.

6 For a detailed study of Sūrdās section in MS Sharma 3190, including the list of *pads* in relation to other Dādūpanthī codices, see Zrnic 2024. In addition to the Sūr section, MS Sharma 3190 contains three poems inserted on fol. 311v–312r, after the *Dādū vāṇī*. These three *pads* have the *bhaṇitā* of Sūriyaudās, rarely found in the Dādūpanthī codices. One of these *pads* is included in the *Sarvāṅgī of Gopaldās* (Gop 14;19) and classified under *aṅg* 14 (*bhram bidhāsaṇ*, Dispelling error). The two other poems are unique to MS Sharma 3190 and contain a formula that might indicate they belong to a different poet.

7 On the three colophons in MS Sharma 3190, see Strnad 2016: 559–67.

8 On scribal alterations of the content in Sūr section of MS Sharma 3190, including the repeated poems, see Zrnic 2024.

9 The date refers to the earliest version of the *Guṇagañjanāmā* found in MS No. 2 of the Dādū Mahāvidyālay, Jaipur, which has a limited number of folios (fols. 521–36). A much larger version (216 folios) appears in manuscript No. 14b, dated 1796 CE. Callewaert 1998: 412.

10 Line 37 on folio 526a in the short version of the *Guṇagañjanāmā*. With variations, the line also appears in the large manuscript of the *Guṇagañjanāmā*

This compilation consists mainly of *sākhī*s structured in thematic headings or *aṅg*s. A *sākhī* would be an unusual type of composition ascribed to Sūrdās even if it appears within the Dādūpanthī context. If we assume that the signature in the line quoted in the *Guṇagañjanāmā* refers to the same Sūrdās, the line might be a part of a *pad*. Such an example appears in the *Sarvāṅgī of Gopāldās*, where only one line quoted (Gop 61;1) with Sūr signature is not a *sākhī* as it might seem at first sight but belongs to a *pad*.[11] The poet's signature in the last or the penultimate line of Sūr poems in the Dādūpanth correlates with those found in the Vaiṣṇava manuscripts, the most recurrent among them being Sūr or Sūrdās, rarely Sūrijadās, Sūriyaudās, and on a few occasions Sūrdās appears along with Madan Mohan.[12]

A comparison of MS Sharma 3190 with other manuscripts used for my edition shows that according to the total number of poems included in a collection, MS Fatehpur contains the smallest proportion of poems shared with MS Sharma 3190, compared to other Dādūpanthī codices. We know that MS Fatehpur consists of three separate sections and contains repeated poems among the sections that show variant readings, which indicates that the anthology is based on three different earlier sources now lost.[13] A comparison of *pad*s common to MS Sharma 3190 and MS Fatehpur shows that the majority of these poems belong to the second section of the latter. As compared to the first and third sections, which are both dedicated primarily to Sūrdās, section two is characterized by the selection of *nirguṇī* Sūr *pad*s and a greater inclusion of other *bhakta*s. Table 11.1 lists the *pad*s common to MS Sharma 3190 and MS Fatehpur, along with their reference to the section of the latter. Only forty-one such poems in total can be found.

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in *aṅg* 27, line 4. I am grateful to Winand Callewaert for alerting me to this line.

11 However, the context of these lines in the two manuscripts is different. Gop 61;1 is quoted among other Sūr *pad*s.

12 The *pad*s mentioning Madan Mohan are here included as Sūr's since, with one exception, they are classified as such in the manuscripts. For poems mentioning Sūrdās Madan Mohan in the early Dādūpanthī manuscripts compared to Mītal's edition, see Zrnic (forthcoming). See also Hiroko Nagasaki's Chapter 10 in this volume.

13 On the three different sections of MS Fatehpur, see Bryant 1983: 38–9.

Table 11.1 Sūr *Pads* Common to MS Sharma 3190 and MS Fathepur

MS 3190	MS Fatehpur	Section in MS Fatehpur
MS 3190; 2[i]	55 (46)	2nd section
MS 3190; 6	36 (51)	2nd section
MS 3190; 8	52 (38)	2nd section
MS 3190; 10	80 (112)	2nd section
MS 3190; 11	83 (123)	2nd section
MS 3190; 14	77 (104)	2nd section
MS 3190; 17	74 (93)	2nd section
MS 3190; 21	140 (66)	3rd section
MS 3190; 22	148 (88)	3rd section
MS 3190; 23	137 (58)	3rd section
MS 3190; 29	54 (42)	2nd section
MS 3190; 35	75 (96)	2nd section
MS 3190; 38	47 (24)	2nd section
MS 3190; 39	12 (33)	1st section
MS 3190; 41	42 (10)	2nd section
MS 3190; 46	43 (12)	2nd section
MS 3190; 47	136 (56)	3rd section
MS 3190; 52	2 (4)	1st section
MS 3190; 56	39 (3)	2nd section
MS 3190; 58	54 (44)	2nd section
MS 3190; 60	52 (40)	2nd section
MS 3190; 61	24 (66)	1st section
MS 3190; 62	111 (2)	3rd section
MS 3190; 63	8 (21)	1st section
MS 3190; 65	4 (10)	1st section
MS 3190; 78	147 (85)	3rd section
MS 3190; 79	112 (6)	3rd section
MS 3190; 82	45 (17)	2nd section

Table 11.1 *(continued)*

MS 3190	MS Fatehpur	Section in MS Fatehpur
MS 3190; 89	48 (28)	2nd section
MS 3190; 92	38 (2)	2nd section
MS 3190; 96	44 (15)	2nd section
MS 3190; 98	48 (26)	2nd section
MS 3190; 101	68 (75)	2nd section
MS 3190; 103	49 (30)	2nd section
MS 3190; 110	45 (18)	2nd section
MS 3190; 117	48 (27)	2nd section
MS 3190; 118	84 (127)	2nd section
MS 3190; 135	32 (90)	1st section
MS 3190; 136	156 (8)	3rd section
MS 3190; 139	33 (93)	1st section
MS 3190; 141	57 (50/55)	2nd section

i   The serial numbers of poems given in this paper do not necessarily correspond to those in the manuscripts, in which the numbering of *pad*s follows the *rāg*-arrangement unless indicated otherwise.

The comparison shows that twenty-six of the forty-one common poems belong to the second section of MS Fatehpur, which contains 178 poems, of which 52 are ascribed to Sūrdās. The remaining poems in this section are attributed to other *bhakta*s. Eight of the above poems belong to the third section, and seven belong to the first section of MS Fatehpur. The first section contains 106 poems, most of which are ascribed to Sūrdās and depict Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. The third section is entirely dedicated to Sūrdās (127 *pad*s) and avoids the *vinay* genre. This means that MS Sharma 3190 has no connection to the first and third sections, and contains 50 per cent of Sūr poems included in the second section of MS Fatehpur. In addition to the variant readings of common *pad*s, which show more significant deviations than other Dādūpanthī manuscripts where these poems appear, this indicates that the *nirguṇī* section of MS Fatehpur did not serve as a model for Sūr section in MS Sharma 3190.

In addition to 138 Sūr *pad*s (once repetitions are subtracted) in MS Sharma 3190, a considerable group of compositions not found in this collection are included in other Dādūpanthī codices predating 1700 CE.

After common poems among the manuscripts have been subtracted, sixty-three such poems exist. Table 11.2 lists Sūr *pad*s in other Dādūpanthī manuscripts not contained in the microfilm copy of MS Sharma 3190.

Table 11.2 Sūr *Pads* in Dādūpanthī Codices not Contained in the Microfilm Copy of MS Sharma 3190

RajS	GopS	VB 34	DM 2	VB 12	AMR 875
Raj 9;24	Gop 8;12	VB 34; 8	DM 2; 8	VB 12; fol. 116a	AMR 875; 1 Smm
Raj 9;25	Gop 8;53	VB 34; 12	DM 2; 12	VB 12; fol. 116a	AMR 875; 6 Smm
Raj 9;26	Gop 10;32		DM 2; 19	VB 12; fol. 145a	AMR 875; 7 Smm
Raj 56;8	Gop 17;15		DM 2; 21	VB 12; fol. 145a	AMR 875; 8 Smm
Raj 58;2	Gop 36;6		DM 2; 22	VB 12; fol. 145a	AMR 875; 9 Smm
Raj 69;30	Gop 36;7		DM 2; 23	VB 12; fol. 145a	AMR 875; 44
Raj 69;40	Gop 36;8		DM 2; 24	VB 12; fol. 145a	AMR 875; 45
Raj 69;41	Gop 36;11		DM 2; 25	VB 12; fol. 147a	AMR 875; 47
Raj 77;11	Gop 36;12		DM 2; 27	VB 12; fol. 147a	AMR 875; 48
Raj 141;5	Gop 36;16		DM 2; 28	VB 12; fol. 147a	AMR 875; 49
	Gop 60;11		DM 2; 29	VB 12; fol. 147a	AMR 875; 50
	Gop 61;3		DM 2; 31	VB 12; fol. 147a	AMR 875; 51
	Gop 62;11		DM 2; 32	VB 12; fol. 192b, (28)	AMR 875; 52
	Gop 77;3		DM 2; 35	VB 12; fol. 192b, (31)	AMR 875; 53
	Gop 78;89		DM 2; 36	VB 12; fol. 319a	AMR 875; 54

Table 11.2 *(continued)*

RajS	GopS	VB 34	DM 2	VB 12	AMR 875
	Gop 93;3		DM 2; 37	VB 12; fol. 319a	
	Gop 110;16		DM 2; 39	VB 12; fol. 328a	
			DM 2; 49	VB 12; n.p.	
			DM 2; 56	VB 12; n.p.	
			DM 2; 57	VB 12; n.p.	
			DM 2; 58	VB 12; n.p.	
			DM 2; 59	VB 12; n.p.	
			DM 2; 60	VB 12; n.p.	
			DM 2; 61	VB 12; n.p.	
			DM 2; 67	VB 12; n.p.	

Monika Horstmann has shown a nearly identical structure of the three codices (MSS 3190, VB 34, and DM 2) by comparing their major block patterns.[14] Specifically with regard to the poems of Sūrdās, the filmed portions of VB 34 contain only fifteen Sūr *pad*s, which is the smallest number of poems compared to other Dādūpanthī manuscripts. DM 2 and VB 12, on the other hand, contain the most *pad*s of Sūr not included in MS Sharma 3190, compared to other Dādūpanthī codices. Sūr *pad*s in MS Sharma 3190 show a high proportion of poems shared with other collections (only 4 out of 138 are unique to MS Sharma 3190). Sixty-three *pad*s found in the Dādūpanthī manuscripts other than MS Sharma 3190 have a considerably lower frequency of poems shared with other collections. The majority is however included in more than one manuscript. Fifty-nine per cent of these *pad*s are found in the NPS edition (thirty-seven poems),[15] and only nine in the Bryant critical edition (14 per cent).

Out of fifty-four *pad*s ascribed to Sūrdās in the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab* (*c*.1620 CE), ten poems are not included in MS Sharma 3190.[16] Rajab

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14 See Horstmann 2021: 64–9.

15 NPS might contain more shared poems with variations of the *ṭeka*.

16 Three poems in Rajab (Raj 39;51, Raj 39;54, and Raj 40;13), attributed to Sūrdās in Callewaert's index of contents of the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab*, have the signature of Turasī, Rajab, and Bīsau respectively, and are not included in my list of fifty-four poems. These poems are also not found in other collections as Sūrdās' poems. In addition to these *pads*, Raj 77;14, also ascribed to Sūr in Callewaert's

has 144 chapters and quotes from 88 identified *bhakta*s. Mainly *sākhī*s, most of which are ascribed to Rajab, and in fewer *pad*s are quoted in Rajab. Table 11.3 lists Sūr *pad*s in Rajab absent from MS Sharma 3190 in their relationship to other collections.[17] A comparison shows that none of these poems is unique to Rajab. It also demonstrates that more than 50 per cent of these *pad*s are classified under *aṅg*s that don't contain poems common to RajS and MS Sharma 3190.

All the poems in Table 11.3 appear in more than one collection (four are in GopS, three in DM 2, three in VB 12, two in AMR 875, one in MS Fatehpur, and six in the NPS edition). Eight out of ten are not in the Bryant edition. If we look at the *aṅg*s under which these poems are classified in Rajab, three of the above *pad*s appear in *aṅg* 9 entitled *virah* (Separation), three are classified under *aṅg* 69 (*upadeś citāvanī*, Warnings). The remaining four *pad*s are classified under *aṅg*s 56 (*prīti akhaṇḍit*, Total love), 58 (*pativrat*, Faithfulness), 77 (*bamek samitā*, Reflection on equality), and 141 (*lāmbī*, Depth), respectively. Compared to *aṅg*s that include Sūr poems common to RajS and MS Sharma 3190, four of the above *pad*s belong to *aṅg*s that otherwise contain *pad*s shared by RajS and MS 3190. *Aṅg* 69 has five shared poems (and three not shared), and *aṅg* 56 one shared poem (and one not shared). The remaining six *pad*s in Table 11.3 are arranged in clusters that do not contain poems common to RajS and MS Sharma 3190 (*aṅg*s 9, 58, 77, and 141). The linguistic peculiarities of RajS, which sets it apart from other Dādūpanthī collections, MS Sharma 3190 included, point to a rather distant relation between MS 3190 and the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab*.[18]

The situation is different if we look at the *Sarvāṅgī of Gopāldās* (1628 CE), structured in 126 *aṅg*s containing mostly *pad*s and *sākhī*s of 138 identified *bhakta*s. Gopāldās includes 17 Sūr *pad*s (out of a total of 114 ascribed to Sūrdās) not found in the microfilm version of MS Sharma 3190.[19] The poems not included in MS 3190 are mainly only one per *aṅg*.[20] Table 11.4 lists these *pad*s compared to other manuscripts.

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index of the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab* and not found in other collections as Sūr's poem, is a long *pad* of seven lines in which the term *sūr* appears twice. On both occasions, the term refers to the sun. These four poems are not included in my list of fifty-four *pad*s.

17 Sūr *pad*s common to MS Sharma 3190 and RajS are demonstrated in my synoptic table, see Zrnic 2024.

18 On linguistic and grammatical features in Rajab, see Callewaert 1978: 104–13.

19 One poem without a signature (Gop 17;3) listed as Sūr's in Callewaert's index of the *Sarvāṅgī of Gopāldās* (1993: 28) is not included in my list of 114 *pad*s. The poem is not found in other collections as ascribed to Sūrdās.

20 Sūr *pad*s common to GopS and MS Sharma 3190 are demonstrated in Zrnic 2024.

Table 11.3 Sūr *Pad*s in RajS Absent from MS Sharma 3190 in their Relationship to Other Collections

RajS	MS Fate-hpur	GopS	VB 34	DM 2	VB 12	AMR 875	Bryant edition	NPS
Raj 9;24 *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 4733
Raj 9;25 *virah (bhram-argīt)*	F 13 (35)	–	–	–	VB 12; fol. 328a	–	272	NPS 4239
Raj 9;26 *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	AMR 875; 50	222	NPS 3928
Raj 56;8 *total love*	–	Gop 36;11	–	–	–	–	–	–
Raj 58;2[i] *virah (bhram-argīt)*	–	Gop 36;12	–	DM 2; 29	VB 12; fol. 145a	–	–	NPS 4606
Raj 69;30[ii] *vinay*	–	Gop 10;32	–	–	–	AMR 875; 9 (Smm)[iii]	–	–
Raj 69;40 *vinay*	–	–	–	DM 2; 37	VB 12; fol. 192b	–	–	–
Raj 69;41 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 297
Raj 77;11[iv] *vinay*	–	–	–	DM 2; 12	–	–	–	NPS 369
Raj 141;5 *depth of love*	–	Gop 77;3	–	–	–	–	–	–

i   Raj 58;2 appears as anonymous in Callewaert's index of the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab* (Callewaert 1978: 415).

ii Raj 69;30 is translated in Zrnic (forthcoming).

iii Smm stands for the Sūrdās Madan Mohan section in MS AMR 875.

iv Raj 77;11 was in later collections ascribed to Kabīr. The poem is absent from the early Kabīr manuscripts and not included in the *Millennium Kabīr vāṇī*. With some variations, it is found in Singh's *Kabīr Bījak* and Dvivedi's *Kabīr* (Rajpurohit 2013: 65 and 71, note 47).

Table 11.4 Sūr *Pads* in GopS not Included in MS Sharma 3190 Compared to Other Collections

GopS	MS Fate- hpur	RajS	VB 34	DM 2	VB 12	AMR 875	Bry- ant edition	NPS
Gop 8;12[i] *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Gop 8;53 *vinay*	–	–	–	DM 2; 8	–	–	–	NPS 123
Gop 10;32[ii] *vinay*	–	Raj 69;30	–		–	AMR 875; 9 (Smm)	–	–
Gop 17;15 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Gop 36;6 *virah*	–	–	–	–	VB 12; fol. 116a	AMR 875; 44	–	NPS 3624
Gop 36;7 *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	AMR 875; 45	236	NPS 3999
Gop 36;8 *virah*	–	–	VB 34; 12	DM 2; 28	VB 12; fol. 147a	AMR 875; 49	201	NPS 3845
Gop 36;11 *total love*	–	Raj 56;8	–	–	–	–	–	–
Gop 36;12 *virah* (*bhram- argīt*)	–	Raj 58;2	–	DM 2; 29	VB 12; fol. 145a	–	–	NPS 4606
Gop 36;16 *decep- tion*	–	–	–	–	–	AMR 875; 47	115	NPS 2912
Gop 60;11 *vinay*	–	–	–	DM 2; 39	–	–	–	–

Table 11.4 *(continued)*

GopS	MS Fatehpur	RajS	VB 34	DM 2	VB 12	AMR 875	Bryant edition	NPS
Gop 61;3 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Gop 62;11 *vinay*	F 43 (14)	–	–	DM 2; 35	–	–	417	NPS 323
Gop 77;3 *depth of love*	–	Raj 141;5	–	–	–	–	–	–
Gop 78;89[iii] *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Gop 93;3 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 62
Gop 110;16[iv] *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	AMR 875; 1 (Smm)	–	–

i   Gop 8;12 is translated in Zrnic (forthcoming).
ii Gop 10;32 is given in Zrnic (forthcoming).
iii Gop 78;89 is translated in Zrnic (forthcoming).
iv Gop 110;16 is translated in Zrnic (forthcoming).

Thirteen of the above poems are included in more than one collection. Their closest link is with MS AMR 875 (six of the above *pad*s are shared by GopS and MS AMR, five are in DM 2, four are in RajS, three in VB 12, only one is in MS Fatehpur, and one in VB 34). Eight can be found in the NPS edition, and thirteen are not in the Bryant critical edition. Six of the above *pad*s are classified under *aṅg* 36 *(prem viyog saguṇ saneh prīti),* two under *aṅg* 8 (*sumiraṇ*, Remembrance). The remaining nine *pad*s are classified under *aṅg*s 10 (*nāv mahimā nāv bin akārth janm*, Greatness of the Name, useless birth without the Name), 17 (*sādh mahimā*, Praise of the saints), 60 (*bhārosā*, Trust), 61 (*bhārosā bīnatī*, Prayer for trust), 62 (*saguṇ sādh milat gobindajī kā guṇāṁha*, Meeting the right saint), 77 (*jaraṇālāmbī*, Depth of own experience), 78 (*karuṇā bīnatī*, Prayer for mercy), 93 (*besās*, Faith), and 110 (*tīsrau aṅg cintāvaṇī*, Third *aṅg* of Warnings), respectively. Most of these the-

matic clusters contain Sūr *pad*s shared by GopS and MS Sharma 3190, as shown in Table 11.5.

Table 11.5 Thematic Clusters Containing Sūr *Pad*s Shared and not Shared by GopS and MS Sharma 3190

Aṅg	Sūr *pad*s contained in *aṅg*	Sūr *pad*s shared with GopS and MS Sharma 3190	Sūr *pad*s not shared with GopS and MS Sharma 3190
78	22	21	1
61	12	11	1
62	5	4	1
110	4	3	1
17	3	2	1
60	2	1	1
8	5	3	2
36	7	1	6
10	1	0	1
77	1	0	1
93	1	0	1

These statistics strengthen my assumption that the four poems in Table 11.4 classified under *aṅg* 36 might be on the missing page of Sūr section in MS Sharma 3190, as further indicated by the linkage with MS AMR. GopS and MS Sharma 3190 share the highest proportion of Sūr poems and are the closest in terms of variant readings, along with MS AMR 875, which includes six of the above-listed poems, four of which correspond to *pad*s in GopS classified under *aṅg* 36.

Among the poems in GopS not included in MS Sharma 3190, four are common to Gopāldās and Rajab, but their sorting by themes differs in the two *Sarvāṅgīs*. Two of the above *pad*s in GopS, both classified under *aṅg* 36 *(prem viyog saguṇ saneh prīti),* appear in RajS, one under *aṅg* 56 entitled *prīti akhaṇḍit*, and the other one under *aṅg* 58 *(pativrat).* Gop 10;32 classified under *aṅg nāv mahimā nāv bin akārth janm* is in RajS classified under *aṅg* 69 *(upadeś citāvanī).* Only one of the discussed common *pad*s appears under a similar *aṅg* in both *Sarvāṅgīs* (77 *jaraṇalāmbī* in GopS, corresponding to 141 *lāmbī* in Rajab). Compared to Sūr *pad*s shared by the three collections (MS Sharma 3190,

RajS, and GopS), this further shows that the majority of Sūr poems common to GopS and RajS belong to different *aṅg*s in the two *Sarvāṅgīs*.[21]

Among the codices in which Sūr *pad*s form a block, the filmed portions of VB 34 (1659 CE) contain the smallest number of Sūr poems. The codex consists of 581 folios; filmed portions are available up to text no. 174.[22] As mentioned above, only fifteen Sūr *pad*s (on fols. 302a–305b) can be found on the available folios of this collection.[23] Two of these poems are not in MS Sharma 3190 but can be found in other manuscripts, as illustrated in Table 11.6.

Table 11.6 Sūr *Pads* in MS VB 34 not Included in MS Sharma 3190 in their Relationship to Other Collections

VB 34	MS Fate-hpur	RajS	GopS	DM 2	VB 12	AMR 875	Bryant edition	NPS
VB 34; 8 *vinay* (*māyā*)	–	–	–	DM 2; 32	–	–	–	NPS 44
VB 34; 12 *virah*	–	–	Gop 36;8	DM 2; 28	VB 12; fol. 147a	AMR 875; 49	201	NPS 3845

Both the above *pad*s are included in DM 2 (and NPS). DM 2 (1676 CE) is an unbound *pothī*, the manuscript starts with Dādū's works.[24] Sūr poems not included in DM 2 are included in VB 34 and MS Sharma 3190 and those not found in VB 34 can be found in MS Sharma 3190 and DM 2. The available portions of the three collections (MSS 3190, VB 34, and DM 2) have only ten Sūr *pad*s in common. A much larger number of Sūr poems not found in MS Sharma 3190 is included in DM 2, which

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21 For a comparison of Sūr *pads* in the *Sarvāṅgī of Rajab* and the *Sarvāṅgī of Gopāldās*, and their relation to MS Sharma 3190, including the list of common poems, see Zrnic 2024.

22 The condition of MS VB 34 is such that only portions of it could be filmed. Folios following text no. 174 are not on the microfilm reel (Horstmann 2021: 55).

23 For Sūr *pads* common to VB 34 and MS Sharma 3190, see Zrnic 2024.

24 The beginning of the manuscript is damaged. Filmed portions are available starting with *sākhī* no. 64, classified under *aṅg gurudev* in the *sākhī* part of Dādū's work.

contains eighty *pad*s of Sūr (on fols. 430b–435b).[25] Twenty-five poems not shared with MS Sharma 3190 are given in Table 11.7.[26] Only three of them are in Bryant's edition.

Of the twenty-five poems in DM 2 shown in Table 11.7, nineteen are included in NPS, seven are in VB 12, five are in GopS, three in Rajab, two are shared with VB 34, two with MS AMR, and two with MS Fatehpur. The majority of these *pad*s express *virah* bhakti and are rarely found in other Dādūpanthī codices. DM 2 contains the most *virah* poems ascribed to Sūrdās as compared to other Dādūpanthī manuscripts. Their sequential ordering in the manuscript might indicate copying more directly from a different, perhaps Vaiṣṇava group of manuscripts.

VB 12 (1684–6 CE), consisting of 330 folios, contains seventy-one available poems ascribed to Sūr, of which twenty-five are not included in MS Sharma 3190.[27] The *pad*s are arranged according to two different principles: thirty-two poems form a block (on fols. 187b–192b)[28], the remaining *pad*s are found on dispersed folios quoted among compositions of other *bhakta*s.[29] The poems are not repeated between the two arranging patterns. The *pad*s given in Table 11.8 are those not shared with MS Sharma 3190.

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25 One interpolated poem in DM 2 within the section numbered 20 is included in 80 *pads*.

26 Sūr poems shared by DM 2 and MS Sharma 3190 are demonstrated in my synoptic table; see Zrnic 2024.

27 For Sūr poems common to VB 12 and MS Sharma 3190, see Zrnic 2024.

28 One folio of this section (fol. 188a) is missing from the microfilm copy.

29 In addition to these, on fol. 21a in VB 12, a *virah pad* ascribed to Nāpā has been later attributed to Sūrdās. In NPS (158, appendix), the poem is ascribed to Sūrdās.

Table 11.7 Sūr *Pads* in MS DM 2 not Included in MS Sharma 3190 in their Relationship to Other Collections

DM 2	MS Fate-hpur	RajS	GopS	VB 34	VB 12	AMR 875	Bry-ant edition	NPS
DM 2; 8 *vinay*	–	–	Gop 8;53	–	–	–	–	NPS 123
DM 2; 12 *vinay*	–	Raj 77;11	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 369
DM 2; 19 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 362
DM 2; 21 *virah* (bhram-argīt)	–	–	–	–	VB 12; fol. 145a	–	–	NPS 4488
DM 2; 22 *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
DM 2; 23 *virah*	–	–	–	–	VB 12; fol. 145a	AMR 875; 54	–	NPS 3953
DM 2; 24 *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
DM 2; 25 *virah* (bhram-argīt)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 4348
DM 2; 27 *virah* (bhram-argīt)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 4605
DM 2; 28 *virah*	–	–	Gop 36;8	VB 34; 12	VB 12; fol. 147a	AMR 875; 49	201	NPS 3845
DM 2; 29 *virah* (bhram-argīt)	–	Raj 58;2	Gop 36;12	–	VB 12; fol. 145a	–	–	NPS 4606
DM 2; 31 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	VB 12; fol. 319a	–	–	NPS 345
DM 2; 32 *vinay* (māyā)	–	–	–	VB 34; 8	–	–	–	NPS 44

Table 11.7 *(continued)*

DM 2	MS Fate-hpur	RajS	GopS	VB 34	VB 12	AMR 875	Bry-ant edition	NPS
DM 2; 35 *vinay*	F 43 (14)	–	Gop 62;11	–	–	–	417	NPS 323
DM 2; 36[i] *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 166
DM 2; 37 *vinay*	–	Raj 69;40	–	–	VB 12; fol. 192b	–	–	–
DM 2; 39 *vinay*	–	–	Gop 60;11	–	–	–	–	–
DM 2; 49 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 375
DM 2; 56 *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	VB 12; n.p.	–	–	NPS 596
DM 2; 57 *virah (bhram-argīt)*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 4242
DM 2; 58 *virah (bhram-argīt)*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 4504
DM 2; 59 *virah (bhram-argīt)*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
DM 2; 60 *virah*	F 123 (30)	–	–	–	–	–	216	NPS 3905
DM 2; 61 *virah (bhram-argīt)*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 4226
DM 2; 67 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

i DM 2; 36 is translated in Zrnic (forthcoming).

Table 11.8 Sūr *Pads* in MS VB 12 not Included in MS Sharma 3190 in their Relationship to Other Collections

VB 12	MS Fate-hpur	RajS	GopS	VB 34	DM 2	AMR 875	Bry-ant edition	NPS
VB 12; fol. 116a *virah*	–	–	Gop 36;6	–	–	AMR 875; 44	–	NPS 3624
VB 12; fol. 116a *virah* (bhramargīt)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
VB 12; fol. 145a *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 3949
VB 12; fol. 145a *virah* (bhramargīt)	–	–	–	–	DM 2; 21	–	–	NPS 4488
VB 12; fol. 145a *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	AMR 875; 51	223	NPS 3929
VB 12; fol. 145a *virah* (bhramargīt)	–	Raj 58;2	Gop 36;12	–	DM 2; 29	–	–	NPS 4606
VB 12; fol. 145a *virah*	–	–	–	–	DM 2; 23	AMR 875; 54	–	NPS 3953
VB 12; fol. 147a *virah*	–	–	Gop 36;8	VB 34; 12	DM 2; 28	AMR 875; 49	201	NPS 3845
VB 12; fol. 147a *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
VB 12; fol. 147a *virah* (bhramargīt)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 4271
VB 12; fol. 147a *Vidur's bhakti*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 239

Table 11.8 *(continued)*

VB 12	MS Fatehpur	RajS	GopS	VB 34	DM 2	AMR 875	Bryant edition	NPS
VB 12; fol. 147a *Vidur's bhakti*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
VB 12; fol. 192b *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
VB 12; fol. 192b *vinay*	–	Raj 69;40	–	–	DM 2; 37	–	–	–
VB 12; fol. 319a *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
VB 12; fol. 319a *vinay*	–	–	–	–	DM 2; 31	–	–	NPS 345
VB 12; fol. 328a *virah* (*bhramargīt*)	F 13 (35)	Raj 9;25	–	–	–	–	272	NPS 4239
VB 12; n.p. *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
VB 12; n.p. *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 595
VB 12; n.p. *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 597
VB 12; n.p. *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 598
VB 12; n.p. *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	DM 2; 56	–	–	NPS 596
VB 12; n.p. *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 578
VB 12; n.p. *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 576
VB 12; n.p. *rāmāyaṇ*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Among the above poems, eighteen can be found in other collections (seventeen are in NPS, seven are in DM 2, four in AMR 875, three in RajS, three in GopS, one in VB 34, one in MS Fatehpur, and three in the Bryant edition). Two of the above *pad*s belong to the section entitled *sūrdāsjī kā pad* in VB 12. The remaining twenty-three *pad*s appear on dispersed folios in the manuscript. Two of these folios, containing the last eight poems listed above, are without a number reference.

MS AMR 875 (1675 CE) includes a peculiar collection of Sūr poems added later to the corpus. Out of eighty-eight *pad*s classified under Sūrdās section, ten are not found on the available copies of MS Sharma 3190. In addition to these, five poems classified under a separate section, which includes Sūr *pad*s common to MS Sharma 3190, are not found in the latter.[30] The identical or nearly identical sequential ordering of Sūr poems in MS AMR indicates that the *pad*s were copied from MS Sharma 3190 or a later source closely related to it. My suggestion is that some of the ten *pad*s classified under Sūr section in MS AMR and not found in MS Sharma 3190 appear on the missing folio of the latter (fol. 470). Table 11.9 lists *pad*s in AMR 875 not found in MS Sharma 3190.

Two of the poems in Table 11.9 classified separately in the manuscript (AMR 875; 1–9) appear in GopS, one is in RajS, and one in NPS. These are *vinay* poems. Eight of the ten *pad*s of Sūr section (AMR 875; 44 onwards) can be found in the NPS edition, six are included in the Bryant edition, four in GopS, four in VB 12, two in DM 2, one in RajS, one in VB 34, and one in MS Fatehpur. Except for AMR 875; 48, the remaining nine *pad*s of this section listed above are *virah* poems. The four *pad*s of Sūrdās section common to GopS and MS AMR in Table 11.9 have a greater possibility of being quoted on the missing folio of MS Sharma 3190. Compared to DM 2, which contains a similar number of Sūr compositions like MS AMR (80 in DM 2 vs. 88 in Sūr section of AMR 875), according to selection, arrangement, and variants, the latter appears to be a direct copy from MS Sharma 3190.

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30 For the two separate sections in MS AMR and its relation to MS Sharma 3190, including the list of poems, see Zrnic 2024.

Table 11.9 Sūr *Pad*s in MS AMR 875 not Included in MS Sharma 3190 Compared to Other Collections

AMR 875	MS Fate-hpur	RajS	GopS	VB 34	DM 2	VB 12	Bry-ant edition	NPS
AMR 875; 1 (Smm)[i] *vinay*	–	–	Gop 110; 16	–	–	–	–	–
AMR 875; 6 (Smm) *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NPS 4412
AMR 875; 7 (Smm) *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
AMR 875; 8 (Smm) *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
AMR 875; 9 (Smm) *vinay*	–	Raj 69;30	Gop 10; 32	–	–	–	–	–
AMR 875; 44 *virah*	–	–	Gop 36;6	–	–	VB 12; fol. 116a	–	NPS 3624
AMR 875; 45 *virah*	–	–	Gop 36;7	–	–	–	236	NPS 3999
AMR 875; 47 *deception*	–	–	Gop 36;16	–	–	–	115	NPS 2912
AMR 875; 48 *vinay*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
AMR 875; 49 *virah*	–	–	Gop 36;8	VB 34; 12	DM 2; 28	VB 12; fol. 147a	201	NPS 3845
AMR 875; 50 *virah*	–	Raj 9;26	–	–	–	–	222	NPS 3928

Table 11.9 *(continued)*

AMR 875	MS Fate-hpur	RajS	GopS	VB 34	DM 2	VB 12	Bry-ant edition	NPS
AMR 875; 51 *virah*	–	–	–	–	–	VB 12; fol. 145a	223	NPS 3929
AMR 875; 52 *virah*		–	–	–	–	–	–	–
AMR 875; 53 *virah*	F 35 (97)	–	–	–	–	–	228	NPS 3957
AMR 875; 54 *virah*	–	–	–	–	DM 2; 23	VB 12; fol. 145a	–	NPS 3953

i   AMR 875; 1 and 6–9 are translated in Zrnic (forthcoming).

Conclusion

Once the common *pad*s to these codices are subtracted, the Dādūpanthī manuscripts predating 1700 CE contain 201 Sūr *pad*s that my edition will bring to light. Out of these, 138 are in MS Sharma 3190, and 63 not found in MS Sharma 3190 are included in other Dādūpanthī manuscripts. Eighty-six *pad*s contained in MS Sharma 3190 are not included in the Bryant and Hawley critical edition. In addition to these, out of 63 poems included in other codices, 54 are not in their edition *(Sūr's Ocean: Poems from the Early Tradition).* This gives the total number of 140 *pad*s recorded in the Dādūpanth and absent from *Sūr's Ocean.* Sūr poems in MS Sharma 3190 show a higher degree of *pad*s shared by several collections than those included in other Dādūpanthī manuscripts and not found in MS Sharma 3190. Unlike the majority of the shared poems with MS Sharma 3190, which remain *vinay*s, the poems in other collections not included in MS Sharma 3190 are mostly *virah pad*s. The distance of these poems from MS Fatehpur is the biggest compared to manuscripts of the Dādūpanthī branch (only four of the discussed sixty-three *pad*s are included in MS Fatehpur). This confirms the independent development of the early Dādūpanthī strand. Exclusively with regard to Sūr poems, MSS 3190, VB 34, and DM 2 show considerably fewer affinities than MSS 3190, GopS, and AMR 875. The *pad*s discussed

in this chapter might indicate that compilers of Dādūpanthī codices, apart from copying poems attributed to Sūr from each other, also drew on a larger (pre-)existing pool of such compositions, or, alternatively, that they themselves might compose such poems and ascribe them to Sūr in the *bhaṇitā*s. Early codices compiled after MS Sharma 3190 clearly show that there was no intention to increase the material ascribed to Sūrdās on the Dādūpanthī side, in contrast to what we see gradually happening in the Vaiṣṇava manuscripts during the same period.[31] The Dādūpanthīs were much more conservative and very strict in their selection, which results in a distinctive image of a strictly morally oriented poet.

ORCID®

Biljana Zrnic 🄳 https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9794-8258

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MS VB 12. Vidyābhuṣaṇ Collection. Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jaipur. MS. no. 12, dated vs 1741–3/1684–6 CE.

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PART VII
Rajasthan

12
Knowledge and Methodic Discipline
A Shared Nāth Siddha and Sant Paradigm

Monika Horstmann

Introduction

The Sants of Rajasthan, propagators of a formless god in the interior of man and identical with his soul, entertained a symbiotic relationship with a particular variant of the Nāth tradition. This claims to be the trustee of the unadulterated yogic lore. Its representatives decry the magic, miracle working, and sexual ritual practices of Nāthyogīs related to the tantric Kaula tradition, the sectarian emblems and the social organization of these in roving bands. They were ascetics calling themselves the Nāth Siddhas, who left behind Hindi compositions preserved as a corpus of texts comprising the works of Gorakhnāth and some twenty-seven more authors. Their names replicate names of the ancient Siddha tradition, but their connection with these is tenuous. No settlements of them are recorded. The various genres of their texts correspond largely to those of Sant literature. Aphorisms and lyrics point to public performance from which ensue questions as to the composition of audiences and the patronage extended to ascetics. Didactic treatises addressing the ascetic yogic disciple point to lineages of teachers and disciples. Though the ascetic is the sole addressee of the texts, this can well be due to a literary convention and need not preclude their being also performed for wider audiences. As for the social setting of ascetics depending on a lay following, this would have hardly differed from that of the Sants.

The Nāth Siddha texts were transmitted not by a Nāth Siddha constituency, of which there are no traces, but by Dādūpanthīs. The codices of these are known from the beginning of the seventeenth century, and from the earliest known ones the Nāth Siddha corpus of texts forms part of these. This corpus shows the signs of redactional interventions, such as numerical grouping of texts or a particular uniform style of colophons, and even as it makes its first appearance is revealed as copied from earlier manuscripts. For the Dādūpanthīs, the Nāth Siddhas represented yogically specialized precursors of themselves. When appending the Hindi Nāth Siddha tradition to the texts canonized by them, they never mixed it with their own texts, but kept them as a separate text block.[1] This strict separation is, however, not found in anthologies in which the text material is grouped according to themes.

By size and quality, the Nāth Siddha corpus of texts is dominated by the oeuvre of Gorakhnāth, to whom some of the Nāth Siddhas in that corpus point as their spiritual ancestor. Though the transmission of the Nāth Siddha corpus was quite stable, it is not all that clear to whom and to what time range the 'Hindi Gorakhnāth' or other 'Nāth Siddhas' refers. Apart from the compositions of Dādū, the early Dādūpanthī manuscripts passed down corpora of other pan-Indian and Rajasthani Sants, Sufis, the Nāth Siddhas, and others. In this, the constituents of the manuscripts appear as completely simultaneous. Except for a few compositions bearing dates, these manuscripts represent a single frozen moment in textual history. Scholarship has been able to establish a relative chronology, particularly for the authors of pan-Indian recognition, but for a great number of authors this has not yet been attempted. Moreover, uncertainty surrounds the relationship of the authors as historical figures and the works assigned to them. To add to the problem, it is unknown how those works might have differed according to different sectarian traditions.[2] As for Gorakhnāth, it is uncertain if the *Gorakhbānī* appearing in manuscripts precedes in time of composition the works of other Hindi Nāth Siddhas referring to him. H. P. Dvivedi thought that most of those other Nāth Siddhas lived before the fourteenth century (Dvivedī vs 2014: 25). In terms of historical linguistics, their texts cannot be strictly chronologically ordered

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1   Two landmark editions of the Nāth Siddha works are *Gorakhbānī* (GB), first published in 1942, and that of H. P. Dvivedī of *c.*1957 (Dvivedī vs 2014). GB is based on a named Dādūpanthī manuscript, and Dvivedī's main textual source seems also to be a Dādūpanthī manuscript, although not identified as such.

2   A case in point would be the Rāmānandī sect, for which see the final section "The Epicentre of the Tenets Observed".

nor do they much differ from the Sant compositions so far analysed in depth.[3] Because of the supposed floruit of the historical Gorakhnāth in the twelfth or thirteenth century, the lower limit of the Hindi Nāth Siddha literature mentioning him is the thirteenth century, but there are no valid testimonies for the upper time limit of their works or the redaction of these in that single corpus of texts, of which the compiler is anonymous. As has been shown, the Nāth Siddha tradition was only gradually aligned to Gorakhnāth (Briggs 1973: 67–77). It cannot be taken for granted that the Hindi Nāth Siddha referring themselves to Gorakhnāth meant the same thing by this reference. Numerous historical questions, then, relating to the Nāth Siddhas composing in Hindi await answers.

Prithīnāth

A single Nāth Siddha author can serve as a trajectory from the historically undifferentiated appearance of the Nāth Siddha corpus of texts to a point in real time. This author is Prithīnāth, the last of the Nāth Siddhas recorded in 1660 by the Dādūpanthī hagiographer Rāghavdās. According to him, Prithīnāth was a contemporary of emperor Akbar and can thereby be assigned to the second half of the sixteenth century (Horstmann 2021b: 82). This makes him also a contemporary of key figures among the Sants of Rajasthan. In the following I will focus on what, according to him, was at the heart of Gorakhnāth's teaching and, subsequently, how this may be related to the Sants of Rajasthan who refer expressly to Gorakhnāth as a religious model. This may sharpen our understanding of the relationship between the basic concepts of the Nāth Siddhas and Sants, seemingly to the extent of revealing a single pivotal concept governing the thought of Nāth Siddhas and Sants alike. Though Nāth Siddha and Sant concepts of interior religion can be distinguished theoretically and heuristically, the respective concepts tend to fuse in reality; a shift of perspective from that which distinguishes them to that which unites them may therefore suggest itself.

Prithīnāth declares himself a disciple of Gorakhnāth, the disciple of Matsyendranāth (Machindranāth), and propagator of his teachings. Both, as well as any perfected yogi, are identical with Śambhū and Ādināth Nārāyaṇa, from whom the manifest world starts unfolding.

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3   For a profound linguistic study of the Kabīr corpus as transmitted in early-seventeenth-century Rajasthan, see Strnad 2013.

Prithīnāth's genealogical link with Gorakhnāth is thereby spiritual rather than historical. He affirms that he is only the transmitter of Gorakhnāth's message, which is identical with the interior unstruck sound.[4] Prithīnāth, then, conceives of himself as one in the chain of human voices transmitting the supreme revelation descended into the world of phenomena. In 1615 (MS. Sharma 3190) and 1659 (MS. VB 34), the treatises of Prithīnāth appear in a redaction comprising twenty-seven and twenty-eight works, respectively.[5] In that redaction one notices more often than not some incongruence between the title of an individual treatise and its contents matter, the title moreover not appearing in the composition itself.[6] Though titles seem assigned somewhat arbitrarily, these are by and large common for yogic treatises. We find similar ones in GB, but as such titles are also found with other authors, one can only speculate that the redaction of older text layers of Gorakhnāth's oeuvre preceded the redaction of Prithīnāth's works, although there are no clues that Prithīnāth might have had in mind the GB in terms of the collection known to us. Redactorial intervention in Prithīnāth's compositions is also visible in the dialogical parts of his treatises. Comparing these with similar texts of GB, which display a strict logical coherence between questions and answers, in Prithīnāth's treatises questions put in the mouths of disciples are not always answered stringently. This suggests that in some cases independent verses of Prithīnāth were strung together to form a treatise corresponding to the quite dominant dialogic principle governing texts of instruction.

Compositions assigned to Prithīnāth are recorded in great number in the Gopāldās' anthology of 1628 (GopS). Quite often they occur as strings of verses, which also appear in the various treatises arguably consolidated by redaction. Apart from these, however, Gopāldās also included three complete treatises of Prithīnāth, all of these preceded by their titles, which are identical with the titles appearing in the

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4   *goraṣa bāṁṇī anahada nāda, prithīnātha kahai gurū prasāda* (*Bārahamāsī-grantha*, v. 5cd).

5   The treatise in excess of the collection of twenty-seven, the *Sidha-cautīsā-grantha*, is partly identical with the collection of verses classified as *Kuch pad* in GB, pp. 241–3. Apart from those treatises, Prithīnāth composed also a collection of distichs, the *Sabadī* (Dvivedī vs 2014: 68–9), and a few songs of which so far seven have been recovered (unedited).

6   See, for example, *Solaha-kalā-joga-grantha*, partly quoted below. While it covers the complete yogic ascent to liberation, the text does not explicitly follow a serial cliché of sixteen stages as one would expect from its title.

Prithīnāth corpus.[7] All the three are relatively short and absolutely coherent in their reasoning and style. It therefore seems that Prithīnāth did indeed compose a number of treatises, including those three, and that his freely floating independent verses or clusters of these were at one point recast in the form of independent treatises. Prithīnāth enjoyed obvious authority, which accounts for the fact that in the eighteenth-century verses of his were absorbed into the ever-growing apocryphal Hindi corpus of Gorakhnāth. They figure in the spurious *Gyānatilaka*, a work of a total of forty-five stanzas, out of which thirty-five formed part of the sixteenth-century redaction of the Prithīnāth corpus.[8]

An examination of the doctrine of Gorakhnāth as perceived in the sixteenth century specifically by Prithīnāth, automatically excludes perceptions setting in around the mid-seventeenth century. At that time Sundardās honed Gorakhnāth's teaching to the model of influential Sanskrit texts, and the trend to graft the *haṭhayogic* apparatus of notions and practices upon the Nāth Siddha yoga remained unabated thereafter.

Basic Yogic Tenets according to Prithīnāth

Rather than laying out a comprehensive system of the Nāth Siddha yoga, Prithīnāth presupposes it. It can be safely said that it does not differ significantly from the one displayed in the layers of GB as these existed by the turn of the sixteenth century.[9] Going by key concepts, its relatively simple structure can be established.

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7   These are *Bhagati-baikuṇṭha-grantha* (GopS 47.76), *Sūtradhaṇīṁ-karatā-kathi-grantha* (GopS 63.31–49), and *Ajapā-gāitrī-grantha* (GopS 84.8; this appears also as RajS 122.1).

8   GB: 207–18. Twenty-two of these are identical, or for certain lines of verses identical, with his *Jugati-sarūpa-grantha*, and the other thirteen, with stanzas of his *Gyānapacīsī*. Listed in the sequence of their occurrence in the text, *Gyānatilaka* stanzas 14–8, 25cd, 20, 21, 24, 23, 28, 27, 29, 30–2, 37, 34, 26, 38, 40–4 correspond to stanzas in the *Jugati-sarūpa-grantha*, while *Gyānatilaka* 1–13 correspond to *Gyānapacīsī* 37–49.

9   In the final third of the eighteenth century incongruent material accrued to the system, namely, the concept of eight *cakras* in the yogic body, against the six *cakras* taught formerly. Concurring views must have been at work for some time, for in the seventeenth century Sundardās also tries to accommodate eight *cakras* to the six-*cakra* system. For the text, see GB, pp. 249–50, for the relevant manuscripts, p. 150 for the table in question.

Yogi, Guru, the Community of Sadhus

The addressee of Prithīnāth is always the ascetic yogi. The yogi aspiring to become a *siddha puruṣa*, the undifferentiated absolute being, has to apply methodical yogic practice *(jugati)* to ascend to the place of absolute eternal union. A suitable guru, whom his father and mother may have found for him – a topos and a fact which bring to mind the child sadhus of Sant groups – teaches him the method of yogic practice. Without the guru, he cannot attain the goal; when he eventually does so, he realizes his identity with the guru and the supreme self, and that he comprises in himself all the deities. These are thereby deprived of their popularly acknowledged standing. The yogi himself is now all that is, and he dwells forever in a state attained by rolling back diversity. Because he is identical with all, he is at once the yogi and the enjoyer *(bhogī).* Now, no interior god, not to speak of exterior deities, nor the name of God as the subtlest equivalent of God, is required to accomplish the yogi's search.

Prithīnāth is, however, a Vaiṣṇava Nāth, so that in some passages of his work the relationship between the aspiring yogi and his guru resembles the devotee's bhakti to the formless god, named in Prithīnāth's compositions variously as Hari, Govinda, Kr̥ṣṇa, or Rāma. The eternal place, the *pada*, is therefore also called Vaikuṇṭha.[10] Teacher, disciple, Govind (or the interior supreme of any other name) are one and identical with Gorakhnāth down to the primeval beginning. All of them are *brahman*.

Prithīnāth's Anthropo-cosmology

The supreme principle devoid of difference – *puruṣa, ātma*, Nārāyaṇa etc. – appears differentiating itself in the power at work in the cosmos, identical with the yogi himself. The supreme real *(tata*, Skt. *tattva)* manifests itself in the five elements *(bhūta)* and the five qualities or properties *(guṇa)* each of these possesses. Together with the five elements these form the *piṇḍa*. This is perishable but can attain immortality by yogic practice, which presupposes insight into the ontological principles. Enlivening the *piṇḍa* is the vital breath, *prāṇa* (also *pavana* or *bāi*). Death and immortality depend on the mind *(mana)*. This is directed outwards, entangled with the sense objects, that is, with the

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10 For translated examples, see Horstmann 2021b: 87–8 for bhakti and Hari; Horstmann 2021a: 167, v. 3 for the Vaikuṇṭha paradise.

transient world. It mistakenly imagines that this is different from itself and, implicitly, from the supreme principle. As long as the mind engages with the world, it remains caught in samsara. It therefore needs to shed its false belief, rooted in ego-mindedness *(ahaṁkāra),* of an independent existence of the created world. This false belief is the characteristic of a human being of bestial disposition, the *paśu(-jīva).*[11]

For liberation to take place, the mind must turn away from the perishable phenomena, roll back all imaginations *(kalpanā)*[12] and perceptions into the supreme principle, and tie itself to the soul. The mind and the vital breath have to unite forever. This requires the methodical discipline *(jugati)* by which the vital breath *(dvādasāṁgula)* is made to circulate through the body. In exhaling, it is directed outwards and has to be continuously redirected into and preserved in the yogic body. In this way the creative power *(śakti),* which is itself a product of a non-ontological differentiation of the supreme self, ascends to the top of the anthropo-cosmos to fuse with the supreme, the Self of the self. The yogi's body in terms of what can be transformed into the supreme is usually named *kāyā*. The perfected *kāyā* has no shape *(māyā)* and does not cast a shadow. It belongs to him who is transformed from old man to the eternal child. In the *kāyā*, the *piṇḍa* is free from difference. Called dying and living at the same time, it is eternal.

The vital breath circulates in the channels of this body. There are three of these: Ilā, Piṅgalā, and Suṣumnā.[13] The place of union is gradually ascended over six consecutive stages, the *cakras*. These are, bottom-up: the *mūla (mūlādhāra, -dvāra), nābhi, hṛdaya, mīna* (normally called *maṇi*), *anahata*, and *sahasradala cakras*. No further description of the *cakras* is given. Only for the *sahasradala cakra*, whose description lies in its very name, is the play of the wind *(prāṇa)* in its petals mentioned. None of the *cakras* is assigned attributes in the fashion of tantric texts (e.g., *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*), which collocate with these the numbers of their petals, colour, presiding deities, etc.

Practice

The yogic practice consists in withdrawing the mind from the world by tying it firmly to the breath and directing it into the *kāyā*. From the *mūlādhāra*, the vital breath *(prāṇa)* passes upwards. This *cakra* has to be blocked to lock out Time, which is located there. In the abdomen

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11 See below, v. 4 of the *Bindu-siddhānta-grantha.*
12 See below, v. 24 of the *Solaha-kalā-joga-grantha.*
13 With the exception of the Śaṅkhinī, no other channels are mentioned by name.

are stored the bodily fluids and waste produced by digestion. At the next stage, the *nābhicakra*, the vital breath enters the dwelling of the sun. The continuously produced and, for waste and semen, discharged bodily fluids are impure. By breath discipline, the yogi dries *(sokh-)* these up, that is, drains them so that they rise like vapour. In the process, the semen is converted into the *bindu*, the drop of the elixir of immortality, and the yogi's body becomes hard as diamond. The following verses from Prithīnāth's *Solaha-kalā-joga-grantha* illustrate the six-*cakra* system:[14]

बंधस्य बंधि बिषंम यहु बाइ, बंधहु चंचल कही न जाइ ।	Block the restive breath, block the fickle one so that it cannot stray,
करंम कलपनां बंधन देहु, इसि बिधि आप बसि करि लेहु ॥२४॥	Block deeds and imaginations; this is how you must subdue your self. (24)
मूल अकूंचन अजपा सार, कथंत प्रिथीनाथ तत बिचार ।	The essence is bending (the breath) at the base[15] and the *ajapā*, says Prithīnāth reflecting on the supreme principle.
तंन जल ब्यब अलष करि पालि, राषि लै मंछा, ज्यूं पडै न जालि ॥२५॥	In the body you must make an embankment for the water of invisible reflection, protect the fish from being trapped in the net. (25)
तहां नवमुषि ब्रह्म, आहुति ऐक, तहां निरंजन प्रतिषि देष ।	There, in the nine-mouthed one (the body), *brahman* and libation are one, and Nirañjana is in plain view.
असंष कंमल दल पवन फिरै, बंकनालि बहु नीझर झरै ॥२६॥	The breath passes through the lotus with innumerable petals, and a rich stream pours down from the curved conduit. (26)
गुहजि स्थांन बिलंबै चीत, तहां द्वादस किरणि तपै आदीत ।	The mind dwells at the hidden place where the sun emits heat from the rays of its twelve digits.
ससि सोलह सोषै रवि झाल, बंधि बज्र ज्यूं दवैं न काल ॥२७॥	The moon (is full with its) sixteen digits. [From there] the flames of the sun drain; blocked, [hard as] a diamond one is not burned by Time. (27)
इस बिधि अग्नि बिंद कूं चरै, तब फिरि भरम बसेरा करै ।	In this fashion he moves through the fire-*bindu*, and then, after roaming, takes the bee's resting place.
इला पिंगला पवनां पूर, गगन गुफा मैं बाजै तूर ॥२८॥	The breath fills Ilā and Piṅgalā, the trumpet resounds in the cave in the sky. (28)

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14 The text is edited on the basis of the full text which appears in MS. Sharma 3190, foll. 632v–634r and MS. VB 34, foll. 426r–427. Words in round brackets are explanations added by the author.

15 The term is otherwise not attested in the works of Prithīnāth or in GB, but occurs from early on, for example, in *Dattātreya-yoga-śāstra*, v. 131 (*c.* thirteenth century).

नाभि चक्र निज हंसा सार, तहां ज्ञांन महारस पवनं अधार ।

At the *nābhi-cakra* is his essence, the *haṁ-sā*, the great elixir of gnosis[16] is there supported by the breath

रबि करि उपरि तलि करि चंद, सिव सक्ती दोइ संमि करि बंधि ॥२९॥

When he has brought the sun up and the moon down, tied Śiva and Śakti together, and made them from two into one. (29)

तब हंसा टलै न सूकै नीर, अषै सरोवर रहिबा थीर ।

Then *haṁ-sā* does not recede, nor the water dry up, the eternal lake will remain stationary.

गुरू गोरष सबद विच्यषिण, ग्यांन उलटी बाइ अजपा ध्यांन ॥३०॥

Gnosis arises from examining the word of Guru Gorakhnāth; as the breath moves in a reverse fashion, there are *ajapā* and meditation. (30)

ह्रदै चक्र चित धरि करि षेल, बाहरि जाता भीतरि मेल ।

Keeping his mind at the *hṛdaya-cakra*, he plays. In the interior is found that which was heading outwards.

भाठी पाचि अंमीरस झरै, इहि रसि रावल छाका फिरै ॥३१॥

Cooked over the burner, the elixir of immortality streams down, the Rāval sways drunk with this juice. (31)

तहां निसा न निंद्रा, पाप न पुन्य, तिस घरि फिरि बिश्रांमैं मंन ।

There are no night or sleep, no sin or merit in the house where the mind comes to rest after roaming.

पंच आत्मां इस बिधि द्रिढी, भए मुक्ति गुर बांनीं चढी ॥३२॥

In this way the five and the self are firm when there is the liberation arisen from the guru's speech. (32)

मींन चक्र मली मूंदै घाट, तहां टूंटै संकल षुलंहि कपाट ।

When he occupies the *mīna-cakra* and seals the bank, the fetter breaks and the doors open.

परंम निरंजन बिण आकार, जा कारणि नर तजंहि भंडारं ॥३३॥

The supreme Nirañjana without form [is there] for whose sake men let go of their coffers. (33)

कहि प्रिथीनाथ इहै ज्ञांन निवास, परचै पुरिष भवंहि बंनवास ।

Prithīnāth says: This is the dwelling-place of gnosis, the experience through which Perfect Men *(puruṣa)* roam as through a forest dwelling.

परंम जोग जोगी के लक्षिण, ऐका ऐकी बीर बिचषण ॥३४॥

The signs of the yogi's supreme yoga are that he is one with the One, a discriminating hero. (34)

अनहथ चक्रहि बंध न करै, तब लग चंचल बाहरि फिरै ।

As long as he does not make a blockage at the *anahata-cakra*, the fickle mind strays outside.

आतम तत अनंत मुषि संधि, चींटी कै घरि हस्ती बंधि ॥३५॥

When the self is united with the supreme principle of innumerable faces, the elephant is tied in the house of the ant. (35)

तब मंन क्यंच्यत मुकता होइ, दुलंभ पंथ न पावै कोइ ।

At this stage, the mind is liberated slightly; no one reaches this path hard to find.

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16 The term is *jñāna*. When translating this, the term 'gnosis' is preferred over 'knowledge' to accentuate that this knowledge is ontological in transforming transient into eternal life.

तौ पावै जे अजपा जपै, गंगन इंद थिर सूरिज तपै ॥३६॥	One reaches it if one recites the *ajapā* while the moon is fixed in the sky and the sun scorches. (36)
अभेद भेदै सु अछेद छेदै, अजपा जपै सु जापं ।	He (the yogi) splits the unsplittable and cuts the uncuttable, he recites the *ajapā jāpa*.
द्रिष्टि अद्रिष्टि अमूर्ति पूजै, ते पद पुन न पापं ॥३७॥	With sight without vision he worships the formless one, at the place where there is no sin or merit. (37)
तहां रूपै न रेषै, हस्तै न पादं, बेदै न बांणी, बिद्या न बादं ।	No form or contour is there, no hand or foot, no Veda or speech, no science or argument,
तहां गुरू न सिष्यं, मंत्र न सिष्क्षा, बनं नग्री जोगी न भिष्या ॥३८॥	No guru or disciple, no mantra or teaching, no forest or city, no yogi or begging. (38)
षट चक्र षट सुत्र, षट दरसंण मंत ऐक ।	There are six *cakras*, six *sūtras*, six views, [but only] a single doctrine.
ए भूले जुगति न पावंहि, जब लग नही बमेक ॥३९॥	As long as they lack discrimination, the errant do not grasp methodical discipline. (39)

Prithīnāth, then, holds that rather than austerities, discrimination is the foundation of yoga, and only by discrimination can one grasp the fiery drop *(bindu)* of *brahman*. This is at the heart of Prithīnāth's yoga: *bindu* is fire, by breath discipline and meditation *bindu* is brought to the supreme place from where it falls again down into the yogi's body to circulate there as a continuous stream of fire. *Bindu* is the eternal sound beyond phonation, *bindu* is *brahman*.

Among the three treatises of Prithīnāth anthologized as early as 1628, one is on *bindu*. In this, the sublimated Nāth Siddha view is contrasted with, one might say, a mechanical view of the practice of the retention of semen believed to lead to eternal life. The word *bindu*, 'drop, semen', is to the unenlightened yogi a drop of semen, which to prevent from spilling fully absorbs his attention (v. 1–3ab). He does not possess the discriminative knowledge which alone would enable him to recognize that *bindu* is the fire of *brahman* itself (vv. 3cd foll.).[17]

इस बिंद भरोसै ईंद्री कंसैंहीं, रांडी कै डर बंन मैं बसैंहीं ।	Counting on this drop (semen), people discipline their senses; out of fear of women, they settle in the forest.
जै उमटै तौ मूलि न रहै, फोडि कछोटी रात्यूं बहै ॥१॥	If the semen spills over, it does not stay at the base, but runs at night into the tattered loincloth. (1)

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17 Edited on the basis of MS. Sharma 3190, foll. 631r–631v and MS. VB 34, foll. 425v–426r.

जै साधै सोधैं तंन्य संचरै, तौ सगली
देही गंदी करै ।

If one moves through the body to ascertain it, one soils the whole body.

दूबासणा बिगाडै गात, उपटि पडै,
मल राषै जात ॥२॥

Its stench fouls the body, it flows over, heading for death one remains defiled. (2)

इस बिंद भरोसै जरा न मिटै, इस
ब्यंद भरोसै जुरा न घटै ।

Counting on this drop, aging is not wiped out; counting on this drop, aging does not diminish.

इस ब्यंद भरोसै लांवहिं बंध,
अविचल होत न देषूं कंध ॥३॥

Counting on this drop, one lays blockages, but I do not see anyone's body endure. (3)

अग्निहीन इंद्री बलु नांहि, अग्नि
बिनां उपजहिं मरि मरि जांहिं ।

He who does not have the fire has no strength; those who lack the fire are born and die;

अग्नि बीज बिनां, उपज्या संसार,
पसुवा न जांनंहि अग्निं बिचार ॥४॥

Because there is no seed of fire, the world comes into existence; beasts have no discrimination of the fire. (4)

अग्नि बिंद अग्नि जिंद, अग्नि रूप
गोरष गोबिंद ।

Fire is *bindu*, fire is life, Gorakha-Govinda have the form of fire.

अग्नि जोति जब घट मैं नांहिं, तब
इन के इंद्री गुंण कहां बिलांहिं ॥५॥

If the light of the fire is not in the body, where will the qualities of one's senses dissolve? (5)

इंद्री ढलै स बिंद न होइ, बिंद बिचित्र
अवरै कोइ ।

When the senses are in motion there is no *bindu*, the wonderful *bindu* is different and rare.

बिंद पुरिस अग्नि की धार, अनंत
सिधा तहां उतरे पार ॥६॥

Bindu is Perfect Man, a stream of fire which innumerable achievers of perfection have crossed. (6)

मुष दाझै जै कहियै बात, मूठी गहै
तौ दाझै हाथ ।

If you talk of it, it burns your mouth; if you seize it, it scorches your hand.

तंन मैं रमै तौ सिध सरीर, ऐ बिंद
उलंबे बावन बीर ॥७॥

If it fluctuates in the body, the body becomes perfect, to this *bindu* the supreme heroes are attached. (7)

इहै बिंद बस्त जै साधै सोधै कोइ,
बृध पलटै बालिक होई ।

The rare person who ascertains this *bindu*, which is the real thing, is transformed from an old man into a young boy.

प्रिथीनांथ बिंद बिधि गही, जीवन
मरंण की संक्यां नहीं ॥८॥

Prithīnāth: He who has grasped the way of *bindu* is not concerned about life and death. (8)

तब जोगी जब इंद्री जती, जापहि
बिंद की बस्त, न भागै रती ।

One becomes a yogi by restraining the senses; by practising *jāpa* not a bit of the real thing that is the *bindu* will disperse.

इहै बिंद गहै तौ जोगी सोइ, जोगी
बिणां न ईश्वइर कोइ ॥९॥

A yogi is he who grasps this *bindu*; there is no Īśvara except the yogi. (9)

जोगी पुरिस अग्नि की झाला, जा
कूं राज छाडि सेवैंहि भोवाला ।

In the yogi, who is the Perfect Man, is a blaze of fire; to dedicate themselves to this, kings resign their rule.

जोगी कै घरि पद त्रिबांण, सब तीर्थ
जा कै नीसांण ॥१०॥

In the house of the yogi is the place of *nirvāṇa*, it bears the sign of all sacred places. (10)

पार्बती ईस्वर अर्धगा, लछिमीं कृष्ण की लाई संगा ।	Pārvatī and Īśvara share one body, Lakṣmī is united with Kṛṣṇa,
सोलह सहंस गोपी सूं भोग, चालि जती ऐसी बिधि जोग ॥११॥	The cowherd is united with sixteen thousand cow-herdesses when an ascetic has pursued yoga in this fashion. (11)
ब्रह्मा जोगी बिष्ण जोगी, जोगी देव महेस्वरं ।	Brahmā is a yogi, Viṣṇu is a yogi, god Maheśvara is a yogi,
अठसठ तीरथ जोग तैं उपजे, थांन रचे परमेश्वरं ॥१२॥	The sixty-eight sacred places came into existence by yoga; Parameśvara created them. (12)
बिंदहीं जोग बिंदहीं भोग, बिंदही द्रपन, जा कै हरिष न सोग ।	*Bindu* alone is yoga, *bindu* alone is enjoyment, *bindu* alone is a mirror in which neither joy nor sorrow are reflected.
बिंदही हरै चौस्ठि रोग, बिंद पवन मुष अबिचल जोग ॥१३॥	*Bindu* alone removes the sixty-four diseases; if it is oriented towards *bindu* and breath, yoga endures. (13)

The process of converting the perishable fluids of the body into that which is imperishable is described in tropes of distillation (Zhang 2019). Besides distillation, the alchemical conversion of base metal into gold furnishes another set of tropes. Prithīnāth uses, however, frozen literary tropes rather than describing the full alchemical practice. As for distillation, in contrast to the split distillation apparatus operating with a distillation vessel heated by an exterior fire and a receiver vessel, the anthropo-cosmic distillation still is fully interiorized and represents perpetual circulation in communicating channels within the one vessel of the yogic body. In ordinary distillation, the fire setting this in motion burns under the still, but in yogic practice it burns at the *mūla* inside the yogi's body. This is the fire of *brahman* identical with the guru's word. On top of the still is the pipe through which the distilled product flows. This is the *mahārasa*, the great elixir. In split distillation, the vapour rising to the top of the first vessel is liquified by cooling it down with the help of a wet cloth put over the apparatus. The liquid then runs into the receiver vessel. Similarly, the *bindu-mahārasa*, which is the fire of *brahman*, is perceived as a cool stream of fire. The *brahma* fire is inside that single bodily vessel, and so is the flow of *mahārasa*, running over the yogi's palate down again into this vessel. All the while the yogi meditates on and practices the *ajapā gāyatrī*, that is *haṁ-sā*, the two sounds produced by breathing. By breath discipline, the sun residing at the navel rises to the house of the moon on top, and, reversely, the moon is transported to the place of the sun, a process running through the sun and moon channels. When thereby the sun occupies the orb of the

moon, the ultimate union is attained. In this way, Śiva and Śakti merge (*Solahakalā-joga-grantha*, vv. 28–9). The *prāṇāyāma* of inhalation and exhalation is enforced by blockages which help sustain the flow of the vital breath tied to the mind. These hinder the mind from straying into the world of sense objects. The numerous forms of blockages, the various fixtures, and the details of breathing known from Sanskrit *haṭha-yogic* treatises since around the twelfth or thirteenth centuries and digested in compendia by around 1500 are not discussed by Prithīnāth. Apart from the advice to sit in a stable position when practicing breath discipline, no sitting postures are mentioned. *Prāṇayāma* combined with continuous meditation on the *ajapā gāyatrī* forms the essence of yogic practice (Horstmann 2021a: 166–7). In this way the yogi reaches the eternal place, Hari in the orb of the void.[18] This is Vaikuṇṭha, this is Nārāyaṇa, illuminated to the yogi by *brahman*-gnosis. The yogic perfection is commonly characterized by the union of the mysterious inner sound *oṁ* and *bindu*, the sublimated form of which Prithīnāth explains in his treatise on *bindu*. *Nāda*, finally, he explains as the unstruck sound identical with Gorakh and *brahman* itself.

The Fire of Gnosis

Fire is of central importance in Prithīnāth's compositions. In the fashion of tantric-yogic thought at large, he reflects on it in the context of the Vedic sacrifice. He speaks of the *brahma* libation poured out over the nine-mouthed deity, that is, in the interior of the body. Kindled by the guru, it is identical with the *mahārasa*. It is the *svāti* rain of *brahma*-gnosis (*Nakṣatra-joga-grantha*, v. 15). The *siddha puruṣa* burns in the *brahma* fire and therefore no other fire can consume him. The eternal place is the sheer light of the flaming *brahma*. In brief, the yogi is the receptacle of and ultimately himself *brahma* fire. *Brahma* fire is the cause and end of yoga.

Brahma-gnosis *(brahmajñāna)* and Methodic Discipline *(jugati)* as a Shared Paradigm

In the period and region concerned, the tantric anthropo-cosmology was widely influential in religious thought and practice. The system underlying Prithīnāth's yoga is not only fairly congruous with that of

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18 *Pratibodha-jñana-joga-grantha*, v. 57, quoted at GopS 74.12.

GB, but is also shared as a worldview and a practice by the Sants native to Rajasthan. Heuristically that relationship of Nāth Siddha yoga and Santism can be regarded as a continuum between opposite poles, the one represented by the methodical discipline of yoga, the other, by the methodical discipline of bhakti, a yoga in its own right. At the Nāth Siddha pole, one finds *joga jugati*,[19] at the Sant pole, the *jugati* of *bhakti*, which is essentially the remembrance of the name of the interior god. At the Nāth Siddha pole, there prevails trust in human agency, at the Sant bhakti pole, the main agency lies with the interior god. But far from being rigid, this distinction rather tends to fuse. Heuristic distinction, then, is not vindicated by reality.

The works of Dādū and his immediate disciples by and large share the foundational principles of *brahma*-gnosis *(brahma-jñāna)* and yogic practice as they were pronounced by GB and Prithīnāth. Similarly, these principles are put in the mouths of other prominent Sant figures such as Kabīr or Raidās. Suffice it to quote two passages. The refrain of a song of Kabīr as quoted in GopS reads:[20]

> Oh Man, examine your body, don't aggrandize yourself!
> How will you attain bhakti without methodic discipline?

And in a song warning against enticing worldly appearance, Dādū says:[21]

> She shows him love and takes away all of his wealth, he keeps
>   nothing of it,
> She searches for the butter inside of him, takes all of it away,
>   and discards him like worthless buttermilk. (2)
> When devotees have come to know and renounce [*māyā*] with
>   methodic discipline, they experience the innate place.
> Dādū points to those whom Time does not devour and who
>   never die. (3)

Therefore, a shift away from a principle dividing Nāth Siddhas and Sants to a uniting principle seems advisable, and this is found in the

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19 See *Nakṣatra-joga-grantha*, v. 29.
20 GopS 47.14, refrain: *tana ṣojau nara na karau baḍāī/ jugati bināṁ bhagati kini pāī.*
21 Dādū n.d.: 340, no. 340; GopS 86.4, stanzas 2–3: *heta lagāī sabai dhana levai, bākī kachū na rāṣai re/ māṁṣana māṁhi sodhi saba levai, chāchi chiyā kari nāṣai re//2// je jana jāṁni jugati sūṁ tyāgaiṁ, tina kūṁ nija pada parasai re/ kāla na ṣāī marai nahīṁ kabahūṁ, dādū tina kūṁ darasai re//3//*

shared paradigm of the Nāth Siddha yoga and Sant bhakti. This is the *brahmn*-gnosis conducive to which is methodic discipline as strongly emphasized by Prithīnāth and other Nāth Siddhas as by the Sants. The disciplines of *joga jugati* and bhakti yoga form two differently accentuated, but not mutually exclusive methods in pursuit of this goal. Because both claim the liberating knowledge of *brahma* coupled with the appropriate yogic practice as their exclusive possession, they decry all established creeds as invalid.

Antecedents of Yoga Coupled with Bhakti

As is well known, the principle of knowledge arising from recognizing one's own self coupled with bhakti and yoga figured in Vaiṣṇava bhakti long before the period under review. As also acknowledged by Prithīnāth (*Sādhaparakhyā* v. 12), the *Bhagavadgītā* is, of course, a *locus classicus* for this, notably its twelfth chapter. It also appears in the third book of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, where it is named the teaching of Kapila.[22] In this it is elaborated in the spirit of Kṛṣṇa bhakti, and leads the yogi to the vision of the corporeal god. The actual execution of yoga taught in that text is as simple as that which is credited to Gorakhnāth and propagated by other Nāth Siddhas, including Prithīnāth as well as the Sants. Absent in Kapila's teaching is, however, the tantric anthropo-cosmology which was propagated by the various groups of yogis tracing their lines to Gorakhnāth and other Nāths and in which the Nāth Siddhas took an anti-Kaula position. Kapila is not mentioned by Prithīnāth, and by Sants very rarely in stereotyped lists of *bhakta*s. A mythical sage, he is invoked both by the Rāmānandī Nābhādās in his *Bhaktmāl* and by Rāghavdās in his Dādūpanthī remake of this. It is noteworthy that their remarks on Kapila differ in thrust. Nābhādās ranges him without further comment among the twelve main *bhakta*s of Hari, while around 1800 the commentator of Nābhādās' hagiography labels him briefly as the great teacher of Sāṁkhya. As for Rāghavdās, he describes him as the conqueror of all passions by yoga, the corporeal *brahma* in whom resounds the perpetual interior sound *(akhaṇḍa dhuni).* He does not mention his generally acknowledged role as a propagator of Sāṁkhya, perhaps because Sāṁkhya was tacitly understood to be coupled with yoga.[23]

The *Bhagavadgītā*'s, Kapila's or any other relevant teachings of the remote past cannot be related straightforwardly to the fused Nāth

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22 Chapters 25–33. Attention to this was drawn at Dvivedī 1998 [1966]: 198–200.
23 Nābhādās 1977, *chappay* 7 and pp. 64–5, resp.; Rāghavdās 1965, v. 23.

Siddha–Sant views emerging centuries later in the vernacular litera-
ture of Rajasthan. Such antecedents indicate, however, that this fusion
had existed long before it actually appeared in that particular Nāth
Siddha–Sant amalgam.[24]

The Epicentre of the Tenets Observed

How does the phenomenon of a fused Nāth Siddha–Sant tradition fit
geographically in the spectrum of aniconic religion in sixteenth- or
seventeenth-century Rajasthan? Here, the bhakti yoga of the relatively
simple form prevailing in Prithīnāth's treatises and congruent with GB
is shared and powerfully expressed in the early- or mid-sixteenth cen-
tury by the bhakti yogi Hardās (Hardās 2007), that is, at a time previous
to the rise of the Dādūpanth and the Nirañjanī sect. He is attested in
the local and oral history of Didvana (Nagaur District), which emerged
as the Nirañjanī epicentre. As for Nirañjanī history, this is entangled
with that of the Dādūpanth. The founding fathers of this added Hardās'
works to their canon and thereby acknowledged him as a forerunner
to their own sect. For Hardās, yoga and bhakti are coupled as means
and end, and they are of course the gift of the guru.

The principle of this is simple enough, but Hardās' poetry, similar
to that of GB, is rich in yogic tropes that need to be deciphered. As for
his longish treatises, these abound in self-comprised verses not nec-
essarily consecutively connected but rather forming vignettes, which
were, as one would imagine, commented on during performance.[25]
The principles of the methodical yogic discipline shared by Prithīnāth
and Hardās suggest the following: The Sant trusteeship over the Nāth
Siddha legacy formed in the region of Didvana, which falls within the
sphere of action of the early Dādūpanthīs. Dādū himself was praised
by his own disciples as the most accomplished yogi, and yogic concepts
run through the works also of these.[26] These Sants were practitioners

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24 A previous witness thereof is the Maharashtrian *bhakta* Jñāndev or the several
   teachers known by this name (Kiehnle 1997: 2–6).

25 For translated samples of Hardās' compositions, see Horstmann 2021b: 164–8;
   Horstmann and Rajpurohit 2023: 95–108. The fact that independent verses,
   strung together to form longish texts of instruction by the authors themselves
   or their redactors, reflects a homiletic practice founded on these rather than
   on abstract doctrinal issues. This can be easily compared with the ongoing
   homiletic practice and calls for analysis.

26 One could name Bakhanāṁ and Rajab. The works of these remain largely
   untranslated, with the exception of the *sākhīs* of Rajab as anthologized by

of yoga by rule rather than exception. As for Hardās, several groups reportedly claimed him as an ancestral figure (SG, p. 385, *savaiyā* 1.5). However, neither he nor any Nāth Siddha, nor other yogic author, nor the Sants of Rajasthan active at his time appear in the Rāmānandī *Bhaktmāl* of Nābhādās. This cannot have happened by accidental omission, for the ways of Rāmānandīs, whose stronghold was Galta (now part of Jaipur), and those other traditions crossed. One of the causes of this rather seems to be that the Rāmānandīs and the Sants of Marwar differed in constituencies and views. What unfolds before our eyes are distinct ways of negotiating a formerly widely shared tradition. A number of aspects of the relationship between the Rāmānandīs and Sants of Marwar seem noteworthy.

1) Consider the place of the Nāth Siddha tradition in these. Principles similar to this were pronounced by the yogically inclined Vaiṣṇava *bhakta* Hardās and were endorsed by the Dādūpanth. At that time, the Nirañjanī sect was still *in statu nascendi*.

2) Judging by Nābhādās' *Bhaktmāl*, Rāmānandīs ignored the Nāth Siddhas. Given the tantric-yogic profile of the Vaiṣṇava founder of the seat of Galta, who in his turn deposed yogis who held Galta before him, Rāmānandī affinity to the yogic tradition cannot be questioned (Burchett 2019). This points to differences between the Sants and the Rāmānandīs regarding the right kind of yoga. The Nāth Siddha yoga espoused by the Marwari Sants distanced itself expressly from tantric yoga, while no debates on right or wrong yoga are recorded from the Rāmānandīs of the period.

3) The Dādūpanthīs held Rāmānand in high esteem and also disseminated in their manuscripts compositions of Rāmānandī authors. Their keen awareness of Rāmānandīs is above all revealed by the fact that the hagiography of Nābhādās served the Dādūpanthī Rāghavdās as the blueprint for his own hagiography.

4) The Rāmānandī Nābhādās lists many of the Sant authors preceding Dādū and transmitted in the Dādūpanthī manuscripts. While he does not provide citations from the texts of these, he lists them in sequential clusters for a considerable part similar to those found in Dādūpanthī manuscripts (Horstmann 2021b: 65–6). This points to a previously established tradition once shared by Sants and Rāmānandīs (or the Vaiṣṇavas who later on emerged as the Rāmānandī sect). The fault line between Sants

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himself (Callewaer 1978). For more translated samples of the poetry of both these authors, see Horstmann and Rajpurohit 2023: 119–43.

and Rāmānandīs does not lie at the divide of non-iconic versus iconic worship, for the Rāmānandī bhakti portfolio comprised both forms of bhakti.

5) Different attitudes towards Muslim *bhakta*s prevail. Dādūpanthīs, who formed a mixed Hindu–Muslim constituency, emphasized that their faith was above the Hindu–Muslim divide. They also transmitted Sufi authors in their manuscripts, these too – like the Nāth Siddhas – assigned a distinct category in these.

Finally, in 1660 Rāghavdās ranged these in his *Bhaktmāl* under the rubric 'Muslim devotees' *(yavan bhakt).* For Hardās, Kabīr is a paragon of bhakti, but he does not specifically ponder the relationship between Hindus and Muslims or the ideal of a devotion above the Hindu-Muslim divide. The Nirañjanī authors of a slightly later period do neither. This caused no split between Dādūpanthīs and Nirañjanīs, but in the decades between the death of Dādū and that of his prominent Muslim disciples – torchbearers of Dādū's principle of the interior religion beyond and above Hindu and Muslim doctrine – the bent of intellectuals in the sect became more Hinduized, which may have been abetted by the spiralling decline of the authority of the *mahant* of Naraina after the death of Dādū's successor Garībdās in 1636. This Hinduization is visible in the sadhu community of Fatehpur in Shekhawati, the most distinguished Sant monastic settlement of the seventeenth century which was populated by sadhus of mixed Dādūpanthī–Nirañjanī parentage from Didvana and elsewhere. No Muslim sadhus are recorded there. While the Dādūpanthī bhakti above the Hindu and Muslim divide continued being emphasized in poetry, with rare cases of engagement with Sufi philosophy, weighty long-term intellectual programmes emerged in the ashram. These were inspired by Sanskrit Vaiṣṇava literature or literary aesthetics connected with Sanskrit, very much of the kind otherwise typical of the period. This suggests a gradual erosion of Sant intellectual interest in the Muslim legacy, although into the early eighteenth century Muslims continued being conspicuous in the Dādūpanth. As for Rāmānandī hagiography, Muslims were irrelevant to it, with the exception of Kabīr, who figures in it as the low-caste *bhakta* blessed with initiation by the Brahman Rāmānand – saying more about Rāmānand's catholicism than about Kabīr's Muslimhood.

The consolidation of the different sectarian attitudes briefly delineated can hardly be seen in isolation from patronage systems. These are far from being sufficiently explored, but their dominant features can be at least painted in broad strokes. Dādūpanthīs and the sadhus, from

among whom the Nirañjanīs of Didvana originated in the seventeenth century, enjoyed a powerful merchant-caste patronage, though not to the exclusion of other patrons, such as land-holding castes and nobility. In Shekhawati, patronage came also from the Hindu–Muslim Chauhan rulers of the Kyāmkhānī dynasty. Against this, the Rāmānandīs of Galta had since the early-sixteenth century made themselves indispensable as religious guarantors of the rule of the Kachvāhās of Amer (Jaipur). The royal legitimation which they helped uphold was formulated in unalloyed Vaiṣṇava terms. Expanding farther afield in Rajasthan, Rāmānandīs also tapped benefits from the castes and communities involved in the salt trade and thereby became competitors for patronage of the various Sant groups. Varying local conditions must thus have shaped the networks of sadhus and patrons and played a role in the drawing of sectarian boundaries of which the micro-historical examination remains largely to be explored.

ORCID®

Monika Horstmann ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4789-7842

Abbreviations

GB	see *Gorakhbānī* 1971
GopS	see Gopāldās 1993
MS. Sharma 3190	Sanjay Sharma Museum and Research Institute (Śrī Sañjay Śarmā Saṅgrahālay evam Śodh Sansthān), Jaipur
MS. VB 34	Vidyābhūṣaṇ Collection, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jaipur
RajS	see Rajab 2010
SG	see Sundardās vs 1993

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13
Significance of Wandering in the Indian Romances

Radosław Tekiela ⓘ

Introduction

The romances[1] of Hindi literature are traditionally associated with a genre called *premākhyān* ('a love story') that contains oral folk narratives as well as tales from the repertoire of – among others – Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian literatures. The genre distances itself from both South Asian and outside literary traditions, and achieves its own identity (de Brujin 2012: 21). These stories very often feature idealized tales of princes pining for, and undertaking journeys and trials to reach, their beloved princesses.

Premākhyān as a genre is often viewed through the prism of its main works (such as *Cāndāyan*, *Padmāvat*, *Mṛgāvatī*, *Madhumālatī*, and *Citrāvalī*) with distinct Sufi undertones, and thus *premākhyāna*s have traditionally been analysed primarily as vehicles for religious meanings. Śukla postulated that poems of this genre should be interpreted

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1 The term 'romance' has multiple meanings. Fuchs 2004: 3–11 provides an in-depth discussion of the various meanings of the term, as well as her own definition of romance as 'concatenation of both narratological elements and literary topoi, including idealization, the marvelous, narrative delay, wandering, and obscured identity, that (...) both pose a quest and complicate it' accepted by this chapter.
In the case of Hindī literature the genre of *premākhyān*, as well as various tales considered similar (cf. McGregor 2021: 150 for remarks on *Maujdīn rī bārtā*) are also of similar nature, albeit Fuchs' definition does not limit romance to a particular genre.

allegorically and that their metaphorical meaning is closely aligned with the symbolism in the text (1946: 94–115). This view was influenced by a symbolic key added to some Sufi works that may have been a later addition rather than a core part of the text (de Brujin 2012: 20). Allegorical interpretation subordinated romances to their symbolic meanings which were esoteric and religious.

More recent scholarship has accepted that many romances do not contain any notion of Sufism (McGregor 2021: 60–3, 148). There has also been a shift in research into the main works of religious significance. Recent scholarship, e.g., Behl (2014) and de Brujin (2012), attempts to break away from Śukla's view on symbolism and offers a more nuanced view of the genre. Behl offers a view that romances have contextual meanings, and the religious meaning emerged in specific, religious contexts rather than being always the primary meaning of the text (Behl 2014: 288–9). De Brujin notes the interplay of worldly and spiritual patronage, and the role of the poet as a mediator (2012: 14). While this new research presents a significant change, it is still concerned primarily with the religious significance of some romances. According to Behl, contextual meanings are not exclusively religious in nature and he primarily tries to reconstruct the contextual meaning that occurred during the Sufi gatherings (2014: 284–5).

What is basically absent, however, is an approach that studies Indian romances as romances and focuses on the structure as well as the typical elements of romances, while not assuming their religious significance. An approach presupposing only that the particular poem is a romance is applicable whether or not it is regarded as Sufi, and also allows us to better appreciate what it is telling us. Thus, this chapter, while recognizing that religious resonances form a significant part of the tellability[2] of many works, attempts to show that a focus on the texts themselves (rather than on specific theories of their religious significance) is productive.

This point will be elucidated by providing examples from the three poems by Jān (*Rūpmañjarī* [1627], *Kāmrānī* [1634], and *Tamīm Ansārī* [1644])[3] that illustrate benefits gained in this way. 'Jān' was a pseudonym of Nyāmat Ḵẖān. He was a prolific Braj Bhasha poet

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2 For more on tellability as a concept, see, for example, Baroni 2011/2014. It is important to note that tellability does not concern only the written texts, but also oral transmission, and what Culler calls 'narrative display texts' (1997: 25–6, 91–2). We have no direct way of knowing what the motivations of reciters of Jān's poems were, but we can make an assumption based on their characteristics, as this chapter attempts to show.

3 Dating is according to colophons in his works (Lāhoṭī 2003: 42, 65, 94).

(fl. 1614–1664),[4] the author of several dozen known works. He was a member of the Qāyam K̲h̲ānī dynasty of Fatehpur in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan. The dynasty, according to Jān's genealogical poem, descends from the Chauhan prince, Qāyam K̲h̲ān, who converted to Islam.[5] This unique background means that he was steeped in both the Rajasthani and pan-Islamic literary cultures; the way romance allowed him to reconcile divergent literary sensibilities will be demonstrated in the analysis of his poems.

Menāriyā notes that most of Jān's poems belong to the genre of love stories *(premākhyān)* (1999: 125). This genre is often rendered as 'romance' in English literature (cf. McGregor 2021: 60, 148). Jān was a member of the Chishti *silsilā* (a Sufi religious order) initiated by *śaikh* Muhammad Chishtī (Gaurāṇ and Gaurāṇ 2007: 65).

The published poems are based on a series of manuscripts published around the fall of Qāyam K̲h̲ānī rule in Fatehpur.[6] They repeatedly mention one scribe: Fatehcand Tārācand of Ḍīḍavānā (near Nagaur).[7] The meagre information about the circulation of Jān's poem available to us shows that his poems were most probably recited outside of Fatehpur.

The Understanding of Romance

It should be noted that some researchers have raised doubts about the assessment of Jān's poems as *premākhyāna*s on account of their lack of philosophical sophistication and metaphorical structure (Śarma 2003: 9–10).[8] While the present author does not accept such a view, the irrelevance of such considerations regarding the precise genre of the works will become apparent once the approach to romance taken by this chapter has been explained.

Romance has been widely considered archetypical since the scholarship of Frye (Behl 2014: 283). This has led to attempts to create a framework for work with romances across multiple genres, and to appreciate elements of romance occurring in non-romance genres (like the novel).

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4   The dates are based on Menāriyā (1999: 125).
5   More on the history of Qāyam K̲h̲ānī dynasty and Shekhawati region can be found in Miśra (1984, 2018). The genealogical poem in question is in Miśra 2007.
6   Jān 2003a: 66 gives a date of 1714; Talbot 2009: 240 maintains that Qāyam K̲h̲ānī lost Fatehpur in the 1730s.
7   Jān 2003a: 66, Siṁghavī 2005: 74, 114, 200.
8   This commentary follows the Śukla tradition of metaphorical interpretation mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Therefore, recent studies on romance have developed a framework for work on texts showing elements of romance regardless of genre considerations. In the words of Fuchs (2004: 2), this approach is more concerned with 'what romance does to text' rather than 'what romance is'.

Such an approach has been common in more recent studies of romance (whether understood as a form, as a strategy, or in some other way). The romance could be characterized as 'a concatenation of both narratological elements and literary topoi, including idealization, the marvelous, narrative delay, wandering, and obscured identity, that (…) both pose a quest and complicate it' (Fuchs 2004: 9). This definition builds on the earlier definition by Parker (1979: 4), formulated as the 'form that simultaneously seeks and postpones a particular end, revelation, or object'. According to both these definitions, a romance may show up in a literary work of almost any genre – and it is this understanding of romance that this chapter shares.

That does not mean that this approach denies the historicity and specific social context possessed by a specific romance tradition. On the contrary, research on romance emphasizes that elements of romance carry changed meanings in different literary and historical contexts (Fuchs 2004: 2, 21–2, 26–9, etc.). Nonetheless, the precise boundaries of the *premākhyāna* genre are irrelevant as long as Jān's work contains elements of romance as a strategy. This chapter will show how it applies to Jān's work.

It should be noted that this understanding of romance is not controversial in research on the Indian romances. Behl (2014: 282) referenced Parker, acknowledged the viability of this approach towards romance, and noted the romance as archetypical. However, this chapter aims to extend their limited discussion to a focus on the special characteristics of romance and their interplay.

Types of Wandering in Jān's works

This chapter is especially concerned with 'wandering', as defined by Fuchs and Parker, and it will show how its workings interfere with other elements of romance listed in Fuchs' definition. However, since 'wandering' is a polysemous word, it will be useful to explicate three of its meanings touched upon in this chapter, namely: a physical journey of a hero; the wandering narrative; and being lost (in the ethical sense).

While the 'wandering' may be a physical journey – and the journeys of heroes are indeed very important for romance – 'wandering'

is much more than just an act of physical journey. It has been noted that wandering both poses and delays certain resolutions. This reveals a very significant feature of romance, and a second understanding of 'wandering' in this chapter: a wandering narrative. Romance often appears in a series of episodes that do not appear to be 'causally' connected with each other in any strong way. This was at the heart of the classical sense of romance, that is, in the genres of Greek and chivalric romance, as a subordinate genre to the 'ordered' epic.

Parker (1979: 23–53) has shown that authors usually have full control of an 'errant' narrative even while they bemoan their lack of control over it. While romance defies expectation, its authors often use 'unordered' narrative to convey important meanings. Parker (1979: 17–19) also noted that romance is often posited as 'errant', an observation she made on the basis of Western literary culture. This criticism, however, was not limited to aesthetic considerations, but was also supported by the ethical condemnation of erring by the Christian tradition. This constitutes an *ethical wandering*: a type of situation in which the hero has strayed away from his journey and succumbed to the (narrative) stasis. The reason is often gendered: he may have been tempted away from his goal by the (primarily female) tempters, or because of other reasons (Parker 1979: 25–30, 66).[9]

While such argumentation is obviously specific to European thought, the sense of 'being lost' as a metaphor for moral erring is hardly confined to European culture. It would therefore be premature to assume that it never occurs in the Indian context, especially since Hindi words such as *bhram* or *gum* contain both meanings.

Seductive Statues and Errant Heroes: An Ethical Erring

Jān occasionally uses a metaphor of being lost in the ethical sense. We will examine two stories where such an episodic metaphor occurs.

Kamrānī (1634) is a short story about prince Prītamdās and his four friends, who all have different livelihoods. During their journey in Kamarupa, the prince spots a statue of Kamrānī in a temple and instantly falls in love with it. Since Prītamdās refuses to leave the statue of his newfound beloved, his friends undertake to win Kamrānī for him by themselves. Kamrānī had been forcibly abducted by king Rām

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9   This was sometimes paralleled by the accusation of the text itself becoming errant.

of Kamarupa[10] after being refused by and warring with the princess' family. The friends use the skills each of them has[11] to reach Kamrānī and free her. Prītamdās and Kamrānī unite, while Rām commits suicide when his plans are shattered (Jān 2003a).

Rūpmañjarī (1628) is a story about prince Gyān Siṅgh, his friend Nyān Siṅgh, and princess Rūpmañjarī. Prince Gyān is an auspicious youth conceived after the asceticism of his father. He excels at everything. Once, after a hunt and deep discussions, he falls asleep and dreams of a beautiful lady. As soon as he wakes up, he is smitten by longing until he calms down, asks his friend for advice, and subsequently resolves to undertake asceticism to see her once again. He thus is granted a dream about the princess, and this time he asks her questions about her name, her home city, and her family. Though a princess, Rūpmañjarī gives him answers in the form of riddles; the prince confers with his friend and solves them. Gyān and Nyān undertake the journey to Rūpmañjarī's home city, where they find her statue. They have a chance meeting with an ascetic and, subsequently, Gyān attempts to elope with princess Rūpmañjarī. Prince Gyān is almost caught by Rūpmañjarī's wrathful father, but an intercession from the yogi convinces the king that Gyān is a mighty *gandharva* and scares him off (Jān 2003b).

Prītamdās comes across Kāmrānī's stone image during his journey through Kamarupa, while Gyān Siṅgh confirms Rūpmañjarī's existence (and presence in a city) when he finds her statue. Thanks to their friends, the princes succeed in freeing the heroines: Gyān Siṅgh elopes with his beloved from her father's home, while Prītamdās' friends free the heroine from captivity by her father's enemy, the vile king Rām.

In both cases, when the princes become enchanted by the statue, they subsequently refuse to move away from it. This is how it is presented in *Rūpmañjarī*:

He saw with his own eyes a statue [looking] just like the woman
    from [his] dream,

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10 This is most certainly not the yogic *kāmrūp*, since the name of Rām's kingdom is given as Kāvrū and not Kāmrūp in Jān 2003a: 45. This chapter agrees with editors of Jān who identify Kāvrū with a historic kingdom in North-East India. It may be similar case as usage of extended Mughal world (e.g., Nepal) in *Citrāvalī*, cf. Orsini 2017: 22–3.

11 The merchant provides money; the gardener befriends a servant of his caste and ascertains Kamrānī's whereabouts;, a carpenter makes statuettes [of the prince and princess] that entrance Kamrānī when they are smuggled in; and the digger digs a tunnel to Kamrānī's prison.

[he] rejoiced and swooned and Nyān Siṅgh helped him up.

When Nyān Siṅgh saw the sculpture, he said many times: 'Your
  eyes are blessed',

[but then] the prince started to worship it like a priest worships
  an idol.[12]

The story of *Kāmrānī* has an even more scathing description:

The prince saw the statue of a woman and became [its] slave at
  that moment,

[he] forgot all about obeisance and offerings, as if before [his]
  eyes appeared thousands of flowers.

From the moment [he] saw this woman of incomparable
  beauty, he became [completely] absorbed [in thinking of
  her].

The prince forgot about Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva.[13]

The statues supplant the deities, a consequence which is not regarded
positively. Jān follows such episodes with a reproach, as for example,
in *Rūpmañjarī*:

Nyān Siṅgh said: Gyān, why are you in its service and praising it?
It does not have eyes that could see you,

nor does its ears hear anything, even if you would say it a thou-
  sand times.

How would [it] say anything without a tongue? [So] it will not
  give [you even] a single answer,

it does not walk with us, nor will it place a hand on [your] head.
  Why are you in its service and praising it?[14]

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12 *jaisī dekhī hī tiya sapanaĩ , mūrati vahai driga apanaĩ,*
  rījhi kūvara murachā gati āi, layau ucāi nyānasiṅgha.
  nyānasiṅgha hū̃ mūrati hera, dhāna drigu kūvara kahyau bahu bera,
  lāgyau kūvara karana uhi seva jyau pujārau pūjata deva. Jān 2003b: 29.
13 *yeka tīya kī dekhī mūrata, kūvara bikãnyau uhī̃ mahūrata,*
  nimasakāra pūja saba bhūlī, driga āgai sarasaū sī phūlī.
  magana bhayau jaba tẽ taki, bāma anūpama bhesa,
  bhūli gayau hai kūvara kaũ, brahmā bisna maheśa. Jān 2003a: 45–6.
14 *nyānasiṅgha bolyau suni gyã̄na, kahā seva tū̃ karata bakhã̄na,*
  yāke to naīnā nahī̃, jo dekhe tuva vora,
  nā sravanani kachu sunata hai, jau tū bakahi karora.
  rasana binā bolibau dūtara, yeka bāta kaũ dẽta na uttara,
  calata na saṅga na dai sira pã̄ni, kahā seva tū karata bakhã̄ni. Jān 2003b: 29–30.

This reproach is ultimately successful in *Rūpmañjarī*, since the prince eventually agrees to abandon the statue (Jān 2003b: 30).

The language used in the cited passages is somewhat evocative of a lovestruck lover, and on many levels it follows the romance traditions of portraying women as the agents of the stasis[15] (Fuchs 2004: 17–20, 48, 69, etc.). Heroes are lost and incapable of continuing their journey when they are entrapped by a temptress. However, the delay caused by the statue is a little different: the statue does not actively tempt the hero with pleasures but rather misleads him into identifying it with his newfound beloved. Thus, the detour stems from the obscured identity of the statue and the mistaken assumption that the statue is the heroine herself. The pleas of friends and helpers are in fact reminders that their identities are in fact separate.

Why does this mistaken identity matter for the worldview expressed in Jān's works? The imagery is much more reminiscent of a fervent worshipper than just a lover. The statue becomes the sole object of worship. Jān lived in a milieu in which worship of idols was common. In such a framework, there would be no mistaken identity: because the god would be one with his idol and thus the identity of the statue would be one with the deity. However, Jān elaborates (through the mouths of characters in his poems) that this is not the case.

The imagery used here is undoubtedly religious in nature. The princes do not just look at the statues wistfully but worship them. The scene in *Kāmrānī* even takes place in the temple where king Rām has set up a statue to worship the heroine (Jān 2003a: 49). This belongs rather to the realm of worship than the poetics of affection. Moreover, while Jān does not often weave deep Sufi metaphors, he still operates in the context of the hero's search for his beloved, a search with religious significance. Once we accept that the association between the heroine and the divine would be natural to Jān, the whole episode takes on more meaning.

In quoted fragments the statues are said to be specifically blind, deaf, and incapable of perceiving the feelings and entreaties of the princes. Interestingly, this negates the very attributes that idols should have for their worshippers to be heard, thus forming a further pointed criticism of idolatry. The entire episode can be interpreted as a statement that God himself cannot be reached through engaging with intermediaries like idols, and that success can be met only through direct worship. It condemns the practice: by engaging in it, the heroes err

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15 The stasis here refers to the narrative force that delays the resolution of the narrative.

(bhram) away from the narrative that implicitly is that of a Sufi seeker. The narrative tension inherent in wandering is important here: more than just wasting their time, the heroes risk becoming slaves of stasis and never finding their way to their true beloved.

It is interesting to note that in one case stasis succeeds (relatively). Prītamdās of *Kāmrānī* is heedless of admonitions from his four friends and continues to cling to the statue's feet, so that he is almost absent from the subsequent narrative. He takes no part in the search for the imprisoned Kāmrānī or in the plot to free her from an evil suitor who killed her father. The friends take action by themselves and it is through their effort that she is finally delivered to him. Only when he glances at the face of the real Kāmrānī can he act again (Jān 2003a: 48, 54, 59–60). The danger inherent in succumbing to stasis further shows the futility of the hero's idolatry and serves to portray idol worship as more than just a distraction, but a risk that threatens to destroy the entire endeavour. If not for Prītamdās' friends, the real Kāmrānī would have remained a slave of her captor Rām.[16]

There is some ambiguity, however, as far as the narrative structure is concerned. The discovery of the statue starts the plot with Kāmrānī and confirms the presence of the titular princess in Rūpmañjarī.[17] Thus, the statues are necessary for the narrative structure of the poems, while also being distracting and dangerous to the princes' resolve.

The essential elements of this episode – the worshipful imagery, the idols, and finally the friends' words – seem to imply that Jān uses the metaphor of 'erring' to speak about idolatry. While the prince can benefit from the direction that the statues provide during some stages of his journey, he ought to reject it at a later stage. This points to a certain ambivalence. Possibly, Jān sought to subordinate contemporary practices of worship through idols (such as, for example, *saguṇa bhakti*) to his philosophy but deny their significance. Such concerns, however, fall outside the scope of this chapter.

Although these episodes are not very prominent in the poem, their presence demonstrates that wandering as their structural element translates into a fuller understanding of the work as a whole.

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16 Notably, Rām also engages in idolatry as he himself commissioned the statue and is said to worship it. Jān 2003b: 49.

17 I am grateful to the reviewer for this valuable insight.

Identities and Religious Answers:
Wandering and Wondrous Narratives

Tamīm Ansārī is a poem that concerns the misfortunes of Tamīm Ansārī, companion of the Prophet Muhammad. This character is more widely known as Tamīm ad-Dārī, the 'intrepid traveller' of the Arabic tradition.[18] His story has some religious significance as it is treated like a hadith about the figure of the false Messiah in the Islamic tradition.[19]

Tamīm has been spirited away by a flying jinn *(pret)* from Medina and his wife is unable to find him. His family has to fend for itself for four years before they can make ends meet. Then his wife eventually asks caliph Umar ibn al Khittab (referred to as Umar Khitāb) for help, but the money she is given is eventually depleted. Three and a half years later, Tamīm's wife applies for the right to marry again and is granted her request by Umar. The following night Tamīm returns amid a storm, and a confrontation with his wife and her new husband ensues. Although Tamīm wins, this does not imply that his family, or alarmed neighbours, are sure of his identity. Though no one recognizes him, his knowledge of matters in the neighborhood ultimately convinces people that he is not a returned bad spirit. Tamīm is advised to apply to Umar's court for his (erstwhile) wife's return. The next morning, Tamīm arrives at court and begins his story, aiming to get his wife back. The story itself is constructed from short, relatively unconnected episodes. It culminates in the sighting of the 'false Messiah' (Dajjāl) and Tamīm's subsequent return to Medina on a storm cloud.

Śarma (2003: 9) presents a traditional reading of *Tamīm Ansārī* in which Tamīm is understood as a typical Sufi seeker.[20] Śarma's interpretation shows the problems inherent in reading the poem in a way that ignores its romance elements. Interpreting *Tamīm Ansārī* as a purely metaphorical story of Sufi spiritual quest has proven impossible. To make metaphors fit, Śarma had to rely on details that are not mentioned in the extant text of the poem. Such is the case with the *pret* that Śarma holds to symbolize ignorance on the account of its black colour. It begs the question as to why such an important detail would be totally

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18 The name 'Tamīm Ansārī' seems to have originated in Persian poetry where he is called both Tamīm Ansārī and Tamīm Dārī (Ethé 1896–1904: 322). On the literary traditions surrounding ad-Dārī, see, for example, Bellino 2009.

19 This hadith is very exceptional as it is transmitted on the authority of Tamīm himself rather than the Prophet.

20 Its translation has been appended at the end of this chapter.

omitted from the extant text.[21] However, this conjecture is still more plausible than Śarma's other assertion about metaphorical meaning: that the hero's wandering started with a sin because he had decided to unlawfully abandon his family. There is only one passage in the poem that explains the circumstances surrounding Tamīm's vanishing, and it reads as follows:

> I told my wife: 'Give me water' [but] she laughed and paid no
>   attention at all,
> Angered, I looked at the pond and then immediately left my
>   home and went [there].[22]

While it is theoretically possible to interpret the verb *calyau* as an indication that Tamīm is about to abandon his family, it seems more probable that he just went to the pond to fetch water himself. This reading would also avoid contradicting the Arabic traditions that Tamīm is captured during ablutions before sexual intercourse with his wife (Bellino 2009: 202). When attention is paid to such details, the neatly ordered metaphor falls apart. However, the main flaw in Śarma's interpretation is that, in order to emphasize the coded and metaphorical nature of *Tamīm Ansārī*, he omits a great deal of explicit religious teaching.

While the more traditional interpretation fails, reading *Tamīm Ansārī* with its romance features in mind will highlight its explicit religious significance and explain where it lies. Moreover, such a reading will allow for an appreciation of the complex narrative structure designed to provide enjoyment to the audience.

And where is wandering in *Tamīm Ansārī*? The answer is rather obvious: for the entirety of his tale Tamīm wanders in search of a way home. Yet, as has already been said, in the case of romance wandering usually 'both pose[s] a quest and complicate[s] it' (Fuchs 2004: 9). Would this still be relevant? What other quests would be connected to Tamīm's journey?

As has been mentioned, one of the defining elements of the romance is 'obscured identity': Tamīm himself acquires such an identity. In this

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21 Obviously, there are some combinations where colours can be understood just from context, as when mentioning the common plants, birds, etc.; it does not seem that *pret* would follow similar conventions. Moreover, Śarmā appears to follow the conventional reading where it is understood that romances contain coded language, and it seems doubtful that coded language would be purposeful if it was omitted.

22 *Maĩ tiya kaũ bhākhyau dai pānī, una hāsi kaĩ dī ānākānī,*
maĩ risāi kaĩ tākyau tāla, ghara tẽ nikasi calyau tatkāla. Jān 2003c: 72.

context, it is important to note that there are two texts in the poem: the primary text about events in Medina and an embedded narrative of Tamīm's journey. Although events in Medina have no obvious narrator, they are seen from the perspective of Tamīm's wife. One learns only about her side of the story, meaning that Tamīm was apparently taken away by the *pret* and never came back. Even after he eventually reappears, the narrative continues to present information from the point of view of Tamīm's wife. Instead of specifying that Tamīm returned on a storm cloud, the description of the circumstances is as follows:

> From there came a raincloud shining with lightnings,
> suddenly a very dark night came on, you could not see anything
>   even if you strained your eyes.[23]

Moreover, this passage not only reveals what Tamīm's wife knows, but also creates a mood conducive to further depictions of the hero. In fact, very soon afterwards follows a description of Tamīm that conveys a premonition of evil forces at play:

> With long nails and body hair [as if] on fire he looked like a *pret*
>   in some disguise,
> his wife screamed in fear then, and [her] new husband came to
>   kill [Tamīm].[24]

This is not a mere description of a stranger: it is meant to evoke an image of a ravenous *pret* and serves to suggest that the returned hero may not be who he seems to be. When Jān notes: 'the wife felt as if it was a returned *pret*' (Jān 2003c: 69), the audience does not know any better. Other circumstances serve to further the wife's version of events: none of the neighbours really recognizes Tamīm and, when the hero is finally sent to Usman's court, they do not hope for any particular verdict. The audience knows nothing other than the wife's claims that all Tamīm's knowledge could have been stolen by an evil spirit.

The consistency with which these efforts are undertaken – Jān does not once move the focus from the wife's point of view – marks this obscuration as intentional. Thus, Jān understood that the obscured identity of

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23 *tāhī mẽ āī ek ghaṭā, barasata camakata dāmina ghaṭā,*
    bhaī bahuta andhiyārī raina, sūjhata kachu na pasāraĩ naina. Jān 2003c: 68.
24 *gura nakha roma ughāraĩ āga, lagyau preta hi kaisau sãga,*
    tiya ḍarakaĩtaba sora macāyau, nayau puruṣa mārana kaũ āyau. Jān 2003c: 70.

Tamīm is significant enough to warrant planning the narrative frame around it. Once Tamīm's identity is established as suspect, he is sent to Umar's court. As the court is a place where the caliph gives verdicts, it is to be understood that Umar will issue a verdict on the identity of the hero. A resolution is promised, but before that a testimonial is needed. Thus, it is through the story which Tamīm tells that his true identity may be established. At the same time, however, the misfortunes and tribulations of the hero are the main source of delay in the poem. Thus, Tamīm's journey leads to the resolution – because the testimony is necessary for Umar's ruling. At the same time, such wondering postpones the said resolution because of endless hold-ups and detours; it clearly creates the tension in which the audience would be left wondering about the truth.

The structure is of note: the poem is composed of short episodes that constantly morph into one another. There is almost nothing that carries over from one episode to another, and that makes summarizing the plot inapposite. The various twists of the plot are meant to be part of what constitutes the tellability of this poem. The audience may lose itself in its wandering through preternatural landscapes. It is through this wondrous journey that the tale of Tamīm ad-Dārī is known: it is here that this hero may prove himself to be an 'intrepid traveller'. The unpredictability means that the audience is not privy to the knowledge of how the episode ends.

One short fragment conveniently illustrates the unpredictability of the plot. The fragment is preceded by an episode in which Tamīm's ship sinks and his raft eventually makes it to the shore, but the next verses bring a drastic change of mood:

> [Then] I came off [the raft] and did not tarry at all, I came for-
>   ward to one mountain,
> I climbed [it] and jumped off [it] so I would die – but I didn't die.
> [Then] I became angry and went into the forest (...).[25]

There was no prior indication that Tamīm would be dejected enough to try to end his life. Moreover, these circumstances are never discussed again nor are they part of a wider story in the tradition of Tamīm ad-Dārī. It seems that its primary function is to further create narrative tension. The episode is situated just before the story culminates with Tamīm meeting with the prophets Ilyās and Dajjāl, both of whom have roles to play

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25 *haũ tab utaryau karī na bāra, āgaĩ āyau yeka pahāra, tā ūpara haũ caṛhi kaĩ*
   paryau, marana heta pai nāhi na maryau. taba uṭhi bana me gayo risāya (...).
   Jān 2003c: 88.

in Islamic eschatology. The doubts about the hero's identity culminate in this episode: the listeners may be expecting the hero to achieve the tasks ascribed to him, but such interruptions may shatter their confidence.

So, is the audience truly meant to doubt in Tamīm? It is rather doubtful that Jān's intention would be to besmirch a holy man of his religious tradition. However, while it would be almost unthinkable to doubt the religious authority of an esteemed Companion of the Prophet, it is not impossible that Jān would confront a Tamīm-imposter with a truly returned Tamīm. Thus, the obscured identity does not mean the audience distrusts Tamīm's authority, but rather is unsure of how the story will proceed. It amplifies the audience's enjoyment without compromising the religious significance of the hero and his journey. This is significant since the narrative tension makes romance enjoyable to listen to, but there is potentially an additional, religious rationale for telling the story. Rather than being obscured by metaphors, however, this knowledge is presented outright. Tamīm often makes inquiries and is given explanations, but they are framed as an explanation of what has transpired earlier:

> Trembling [with fear], I returned to the hermitage and
>   explained what I saw,
> [and then] I fell at his feet and said many times: 'Please, explain
>   to me all the secrets!
> Who was the holy man [Brahman] who sent me to you? [And]
>   who are you who have shown me so much love?
> Who was this old woman who has uttered the dreadful words?'
> 'This [one] who sent you to me was Iliyās,
> I am Khidr[26] myself and I will fulfill all the desires of your mind.
> The adorned woman you saw was Lakṣmī whose work is to
>   deceive everyone,
> [and] those words that fell into your ears, were Yājūj's[27] words
>   reaching you.'[28]

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26 Both Khidr and Ilyas are connected with Islamic eschatology. They are associated with helping people in desperate situations, they may have drunk the water of life to attain immortality, and they are said to possibly appear at the end times. They appear as two holy men whom Tamīm meets – and they help him reach Medina (Wensinck and Vajda 2012; Franke 2022).

27 Yājūj, together with Mājūj, form a pair of evil beings (or evil people) associated with the eschatological narrative in Islam. They are said to be walled off behind a wall that they will only be able to overcome during the last days, when they are prophesized to ravage Earth (Cook 2013).

28 *kãpata āyau purakhā pāsa, jo dekhyau so karyau prakāsa,*
   bahuraũ kahyau lāgi kẽ pãi, bhedu sabei dījai sujhāi.

The obscured identity appears once again: the supernatural incidents happening may be as much a mystery for the audience as they are for Tamīm, and so there is a need for an explanation–resolution. What is a lesson on eschatology also becomes the answer to the mystery in the story that the audience may yearn for. It forms a literary strategy: it is worth asking what purpose would it serve.

It should be remembered that Jān shared sensibilities with people of his milieu, but there was an ideological and political difference with regard to the predominantly Hindu milieu pervading Shekhawati, as he himself acknowledged in *Kāyam Khã rāso* (Talbot 2009: 223; Miśra 2007: 23, 26).[29] *Tamīm Ansārī*, however, is a story of religious significance.[30] It seems doubtful, however, that the cultural milieu of small Fatehpur supported highly specialized contexts, such as gatherings of Sufi initiates capable of elucidating various significant religious points relevant to poems like *Mirigāvatī*. It is far more likely that a possible recitation took place before a mixed audience, and at least part of it would have been motivated by non-religious concerns. Thus, Behl's framework of contextual meaning would prove insufficient (2014: 282–4, 288–9).[31]

The lack of specialized contexts may present a problem. While an author initiated in Sufi *silsilā* may be motivated to convey eschatological details (as the story of Tamīm is understood to be a hadith),

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brahu ko jin tum pāsa paṭhāyau, tum ko jita hitu itau janāyau,
kaun taki maĩ bridhā nārī, kina bānī bhaivanta ucārī.
Jina paṭhayau tū mere pāsa, vahu to hai bhāī Iliyāsa,
khvāja khijara haũ āpuna āhi, tere mana kī pujaũ cāhi.
gahinau sajē ju dekhī bāma, hai lachimī chala hī saũ kāma,
vahu hai sabada paryau tuhi kāna, vahu yājūja sabda pahicāna. Jān 2003c: 92.

29 While we should avoid essentializing the (declaratively) Hindu population of Shekhawati, the surrounding royal courts were predominantly Rajput Hindu courts that ideologically linked kingship with Hinduism. Thus, Islamic religious elements would certainly not be sufficient to patronize Jān's poems in surrounding courts – though we do not know where Jān's poems were performed.

30 Tamīm is still revered by Indian Muslims, primarily in South India.

31 While it can argued that the individual social context of the listener would influence their horizon of individual understanding, Behl does not seem to understand 'context of performance' subjectively. He wrote that 'meaning is contextual in that performances of these poems could be either entertainment or courtly poetry or a blueprint for the serious business of enlightenment, depending on the context of reception', and then in 'the different contexts of performance (court, salon, and shrine)' gave us a hint about what meaning 'social context' seems to have in his argument, and Jān probably did not benefit from these different contexts in Behl's sense (2014: 289).

presenting them as religious instruction could prove an insufficient motivation for many of his potential listeners. In order to solve this problem, Jān deliberately chooses the genre of romance. The obscured identity allows the religious teaching to be portrayed as an answer to the mystery, while wandering builds narrative tension and expectations for these answers. In addition to its religious role, together they add an alternative feature of listenability[32] and tellability to the poem. This does not mean that religious and aesthetic considerations in tellability are opposed to each other. Jān (and the people reciting his poem) undoubtedly enjoyed the poetics of wondrous wandering just as much as people in his milieu.

The result is a text that exhibits multiple layers of meanings in the context of a single recitation, rather than different meanings in the context of different recitations. While for part of the audience listenability undoubtedly derived purely from the pleasure of enjoying the piece, they were nevertheless influenced by its religious undertones. This resulted in both greater inclusivity of religious teachings and the possibility of openly transmitting them to an audience motivated by a variety of nuanced reasons for engaging with the poem.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that the focus on wandering results in new readings that are different from several earlier interpretations. Although none of the analysed poems are well known, they have been subject to interpretations, which have not addressed

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32 The 'listenability' proposed here would be a quality similar to tellability. While tellability itself is concerned with what the potential narrator thinks of the reception of their story – since it is pointless to tell a story that fails to attract the attention of an audience – it does not account for a situation where there is a divide between a potential narrator and their audience. In such circumstances, it can occur that some parts of the story can hold a different significance to the (potential) narrator and to their audience.
Such a situation is exemplified by the case where a parent tells their child a fable with moral lessons. While both parties accept that the tale provides entertainment (tellability and listenability), its educational qualities (tellability) may be far less important to the child than to its parent. It is worth noting that the aim of this model is not to imply an unbridgeable divide between Jān and his audience. (Although Jān's involvement with Sufism to an extent sets him apart from much less involved members of the audience.) Rather it is to underscore the purposeful approach Jān takes to widen the appeal of his stories.

the issues raised in this chapter – all the more reason why this approach seems productive. Our attention is drawn to those passages in the text where the narrative is interrupted and wandering occurs. As has been demonstrated, this may happen as a relatively isolated occurrence, for instance in *Rūpmañjarī*, where the hero wanders off the path for a while but soon finds himself on it again. In *Kāmrānī*, such wandering is more prominent: although it occupies only a small part of the plot, it effectively removes the prince from it. Finally, *Tamīm Ansārī* serves as an example of a story in which wandering is a central feature of the narrative structure. It becomes nearly impossible to interpret its occurrence without considering its place in the poem's overall structure; it lies rather at the core of both the tellability and the listenability of the romance. The focus on wandering in romance helps to make it more inclusive. Besides, the ubiquity of this genre across cultures has made it a source of poems aesthetically appealing to people across cultural and religious divides.[33] This makes it easier to explain how it was possible for a popular story to exist that contained overt Islamic teachings, while these teaching were expected and anticipated even by listeners with no obvious interest in Islamic religious doctrine.

Appendix

Longer Passage: Interpretation of Tamīm Ansārī (Śarma 2003: 9)

Tamīm Ansārī, the hero of the tale *Tamīm Ansārī*, who is unreasonably angry at his wife, resolves to leave home, a breach of Quranic precepts since the head of the family is responsible for its maintenance.

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33 A strain of literary criticism, starting from Frye (1976), proposes that romances are archetypical in character. If such assertions are accepted, then elements of romance would naturally be common across cultures. In any case, the romance in Hindī, specifically, is connected to the Persian romance to the point that some consider the romance (as a genre) an expression of the Persian *masnavī* genre in Hindī (cf. McGregor 2021: 26–7 remarks on *Cāndāyan*). In light of such a tight connection the question of intercultural attractiveness is trivial: if Persian audiences had not appreciated the romance elements inherent in the *masnavī* genre, then *masnavī* would not have prospered; if Indian audiences similarly had not appreciated romance, then we would not have a thriving tradition of Avadhi romances. While this issue could be explored further, it falls outside of the scope of the present chapter.

A black-coloured evil spirit *(pret)* is a symbol of the ignorance into which Tamīm Ansārī has been sinking until now. It is the reason he has to suffer so many troubles to meet with his wife again. As soon as Tamīm is conscious of his mistake *(ġaltī)*, his mind instantly becomes pure *(pāk)*. He is subjected to the temptations of diamonds, pearls, gold, etc. but is not affected by that at all. His only goal is to meet his progeny and wife after reaching Medina and, after trying many ways [to return], he finally arrives there. However long the path of ascetic practices *(sādhana)* may be, if a practitioner desires to endure it, nothing is impossible. That is what Jān wants to tell through his tales. In addition to that in some places the poet demonstrates the holiness of the Quran and the greatness of Islam.

कथा तमीम अनसारी का नायक तमीम अनसारी अकारण ही पत्नी पर क्रोधित होकर घर से बाहर चला जाता है जो कुरान के पवित्र सिद्धांतों का उल्लंघन है, क्योंकि पुत्र कलत्रादि की परवरिश का जिम्मा परिवार के मुखिया का होता है। कृष्णवर्णीय प्रेत अज्ञानता का प्रतीक है जिसमें काफी समय तकतमीम अंसारी डूबा रहता है। यही कारण है कि अपनी ही पत्नी से पुनर्मिलन हेतु वो अनेकानेक कठिनाइयां झेलता है।अपनी गलती का ज्ञान हो जाने पर अंसारी का मन एकदम पाक हो जाता है। हीरे-मोती एवं स्वर्णादि का लोभ बार-बार उसके सामने आता है, लेकिन वह इससे तनिक भी विचलित नहीं होता है। उसका एक मात्र लक्ष्य मदीना पहुँचकर पुत्र कलत्रादि से मिलना है और अनेक विध उपाय कर वहाँ पहुँच जाता है।साधना का पंथ चाहे कितना ही लंबा क्यों न हो, साधक अगर उसे पर करना चाहे तो कुछ असंभव नहीं है। यहीं कुछ कथानक के माध्यम से जान कवि कहना चाहता है । उसके अतिरिक्त जगह जगह कुरान की पवित्रता एवं इस्लाम की महानता भी कवि ने दिखाई है।

ORCID®

Radosław Tekiela ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2710-8076

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14
Individuality Versus Collectivity
Pragmatic Goals of *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* Literary Compositions

Aleksandra Turek ⓘ

Abstract   This article aims to reflect on the genre of *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* – commemorative poems which form the bulk of indigenous middle Marwari literature in Ḍiṅgaḷ (sixteenth–nineteenth centuries) – and to show the poems as works composed to immortalize certain individuals, ordinary beings first of all, such as Rajput warriors, petty lords, landowners, and to praise their acts, deeds, or achievements. The existence of a large number of *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* stands in contrast to a generally held opinion that the notion of collectivity encompasses almost all aspects of life in India. The genre of panegyrical poems has been placed in the wider sociopolitical context of the Rajput world, which was inextricably linked to the land. In this fashion the notion of individuality and the function of the *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* as a way to achieve realistic goals for a certain individual person can both be discerned. The *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*, together with Rajput chronicles *(khyāt)* and genealogies *(vaṁśāvalī),* served locally oriented Rajput politics in their own ways as attempts to confirm someone's individual rights to rulership in the *jāgīrdārī* and *zamīndārī* systems of land distribution. However, although they present highly sophisticated poetry, aesthetics was not the ultimate purpose of the *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*, but only the way to obtain pragmatic goals, namely to improve reputation and with this to legitimize power.

Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt are strophic poems, highly elaborated for metrical purposes, and intended for recitation. They are composed in Ḍiṅgaḷ, a literary style of middle Marwari (sixteenth–nineteenth centuries) mostly used in poetry. This genre was created to commemorate particular events, but more importantly, to immortalize certain individuals, ordinary beings, such as Rajput warriors, petty lords, and landowners *(bhomiyā*s*),* and to praise their acts, deeds, or achievements. Although *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* can be linked to other literary traditions known as *carit kāvya*s that record the names and deeds of certain warriors, as, for example, *rāso* compositions, *virudāvalī*s, or in the form of stories in prose like *vāta* and *vartā* (cf. Saran and Ziegler 2001.1: 65), it is this genre that formed the bulk of indigenous middle Marwari literature in Ḍiṅgaḷ. Some questions are crucial in this context: why did this particular genre become predominant? Nowadays, it is almost forgotten; only a relatively small number of *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* have been preserved and published;[1] and they are hardly ever read, or recited, because of their archaic and difficult language, as well as contextual obscurities. And with regard to the content of *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*, what was behind this great impulse to commemorate so many individuals, ordinary men, who were negligible in the wider discourses of politics or history? Without going in great detail into the poetics and rhetoric of *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*, which is remarkably developed (for more, see Svāmī 1948), it is the aim of this chapter to discern the purpose of such compositions, and what message remains after examining the figurative metalanguage and aesthetics. The term 'metalanguage' refers here to the verbal imagery that draws inspiration from the repertory of the so-called Great Tradition of India. As for this metalanguage, one is reminded of the words of Tessitori that every skirmish becomes a Mahabharata: in the eyes of a Rajasthani poet, every warrior is a giant or Bhīma, or Arjuna, and, in general, the tendency is to see the world through a magnifying glass (Tessitori 1917: 228).

People of the Soil

What, then, remains in the *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* apart from their aesthetic function? One should look for clues in the construction of the Rajput world and in the fact that it was inextricably linked to the land. It is very

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1 See, for example, twelve volumes in the series *Prācīn rājasthānī gīt* 1956–9, or *Rājasthānī-vīr-gīt-saṅgrah* of the series Rājasthān purātan granthmālā 98.1, 100.2, 1968, and 116.3, 1972.

significant that the land was permanently an object of conquest, defence, protection, cultivation, and also glorification. In Rajasthan, Rajputs formed a political elite but, essentially, a landed class with their exclusive rights to land. The appropriation of land mainly for the Rajputs can also be discernible in the motto *vīr bhogya vasundharā* by which the region of Rajasthan has been frequently described in the sphere of the Rajput milieu. According to this romanticized phrase, originally from the *Bhagavadgītā*, only warriors, hence brave heroes, have the right to exploit (enjoy) the resources of the earth.

The Rajput hierarchy consisted of landlords, with kings and princes at the top and masses of ordinary landholders (Hindi *bhomiyā*; Rajasthani *bhomiyo*) at the bottom. The term *bhomiyo*, literally 'one of the soil' *(bhom / bhūm)*, reflects the Rajputs' strong attachment to the land. *Bhomiyo* was a holder of land at the local, village level, exempted from paying any tribute. In fact, the terms 'Rajput' and *zamīndār*, or *jāgīrdār*, were synonymous in Rajasthan and such people were addressed with respect as 'Lord' *(ṭhākur)* (Sharma 1998: 39, 63). Those who died fighting for the protection of their land were idolized as *Bhomiyājī*s and venerated in the local communities from which they came.[2]

Rajputs were sustained by the land which provided the means to conduct warfare. A warrior's strong tie with land and its soil is nothing new or special in agrarian societies; likewise it is well attested in the culture of Rajasthan. This motif has a long tradition in Indian literature as well. Farming activities that connote warfare and vice versa have been especially popular metaphors and similes used in classical Sanskrit poetry. A soldier who extirpates, or uproots, enemies is at the same time a farmer carrying out his field work, as in the following example from the Sanskrit poem *Padyacūḍāmaṇī* of Buddhaghoṣa:

> Having reaped crops of rival kings with his swords,
> having threshed [them] with his cavalry columns,
> having winnowed [them] with elephant ears as fans,
> he heaped up the rice of his glory in battle.
> (tr. Franceschini 2019: 71)

This kind of imagery can also be discerned in Rajasthani literature,[3] and one of the most beautiful literary examples of the connection of

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2　A *Bhomiyājī* can be also worshipped for his death in a battle fought for the protection of cattle, Brahmans, or religion.

3　'Rajasthani' is a general but handy term. In this chapter it is used primarily to denote the Marwari language.

battle with field work against the backdrop of changing nature is found in *Krisana Rukamaṇī rī veli*, a poem in Ḍiṅgaḷ composed in 1580/vs 1637 by Pṛthvīrāj Rāṭhoṛ (1549–1600).[4] The passage describing a battle and subsequent stages of the fight *(yuddh varṇan),* by means of the use of the figure of speech, *śleṣa*, depicts at the same time the seasons according to the agricultural calendar (verses 117–29; Rāmsiṁh and Pārīk 1931: 182–9). The army gathers like congeries of rain clouds in the sky; the rumble of the sky during the monsoon season is also the sound of artillery together with a rain of arrows; water channels are overflowing, and so is the battlefield with a mire of blood full of floating skulls which also take the form of bubbles on water. This image also contains the typical Rajput projection that the blood of the Rajput warriors shed on a battlefield fertilizes the soil of Rajasthan. The end of a fierce battle is the season of (vicious) harvest when a farmer's threshing floor also serves as a storage space for dead bodies collected from the battleground (verse 128; ibid. 1931: 188). However, the strongest correlation of a fighter with a farmer, and a weapon with agricultural tools, is in the figure of Balarāma, also known as Haladhara, literally 'that one who holds a plough'. Indeed, the plough can itself be a weapon, which is clear from the following fragment containing two inseparable images:

Then Balarāma barracks his companions:	Then a farmer encourages his companions:
'Until now the enemy ranks are unbroken.'	'Until now [the soil-like] enemy is unploughed.'
After the rain [of arrows] is a proper time for attack,	After rain is a proper time for ploughing,
Who will now use [his armed] hands to achieve the victory?'	Who will now use a plough to reap the harvest?'
Having forgotten what has passed,	Having finished [ploughing] for the second time,[5]
seeds of glory should be sown,	seeds of glory should be sown,

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4   For more information about the poem and its author, see Tessitori 1919; Rāmsiṁh and Pārīk 1931.

5   The exact meaning of the phrase *bisariyā̃ bisari* is cryptic, and was a puzzle for the commentators; there are therefore different interpretations. Tessitori admits that he was unable to guess, although from the general sense it should be something like 'after doing the ploughing' (Tessitori 1919: 105). Svāmī's translation looks plausible because ploughing twice is a common farming practice (Svāmī 1971: 64). Rāmsiṁh and Pārīk propose another meaning: 'having forgotten what has happened'. Then the verb *bisari* stands for 'to forget' (from the infinitive *bisarṇo*; maybe also from the verb *sarṇo*, 'passed by, spent [as time]'). A similar use is found in Braj Bhasha (the verb *bisārnā* from Sanskrit

For enemies [this time] will be pun-
gent like poison.'
Limbs [of the enemy] fall away [like]
roots [of weeds] that crack,
[When] Balarāma attacks [with his]
weapon.

[This is the ultimate time for] wicked,
poisonous [leftovers of] dry stems.'
Limbs fall away, roots [of weeds]
crack,
[When] the farmer turns the field
with a plough.[6]

A Rajput, even when cultivating his land with the labour of other sub-
ordinate groups, he maintained a profound and enduring connection
with the soil. The imagery of the aforementioned fragment appears to
be well grounded in the culture of North India which was formed to
a large extent by an armed society (Kolff 1990: 7); the phenomenon of
mobile, militarized peasantry recruited as soldier-peasants who could
achieve the status of a Rajput by gaining fame in battles completes
this picture (for more, see Kolff 1990). The hero of the third *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*
studied in this chapter has in fact more in common with those ordinary
soldiers in an agrarian society.

Such a strong emphasis on ties with the land might have had some-
thing to do with the fact that the Rajputs emerged as the (titular) owners
of land that first they had to conquer, or capture. Territorial expansion of
Rajput lineages – for example, in unpopulated territories or controlled by
a non-Rajput population, or at the expense of another Rajput clan – was
another principle of the Rajput world (Saran 1978: 87, 91). An integral
part of the conquest and colonization (a subject that was thoroughly stud-
ied by Saran) was the phenomenon of disinherited sons who migrated to
conquer their own territories, which in the course of time came to form
separate domains claimed to be independent (Saran 1978). The frequent
result was overcrowding due to the growth of extended Rajput fami-
lies and conflicts inflamed by their demand to gain access to the land.
There were therefore many who claimed shares or rights to the land.
Study reveals that '[p]rosperity as much as poverty deeply influenced

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vismṛt), e.g. in a verse from Bihārī Lāl: *surati śyāmadhana kī surati bisarehū
bisaraina*; Rāmsiṁh and Pārīk 1931: 454.

6 बेली तदि बळभद्र बापूकारे
            सत्र साबतौ अजे लगि साथ।
    वूठै वाहवियै आ वेळा
            हल जीपिस्यै जु वाहिस्याइ हाथ॥
    बिसरियां बिसर जस बीज बीजिजै
            खारी हाळाहळां खलांह।
    ऊटै कंध मूल जड़ ऊटै
            हळधर कां वाहतां हलांह॥
    Verses 123–4; Rāmsiṁh and Pārīk 1931: 186.

lineage strategies for social advancement and prestige and relationships between kin' and, therefore, economic determinants played a crucial role in status and rank hierarchies among Rajputs (Kasturi 2002: 13).

A specific vocabulary for conceptualization of the world constructed in this way was also necessary. It is interesting to note the organic and agricultural aspect of the terminology as '… there existed a perception of a Rajput clan as an organic body, a bamboo shoot *(vaṁs),* which had branches *(sākh),* twigs *(khā̃p),* and tips (perhaps 'buds' would be better)'. This imagery extends even further: a lineage sometimes was believed to have been founded by a Rajput with a symbolic name, such as *bīj* ('seed') or *mūḷ* ('root'). A lineage needed a place to grow, a *mūḷsthā̃n* ('place for the root') or a *pagṭhoṛ* ('place for the foot'). Without such a place, the Rajput was said to be hungry *(bhūko),* i.e., landless; once he obtained territory, he and his descendants would 'consume' it *(dhartī khāṇo*, *dhartī bhogṇo).* Sustained by the land, the lineage would 'prosper *(vaḍhṇo)*' and 'get nourishment from the soil *(bhog)*' (Saran 1978: 87–8). If the land was fertile and, hence, secured a clan's prosperity, the land was succulent or tasty *(ras paṛiyo)* (Saran and Ziegler 2001.1: 113). 'The loss of territory was perceived as loss of nourishment, of the proper "food" for the Rajput *jāti*.' (Saran 1978: 102).

Pragmatic Goals of the *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*

The worldview outlined above obviously had a significant impact on the indigenous literature, particularly on Marwari literature, in which a superregional pan-Rajput form of the peculiar style of Ḍiṅgaḷ was created that was exclusively linked to the Rajput milieu. At the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the segmentation process of Rajput families coincided with the emergence in Rajasthani literature of a great number of such genres as *vaṁsāvalī* (genealogies) and *khyāt* (chronicle), which include, among other things, long lists of Rajput warriors. Literature of this type also had pragmatic goals: it served Rajput politics as another means of confirming someone's individual rights to rulership in the *jāgīrdārī* and *zamīndārī* systems of land distribution in the face of both locally oriented chieftains and their Mughal overlord. According to Ziegler, Mughal concerns about ancestry and precedence, and Rajput attempts to emulate the traditions of the imperial court for political advantage, also had an undoubted impact on the forms and content of local compositions in vernaculars, as well as on genealogies and *khyāt*s (Saran and Ziegler 2001.1: 66). The genre of commemorative poems, commonly known as *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*, came into

existence, in greater numbers, in the sixteenth century. It happened more or less at the same time as the development of *khyāt*s and other genres of genealogical and historical accounts.

It should be remembered that this was a very dynamic and violent world in which people were frequently uprooted; only a few would not have been skilled in the use of arms (Kolff 1990: 7), and 'to rule ideally required a pristine right to enjoy or "consume" territory; therefore, defeated ruling groups left their lands with their people, while conquerors entered with theirs' (Saran 1978: 114). It becomes evident that in such dynamic circumstances of mass migration, there was a constant need to confirm, guarantee, and secure one's authority over the land. Literature was one of the means that served those purposes. If the genre of panegyrical poems is put in the context detailed here, the notion of individuality and the function of *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* as a way for an individual to achieve very pragmatic goals by improving his reputation and, as a result, legitimizing his power, can both be discerned. To be considered *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*, a poem had to be composed according to well-defined rules that included mentions of personal information, such as the name of the warrior-hero, the name of his father and the name of his notable ancestor, the designation of his Rajput clan, branch *(vaṁś, sākh, khā̃p);* and the name of his homeland or his main lineal roots (for more, see Sārasvat 1986). In poetry expressed with fine artistry but in prominently conventional language, an individual is therefore brought to the forefront.[7]

Let me illustrate this with some *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*. The examples have been selected with the intention of representing a common man, or a chieftain from the periphery. A good example is provided by members of the brotherhood of Śekhāvat Rajputs from the estate of Sīkar (Sīkarvāṭī) in the region commonly known as Shekhawati (Śekhāvāṭī).

The first poem, composed by Ūmed Sā̃dū, the Cāraṇ poet, extols Samrath Siṅgh, the son of the ruler of Sīkar, the notable Śiv Siṅgh (r. 1721–1748), who has been remembered in history as the chief who put an end to one of the last two Muslim (Kāyamkhānī) rulers over Shekhawati by conquering Fatehpur in 1731. Śiv Siṅgh thus contributed to capturing the region entirely for Śekhāvat Rajputs (Miśra 1984: 192; Hooja 2009: 412; Ārya 2013: 60). His heir, Samrath Siṅgh, has been commemorated in the following way:

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7   It is also worth noting that the authorship of the *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* compositions is usually well-known. Thus, the stress on certain individual poets is set against an anonymous collectivity. The poems circulate with the following formula, usually treated as its title: 'the poem about xxx composed by xxx' *(gīt xxx rau xxx rau kahyau).*

The Poem about Samrath Siṅgh, the Son
of Śiv Siṅgh of Sīkar

Mount Sumeru is the abode of the gods, and the lake Mānasaro-
  var, that of the geese,
And the imperishable banyan tree of Prayāg gives shelter to
  birds.
In the same way, there is no other support for poets and bards
  in the Kali age
But your singular patronage, oh son of Śiv Siṅgh.

Just as in this world, the lotus provides refuge to the bees,
We, the devotees, call Śrī Rām their shelter.
In the same way, as the Kali age proceeds, there is no other shel-
  ter on earth,
Than our reliance on you, the chieftain[8] Samrath Siṅgh.

The *cakorās* depend on the moon, and the *cakvās*, on the sun,
Peacocks depend on the rain clouds,[9]
And the ocean gives shelter to fish big and small,
In the same way, the great king Samrath Siṅgh assures the
  Cāraṇ poets of his protection.

The magnificence and fame of rulers proved false,
With the ocean unfordable, and the indifference of the Kali age
  growing.
When the Satya age departed from this earth and went to the
  gods,
Rāo Śekhā gave true protection.[10]

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8 The cryptic word *dalā̃hara* is probably a compound noun, literally 'the holder
   of an army', combined from the words *dala* (*daḷa*; 'army') and the ending *-hara*
   (the Ḍiṅgaḷ variant of the ending *-dhara*).
9 The word *pulanda* ('Indra') implies rainy clouds.
10 गीत राव सम्रथसिंघ सिवसिंघोत सीकर रौ
   सुरां ओठंभण मेर हंसां जिहीं मानसर,
           प्राग तरवर तिकै ओठंभ पंखाळां।
   ओठंभण कळु मझि न को पातां यळां,
           ओठंभण तूं हीज सिवसिंघ वाळा॥
   जगत विसरांम जेम भंवरां जळज,
           भगत विश्राम श्रीराम भाखां।
   कवियणां न को विसरांम वधतै कळु,
           दलांहर सधर विसरांम दाखां॥
   चकोरां चंद आधार दुड़ियंद चकां,
           पुलिंद आधार मोरां पिसातां।

Each four-lined stanza of the above poem is based on a key-word: *oṭhambhaṇa*, *visarā̃ma/viśrāma*, *ādhāra*, and *saraṇa* respectively. Although the words are translated in different ways in English, they all fall within the semantic range of 'shelter', 'refuge', 'abode', 'support', 'trust', 'patronage', and 'protection'. All of these aspects of support and patronage, especially patronage of poets, are typical domains of a ruler, for only one who can afford to be generous and powerful enough to guarantee protection is a legitimate ruler. Focusing on these aspects of rulership reveals the stages of a political transition that the hero of the poem goes through in order to create his image as an ideal king. However, a paratextual analysis is useful to find something else, for example, the pragmatic intentions of this composition rather than the mere flattery expressed in highly figurative and conventional language by a poet probably well-paid by Samrath Siṅgh for carrying out this task.

Śiv Siṅgh of Sīkar had five sons, and Samrath was the oldest heir (see the genealogical tree below). Due to the chronic absence of Śiv Siṅgh in Sīkar, since the chief preferred to stay at the court of Jaipur in relation to which his estate was a tributary, Samrath Siṅgh effectively wielded power in Sīkarvāṭī. In the quest to ensure full power and also unrestrained access to the resources for himself, Samrath Siṅgh eliminated his two brothers – Kīrat Siṅgh and Med Siṅgh – who were next in the line of succession (this fratricide offers a significant contrast to the poet's statement that 'the magnificence and fame of rulers proved false' when Samrath Siṅgh appeared). Maybe this tragedy persuaded Śiv Siṅgh to change his mind, so that he disowned Samrath Siṅgh and appointed his youngest son, Cānd Siṅgh, as his successor (Hooja 2009: 693; Śarmā 2015: 44; Kālīpahāṛī 2014: 213). Sources are equivocal as to whether Samrath Siṅgh accepted his father's decision and proclaimed his own accession,[11] or whether it was Cānd Siṅgh who subsequently usurped power (Śekhāvat 1991: 376); in any case, Samrath Siṅgh ruled over Sīkar as its king for only six years (1748–1754). If the aforementioned poem is put in the context of the tragedy of bloody feuds within

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मह समंद आधार जेम त्रमंगल मछां,
    सुपह आधार समरथ सुपातां॥
राव राणा असत हुवा मह तेज रज,
    अथध जळ कळु वधती उपेखा।
सत प्रथी छोड जातौ हुतौ सुरमंडळ,
    सत सरण राखियौ राव सेखा॥
Śekhāvat 1991: 208–9.

11 Śarmā writes that the rights of Cānd Siṅgh to the throne of Sīkar were declared by Śiv Siṅgh in the presence of the Maharaja of Jaipur, so that it was he who would be recognised as the legitimate ruler; Śarmā 2015: 44.

the Sīkar family, then it becomes clear how passionately Samrath Siṅgh might have also sought confirmation of his status as a great (almost archetypical) ruler in a symbolic dimension buttressed by poetry. Being praised as a very generous patron produces measurable effects, especially when chieftainship is at stake. This method also proves efficient over the course of time when a man becomes a negligeable in historical discourse and almost nothing remains after him but poems that commemorate him. The disownment of Samrath Siṅgh turned out to be fatal for Sīkar for generations. It also led to diarchy, with both Cānd Siṅgh and Nahar Siṅgh, the oldest son of Samrath Siṅgh, claiming the throne of Sikar. Nahar Siṅgh managed to rule for only two years (r. 1754–1756; d. 1769). His rule was put to end when Cānd Siṅgh besieged Sīkar. Although the kinsmen and descendants of Samrath Siṅgh were given land (plots of land in perpetuity), they remained hostile to the ruling house of Sīkar for at least the next three generations, causing the most terrible depredations on the territory of Sīkarvāṭī, and thus creating the greatest threat and trouble for Sīkar in the subsequent nineteenth century.[12]

Keeping in mind what has been written above, it is interesting to see in contrast how Cānd Siṅgh (r. 1756–1763) sought to legitimize his rule through poetry. In this potlach-like race for power, an intention to surpass others might also have played a significant role. Cānd Siṅgh, for example, has been remembered as the king who in just one day granted fourteen villages to fourteen Cāraṇ poets (Śekhāvat 1991: 377). In this way, his generosity may well have overshadowed that of his deposed predecessor. Maybe Hukmīcand Khiṛiyā was one of them who, in return, composed the following *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt*:

The Poem about Cānd Siṅgh, the Son of Śiv Siṅgh of Sīkar
Single-handed he dispersed his enemies, like Agastya who
  drank all the ocean's waves.[13]

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12 The situation was quite well recognized and the account described in great detail by the intelligence agents of the British East India Company, which in its own interest attached particular importance to the rights of succession and distribution of land. Kinsmen of Samarth Siṅgh, such as Ghumān Siṅgh, Zalīmjī, Gyānjī, and Śyāmjī, formed a marauding party and were named dacoits by the British. See the letter of N. Alves to W. H. Macnaghten, dt. 27.06.1835, National Archives of India (henceforth NAI).

13 The fact that Cānd Siṅgh acts easily, even with only one hand, has been emphasized in such a way that the poet makes reference to one of the stories from *Mahābhārata* about the miraculous deeds of the hermit Agastya when he brought the ocean into his palm and drank it easily. This enabled him to slay

Like Garuḍa who exterminated the snakes all by himself,
Like Indra who destroyed all the mountains with a single
    thunderbolt,[14]
Cānd Siṅgh single-handedly defeated all his enemies.

With his threatening cry, Agastya crushed the ocean's pride,
With his ferocious anger, Garuḍa reduced the snakes to ashes,
With his wrath, Indra destroyed the mighty mountains.
In the same way, the heroic son of Śiv Siṅgh destroyed and scat-
    tered his enemies.

Roaring furiously, thirsty Agastya subdued the ocean,[15]
With a raised pennant of victory, Garuḍa attacked the king of
    snakes,
Hurling his thunderbolt through the sky, Indra cut off the wings
    of the mountains.
In the same way, the grandson of Daulat Siṅgh destroyed the
    enemy's army on the battlefield.

The strength of Agastya threatens the ocean, and that of
    Garuḍa, the snakes,
Dadhīca's bone, made into Indra's thunderbolt,[16] brings
    destruction to the wicked mountains.
In the same way, Rāysal Siṅgh's descendant Cānd Siṅgh was an
    obstacle for the army of his enemies

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the enemies of the gods (Kālakeyas) who hid themselves at the bottom of the
ocean (Mani 1975: 7). The verb *hiloḷiyā* suits this theme well and adds aquatic
aspects too, because if it is not used with regard to an army, it also stands for
'to create waves', 'wash over by waves', 'to shake / stir up (water, ocean)'. See
the entry *hiloṛṇau* in Lāḷas 1976–78. IV.3: 151.

14 Here is the reference to the story from Vālmīkī's *Ramāyaṇa* that in *Kṛtāyuga*
all mountains had wings and thus they posed a danger to the gods. Indra had
to cut the wings off with his thunderbolt or diamond weapon, *vajra*; Mani
1975: 325.

15 The first line is cryptic, most probably because of scribal negligence. For the
entry *pāthoda* ('ocean') Lāḷas also gives the meaning 'cloud' and provides this
very line as an example but in a differing variant *(teja hāka-nīra pūra pāṛiyā
pāthoda tasā̃);* cf. Lāḷas 1967–73. III.1: 2464.

16 This is another reference to *Mahābhārata* that Indra's weapon, *vajra*, with
which he killed Vṛtra, was made from a bone of the hermit Dadhīca / Dadhīci;
Mani 1975: 191.

And destroyed his foes: a warrior there has never been like him
before on this earth.[17]

The second *gīt* develops the theme of heroism in war, which, along with
generosity, is another typical characteristic of the ideal Indian ruler.
Structurally, the poem is based on a simile: Cānd Siṅgh's strength and
omnipotence are compared (equated) with the power of mythical fig-
ures – Agastya, Garuḍa, and Indra – known for their potency. It is also
worth noting that the structure of the piece perfectly meets the criteria
for this type of composition: each stanza is a paraphrase of the same
theme, or evoked image. Knowing the context in which Cānd Siṅgh
came to power, it also becomes evident why the greatest stress in the
poem is put on the enemies and the strength needed to dispose of them.
The story, narrated in a language that exploits Sanskrit epic tradition,
has local overtones as the opponents were in fact close relatives of Cānd
Siṅgh. In reality, 'the heroic son of Śiv Siṅgh destroyed and scattered his
enemies' in a less bombastic way than the poet described. In the middle
of the night, when everyone was asleep and Nahar Siṅgh was away in
Jaipur, he commanded an army to take possession of the fortress of
Sīkar. During the attack, the commandant of the fort *(kiledār)* and his
twelve companions were beaten to death, and the wives and brother
of Nahar Siṅgh sent away from Sīkar (Alves to Macnaghten 1835, NAI).
The aforementioned imaginative poem has an unimaginative but prag-
matic goal: to confirm that Cānd Siṅgh won the race to obtain access to
the resources. East India Company's intelligence thus noted:

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17 गीत राव चांदसिंघ सिवसिंघोत सीकर रौ
 हेळा आगथी सिंघ ज्यूं अेके आच हूंत हिलोळिया,
  धीस खगां अेके ज्यूं वोळिया नाग धींग।
 सुरांपती अेके वज्र रोळिया पहाड़ सारा,
  सारा खळां उतोळिया अेके चांदसींग॥
 वारधीस गाज जोम गाळिया त्रिकूट वासी,
  राजचील जाळिया तारखी तेज रूंस।
 कुमंखी कुलेसां इन्द्र खाळिया पहाड़ काळा,
  वीर सिवा वाळै सत्रां राळिया विधूंस॥
 तेज हाक मुनि पूर पाड़िया पाथोद त्रास,
  नागेस झाड़िया ज्यूं खगेस बंधे नेत।
 पब्बै पंख विडोजै झाड़िया वज्र वोमवाट,
  खळां थाट दूजै दौलै विभाड़िया खेत॥
 तोयधी मुनिन्द्र पांण वचै व्याळ वैंतेय,
  दूठ अद्र वचै घांण जुआंण दधीच।
 बरूथां सत्रां चा बाधा चंद रायसाल बीजै,
  वीर खगां खाधा जे न लाधा भौम बीच॥
 Śekhāvat 1991: 212–3.

The Seekur lands are to be divided into five portions, three of which to be given to Chand Singh and his brother Bood Singh, and the remaining two to Nahur Singh and Gooman Singh. Nahur Singh, as the oldest son of Sumrut Singh, got the district of Ballahran, containing 84 villages. Gooman Singh received 12 villages from Mungloona, which were very large and produced a revenue equal to those of Ballahra. By this arrangement, the claims of the lawful heirs, the sons of Sumrut Singh, were left aside, and the chieftainship of Seekur and its dependencies, were transferred to Chand Singh and Bood Singh. (ibid.)

Eventually, Cānd Siṅgh, praised by the poet as 'a warrior there has never been like him before on this earth' did not effectively destroy all his enemies. He died in 1763 poisoned by his other enemies (Kālīpahāṛī 2014: 214).

The third *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* extols the hero of the times of the next ruler of Sīkar, Raja Devī Siṅgh (r. 1763–1795) who succeeded to the throne after his father, Cānd Siṅgh, at the age of ten. The poem presents a *bhomiyo*, Padam Siṅgh Śekhāvat, who was the *ṭhākur* of a unit of only twelve villages (with the headquarters in Baṭhoṭh village in the region of Sīkarvāṭī), and related by blood to the royal house of Sīkar (see the genealogical tree below). Padam Siṅgh was the son of the previously mentioned Kīrat Siṅgh who was murdered by his brother (Samrath Siṅgh). The poem glorifies Padam Siṅgh's heroism and the sacrifice of his life for the protection of the land by describing his fight with Pūranmall Siṅgh of Kāslī (12 km to the southwest of Sīkar), which turned out to be fatal for the hero. It has been commemorated by a poet whose name has been lost in the mists of history:

The Poem about Ṭhākur Padam Siṅgh, the Son of Kīrat Siṅgh of Baṭhoṭh Paṭodā

On the order of Devī Siṅgh, he unsheathed a sword and began
    to revolt for the land,
Strong and fearsome Padam Siṅgh does not step back.
The most eminent and valiant son of Haṭhī Siṅgh, [Pūranmall]
    Siṅgh has come in the name of [his people][18] and unleashed
    a rain of arrows,

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18 The word *udhāro* is cryptic; literally meaning 'he took out a loan' or 'he got into debt'. The present translation infers that the hero is indebted to others, meaning that he owes them something, and therefore he acts in their name. However, a more contextualized meaning cannot be ruled out, as it may have

While Padam, the son of Kīrat Siṅgh, appeared in the form of
the archer Arjuna.

Both of them are hired soldiers in powerful armies,
These victorious lion warriors, came to confront each other.
The grandson of Rām Siṅgh said: 'It's up to you to attack, oh
grandson of Śiv!'
Śiv's grandson replied: It's up to you to attack first, oh grandson
of Rām Siṅgh!'

Brave and never surrendering like ferocious lions,
Both warriors, with hearts ablaze, began to attack for the sake
of the land.
Pūranmall started an assault and endured the sword slash of
Lord Padam,
Lord Padam attacked and held on to the Pūranmall brand.

Rajput dynasties of Rāṭhoṛs, Sisodiyās and all people state
happily
That Padam Siṅgh is the best of all the brilliant and glorious
thirty-six branches.
The one [who] wins fierce battles has returned to his own
estate,
The body of the grandson of Śiv Siṅgh was heavily wounded
and attained salvation.[19]

referred to land grants in the feudal system or taking a monetary loan in
a new fiscal reality that emerged in the eighteenth century. The next stanza
repeats the same term in the adjectival sense *(udhārī),* which is glossed as
'one who fights for the others'. Therefore, it also implies being indebted to do
something. Cf. Śekhāvat 1991: 272.

19 गीत ठाकुर पदमसिंघ कीरतसिंघोत बठोठ पाटोदा रौ
लागो धरा रौ देवा सूं वेध ऊनागो दुधारो लीधां,
करारो कदम पाछा न धरै कदम।
उधारो वरारो वूठि हठीसिंघ वाळो सिंघ,
पाथ रूपी आयौ उठि कीता रौ पदंम॥
उधारी खाटवा राड़ अफारी घड़ां में उभै,
तेग धारी मुंहमेदां हुवा जैतसिंघ।
वीजौ रामसिंघ कहै सेवा वीजा सेल बाह,
सेवौ बीजौ कहै वाहि वीजा रामसिंघ॥
केहरी खिजाया जांण मारकां अनम्मी कंघ,
उभे भड़ां जंमी आंटे लागा हिये ऊक।
रोलै आय पूरा तणै पदंमेस झेली रूक,
रोलै पदंमेस तणी झेली पूरै रूक॥
कमंधां दीवाणां रीझ आरद्धासां जणां करै,

The poem refers to the events in 1784 (Śekhāvat 1998: 220), or in 1785 (Kālīpahāṛī 2014: 194), when the king of Sīkar, Raja Devī Siṅgh, was annoyed by the constant attacks and plunder by Pūranmall Siṅgh of Kāslī, and consequently, the king annexed five villages that belonged to the Kāslī jurisdiction. Padam Siṅgh had been appointed to govern the territory and to protect the border: 'On the order of Devī Siṅgh, he unsheathed a sword and began to revolt for the land.' This was the reason why Pūranmall began to fight with the *ṭhākur* of Baṭhoṭh. The *gīt* is constructed as a parallel: the duel between two warriors is presented as if they were mirror images (especially the second and third stanzas). Concrete imagery has been used here through analogy to convey the meaning that they are equal fighters worthy of each other. This claim is further reinforced by the repetition of the word 'both' *(ubhai/ubhe)*. The use of such a literary device becomes more apparent when we consider that this is actually a duel between kinsmen who are close relatives from the same clan of Rāysalot Śekhāvats. They both exhibit heroism and valiance, with a strong focus on defending their land. Thus, the poem presents the idea that both parties are equally willing to die and shed blood for their land in a compelling manner. They are also like ferocious lions – the animals that are strongly associated with the Indian warrior spirit. The lion aspect is deliberately used in its double meaning, both in the literal sense (*jaitasiṅgha* 'victorious lions') and as an epithet adopted by every Rajput warrior (as, for example, *Haṭhī Siṅgha vāḷo Siṅgha* '[Pūranmall] Siṅgh of Haṭhī Siṅgh' or 'the lion of Haṭhī Siṅgh').

According to the genealogical tree, it appears that Pūranmall Siṅgh had the legitimate and undisputed right to possess Kāslī for at least five generations. During the duel, he defended his property and he was so desperate that he was ready to act against the rules of the code of chivalry. As we read, during the sword fight Padam Siṅgh was wounded and ultimately received a rifle shot while surrounded by Pūranmall and his men. Pūranmall Siṅgh incurred the wrath of the ruler of Sīkar and he refused to compensate for killing Padam – by giving two villages to the family of the deceased – despite attempts at mediation. As a result, Raja Devī Siṅgh of Sīkar marched with his army to Kāslī and seized the entire Kāslī region, which formed the unit of eighty-four villages, from him after three days of resistance. Pūranmall Siṅgh lost his ancestral land and was forced to flee to Marwar (Śarmā 2015: 52–4). In this way, the stronger one

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उजाळा बिरद्रां साखां छतीसां उजाळ।
एक तौ भारथ जीतै आप रै ठिकाणै आयौ,
बीजौ देह भांजि गयौ साजोत विचाळ॥
Ibid.: 272–3.

won. This account also demonstrates that in the late-eighteenth century, Rajput conquests often came at the expense of other Rajputs, including their own relatives, for example, from the same brotherhood *(bhāībandh).*

Although both Rajputs are equally skilled warriors, the poem under study only monumentalizes the fight and the death of Padam Siṅgh. It is also possible that poems praising Pūranmall Siṅgh for avenging his loss and thus killing Padam Siṅgh, may have been composed in the circles of the Kāslī line but have not survived due to oral transmission or the demise of the bardic tradition. The purpose of this *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* is to receive public validation for a newly minted landholder, Padam Siṅgh. The final stanza emphasizes the need to gain public recognition in the eyes of the whole Rajput community, symbolized by the mention of the list of thirty-six Rajput clans accepted by tradition, with some of the most influential mentioned by name. The heroic deeds performed by Padam Siṅgh for the land are confirmed by the most eminent Rajput dynasties, thus affirming this event. This poem, although formulated in a standard way, serves as a measure of legitimacy for the *jāgīr* of Kāslī for Padam Siṅgh's descendants, which was also sealed with his blood.
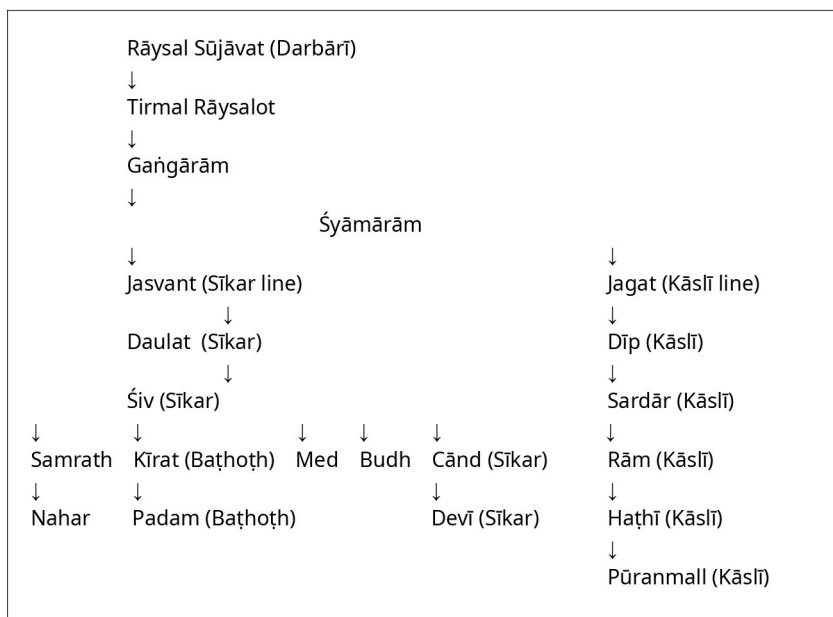

Figure 14.1   Genealogical Tree of Sīkar and Kāslī Lines of Rāysalot Śekhāvats[20]

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20 The genealogy is based on information given in Śekhāvat 1998: 219–20 and Kālīpahāṛī 2014: 189–95. The genealogy of the Sīkar line is also recorded in the chronicle of Bā̃kīdās *(Bā̃kīdās rī khyāt);* Svāmī 1956: 128.

Conclusion

To sum up, the linguistic picture of the Rajput world is determined by the Rajputs' style of life, which seemingly is connected chiefly with warfare, but nonetheless firmly grounded in its relatedness to land and soil. The abundance of poetic compositions in early modern Rajasthan – many of them literary masterpieces – eulogizing certain ordinary beings, stands in contrast to a more or less general opinion that the notion of collectivity encompasses almost all aspects of life in India. The preponderance of the *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* in Rajasthani literature suggests that aesthetics was not the ultimate purpose of the poems, but that they were rather an artistic package of more down-to-earth messages. Any analysis of their content is indeed inseparable from the local context and the local milieu in which certain *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* were composed. Only then can the pragmatic intentions be discerned; otherwise, such poems may appear as merely a large stock of ready-made images of a pan-Indian literary tradition. However, the language used in these compositions should not be dismissed as mere hyperbole or clichés. Rather, it is a tool that allows to connect ordinary men, certain individuals with tradition and history, also linking them to their ancestors. The uniqueness of the *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* lies in the phenomenon that they bring into focus individuals from the collectivity of the Rajputs and present featured characters despite their stereotypical and unindividualized language. With regard to the relationship between the aesthetical frame of the poems and their content, we can use a comparison from the natural world to better understand this phenomenon. In a tropical jungle, exotic flowers are found in a larger number than is usually the case. Due to the very tough competition for hugely rich flora, the flowers develop more and more desirable and unique features to survive by attracting attention. Similarly, in the dense forest of Rajput collectivity, individuals – in their race to gain access to resources and power – can attract attention like those flowers by giving themselves sophisticated and artistic expression in the form of *Ḍiṅgaḷ gīt* to achieve pragmatic goals. Such a strategy secures their livelihood.

ORCID®

Aleksandra Turek ⬤ https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8431-1268

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15
The 'Callewaert Collection'

Winand M. Callewaert

The Prehistory

It is a very agreeable privilege to be allowed to give this introductory paper to the 14th 'Bhakti Conference'. For me it remains the Bhakti Conference, after number one in Leuven in 1979. At that time there was no network for communication with scholars, and all communication was via blue aerogramme letters that took weeks to go around the globe. My paper deals with the prehistory of bhakti studies from the 1970s onwards. Those were the days of my great examples, the Hindi scholars Śyāmsundar Dās, Paraśurām Caturvedī, Pārasnāth Tivārī, Mātāprasād Gupta, to name only a few. In those days the study of bhakti literature in North India between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries was often the research hobby of scholars who were academically engaged in the study of Sanskrit or modern Hindi. I have been very lucky in meeting many great and kind people, but one of the great gifts in my life is my meeting with Father Camille Bulcke S. J. in Ranchi in 1965. He directed me in my study of Hindi and Sanskrit. In addition to all his publications he was then working at his English–Hindi Dictionary. One day he advised me: 'Winand, never start work on a dictionary, it is too hard!' In 1996 I started the Bhakti Dictionary.

By 1971 I had spent seven years studying in three Indian universities and came back to my hometown Leuven in Belgium. For one year I went then to Paris to attend the classes of Professor Charlotte Vaudeville at the Sorbonne. She was born in 1918 and died in 2006, after an adventurous and splendid career of great scholarship. I owe her very much. One day she told me: 'Winand, if you want to do something worthwhile with your research career, go to Rajasthan, look for Dādūpanthī

Figure 15.1 I took this photograph on the occasion of the 'annual airing' of the manuscripts in the Vidya Bhushan Sangrah, Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jaipur branch, in 1973. In the month of May everything was exposed to the dry air and then stored again till the next dry season. © W. M. Callewaert.

manuscripts, copy and edit the texts, and make a translation. And while you do that, look also for other manuscripts.'

How do you find manuscripts in remote temples and collections in Rajasthan, in the seventies of the previous century? Very simple: drink tea, drink tea, and drink tea. The result of my travelling all over India and drinking tea for so many years is now a databank of 15,000 exposures, digitized with a grant from the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, with the scholarly and very devoted help of its senior research fellow Dr. Jaroslav Strnad. In that databank of 15,000 scans, called the 'Callewaert Collection', a copy is preserved of 94 manuscripts, copied in 15 different places (in India and in London) over a period of 15 years. These 15,000 digitized pages amount to about 150 Gigabytes! Not a few of these manuscripts have now disappeared or are in a hopeless condition or are no longer accessible.

Figure 15.2 I saw thousands of manuscripts, some of them in a pitiful condition. © W. M. Callewaert.

Figure 15.3 Only the first folios of this manuscript of 1636 ce were brittle. The remaining 133 scans illustrate how the first manuscripts were written. © W. M. Callewaert.

I am very grateful to the Osaka Bhakti Conference for allowing me to discuss in more detail what is available in this databank. I also want to turn to the future. Even today, everywhere in India, hundreds of manuscripts disappear through decay or neglect or because business people use the old paper to produce copies of old paintings painted by modern young artists. In the field of bhakti literature many treasures are waiting for the brave adventurer who is ready to drink tea, and drink tea, and negotiate.

Let me conclude this introduction with a quote from a great contributor to my research in the early 1970s. His name is Bahuraji (Gopāl Nārāyaṇ Bahurā), the then librarian of the City Palace Library in Jaipur. I gladly share his quote which was a continual source of encouragement to me: 'Winand Saheb, if all the manuscripts of only the City Palace Library in Jaipur are published one day, the history of Sanskrit and Hindi literature will be totally changed.'

During my first tour in search of manuscripts in 1973, I was equipped with a 35 mm Olympus camera and thirty boxes with 25 metres of film. I cut up the films to fit in a cartridge of thirty-six exposures and, when I had located the manuscripts, I copied them (Figure 15.4). In the evening I darkened the bathroom of the tourist bungalow where I stayed and developed the films to make sure I had the texts safely on film. Prehistory and archaeology for many of you. But fortunately, these films were still good enough to be scanned, nearly fifty years later. Around 1980 I was given a grant for a special equipment for my Olympus camera and with that equipment I could fit a film for 250 exposures.

One day in 1973 I went to Kuchaman City, by train from Jaipur. I slept on a bench in the station and in the morning I walked to the temple of Svāmī Maṅgaldās. He was a Nirañjanī sadhu, but an expert on Dādūpanthī manuscripts. I had with me a long list of more than fifty *bhagats*, Dādūpanthī and others, and I wanted to know where I could find the manuscripts. Just from memory, Maṅgaldās jī told me what their works were and where I might find the manuscripts. I was young and strong and ascetic, but around noontime I asked if perhaps he wanted a cup of tea. In fact, I wanted to eat. But Svāmī jī replied: *'Nahīṁ, ṭhīk hai'*, and he went on dictating till 4 p.m. In 1981 I came again to Kuchaman City, and I wept on his *samādhi*. Later I learnt that Svāmī Maṅgaldās had come to Jaipur to study Ayurveda with Svāmī Lakṣmīrām Dādūpanthī. In 1939 (still British India and under the Maharaja of Jaipur), the Dādū Mahā Vidyālay had started in Jaipur and Svāmī Maṅgaldās offered his services 'for two years', but he stayed there for a long time as he had a very good relation with

Figure 15.4   Around 1980 I was given a grant for a special equipment for my Olympus camera and with that equipment I could fit a film for 250 exposures. © W. M. Callewaert.

the Dādūpanthīs.[1] He resigned from both the Dādū Mahā Vidyālay and the Dādū Mahāsabhā in 1966 and went to live in Kuchaman City.[2] Apparently, all the books of Svāmī Maṅgaldās were moved after his death from Kuchaman City and may now be in a Nirañjanī establishment in Navalgarh.

Another similar ascetic scholar from my early days was the Dādūpanthī Svāmī Nārayandās of Ajmer, a very gentle person and prolific writer. He too gave, just from memory, all the information I wanted.

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1   B. K. Siṅghal (personal communication) pointed to a tension building up between the svāmī and the Dādū Mahāsabhā, the governing body of the Dādūpanth, since the publication of his *Mahārāj Haridās jī kī vāṇī*, in which he proved that Haridās was earlier than Dādū (Maṅgaldās 1931).

2   For details of the conflict of the svāmī with the Dādū Mahāsabhā, see Horstmann 2019.

For several years I spent many pleasant days with the Brahman collector Ram Kripalu Sharma in Jaipur. I was one of the first students who was allowed to copy from his immense collection. The last time I was there, I remember, he had more than 60,000 manuscripts.

Manuscripts of the Sikh Tradition

In 1983, after years of negotiation and with the help of the beloved great Sikh scholar Prītam Singh of Patiala, I received permission to copy the complete volume of the unique Banno manuscript of the *Gurū granth sāhib*, preserved in the Gurdvara in Kanpur.

The problem in Kanpur was that in the shrine on the ground floor where the *Gurū granth sāhib* was kept, there was not enough light for my camera. Again, drinking tea, drinking tea, and drinking tea. Eventually, after long discussions, the custodians agreed to take the sacred volume to the rooftop, in a very ceremonious procession. On the rooftop it appeared that my tripod (in fact a quadruped) was not high enough to stand on top of the *Granth* and I had to copy the 1,430 pages with my camera in my hands. Bending, shooting, standing straight for the next page, 1,430 times. At the end of the day, I had developed a firm belief in the positive results of good *karma*. Or at least the hope for it.

The Banno manuscript is very important for a textual study of the *Gurū granth sāhib*, a study which is very delicate. What also makes this Banno manuscript of Kanpur special is the fact that there is in it one *pad* by Mīrā. How did the Kṛṣṇa *bhakta* Mīrā enter that manuscript of the *Gurū granth sāhib*? Prof. Prītam Siṅgh gave a paper on the Banno manuscript and this *pad* in it at the Bonn Bhakti Conference in 1982 (Singh 1983: 326).[3]

And now comes a sad story. In the spring of 1984, after many cups of tea, I was given permission to copy the oldest manuscripts of the *Gurū granth sāhib* that were preserved in the Pothīkhānā of the Har Mandir, the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Negotiations were completed and I decided to return home, planning to do the copying of the precious manuscripts in the fall of 1984. But, in June 1984 came the Blue Star Operation of Indira Gandhi and the bombing of the Temple in Amritsar and the destruction of many manuscripts. An attack on the very soul of Sikhism, of course. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Blue_Star, accessed 9 February

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3   I have published this *pad* in Callewaert 2013: 104–19 ('The "Earliest" Pad of Mīrā (1503–1546)').

Figure 15.5 What you see here is of course a printed copy of the Guru Granth Saheb, but it gives you an idea of the size of a volume. Exactly 1,430 pages! © W. M. Callewaert.
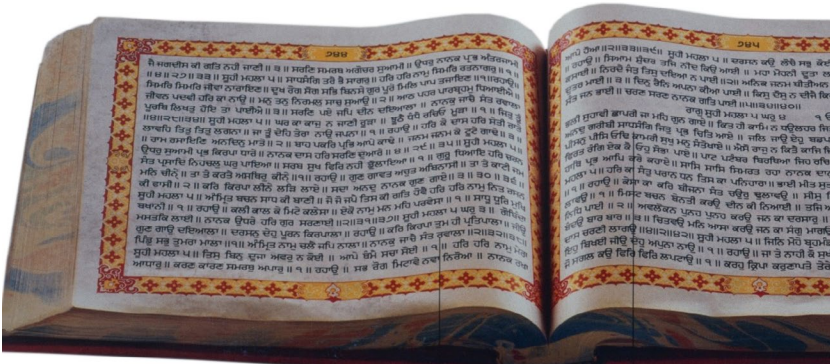

Figure 15.6 The first complete copy of the Guru Granth Saheb was scribed as early as 1604. © W. M. Callewaert.

2025. I do not dare to think what turn my career would have taken if in the spring of 1984 I had copied the manuscripts in the Pothīkhānā of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, instead of going home.

Fabulous Memories and Patient Scribes

This is enough about my recollection of the hard but wonderful time I spent searching for manuscripts, and about the text editions and translations of original texts, by me and others, with the motto: 'Let the editor say what is in the text and let the commentator say what there might be.' I should now like to introduce you to some precious gems of manuscripts in the 'Callewaert collection'[4] and present a challenge to young scholars, with the following question, a question that perhaps can be answered looking at all the material in this databank: How did scribes after 1600 CE produce the beautiful texts we can still admire today? How did they do it? Only copying or only from memory, or both?

In quite a few manuscripts we find hundreds of pages, with the number of lines on each page exactly the same from the beginning till the end and nearly the same number of letters in each line. How did scribes do it? The question is: were the manuscripts that were scribed around 1600 in the Dādūpanth produced from memory or from one manuscript or several manuscripts lying in front of the scribe?[5]

Often, I have tried to visualize this scene: shortly after the death of Dādū, in 1603, around the end of emperor Akbar's life, in the pleasant temperature of the month of October in Jaipur, a Dādūpanthī sadhu is sitting on the floor of a simple residence. He is thirty-seven years old, and has spent his youth listening to travelling singers, and especially to his master Dādū. This young man has a fabulous memory and whatever he hears is stored in that memory. The manuscripts in the 'Callewaert Collection' give plenty of material to tackle this intriguing problem: how were the huge compilations created and written down? Scribing the manuscripts is one thing, but how did the collections slowly get their shape?

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4 With Jaroslav Strnad and Biljana Zrnić we completed a detailed list of contents of all these digitized manuscripts (15,000 pages). The scans and the Indexes are now available on the website of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences, Prague, the beautiful capital of the Czech Republic: https://hindi-man uscripts.orient.cas.cz/OLD%20HINDI%20MANUSCRIPTS_1/.

5 For the following thoughts on the problem of oral vs. written transmission of texts, I draw on Callewaert 2013.
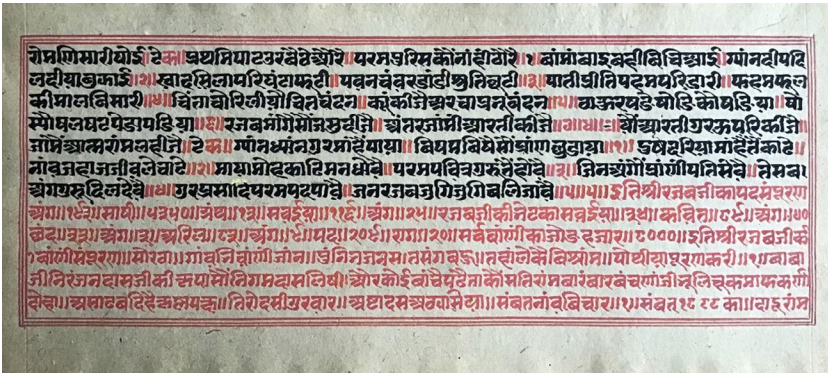
Figure 15.7 From the early 17th c. CE onwards even red ink was used for the numbers and titles. This manuscript is dated 1753 CE. © W. M. Callewaert.

Let us imagine we are travelling through northwest India in 1550, around the beginning of Akbar's reign. We walk on bumpy roads after the rainy season, from Banaras to Vrindavan, or on sandy tracks in Rajasthan. We spend the nights on the floor in temples, and we watch the audiences drawn by travelling singers singing songs of bhakti. These singers, like the puranic bards, received extended hospitality depending on the quality and depth of their performance. They may not have belonged to a particular *sampradāy* and they sang what appealed most to local feelings. We are on the way to Rajasthan after a visit to Banaras, where a few years earlier Raidās had died, and where the oldest member in the family of singers had heard *about* a person called Kabīr.

The singers sang the songs which were most in demand, such as those of Nāmdev and Kabīr, which they had learned from their fathers. But these singers too were artists and inspired by a particular environment, and they added new, sometimes their own, songs to the repertoire. Memory was the only way of recording for these singers, and as the repertoires grew bigger and bigger, some musicians started to keep little (or big) notebooks as an aid to their memory. The earliest manuscripts I have seen and copied may have had these notebooks as their basis.

Travelling singers knew no borders. They easily walked from the kingdoms in and around Banaras through the Mughal territories to the princely states in Rajasthan, or from the Maratha country to the Punjab. With amazing ease they moved from one language to another, using a super-regional medium, while at the same time picking up local idioms and words in an effort to adjust to local audiences. This

practice is responsible for the chaos of variants which we find in the manuscripts.

A Masterpiece of Dādūpanthī Scribing: The *Pañcavāṇī*

With this in mind let me look at a few masterpieces of Dādūpanthī scribing after 1600 CE. We know that travelling singers classified the *pad*s of their performance according to the *rāg*. Scribes kept that *rāg*-label when they brought together hundreds of *pad*s in one volume. One of the earliest, *rāg*-oriented collections made in the Dādūpanth in Rajasthan is the *Pañcavāṇī*, 'Songs of the Five'. These five *bhaktas*, highly respected in the early Dādūpanth, are: Dādū (1544–1603), Kabīr (*c*.1398–1448), Nāmdev (*c*.1270–1350), Raidās (*c*.1450–1520), and Hardās (floruit *c*.mid-sixteenth century). Such a *Pañcavāṇī* collection has more than 1,000 *pad*s. Later, several compilers wrote the huge collection on paper and it became known as the *Pañcavāṇī*.

Scores of manuscripts with *different versions* of the *Pañcavāṇī* are even today found in manuscript collections in Rajasthan, Punjab, and Banaras. I have copied several of them and they are now in this 'Callewaert Collection'. It is not only the enormous size of the *Pañcavāṇī*, at first definitely only available in the memory of singers, that makes it an amazing creation. What amazes us even more is the fact that different singers, possibly in different places, had memorized the five repertoires. We do not have one *Pañcavāṇī* recension, but several, each one relying on a different oral tradition – each one different in size and in the order of the *pad*s.

Kabīr scholars like Pārasnāth Tivārī thought that the numerous *Pañcavāṇī* manuscripts found in Rajasthan all go back to a single, scribal archetype, compiled by one of the learned disciples of Dādū. He thought that this archetype served as the basis for all later copies of the *Pañcavāṇī*. Such an idyllic thought must be given up. The *Pañcavāṇī* manuscripts now at hand do not go back to one archetype or to one single compiler. There must have been several *Pañcavāṇī* compilers, each working separately either from existing manuscripts – which I doubt – or in direct contact with the oral tradition.

A critical analysis of the *Pañcavāṇī* manuscripts takes the researcher much further into the period of oral transmission than was possible, for example, for S. S. Dās, who published his study in 1928, or Pārasnāth Tivārī who published his in 1962. All this is explained at length in the study of Nāmdev which I made with my good friend and great scholar from Jaipur, Mukund Lath (Callewaert and Lath 1989).

Some More Masterpieces:
Sarvāṅgī and *Guṇagañjanāmā*

Besides the *Pañcavāṇī* there are three vast anthologies created in the early Dādūpanth that deserve a special study:

1) the *Sarvāṅgī* created by Dādū's disciple Rajab, with 88 identified *bhakta*s quoted in 144 *aṅg*s or thematic chapters (Callewaert 1978);
2) the *Sarvāṅgī* created by the Dādūpanthī Gopāldās, with 138 identified *bhakta*s, quoted in 126 *aṅg*s (Callewaert 1993); and, finally,
3) the *Guṇagañjanāmā* by Dādū's disciple Jagannāth, with 179 *aṅg*s (Siṁhal 2021).

The amazing phenomenon is the fact that the *pad*s, *sākhī*s, and *śloka*s collected in these anthologies are classified according to themes, in *aṅg*s. In the Callewaert Collection you will find three manuscripts with the *Sarvāṅgī* of Rajab and one manuscript with Gopāldās's *Sarvāṅgī*. There is one manuscript with the *Guṇagañjanāmā* (and one manuscript with a short version of that text).[6]

When in 1973 I discovered the huge manuscript with the *Sarvāṅgī* of Gopāldās, I was overwhelmed by its size: 364 folios, that is, 728 pages – in the computer 1.6 Megabytes, or half the size of the *Gurū granth sāhib*. Only after the entire text had been input into the computer could I grasp the importance of this document. I found 1,670 *pad*s of 138 identified *bhakta*s. Of Kabīr, only the compiler Gopāldās quoted 360 *pad*s; of Dādū, 403 *pad*s, and so on. It has taken me years to rid myself of the notion that Gopāldās or Rajab compiled their *Sarvāṅgī* from existing manuscripts lying on the floor in front of them.[7] It was hard to imagine that without manuscripts a person could produce, from memory, such a wonderful selection of *pad*s and *sākhī*s of so many *bhakta*s and that he could classify them according to theme, in 144 *aṅg*s. That man must have spent many days listening to performances of singers and storing all that literature in his extraordinary memory. In my young days I have witnessed several such extraordinary memories during my travels in India.

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6   For Callewaert 1978 and 1993, see also https://kuleuven.academia.edu/Winand Callewaert, accessed 9 February 2025.
7   Horstmann (2021: 54, note 94), however, points out that besides relying on his memory, Gopāldās also used manuscript sources.

But I keep wondering: how did the compiler bring the *pad*s or *sākhī*s together according to theme? Was there a particular word that connected two *pad*s, a particular mnemotechnical device?

Intentional Changes

All this is very exciting, but what is the real reason why we look for manuscripts, why we look for the earliest manuscripts, and, if possible, why we try to reconstruct the autograph, that is, the very first manuscript? The reason is very simple: scribes made mistakes when they wrote down from memory or when they copied a manuscript. Some mistakes were not accidental, because the scribe changed a word or half a line thinking he knew better, or because a particular idea had become controversial. Some mistakes were not intentional, because the scribe felt drowsy or simply because he could not read the letters of his original, or his memory failed him. Another unintentional mistake of a scribe was the fact that he skipped a line, by mistake. For that reason, we know, every page of the 1430 pages of the *Gurū granth sāhib* and every line in that huge text has to start and end with the letter as it is seen in the original.

I should like to refer to one example of a text with intentional changes, a text that was much tampered with within one generation after the original was created: the *Biography of Dādū*, the *Dādū / janma-līlā*. It was very necessary to search for the earliest manuscripts of this text as I had noticed that in a later set of manuscripts the text was enlarged and that in those later manuscripts the life of Dādū had become very miraculous (Callewaert 1988).

There is another reason why we should look at the manuscripts and search for the very earliest manuscripts. If the Rajput princess Mīrābāī died at the age of 43, possibly in 1546, it is remarkable that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there should be as many as 5,200 *bhajan*s with her name attached. It has become commonplace in studies about Mīrābāī that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to decide which and how many songs are most probably by Mīrā. And yet, ever expanding collections go on appearing. In some editions the question of authenticity is solved on the basis of content, in others on the basis of language. Rarely do scholars bother to look at the manuscript material. It remains a mystery for me why the written tradition, in the case of Mīrā, seems to have started so late, around 1800 CE. Very late indeed when compared with the spate of manuscripts with bhakti literature in Rajasthan or the Braj area from 1600 CE onwards. Some

argue that sadhus did not like to write *pad*s created by a lady and that female scribes did not exist in the early days.

So, when Charlotte Vaudeville in 1971 in Paris told me to look for manuscripts, I had a very clear plan: I would go to Rajasthan, drink tea, and copy manuscripts; I would reproduce the archetype and prepare a critical edition on the basis of scribal mistakes. I discovered I was partly wrong with this plan when in the 1980s I worked on Nāmdev with Mukund Lath, who introduced me to the exciting world of the *geya-vikāra* or the changes brought about by singers (Callewaert and Lath 1989).

Some More Impressive Manuscripts

In Film 42 of the Callewaert Collection we find a huge manuscript bearing two colophons, one of 1615 CE and the other of 1622 CE, from the Rām Kṛpālu Śarmā collection (the Sharma manuscript) in Jaipur (Strnad 2016; Horstmann 2021b: 40–51). It has 671 folios, with folios 21–54 and an unknown number of folios at the end missing in the scans. It is not only the earliest *Pañcavāṇī* manuscript known to me, it is also an encouragement to go on searching for manuscripts and to use them for new critical editions.

I should like to point out an interesting feature in this Sharma manuscript: of the 370 *pad*s of Kabīr quoted in this early *Pañcavāṇī* manuscript, three *pad*s are not found in any other manuscript source which I used for my critical edition of Kabīr (Callewaert 2000). The Sharma manuscript is the earliest manuscript found so far, but three *pad*s are not found in later manuscripts (129/231 and 331 in Callewaert 2000). How do we explain that? It is also interesting to note that in this old manuscript of 1615/1622 CE less *sākhī*s of Kabīr are given than in the Mātā Prasād Gupta edition; the oldest manuscript which Gupta consulted was dated 1658 CE. The later Mātā Prasād Gupta manuscript gives more *sākhī*s than the earlier Sharma manuscript. That is of course more understandable.

Besides the *Pañcavāṇī* texts (the *Vāṇī*s of the Five), there are more than 100 *bhakta*s quoted in this Sharma manuscript. If anyone still clings to the *saguṇa–nirguṇa* distinction, I am happy to announce that in this manuscript we also find 141 *pad*s of Sūrdās, and many of Nānak (on scans 154–9), of Kājī Mahmūd, and of others. The *pad*s of Sūrdās have, with great expertise, been studied by Dr. Biljana Zrnic. Sūrdās is also found in Film 12 and Film 18 of the Callewaert Collection and it would be interesting to look at the context of these manuscripts. Dr. Zrnic has also discovered eighty *pad*s by Sūrdās in Film No. 2 (scans 157–67,

folios 430b–5b). That manuscript is dated 1676 CE. In Film 15, too, of Amritsar, we find *pad*s by Sūrdās, among all the so-called *nirguṇa* texts.

Kabīr

When around 1420 the Muslim Kabīr sang his songs in Banaras, nobody could imagine that in the twenty-first century he would be the most frequently quoted bhakti saint in North-India, having an equal only in Tulsīdās. Even South Indians pride themselves in having memorized some of his lines. In the beginning of the twentieth century Rabindranath Tagore translated 100 of his songs and made Kabīr known all over the world. Having now prepared a critical edition of the *pad*s of Kabīr, based on the earliest available manuscript material, I am convinced that hardly any of those *pad*s translated by Tagore were ever composed by Kabīr.

When more than 30 years ago Bahadur Singh of Hamburg recorded about 500 songs of Kabīr, then commonly sung during performances by travelling singers in Rajasthan, he noted that hardly any of these were found in the earliest manuscripts which I studied. David Lorenzen, specialist of the Kabīrpanth and its literature, made a survey of the twenty most popular songs of Kabīr in the Kabīrpanth: hardly any of these is found in the earliest manuscripts (Lorenzen 1996: 205–23).

I can understand and appreciate that a translator of Kabīr may look for a nice song without bothering about its authenticity. All right, beautiful and enjoyable work. But let us not start writing commentaries on Kabīr and on fifteenth-century Banaras quoting those songs.

Interaction in the oral tradition and corruption in the scribal tradition act like fog and pollution, creating an environment in which it becomes very difficult to find the original version of the songs of the fifteenth to seventeenth century *bhakta*s. Five hundred years after Kabīr was born in Banaras and after at least 100 years of scholarship, do we have any certainty that the songs attributed to him and published in critical and uncritical editions and translations, are by Kabīr? I doubt it more and more. Between Kabīr and our computer age lie 150 years of oral transmission (which never stopped) and nearly 400 years of scribal transmission. We have no oral recordings of Kabīr scolding his audiences, and I take it for granted that he did not write down his compositions. What we have are manuscripts in which his popular repertoire was written down, first by travelling singers and later in a more respectful and professional and organized manner, by devoted scribes. But what do we have of Kabīr in those repertoires?

This question can be raised for many *bhakta*s of the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.

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About the Editors and Contributors

Annalisa Bocchetti ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0603-5848
specializes in early modern Indo-Islamic literary cultures, focusing on vernacular Sufi narratives. With a PhD from "L'Orientale" University of Naples (2022) and an FWO postdoctoral fellowship at Ghent University (2022–2024), she now researches South Asian folk and oral traditions at "L'Orientale" University of Naples.

Winand Callewaert is an emeritus professor of Sanskrit and Hinduism at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. He has conducted research in India since 1965, focusing on the devotional literature of the Nirguna and Saguna traditions, including Dadupanthi and Kabir. He has published numerous books and articles.

John E. Cort is Professor Emeritus of Religion at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, USA. His research focuses on religion, history, literature, culture and society in western India, especially Gujarat and Rajasthan, and especially on the Jains. He has published articles in several ICEMLNI volumes.

John Stratton Hawley ⓘ https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6771-0275
– informally, Jack – is Claire Tow Professor of Religion at Barnard College, Columbia University. His most recent book on India's bhakti traditions is *Krishna's Playground: Vrindavan in the 21st Century* (Oxford, 2020), which has recently been translated into Hindi as *Kṛṣṇa Līlābhūmi* (Rajkamal, 2022).

Monika Horstmann ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4789-7842
retired as Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures of South Asia at South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg. Her area of research is north India, with a focus on religious orders of Rajasthan, their literature, and the interface between religion and politics.

Heleen De Jonckheere ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9714-0250
is a scholar of Jain literature and the history of the Jains within the religious plurality of premodern India. Her research has focused on multiple language use by Jains involving Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha,

Kannada, and Old Hindi. She obtained her PhD from Ghent University, is currently appointed at SOAS, and will return to Ghent University at the end of 2025.

Anne Murphy https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0171-6003
(Ph.D. Columbia) teaches in the Department of History at the University of British Columbia. Her work focuses on the Punjab region of India and Pakistan, with interests in language and textual cultures, the history of the Punjabi language, literary and religious community formations in the early modern and modern periods, oral history, commemoration, historiography, and material culture studies.

Hiroko Nagasaki https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5339-2903
is a professor of Hindi literature at the University of Osaka. Her research focuses on early Hindi devotional literature and Hindi metrics. Recent publications are the co-authored book *Triveṇī Texts of Three Literary Traditions in Early Modern Languages of North India. A Reader* (2023) and 'The Rhythm of Early Hindi Poetry as Reflected in the *Piṅgala* Literature' (2024).

Kiyokazu Okita https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6752-2802
is Associate Professor of Hindu Studies at Faculty of Liberal Arts and at Graduate Program in Global Studies, Sophia University. He is also a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. He is the author of *Hindu Theology in Early Modern South Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2014) as well as the editor of *The Building of Vṛndāvana* (Brill, 2024. Co-edited with Rembert Lutjeharms).

Rosina Pastore https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6594-4577
is currently FWO postdoctoral fellow at Gent University (Belgium). She obtained her PhD in 2022 from the University of Lausanne (Switzerland) in Indian Studies. Her main domain of research is vernacular philosophical literature, which she investigates through primary sources in Classical and Modern Hindi, Rajasthani, and its interactions with Sanskrit knowledge systems. She is the author of *Vedānta, Bhakti, and Their Early Modern Sources: Philosophical and Religious Dimensions of Brajvāsīdās's Prabodhacandrodaya Nāṭaka* published by De Gruyter in 2024.

Heidi Pauwels https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0919-0774
is Professor at the University of Washington, Seattle. She has written two monographs on 16C *Bhakti;* a book comparing Sanskrit, early

modern Hindi, and contemporary film and television retellings of the stories of Sita and Radha; and two volumes on cultural exchange in 18C Kishangarh art and poetry. A third volume has just appeared from Cambridge University Press: *The Voice of the Indian Mona Lisa.* She has been awarded Guggenheim, AIIS, and NEH fellowships.

Akshara Ravishankar https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3066-5066
is currently an FWO Junior Postdoctoral Fellow at Ghent University in Belgium. Her current research focusses on the interpretive histories of the Bhagavad Gītā in North India, and on exegetical writings in Sanskrit and early Hindi in the period between 1400–1800 CE.

Danuta Stasik https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6885-9714
– Professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Warsaw. Her research focuses on the history of Hindi literature, literary criticism, and the Rāmāyaṇa tradition. Her latest works include the volumes *Oral–Written–Performed* (HASP 2020) and *Literary Cultures in Early Modern India* (with Imre Bangha; OUP 2024).

Radosław Tekiela https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2710-8076
is a former PhD candidate at the Doctoral School of Humanities, University of Warsaw. His research was focused on early modern romance in Hindi, and Islam in India.

Aleksandra Turek https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8431-1268
is an Assistant Professor at the Chair of South Asian Studies, University of Warsaw. Her research focuses on early modern Rajasthani literature and the Rajasthani language. She has authored publications on Rajasthan, including articles, book chapters, and the book *The Three Jewels of the Desert* (2012). Additionally, she is a co-author of *Triveṇī* (2023).

Biljana Zrnic https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9794-8258
is a visiting professor at the Department of Languages and Cultures at Ghent University. Her research focuses on early modern North Indian literatures, manuscript culture, and the community of Dādūpanth. Her recent publications include 'Sūrdās' poetry in the community of Dādūpanth' (2024) and *Reframing Traditions in Early Modern India* (forthcoming, 2025).

The volume represents the Proceedings of the 14th International Conference on Early Modern Literatures of North India, Osaka University, 15–19 July 2022. It highlights the conference series' history, the influential 1970s manuscript collection foundational to Sant tradition studies, and multilinguality in Jain traditions. It further explores the role of women in court literature, Vedāntic interpretations, the symbolism of paintings in literature, Sūrdās and Gurmukhi cultural outputs, emphasizing the cosmopolitan nature of vernacular literature.