

# English Voices for Hindi Verses? Issues in Translating Pre-Colonial Poetry\*

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Some hold translations not unlike to be  
The wrong side of a Turkey tapestry.

James Howell (1594?-1666)

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The path of translation studies is paved with aphorisms, and the ‘Translation and Translators’ section of Peter Kemp’s new *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Quotations*, source of the Howell couplet above, lends quotable comfort to almost any attitude from which the thorny problems of literary translation might be approached. So it is also with the now impressive bibliography of theoretical writing on a subject which has grown so formidably in recent years as almost to eclipse the concept of ‘Comparative Literature’ which had formerly seemed its natural home.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the comparative nature of translation as a practice and as a discipline, much of this theoretical argument applies universally to any pair of source and target languages; but the student of translation from Indian languages is faced with a particular set of problems which call for some particular discussion.

The question of the translator’s contamination of his material, and of the heinous effects of an imposed ‘alien’ cultural perspective, has rightly become a major focus of post-colonial literary critique in recent years<sup>2</sup>. There is consequently no shortage of warnings to the would-be translator of the dire consequences of naiveté in his or her approach to a source text from a once-colonised culture. Less commonly available in the context of translation from Indian languages into European ones (except in the often self-serving introductions to individual translated works) is any kind of detailed critique of the specific issues encountered in the far from simple process of making such texts available to readers not enjoying access to the originals. Emboldened by a perceived need for more analysis of this kind, this paper looks at specific examples of published and in-progress translations, in the hope of starting certain hares whose pursuit may be profitable for the highly underdeveloped art of translating from Hindi into English. The approach adopted here is,

unapologetically, that of Indology looking out, rather than that of Translation Studies looking in.

Firstly the broad outlines of this literature should be defined. Literature in the various regional languages or dialects included under the umbrella of ‘Hindi’ was composed from about the fifteenth century onwards in a number of genres, most of which were to be modified, eroded or replaced through processes of social change (including contact, through English, with western literatures and concepts of literature) brought about by the colonial encounters of the nineteenth century. In this sense the colonial presence ushered in a new era of ‘modern Hindi literature’, written almost entirely in the Khaṛī Bolī dialect of the Delhi area which came to be identified and promoted as ‘standard’ Hindi. Our concern here, however, is with the earlier literature, mostly composed in the Braj Bhāṣā or Avadhī dialects which dominated literary production in the western and eastern parts of the Hindi area respectively. Characteristics of this pre-colonial literature include the fact that it is overwhelmingly in verse; that its currency depended largely on oral transmission (bypassing the low literacy rates which are still a feature of the Hindi-speaking North today); that it drew heavily on Sanskrit models for its conventions, its aesthetics and its modes of critical analysis; that the religious inspirations of devotional Hinduism or *bhakti* were a major preoccupation – one whose conventions and imagery often outlived their original religious impulse, thereby enjoying an afterlife in the secular poetry of the royal courts; that any barriers between ‘élite’ and ‘popular’ modes of culture were lowered by the broad following enjoyed by religious literature, and by the sharing of formal and conventional features across genres from temple, court and ‘folk’ traditions; and that despite the new agendas introduced from the nineteenth century, the devotional literature still maintains a currency today, challenging the traditional era-based literary historiography which regards the *bhakti kāl* or ‘devotional era’ as belonging to the historical past.

The relationship between Hindi and its classical antecedent, Sanskrit, makes processes of borrowing, rewriting, and translation a commonplace in this linguistic context; indeed the Hindi linguistic tradition typically chooses to view the Sanskrit-Hindi connection as so fundamental and organic that words borrowed from the former into the latter are hardly regarded as ‘loanwords’ at all, but rather as an integral part of the Hindi lexicon. Translations from Sanskrit into Hindi (or any other Indo-Aryan vernacular) therefore involve mechanical transfers to vernacular syntax, and a decanting of material from elaborate Sanskrit metres into simpler vernacular ones, while maintaining a substantial proportion of the Sanskrit or Sanskritic vocabulary, not to mention an even fuller proportion of the Sanskritic cultural context. This great facility, while admittedly less simplistic than characterised in this paragraph, underlies the profuse traditions of translation that have been so fundamental a part of Indian cultural history over the centuries. By

contrast, the question of translating from Indian languages into European languages, while having a substantial history of its own, involves far greater linguistic, formal, cultural and theoretical problems; and the unfortunate result of this fact is a dearth of such translations from pre-colonial Hindi as could sustain the interest of a reader seeking insight into the aesthetics of that literature through English.

The difficulties of translating cultural specificity often involve religious and aesthetic vocabulary. Coming directly to a specific example, one might cite the matrix of implications that surrounds the Sanskrit word *maṅgala*, so frequently encountered in Hindi devotional and religious texts. Dictionary definitions include ‘happiness, felicity, welfare, bliss...; anything auspicious or tending to a lucky issue (e.g. a good omen, a prayer, benediction, auspicious ornament or amulet, a festival or any solemn ceremony on important occasions &c...’<sup>3</sup>; but already this brief entry encounters problems of cultural equivalence, since the resonances of the headword’s meaning derive from a Hindu – or South Asian? – viewpoint in which a personal apprehension of felicity and well-being is defined by a harmony of karmic and metaphysical factors in which the randomness of a concept such as ‘luck’ have no place. The translation choice of ‘auspicious’ as an English equivalent of *maṅgala* recommends itself to most translators in most contexts, but loses the deeply perceived sense of a pious harmony – of all being right with and without the world – implicit in the Sanskrit term. Furthermore the word ‘auspicious’ itself has little resonance in a world-view which has progressively forsaken belief in metaphysical processes and their benefits; even the etymological entrails of the word seem remote from contemporary sensibilities, and current usage is typically restricted to ironic or waggishly facetious contexts. Similar cruxes appear equally commonly with related Sanskritic vocabulary, including not only semantically parallel adjectives such as *śubha*, but also the subtly weighted prefix *su-* whose literal sense of ‘good, well-’ so typically bears an implication similar to that of *maṅgala* itself.

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Moving from word to text, one may start by looking at a remarkable and probably unique work of the seventeenth century, the *Ardhakathānaka* of Banārsīdās, together with its hardly less remarkable translation by the historian Mukund Lath. Banārsīdās was a Jain merchant, born in Rajasthan, who migrated first to Jaunpur and later to Agra, where in 1641 AD he wrote the famous verse text that is often described as the first real autobiography written in the Indian tradition<sup>4</sup>. While contemporary sectarian, religious and court poets hardly acknowledge their individual existence as real people, Banārsīdās – especially in Lath’s blithely fluent English translation – seems to speak across the centuries with an individuality that sometimes shows a strikingly modern tone. The following extract describes the death of the Mughal emperor Akbar and the instability and panic that ensued

when the news reached Jaunpur. Lath's prose rendering *Half a Tale*<sup>5</sup> offers the following version:

In Vikram 1662 (A.D. 1605), during the month of Kartik, after the monsoon was over, the great emperor Akbar breathed his last in Agra. The alarming news of his death spread fast and soon reached Jaunpur. People felt suddenly orphaned and insecure without their sire. Terror raged everywhere; the hearts of men trembled with dire apprehension; their faces became drained of colour.

I was sitting up [sic] a flight of stairs in my house when I heard the dreadful news, which came as a sharp and sudden blow. It made me shake with violent, uncontrollable agitation. I reeled, and losing my balance, fell down the stairs in a faint. My head hit the stone floor and began to bleed profusely, turning the courtyard red. Everyone present rushed to my help. My dear parents were in utter agony. My mother put my head in her lap and applied a piece of burnt cloth to my wound in order to stop the flow of blood. I was then quickly put to bed with my sobbing mother at my side.<sup>6</sup>

The English version is supple and self-confident; it accurately conveys the narrative of the original, hardly altering the sequence of events though adding some contextual flesh to the bones of the narrative. The function of the text as chronicle is happily reproduced by the translation, and a reader concerned to know the facts of Banārsīdās's life and times would find Mukund Lath the ideal guide. Yet what is it that makes the English text seem so very contemporary in tone; and is this intimation of modernity desirable and appropriate? Banārsīdās's narrative technique has its own sophistications, notably in the use of synecdoche to convey the mood of the times, as when his staircase-fall (itself reminiscent of the accident that killed Akbar's father Humayun) and head-injury suggest the threat of wider and more deliberate bloodshed; but this original facet of Banārsīdās' text is embroidered by techniques of translation which wittingly or unwittingly erode the psychological distinctions between the seventeenth-century author and his twentieth-century reader.

The first and most obvious difference is that of narrative voice. As India's first autobiographer, Banārsīdās was certainly innovative, and his purpose seems genuinely to have been to write a record of events without any specific didactic, religious or moral purpose, simply for the sake of the record itself – if one can conceive of a text without an agenda; and yet without any tradition of autobiography behind him, Banārsīdās could not yet make use of that most inherently individualistic of all literary features, the first-person narrative. The 'I' of the English text brings an immediacy of experience which seems both congenial and effective to the English reader; we are used to this perspective, and the 15 occurrences of a first-person pronoun in the second paragraph quoted above enable us to slip our feet very easily into Banārsīdās' shoes (if he was wearing any: cultural solecisms threaten our idiom at every turn).

Another change is in the integrative narrative flow of the translation. Where the original narrates events in a concatenated manner, the English supplies a more organically integrated narrative in which imputations of causality are more fully and analytically blended into the text. For example, the emphasised wording in the following extract is (like some other features not discussed here) all added by the translator:

In Vikram 1662 (A.D. 1605), during the month of Kartik, after the monsoon was over, the great emperor Akbar breathed his last in Agra. ...I was sitting up a flight of stairs in my house when I heard the dreadful news, which came as a sharp and sudden blow. It made me shake with violent, uncontrollable agitation. ...

Such additions are, of course, necessary if the staccato tone of the brief, end-stopped verse lines is to be re-drafted as fluid prose; but this change of form achieves willy-nilly a marking of causality which is barely hinted at in the original. A similar feature is the substitution of specific registers for general ones: the sentence 'I reeled, and losing my balance, fell down the stairs in a faint' overlies an original wording (*āi tavālā giri paryau, sakyau na āpā rākhi* – lit. 'a swoon came, [he] fell down, could not hold himself') in which the technical register of 'balance' is absent, and the sequence of actions more literal than the translation, which throws in the 'reeling' for good dramatic measure. Compare also the explanatory phrase 'in order to stop the flow of blood' added by the translator later in the paragraph: this may be viewed as a necessary explication of an obscure surgical procedure, or as an attempt to gloss the narrative with a fuller rationale than had been felt necessary by the author.

Further changes of similar intent are to be seen in another passage, in which Banārsīdās speaks of the ebb and flow of life in his family. A close literal translation might read as follows:

After marrying, he came to his own abode; another lovely sister/ was born to the house of Kharagsen. On that day [Kharagsen's] aged grandmother died. / The grandmother's dying, the daughter's birth, the arrival of a daughter-in-law; / all three events took place in one day, in one house./ This is the world's deceit: see grief and sorrow manifest. / The wise become detached in their mind; the foolish do not understand the inner meaning.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, no English reader would tolerate such a grotesquely literal rendering for long. Compare the fluent, freer, expanded version offered by Mukund Lath:

On the day I returned home [after my wedding], another sister was born to me. And by a quirk of fate, on the same day my father Kharagsen's old maternal grandmother expired. This curious juxtaposition of events troubled my mind for long.<sup>8</sup> On the same day, in the same house, my father's grandmother was breathing her last, and my mother was giving birth to my sister, while at that very moment a new bride was being welcomed at the door. A thoughtful man would have discerned in this a profound irony, the mockery and the wretchedness of life. Only a fool could have remained unruffled.<sup>9</sup>

Here again, adverbial connections and other additions lubricate and elucidate the English narrative, while the substitution of continuous tenses (‘was breathing her last’, ‘was giving birth’) for nouns (*marana*, *janama* – ‘death’, ‘birth’), and of the long descriptive clause ‘while at that very moment a new bride was being welcomed at the door’ for the nominal compound *putrabadhū āgauna* (‘daughter-in-law’s arrival’), all forge a visual, almost cinematic realism from the relatively abstract references of the Hindi. Again it can be argued that readability demands or requires such changes; but some of the commentatorial links in this passage seem quite alien to the texture and sentiment of the original. For example, the phrases ‘by a quirk of fate’ and ‘the curious juxtaposition of events’<sup>10</sup> speak of a perception of fortuitousness which can surely have had little place in the world-view of a seventeenth-century Jain.<sup>11</sup> Then, while Banārsīdās records his great-grandmother’s death with a stark verb (*marī*, reappearing as the verbal noun *marana* – ‘died’...‘death’), the English narrative is aesthetically softened with the use of emollient euphemisms – (‘expired’...‘was breathing her last’). The Englishing of the final couplet also shows assimilation to a Western system of values: the Hindi text locks into a system of spiritual gnosis voiced by the four key words *saṃsāra*, *dukha*, *tyāgī* and *bheda*, (‘world(liness), suffering, renouncing, inner meaning’) each of which adds its four annas’ worth to the often-coined metaphor of ‘the world’ as a location of suffering, rejected by the wise (who alone have the capacity to discern its true nature, and therefore to transcend it); but the English hints at no such metaphysics, stressing instead that sense of irony which is so much more familiar a feature of the English reader’s landscape. Simply put, while Banārsīdās’s statement *mūḍha na jānāhi bheda* (‘the fool discerns not the inner meaning’) relates to a certain position within a technical system of gnostics, Lath’s translation ‘only a fool could have remained unruffled’ is a psychological observation about an individual’s state of mind.

Many such comments could be offered about the translation choices running through every paragraph of Lath’s fine version; yet none should be made without reference to his own statement on his working procedures. Lath notes:

In the *Ardhakathanaka*, [Banārsī’s] language has an easy colloquial flow and an informal tenor of narration. Yet it also has a compactness and economy natural to verse, especially in the well-established doha and caupai meters he uses. Translating his pithy expressiveness into plain, literal prose often makes him sound too bland and stiff, and calls for an explicit articulation where he is effective through suggestive silence. We have sometimes resorted to such articulation.<sup>12</sup>

Lath also comments more generally on the challenge of translating old Hindi into English, ‘a language entirely alien in culture and tradition’, and notes that ‘[the translator] can only hope to achieve an approximation of the spirit of the original in the new idiom’; and he justifies his use of prose and first-person narration on the grounds of achieving a natural voice in the target language. His apology is thus centred on – if not wholly limited to – the

formal factors of the text, and he offers little critique as to other kinds of manipulation entailed in the translation process. Implicit in the introduction from which these remarks come is the motivation for undertaking the translation: an intellectual and personal response to a unique historical document, whose predominant feature is the candour with which the author portrays both his community and himself as an individual within it. Lath introduces his translated text with an infectious enthusiasm which powerfully invests it with what Steiner calls a ‘dynamic of magnification’;<sup>13</sup> thus whether approaching the translated autobiography directly or through the introduction, the reader benefits from, or falls victim to, the translator’s ebullient admiration of the text, and the translator’s creative word-processing of the narrative inevitably denies the reader any innocence of approach to the author’s articulations.

To point this out is perhaps to do nothing more than to recognise the subjectivity of translating; yet the tendency is to be set against a further, and much more obviously deliberate and discreditable, process of reinterpretation, namely the variety that is so typically found in the translations of Indian material carried out by British and Indian scholars of the colonial period. Steiner remarks that his ‘dynamic of magnification’ is ‘subject, naturally, to later review and even, perhaps, dismissal’, a tendency which is seen very strongly in the early history of Hindi-English translation, when translators’ attitudes were moulded by the self-assurance of Victorian moral values, and when the content of many a (Hindu, Indian) text was held up for opprobrium rather than approval. The range of attitudes extends from indifference to downright condemnation. As an example of the former one might cite John Platts’ preface to his 1871 translation of the *Baitāl Paccīsī*, seen simply as convenient language-teaching data: ‘It being considered that few save students who are compelled to study the Hindī original would be likely to peruse the work, the translation has been made as literal as possible to make it without doing unpardonable violence to English idiom.’<sup>14</sup> The latter extreme is evident in the reference by Platts’ contemporary scholar-administrator F.S. Growse to a sixteenth-century devotional text portraying the symbolic love-play of K ṣṇa and Rādhā as ‘these sensuous ravings of a morbid imagination’, and ‘the language of the brothel’.<sup>15</sup> The crudely destructive process of such unsympathetically judgemental positions is a matter of historical record which hardly needs to be picked over here; but its existence is a reminder of the inevitability of cultural perspective on the part of the translator (and one can hardly avoid wondering which aspects of today’s critical stance and intellectual fashion are destined to become the butt of future generations’ unforgiving ridicule). What is significant is not simply the fact that Lath’s blithe enthusiasm for his *Ardhakathānaka* text has a more positive ring than the indifference or grousing of a Victorian Briton over his, but rather the humbling perception that all translators are children of their own times.

The colouring of translations with the translator’s own palette is prominent in English versions of Hindi religious verse, often making them reminiscent of Christian hymnals or psalmody<sup>16</sup>. A surprising example is to be found in the opening lines from a verse of Kabīr, not merely Englished, nor yet merely Anglicised, but rather ‘Anglicanised’. This is Kabīr the fifteenth-century psalmist in vestments lent him by no less a translator than Ezra Pound, under the editorial hand of George Steiner:

It is true, I am mad with love. And what to me  
Is carefulness or uncarefulness?  
Who, dying, wandering in the wilderness,  
Who is separated from the dearest?  
My dearest is within me, what do I care?  
The beloved is not asundered from me,  
No, not for the veriest moment.  
And I also am not asundered from him.  
My love clings to him only. ...<sup>17</sup>

Doubtless this is a more readable a ‘Kabīr’ than most of his several translators have given us; but any resemblance to the original tone may be assumed to be coincidental. While Lath and Growse, despite their radically different approaches and attitudes, share a concern for a certain faithfulness to the source text, many other translators from Hindi have joined Pound in preferring a freer and more innovative methodology. In the 1930s, A.G. Shirreff, an ICS officer and Collector of Jaunpur (sometime home of Banārsīdās also), there encountered the Hindi scholar Pandit Ram Naresh Tripathi, and was much taken with his collections of folk songs published in the *Grām gīt* volume of his anthology *Kavitā kaumudī*. Shirreff translated some examples of these songs with the intention of presenting them in what he called ‘as accurate a rendering as possible in a form which may remind English readers of folk poetry with which they are more familiar’. Shirreff’s methodology is therefore, by its own confession, to smuggle an unfamiliar literature into the target culture by literary assimilation.<sup>18</sup> Taking an Eastern Hindi ballad from Tripathi’s collection, Shirreff first offers a literal version, preserving the sense and the four-line structure of the original:

Black, black horse: Handsome rider (such as)  
sets up his standard in Kurukshetra.  
The mother opens the window and sees him–  
“Would I had ten more daughters.”  
The wedding finished: the vermilion line on head:  
dower of nine lakhs too little:  
She throws all the vessels out of the house:–  
“I would not that my enemy had a daughter!”<sup>19</sup>

Realising this to be pretty insipid stuff, and anxious to reproduce the regional flavour of the Eastern Hindi dialect whose features are far removed from the standard Khaṛī Bolī, Shirreff then re-writes the poem in the diction of a Scots air:

*Daughters to wed*

There came a bra' wooer to Jeannie's ha' door  
On a bonny black horse, like a hero of yore.  
And her minnie keeked oot of the window & said  
"I wad fain hae a dizen more daughters to wed  
Daughters to wed, O daughters to wed,  
It's blithe is the mither wi' daughters to wed."  
But when the bra' callant had married the maid,  
And her snood had been loosed & her tocher been paid,  
Oh then Jeannie's minnie she grat & she said  
"I'd no wish my warst fae had a daughter to wed.  
Daughters to wed, O daughters to wed,  
It's wae is the mither wi' daughters to wed."<sup>20</sup>

A faithfulness of obscurity has been preserved here, and readers<sup>21</sup> of either language may derive some pleasure from encountering an exotic 'other' which remains just within the borders of comprehension. The process is problematic: should a modern English translation of a pre-modern Indian text be both English *and* modern – a result which puts the reader into a different relationship with the translated text from that in which contemporary readers of the pre-modern original find themselves? Does translation obliterate both space *and* time? But that parenthetical question apart, the methodology through which Shirreff's obscurity is achieved is also worth noticing: for whereas the English version is marked by a regional lexicon which might be glossed by substituted synonyms – 'to keek' (to peep), 'snood' (a hairband, symbolising virginity), 'tocher' (dowry) – the Hindi is marked by particular regional, vernacular and/or archaic, versions of standard vocabulary, such as *asavaravā* (*savār*, 'rider'), *āūri* (*aur*, 'more'), *saturū* (*śatru*, 'enemy').

Another of Shirreff's translations shows his skill in capturing some of the witty playfulness of the Hindi – again by substituting new effects of his own rather than by literal translation of features of the source text. The song is a self-contained little narrative telling of the ambitions of a *kotvāl* (police officer) in respect of a young girl:

RESMA AND THE KOTWAL

Resma was her daddy's darling, & her daddy for a treat  
Often gave her, as a favour, pounds & pounds of cloves to eat.  
Resma darling, Resma darling, Resma darling, by & by  
Somebody will be your husband. How I wish it might be I.  
  
In her silk-embroidered bodice & her petticoat of blue  
She was neat & she was sweet & most attractive to the view.  
Resma darling...

Resma went one day to market in the dress described above.

And the Kotwal fell a total victim to the power of love.

Resma darling...

“O my golden girl!” he babbled, “Tell me from what perfect mould  
Thou departest, & what artist formed thee of the purest gold?”

Resma darling...

“O you silly old policeman, I should like to burn your beard,  
With your golden girls & moulding. Stuff & nonsense!” Resma jeered.

Resma darling...

“One half of me by my daddy, if you want to know was given,  
And the other by my mother; but my beauty came from heaven.”

Resma darling...<sup>22</sup>

The English text invents a neat pattern of none-too-serious internal rhyme (‘Often gave her, as a favour’; ‘she was neat and she was sweet’; ‘Thou departest, & what artist’; ‘With your golden girls and moulding’; ‘And the other by my mother’; and even the self-mockingly outrageous ‘And the Kotwal fell a total’). Other contrivances include the brazen invention of a refrain, and the adoption of a bookish register in such phrases as ‘most attractive to the view’, and ‘in the dress described above’, whose pedantic tone mocks the aspirations of the Kotwal before he meets his come-uppance in a highly colloquial ‘stuff and nonsense’: this is surely a very *British* mode of humour. The ‘given/heaven’ rhyme echoes the Anglican hymnal, cheekily adding a further touch of incongruity to the tale; perhaps the occasional appearance of the ampersand may be intended to have a similar effect. These devices are all substitutions for the allusions of the original, whose Avadhī forms – *lahāgavā*, *bajariyā*, *kotavalavā* – belong to a well-established tradition of suggestive folk-songs and bring to mind many a saucy *thumrī* lyric. Aware of the regionally marked quality of his originals, Shirreff uses a marked stylisation of his own in the translations; but in so doing he substitutes a knowingly ludicrous music-hall register for the less self-ironic humour of the Hindi verses. This technique is to be compared to that of Mukund Lath in his search for accessible equivalencies for Banārsidās.

Shirreff’s work is, however, clearly redolent of a colonial cultural orientation, wherein vernacular Indian materials can be plundered and re-written, à la Fitzgerald, with an easy conscience. Unsurprisingly, colonial translators are markedly less apologetic and more assured in their approach to source texts than the majority of their latter-day successors. For an example of imperial self-assuredness we can turn again to F.S. Growse, this time introducing his prose translation of Tulsīdās’s verse classic the *Rāmcāritmānas*, the sixteenth-century ‘Hindi Rāmāyaṇ’; the example is significant, because it helps us understand the motivations of the translator, and perhaps also to perceive his true view of the literary character of his source text. In a tone of conventional false modesty that

ironically steals the thunder from Tulsī's own highly rhetorical apologia at the beginning of the text proper, Growse records an anticipation 'that there would be found a number of errors and oversights in my performance [as translator], and the more so as it was executed under not very favourable circumstances; a considerable portion of it having been written in camp, when I had few books of reference at hand, and the remainder during the midday heat of the summer months in the plains, when the intellectual faculties are apt to become a little torpid.'<sup>23</sup> The very fact that Growse's apprehensions are limited to the heat-and-dust circumstances of his working, and that his confession of them seems designed to solicit from the reader a politely rapid confutation of any shortcomings ('Not at all, my dear fellow!'), shows how far Growse was from any real engagement with the more penetrating questions that are today raised about the political and cultural implications of the translation process.

The reason for this perhaps does not derive from a Macaulayesque disdain for Indian literatures, but rather from Growse's estimation of the relevance of his source text to the imagined reader: like many translators since, what Growse admires in his text is the fact that he finds therein 'the best and most trustworthy guide to the popular living faith of the Hindu race at the present day – a matter of not less practical interest than the creed of their remote ancestors' while a second recommendation is that 'its language, which in the course of three centuries has contracted a tinge of archaism, is a study of much importance to the philologist, as helping to bridge the chasm between the modern and the mediæval.'<sup>24</sup> What is offered through a study of Tulsīdās, then, is a knowledge of Indian religious and linguistic history, and for Growse the translated text seems to belong on the shelf next to the District Gazetteer, the Survey Report and the dictionary. The literary character of the original work being apparently insignificant, it follows that the methodology and aesthetics of the translation too are immaterial.<sup>25</sup>

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Reference was made earlier to the self-serving function of translators' prefaces, and Susan Bassnett points out that 'All too often, in discussing their work, translators avoid analysis of their own methods and concentrate on exposing the frailties of other translators'.<sup>26</sup> This mild chastisement suggests that this may be a good place to expose my own frailties as a translator by discussing some work in progress. The text is Bihārīlāl's *Satsaī*, a Braj Bhāṣā collection of 'seven centuries' of couplets on themes of love, devotion, and the world; its first audience is presumed to have been the royal court of Jai Singh Mirza at Amber, the old capital which was later to be replaced by the newly built Jaipur; and this 'Jai Śāh' is himself apostrophised in a handful of Bihārī's verses. The 700-odd couplets which make up the text are in the brief *dohā* metre, a concise moric construction with trochaic end-rhyme. The

difficulty of catching sufficient of the text's extremely compressed and ornate poetic potency to justify the translation candle is often expressed with a defeatist shake of the head: Bihārī's allusive verses are characterised as *gāgar mē sāgar* – 'an ocean in a pitcher', and even Sir George Grierson refrained from publishing translations after twenty years of experiment.<sup>27</sup> In fact, however, many of the verses are no more (or less) inaccessible of translation than any other genre in which a large amount of 'given' meaning programmes the literary expectations of the audience; in many ways, for example, the Hindi *dohā* can be seen as a kind of formal parallel to the Urdu *ghazal*. Since Grierson's time, a literal translation has been undertaken as part of a Berkeley PhD thesis by Baron Holland, and a more interpretative version by K.P. Bahadur has been published by Penguin India; but it is in the nature of the text that no translation can be definitive or final.

My own present attempt is to make a partial translation of this text, in which the translations of selected couplets might both stand alone and be accompanied, in an appendix, by a roman transliteration of the text and a literal rendering. It is hoped that such a procedure will facilitate an understanding and appreciation of the source text, both comparatively, through the divergent positions taken by the two renderings, and also (optimistically), through the free-standing 'literary' translations themselves; but a further aspiration is that a candid discussion of *why* the text is difficult to translate, and of the failures inherent in these new attempts, may of itself constitute a new approach to Bihārī's poems. For the present translator, this procedure represents a stage beyond that of merely providing a 'key-plus-footnotes' guide to the contents of the text, as published earlier.<sup>28</sup> For present purposes, the example of a single verse is taken as representative of my working translation practice. The *dohā* given below describes the heroine's bashfulness when close to the man she loves:

कैवा आवत इहिं गली रहौं चलाइ चलैं न ।      *kaivā āvata ihī galī raha calāi calāi na;*  
 दरसन की साधै रहै सूधे रहैं न नैन ॥      *darasana kī sādhai rahaī sūdhe rahaī na naina.*<sup>29</sup>

As a basis for discussion one may take the literal translation offered by Baron Holland:

Often as he comes down this road, I cannot turn them – they do not go;  
 My eyes will not stay straight, and desire for *darśan* stays.<sup>30</sup>

Such literal renderings are rather too precisely 'the wrong side of a Turkey tapestry', in that they show something of the construction of the artefact while hiding the delights of its surface texture and pattern, and they cannot have (and here do not claim) any independent status. But Holland, however flat, serves as a useful crib to the Braj, and delivers more or less intact the basic terms of the conceit: the heroine's bashfulness is the enemy of her ambition to admire the beloved. In the original the first rhyme, based on a trochee whose short syllable is the negative particle *na*, anticipates its rhyming partner, *naina*, 'eyes', the subject of the two verbs *calaī* and *rahaī*: here, in a favourite device which adds a certain

riddle-like quality to the verse, Bihārī withholds the syntactic and semantic key to the couplet until the very last moment – *naina*, the last word of line two, is the subject of *calāi* in line one. The narrative crux, a conflict between the eyes’ shyness and their desires, is highlighted by the parallelism of *sādhai* (*sādha* ‘desire’, with emphatic suffix *-i*) with *sūdhe* (‘straight’). While the use of ‘eye’ imagery as synecdoche is by no means unique to Bihārī, it is used by him here with great subtlety. Recognising this feature, Holland copies the original in holding back the subject of the conceit until the second line – though English syntax does not enable him to sustain that expectancy until line-end, nor is the feature foregrounded through end-rhyme as in the Hindi.

K.P. Bahadur’s version of the couplet is a free paraphrase, much fleshed-out with contextualising information and headed, in a convention which he adopts throughout most of his translation of the 700-odd couplets, with an identification of the dramatis personae.<sup>31</sup>

What the shy girl told her confidante

My lover often passes  
 through this lane  
 but though I long for his sight  
 I can’t see him;  
 for whenever my yearning glance  
 speeds on to him  
 bashfulness gets in the way  
 and stops it from reaching!

The translation has its virtues: ‘lane’ is a sound choice for *galī*, alliterating nicely with ‘lover’ and ‘long’; ‘I long for his sight’ retains a noun in a bid to replicate the semantically loaded *darśana* with its implied sense ‘vision of a revered figure’, but falls foul of the semantic complexity of the English genitive (‘a sight of him’ is meant, though the term *darśana*, like *maṅgala*, belongs to the category of the untranslatable); ‘yearning glance’ is effective enough, if a touch oxymoronic. But the last couplet is problematic, for the late introduction of a new subject, ‘bashfulness’, disturbs the pattern in which the eyes and their longing have predominated thus far. The *idea* of bashfulness lies securely in Bihārī’s intended meaning, but making it explicit robs the conceit of its careful focus just as surely as Bahadur’s final exclamation mark impales the side of subtlety. Likewise, the too-colloquial register of ‘gets in the way’ is stylistically crude; and the wording ‘stops it from reaching’ works only in Indian English (since elsewhere the verb ‘to reach’ requires a destination to be stated as complement — and differs in this respect from ‘to arrive’).

Graduating from an encounter with Lath and Shirreff, one may attempt an alternative kind of rendering, foregrounding the qualities of conciseness, alliterative harmony and tight integration of construction that, arguably, most fully characterise Bihārī’s use of the *dohā* form:

Many a time he walks this way:  
but though I try to look at him  
my eyes, too prim, will not obey –  
my longing's in its prime.

Certain internal correspondences attempt to replicate the fluent assonances which run through the Braj text: just as the correlation between *sādhai* and *sūdhai* is one of sound only, and does not touch etymology or morphology, so does 'prim' lie in relation to 'prime' (and, in parallel, 'him' to 'time'). A problem here, nevertheless, is the impossibility of reproducing more fully this teasing trope which foregrounds *sādhā* 'desire' so strongly: if the translated poem does not convey a sense of the unfulfilment of the frustrated desire, it is not Bihārī's. Awareness of this weakness prompts the use of a dash at the end of line three, in the hope that this may suggest a causality in which bashful eyes are blamed for the frustration of the beloved. (And this usage is in itself *partly* responsible for the decision to translate a couplet as a quatrain.) The length of the word 'longing' itself is something of a bonus in helping to compensate for the problem of loss surrounding *sādhā*, sitting as it does in an English verse almost entirely composed of monosyllables.

There is also a choice to be made here between economy of wording and explicitness of image. Bahadur's reified representation of the race between the 'yearning glance' and the obstructive 'bashfulness' acts as a gloss to explicate the Hindi usage in the phrase '[*naina*] *calāi calāi na*' wherein the pairing of a negated transitive verb (*calā- na*) with an intransitive version of the same verb (*cal-*) indicates a frustrated endeavour: the eyes will not 'rise' despite a will to 'raise' them. (The device is one of many in which transitivity becomes a favourite plaything in the skilful hands of the poet – and a nightmare for the translator into English, where contrasts of transitivity and intransitivity are less clearly defined.) In my translation a similar effect is sought through the tempting wording 'too prim'. This is, however, doubly problematic: firstly its sense is too tight and stiff (wrongly favouring corsetry over the required coquetry); and secondly, it follows Bahadur into the trap of making specific a sentiment which is only *suggested* by Bihārī's wording.

Part of the ambition in my own translation of such couplets is to engage with Bihārī's use of the *dohā* couplet format. This is not the place for a detailed or comparative analysis of the metrics of the *dohā* in Bihārī and other poets, but I have argued elsewhere<sup>32</sup> that the conventional definition of the *dohā* form through a simplistic mathematical statement of its moric structure is inadequate to the task of analysing the stylistics of individual exponents. In addition to the process of loss that famously accompanies any translation of poetry, a loss of *individual poetic identity* is also an early casualty in the translation of Hindi poets into English. The reader of English is hard put to distinguish the varied work of poets of radically different sensibilities in Hindi, and any aspiration to maintain a plurality of

‘voices’ for English verse remains, like the heroine’s love-struck eyes, frustratingly earthbound. Individual poetic voices are levelled out; the functions of different forms are obscured by a lowest-common-denominator in the production of readable English versions. The translation problem is exacerbated by a lack of a sophisticated stylistics, especially in respect of the function of form, in Hindi literary criticism.

– 5 –

A shibboleth for translators of Indian devotional verse is the matter of proper names. The epithets of deities and other ‘mythological’ figures allude to various aspects of the system of belief and aesthetics in which a text is grounded, and the question of translation may involve, amongst other factors, a range of issues similar to those surrounding the adjective *maṅgala* discussed above. Thus while the deity known to English sources as ‘K ṣṇa’ presides over vast tracts of Hindi poetry, only very rarely is he actually referred to by this name in the texts themselves, because a blunt Sanskrit adjective meaning simply ‘black’ is inadequate testimony to the poet-devotee’s feelings of deeply experienced piety towards a loving and beautiful deity characterised variously as mischievous child, sublime prince, or sensuous lover. Instead, a poetic thesaurus of patronymics and other epithets facilitates sweetly ecstatic reference to the deity. Some epithets may refer organically to the poetic context in which they appear, as *Ban-k var* ‘prince of the grove’ or *Rādhāramaṇ* ‘Rādhā’s lover’; others domesticate lofty Sanskritic epithets by dressing them in vernacular garb, as *Kānha* and its diminutive *Kanhaiyā* – both derivatives from *K ṣṇa* (the etymological distinction, so compellingly effective in Hindi, is itself very difficult to retain in translation, and the sweetly vernacular implication of familiarity or intimacy is lost). An example of this is the way in which the 16th-century poetess Mīrā uses the allusive epithet *Gir(i)dhar*, ‘mountain-holder’, in many of the hymns attributed to her. The following verse is translated by R.S. McGregor:

Friend, my eyes are blind  
 To all but him: his darkness fills  
 My thoughts, my doubts, my mind.  
 I search through groves and lanes to find  
 Each place the world’s Upholder trod this ground,  
 And dance to my kind Lord who held  
 A mountain in his hand.<sup>33</sup>

Here the epithet ‘Girdhar’ is translated analytically in a relative clause which enjambes the last two lines. It is built into the structure of the verse by alliteration and half-rhyme; and by being linked by a semantic and syntactic parallelism to the preceding clause, it invites the reader to recall the episode in which K ṣṇa saved his companions from Indra’s floods by lifting Govardhan hill as an umbrella – the earlier phrase ‘world’s Upholder’ allows a

connection to the substance of this verse. Simply to transliterate ‘Girdhar’ would seem to entail too much loss of internal reference. Elsewhere in the *Mīrā* corpus, however, the same epithet frequently appears without any such relevance to the content of the stanza, since *Mīrā*’s favoured image of K ṣṇa is not generally that of heroic saviour. But one might argue that this very displacement suggests the universality of the deity’s character: by being cantilevered out from the narrative, as it were, the epithet extends the narrative’s field of reference. In such circumstances the question of whether to translate or to transliterate is a thornier one.

A.K. Ramanujan is one of the few translators to discuss cruxes of this kind. In his *Speaking of Śiva* he gives a valuably open – if brief – discussion of the compromises that have to be wrought in the translation process; and among them, he includes the question of proper names. A sequence of *vacanas* (free-verse devotional lyrics) by the twelfth-century Kannada poet Basavaṇṇa is unified by reference, at the end of most stanzas, to the poet’s deity Kūḍalasaṅgamadēva, a name which tautologically compounds words for ‘confluence’ in both Kannada (*kūḍalu*) and Sanskrit (*saṅgama*), with Sanskrit *dēva* ‘god’, and which Ramanujan translates with the analytical phrase ‘lord of the meeting rivers’. Such usage is explained as part of a translation strategy:

Such quickening of etymologies in the poetry is one reason for translating attributive proper names into literal English – hoping that by using them constantly as a repetitive formula they will keep their chanting refrain quality and work as unique proper names.<sup>34</sup>

In her critique of Ramanujan’s translation methodology (to which, incidentally, she does considerable violence by suppressing the English poem’s all-important textual layout), Tejaswini Niranjana discusses a poem by Basavaṇṇa’s approximate contemporary the poet Allama, addressing the deity Guhēśvara<sup>35</sup>. While Ramanujan’s version translates the Sanskrit<sup>36</sup> epithet as ‘Lord of caves’, Niranjana’s counter-version leaves it untranslated, and she notes:

[Guhēśvara] is a name that recurs in every *vacana* that Allama wrote, and force of repetition allows it to function as a proper name that is not obscured by simple translation. Given that colonialism’s violence erases or distorts beyond recognition (as witnessed in innumerable colonial texts) the *names* of the colonized, it seems important *not* to translate proper names in a post-colonial or decolonizing practice.<sup>37</sup>

This ‘debate’ is based on unlike agendas: Ramanujan argues on the basis of literary aesthetics as applied to a particular textual example, whereas Niranjana subjugates the immediate data to the politics of the post-colonial. Both approaches are highly relevant to a consideration of how to translate from Hindi; and both are almost entirely absent from such meagre discussion of the problems of translating Indian literatures as has yet appeared in print.<sup>38</sup>

Niranjana's argument on the matter of proper names lies within a broader critique of two translations of the Allama text: that of S.C. Nandimath *et.al.*, and that of Ramanujan. Her position on the translations depends partly on a detailed analysis which cannot readily be summarised, but one section of her paper is closely relevant to the matter in hand and deserves quoting at some length:

Attempting to assimilate Śaivite poetry to the discourses of Christianity or of a post-Romantic New Criticism, these translators reproduce some of the nineteenth-century native responses to colonialism. Accepting the premises of a universalist history, they try to show how the *vacanas* are always already Christian, or "modernist," and therefore worthy of the West's attention. Their enterprise is supported by the asymmetry between English and Kannada created and enforced by colonial and neocolonial discourse. This is an asymmetry that allows translators to simplify the text in a predictable direction, toward English and the Judeo-Christian tradition and away from the multiplicity of indigenous languages and religions, which have to be homogenized before they can be translated.<sup>39</sup>

The statement is one that might have provoked a spirited defence on the part of Ramanujan or his intellectual heirs. But our concern here is less with such a defence on the part of the Kannada translators than with the applicability of possible similar charges to the translators of pre-colonial Hindi texts: if Ramanujan is guilty of 'assimilation', then how much more so are the translators of the Hindi texts quoted earlier in this paper? Without even attempting to answer such a rhetorical question it can be keenly felt that the translator is in a double bind: on the one hand he or she has to attempt the task of 'taking across' that is the bottom line of the process; on the other the text is supposed to remain rooted firmly in the culture of its birth. A rapid survey of the prefaces to English translations of pre-colonial Hindi works shows that very few translators declare much of an engagement with this problem; and while one can hardly assume that the resulting silence indicates a lack of awareness of the issues, the result is that translation practice in the area of Hindi literature remains unmoderated by any articulated debate over the cultural assumptions underlying the translation process.

– 6 –

George Steiner is the patron saint of translators, and Steiner-mining remains a favourite recourse of translation theorists. This is unsurprising: who else could justify the activity of translation so beautifully and comprehensively as Steiner when he notes that 'Without it we would live in arrogant parishes bordered by silence'.<sup>40</sup> Yet it is a different Steiner dictum whose weight I appropriate finally. Speaking again of translation, he says:

Its necessary failures, the fact that the original cannot be rendered exhaustively, that we cannot retrace the steps of the poet had he conceived the poem in our own language, are often uniquely positive. The inadequacies of a significant translation are creative of insight, critically revealing as no other reading of a poem is. To the poet who translates and to the reader who has access to both languages that is the justifying paradox.<sup>41</sup>

From the point of view of the teaching of literature, this recognition of a new perspective on the original is highly significant; to the translator, there is comfort in the thought that however inadequate a translation may be, its ability to show at least the *wrong side* of the tapestry has its own value. Yet this is not enough: there needs to be an insistence on self-criticism as taught by the abstract study of translation practice, and yet which is intimately, pragmatically and lovingly connected to the detail of the word on the page. As yet, the many questions that surround the specific problems and potentialities of translating pre-colonial Hindi literature have barely been asked, still less answered; and consequently very few translations have come near to disproving James Howell's dictum that appears above as our epigram.

\* I am grateful to Javed Majeed for his many helpful suggestions on the content of this article.

<sup>1</sup>Susan Bassnett, *Comparative Literature: a Critical Introduction* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 160-61.

<sup>2</sup>Notably in such works as Tejaswini Niranjana's *Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley, 1992).

<sup>3</sup>Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, new edn. (Oxford, 1974 [1899]), p. 772.

<sup>4</sup>Such an evaluation overlooks, of course, the Perso-Arabic autobiographical tradition as exemplified by the memoirs of successive Mughals.

<sup>5</sup>The text was written when the author had lived 55 years – half the expected lifespan of 110, as explained by the author in the closing verses of the work. The title *Ardhakathānaka* may most literally be translated as 'A Half-Tale'.

<sup>6</sup>Mukund Lath (trans.), *The Ardhakathanaka — Half a Tale; a Study in the Interrelationship between Autobiography and History*. Jaipur, 1981, pp. 38. The text (pp. 242-43) is as follows:

चौपई	संबत सोलह स बासठा । आयौ कातिक पावस नटा ॥ छत्रपति अकबर साहि जलाल । नगर आगरे कीनों काल ॥ २४६ ॥ आई खबर जौनपुर मांह । प्रजा अनाथ भई बिनु नाह ॥ पुरजन लोग भए भयभीत । हिरद व्याकुलता मुख पीत ॥ २४७ ॥
दोहरा	अकसमात बनारसी, सुनि अकबर कौ काल । सीढी परि बट्यो हुतो, भयौ भरम चित चाल ॥ २४८ ॥ आइ तवाला गिरि परचौ, सक्यौ न आपा राखि । फूटि भाल लोहू चलयौ, कह्यौ 'देव' मुख-भाखि ॥ २४९ ॥ लगी चोट पाखान की, भयौ गृहांगन लाल । 'हाइ हाइ' सब करि उठे, मात तात बेहाल ॥ २५० ॥
चौपई	गोद उठाय माइनें लियौ । अंबर जाति घाउ में दियौ ॥ खाट बिछाइ सुबायौ बाल । माता रुदन करै असराल ॥ २५१ ॥

<sup>7</sup>The original reads:

[चौपई]	करि बिवाह आए निज धाम । दूजी और सुता अभिराम ॥ खरगसेन के घर अवतरी । तिस दिन वृद्धा नानी मरी ॥ १०६ ॥
दोहरा	नानी मरन सुता जनम, पुत्रबधु आगौन । तीनों कारज एक दिन, भए एक ही भौन ॥ १०७ ॥ यह संसार बिडम्बना, देखि प्रगट दुख खेद चतुर चित्त त्यागी भए, मूढ़ न जानहि भेद ॥ १०८ ॥ ( <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 232.)

<sup>8</sup>This usage of ‘for long’ in a positive context is acceptable in Indian English, though the phrase is restricted to negative contexts (as in the previous paragraph in my text) in British English.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup>A change of metre (from *caupāi* to *doharā*) could be seen as foregrounding this phrase in the original. (NB: the *caupāi* metre which predominates in this text is a 15-*mātrā* variant of the more common metre whose name, *caupāi*, like the metre and its rhyme-scheme, is one *mātrā* longer.)

<sup>11</sup>Even if, as argued by Mukund Lath (*op.cit.* pp. lxvi-lxix), Banārsidās shows a sophistication in his attribution of life-events to causes which can include the fortuitous.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. lxix.

<sup>13</sup>George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1992), p. 317.

<sup>14</sup>John Platts (trans.), *The Baitāl Pachchisī* [sic]; or the Twenty-five Tales of a Sprite (London, 1871), p. iii.

<sup>15</sup>F.S. Growse, ‘Mathurā notes’, in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. XLVII (1878), pp.97-113 (p. 98).

<sup>16</sup>Or indeed, of other religious traditions: interpretations of Kabīr by Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh seem to be influenced by the Zen works cited in the bibliography to *The Bijak of Kabīr* (Delhi, 1986).

<sup>17</sup>Pound’s translation is ‘from the English versions of the Hindi by Kali Mohan Ghose’. George Steiner, ed., *Poem into Poem: World Poetry in Modern Verse Translation* (Harmondsworth, 1970 [first published under the title *The Penguin Book of Modern Verse Translation*, 1966]), p. 90.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Dryden: ‘I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age’. Quoted by Susan Bassnett, *Comparative Literature*, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup>A.G. Shirreff, *Hindi folk-songs* (Allahabad, 1936), p. 6. The original (p.35) is as follows:

नीले-नीले घोड़वा छयल असवरवा कुरुखेते हनइ निसान ।  
खिरकी उघारि के मइया जो देखै धिया दस आउरि होई ॥  
होइगा बियाह परा सिर सेदुर नौ लख दाइज थोर ।  
भितरा कइ भाँड़ बाहर दइ मारी सतुरु के धिया जिनि होइ ॥

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>21</sup>In the context of pre-colonial poetry, the word ‘reader’ should be assumed to include ‘audience’, since most texts are transmitted orally.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29. The original (p. 43) is as follows:

अपने बपैया जी के रेसमा दुलारी कि सेर सेर लौंगा चबाय ।  
बहुअरि रेसमा ॥ १ ॥  
रेसमा क सोहै एक लाल के लहंगवा चोलिया सोहै बूटेदार ।  
बहुअरि रेसमा ॥ २ ॥  
ओढ़ि पहिरि रेसमा चली हैं बजरिया रुमिझूमि परे कोतवाल ।  
बहुअरि रेसमा ॥ ३ ॥  
की तूं हौ रेसमा हे संचवा के डारी की तुहें गढ़ला सोनार ।  
बहुअरि रेसमा ॥ ४ ॥  
दड़िया में जारो भैया तोर कोतवलवा मनइउ का गढ़ला सोनार ।  
बहुअरि रेसमा ॥ ५ ॥  
जनम दिहिन मोर माई रे बपवा सुरति दिहिन भगवान ।  
बहुअरि रेसमा ॥ ६ ॥

<sup>23</sup>Growse continues by referring to a problem of a different kind: ‘[...] after my transfer [from Mathura] to Bulandshahr in 1877 I laboured under the serious disadvantage of writing in a thoroughly Muhammadanized district, where it is impossible to obtain any assistance, every subject connected with Hindu literature or scholarship being almost as incongruous with my environment as it would be in England.’ F.S. Growse (ed.), *The Ramayana of Tulsi Das* (Delhi, 1983; reprint of 1883 edition), pp. xviii-xix.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.* p. i

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<sup>25</sup>And if in the intervening century the *Rāmcaritmānas* has found new English-medium champions, their agenda is still not necessarily a literary one; in his preface to the centenary reprint of Growse’s translation, Karan Singh takes for granted the efficacy of translation as he records his missionary aspirations: ‘English being the most widely read and understood language of the world, I hope that through this version the message of Tulasidas’ Ramayana will reach all those who are not able to read it in the original, and thus spread the fragrance of Sri Rama’s life and teachings to a beleaguered humanity’. *Ibid.*, unpaginated preface.

<sup>26</sup>*Op.cit.* p. 8

<sup>27</sup>G.A. Grierson (ed.), *The Satsaiya of Bihari, with a Commentary entitled the Lala-candrika, by Çri Lallu Lal Kavi* (Calcutta, 1896) p. 9.

<sup>28</sup>Rupert Snell, *The Hindi Classical Tradition: a Braj Bhāṣā Reader* (London, 1991; Delhi, 1992), pp. 134-47.

<sup>29</sup>Jagannāthdās ‘Ratnākar’ (ed.), *Bihārī-ratnākar, arthāt Bihārī-satsai par ratnākarī ṭikā* (new edn.; Varanasi, 1969), p. 291.

<sup>30</sup>Barron Gregory Holland, ‘The *Satsai* of Bihārī: Hindi poetry of the Early Rīti Period’. (PhD dissertation, Berkeley, 1969), p. 184.

<sup>31</sup>In a personal communication, Arshia Sattar notes that Bahadur’s use of a contextualising title may derive from A.K. Ramajunan’s translations (but of texts having such headings as a feature of the original), for example in *Hymns for the Drowning: Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammāḷvār* (Princeton, 1981).

<sup>32</sup>‘The construction and aesthetics of the *dohā* in Bihārīlāl’s *Satsai*’; paper given at the Dharam Hinduja Indic Research Center, Columbia University, 25.3.98; forthcoming in a collection of papers under DHIRC auspices.

<sup>33</sup>R.S.McGregor, *Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1984), pp. 82-3. The Rajasthani text (Bhagvāndās Tivārī (ed.), *Mirā kī prāmāṇik padāvalī* (Allahabad, 1974), p. 212), which has an apparent lacuna in line 3, reads as follows:

सखि म्हारो सामरिया गे देखवां करां री ।  
सांबरो उमरण सांबरो शुमरण, सांबरो ध्यान धरां री ।  
ज्यां ज्यां चरण धरयां धरणीधर (?) निरत करां री ।  
मीरां रे प्रभु गिरधर नागर, कुंजा गैळ फिरां री ।

<sup>34</sup>A.K. Ramanujan (trans. [& ed.]), *Speaking of Śiva* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 47.

<sup>35</sup>Spelt ‘Guhēśvarā’ in Niranjana’s transcription (*Siting Translation* p. 174).

<sup>36</sup>Niranjana alleges that Ramanujan says the name to be only ‘partly Sanskrit’; but this reference in Ramanujan’s analysis (*loc. cit.*) relates not to Guhēśvara but to other epithets such as Cennamallikārjuna (in which ‘*cenna* “lovely” is Kannada, the rest Sanskrit’) and Kūḍalasaṅgamadēva (discussed above).

<sup>37</sup>Niranjana, *Siting Translation* p. 183.

<sup>38</sup>Clearly, the literal approach of ‘translate every name or epithet’ has to stop somewhere: ‘Ramanujan’ is not always to be rendered as ‘Rāma’s younger brother Lakṣmaṇa’ (or, with Monier Williams, ‘K ṣṇa, younger brother of [Bala-]Rāma’); nor ‘Niranjana’ as ‘immaculate; pertaining to Śiva’.

<sup>39</sup>Niranjana, *Siting Translation* p. 180.

<sup>40</sup>George Steiner, *Poem into Poem* p. 25.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.* p. 28.