Literary Cultures in History

A

signature

BOOK

Literary Cultures
in History

Reconstructions from South Asia

EDITED BY

Sheldon Pollock

To the memory of our fellow contributors
and cherished friends

D. R. Nagaraj
1954–1998

Norman Cutler
1949–2002

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

CONTRIBUTORS

Muzaffar Alam, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago

Ali S. Asani, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University

Steven Collins, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago

Norman Cutler, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago

Vinay Dharwadker, Department of the Languages and Cultures of Asia, University of Wisconsin

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, Urdu Monthly Shabkoon, Allahabad

Rich Freeman, Center for South Asian Studies, University of Michigan

Charles Hallisey, Department of the Languages and Cultures of Asia, University of Wisconsin

Matthew T. Kapstein, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago

Sudipta Kaviraj, Department of Political Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

Stuart McGregor, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge University

D. R. Nagaraj, Institute of Kannada Studies, Bangalore University

Velcheru Narayana Rao, Department of the Languages and Cultures of Asia, University of Wisconsin

Sheldon Pollock, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago

Frances W. Pritchett, Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University

Harish Trivedi, Department of English, University of Delhi

Sitamshu Yashaschandra, Department of Gujarati, M.S. University, Baroda

Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia originated in a research proposal consciously designed to implement a new practice of scholarship in the service of new historiographical and theoretical objectives. The new practice required intensive, long-term collaboration among specialists in a range of regional and transregional literary traditions, while the new objectives entailed rethinking some basic presuppositions of literary history as it has been practiced for generations in South Asian studies. The contributors met at workshops over three or more years, engaging with each other's often radically different viewpoints and attempting to find areas of agreement. The very fact of collaboration enabled them to resituate individual traditions within the multiple literary-cultural systems in which they once existed, and thereby to recover something of the dynamism and complexity that really marked the development of South Asian literatures. As for determining appropriate interpretive protocols, this was more difficult than anticipated. To the degree possible the protocols were developed empirically and collectively, rather than imposed by fiat according to some already given model; at the same time, traditions have their particular histories and often required particular interpretive strategies. The degree of cooperation and goodwill shown by the contributors in the face of these various challenges was inspiring. All were unstintingly generous with their time and learning, and unflaggingly enthusiastic about what proved to be an exciting and innovative scholarly experiment.

There are numerous difficulties in presenting scholarship on early South Asian literary cultures to contemporary readers. Two that seem small but are especially vexatious concern the representation in roman script of South Asian words, and the identification and presentation of geographical information. The procedures adopted here require brief explanation.

South Asian writers have always been remarkably attentive to the correct use of language, showing as profound a concern for grammatical exactitude as for any other feature of literary composition. Ancient Sanskrit stories tell of beings coming to grief because of a mispronounced word: the son of the divine Tvaṣṭṛ, for example, famously become a *victim* instead of a *victor* of the god Indra because his father misplaced the accent when announcing his name at birth. Later poets would ridicule their rivals for failure to discriminate between long and short vowels, as in Tenāli Rāmaliṅgaḍu's parody of Allasani Peddanna, recounted by V. Narayana Rao in this book. In an effort to take seriously what South Asian literary traditions have taken seriously— perhaps the cardinal methodological principle of this volume—we have tried to be as exact as our sources in attending to their language practices. Accordingly, when transliterating we provide full diacritical marks, appropriate to each language tradition. The guide to pronunciation aims to make as clear as possible to the nonspecialist reader the practical significance of these sometimes extremely subtle distinctions—whose importance to the literary traditions derives in part precisely from their subtlety. The guide is meant to assist in pronunciation; in a few cases, diacritics that are necessary for orthographic precision but have no effect on pronunciation are provided in the text of the book but omitted from the guide. Anglicisms are given without diacritics (thus we write "Vaishnavism" but "Viṣṇu," "shastric" but *śāstra*). For words commonly Anglicized we have generally followed *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* except where it misleads (thus we write "Shudra" instead of "Sudra"). We similarly write language names and scripts without diacritics (thus "Sanskrit" instead of "Saṃskṛt," "Brahmi" instead of "Brāhmī"), as well as the names of modern writers that are typically Anglicized (thus, "Rabindranath Tagore," not "Rabīndranāth Ṭhākur"). Titles of works that are compounds are transliterated as such (thus *Sūrsāgar* instead of *Sūr-sāgar* or *Sūr Sāgar*).

Questions of literary-cultural space have proved to be as important in the eyes of many contributors to this book as questions of history. Whereas dates have normally been transformed into their corresponding Common Era year without much difficulty, spatial issues, especially the correct location of regions and towns but also their spelling, often proved to be more intractable. For modern place names current official spelling has been followed (e.g., Chennai), and the usual colonial-era spellings when colonial-era places are discussed (e.g., Madras); both are written without diacritics. The situation is more complex for the premodern period, where the historical geography is riddled with uncertainties. Not only do multiple spellings abound, but numerous places are difficult to locate precisely on a map. Yet even if the spatial sensibilities of many of the authors discussed here may have differed, sometimes considerably, from those of modern mapmakers, producing the very uncertainties we now confront, the places with which they concerned

themselves in their literary works had their own vital reality. It was therefore imperative for us to try to represent these as accurately as possible, however elusive accuracy sometimes turned out to be. Toponyms are given in the spelling historically appropriate for the map in question, with modern names or identifications often added parenthetically (thus Orugallu [Warangal], Daśapura [Chattisgarh]). Special thanks go to Whitney Cox of the University of Chicago for help in assembling the toponyms referred to in the book, and to Bill Nelson for his careful cartography.

The Literary Cultures in History (LCH) project was initially organized by V. Narayana Rao and myself when we were members of the Joint Committee on South Asia (JCSA) of the Social Science Research Council/American Council of Learned Societies. It was conceived originally as the second component of JCSA's South Asia Humanities Project (1991–1994), of which I was director. The program officers at the Council, Toby Alice Volkman and Itty Abraham, offered early support and advice that proved decisive to the long-term health of the project. One member of JCSA in particular, David Ludden of the University of Pennsylvania, has been a continuing source of encouragement and inspiration. It is regrettable that the Council's area committees have since been eliminated and can no longer aid in the incubation of new research such as this.

Francine Berkowitz of the Smithsonian Institution made available funds for a workshop in Hyderabad in 1994, and a gathering the following year in New Delhi, that enabled the project to advance substantially. The Central University, Hyderabad, and the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, both provided various forms of support, and sincere thanks are expressed to Professor K. K. Ranganathacharyulu of Central University and Dr. U. R. Ananthamurthy, then president of the Akademi. Some of the ideas that were eventually developed into core concerns of the LCH project emerged directly out of the Hyderabad workshop and were first published in a special number of *Social Scientist* that I edited: "Literary History, Region, and Nation in South Asia" (*Social Scientist* 23.10–12 [1995]). I particularly thank Atluri Murali of the Central University, Hyderabad, who first recommended the collection of conference papers to the journal, and Rajendra Prasad, editor of *Social Scientist*.

The execution of this project would have been impossible without the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1995–1999 (grant RO-22868). The Endowment's Collaborative Research Grant Program is the only one of its kind in the United States and is thus a truly precious resource for experimental forms of cooperative scholarship. Elizabeth Arndt, program officer for the Collaborative Research Grant Program, was wonderfully helpful throughout the grant period.

A grant from the Rockefeller Foundation enabled the LCH group to hold its final meeting at the Foundation's Bellagio Study and Conference Center. I am grateful to Susan Garfield at the New York office for her help, and to

the staff at the Villa Serbelloni for their truly gracious hospitality. Thanks also go to the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi; the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Wisconsin; and the Committee on Southern Asian Studies and the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago for hosting earlier meetings of the group.

Of the seventeen contributors to this book, ten have had a close relationship with the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, whether as permanent or visiting faculty or as graduate students. This is more evidence, were more needed, of the University's long and firm commitment to South Asian literary studies, one that is unparalleled in the United States. Twenty-five years ago, several of our distinguished predecessors in the department—Edward C. Dimock, A. K. Ramanujan, and J. A. B. van Buitenen—collectively published a new orientation to the field of study (*The Literatures of India: An Introduction,* University of Chicago Press, 1974). It is a source of great satisfaction to the contributors associated with the university that we have been able to honor the memory of these men, their teachers, colleagues, and friends, by continuing the tradition they inaugurated.

Other members of the Chicago South Asia community merit special thanks: James Nye, director of the South Asia Language and Area Center; Ralph Nicholas, former director of the Center for International Studies, and the entire Committee on Southern Asia Studies. In the Humanities Division, Dean Philip Gossett provided financial support in the initial phase; Gilda Reyes, Kathy Watson, Henry Way, and John Whaley offered welcome administrative assistance.

Many other individuals helped in crucial ways in the course of the project and during the production of this book. Robert Devens, my editorial assistant, was unfailingly responsive, impeccably well-organized, and marvelously insightful about the overall organization of the book and each individual chapter. Three superb program assistants, Alyssa Ayres, Daniel Klingensmith, and Andrew Sartori, made the task of organizing the project, especially our periodic meetings, far lighter than it would otherwise have been. A number of my extraordinary graduate students at Chicago worked as research assistants or helped in other significant ways. I am deeply grateful to Yigal Bronner, Allison Busch, Prithvidatta Chandrashobhi, Whitney Cox, Guy Leavitt, and Lawrence McCrea. James Nye and Bronwen Bledsoe, the remarkably accomplished South Asian bibliographers at Joseph Regenstein Library, provided help to many of the contributors over the life of the project.

At the University of California Press I thank first and foremost Lynne Withey, the associate director, for her strong support and encouragement from her first acquaintance with the project in 1994. I was fortunate to have the help of a skillful acquisitions editor in Reed Malcolm. Erika Bűky, assis-

tant managing editor of the Press, provided superb editorial guidance on all matters concerned with the production of a book whose complexity challenged us all. Carolyn Bond proved to be a peerless copyeditor, combining deep knowledge of South Asian languages and cultures with unfailing literary good sense. That the Indian edition is being published by Oxford University Press, Delhi, is due to Rukun Advani, long-time director of academic publications at OUP and now managing editor of Permanent Black. I have greatly valued his enthusiasm and support for the project since its inception.

For their various acts of assistance and goodwill I also thank Seema Alavi, Benedict Anderson, Kunal Chakrabarty, David Damrosch, Ute Gregorius, George Hart, Jesse Knutson, Colin Masica, Walter Mignolo, Mithilesh Mishra, Mithi Mukherjee, Panna Naik, John Perry, Shantanu Phukan, Joseph Schwartzberg, Clinton Seely, and Sunil Sharma.

The literatures of South Asia constitute remarkable achievements of global significance. They are magnificent in their own right and invaluable for what they can tell us, once we learn to listen, about matters of concern to people everywhere—about the power of culture, the culture of power, the uses of the past, or the nature of literary beauty. I know I speak on behalf of all the contributors when I say that whatever else they may accomplish with this book, they hope to have communicated something of their fascination with the quest for learning how to listen.

Sheldon Pollock
Chicago, September 2000 / October 2002

Sounds marked with diacritics in the book that have more of an orthographic than a phonetic significance in South Asia (e.g., Persian *ẕ* or *ṯ*, which are pronounced as English z and t respectively) are ignored in this guide. Conversely, some distinctions made in pronunciation but rarely represented in orthography are merely noted here.

INDIC

"Indic" is a theoretical construct devised here to function as the baseline language.

Vowels

a   like *u* in "but"
ā   like *a* in "father"
i   like *i* in "bit"
ī   like *ee* in "beet"
u   like *oo* in "look"
ū   like *oo* in "pool"
ṛ̥   like *ri* in "rig" (in the north), like *roo* in "root" (in the south), but slightly trilled
e   like *a* in "gate"
ai   like *i* in "high"
o   like *o* in "rote"
au   like *ou* in "house"

Consonants

k	like *k* in "skate"
kh	like *k* in "Kate"
g	like *g* in "gate"
gh	like *gh* in "big house"
ṅ	like *n* in "sing"
c	like *ch* in "eschew"
ch	like *chh* in "much help"
j	like *j* in "judge"
jh	like *dgh* in "budge her"
ñ	like *n* in "cinch" before *c, ch, j, jh*
ṭ, ḍ	like English *t* and *d,* but with the tongue curved back so as to touch the front of the hard palate
ḷ	like English *l,* but with the tongue curved back so as to touch the front of the hard palate
ṭh, ḍh	as *ṭ* and *ḍ,* but with aspiration
ṇ	like English *n* but with the tongue curved back (as in American English "corn")
t, d	like English *t* and *d,* but with the tip of the tongue touching the teeth (like the *d* in "breadth")
th, dh	as *t* and *d,* but with aspiration
n	like *n* in "nose"
p	like *p* in "spin"
ph	like *p* in "pin"
b	like *b* in "bin"
bh	like *bh* in "club house"
m	like *m* in "mother"
y	like *y* in "yellow"
r	like *r* in "drama"
l	like *l* in "love"
v	produced with the slightest contact between the upper teeth and the lower lip; closer to the *w* in "wile" than the *v* in "vile"
ś	like *sh* in "shove"
ṣ	as *ś,* but with the tongue curled slightly back
s	like *s* in "so"
h	like *h* in "hope"
ṃ	a nasalization of the vowel that precedes it
ḥ	an aspiration of the vowel that precedes it (thus, *devaḥ* is pronounced "deva[ha]")

BANGLA

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Vowels

a   like *aw* in "awe"; as Indic *o* when preceding an *i* or a *u,* or when fol-
     lowing a final conjunct consonant; thus Pārtha is pronounced "Pārtho."
Modern Bangla does not distinguish between long and short *i* and *u* in pro-
nunciation; both are pronounced as the long vowel.

Consonants

v   as *b*
s   as Indic *ś* in most cases, but like the *s* in "stair" when followed imme-
     diately by a dental consonant or *r;* like the *s* in "scare" or "spare" when
     initial in a word and followed by a velar or a bilabial, respectively.
ṣ   as Indic *ś*
Consonant clusters comprising dissimilar consonants behave predictably but
variously. The *kṣ* cluster, for example, is pronounced "kh" when initial in a
word and "kkh" when internal. Thus, Lakṣmi is pronounced "Lokkhi" (note
also that the *m* is lost altogether), and *kṣatriya* "khotrio."
ṃ   represents the velar nasal

GUJARATI

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Vowels

Additional low-front vowels and "murmured" vowels exist in speech but are
not represented in the orthography.
a   not pronounced in final position, though often preserved in translit-
     eration; thus, *dharma* is pronounced "dharm"
Additionally, vowels pronounced with nasality are represented thus: õ, etc.

HINDI

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Vowels

a   not pronounced in final position, though often preserved in translit-
      eration; thus, *dharma* is pronounced "dharm"
ai   like *a* in "sad"
au   like *au* in "caught"

Additionally, vowels pronounced with nasality are represented thus: õ, etc.

Consonants

Hindi has several consonants not present in the standard Indic repertoire.
These are:

ṛ   as *ḍ,* but with the tip of the tongue flapping the roof of the mouth
      quickly (distinguish this from Indic vocalic *ṛ,* transliterated as *r̥*)
ṛh   as *ṛ,* but with aspiration
f   like *f* in "fast," but tends to be replaced by the Indic sound *ph*
z   like *z* in "zoo," but tends to be replaced by the Indic sound *j*
ṣ   as Indic *ś*

KANNADA

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Vowels

In addition to Indic *e* and *o* (written as *ē* and *ō* in Kannada), Kannada in-
cludes the short vowels *e* and *o.* The long vowels tend to be more open (like
e in "net" or even "gnat," and *au* in "caught"), and the short vowels more
closed, as in Indic. Word-initial *e, o, ē, ō* are usually pronounced *ye, wo, yē, wō.*

Consonants

Old Kannada also has an additional consonantal *r̥* pronounced as a very
harsh *r,* and an additional consonantal *ḻ,* pronounced as a retroflexed *r.*

   The aspirated consonants in Sanskrit loanwords are preserved in writing
but are not distinguished in pronunciation except in the careful speech of
educated speakers.

MALAYALAM

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Vowels

Malayalam includes the Tamil short *e* and *o*.

   The word-final "minimal vowel" *u* of Tamil is generally marked in Malayalam script; there is no standard diacritic to represent it in transliteration, and so it is not distinguished here from the unmarked, short *u*.

Consonants

Malayalam includes the Tamil *ṉ, ṟ,* and *ḻ*.

   The set of Tamil nasal-conjunct and intervocalic contrasts operates for the Malayalam consonant system, but with intervocalic *k* and *c* realized more as a lax *g* and a lax *j*, respectively.

   The contrasts of voicing and aspiration at the beginning of a word are graphically taken over from and ideally pronounced as in Indic. Within a word, however, the Tamil nasal-conjunct and intervocalic contrasts generally override these graphic distinctions in pronunciation.

   ṟ is pronounced as a trill, and the conjuncts *nṟ* and *ṟṟ* are pronounced like *nd* in English "end," and *t* in "bit," respectively; *ḻ* is pronounced as in Tamil.

PALI

As in Indic.

PERSIAN

As in Indic, with the following distinctions (Indo-Persian differs considerably from modern Iranian Persian, retaining some older pronunciations):

Vowels

ē   as Indic *e*
ō   as Indic *o*
ai   like *a* in "sad"
au   like *au* in "caught"

Consonants

ʾ   weak glottal stop, like in "li'l Abner"
q   like *k* in "skate" but pronounced much further back in the throat
kh   like *ch* in Scottish "loch"
gh   like *r* in French "rien" (though pronounced from the back of the throat)
zh   like *s* in "leisure"
r   lightly trilled, with the tip of the tongue against the teeth

SANSKRIT

As in Indic.

SINDHI

As in Indic, with the distinctions and additions included under Urdu, as well as the following:

Consonants

Four distinctive implosive consonants, sometimes written *ḇ, ḏ, dy, nġ* at the beginning of a word, are pronounced by sucking in rather than expelling the breath.

SINHALA

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Vowels

In addition to Indic *e* and *o* (written as *ē* and *ō* in Sinhala), Sinhala includes the short vowels *e* and *o.*
ä   like *e* in "edify"

Consonants

Half-nasals occur before certain voiced stops, being pronounced in a manner similar to the corresponding full nasals, but kept very short.

TAMIL

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Vowels

In addition to Indic *e* and *o* (written as *ē* and *ō* in Tamil), Tamil includes the short vowels *e* and *o*. Word-initial *e, o, ē, ō* are pronounced *ye, wo, yē, wō.*

The diphthong *au,* rare in Tamil and occurring almost exclusively in Sanskrit loans, frequently resolves into *avu.*

Word-final *u* is pronounced as a *u* with the lips spread rather than rounded.

Consonants

There are no aspirates.

Tamil orthography does not have separate characters for voiced stops (*g, j, ḍ, d,* and *b*). These are represented by the corresponding unvoiced stops (*k, c, ṭ, t,* and *p*) under the following conditions:

After nasals: thus, Tamil *ṅk* = Indic *ṅg*

When single *p, ṭ,* or *t* occurs between two vowels, it is pronounced as a weakened *b, ḍ,* or *d,* respectively (that is, with loose contact and some friction). However, *k* or *c* occurring between two vowels is pronounced as *h* (sometimes as *g*) or *s,* respectively.

In initial position, pronunciation depends on the word in question. *Tarumam* (Skt. *dharma*) is pronounced *darumam* (never *dharumam*), but *tampi* is pronounced *tambi.*

n̲, r like English *n* and *r;* however, n̲r is pronounced like *ndr* in "laundry," and rr like *tr* in "tree"

ḻ   like American *r* in "girl"

TELUGU

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Vowels

In addition to Indic *e* and *o* (written as *ē* and *ō* in Telugu), Telugu includes the short vowels *e* and o. Word-initial *e, o, ē, ō* are pronounced *ye, wo, yē, wō.*

Consonants

In native Dravidian words, *c* and *j* are pronounced *ts* and *dz* respectively, except before *i* and *e:* thus, *cūḍu* is pronounced "tsoodu." (some transcriptions represent this by the signs *ć* and *ĵ,* a practice not followed here). In Sanskrit loan words, *c* and *j* are pronounced as in Indic.

The aspirated consonants in Sanskrit loanwords are preserved in writing but are not distinguished in pronunciation except in the careful speech of educated speakers.

TIBETAN

The transcription of Tibetan in English introduces special problems because the pronunciation of the spoken language does not closely correspond to the orthography of the literary language. For this reason, a transliteration of Tibetan spellings is of little use to the ordinary reader, who will have no way of knowing that, for example, *bsgrubs* and *dbyings* are currently pronounced "drup" and "ying," respectively. On the other hand, students of classical Tibetan usually prefer the literal transcription to simplified phonetic schemes. The solution adopted here is to give all Tibetan personal and place names occurring in the text in a simplified phonetic transcription that approximates the pronunciation of modern Central Tibetan. Book titles, technical terms, and peculiarities of language that are mentioned parenthetically or discussed in the annotations are given in a formal transliteration of the classical Tibetan, using a system based on that of Wylie.

Vowels

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:
ö, ü   like *ö* and *ü* in German

Consonants

As in Indic, with the following distinctions:

Tibetan has additional consonants: *ng, ny, tr, trh, dr, ts, tsh, dz, w, sh, z, zh.* Of these, *ng, ny, tr, dr, w, sh,* and *z* are similar to their values in English; *trh* is like *tr* but with strong aspiration; *ts* resembles *ts* in English "bets"; *tsh* is a strongly aspirated version of *ts; dz* resembles the *dz* in "adze"; *zh* is similar to *s* in "leisure" or *j* in French words such as "jamais."

URDU

As in Indic, with some distinctions and additions included under Hindi and Persian. These are:

Vowels

ai   like *a* in "sad"
au   like *au* in "caught"
Additionally, vowels pronounced with nasality are represented thus: oñ, etc.
ʾ   represents various vowel sounds in different contexts

Consonants

ṛ   as *ḍ,* but with the tip of the tongue flapping the roof of the mouth quickly
ṛh   as *ṛ,* but with aspiration
q   like *k* in "skate" but pronounced much further back in the throat
ḳh   like *ch* in Scottish "loch"
ġh   like *r* in French "rien" (though pronounced from the back of the throat)
z   like *z* in "zoo"
zh   like *s* in "leisure"

WORKS CONSULTED

Masica, Colin. *The Indo-Aryan Languages.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

McGregor, R. S. *Outline of Hindi Grammar.* 2d ed. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Phillott, D. C. *Higher Persian Grammar.* Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1919.

Pollock, Sheldon, trans. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India.* Vol. 2: *Ayodhyākāṇḍa.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Ramanujan, A. K., trans. *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975.

Rinpoche, Dudjom, and Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History.* Translated and edited by Gyurme Dorje, with the collaboration of Matthew Kapstein. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1990.

Map 1. Contemporary South Asia.

KĀŚMĪRA
Pravarapura

KĀJAM

Mūlasthāna

Yamunā R. ŚŪRASENA

NEPĀLA

Pāriyātra Mt.

Mathurā Kānyakubja Kapilavastu
Kuśinagara
Gaṅgā R.
Vārāṇasī
Kauśāmbī Jagaddala
MAGADHA
Prayāga Rājagṛha GAUDA

Daśapura
AVANTI Vardhamānapura
MĀLAVA Ujjayinī Tripurī
Dhārā

Narmadā R.
LĀṬA

VIDARBHA
Godāvari R.

KALIṄGA

KOṄKOṆA

Kalyāṇa Orugallu
Kisuvoḷal Guntūr
Keḷadi *CĀḶUKYAS* Veṅgināḍu Dakṣārāma
Omkunda Kondaviḍu Rājamahendra
Halmiḍi Bādāmi Śrīśailam
Puligere Mahākōpaṇa
CITRADURGA Nallūr
Tirupati
Banavāsi Melkote Kālahasti
Śravaṇabelagoḷa Hāgalavāḍi Kāñcīpuram
Nañjanagūḍu Senji
COḶAS
Kāverī R. Pukār
Vañci Uṟaiyūr Tañjāvūr
Maturai
Anurādhapura

0   300 km

Map 2. South Asia, c. 1200. Toponyms in italic type represent dynasties.

QIPCHĀQ

KHWARIZM

TRANSOXIANA

QARA

Ganja

Muliyan R.

Khajend

Bukhāra

Samarqand

SOGDIANA

MĀVARĀ-
AN-NAHR

KHOTAN

Amu R. (Oxus R.)

Isfarāin

TURAN

Astrabad

Tus

Tirmiz

Badakhshan

Sabzavar

Nishapur

Balkh

TURKISTAN

Hamadan

KHURASAN

Herat

Kashan

Ghazna

IRAQ

IRAN

Isfahan

GHŪR
(JIBAL)

ʿAJAM

Yazd

NIMROZ
(SISTAN)

AFGHANISTAN

FARS

Shiraz

SINDH

0   300 km

Dwārikā
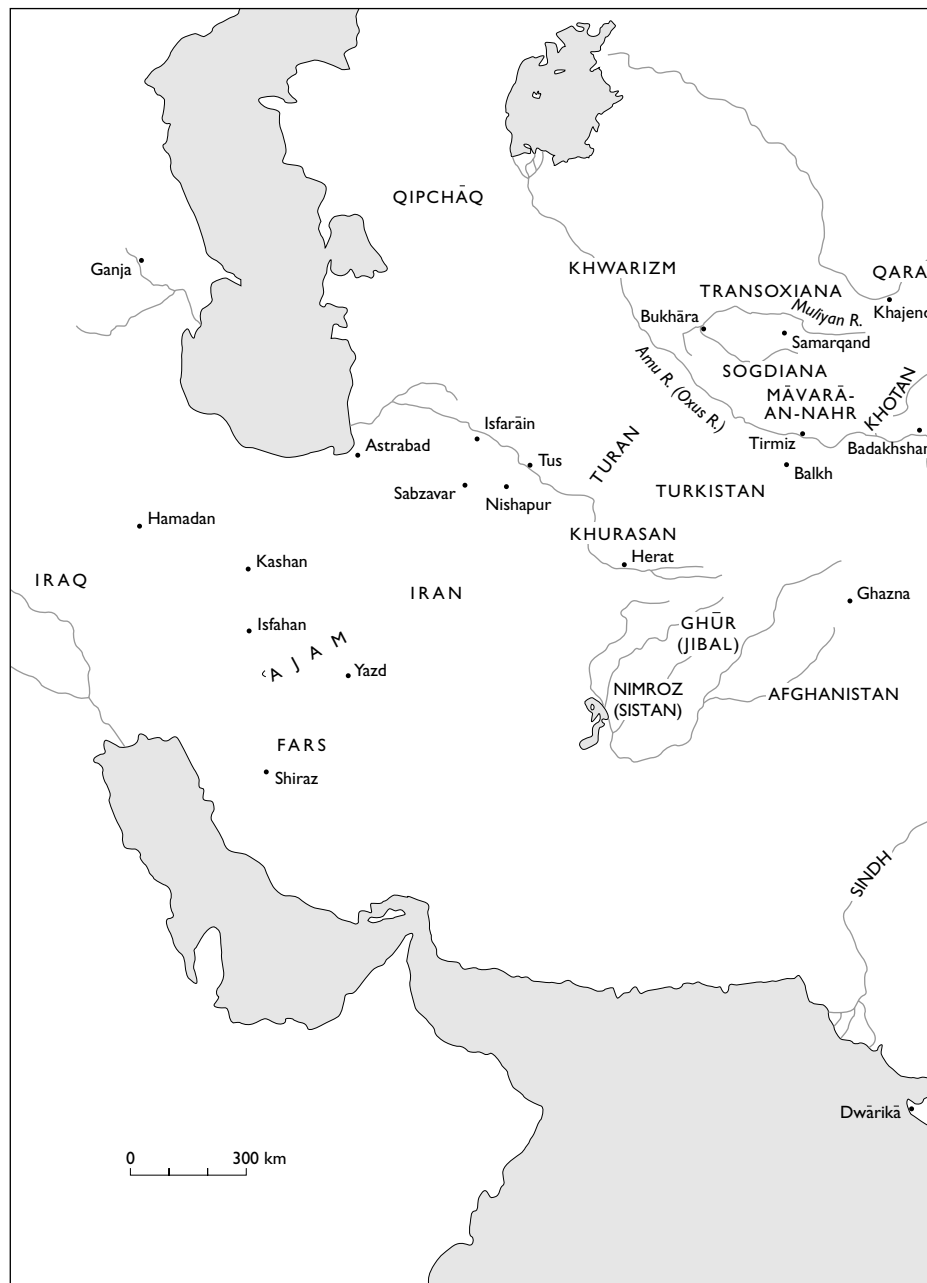
Map 3. Central and South Asia, c. 1600.

N

GANSU

KHITA'I

FARGHANA

QINGHAI
(AMDO)

BALTISTAN

LADAKH

TIBET

KASHMIR

△ *Mt. Kailash*

Lhasa •

PANJAB   • Lahore

• Badāun

Sakya •

BHUTAN

SIKKIM

AVADH

NEPAL

• Multān

Akbarābād (Agra)

Kanpur

Mithilā •

Darjeeling •

Shāhjahānābād
(Delhi)

Bilgrām

Lucknow

• Uchch

Vṛndāvan

Kanauj

Rae Bareli

TIRHUT

Mathurā

Etawah

Ayodhyā

BRAJ

MARWAR Amber

Dalmau

Jaunpur

Ajmer •

Gwalior •

Vārānasī
(Benares)

Orccha •

• Jhansi

BIHAR

BUNDELKHAND •

Pratāpgarh

MEWAR Nad Kachova

Panna

Allahābād

Udaipur •

Citrakut

Rewa

*Jamunā
(Yamunā) R.*

Pāṭaṇ •

MĀLVA

Gaṅgā R.

GUJARAT

• Surat

• Bīdar

Map 4. Southern India, c. 1800.

Map 5. Western India, c. 1500.

Map 6. South and Southeast Asia, c. 1200–1800. Toponyms in italic type represent polities.

Introduction

Sheldon Pollock

It hardly seems proper to introduce a work about the literatures of South Asia, long known as home of many of the world's best stories, without telling one:

> Once when the great and all-knowing god Śiva was alone with his wife, she asked to hear a story never told before, and he told her the most wonderful one he knew—one in seven hundred thousand verses called, appropriately, the *Bṛhatkathā* (Great story). The next day when her handmaiden began to tell her the same story, the goddess knew that the girl's lover—who was one of Śiva's attendants—had been eavesdropping. The goddess placed a curse upon him to live among mortals until he succeeded in disseminating the tale. (The goddess knew a good story when she heard one, and, after all, she was compassionate.) Reborn as a poet-grammarian, the attendant eventually found himself in a double exile: Not only had he been banished from heaven, but he was also barred from the court 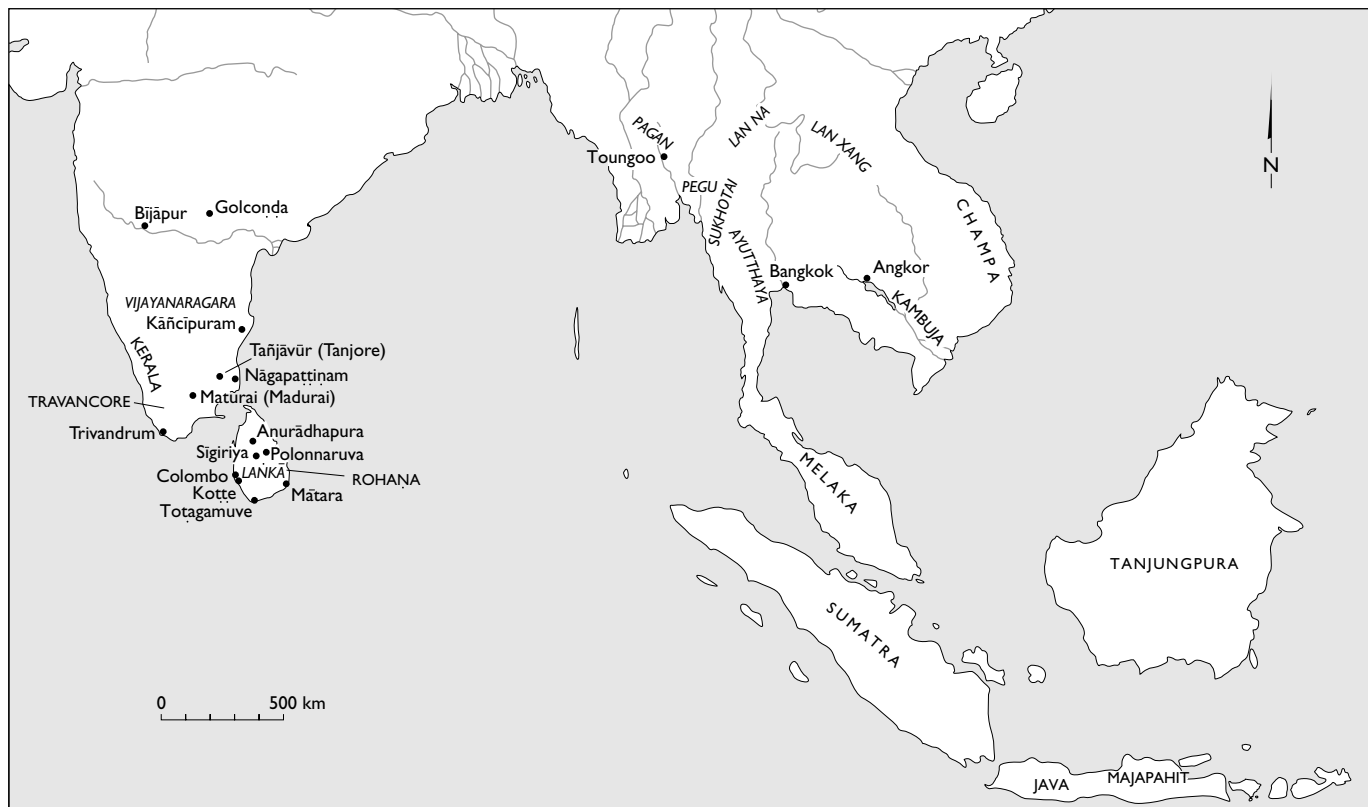where he had taught poetry and grammar. For, having lost a wager that he could teach his king Sanskrit in a timely fashion, he was forced to leave the kingdom and dwell in the forest, and to avoid human language. To pass on the *Bṛhatkathā* he was compelled to use the language of mysterious beings called *piśāca*s, and the only materials he had for writing it down were palm leaves and his own blood. The learned king of the region, his former patron, alone had the stature to make the book known in the world; but he was appalled by its language and appearance and rejected it out of hand. Desolate and alone in the forest, the poet resolved to burn the book. But before he cast each leaf into the fire, he recited it to the assembled animals, who listened enraptured. The king learned of the marvel and hurried to save the work. Only a fragment was left.

What must have made the *Great Story* great, besides the magic of the narratives themselves, is suggested by this metatale. Stories—and literature more

generally—are essential to our lives; if humanity would learn to consider itself candidly and purely in the mirror of its works of literary art (as Flaubert once put it), it would become godlike. Analogously, the literary world of South Asia is essential to our understanding of human culture. It is a complex world, to be sure. Its languages are difficult, often made intentionally so, and its forms can sometimes appear fantastic. But like the king in the story, if we ignore it, we risk losing something precious and irreplaceable.

This is the conviction that animates this book: that the literatures of South Asia constitute one of the great achievements of human creativity. In their antiquity, continuity, and multicultural complexity combined, they are unmatched in world literary history and unrivaled in the resources they offer for understanding the development of expressive language and imagination over time and in relation to larger orders of culture, society, and polity. This volume's main objective is to explore these resources in their historical variety and complexity, and thereby to suggest ways of bringing these literatures back to the center of scholarly attention. For too long they have occupied a marginal place that is radically at odds with their centrality to the lives of people across southern and wider Asia. This marginalization is found even in the area-based study of South Asia itself, to say nothing of such disciplines as comparative literature and historical cultural studies, where the non-West in general and South Asia in particular have long been less than welcome guests.[1] In contemporary South Asia the neglect is even more astonishing.

There are complex reasons for this state of affairs, and briefly reviewing them will help to situate the present project in relation to the many practical, historical, and theoretical challenges it has had to face. I can then proceed more assuredly to explain the particular approaches and methods used by the contributors to this volume, and, indeed, the various meanings we give to "literary culture," "history," "reconstruction," and even "South Asia."

ACTUALLY EXISTING LITERARY HISTORY

A good place to begin is with the history of literary studies, and especially the history of literary history, in South Asia itself, especially since the understanding of literatures in their places of origin is crucially important, both as a problem and as a problematic, to the contributors to this book. Although no comprehensive account of this history for South Asia has ever been offered—and we have been able to do this ourselves only incidentally in the present volume—it is indisputable that criticism, no less than creativity, in two dozen regional and transregional written languages was cultivated by tra-

---

1. Lentricchia and McLaughlin 1995, for example, perhaps the most widely consulted work of its kind, is as narrow in its area focus as it is capacious in its theoretical approach. The non-West is excluded as if by sworn covenant among contributors.

ditional literati continuously up to the coming of European colonialism. They copied manuscripts; prepared new editions of important texts; wrote commentaries and works on grammar, lexicography, and metrics; and taught both cosmopolitan and vernacular literary texts at schools throughout the subcontinent. Such literary study did not of course always proceed uninterruptedly; by the middle of the second millennium much of Tamil *caṅkam* literature, for example, had fallen into oblivion, and Old Kannada literature was hardly read. But the survival of incomparably vast quantities of texts is testimony to the enduring devotion to and care for literary learning that people in South Asia have displayed for centuries.

Under the influence of English education from the mid-nineteenth century on, this care and devotion continued and in many ways even intensified. With different historical and text-critical methods added to the traditional repertory, vernacular intellectuals well into the twentieth century produced works of enormous learning, evincing mastery of the entire history of their traditions. Over the past fifty years, however, the ranks of this category of scholar have gradually diminished—so much so that the study of South Asian literary archives in their historical depth has lost two generations of scholars. There is now good reason to wonder whether the next generation will even be able to read *piṅgaḷ* texts in Old Gujarati or *rīti kāvya* in Brajbhasha or *ghazal*s in Indo-Persian. After a century and a half of Anglicization and a certain kind of modernization, it is hardly surprising that the long histories of South Asian literatures no longer find a central place in contemporary scholarly knowledge in the subcontinent itself, however much a nostalgia for the old literary cultures and their traditions may continue to influence popular culture. This is one fact that makes production of an account such as the present one at once so difficult and so compelling.

The study of South Asian literature in the West, especially in North America, has followed a rather different path. It was mainly shaped by forces indifferent if not hostile to the study of literature in general and regional literature in particular. And when South Asian literary studies were pursued, they were typically forced into conceptual models developed for very dissimilar traditions. The reasons for all this are complex. Many readers will know something of the wonderment with which eighteenth-century Europe discovered Sanskrit poetry; Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* and, arguably, even the consolidation of aesthetics as a science, are hard to imagine without this discovery. Both, after all, depended crucially on an encounter with what was outside of, yet seemingly encompassed by, a European theory of culture as convinced of its universal truth and applicability as European power was then convinced of its universal right to rule. Part of this fascination also had to do with Romantic Europe's preoccupation with origins and lines of descent, and in the mirror of this preoccupation, India came to be regarded as the cradle of Europe's own civilization. At the same time, as the

economic and social dislocations of early modernity produced ever sharper self-estrangement in Europe, India came to be constituted as the repository of Europe's vanishing spirituality. Two important consequences for literary scholarship followed from these developments. On the one hand, the ideology of antiquity—according to which the more archaic a text, the purer it was thought to be, and the more recent, the more derivative and even mongrel—ruled out study of the greater part of South Asian literature, in particular vernacular literature. On the other hand, religion, especially religion as understood in Protestant Christianity, became and has remained virtually the single lens through which to view all texts and practices in the subcontinent, further distorting what little attention had been directed toward literary culture.[2]

In North America in the twentieth century other kinds of intellectual forces were at work. South Asian languages were newly authorized for study at universities after World War II, but this was largely to do the work of the emergent security state and development regime. The study of Indian regional languages was intended in the first instance to meet the needs of the social sciences; in the humanities these languages held interest only for linguistics. South Asia became the "sociolinguistic giant," and attracted new attention during linguistics' meteoric rise to the status of queen of human knowledge. But this waned as the meteor itself disintegrated.[3] Even to speak of authorization is thus something of an exaggeration. Consider that of the fourteen (non-English) language traditions examined in this book, whose histories span some two millennia and embody the expressive energies of something close to one-fifth of humanity, less than half are formally studied at more than one or two universities in the United States. Some are not taught anywhere, or, as in the case of Persian, are taught in such a way that the South Asian dimension is effectively marginalized, all evidence of its historical centrality notwithstanding.[4]

I have somewhat exaggerated in my account so as to highlight the quali-

---

2. All these tendencies are illustrated by the first and still largest European collaboration on South Asian texts, the *Sacred Books of the East* (1879). Its purpose, in the words of the general editor, F. Max Müller, was to allow us to watch "the dawn of the religious consciousness of man," while at the same to provide the missionary with the knowledge that is "as indispensable as a knowledge of the enemy's country is to a general" (Müller 1879: xi and xl). Both the non-religious, by definition, and the vernacular, by the ideology of antiquity, were rigorously excluded from the project.

3. On the place of South Asia in sociolinguistics, see for example Fasold 1984: 20.

4. In the United States, Kannada, Sindhi, and Gujarati seem not to be offered as permanent components of any university program. Sinhala, Malayalam, and Telugu are each taught at a single institution; Bangla and Tamil at only two or three. Persian is usually housed in Middle East departments, where typically an old Irani bias is perpetuated that denies Indo-Persian literature its rightful place in history (see Alam, chapter 2, this volume).

tative asymmetry that exists between the scholarly attention paid to South Asian literary studies and the actual historical, cultural, and theoretical importance of South Asian literature. It is not of course the case that modern scholarship has greeted this literature with total indifference. Major contributions have been made by South Asians and Europeans alike; indeed, without them a project such as this one would be impossible.

From their first encounter with South Asian texts in the early nineteenth century, European scholars devoted enormous energy to making historical and critical sense of them. This was especially the case in Germany, even among influential thinkers of the epoch such as Friedrich Schlegel and G. W. F. Hegel. From the start and for long afterward, the texts of interest were exclusively Sanskrit. The fascination with Sanskrit was in harmony, on the one hand, with the then emerging search for European origins I have just noted, and on the other, with the scientific objectives of the new historical-comparative linguistics. At the same time, Sanskrit was posited as the classical code of early India, congruent with new, linked conceptions of classicism and class (Sanskrit was usually, and often still is, studied within the field of classical philology). With very few exceptions, European histories of Indian literature remained histories of Sanskrit and its congeners: Pali, the language of southern Buddhism, and Prakrit, an umbrella term for a variety of Middle Indo-Aryan literary dialects used in early Jain religious texts but also in inscriptions and literary works. The real plurality of literatures in South Asia and their dynamic and long-term interaction were scarcely recognized, except perhaps incidentally by Protestant missionaries and British civil servants who were prompted by practical objectives of conversion and control.[5]

By the last third of the nineteenth century, this situation began to change fundamentally. The reduction of South Asian literatures to Sanskrit literature gave way to a much more nuanced understanding. This happened only slowly in Europe. The major literary history of the first half of the twentieth century, Moriz Winternitz's *Geschichte der indischen Literatur* (1908–1922), still restricted itself to the Sanskrit (and Pali and Prakrit) past and retained a vision of Indian literature resolutely in the singular. A stark contrast was offered in the work of the remarkable George Grierson, a British administrator in India whose eleven-volume *Linguistic Survey of India* (1903–1922) was to have so profound an impact, for good and ill, on the understanding and

---

5. Schlegel 1808; Hegel 1970 (original lectures delivered c. 1820). The link between the literary "classics" and elite "class" status was restated by Sainte-Beuve (on the basis of a remark by Aulus Gellius) in his celebrated essay "Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?" (1850). One of the few among European academics to devote himself to vernacular texts was Garcin de Tassy, the first French historian of Hindustani literature (see Tassy 1839–1847). Missionaries and civil servants who were early vernacular partisans include Ferdinand Kittel (of the Basel Mission) for Kannada, and the colonial administrator Charles Percy Brown for Telugu.

politics of language in north India. Grierson was perhaps the first European to write in self-conscious defense of the study of regional literatures from a truly informed position. Even earlier, however, Indian intellectuals within the colonial sphere, standing at the crossroads of historiographical mentalities, had begun to rethink their regional literary pasts (typically and significantly even before they began to rethink their political pasts). Narmad's Gujarati-language work *Kavicaritra* (Lives of the poets), written in a mode that preserved something of the old *tazkirah,* was published in 1865, and a history of Bangla literature on the European model appeared seven years later.[6] Accounts like these—of regional literatures seen increasingly as subordinate to a supposed "Indian literature"—grew in number as the nationalist movement with its integrating impulses gained momentum.

With Independence and Partition for India and Pakistan in 1947, the task of writing literary history as the story of the ever-emergent and now realized nation was begun almost immediately. One of the primary objectives of the Sahitya Akademi of India (National Academy of Letters, founded in 1954) as set forth by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister and first chairman of the Akademi, was to describe the individual regional literary traditions in a way that would show the citizens of the new nation "the essential unity of India's thought and literary background." Accordingly, the Akademi adopted as its motto "Indian literature is one though written in many languages." Literary histories of eighteen of the twenty-two languages recognized by the Akademi have been published to date.

This project also indirectly influenced the large-scale *History of Indian Literature* begun by the late Dutch Sanskritist Jan Gonda, which has been under preparation in Europe for the past quarter of a century. In turn, the work begun under Gonda seems to have stimulated the project organized by the Akademi itself, *A History of Indian Literature.* Cognate enterprises, each with its specific ideological vector, are found in other nation-states of South Asia, such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. And if the genre of subnational literary history has yet to be widely cultivated in these countries, the institutional conditions for it are certainly in place.[7]

6. For the Gujarati text, see Dave [1865] 1996–. The *tazkirah* model is discussed by Alam, Faruqi, and especially Pritchett (chapters 2, 14, and 15) in this volume. The Bangla work is Rāmgati Nyāyaratna's *Bāṅgāla bhāṣā o Bāṅgāla sāhitya viṣayak prastāv* (Introduction to Bangla language and literature, [1872] 1991). This was preceded by two short essays: Kasiprasad Ghosh's "Bengali Works and Writers" (1830) and Raṅgalāl Bandopādhyāya's "Bāṅgālā Kavitā viṣayak" (1852). There is a certain precocity to this indigenous production. Recall that the national historiography of European literatures is not much earlier. In the case of English, this begins in the late eighteenth century, with the work of Warton, and makes a real impact only with Taine's *History of English Literature,* which appeared (in French) in 1863–1864 (English translation 1871).

7. See Gonda 1973– (10 volumes in 28 fascicles published to date); Das 1991– (2 volumes published to date). Other South Asian literary bodies have far less prominence than the Sahitya

This body of scholarship, in addition to providing enormously valuable data for understanding the history of literatures in South Asia, has bequeathed us problems at virtually every level of conceptualization. This is the case even when—and especially when—the works seem least concerned with enunciating the principles that inform them. These difficulties, which leap from the very titles of the books themselves, are by no means simple; indeed, their intractability is shown by the way they infiltrate the language of this introduction. What, after all, do we mean by "literature," the primary analytical category in all this scholarship? What is South Asia or India or Bengal? What authorizes the boundaries of these regions (if they can be said to have boundaries other than what twentieth-century nation-states and the U.S. State Department devised), and what sanctions these as sensible ways of delimiting an account of literature? The same questions apply to the languages themselves: What do we mean by Hindi or Urdu, Malayalam or Gujarati, when used as a category for charting the historical process of which it is in fact the outcome? What constitutes the substance of the history that supplies the framework of description and understanding in all these histories of literature? What, in other words, can it possibly mean to think of literature as a historical phenomenon?

If these questions seem like so much theoretical mischief-making, consider how the most recent additions to the field of South Asian literary history have understood the very term that grounds their intellectual enterprise. In the introduction to the Akademi's projected nine-volume *History of Indian Literature,* no attempt is made to explain what is meant by the term "literature." The categorical question itself is addressed only indirectly in one of the project's working papers. There we are told that literature comprises in part "all major texts"; in part "fairy tales and tales of adventures, songs of various types and nursery rhymes"—in short, "all memorable utterances."[8]

Akademi; even obtaining information about them is difficult. It has proved impossible to find when the Pakistan Academy of Letters was established, but it has been in existence at least since 1980 (preceded by the Anjuman Taraqqī-e-Urdū, or Society for the Advancement of Urdu, founded in 1905; a branch shifted to Karachi in 1947). The Bāṃla Academy (Bangladesh) has been in existence since 1975. In Nepal, the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti (Committee for the Dissemination of the Gurkha Language), founded in 1913, became the Nepāli Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti after Nepali was declared the national language in 1959. The Sri Lanka Sāhitya Maṇḍalaya has been in existence since at least 1962. On the narrative of literary Pakistan, see Rahman 1996; for Nepal, Hutt 1988. Regional literary societies in South Asia began with the Bengal Academy of Literature (later renamed Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad) in 1894, and are now found throughout the area, in India as well as Pakistan (where there exists a Sindhi Adabi Board, a Pashto Academy, a Balochi Academy, and so on). No synthetic study of this institutional history has been done, whether at the national or regional level.

8. Das 1991–, vol. 8: 5, 13, (and in app. 1) 342, 353. "All major texts" is a category that begins, as we learn from the contents of the *History,* with the ancient collection of liturgical hymns,

Exactly what the parts of this congeries of oral and written, formal and informal, utterances have in common remains unclear—some rough-and-ready distinction between information and imagination, one would assume. But we are never enlightened and so await the remaining volumes with a mixture of curiosity about the choices to be made and commiseration for those obliged to choose.

In Gonda's *History of Indian Literature,* on the other hand, even the implicit definition of literature inferable for the Sahitya Akademi project is absent. Instead, it appears that everything ever textualized in South Asia is qualified for inventory: philology ("grammatical literature"), ritual ("Hindu tantric and śākta literature"), systematic thought on the moral order ("*dharma-śāstra* and juridical literature"), cosmology ("Sāṃkhya literature") and physical sciences ("astral literature"), in addition to "Tamil literature," "Assamese literature," and again, "Vedic literature." When individual authors in this series turn to the objects of their inquiry, they often expose the logical difficulty of framing a stipulative definition (as when we are told that a Sanskrit text will be considered poetry if it is "executed with artistry, i.e., organized in a poetic manner"). Or they betray an impatience that ends up throwing out with the bathwater of stipulation the baby of South Asian literariness ("It is nevertheless still true to say that for the Indologist Pali literature means everything that is written in Pali, irrespective of literary value in the accepted European sense").[9]

To offer these criticisms is not to berate our colleagues for lack of intellectual rigor but to try to make sense of the reasons behind such imprecision. Some may say the reasons are self-evident, even natural; the ambiguities at work in "literature" are built into the protean semantic development of the European word itself.[10] And South Asian literary scholars are by no means alone in their approach. The recent *Latin Literature: A History,* a product of the most mature classical scholarship, sees little need to justify itself (whether on emic or etic grounds) in considering Pliny's *Natural History* and the work of the jurists and philosophers alongside Horace, Vergil, and the rest of the *poetae.*[11] Moreover, seen as inclusiveness rather than imprecision,

the *Ṛgveda,* and "Buddhist and Jain literatures preserved in Pali and Ardha Magadhi." On the rigorous exclusion of the Veda from the domain of literature in traditional Sanskrit theory, see Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

9. Lienhard 1984: 3, and Norman 1983: ix. See respectively Pollock and Collins (chapters 1 and 11) in this volume.

10. According to the standard accounts, the English word "literature" was not used in the narrower sense of imaginative and "elegant" writing before Samuel Johnson in 1779. On the history of the idea of "literature" in colonial India, see Dharwadker 1993.

11. Conte 1994. The procedure is defended on the grounds that nonliterary texts could be accepted by "official literature" because they "seemed susceptible to esthetic evaluation and

the resistance to definition can be regarded as an intellectual virtue, if a necessary one. The quest for the essence of literature that occupied European thinkers for the entire twentieth century—their suggestions running from features wholly internal to the text such as the foregrounding of the utterance itself (thus Czech Formalism) to wholly external factors such as pedagogy (Roland Barthes's observation that "literature" is what gets taught)—we now recognize to have been quixotic.

Acknowledging the impossibility of definition, many scholars have begun to argue the postulate that "anything can be literature." Not the least clever scholar here is Terry Eagleton, whose book on literary theory succeeded in part by theorizing the literary away: literature is not some permanent and essential feature of a text but a way the reader relates to it. Texts come into and go out of literary being (as when Plato is read as drama or Homer as history) depending on what we want to do with them. In this, "literature" is like "weed": one person's pest is another's flower and yet another's dinner.[12] And not the least substantive scholar in arguing the openness of the category is M. M. Bakhtin. "After all," he tells us, "the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, between literature and nonliterature and so forth are not laid up in heaven. Every specific situation is historical. And the growth of literature is not merely development and change within the fixed boundaries of any given definition; the boundaries themselves are constantly changing."[13]

This very observation by Bakhtin, however, helps us locate a constant in Eagleton's otherwise inconstant pragmatism. What is crucial for historical literary scholarship is not the fact that the literary is a functional rather than an ontological category, comprising something people do with a text rather than something a text truly and everlastingly is, but the fact that people are constantly induced to do whatever that something is, and to do it variously because "every specific situation is historical." However pluralistic we wish to be, however generous and accommodating (or nonchalant and lax) in our embrace of things textual, we ignore a crucial dimension of the history of the literary if we ignore the history of what people have taken the literary to be. The key question thus becomes not whether to define or not to define, but how to make the history of definition a central part of our history of the literary. Definitions of the literary in cultures such as those of South Asia can include everything from the sophisticated and powerfully ar-

---

were in some way marked by rhetorical characteristics" (p. 4). Yet, the work itself does little to make manifest the process by which the "boundaries of the Latin literary system" shifted.

12. Eagleton 1983: 6 ff. (the taxon "weed" is a rather popular one, borrowed by Eagleton from John Ellis, and from Eagleton by Jonathan Culler in his *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* [Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], p. 22).

13. Bakhtin 1981: 33.

ticulated theorizations found in Persian, Sanskrit, and Tamil, among other traditions, to the entirely practical but no less historically meaningful judgments of anthologizers, commentators, and performers. And a history of definitions would not only take account of both the semantic and pragmatic aspects, but ask directly how such definitions were formed and, once formed, were challenged; whether they were adequate or inadequate to the existing textual field, and by what measure and whose measure of adequacy; whether, and if so, how, they excluded certain forms even while—and precisely by—including others.

The critique applied to definitions of textual forms can be extended to every other element of literary history. Geocultural and sociopolitical templates, identities of languages, narratives of history—all are used in ways that beg most of the important questions. Categories and conceptions that literature itself helps to produce are typically presupposed to be conditions of its historical development. The frameworks of geocultural and sociopolitical reference, for example, that have organized literary histories in the West from Francesco de Sanctis's *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1870), to cite an influential national literary history from the last century, to the *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (1989), to cite a recent one, are not primeval, not "laid up in heaven." Quite the contrary, they are historical in "every specific situation." This means not only that these frameworks are wholly contingent and variable, but also that they are in part the outcome of the very processes they are charged with retrospectively organizing.

This balancing act—or better, this tumbler who climbs up on his own shoulders—is precisely the equivocation of the nation-state itself. We can perceive this with unusual clarity in India as the Sahitya Akademi, at the moment of its founding, struggled with the dilemma presented by the very concept of Indian literature: "The main idea behind the program," the Akademi declared in its *First Annual Report,* "is to build up gradually a consciousness that Indian Literature is one, though written in many languages. One of the limitations under which our writers work is that a writer in one Indian language has hardly any means of knowing the work that is being done in other Indian languages."[14] In other words, none of those writers actually producing Indian literature knew that there was a singular Indian literature. It is the nation-state alone that knows, if only obscurely; or more accurately, it knows, if only tacitly, that it must produce what it is empowered to embody and defend. In this the nation acts exactly like literary history, and even like literary discourse itself, more broadly conceived. For it is literature that produces some of the most influential representations of peoples and places, though the meanings of these representations are always context-sensitive

14. Sahitya Akademi, "Current Programme," *First Annual Report,* 1954 (Sahitya Akademi archives, New Delhi), p. 14.

and therefore often at odds with those they are made to convey in national histories. To understand literature in relationship to a place, accordingly, is as much a matter of understanding how literature can create places as it is a matter of understanding how it is created by them. But again, in their inattention to this second vector of causality, South Asian literary histories show themselves to be no different from those produced elsewhere.

Consider one of the more influential contemporary literary histories of Europe. Despite its ironic and at times even whimsical structure, *A New History of French Literature* is teleological to the core and unhistorical except in its brute linearity. It projects back into the distant past both a context-free sense of the literary and a static notion of the French language itself. Thus, in one contribution we are told that "the oral literature of France came into being along with the French language as it developed out of popular Latin," despite the fact that there was no literature, no French, and no France when this is supposed to have occurred. To say this is not to make a simplistic nominalist complaint, since the problems inherent here reach to the conceptual heart of the project.

We may note, for example, how the attempt to justify the national history of literature implicit in the title and the organization of the book requires above all else the naturalization of the nation-state. The editor writes: "Not only, as Rousseau said, does language distinguish humans from animals," "but also, as he added, languages distinguish nations from one another." Even if we take "nations" in a very loose sense (peoples, *ethnie*s), this statement is dubious, if only because a number of languages—let us call them cosmopolitan languages—were for much of their history resolutely trans- or supra- or post-national (Arabic, Chinese, Latin, Persian, Sanskrit, Spanish—and indeed English). Moreover, if languages come to distinguish nations, it is in part because nations are made by turning languages into distinctive national markers. And again, if the production and consumption of literature, according to the *History,* are "framed by the experience of frontiers," these are frontiers that literature itself, through both its representations and its modes of circulation, helps to establish as conceptual realities. This suggests that literary history itself should include in its narrative the story of how literature and its historiography for their part narrow or broaden cultural borders. What escapes a national-territorial literary history of France of the kind under consideration is one of its more splendid ironies: that its earliest forms were invented in England.[15] And all this is to say nothing of subnational processes—the codes (of Limousin, Gascony, Brittany) that get left out of the national narrative of French—and transnational processes (interactions

---

15. See Howlett 1996; Hollier 1989: 20, xxi–xxv. Hollier is not alone in his vision; not one of the dozen or more reviews of Hollier's work that I have seen is at all worried about the teleology implicit in tracing, as one reviewer puts it, "1143 years of French history."

with Latin, Arabic, Italian, and so on) that we must understand if we are to understand the historical development of French literature.

Clearly, many of the problems contemporary students have inherited from the literary historiography of South Asia are problems it has inherited from Europe. Its object of analysis has been either arbitrarily, and even incoherently, stipulated or left so open as to render analysis an impracticable if not unintelligible enterprise. Boundaries of languages, cultures, societies, and polities that were created after the fact and in some cases very recently—boundaries that literary and linguistic processes in large part helped to create—have been taken as the condition of emergence and understanding of these processes themselves. As for the history in which literature is embedded in South Asian literary histories, one of several modes of European temporality has typically been adopted: the purely serial, almost annalistic mode, whereby texts follow each other over the centuries (as if sequence were somehow meaningful in itself, or were somehow safely situated beyond meaning); or, more problematically, the story of the birth of the nation or region or community, with its teleological embarrassment whereby the nation or region or community that marks a contingent end point becomes the necessary end point, and, in this way, often the starting point. It is this last dimension, where literary history manifests itself as national history, that has made it so difficult to perceive any of the generative literary processes that transcend or escape the national.[16]

FROM LITERARY HISTORY TO LITERARY CULTURE IN HISTORY

If literary history as such has become increasingly vitiated as a form of knowledge, literary scholars of South Asia have found additional problems confronting them. New forms of critique have been generated in other fields of South Asian studies that over the past twenty years have profoundly reshaped thinking in at least three important domains: our moral no less than intellectual orientation in general to the object of inquiry; our awareness of the epistemological no less than political violence of colonialism; and, more broadly, our appreciation of the limitations of an area-based structuring of research.

The Orientalism debate has alerted us to the political constraints—in the widest sense of "political"—that have operated in the production of knowledge about Asia. While sometimes excessive in its claims, and perhaps, in the last analysis, only a subset of a more general problem of knowledge and interests, the critique of Orientalism has at its best made Western scholars

---

16. For Das, a principal contributor to *A History of Indian Literature,* the concept of India is a permanent part of the "psyche of Indian people" and needs no further warrant to become the conceptual cadre of the book. See Das 1991–, vol. 8: 4–5.

more sensitive to the fundamental importance and difficulty of learning to listen, at once sympathetically and critically, to non-Western voices when attempting to understand non-Western cultures. The Subaltern school of historiography has sought to redirect the study of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Indian society and politics toward the popular, the vernacular, the oral, and the local, and to recapture the role of small people in effecting big historical change. Contemporary analyses of colonialism have shown how new Indian pasts with real-life social consequences, such as the traditionalization of the social order by the systematic miscognition of indigenous discourses on caste, were created by colonial knowledge. They have demonstrated at the same time how discourses such as nationalism that were borrowed from Europe entered into complex interaction with local modes of thought and action that, through a process not unlike import substitution, appropriated, rejected, transformed, or replaced them. The reexamination of the theory, practice, and history of area studies, driven in large part by the analysis of globalization, has made us more acutely aware of the artificiality of the geographical boundaries of inquiry, especially as currently institutionalized in universities in the United States. And attention has in fact begun to turn instead to how movement—whether of people, ideas, or texts—tends to ignore such boundaries altogether.[17]

In view of all of these important developments, it has become increasingly clear to students of South Asian literature that a different approach to their materials is necessary. Crucially, this approach would seek to avoid reproducing the problems of earlier literary historiography. But it would also mean taking seriously the insights of colleagues in related fields of scholarship. Their insistence, for example, on the need to provincialize European theory encourages the search for ways to generate the procedures, questions, and theory appropriate to South Asian literary materials from those materials themselves.[18]

This search would include listening to the questions the texts themselves raise—as the late D. R. Nagaraj often encouraged members of the Literary Cultures in History project to do—rather than, like inquisitors, placing the texts in the dock and demanding that they answer the questions we bring to them; in other words, focusing on their critical processes rather than on our critical positions. It would mean suspending the otherwise reasonable goals of standard literary historiography—the situating of literary discourse in relation to other kinds of discourse at given historical moments; the elucidation of stylistic change; the contextual interpretation of literary works in service of an "appreciation of literature"—for these presume an already-given

---

17. Compare Guha et al. 1985–, Inden 1990, Breckenridge and van der Veer 1993, Bhabha 1994, Appadurai 1996, Cohn 1996, Guha 1997.

18. See Chakrabarty 2000.

map of the literary-cultural world.[19] It would also require suspending literary criticism as normally practiced in South Asian scholarship, as well as the naive subjectivism to which it so often falls victim. And it would mean refusing to segregate literature from the rest of the culture, society, and polity where it comes into being and finds its audience. This segregation is itself culturally specific. It is defended nowadays largely in belief in the Heideggerian-Hölderlinian revelation of a mysterious, even transcendent, essence of the literary that insists on its own uniqueness, forever escaping explanation.[20] But little in South Asian historical experience suggests that literature was ever thought to be quarantined from the world to begin with (even when the literature in question, such as Sanskrit, appears at times to have striven to cultivate such an image), or that it was thought to open into the endless proliferation of private meanings that its inexplicability entails.

Most important of all, this search would mean learning to think in a historical-anthropological spirit: trying to understand what the texts of South Asian literature meant to the people who wrote, heard, saw, or read them, and how these meanings may have changed over time. We cannot orient ourselves to a text without first grasping how its readers oriented themselves—unless we want to read it in a way that no South Asian reader ever did and abandon the attempt to know what literary culture meant in history. Of course, no audience, however primary, is omnipotent in its capacity to understand its own culture; texts can be thought to bear meanings—ideological meanings, for example—that by definition are unavailable to primary readers. Yet we cannot possibly know and make sense of what early readers could not see until we know what they did see. For this reason, too, the prior recuperation of historical reading practices is a theoretical necessity of scholarship.

When I and the other contributors to this book began to contemplate the zone of freedom we entered when we escaped literary history for the history of literary culture, committing ourselves to taking South Asian people and their ideas seriously, and allowing for (potentially radical) South Asian difference, it was both liberating and unsettling. It was liberating because we now had the opportunity to pose a new set of questions to our materials; unsettling because the inquiry was, effectively, uncontainable and threatened to escape any organizing structure. Our first assessment of objectives showed both features well. Instead of starting from received notions of area-based or national or regional cultures, we knew we wanted to explore how boundaries have been continuously recreated. Instead of deciding in advance what

19. Perkins 1992: 78; see also Patterson 1995.

20. See for example Bourdieu 1996: xvi ff., 286 ff.; and more programmatically Gramsci 1991: 205. South Asian traditions that emphasized the transcendent characteristics of the literary, such as the new theological aesthetics of eleventh-century Kashmir, far from suggesting that literature is resistant to analysis, essentially reduce it to a set of philosophical propositions.

literature is (or deciding not to decide), we wanted to ask what literature has been decided to be, and how local decisions may have changed over time. Instead of segregating the oral from the literate, or mechanically assuming that the transition to print was exported from Europe with the same consequences everywhere, we wanted to explore what relationships have existed between literature and the often simultaneous orders of oral, manuscript, and print cultures. We wanted to understand how South Asians themselves conceived of the pasts of their literatures, according to modes of temporality that may have been peculiar to them; how they established their canons, and what norms, aesthetics, and readerly expectations these embody, instead of assuming that canons were colonial inventions. We wanted to write not literary criticism but a history of what has been taken as the criticism of literature in our various literary cultures; to provide not our own interpretations, judgments, or evaluations, but an account of how and by what criteria the traditions have interpreted, judged, or evaluated. We no longer wished to segregate the various literary cultures and treat them as discrete and autonomous units that had no actual historical relationship to each other, but instead we hoped to rediscover the arteries that connected them and helped bring each to life. The same would hold true of the languages themselves, which, we aimed to show, never exist as pure, self-identical, thinglike isolates, but are instead processes, in fact, mutually constitutive processes, especially as they participate in the greater dialectic between the cosmopolitan and the vernacular. This binary, for its part, would be thematized not only as a competition for literary and social prestige but also as a larger movement by which communities of readers/listeners produced and reproduced communities of citizen-subjects.[21] We wanted to demonstrate as well that the aesthetic, social, and political forces at work in the cultures of South Asian literatures have had long though never homogenous histories. Region and nation, literature and literacy, canonicity and criticism, language and identity we aimed to consider not as problematics of modernity alone, but as showing complicated, long-term continuities and discontinuities, innovations and iterations, requiring historical differentiation.

This initial program comprised a very ambitious set of goals indeed. While they serve to illustrate clearly the theoretical interests that set the project in motion, these goals also reveal how open is the concept of literary culture itself—productively open where new heuristic practices are desired, disruptively open where conceptual or expository unity across traditions is sought. As the project developed, we found that many of our original concerns were in fact commonly shared by the literary cultures we were examining. At the

---

21. I consider the relativities in play in the terms "cosmopolitan" and "vernacular" in Pollock 1998.

same time, each of these cultures (or, perhaps, their expert readers) seemed to lay particular stress on one or another question, or generated new questions altogether. Clearly a more pragmatic methodology for understanding literary cultures in history was called for. Because this pragmatism informs the book as a whole, I want to discuss it first, before turning to address the issues more widely confronted in our studies: forms of history, language in literary culture, and communities of literature.

THE CONTINGENCY OF METHOD

How our black box of literary culture was to be filled proved to be contingent—and quite reasonably so—on the individual histories of the traditions in question. All literary cultures exist in time and space, and they acknowledge this by their specific internal processes of spatialization and temporalization. They all use language and thereby create literary language; they all appropriate and adapt existing conceptions of the literary and invent new ones. Though they have these fundamental traits in common, South Asian literary cultures diverge markedly on the question of which features are to be awarded primacy for historical analysis. Accordingly, the methods themselves that contributors adopted for understanding and explaining the various literary cultures proved equally divergent. Disciplinary or historical preoccupations have no doubt also played a role: some of the contributors work in anthropology, some in history, languages and literature, philosophy, political science, or religion; some concentrate on the premodern period, some on the modern. But the decisive contingencies seem to have been the differences in the histories of literary cultures themselves. In one case, for example, a defining factor of a literary culture in history turned out to be the problematic idea of history itself; in another case, the very absence of the literary; in yet another, the irruption of radical cultural difference in the form of colonialism and European modernity.

In Tamil literary culture we observe a long and complicated confrontation with the problem of historicity—a fact that is anomalous in relation to other South Asian cultures. Some scholars have viewed Tamil literature of the entire premodern period as aspiring to an order of simultaneity rather than succession (let alone supersession): later works were intended to supplement rather than supplant earlier ones.[22] Yet the tradition itself has long thematized its uneven history, beginning as early as the medieval tales of the great flood said to have destroyed the works of a literary academy *(caṅkam)* in the archaic period. The actual texts, which, although they had not been

---

22. See Cutler, chapter 4, this volume, and Zvelebil 1974: 2.

entirely forgotten in the late medieval period, had long disappeared from the standard syllabus of Tamil literary study, were rediscovered or, rather, reintroduced at the end of the nineteenth century by U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar (1855–1942), an event that entailed a radical revision of the history of Tamil. As Norman Cutler shows in chapter 4, the twentieth-century discourse of Tamil literary historiography tells the story of literary primevality, disappearance, and recovery in a new idiom but as if recapitulating those earlier anxieties of loss and much older concerns with antiquity. It is by virtue of this long-term centrality of the historical, then, that literary historiography in the twentieth century comes to occupy a more prominent place in the analysis of Tamil literary culture than in that of any other in South Asia.

A tradition's historically variable attitude toward the literary and the consequences of this variability for our sense of the object of our investigation are defining issues in what Steven Collins in chapter 11 has called the Pali *imaginaire*. Literature as constituted in the high tradition of Sanskrit and Prakrit—and understood as such by many regional traditions in the early centuries of vernacularization—seems to have been fundamentally rejected from the beginning by the custodians of the hieratic language of southern Buddhism. This was so despite the clear commitment to literature among Buddhists in the north, who wrote in Sanskrit from the second century onward. Equally important, this was despite the fact that materials in the oldest stratum of the Pali canon demonstrate a strong aesthetic commitment, such as the *Theragāthā* and *Therigāthā* (Verses of the male elders; Verses of the female elders) or the balladlike portions of the *Suttanipāta* (Group of discourses). Other vastly influential, though in some sense counterdominant, literary processes were engaged in Pali, most notably in the case of the dramatized moral discourse of the *Vessantarajātaka* (Birth story of prince Vessantara). At the beginning of the second millennium, however, a new literary culture, Sanskritic to its core, was abruptly created. This was precisely the moment when the transregional career of Pali in Southeast Asia was commencing, and it seems unlikely that the two developments were unconnected.

The character of the literary culture that developed in the area we now call Bengal and that made use of the language we now call Bangla is generally comparable to what is found elsewhere in the subcontinent. Vernacular beginnings were tentative in a literary space entirely dominated by Sanskrit. The semiotics of socioideological registers used in literary texts shows the same complexity as elsewhere in South Asia, and the competition between them shows the same intensity, though both were made yet more complex and intense by the presence of Persianate culture after the sixteenth century. Borders of place and borders of language were as messy as they were elsewhere, until literature began its work of purification. What seems to distinguish Bangla literary culture are the processes inaugurated with the con-

solidation of British colonialism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is crucial to recognize what is often ignored: that we do not all live in the same Now, as Ernst Bloch put it—that the rhythms of historical change are as variable across South Asia as they are anywhere else, and that, as a case in point, the force of the colonial impact on Bangla literature was different from what occurred in Kannada, Sindhi, or Telugu. Nineteenth-century Bangla novelists such as Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay evinced an especially intense literary engagement with colonialism, as Sudipta Kaviraj demonstrates in chapter 8—one that eventually did exercise great influence on other regional traditions. At the same time, colonialism threw into relief the choice of literary language and made this choice more passionate—or made it at least an object of more explicit reflection—than appears to have previously been the case. Here Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–1873) is the iconic figure, and both Kaviraj and Vinay Dharwadker (in chapter 3) delineate the afterhistory of the existential-aesthetic dilemma that Madhusudan had been the first to confront in the South Asian theater of the war waged by global English.

This sort of specificity of historical problematics, and the shift in methodological focus entailed thereby, may be found everywhere among these essays—for Malayali literary culture in the multiplicity and social significance of oral-performative genres, for Urdu in the politics of language identity, for Tibetan in the image and idiom of India itself. What is revealed in the black box of literary culture is the complex diversity of the phenomenon itself, the variety of points of historical prominence, and the methodological particularity both require.

FORMS OF HISTORY

If the idea of literary cultures can allow for their historical individualization in a way that the homogenizing procedure of literary history does not, history itself as a theoretical problem is by no means thereby simply cancelled. What does it mean to conceive of literary culture as historical? Is it a matter of sheer chronology, because that is the way history happens? Is it like plotting the course of development of an organic life-form from birth to flourishing to decay and death, or like assigning values on a commodity exchange—golden age, silver age, and the rest? Is it the story of the gradual manifestation of the latent nation? What leads us to decide on one approach or the other as especially appropriate for South Asia? Our inquiry into what constitutes the literary showed that stipulative definitions are often nothing more than unwarranted universalizations of this or that particular; instead, the literary needs to be understood as a historically situated practice: how people have done things with texts. This approach suggests that the problem of history may also be addressed, at least in part, by exploring how people

have done things with the past and by taking seriously how different modes of temporality may have worked to structure South Asian literary cultures for the participants themselves.

A good example of history as doing things with the past is found in the genre of the *tazkirah* in Persian and Urdu. In chapter 15, Frances Pritchett explores in detail the complexities of this form of "remembrance" (the root meaning of *tazkirah*), at once genealogical, critical, and anecdotal. Its visions of a literary culture may not be reducible to a simple chronology, but it everywhere produces some past by assembling the poets who count in the literary tradition. Remarkably, as argued by Muzaffar Alam in chapter 2, what may have been the first such *tazkirah* in Persian was produced not in Iran but in the Panjab (in the *Lubāb al-albāb* of Sadīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAufī, d. c. 1252), as if the very fact that Persian poets were working at the Ghaznavid court in Afghanistan (or the Ghurid in Uchch, or the Ilbarite in Delhi) was what needed to be preserved in memory. An ironic double reversal marks the end of the *tazkirah* as a genre: In 1880, when in the wake of the failed uprising of 1857, Urdu intellectuals found a compromise with European modernity inevitable, Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād produced the *Āb-e ḥayāt* (The water of life), a *tazkirah* intended to consign the greater part of the Urdu tradition to the trash can of history. Only a generation earlier Garcin de Tassy had adopted the *tazkirah* as the form most appropriate for describing to Europe what he understood to be the *Histoire de la littérature hindoui et hindoustani.*

Other forms of ethnohistory may be found in the most unexpected places.[23] Sanskrit eulogies of poets of the past create long-term genealogies, even as they create canons and critical criteria, often in a way that approximates positive chronology (though without a trace of evolutionism). It was not unusual for a poet in twelfth-century Gujarat to have a reasonably correct chronological knowledge of more than a millennium of Sanskrit and Prakrit poetry. D. R. Nagaraj has noted (in chapter 5) how Kannada-speaking intellectuals in fifteenth-century Vijayanagara collected, literized, and narrativized the hitherto dispersed, unwritten, and wholly decontextualized utterances *(vacana)* of the twelfth-century Vīraśaivas (militant devotees of Śiva). The biographical impulse in evidence here is a crucial use of the past that for both original participants and later scholars has shaped the entire understanding of the rise of a new cultural form and its political-theological significance.

In the same spirit, rather than offering a chronological survey of texts, which begins at an arbitrary beginning and ends at an arbitrary end (a re-

---

23. The absence of any term besides "ethnohistory" to describe alternative narratives of temporality without at once affirming the primacy of Western positivist history is a good indication of the absolute dominance of this history as a form of contemporary knowledge.

dundancy anyway, since the literary histories that already exist for all these literary cultures do precisely this), many contributors have preferred to address the problem of what South Asians themselves have decided were beginnings, endings, and critical moments. They have also asked how to gauge what is at stake in the decision to see in this or that writer or text a break in the flow of time. Many cultures have traditions of invention, and it has proved instructive to pay close attention to these, too. They may not necessarily be in accord with what positive historiography marks as significant, but it can be precisely the tension between the two forms of knowledge that yields important new meanings.

Consider the case of Eḻuttacchan, the low-caste poet who composed the Malayalam *Rāmāyaṇa* sometime in the sixteenth century.[24] He is not in any simple sense the "primal poet" in Malayalam, as he is often represented by people of modern Kerala. For at least three centuries before him, as Rich Freeman shows in chapter 7, people had been producing texts in what we now call Malayalam and in the script now known as Aryalipi (the script of the nobles; more or less the modern Malayalam writing system) and using those texts in ways that distinguish them from any other texts and in fact make them, for Malayalis, literature. But it is worth listening when the later tradition assigns a primal role to Eḻuttacchan. It tells us something about the place of this multiform narrative, the *Rāmāyaṇa,* in constituting the core of a literary tradition; about the enduring historical importance of the moment when a subaltern social formation achieved the literacy that in the South Asian world conditioned the culturally significant type of textuality we may call literature; and about literature as requiring, in the eyes of many readers and listeners, a particular linguistic register, in this case, the highly Sanskritized.

Thinking of history as a use of a past, in the way that literature is a use of a text, may help us elude deterministic narrative plots, whether teleologies of the nation-state or of the organic life-form, without at the same time retreating to postmodern encyclopedism to avoid "distorting the past."[25] One avoids distortion not by renouncing any determinate relation of the events of the past (assuming such renunciation is even possible), but rather by recognizing that the past in one of its most important dimensions is what people have taken the past to be, indeed, just as literature is what people have taken literature to be.

The analogy between literature and history is nevertheless not an exact one. Texts are objects of intentionality, with a structure of meaning intersubjectively shared between author or performer and reader or listener. The past as such is not exclusively such an object, nor is it solely part of a shared

24. Similar arguments can be made about other vernacular poets. See for example the discussion of Narasiṃha in Yashaschandra, chapter 9, this volume.

25. As described by Perkins 1992: 53–60 and (Perkins claims) exemplified by Hollier 1989.

system of meaning. It has larger dimensions with effects that the primary agents themselves may have been unable to grasp, and that consequently have not been thematized or even made present in South Asian discourse. In other words, the view of the literary past from inside—the *taẕkirah,* the Sanskrit praise-poem, the Kannada biographies, the different traditions of invention—may be supplemented by the view from outside: our view here and now, when the dust of history has settled.

The view from outside often focuses on ruptures in literary culture, whether constituted by breaks in technology, learning, religion, or polity. Persian literary culture was intimately tied to the fortunes of the imperial Mughal formation and did not long survive when this formation began to mutate in the early eighteenth century. As Nagaraj shows, the militant devotees of Śiva in twelfth-century Kannada country produced an altogether new literature (the nonmetrical, unadorned discourse that they called simply *vacana,* "utterance"), in a new literary idiom (a Middle Kannada that was dramatically de-Sanskritized in comparison with the earlier literary register), with a new social vision of caste transcendence and an antistatist political vision. In thirteenth-century Tibet, a new commitment to Sanskrit intellectual practices in grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, greater than anything seen before in the region, utterly transformed the styles and standards of literary production for centuries to come. These ruptures are often not explicitly acknowledged within the traditions in question, but clearly any adequate analysis of literary cultures in history must address them. The same holds for ruptures in literary technology.

There are two such technological ruptures, with markedly different historical significance. While contemporary scholarship may be preoccupied with the consequences of print, the transition to manuscript culture around the start of the common era did far more to transform the practices of literary communication than did the transition to print culture in the eighteenth century.[26] Long a preserve of Sanskrit and the other cosmopolitan languages, including Arabic, literary inscription was achieved by vernacular languages at different moments, starting around the beginning of the second millennium. It was this development that, in combination with other factors, inaugurated the vernacular revolution with which many of the chapters of this book are concerned. Precisely how the new manuscript culture interacted with an orality that long remained dominant both in fact and in the ideology of authentic knowledge—to say nothing of its interaction with the true oral culture that maintained its existence outside of literature and history—is one of the great complexities of South Asian literary cultures, and as the different chapters show, this interaction can be variously inter-

---

26. Recall, however, that woodblock printing was used in Tibet from about the thirteenth century.

preted. The dichotomy oral-literate neither recapitulates that of folk-elite nor fits with received European notions of cultural-historical stages. For one thing, written literature continued to be orally performed among most social orders well into the modern period. But while in some traditions literacy was unquestionably primary in both composition and performance (the latter typically from a written text), in others orality was a far more powerful influence. Freeman describes how in Kerala text-artifacts were often merely scripts for improvisation; and according to Pritchett's vivid account of the *mushāʿirah,* the Urdu literary salon in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century north India, an undiminished orality and the capacious memory that accompanies it remained vital components in a culture otherwise thoroughly saturated by the written word. And not all oralities are equal: Kaviraj distinguishes a high orality having cultural valorization, such as the Sanskrit *mantra* (liturgical formula), from a relaxed orality of everyday life. But the vernacular can migrate from the second to the first category and radically reform the boundaries of literary culture in the process.

The narrative of the history of print culture as told for Europe has little resonance in South Asia, although due to their historical focus, most of the chapters do not demonstrate this systematically. As we learn from the history of south Indian languages—Kannada and Telugu in particular—standardization in orthography and grammar, and unification into a literary language, were preprint achievements (something that holds for literary Prakrit and Sanskrit from a far earlier period). In north India too, as Sitamshu Yashaschandra argues (in chapter 9) in the case of Gujarati, by the fourteenth century a largely unified literary idiom had already been adopted for the creation of literature over a large, multidialectal region. A work like the fifteenth-century *Līlātilakam* demonstrates that the hierarchization of literary dialects in Malayalam could occur in the absence of printed texts. Print and capitalism only slowly achieved (and according to some contributors, may not yet have achieved) a synergy critical enough to transform the character of literary culture. Although mass-circulation journals have proved important for the development of South Asian literary cultures, printed books themselves have remained out of the reach of many people. It is worth observing that today the largest sector of book sales of any sort, including literature, is school texts. How this economic fact affects the production of literature is touched on by Dharwadker. To a certain extent Barthes's definition, modestly amended, seems to find increasing application today: literature is what gets taught and thus sold.

LANGUAGE IN LITERARY CULTURE

As we have tried to think about texts and pasts as situated practices rather than stable things, so also we have sought to conceive of languages them-

selves as processes rather than objects. This has meant thematizing and attempting to make historical sense of two closely related phenomena: the creation of language by literature, and the competition between and choice of literary languages.

In a world where government censuses and linguistic surveys demand that citizens declare their "mother tongue"—even though a person may have two or three, or have one that can be found on no list of "languages"—and where procedures of classification and objectification can actually create what they seem to only describe, we are prone to think of languages as stable, single, self-identical, and discrete. Thus, according to textbook representations, the world of South Asia may be said to know three international culture languages: Sanskrit, the major Indo-Aryan language of premodernity, with a literary history of two and a half millennia; Persian, whose own history began anew at the start of the second millennium; and from the eighteenth century on, English. (Arabic may be included too, though its use in South Asia was almost exclusively for theological discourse.) Added to these are a small number of Middle Indo-Aryan script languages of the first millennium: the Prakrits (above all Maharashtri and Shauraseni), Pali, and Apabhramsha; the New Indo-Aryan languages of the second millennium, including Bangla, Gujarati, Hindi, Sindhi, Sinhala, and Urdu; and four major Dravidian languages of south India first attested at different points in the first millennium: Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam.

There is a complex truth to such crude representations as these. They can, after all, produce a brute reality of their own: people begin to live the objectifications that the surveys and the censuses create. Thus, should the National Academy of Letters in India decide to institute an award for literature in Dogri (a language spoken in the union state of Jammu and Kashmir), Dogri would take on a harder conceptual and material facticity than it may ever have had previously. But comparable processes of the creation of languages through literature and philology, and their reification as intentional objects, long antedate the rationalizing procedures of the modern state—although again, we must remember that since every specific situation is historical, these processes will have a range of potentially incommensurable significations and purposes. Virtually every chapter in this book has to some degree sought to grasp the means and the meanings of the literary invention of languages—for it is literature itself that above all other forms of elaboration organizes jargons into language—and to gauge the competition that this involved and the grounds for choosing that it often provoked. There is no single rubric under which this has been done. Each tradition has worked through the problem in a particular historical way: in some cases a highly consequential nominalism seems to be the critical issue; in others, it is individuation and differentiation from other literary languages; and in yet others, reconciliation and compromise.

The most familiar and in some regards the most distressing example occurs in the history of the languages now known as Hindi and Urdu. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (chapter 14), Stuart McGregor (chapter 16), and Harish Trivedi (chapter 17) explore from different perspectives the fortunes and misfortunes of language naming as a problem of power in the colonial period. Since names are in part warrants for making historical claims over texts and persons, what is meant by "Hindavi" ("Hindvi," "Hindui"), "Hindustani," "Hindi," "Dihlavi," "Gujri," "Dakani," "Rekhtah," and "Urdu" entails determining which texts would be included in each language, how ancient and honorable each one may be, and accordingly, how rightful is each one's claim in the present to recognition and status. Less complex and more recent, though participating in a similar process, is the relationship between what are now called Gujarati and Rajasthani. The term "Gujarati," found in "Gurjarabhasha" and related locutions, was only sporadically in use before the eighteenth century (when some Gujarati writers were still calling their language Prakrit), whereas "Rajasthani" is a nineteenth-century European coinage. In the Gujarati case, however, as Yashaschandra shows, a nominalism of a different order is at work, one that lacked the relation to social difference that we find in the case of Hindi and Urdu. Freeman explores the problem of language naming in Kerala. What we now know as Malayalam was called Tamil for many centuries, even as vernacular intellectuals as early as the fourteenth century were attempting to differentiate it from Tamil, which dominated the literary sphere of peninsular India. Bangla and Maithili, Oriya and Bangla, Gujarati and Apabhramsha—the speciation of each has a long history that has complexly interacted with literary processes.

If the common sense of languages as individual and stable is disturbed by the histories of their actual creation, these histories render the common sense of the social identities associated with these languages even less sensible. The linkage now taken entirely for granted between literary language and religious community before vernacularization—the linkage between Sanskrit and what we now call Hinduism, and between Prakrit and Jainism—actually has little foundation for much of the South Asian story. As I argue in chapter 1, writers selected freely from among these idioms. Brahmans chose Apabhramsha for poems about the god Viṣṇu (and for much else besides Vaishnavism), and Buddhists chose Sanskrit for poems about the life of the Buddha (and for much else besides Buddhism) on grounds that seem to have had far more to do with the expressive qualities of register than the restrictions of religion. Other factors informed the choice of Brajbhasha instead of Sanskrit on the part of seventeenth-century writers like Keśavdās, and of Persian and eventually Urdu in the case of Hindu writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To be sure, religious motivations prompted some writers of devotional poetry to turn to the vernacular instead of Sanskrit or Persian—but the reason often had more to do with the aesthetics of religious

experience than with proselytization. These poets included the Sufi writers of theological romance *(premākhyān),* who for their mystical practice (the *samāʿ*) used what was thought of as the sweet musicality of Avadhi (eastern Hindi) or Sindhi in preference to the courtly and imperial overtones of Persian. Ali Asani shows in chapter 10 how in the case of Sindhi, vernacular language and local musical traditions fused so that even written poetic texts came to be organized according to the *rāga* in which they were meant to be sung.

In general, the evidence of the literary cultures surveyed in this book leaves no doubt that social or religious birth was not cultural destiny in South Asia at any time before modernity. On the contrary, affiliation to a literary culture was always something one chose, though again, each choice was made for reasons specific to each historical situation. When in the early centuries of the second millennium Pali literary culture was adopted by Cambodians and Thais, Sanskrit by Tibetans, Kannada by Tulavas and Konkanis, and Persian by Mughals (who originally were speakers of Chaghatay Turkish), it was cultural choice rather than necessity that was at work.

A choice is always made among options, however, and options imply competition. In addition to long-term processes of individuation and differentiation in South Asian literary cultures, countervailing tendencies of appropriation and compromise are everywhere and dramatically in evidence. At different periods in South Asian history, Sanskrit, Persian, and English have constituted powerful, even hegemonic presences in literary culture, and this trait distinguishes them from other transregional codes: Pali, for example, is a sacral language vast in its dispersal but strikingly self-limiting in its literary purposes until late in its career. Tamil's influence was widespread but bounded throughout south India and, after the eleventh century, in Sri Lanka. Urdu was diffused widely (in its western form, Gujri, and its southern form, Dakani, in addition to what was constituted as Urdu in the north), yet though it described a complex cultural geography in some sense unique in the subcontinent, it never went beyond these limits.

The interactions between master languages and their vernacular others—which were decisive for the histories of the latter but also fed back in less obvious ways into the former—show substantial and significant historical differences. Persian and Sanskrit cosmopolitanism, for example, never operated with the kind of scorched-earth policy that contemporary global English (or premodern global Latin) does; regional languages were enabled rather than obliterated by their presence.[27] But this enabling was itself differentiated—each specific situation being historical—and to capture the differences the contributors to this volume have employed various analytics. Western scholarship is again of little help here, despite the presence of comparable

27. I discuss the notions of "voluntaristic" and "coercive" forms of cosmopolitanism in Pollock 2000.

processes. It is hard to find much of theoretical value beyond Gramsci's contrast between "molecular" and "massive" forms of influence. Some of these analytics derive from local theorization itself, as in the distinction that emerged in the early centuries of vernacularization among south Indian intellectuals between the literary cultures of the Way *(mārga)* and of Place *(deśī),* as noted in the chapters by Narayana Rao and Nagaraj. The larger cultural-historical implications of this distinction I have elsewhere tried to capture through the terminology of "cosmopolitan" and "vernacular."[28] The term *maṇipravāla* (pearls and coral) came to be used in Kerala especially for the complex appropriations of cosmopolitan language, though the phenomenon itself, and the various possibilities it involves, are visible right across the spectrum of regional literary idioms, northern and southern. Writers were profoundly sensitive to the relative weight, so to speak, of cosmopolitan characteristics: they carefully distinguished and distributed grades of similarity in lexical items (identical, semi-identical, radically different); they debated the propriety of morphological appropriation; and they strove for balance between the cosmopolitan and the vernacular in many other realms of aesthetic practice, from versification to imagery. The historical engagement with many of these questions in Telugu, and Narayana Rao's discussion of them in chapter 6, are exemplary.

Other contributors have sought to theorize the social ground upon which these negotiations took place. Thus, Kaviraj differentiates between exclusivist and inclusivist practices. The social intention of the former is to obstruct access to meaning on the part of noncosmopolitan users. The latter allows entry without specialized knowledge because the cosmopolitan language itself is, as it were, almost entirely liquefied into the vernacular.

Seen against the widest canvas of sociality, the competition between vernacular and cosmopolitan, as noted earlier, takes on a particular poignancy in the cultural politics of postcolonial Asia, where writers have struggled with the problem of authenticity and the role of the vernacular in a world of global English. As these chapters everywhere demonstrate, structurally similar contentions, in which emulation, denial, and compromise all came into play, marked the literary cultures of precolonial traditions as well, from the engagement of Old Kannada with Sanskrit to that of Urdu with Persian. Yet, what to all appearance is the same historical problem often discloses crucial differences in political and social effects and in personal meaning at different historical epochs. Premodern negotiations between local and global were complex, to say the least, as were the engagements between local and local, as is evident in Yashaschandra's account of Gujarati (in reference to Hindi, Marathi, and Marwari), Freeman's of Malayalam (in reference to Tamil), and

28. See Pollock 1998 and forthcoming (part 2) for a historical account of this theorization of *mārga* and *deśī.* Gramsci's reflections on language influence are found in 1991: 178 ff.

Kaviraj's of Bangla (in reference to Oriya and Maithili). If what was at stake in each particular case remains to be more systematically explored, our different accounts at least serve to show how salient such negotiation was. And by their very juxtaposition in this volume, these cases reveal a crucial fact obscured when each tradition remains in pristine isolation between the covers of its own literary history: that such transactions have fundamentally conditioned, and even defined, the literary cultures of South Asia throughout their long history.

COMMUNITIES OF LITERATURE

Literature, history, and language, I have been arguing here, are as much what people do with a text and a past and a spectrum of articulate sounds as they are pregiven entities that do things to people. Similarly, space—along with the important features of the social and political formations that mark themselves off in space—is a product of literary cultures as much as these cultures may in turn be reproduced by space. Region and nation and civilizational area are no more natural kinds than is literature or history. We observed earlier that members of the project started out from the conviction that literature may have produced Bengal and India and South Asia as much as South Asia and India and Bengal have produced literature; that literary representations can conceptually organize space, and the dissemination of literary texts can turn that space into a lived reality, as much as space and lived realities condition conceptual organization and dissemination.

These are not facile logical palindromes: At issue is the question of how certain kinds of community come to be constituted. One of these is what we may call the sociotextual community—the community for which literature is produced, in which it circulates, and which derives a portion of its self-understanding as a community from the very act of hearing, reading, performing, reproducing, and circulating literary texts. Another is the political community, in which the different sociotextual orders may come to be incorporated, and whose existence as an intentional object often takes the form of narratives made available in literature. When literary history became the handmaid of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe and in postcolonial South Asia, it was for good reason. Linguistic particularity and aesthetic difference, to say nothing of the actual stories about particular spaces and their reproduction across these spaces, produce powerful ideational effects, and have done so for a long time. But again, these effects can have histories totally different from those consecrated by nationalism and modernity.

No a priori answer to the meaning (and meaningfulness) of "South Asia," "India," "Bengal," or other such notions is possible, for these have no primeval and eternal meanings. They are, rather, culturally and historically constituted and intrinsically relational, which is why they can be constantly

revised, with 1947 and 1971 (the dates of Independence for India and Pakistan, and for Bangladesh, respectively) marking only the most recent and most dramatic revisions. Before 1947, the notions of "Bharat," "Al Hind," and "India" each had its own complex and mutable discursive history and domain of reference, whereas "South Asia" gained currency only in the post–World War II era of the security state with its newly segmented spheres of scholarly interest known as area studies. As I argued earlier, classifications of regions, nations, and the rest that are products of discourses—typically discourses provided by literary history—cannot be presupposed as the appropriate frameworks for analyzing what produced them in the first place. A critical historical account needs to understand those classifications themselves, by taking seriously the representations that people in those spaces have provided for the domains of literary culture meaningful to them and charting the shifting boundaries of these domains over time.

The varieties of meaningful literary space in South Asia and the pertinent communities of literature that inhabit them are astonishing in their multiplicity and complexity, as even a cursory reading of these chapters demonstrates. The English readership of contemporary South Asian writers, as well as those writers themselves and the themes of their work, are as globalized as any other cosmopolitan literature or literary culture, as Dharwadker demonstrates. In late-colonial India, the literary production of political space was a complicated dual project in some ways comparable to but not wholly symmetrical with the nationalization of culture in nineteenth-century Europe. On the one hand, writers sought to recreate the region (like Bengal) even while writing the nation through the dissemination of work in translation, as Kaviraj shows in the case of the novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay; on the other hand, they sought to recreate the nation even while writing the region (like Gujarat) through a new form of prose, as Yashaschandra demonstrates in the case of Gandhi. The kinds of spaces to be found in precolonial periods, for their part, at once complement and contradict these later constructions.

The most dramatic transformation in the early centuries of the second millennium was the production of new vernacular places. The projection of a recently regionalized domain is vividly present in the Telugu work of Śrīnātha in the fifteenth century, as Narayana Rao shows, and in a number of texts in tenth- and eleventh-century Sri Lanka, according to Charles Hallisey's account (chapter 12). Often these representations coincide, or appear to coincide, with unifying polities. Kerala presents a rather different picture, however. While courtesan narratives, messenger poems, and a new genre called the *kēraḷōtpatti* (origins of Kerala) produced significant regional spatializations from about the fifteenth century, Freeman shows that these arose in a world where political power was highly dispersed. Around the same time, Persian began newly linking the subcontinent with vast worlds to the north

and the west, and poets circulated freely across this increasingly unified culture space. That said, some kind of South Asian particularity was discursively produced in the seventeenth century, as Alam shows, when poets in Iran began to speak (dismissively, as a rule) of an "Indian style" *(sabk-i Hindī)* in the Persian poetry composed at the Mughal court. Earlier, the circulation of Buddhist scholars had linked areas as distant as Tibet and Bengal and Sri Lanka, and more unevenly, parts of Southeast, Inner, and East Asia, as the chapters of Collins and Matthew Kapstein (chapter 13) demonstrate. This macrospace rarely found literary representation in the Pali tradition, except in such forms as the cosmological map of the Rose-Apple Continent. In contrast, the imaginary journeys of Tibetan vision poetry discussed by Kapstein can be supplemented by Tibetan works describing real itineraries and actual geographies. What I have elsewhere called the Sanskrit cosmopolis shows, in the mature form it attained around the middle of the first millennium, a remarkable bifurcation.[29] In repeated and consistent textual representation the cosmopolis was seen as filling—and not exceeding—a subcontinental space and as projecting onto this space a vision, however vague, of polity. At the same time, however, the zones of actual production of Sanskrit culture, in at least some of its most noticeable forms, such as royal inscriptions, extended far beyond this space to include Khmer country, Java, and other Southeast Asian spaces at least up to the end of the fourteenth century. None of this extraordinarily diverse material can be taken as having produced, by a rectilinear development, the regions, nations, or areas as we know them in the present, and yet without this material such spatial divisions could scarcely have been created in the first place.

Even while we may fully embrace the indeterminacy and historical variability of cultural space in the prenational and premodern world, it is obvious that in its very organization, a scholarly project like the present one inevitably presupposes a certain determinate conception of geographical boundaries, a relative evaluation of the literary-cultural importance of regional traditions, and much else of which we may be less vividly aware. But here we are entering only another hermeneutical circle, if a larger one, and not necessarily more vicious. Including among the contributors a historian of Old Javanese would have illustrated how much greater was the domain comprised by "South Asian" literary cultures in history, in any assessment of that term, when unconstrained by postcolonial definitions. The inclusion of a historian of Naga oral poems would have illustrated how much smaller it sometimes was. By the same token, indeterminacy freed the contributors from any theoretical obligation to represent some putative whole, to fill gaps

29. See Pollock 1996.

in some imaginary totality. Scholars were accordingly invited to contribute to this volume who were interested in literary processes, wherever they might be working.

The contributors know full well that even while we can appreciate and sometimes articulate the strong critique of pertinent categories—that literature and history are practices; that cultures are wholly permeable and constantly reorder themselves; that languages, like nations, are in an important sense the effect and not the cause of literature; that objectifications produce their own indubitable reality—we nevertheless live in a world of nations and languages and linear chronologies. As a consequence, it has not always been possible to resist thinking according to the borders and boundaries and linearities that these comprise. Moreover, all of the contributors, wherever born or educated, have been trained almost without exception within the frameworks of single national and subnational traditions, and these of necessity act as additional constraints on our research and writing. However porous the walls between literary cultures in history may have been in the past, now, at the start of the third millennium, they have become much too dense for any of us to penetrate fully.

SEEING SOUTH ASIA DIFFERENTLY BY LOOKING THROUGH LITERARY CULTURE

How do we see South Asia differently as a result of looking specifically at the history of its literary cultures? How do we see the worlds of greater Eurasia differently, with respect to both their historical and their conceptual linkages to the south? How do we see history differently, especially the fateful transition to the Western model of modernity, and the problem and practice of postcoloniality? Hard questions all of these—but let me in closing try to address them by summarizing several of the themes I have already discussed.

From colonialism, capitalism, and Christianity—three of the forces that, in their different ways, produced the knowledge of South Asia through which we still must go if we are to go anywhere—contemporary scholars have inherited a set of representations and conceptions, some better known, some less, about refinement and cultivation, the social meaning of literature, and the place of religion in South Asia. The history of literary cultures suggests that much of this inheritance should be discarded. The cultural humiliation of South Asia, prerequisite for the civilizing mission of colonizing Europe, is hardly still with us except perhaps in the form of the astonishing marginalization of South Asia in Western intellectual life. And although cultivation is not a function of literary excellence alone, observers must be overwhelmed and humbled by the vision of cultural productivity, unlike any other in the world, that opens up before them here. In an unbroken tradition of literacy of some two and a half millennia, across successive generations that copied

and recopied palm-leaf and birch-bark manuscripts under conditions of extreme environmental hostility, in ever-increasing numbers of languages, and with every conceivable degree of literary intricacy, texts were composed and preserved to embody the imaginative experience of South Asian peoples. This is a story of complex creativity and textual devotion with few parallels in history.

How this literary production related to the world in which the literary field was variously embedded seems to escape the explanatory models offered by the twin cognitive modes of modernity: capitalism and nationalism. Language was not destiny, and literary culture was not ethnic culture. Both, instead, were things one chose in accordance with the rules of the literary system or the predilections of the political system. Culture was not subservient to power in the simple, instrumental way postulated by the rationality of capitalism or by extrapolation backward to some Oriental despotism. Yet power was not indifferent to culture; the great vernacular revolution, as many chapters show, was most decidedly a courtly project. The logic of those literary cultures was different. Their spaces were not the spaces of nations to come, yet neither were they the dreamscapes where Orientalists like Hegel saw "plant-like beings" in a vegetative state, "incapable of the prosaic circumspection of the intellect."[30] And despite the images of the spiritual East promulgated by an alienated West and a Christianity that sought to remake the world in its image, culture was far less tied to religious community or to the projects of religious instruction or mobilization than was the case in medieval or early-modern Europe—or in contemporary fundamentalist America.

This volume does not aim to draw parallels and contrasts with other literary worlds such as Europe or East Asia, but it does provide materials for the interested reader to do so. In all three civilizational domains, for example, great transregional languages—Latin and Greek, Sanskrit, and Chinese—completely defined the space of literary culture for centuries. In the last case, this persisted long into the modern period, with vernacularization of the sort found in South Asia effectively proscribed by neo-Confucianism until the end of the nineteenth century. The Greek *oikoumene* in its Byzantine form similarly constrained the universe of the literary to the narrowest compass, so much so that its northern embodiment, in the culture of Old Church Slavonic, restricted the development of a Russian literature until the early nineteenth century. The Latinate world shows far closer parallels to South Asia in the structure of its literary-cultural history, if not in its content. The literary cultures that succeeded that of the Latin *imperium* were increasingly ethnicized and historicized even before print capitalism, and evince thereby a radically different mentality from their analogues in South Asia.[31] Ver-

30. See Hegel 1970: 394.
31. A helpful account of early-modern literary Europe and nationalism is Garber 1989.

nacularization may everywhere employ similar techniques, but does not everywhere produce a similar discourse of identity.

To speak of identity—a problem that many see as peculiar to modern society in general and postcolonial societies in particular—invites comment on the historical focus of this project and its relation to the present moment. The emphasis on the pre–twentieth century, indeed, on the period before European colonialism, is not an accident of personnel but rather part of the project design. It comes out of the conviction that as crucial to contemporary theory as understanding postcolonial South Asian literary cultures may be, these represent a very thin slice of a long historical experience whose careful preservation in texts makes this region of the world so special. Equally important—and here we confront a weakness of a certain species of postcolonial critique—these contemporary forms of culture and the role of colonialism in shaping them cannot be understood without a deeper understanding of the long premodern past. That said, we hope literary precoloniality in itself has insights to offer to the student of postcoloniality. How the categories of self and other were actually constituted before colonialism, to consider one important question, begins to come into focus when we think about writing in the other's language. Although no South Asian Muslim and Hindu writers of the seventeenth century were speakers of Persian in their bedrooms or kitchens, Persian could become their primary mode of literary expression; exactly the same was true of Sanskrit. Vernacular writers, for their part, in some sense resisted the cosmopolitan and thereby avowed a different, if never an ethnicized, self. They developed new ways of intermingling the local and global, indeed, remarkable new forms of hybridity—if we can use this term without implying that purity is anywhere or ever preexistent. These forms, as yet untheorized, often appear far more complex than the "shadows" of Indian languages that, as Dharwadker rightly points out, fill the work of the great postcolonial Indian novelists.

Yet rarely if ever do we hear in the premodern forms the desperate expression of cultural inferiority or the humiliation of mimicry that is so common in Indian modernity. Difference was sought, and sought within a realm of power, but it operated in ways that seem beyond our ability to comprehend. It is in large part the effort to capture these sorts of distinctions between modern and premodern modes of literary culture that engendered this project. We felt, and hope readers will also come to feel, that we could best serve the development of our field of study not by producing a sort of *Cambridge History of Literature* relating to India—a summation of existing scholarship with requisite bibliographical exhaustiveness that in any case presupposes a field far better tilled than what now confronts us—but rather by finding ways to suggest why anyone should even bother to study South Asian literary cultures in history. And one reason is surely their astonishing capacity for suggesting other possibilities of life.

NOTE ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUME

From all that has been said so far, there are obviously many ways to arrange a history of literary cultures in South Asia. Unfortunately, however, given the deep anxieties of theory that encumber scholarship at present, most of these arrangements seem flawed. Each one presupposes and reproduces a particular and partial understanding of historical change. Organizing according to gross language family—Dravidian and Indo-Aryan, for example—would be to marginalize in advance the powerful influence that Sanskrit, an Indo-Aryan language, had on Dravidian and to presuppose an interaction among members of these language families that was sometimes less significant than interaction across them. Sinhala, for example, though an Indo-Aryan language, was shaped far more powerfully by its exchanges with Tamil and Malayalam than with Hindi or Gujarati, while Sindhi was as much influenced by its interactions with Persian as with Sanskrit. An arrangement based on other kinds of language relationships is no less problematic. Juxtaposing Persian to Urdu and Sanskrit to Hindi, for example, would undoubtedly highlight the important influence each master code exerted, but at the same time it would erroneously imply that religious community has been the principal determinant of literary-cultural change, to the exclusion of other factors. A simple chronological sequence would hardly be simple, in view of the uncertainties of the historical development of many traditions. And resorting to the false security of alphabetical order would have been an attempt to evade the responsibility of historical interpretation, which none of the participants in the group could endorse.

The arrangement chosen does attempt to make several arguments, and since these are not likely to be grasped before the entire volume is read, it seems advisable to preview some of them here. Although Sanskrit, Persian, and English have had complicated relations with a wide range of South Asian literary cultures, it is their status as self-consciously transregional literary formations that we wish to emphasize in this volume, and they are accordingly grouped together to allow the commonalities and differences in their careers as cosmopolitan languages to emerge. The south Indian literary cultures, for their part, do evince particular interactions and lines of development, especially in their concern with differentiating themselves from one another and producing their own places, that make grouping them together sensible. Quite different is the logic for the arrangement of the vernacular literary cultures of north India. Although Bangla, Gujarati, and Sindhi appear to be located around the edges of South Asia, they are central to the argument of this book as a whole by reason of the problematics that in each case achieved a special salience: in Gujarati, the question of regionality; in Sindhi, the encounter and fusion of Sanskrit and Persian civilizational elements; in Bangla, the impact of colonialism. In the northern and southern

rimlands of South Asia, on the other hand, the presence of Buddhist religious culture emerges as a powerful (though obviously not the sole) determinant of the character of literary culture. Urdu and Hindi, lastly, share a complex and disputed past, which makes their juxtaposition especially illuminating.

To be sure, the current arrangement by no means solves all our problems. It continues to reproduce certain illusory spatial dichotomies that bedevil our historical understanding of culture and politics in this region (notably, suggesting that south India as a unit stands in opposition to the rest of South Asia and positing "borderlands" for a world whose borders were defined only post-Independence). It probably continues to exaggerate the dominance of religious identities (for example, Buddhism in the case of Sinhala). It may tend to reinforce the dominance of Sanskrit, a long-standing anxiety among a number of vernacular traditions. No matter how we arrange the chapters, we risk naturalizing categories—of time, place, language, community—whose historical contingency is precisely what we are seeking to demonstrate. Yet we believe that intelligibility at the risk of anachronism or essentialization is probably more tolerable for the readers for whom we have written this book than confusion in the service of innovation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bhabha, Homi. 1994. *The Location of Culture.* London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Breckenridge, Carol, and Peter van der Veer, eds. 1993. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Condition.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cohn, Bernard S. 1996. *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Conte, Gian Biagio. 1994. *Latin Literature: A History.* Translated by Joseph B. Solodow, revised by Don Fowler and Glenn W. Most. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Das, Sisir Kumar, ed. 1991–. *A History of Indian Literature.* Vol. 8, *1800–1910, Western Impact, Indian Response,* by Sisir Kumar Das. Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Dave, Narmadāśaṅkar Lālśaṅkara [Narmad]. [1865] 1996–. *Narmagadya.* Edited by Rāmeśa Ma. Śukla. Surat: Kavi Narmada Yugavrata Trust.

Dharwadker, Vinay. 1993. "Orientalism and the Study of Indian Literatures." In Breckenridge and van der Veer 1993.

Eagleton, Terry. 1983. *Literary Theory: An Introduction.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Fasold, Ralph. 1984. *The Sociolinguistics of Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Garber, Klaus, ed. 1989. *Nation und Literatur im Europa der frühen Neuzeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Gonda, Jan, ed. 1973–. *History of Indian Literature*. 10 vols. in 28 fasc. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1991. *Selections from Cultural Writings*. Edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Grierson, George Abraham. 1889. *The Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society.

———. 1903–1922. *Linguistic Survey of India*. 11 vols. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing.

Guha, Ranajit, ed. 1997. *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986–1995*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

——— et al., eds. 1985–. *Subaltern Studies*. 9 vols. to date. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1970. *Vorlesungen über die Äesthetik*. 3 vols. Frankurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Hollier, Denis, ed. 1989. *A New History of French Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Howlett, David. 1996. *The English Origins of Old French Literature*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

Hutt, Michael. 1988. *Nepali, a National Language and Its Literature*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers; London: School of Oriental and African Studies.

Inden, Ronald. 1990. *Imagining India*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Jauss, Hans Robert. 1982. "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory." In *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception,* translated from the German by Timothy Bahti; introduction by Paul de Man. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. 1992. "The Imaginary Institution of India." In *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society,* edited by Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Lentricchia, Frank, and Thomas McLaughlin, eds. 1995. *Critical Terms for Literary Study.* 2d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lienhard, Siegfried. 1984. *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit—Pali—Prakrit*. Vol. 3, fasc. 1 of *History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Müller, F. Max, ed. 1879–1910. *Sacred Books of the East*. 50 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Norman, K. R. 1983. *Pali Literature, including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hinayana Schools of Buddhism*. Vol. 7, fasc. 2 of *History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Nyāyaratna, Rāmgati. [1872] 1991. *Bāṅgāla bhāṣā o Bāṅgāla sāhitya viṣayak prastāv.* Edited by Asitakumara Bandyopadhyaya. Calcutta: Supreme Book Distributors.

Patterson, Lee. 1995. "Literary History." In Lentricchia and McLaughlin 1995.

Perkins, David. 1992. *Is Literary History Possible?* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1996. "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, A.D. 300–1300: Transculturation, Vernacularization, and the Question of Ideology." In *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language*. Edited by J. E. M. Houben. Leiden: Brill.

———. 1998. "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000–1500." In *Early Modernities,* edited by Shmuel Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter. *Daedalus* 127 (3): 41–74.

———. 2000. "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History." *Public Culture* 12 (3): 591–626.

———. Forthcoming. *Cosmopolitan and Vernacular before Modernity: Culture and Power in South Asia to 1500.*

Rahman, Tariq. 1996. *Language and Politics in Pakistan.* Karachi: Oxford University Press.

Schlegel, Friedrich. 1808. *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Alterthumskunde.* Nebst metrischen Übersetzungen indischer Gedichte. Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer.

Tassy, Garcin de [Joseph-Heliodore-Sagesse-Vertu]. 1839–1847. *Histoire de la littérature hindoui et hindoustani.* 2 vols. Paris: Printed under the auspices of the Oriental Translation Committee of Great Britain and Ireland. Oriental translation fund (Royal Asiatic Society) Publications.

Winternitz, Moriz. 1908–1922. *Geschichte der indischen Literatur.* 3 vols. Leipzig: C. F. Amelang.

Zvelebil, Kamil. 1974. *Tamil Literature.* Vol. 10, fasc. 1 of *History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Globalizing Literary Cultures

Sanskrit Literary Culture
from the Inside Out

Sheldon Pollock

In contrast to most other literary cultures examined in this book, Sanskrit literature has a long and deep tradition of scholarship. A serious attempt at a comprehensive account appeared by the middle of the nineteenth century, and today many single- and multi-volume histories are available.[1] Without the foundation this impressive body of work provides, the historical study of Sanskrit literature would be hard indeed to undertake. At the same time, this scholarship, like all human works, has been shaped by the categories and assumptions of its times, and these seem especially vulnerable to criticism from the theoretical perspective adopted in the present volume.

The difficulty of defining the object of analysis, to which the introduction to this volume has called attention, is in evidence everywhere in Sanskrit literary scholarship. For many writers, "literature" embraces everything preserved in writing, or even in speech. Narrower definitions prove to be arbitrary stipulations or mere tautologies, and hand-me-down qualifiers such as "classical" are typically left unexplained.[2] Implicitly, Sanskrit literature is usually understood to be Brahmanical and, by preference, the oldest literature, the Veda, the body of orally transmitted texts of myth and ritual; post-Vedic Sanskrit literature remains for many present-day scholars merely "pretty" and "curious," as the nineteenth-century scholar F. Max Müller put it, and

---

1. Weber 1852. Among the more influential texts following upon Weber are Müller 1859, Lévi 1890, Krishnamacariar 1906 (and 1937), Winternitz 1908–1922, and Keith 1923 and 1928. The most serious one-volume work to appear recently is Lienhard 1984; six volumes of A. K. Warder's survey (Warder 1972–) have been published to date. Good regional accounts include De 1960, Banerji 1965, and Raja 1980.

2. For some of these definitions, see the introduction to this volume. Lienhard does define "classical" but darkly: it means "literature that is of a sufficiently high standard to apply the ever-growing canon of poetic rules in a manner that conforms to the traditions of poetry" (1984: 2, 48).

hardly an object of serious intellectual engagement. Sanskrit and India have long been treated as synonyms; works called "Indian theater" and "Indian literature" can unproblematically concern themselves with Sanskrit theater and Sanskrit literature alone. The India that constitutes the conceptual framework of such works, moreover, presents itself as a natural kind, directly given and knowable. At the same time, the prolific genre of regional study ("Bengal's contribution to Sanskrit literature" and the like) never asks what the regionalization of Sanskrit might signify. History itself is an equally straightforward matter: pure chronological sequence without content, as if time merely passed and nothing passed with it. The dominant literary method is everywhere subjective evaluation, and its standards of taste appear as inerrant as they are unself-conscious. "Too much learning will adversely affect a poem" is a Romantic axiom widely if anachronistically applied by modern scholars, and it is easy to foresee its evaluative consequences for a world where learning could never be too much. In the first comprehensive literary history to appear in post-Independence India, precious little is left that is considered worth reading.[3] Even those most sympathetic to the wider Indian world seem to care little for Sanskrit literature. It is with some wonder, therefore, that one registers what has become of the literary culture that for two millennia exercised a unique fascination for people across all of Asia: few today are able to read its great achievements, and fewer even bother.

This curious state of affairs, where our categories of analysis and our judgment seem radically at odds with our object of inquiry and its historical importance, suggests that we need to rethink the research questions with which we approach Sanskrit literature. Is there something we have not fully appreciated that might bring us closer to understanding its cultural life, something we can perhaps capture by exploring how Sanskrit has understood itself? Might it be worth having a better idea of what those who produced Sanskrit culture actually said about the different kinds of texts they made and the different kinds of meanings those texts were thought to bear? We read Sanskrit literature today in printed books, but what were the media of Sanskrit literature before printing, and what were their implications for the experience of literary culture? We might wish to ask directly an even more fundamental question: What did it mean to choose to write in Sanskrit in the first place? This entails asking as well what Sanskrit actually is and in what sense writing in Sanskrit was in fact a choice. Our historical analysis might benefit from understanding how Sanskrit writers themselves conceived of and used their literary past—indeed, it might benefit from appreciating the very fact that they had such conceptions and uses. What, for example, are we to make of their assertion that what they named *kāvya*—for which the En-

---

3. Dasgupta and De 1962. The judgment on the dangers of learning is that of Lienhard 1984: 4.

glish word "literature" in one of its senses is a good translation—had a beginning in time? If it began, can we concomitantly say that it has ended, and if so, when and under what circumstances? And what might the history of its end tell us about what was necessary to keep it alive? And last, if India is not a natural kind, what in fact is it as far as Sanskrit's spatial imagination is concerned?

A lot of questions remain in the study of Sanskrit literary culture—complex and largely unasked questions—and many volumes would be needed to respond to them responsibly for a corpus of texts as vast as that available in Sanskrit. The present chapter is the place to try to state the unasked questions clearly, to explain their cultural importance and theoretical kinship, and to suggest some possible ways of going about answering them. This can best be done by examining a relatively small selection of authors and texts that have exemplary status within the traditions of Sanskrit literary culture and by focusing both on moments that mark points of discontinuity—when newness entered or left the Sanskrit world—and on long-term trends that, as will become clear, signify not so much stagnation as achieved perfection of literary culture.

THE IDEA OF LITERATURE IN SANSKRIT THOUGHT

The introduction to this volume assesses some of the answers that twentieth-century Western scholarship has given to the slippery question of what is literature. Aside from anything else we may learn from them, their disagreements about the object of analysis suggest that, a fortiori, Western science alone is inadequate for understanding the different language phenomena and textual practices encountered in the non-West. An indigenist turn, toward local knowledge, would seem to recommend itself easily; for the meanings of texts and language practices that should concern us here in the first instance, in any case, are those historically available to the primary producers and users of the texts. But, in addition, Sanskrit has a long and sophisticated tradition of reflection on "things made of language"—to use the capacious word *vāṅmaya* that often provides the starting point for its textual typologies. And this reflection came to produce those very things even as it was refined by them in turn, and not just within the world of Sanskrit culture narrowly conceived. The theory no less than the practice of Sanskrit *kāvya,* as almost every chapter in this volume demonstrates, was the single most powerful determinant of vernacular conceptions of literature until it was supplemented or displaced by Persian and English counterparts.

There are sound reasons, then, why local knowledge should command our attention. But I name the turn toward it "indigenist" with a slightly pejorative accent to signal the hazards of looking at culture only from the inside out. The very fact that a representation is held to be traditional induces

us to naturalize it, to render it valid across all times, languages, orders of society. But while there may be remarkable unanimity among Sanskrit thinkers about what differentiates the various things made of language, their definitions undoubtedly reduce complexity, as definitions are meant to do. Marginal cases—sometimes precisely the kinds of texts that make history by disrupting dominant definitions—were excluded, while the very fact of ruling some things in necessarily ruled others out. Any adequate analysis of Sanskrit literary discourse would be expected to recover something of this history, reading it now positively as an account of what was said, and now critically as an account of what was unsaid, and even mis-said:[4] unsaid because no description can exhaust the phenomena it addresses, and mis-said because Sanskrit literary theory, like its object, was enunciated within a field of power and was in the full sense hegemonic in that field. It represented the expression of the culturally dominant—just how dominant can be inferred from the often-resistant work of vernacular literati explored throughout this volume.

Whatever we may conclude about the nature of Sanskrit *kāvya* from examining the works themselves, local theorization about it began at a remarkably late date. The first such texts, Bhāmaha's *Kāvyālaṅkāra* (Ornament of *kāvya*) and Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* (Mirror of *kāvya*), belong to the second half of the seventh century, and though Bhāmaha alludes to some predecessors, there is no reason to think that major works from a much earlier period have been lost. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* (Treatise on drama) attributed to the sage Bharata may in some early and now-vanished form have been contemporaneous with the earliest extant dramas, which are dated to the second century; Kālidāsa in the fourth century and Amara in his lexicon a short time later were the first to testify to the existence of a work so named.[5] But Bharata's main concern is the structure of drama, not the theory of the literary, however much it may have helped to shape that theory—especially the understanding of how literature embodies emotion *(rasa)*. Generally speaking, Sanskrit literary theory is a tardy development, remarkably tardy considering what the theory itself regards as the historical origins of the literary culture.

What divides this remarkable tradition of reflection, which continued to ponder innovatively the nature of *kāvya* for a thousand years, until Jagan-

---

4. Here we can invoke a tradition of criticism found in the genre of *vārttika,* whose purpose is precisely to expose all three points *(uktānuktaduruktārthavyakti).*

5. The text was subject to revision and rearrangement especially at the hands of Kashmiri editor-commentators, who seem to have rediscovered its importance in the eighth or ninth century. On the sometimes irreducible incoherence in the present text, especially in the *rasa* chapter, see Srinivasan 1980. For a sympathetic reading of the work, particularly its relation with early drama, see Bansat-Boudon 1992.

nātha Paṇḍitarāja in the mid-seventeenth century, is minor in comparison with what unifies it. Its sense of purpose may have changed between the seventh and the tenth centuries, away from an original ideal prescriptivism toward an analysis of actually existing texts. Yet the habit of sedimentation (rather than the will to supersession) demonstrated in Sanskrit intellectual history across all disciplines ensured the preservation of earlier components of the discourse on *kāvya* even as they were supplemented by new insights and interests. Thus the preoccupation with the analysis of tropes *(arthā-laṅkāra)* that marked the discourse at its commencement, for example, remained central at its end, with Jagannātha still devoting more than two-thirds of his treatise to the topic—precisely the percentage of the earliest texts.

Organized thinking about *kāvya* originated with the aim of providing the rules by which an aspiring writer could produce good *kāvya.* For Daṇḍin, whose *Mirror* is the most influential textbook of its kind in the history of southern Asia, these rules covered a broad range of phenomena that, combined and ordered, provide us with an influential pragmatic definition of what *kāvya* was held to be.[6] In ascending order of elaboration, Daṇḍin's rules can be grouped according to the following topics:

the choice of language, and its relation to the choice of genre;
the components of genre, exemplified by the eighteen story elements
     (kathāvastu) of description and narration that constitute the genre
     called great *kāvya (mahākāvya),* or chapter composition *(sarga-*
     bandha);
the Ways *(mārga)* of *kāvya,* regional styles defined by the presence
     or absence of the expression-forms *(guṇa),* various features
     of phonology, syntax, and semantics;
factors of beauty *(alaṅkāra),* the figures of sound and sense.

While quite schematic in some areas, Daṇḍin's treatment isolated tendencies that were to remain key long into the future. In regard to language choice, for example, Daṇḍin shows that in the seventh century *kāvya,* or literature as such, was a phenomenon restricted to the transregional cosmopolitan languages; the vernacular was entirely excluded. The thematic construction of the great *kāvya,* or courtly epic, which is offered as exemplary of all other genres, required a given mix of descriptive and narrative topics. The descriptive concerns the natural order (such as sunrise, sunset, seasons) and the social order (festive gatherings, water sports, lovemaking), whereas the narrative concerns the political order (councils of state, em-

---

6. On the impact of the *Mirror* in Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Karnataka, see respectively Hallisey (chapter 12), Kapstein (chapter 13), and Nagaraj (chapter 5), this volume, as well as Pollock 1998a. It was also adapted in Tamil in the *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāra* (probably late twelfth century) and in Pali in the *Subodhālaṅkāra* (thirteenth century).

bassies, military expeditions). These topics find expression in virtually every courtly epic; and every one of these, moreover, is adapted from well-known tales. Clearly, *kāvya* was not something read for the plot—or perhaps for any simple discursive content. Other ends were sought, such as those the next two of Daṇḍin's categories suggest. The Ways concern the very language stuff that constituted the literary text. And as his exposition of the Ways demonstrates, and even more so that of the tropes (this takes up the great part of his treatise), whatever else *kāvya* may have been about, it was for Daṇḍin also an exploration of the nature and power of language itself.

Although it is not certain that Daṇḍin nowhere cites actually existing poetry, he appears to produce ad hoc his own illustrations of the rules he formulates.[7] This procedure, which is of a piece with the general prescriptive tone of the work, implies that in its earliest embodiment the discourse on *kāvya* was intended not to explain it but to help produce it. It was knowledge meant in the first instance for writers, not readers, even while it inevitably shaped readerly expectations. The move away from normative prescription to theoretically informed description is first clearly visible in a late-eighth-century text whose character is clearly indicated by its title, *Scientific Principles of Literature (Kāvyālaṅkārasūtra).* But even this work basically agrees with Daṇḍin about what constitutes its object; the Ways of *kāvya* and tropes continue to dominate the discussion. A far more profound conceptual innovation occurred in ninth- and tenth-century Kashmir. Ānandavardhana (c. 850) theorized *kāvya* anew by making use of materials that had not previously enjoyed critical scrutiny: the Prakrit lyric *(gāthā)* from perhaps the second or third century; and the *Mahābhārata,* the preeminent "narrative of the way things were" *(itihāsa)* that was textualized during the early centuries of the first millennium. The former enabled Ānanda to develop his new understanding of *kāvya* as meaning-without-saying (*dhvani,* aesthetic suggestion or implication); the latter allowed him to demonstrate how the meaning of the work as a whole resides in an emotional content *(rasa)* that can be communicated only by suggestion. Ānanda's successors in the next two centuries, especially Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and Abhinavagupta, transformed the very concept of *rasa.* In line with the new attention to understanding actual literature (and perhaps in association with new theological concerns), they thought of *rasa* as a phenomenon less of the text in itself than of the reader's response to the text. Analytical emphasis was shifted from the textual processes of meaning

7. At *Kāvyādarśa* 2.274, 280, 282, 291, and 3.7, 9, Daṇḍin appears to cite from poetry based on *Mahābhārata* themes; none of the verses are from the epic itself and I am unable to trace them. His immediate predecessor, Bhāmaha, cites from authors and works unknown to us and to the later tradition (one Rāmaśarman, author of the *Acyutottara,* at *Kāvyālaṅkāra* 2.19; a Śākhāvardhana at 2.47; the *Aśmakhavaṃśa* and the *Rājamitra* at 2.45).

production (how literature makes emotion perceptible) and the construction of social subjectivity (why characters act the way they do) to the modes of our depersonalized experience (why we like sad stories).[8] These were significant—even radical—reorientations in the discourse on *kāvya*. But they have usually been ascribed an importance quite at variance with their historical effects. For although the new conceptions about literature in medieval Kashmir influenced its interpretation across South Asia (as the reading practices of later commentators suffice to show), they left largely unchanged the way it was composed, even in Kashmir itself.[9]

If we are to grasp the dominant tradition of literary theory, and especially to understand how *kāvya* was held to differ from other language uses and other kinds of texts, we need to look elsewhere. An irreplaceable guide here is the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (Illumination of passion) of King Bhoja, who ruled over a fabled court in what is today western Madhya Pradesh from 1011–1055. In the 1800 printed pages of the *Illumination,* Bhoja sought to summarize the whole of earlier thought at a time before the speculations of the later Kashmiris were widely diffused across the subcontinent and, equally important, before the cosmopolitan literary order started to give way—as it was everywhere about to give way—to the new literary vernacularity.

We get a good sense of Bhoja's understanding of *kāvya* from two passages: one where he sets out the organization of the *Illumination* as a whole and another where he provides a typology of the genus "things made of language," of which *kāvya* is only one species. In the first, he tells us that the elements that make up *kāvya* are words, meanings, and the ways in which words and meanings can be "composed" (this is the three-part framework that will structure his entire exposition):

> Tradition holds that *kāvya* is a composition [*sāhitya;* also "unity"] of word and meaning: "Word and meaning 'composed' *[sahitau]* constitute *kāvya*." What, however, does the word "word" signify? It is that through which, when articulated, meaning is understood, and it is of twelve sorts, starting with base and affix and ending with sentence, section, and whole work. "Meaning" is what a word gives us to understand, and it is of twelve sorts, starting with action and tense and ending with word-meaning and sentence-meaning. And last, "composition" signifies the connection of word and meaning, and it, too, is of twelve sorts, starting with denotation and implication and ending with avoidance of

8. This history is sketched in Pollock 1998b: 1–24, and briefly compared with the shift in American theory in the 1970s from the earlier text-centrism of the New Critics to reader-response criticism. For the new theological concerns of tenth-century Kashmir, see Gerow 1994.

9. This is clearly demonstrated by the work of Ratnākara, Bilhaṇa, Kṣemendra, Maṅkha, and other writers in this period (900–1100). The best history of the revolution in Kashmiri literary theory is McCrea 1997.

faults, employment of expression-forms *[guṇa],* connection with factors of beauty *[alaṅkāra],* and presence of *rasa.*[10]

The definition cited here of *sāhitya*—a term used to signify *kāvya* as an object of theoretical reflection—is the celebrated if apparently simple formulation offered four centuries earlier by Bhāmaha.[11] And it is entirely proper for Bhoja to begin his work with the quotation. The two ideas here— that what makes *kāvya* different from everything else has essentially to do with language itself, and that, accordingly, literary analysis must center on language—are presuppositions that span the entire history of *kāvya* theory and profoundly influenced its production. Assessments based on extralinguistic features are uncommon in the Sanskrit world. *Kāvya* is never conceived of as a unique epistemic form, for instance, teaching us something otherwise unknowable. We find nothing comparable to the Platonic (and pragmatic) opposition between the *mythos* of literature and the *logos* of philosophy. In fact, many masters of systematic thought across the religious and philosophical spectrum wrote *kāvya,* often very unphilosophical *kāvya.* One thinks immediately of Dharmakīrti (c. 650) among the Buddhists, Haribhadra (c. 750) among the Jains, and Śrīharṣa (c. 1150) among the Vedāntins, and such men are the rule rather than the exception. The fact that *kāvya* may be uniquely empowered to make certain truths known to us, accordingly, remains something for Sanskrit readers to work out on their own. Hardly more attention is given to what *kāvya* means as a form of moral reasoning, as a way of understanding how life is to be lived. Although every thinker attributes to literature some didactic role in relation to the ethical, material, emotional, and spiritual realms that make up the four life-goals *(puruṣārtha),* rarely does this become an object of sustained scrutiny.[12] Here another contrast with Greco-Roman antiquity may usefully be drawn. While Sanskrit culture also recognized a trivium of fundamental learning, it was hermeneutics *(mīmāṃsā),* not rhetoric, that rounded out grammar and logic. The focus on the scientific analysis of sentence meaning as opposed to the

10. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 6. All translations here and throughout the chapter are my own unless otherwise noted.

11. *Kāvyālaṅkāra* of Bhāmaha 1.16. The term *sāhitya* begins its history here. Its various nuances are discussed at the opening of the *Sāhityamīmāṃsā,* an anonymous work of uncertain date and provenance (probably late-medieval south India; it is *not* by Maṅkha, *pace Sāhityamīmāṃsā* pp. ka, kha); the broader history is considered by Raghavan 1978: 82–103; cf. also Krishnamoorthy 1970. Modern Indian writers such as Tagore have sometimes misunderstood, or creatively reunderstood, the term as *sa-hita* (beneficial) in order to assert a moral function for literature.

12. A rare exception is the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* itself (chapters 18–21). A century earlier Rājaśekhara defended the truth, morality, and civility of supposedly untrue, immoral, and uncivil poetry (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā* pp. 24–25), but the thinness of the discussion indicates how little the matter interested him.

art of forensic persuasion, besides essentially differentiating the two ideals of education, *vyutpatti* and *paideia,* is something that derived from and served to reproduce basic protocols of the reading—and no doubt the making—of literature.

And it is this question, how *kāvya* works as a specific language system—literature not as exhortation but as nontransitive communication, as verbal icon—that interests Sanskrit literary theory to the exclusion of everything else; and this is where its explorations arguably probe deeper than any available from other times or places. The one point of contention among the theorists is how to identify this specificity; the history of discourse on *kāvya* can in fact be described as the history of these different judgments. A later commentator provides just such an account for Kashmiri thinkers of the period 800–1000:

> Literature is word-and-meaning employed in a manner different from other language uses. This difference has been analyzed in three distinct ways, depending on what is accorded primacy: (a) some language feature *[dharma],* such as tropes or expression-forms; (b) some function *[vyāpāra]* such as striking expression or the capacity to produce aesthetic pleasure; or (c) aesthetic suggestion. There are thus five positions, which have been upheld respectively by Udbhaṭa, Vāmana, Kuntaka, Nāyaka, and Ānandavardhana.[13]

One of the last major works of theory, that of Jagannātha in the mid-seventeenth century, shows how long the analytical dominance of the linguistic had persisted when he defines *kāvya* as "signifiers producing beautiful significations."[14] As for the modalities of "composition" considered by Bhoja himself, which can be reduced essentially to four that occupy him for most of his treatise, all are language-based: (1) *kāvya* must be "without faults": the congenital threat of solecism, which is copresent with language use, must be eliminated; (2) expression-forms must be used: the phonetic, semantic, and syntactic character of the literary utterance must be carefully constituted with due attention given to the Ways and their emotional register, *rasa;* (3) figures of sound and sense may or may not be joined to the work (unlike 1 and 2, this is optional); (4) nothing must obstruct the manifestation of *rasa,* which for Bhoja is the linguistic production of an emotion in the text.[15]

A second passage in the *Illumination* shows that the definition of *kāvya* as a particular composition of word and meaning needs further limitation, in

13. Samudrabandha (Kerala, c. 1300) on Ruyyaka's mid-twelfth-century *Alaṅkārasarvasva* (text reproduced in Raghavan 1963: 84). Others award primacy elsewhere, for example to propriety (*aucitya,* Kṣemendra, mid-eleventh-century Kashmir) or aestheticized emotion (*rasa,* Viśvanātha, fourteenth-century Orissa).

14. *Rasagaṅgādhara* p. 4: *ramaṇīyārthapratipādakaḥ śabdaḥ.*

15. See *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* pp. 662, 528.

addition to the narrowly linguistic, based on the provenance of the text and, more generally, its communicative nature. Theoretically, the peculiar word-meaning unity that defines *kāvya*—whether this is the presence of expression-forms, or figures, or aesthetic suggestion—can be found anywhere in language. But, in fact, not everything can be *kāvya:*

> Words with unitary meaning constitute a unit of discourse *[vākyam].* There are three species of such discourse: Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha. As for Sanskrit discourse, it is of three types: relating to revelation, to the seers, and to the world. Discourse relating to revelation has two subtypes: liturgical formulae *[mantra]* and liturgical commandments and explanations *[brāhmaṇa]....* Discourse relating to the seers is of two sorts: revealed texts remembered *[smṛti]* and ancient lore *[purāṇa]....* Discourse relating to the world has two subtypes: *kāvya* and science, or systematic thought *[śāstra].*[16]

I take up later the question of the actual languages used for *kāvya.* Here what requires comment is the three-part categorization of Sanskrit texts according to their origin, whether in transcendent revelation, the mythic realm, or the human world. Like the definition of *kāvya,* this division of textuality long antedates Bhoja and is never questioned in Sanskrit theory before or after. And it shows that *kāvya* comprises a very narrow range of phenomena in the universe of things made of language. Although the logic of the typology might be expected to bring us closer to extralinguistic ideas of the literary of the kind mentioned earlier (such as the Platonic), this line of reasoning—about the truth that only fiction can reveal, for example—is rarely pursued. The concerns of Sanskrit thinkers are different.

What exactly are these criteria of provenance and communicative nature that exclude all other types of texts from the realm of *kāvya?* For many thinkers, a decisive factor is *vivakṣā,* language usage that depends on what a speaker "desires to say," or what we might call intention. The literary work is in fact sometimes defined as "a sequence of words, succession of units of discourse, or series of episodes delimited with respect to an intended meaning."[17] Intention is a feature able to differentiate literature from other textual forms since, surprisingly, it is not uniformly distributed in the world of textuality. This odd claim is explained in a passage where the *Illumination* reformulates

16. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 165.

17. Intention is defined at *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 376 *(vaktur vivakṣitapūrvikā śabdapravṛttiḥ);* and the literary work on p. 712 *(iṣṭārthavyavacchinnā padapaṅktir vākyapaddhatiḥ prakaraṇāvalī vā prabandhaḥ).* Bhoja here borrows from Daṇḍin: "First of all, the body [of a literary text] is defined as a series of words delimited with respect to an intended meaning" *(śarīraṃ* [sc., *kāvyasya*] *tāvad iṣṭārthavyavacchinnā padāvalī, Kāvyādarśa* 1.10). Or as Ānandavardhana put it: "The meaning of the words of a literary text rides on the poet's intention" *(vivakṣopārūḍha eva hi kāvye śabdānām arthaḥ, Dhvanyāloka* p. 496). Authorial intention figures widely in Sanskrit reading and editing practices. See for example the discussion in Bronner 1998.

the three-fold division of texts according to whether they issue from a normal human agent, from a special agent (a mythic seer), or from no agent whatever. Intention itself varies across these three types:

> The essence of texts without agents [i.e., the Veda] . . . lies in their specific wording. Given that there is no original speaker of these texts, the category of intended meaning does not apply here at all. The essence of seers' texts, which consist of revealed texts remembered and narratives of the ways things were *[itihāsa],* lies in their meaning; in such texts, intended meaning is pure. Both wording and meaning together form the essence of human texts [i.e., *kāvya*]; the prominence of both aspects derives from particular intentions on the part of agents consciously aware of both these dimensions.[18]

These distinctions merit a closer look, for we learn what *kāvya* is in part by learning what it is not.

The Veda is excluded from the domain of *kāvya* for various reasons. It exists forever in beginningless time and was composed by no author, human or divine. Since there is no one to have desired in the first place, the "desire to say" *(vivakṣā)* cannot literally apply.[19] That the Veda's essence is held to lie in its wording reflects an archaic conviction about the magical efficacy of its purely phonic dimension, embodied in the traditional training of syllable-by-syllable reproduction without attention to signification. At the same time, the Veda does have meaning, which lies primarily in its commandments of moral action *(dharmavidhi).* This is in fact its primary signification, one that must not be interpreted away by recourse to secondary language functions associated with *kāvya,* such as implication. While *kāvya,* too, can have real-world entailments—from reading Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* one learns to act like the hero Rāma, and not like the villain Rāvaṇa[20]—*kāvya* does not, like the Veda, prompt, let alone command, us to do anything.

The intentionality of seers' texts, on the other hand, is "pure," that is, simple and direct. The authors of such works had infallible knowledge of past events, and their texts transmit this knowledge perfectly by expressing exactly what they mean. In *kāvya,* as in everyday life, when we employ metaphorical language, for example, we desire to express the identity of two things that in reality are different. But no such discrepancy between verbal inten-

18. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* pp. 376–77 ("intended meaning is pure," *vivakṣāmātram;* "agents consciously aware of both dimensions," *abhiniviṣṭabuddhīnām*). Raghavan mistakenly prints *kāvyaṃ [śāstraṃ ca].* See Joyser's edition, p. 238, and Raghavan's earlier analysis, 1963: 111.

19. Resort to a more metaphorical sense of intention—what a given passage itself "wants to say"—is however common among Mīmāṃsā exegetes, e.g., *Tantravārttika* on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 3.1.13, Poona ed. pp. 65–70; *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.2.31, which considers the question of whether the words of a *mantra* are "intended" *(vivakṣita)* or not (they are, it turns out).

20. The common formula of didacticism is perhaps found first in Bhoja, *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 471; see also *Kāvyaprakāśa* 1.2 *vṛtti.*

tion and reality occurs in seers' texts; in fact, reality itself adjusted to whatever they may have said: "The language of honest men in everyday life corresponds to reality," says the eighth-century dramatist Bhavabhūti (whom Bhoja cites here) in his *Uttararāmacarita* (1.10), "but reality itself came to correspond to the language of the ancient seers." Elements of *kāvya* may appear to be present in Vedic texts remembered *(smṛti),* in narratives of the way things were *(itihāsa),* or in ancient lore *(purāṇa),* as they may in the Veda itself, but they are unintentional and therefore entirely irrelevant—indeed, invisible as *kāvya*—to traditional audiences.

Let us see how this textual typology works in critical practice. All kinds of texts—science, narratives of things as they were, and, as just noted, *kāvya* itself—have the capacity to teach us something by prescribing or prohibiting action, something Bhoja calls the educative function.[21] But they execute this function in very different ways, as the following examples show (note that their formal organization is entirely irrelevant to the discussion; all illustrations are verse). The educative in *kāvya* is shown in the following verse:

> If I call to mind that beautiful girl, what hope have I to stay alive?
> If I forget her and live, what point would there be in living?[22]

This is *kāvya,* we are told, because "the expression itself *(ukti)* has primacy." However we might want to characterize the "educative" aspect of the text (perhaps it shows how neither prescription nor prohibition applies to the dilemma of unfulfilled love), it does not expressly enjoin or define appropriate action, nor adduce an actual account of such action from the past as authority. Its specificity resides precisely in the self-sufficiency of the utterance itself. In *śāstra,* by contrast, where prescriptive, injunctive, and related forms of discourse are found, the particular wording or terminology has primacy, as in the descriptions in the following text from the chapter on physiognomy in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā,* Varāhamihira's early-sixth-century treatise on cosmology (here human *śāstra* is conflated with its transcendent prototype, as often elsewhere):

> He who seeks lordship over the world should marry a virgin
> whose feet have nails that are glossy, convex, tapered, and tawny,
> whose ankles are not bony but fleshy, lovely, inconspicuous,
> whose toes are thick, whose soles have the hue of lotuses.[23]

21. *adhyeyam, Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 596; cf. *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇālaṅkāra* pp. 228–29, from which I take the definition *(yad vidhau ca niṣedhe ca vyutpatter eva kāraṇam).*
22. *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇālaṅkāra* p. 228.
23. *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇālaṅkāra* p. 229 (citing *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 70.1).

In narratives of the way things were *(itihāsa)* or ancient lore *(purāṇa),* it is the meaning or reference—indeed, the event—that has primacy, as in this verse from the *Vāyupurāṇa:*

> In whatever direction the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu glanced with a smile
> the gods in confusion and terror thither did obeisance.

Textual types can be mixed, to be sure: The materials of *śāstra* can appear in *itihāsa,* as they frequently do in the *Mahābhārata,* or in *kāvya,* as when the gasp and cry of a woman whose lover bites her lip during foreplay are described in a poem, with technical allusion, as "the benedictory prelude *(nāndī)* of the drama of love-making that will ensure its perfect consummation." The materials of *itihāsa* can appear in *kāvya,* as when the eighth-century poet Māgha transforms the puranic verse on Hiraṇyakaśipu just cited into the following:

> As that abode of royal power wandered through the universe,
> the gods—their trembling hands raised to jeweled crowns in homage—
> performed sunrise, noonday, and sunset obeisance
> to any direction where he chanced to roam.[24]

What marks off *kāvya* from other kinds of text is that the raison d'être of its type of expression is the expression itself. Bhoja states this in another way by distinguishing *kāvya* from ordinary language in terms of directness: "Ordinary language is the direct language of science and everyday life; *kāvya,* by contrast, is the indirect language found in descriptions," that is, in statements that do not prescribe action.[25] It is indirection—*how* what is said is being said—that for Bhoja most simply identifies *kāvya* as a specific kind of text. At the same time, such an identification suggests a specific way of reading. For to know such differentia (that intention does not pertain to the unauthored Veda but commandment does; that historical truth is a matter only of seers' texts; that indirection does not mark *śāstra*) is at once to procure a set of interpretive protocols: Do not read *kāvya* the way you read science, ancient lore, or the Veda; do not be concerned (except insofar as it is a source of pleasure) about a breach between what is said and what is really meant, about correspondence with an actual world, about information or injunction. And do not expect *kāvya* to be like ordinary language; its purposes are different.

Everything Bhoja has told us, let me repeat, will be familiar to students of

24. *Śiśupālavadha* 1.46. Normally they would turn to the east, to the zenith, and to the west as the day advanced. The preceding citation is *Vāyupurāṇa* 67.2.65.

25. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 351: *yad avakraṃ vacaś śāstre loke ca vaca eva tat / vakraṃ yad arthavādādau tasya kāvyam iti smṛtiḥ* (note that *arthavāda* is not used here in the narrower sense Bhoja gives it at *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 483).

Sanskrit textuality. The distinction between the unauthored Veda and the texts of seers comes from a much earlier period and originates outside of literary-critical discourse. The differentiation of Veda, *itihāsa-purāṇa,* and *kāvya* each according to its predominant textual feature (sound, sense, expression) is not original to Bhoja either.[26] Much older, too, is the associated formulation that the Veda acts like a master in commanding, the seers' texts like a friend in counseling, and *kāvya* like a mistress in seducing. And this is precisely the point. Bhoja is summarizing an organizing logic, an episteme that informed the discourse on *kāvya* from the beginning and lasted without major modification until the end of Sanskrit literary culture. Not only was it perfectly possible to define *kāvya,* but its definition was specifically framed by a contrast with a vast range of other language uses that were not literature, could not be read as literature, and never were read as such.[27] This does not mean that literary theory offered no further refinements within these dominant definitions. When Ānandavardhana argued that what defines literature is the particular modality of the production of meaning known as aesthetic suggestion, texts lacking this feature could no longer be regarded, in his view, as literature in the full sense. Thereby the tradition of "brilliant literature" *(citrakāvya),* which had been so important to writers for centuries (it includes among other things the remarkable genre of double narratives *[śleṣa]*), was devalued in a stroke.[28] But the basis of Ānanda's devaluation itself remains strictly within the dominant paradigm of what constitutes the literary.

The Pragmatics of Literature

If we examine actual practices of Sanskrit literary culture, such as performance (the social spaces for the consumption of literature, for example), com-

26. A similar formulation was offered in the *Hṛdayadarpaṇa* of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka (as cited by Abhinavagupta on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 16.1, Māṇikyacandra and others on *Kāvyaprakāśa* 1.2 *vṛtti*). But Bhoja appears not to know Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's work (cf. Pollock 1998b: 26 n. 37), and both may be drawing on a common source.

27. Contrast this with another cosmopolitan tradition, that of early Latin. Here everyone who wrote was simply an *auctor,* differing only with regard to their genres, whether *philosophia, historia,* or *poesia* (which were differentiated more on the basis of subject matter than mode of expression). In their clear delineation of literariness Sanskrit thinkers seem uncommon in the premodern world.

28. Distinguish *citrakāvya* in this broader signification from its narrower connotation, "pattern poetry." See *Dhvanyāloka* 3.41 ff. (p. 494 ff.). Observe that *citra* features such as *yamaka,* or identical syllabic strings repeated with different meanings, are found in the oldest courtly epics (e.g., *Saundarananda* of Aśvaghoṣa, cf. 9.49), as are certain *schemata grammatica* (the illustration of aorist forms in *Saundarananda* 2). Ānandavardhana's strictures, it may be noted, again had little impact on practice. If anything, the popularity of *citrakāvya* only increased in the following centuries. On the history of *śleṣa*—which was in vogue in the three centuries before Ānanda and may have conditioned his views—see now Bronner 1999.

mentary and pedagogy (who explains texts, and for whom; what is entered onto syllabi and where; the divisions of knowledge in schools and surveys), and the reproduction of texts (the purposes of copying manuscripts and the audiences for which they are copied), we find that the semantics of the literary as summarized by Bhoja is, some remarkable exceptions aside, generally corroborated by its pragmatics. Nowhere does the theoretical differentiation of *kāvya* from other language uses achieve a greater degree of reality as a cultural practice than in the case of the Veda.

The two genres do, it is true, have some features in common. The liturgical formulas *(mantra)* were referred to, from within the Vedic corpus itself, as *sūkta,* well-uttered—a term comparable to that later used for *kāvya, sūkti* (or *subhāṣita*), well-spoken. The hymnists were called *kavi* (poet), and some of the old associations of this title were passed along into later periods, though the subsequent use of the term is significantly broader, as Abhinavagupta's teacher, Bhaṭṭa Tauta (c. 950), argued:

> It is said, "None a poet *(kavi)* but also a seer *(ṛṣi)."* A seer is so called because of his vision *(darśana),* which is knowledge of the true nature of entities and their varied states of being. And it is because of his vision of the truth that the seer is declared in *śāstra* to be a poet. The conventional meaning of the word "poet," for its part, is derived from his capacity for vision as well as his powers of description *(varṇanā).* Thus, although his vision was permanently clear, the sage who was the first poet [Vālmīki] did not in fact become a poet until he attained the power of description.[29]

In addition, important intellectual ties link the tradition of Vedic interpretation and the analysis of *kāvya*. Little is known about the early history of this interaction, but by the end of the first millennium the analysis of literature had become thoroughly permeated by the concepts, principles, and procedures of Mīmāṃsā, the "discipline of discourse" *(vākyaśāstra),* or scriptural hermeneutics. Mīmāṃsā scholars were the first to theorize, on the basis of Vedic texts, a number of themes that were to become central to literary analysis. Śabara (fourth century?) drew the distinction between direct and figurative expression *(śruti* and *lakṣaṇā)* before any literary scholar did, and Ku-

29. For *sūkta,* cf., e.g., *ṚV* 7.58.6 and 10.65.14. The Tauta citation comes from Hemacandra (c. 1170) in *Kāvyānuśāsana* p. 432 ("true nature of entities and their varied states of being," *vicitrabhāvadharmāṃśatattvaprakhyā*). He introduces it with the remark: "A *kavi* is so called both because of his vision, as declared in the phrase 'None a poet but also a seer,' and because of his powers of description, coded in the verbal root *kavṛ* [or *kṛvṛṅ*] [from which the noun *kavi* is derived], which has the meaning 'description.' The work or activity *[karma]* of a *kavi* is called *kāvya.*" (The *taddhita* suffix in question is *ṣyañ, Aṣṭādhyāyī* 5.1.123–24; *kāvya* in this sense is post-Vedic.) For the "vision" of the Vedic *kavi*s see Gonda 1963: 318–48; Granoff 1995 discusses tales suggesting that the word's archaic associations (of seer, wizard, etc.) may have been alive in some circles into the late-medieval period.

mārila (seventh century) theorized metaphor and metonymy *(gauṇatā* and *lakṣaṇā)* with a sophistication not seen in literary theory for another several centuries. We even find figurative interpretation of Vedic texts. In the case of *mantra,* for example, metaphorical analysis is sometimes used to support the hermeneutists' claim that the purpose of such texts is indeed to communicate meaning (in the view of Mīmāṃsakas, the texts' liturgical efficacy does not derive from the mere fact of utterance) and thus is particularly useful where such a text appears to be nonsensical.[30]

Aside from these historical linkages, the Veda will strike contemporary readers as objectively literary in respect of form, content, and expression. Major portions of the Veda are versified; they can be emphatically figurative; their use of language is so foregrounded as to constitute an unmistakable part of their meaning. So it is entirely natural that modern scholars, such as the art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy, should judge the Veda to be "in a less restricted and technical sense of the word" *kāvya.* But it is precisely the technical sense of *kāvya*—the sense Sanskrit poets and theorists and readers made of it—that matters to us in the first instance. What we may believe in our heart tells us nothing of Sanskrit literary culture in history, and nothing in this history makes the Veda *kāvya.* The grounds for its original exclusion from *kāvya* is an important historical problem worth exploring, but for my purpose here, it is enough to note the historical consequences. Not only was the Veda regarded as a form of textuality totally different from any other, but it was never practiced as anything remotely approaching *kāvya. Mantra* and the other genres of the Veda were never performed as literature (as the nature and location of their ritual use shows), never read as literature (as the commentaries from at least the ninth century onward clearly demonstrate), and never selected for inclusion in literary anthologies. When Śabara wants to draw an absolute contrast between the nonintentional, transcendent Veda and intentional, human discourse, he cites *kāvya.* The late-tenth-century philosopher and literary theorist Abhinavagupta put it most directly: "It is not

---

30. *ṚV* 4.58.3, which begins "It has four horns, three feet, two heads," is taken to be a series of metaphors: by the four horns are intended *(abhiprāya)* the four priests, by the three feet the three pressings of *soma,* by the two heads the patron of the sacrifice and his wife. It is, Śabara adds, "like praising a river by saying that a pair of water birds are its two breasts, a line of snow geese its brilliant white teeth, the silvery rushes its garment, and the dark seaweed its flowing hair." See *Śābarabhāṣya* on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.2.46. The distinction between *śruti* and *lakṣaṇā* is drawn by Śabara in his comment on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 6.2.20; Kumārila's analysis of metaphor and metonymy is found in *Tantravārttika* on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.4.22 (p. 313; cited with approval by Mammaṭa in *Kāvyaprakāśa* 2.12 *vṛtti*). A striking example of Mīmāṃsā-based reading practices of literary texts is contained in the section on "features of discourse units" *(vākyadharma)* in chapter 9 of *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa.* McCrea 1997, especially chapter 2, explores the impact of Mīmāṃsā on literary theory in Kashmir. The meaningfulness of *mantra*s is argued in *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.2.31 ff.

the mere capacity for producing meaning as such that enables a text to be called *kāvya.* And that is why we never apply that term to everyday discourse or the Veda." Abhinava and every other reader of *kāvya* in South Asia before colonialism would have been mystified to see the West turn the *Ṛgveda* into literature.[31]

If an untranscendable line was thus drawn between *kāvya* and Veda, with regard to some other genres and several major texts the boundaries of the literary in practice were more permeable than Bhoja's description would suggest. What a vital culture does to stay alive—even one like Sanskrit, whose vitality drew on such peculiar sources—is to push constantly on the limits of definitions. Thus, we encounter works that, in light of the taxonomy I have set out, would have to be considered as ambiguous or hybrid, or as having passed into or out of the realm of the literary over time.

Consider first the phenomenon of the *śāstrakāvya,* science-literature. The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā,* which Bhoja cites as a model of *śāstra,* aspires to the condition of poetry both formally (it uses some sixty different meters, many found only in *kāvya,* as well as *gadya,* or literary prose) and by its use of the self-sufficient utterance *(ukti)* constitutive of *kāvya.* A section in praise of women (which introduces a technical discussion of propitious moments and methods of sexual intercourse) at times resembles a literary anthology:

> To enjoy a beautiful woman
> is to be king of the world
> even if in fact a pauper.
> Woman (and food enough!) is the essence
> of kingship; all else just fuels desire.[32]

That the work was excerpted in anthologies demonstrates that it was read as *kāvya.*[33] Its textual status is made ambiguous, however, by the fact that Varāhamihira himself consistently calls the work a scientific treatise on cosmology, but

31. The contemporary judgment on the Veda is that of Ananda Coomaraswamy 1977: 80 n. (he adds how absurd it would be to think otherwise). Contrast the judicious statement of Lienhard 1984: 57. For Abhinava's comment see *Dhvanyāloka* p. 44; Śabara cites *kāvya* at *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.24 ("As they glide among the blue lotuses sweetly calling, the geese seem to be almost dancing, dressed in violet silks"). Later writers such as Jagannātha occasionally identify figures of speech in the Veda or the *smṛti* (see for example *Rasagaṅgādhara* p. 420), but this does not imply that they understood these works to be *kāvya.* As for the influence of the Veda on *kāvya,* Renou exaggerates when arguing that *kāvya* as such is the "direct heir of Vedic *mantras*" and seeks "a Vedic effect" by means of a vocabulary and a density that can often be traced back to Veda (1956: 169 n., 1959: 16).

32. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 73.17.

33. As for example the *Sūktimuktāvalī,* which was edited by Jalhaṇa at the Devagiri court of the Yādavas in 1258.

also by the undeniable predominance of directness and information—or what Abhinava calls bare meaning—over indirection and imagination.[34] A verse like the following,

> A Brahman is rendered homage at the feet, a cow at the rear, a goat at the
>   mouth,
> but there is no part of a woman's body where homage may not be done,[35]

could easily be categorized as a "well-turned" lyric, but it is immediately followed by a verse that evacuates any literary impact it might have in isolation:

> For a woman is totally pure and cannot become polluted,
> since every month menstruation removes her impurities.[36]

Premodern readers surely felt this difference, though no major thinker ever bothered to spell it out in the detail lavished on other questions about the literary. And the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* is not an isolated case of *śāstrakāvya.* The version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by an author known as Bhaṭṭi, a seventh-century work of enormous popularity in South and Southeast Asia, is a systematic illustration of the rules of grammar and poetics—the first of a large subgenre. It is included by Bhoja in the category of literature; by the seventeenth or eighteenth century, and probably sooner, it was being read exclusively as a grammatical textbook.[37]

   More complicated issues are raised by a text like Kalhaṇa's celebrated *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (The river of kings, c. 1150). Present-day readers would immediately label this work a history, especially given the author's own insistence on the importance of historiographical methods, such as weighing evidence and judging the truth of matters "free from passion and hatred." And this was the judgment of the translators at Akbar's court in the late sixteenth century, who rendered it into Persian along with other texts the Mughals regarded as histories, such as the *Mahābhārata,* while translating

---

34. The self-descriptor "astral science" *([jyotiḥ-]śāstra)* is common in the work, and only once—and by implication—does Varāhamihira seem to refer to it as *kāvya* (*Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 105.4).

35. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 73.8.

36. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 73.9.

37. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 729. The work is listed as a grammar in Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī's library catalogue of the early eighteenth (?) century. Grammar poems after Bhaṭṭi more frequently narrate the political history of a patron than they narrate a legend: Halāyudha's early-tenth-century *Kavirahasya* (The poet's secret) illustrates Sanskrit verbal forms through an encomium of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Kṛṣṇa III; Hemacandra's *Kumārapālacarita* exemplifies his own Sanskrit and Prakrit grammars via *śleṣa* while telling the history of the Chālukyan dynasty of King Kumārapāla. The balance tips from *kāvya* to *śāstra* in a work like the *Pratāparudrayaśobhūṣaṇa* of the late-thirteenth-century writer Vidyānātha, who defines tropes by way of verses in praise of the Kākatīya king. This genre has an afterlife in *bhāṣā* literature, too, as a work like Kavibhūṣaṇ's Brajbhasha *Śivarājabhūṣaṇ* (1674) testifies.

few literary texts. But Kalhaṇa himself explicitly identifies his work as *kāvya,* and he affiliates it with literature by frequently echoing earlier poems that had achieved the particular synthesis of the literary with the historical-political that Kalhaṇa sought.[38] Moreover, the work was regarded as litera-ture by his contemporaries; one verse is cited in a literary-theoretical text, the *Alaṅkārasarvasva* (Compendium of tropes) of Ruyyaka (who undoubtedly knew Kalhaṇa personally), and a dozen or so verses are anthologized in the *Subhāṣitāvalī.* Western students of Kalhaṇa have also pointed out the liter-ary conventions that structure the *Rājataraṅgiṇī,* while at the same time (mix-ing endogenous and exogenous criteria) arguing that his work is not "crit-ical in our sense" and therefore should not be interpreted primarily as history.[39]

Yet these arguments, from both outside and inside the tradition, have their limits. For one thing, a degree of literariness (in a less culture-specific sense) unavoidably marks all narrative history, as recent scholarship has sufficiently demonstrated. For another, no other *kāvya* ever written in Sanskrit com-mences with the kind of self-justification Kalhaṇa offers; none shows quite the interest in facticity (chronological, geographical, historical), in the real-ity effects of concrete detail, or in understanding motive or determining what really happened. It is precisely this highly referential quality that renders the status of the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* ambiguous in the minds of readers today, as it was also in Mughal Delhi and, no doubt, in twelfth-century Kashmir.

Referentiality of this sort, where direct correspondence with a historical truth (or perhaps the creation of historical truth by such supposed corre-spondence) constitutes an explicit writerly aim, has long been regarded by modern scholars as a serious deficiency in Sanskrit literature. Quite the op-posite is true. The historicization of the literary narrative, if not exactly on the order of Kalhaṇa's positivism, began with Bāṇa in the seventh century and underwent an ever-intensifying development over the following millennium—so much so that it eventually suffocated the poetry of personal expression that had been one of the luminous achievements of Sanskrit literature. It re-mains the case, however, that historical fact constituted something of a prob-lem for Sanskrit literary theory.

To be sure, fact no less than fiction was acknowledged as a source of liter-

38. See *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 1.7 (on historical method); 1.2–5, 44–47 (on *kāvya*). The most no-table literary echoes are with Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* (c. 1080) and Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* (c. 640). Kalhaṇa's contemporary Maṅkha in fact compares Kalhaṇa's historical-literary style to Bilhaṇa's: "He so burnished the mirror of his poetry that it could reflect the image of Bil-haṇa's ripeness *[prauḍhi]*" (*Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 25.79). Note however that Kalhaṇa never mentions his literary models, eschewing the convention of "praise of poets past" that I examine later in the chapter.

39. See *Alaṅkārasarvasva* p. 93, where *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 4.441 is cited. For the judgment on history, see Kölver 1971: 8–9.

In such a universe, where the moral imagination of a literary work and its emotional coherence took precedence over any other dimension, a historical poet like Kalhaṇa was presented with unusual challenges. For his stated aim was to proceed "like a judge in relating what had actually happened," while yet attempting to ensure that the work produce a particular *rasa,* that of tranquility *(śānta).*[44] Unusual challenges also confronted the authors of public poetry: the royal and other inscriptions, especially praise-poems *(praśasti),* which record the genealogy of kings and celebrate their notable deeds in always stately and sometimes powerful *kāvya* style. It may be a consequence of these challenges that with few exceptions (approaching a statistical zero), authors of inscriptional poetry never wrote textualized poetry, and they seem to have occupied a place in the world of cultural production altogether different from that of writers of *kāvya.*[45]

The permeability and instability of Sanskrit textual categories find their limit case in Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata.* About its genre there is no uncertainty, for in virtually all Sanskrit text-lists it defines the category of *itihāsa,* the narrative of the way things were. Our standard taxonomies of textual forms represent this genre as radically different from *kāvya,* and many other thinkers are in agreement. Tauta's verse cited earlier goes on to say that "Although 'vision' may be found to exist in other textual types such as *itihāsa,* these cannot be *kāvya* because they lack the descriptive element *[varṇanā].*" The *Mahābhārata* should therefore be performed and taught and reproduced and, what is most important, read and understood and appreciated differently from *kāvya.* But from at least the seventh century, the work came to be treated as something close to *kāvya.* Ānandavardhana considered it "moral-spiritual science with the beauty of literature," and drew from it some of his most powerful examples of aesthetic suggestion, at the same time conceiving of this massive work as a unified literary whole, with a single predominant emotional force.[46] Yet—an exception to this exception, in terms of textuality, performance, and reading—no Sanskrit *kāvya* in India was ever as textually open, as expandable, as the *Mahābhārata.* A courtly epic like Kālidāsa's *Kumāra-saṃbhava* (Birth of the divine prince Kumāra), which ends before the birth of the hero named in the title, could in a later age be perceived as unfinished

---

personating his stepmother, Kaikeyī, and father, Daśaratha, (the former selfishly manipulative, the latter pathetically uxorious in the "historical" *Rāmāyaṇa*), and, most famously, Kālidāsa's *Śākuntala* (fourth century), in which the lover's forgetfulness is not willful and perverse (as in the "historical" *Mahābhārata*) but caused by a curse that results from his beloved's unintentional show of disrespect to an ascetic.

44. *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 1.7, 23.

45. For some brief observations see Pollock 1995b.

46. For the *Mahābhārata* as *śāstrarūpa kāvyacchāyānvayi* and possessing *śāntarasa* see *Dhvanyā-loka* 4.5 (p. 530). Cf. also Tubb 1985.

and requiring completion (nine chapters were in fact later added), but the body of the work had an integrity that strongly resisted interpolation.[47] Nor did any Sanskrit *kāvya* (aside from the perhaps unique case of the twelfth-century Vaiṣṇava lyric of Jayadeva, the *Gītagovinda* [Govinda in song]) ever become the object of endowments for perpetual recitation in temples, as occurred in the case of the *Mahābhārata* from as early as the seventh century. And a whole history of reading the epic, which is sedimented in centuries of commentary on it, never treats the work as anything but a text of the seers *(ārṣa),* with an ontology, authority, and referentiality radically different from *kāvya.*[48]

In short, whether a text's purpose is thought to be the direct and truthful narration of the past or, instead, the celebration of its own linguistic realization would seem to make a great deal of difference to the way it is understood. Yet none of this pragmatic slippage in the taxonomy of the literary is ever thematized in Sanskrit, despite the difficulty of accommodating even canonical works in the theory. The *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* whose status as first *kāvya* we will consider momentarily, was for many premodern readers a work that simultaneously narrates what truly happened exactly as it happened and makes absolute claims for regulating the moral order; that is, it is both an *itihāsa* and a *dharmaśāstra.*[49] By contrast, the *Bhāgavatam,* a tenth-century masterpiece of incalculable literary influence and popularity, calls itself ancient lore *(purāṇa)* and tries to fulfill a *purāṇa*'s genre requirements, but it more often looks and sounds and speaks like a *kāvya,* and was sometimes read as one.[50] A comparable development manifests itself in, for example, the Jain tradition of literary *purāṇa*s, most remarkably with the *Ādipurāṇa* (First *purāṇa*) of Jinasena II (837), which actually calls itself a *kāyva.*

The behavior of textual types was thus more unruly than the orderly classifications of Sanskrit literary theory might lead us to expect. Yet this un-

47. Cf. also Shulman 1991.

48. This is true from the earliest extant commentator on the work, Devabodha, a Kashmiri ascetic of perhaps 1000, to Nīlakaṇṭha at the end of the seventeenth century, who insisted that the text be "treated like scripture" *(āgamayitavyam)* (p. 2, col. 1, line 16). On the latter, see also Minkowski (in press).

49. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* (early tenth century), p. 7: *rāmāyaṇam itihāsam;* for the *Pṛthvīrājavijaya* (c. 1190), the *Rāmāyaṇa* is "as true as the Veda" (1.3; cf. the commentary of Jonarāja on *Pṛthvīrājavijaya* 1.5). The seventeenth-century scholar Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī, in his review of the eighteen disciplines, lists the *Rāmāyaṇa* under *dharmaśāstra* (*Prasthānabheda,* pp. 1, 9). A tenth-century writer is praised in an inscription as the "Vālmīki of the Kali Age" for "expounding revealed literature in books of moral history" (*dharmetihāsaparvasu,* EI 2: 164). The thirteenth-century philosopher Madhva ranked both the "originary *Rāmāyaṇa*" and the *Mahābhārata* with the Vedas (cf. *Sarvardarśanasaṃgraha* p. 157, citing *Skandapurāṇa*).

50. This holds even for the Kṛṣṇacarita chapter of the *Viṣṇupurāṇa.* See *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 4.10, where *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 5.13.21–22 are cited to illustrate *alaṅkāradhvani* and the author is referred to as *kavi.*

ruliness was within limits. The *Bhāgavatam* is the only (non-Jain) *purāṇa* among scores to aspire so noticeably to the condition of *kāvya;* the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* constitute genres unto themselves. And these texts aside, along with a few others noted earlier, there never was any large-scale migration between the literary and the nonliterary in the eyes of those inside the tradition. Literature in Sanskrit thought never remotely approached the open category it has become in the critical and pedagogical (if not popular) practices of the contemporary West.[51] In general, the state of literary taxonomy was a steady one for nearly two thousand years. And in this we can perceive both a victory and a defeat of Sanskrit literary culture: Such an astonishingly broad and long-lasting consensus among readers and writers about how *kāvya* should be written and interpreted produced literature of ever greater refinement, and reading of ever greater sophistication. But this was a consensus that arose in and made sense for a particular world, a particular sociality and polity; and when these changed, Sanskrit literary culture was unable to change with it.

WHAT WERE SANSKRIT POETS CHOOSING WHEN THEY CHOSE TO WRITE IN SANSKRIT?

Not only do Sanskrit discourses on literature take *kāvya* to be a peculiar use of language, but they also confine this use to a narrow range of languages. Bhoja, as we saw, gave a paradigmatic formulation: "Words with unitary meaning constitute a unit of discourse *[vākyam].* There are three species of such discourse: Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha. [Sanskrit] discourse . . . relating to the world has two subtypes: *kāvya* and science, or systematic thought *[śāstra]*." Although this would appear to restrict *kāvya* to Sanskrit, we will see that Prakrit and Apabhramsha, too, function as languages of the literary (indeed, only as such, for in Bhoja's eyes Sanskrit retains a monopoly on scientific discourse, narratives of the way things were, and the rest). That it is possible to make *kāvya* only in this triad of languages is the unanimous judgment of Sanskrit literary theory from its beginnings in Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin.[52] And this raises at least three critical questions, which I consider

51. The rise of the grand philosophical prose style (with Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya,* eighth century, or Jayantabhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī,* c. 900), which may seem unthinkable without the earlier developments in literary prose, was never read in relationship to it. When Jayanta wanted to be truly literary he wrote literature (the drama *Āgamaḍambara*). Bhoja does vaguely associate literary style with nonliterary discourse when he observes that treatises on polity *(arthaśāstra)* are characterized by "the eastern path" *(gauḍīyā rīti),* and those on spiritual liberation *(mokṣaśāstra)* by "the western" *(lāṭīyā)* (*Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* pp. 1107, 1179).

52. Bhāmaha, *Kāvyālaṅkāra* 1.16, cf. 34–36; Daṇḍin, *Kāvyādarśa* 1.32. Daṇḍin and other theorists include Paishachi, the language of a single work of literature, the placeless and dateless—and lost—*Bṛhatkathā.*

in turn: What exactly were these languages? Why in the opinion of theorists (and, with few exceptions, in actual fact) did they constitute the sole vehicles for the creation of *kāvya*? And what factors conditioned a writer's decision to use one language rather than another?

The first question—what actually is Sanskrit (and Prakrit and Apabhramsha)?—is one not asked of most of the other languages treated in this volume, since they come before us like facts of nature. Of course, from a more capacious historical vantage point, there is nothing at all given or natural about any language; all are only jargons until they are unified by certain cultural practices, foremost among which is the production of literature. But in the case of Sanskrit and its two companions we feel compelled to raise the question, which already, and correctly, intimates something of their unusual position in the repertory of literary codes represented in this book.

The need to ask is occasioned in part by the very words we use to refer to these languages. In contrast with, say, "Kannada" or "Bangla" or "Sindhi," which in their semantic core signify at once a group of speakers and their geographical location, the terms "Sanskrit," "Prakrit," and "Apabhramsha" all refer to social and linguistic characteristics and not to particular people or places. The word *saṃskṛta* points in the first instance to the language's paradigmatic analyzability: it is something "put together" by means of phonological and morphological transformations of the sort so powerfully described in the Sanskrit grammatical tradition (synthesized around the third or fourth century B.C.E.). At the same time, the term long preserved associations from the sacred domain of Vedic liturgical practices: Sanskrit is also that which is "rendered fit" for these practices because, like other instruments or objects used in ritual acts, it has been made ritually pure. In its oldest form, Sanskrit was an idiom of liturgical acts and their associated scholastic disciplines, spoken and fully alive for that domain in the way long-cultivated learned idioms can be. Only gradually and hesitantly did it enter into the realm of worldly *(laukika)* communicative practices—coinage, deeds, inscriptions, and the like, including *kāvya*—around the beginning of the common era. What is important to bear in mind, however, is that it never fully became— and almost certainly never had been—a code of everyday usage. It was never the language of the nursery, the bedroom, or the field, although since Sanskrit poets experienced childhood, love, and (no doubt some of them) labor, they learned to speak of these things, too, after their fashion, in Sanskrit.[53]

What they almost certainly did not speak either, whether in the nursery, bedroom, or field, was Prakrit, at least in the form in which we know it in

---

53. See Pollock 1996 on the *laukika* transformation of Sanskrit, Thieme 1982 on the descriptor *saṃskṛta,* and Deshpande 1993 and Houben 1996 on the sociolinguistic status of Sanskrit.

Prakrit literary texts. The word itself, according to the standard interpretation, refers to the "common" or "natural" dialect(s) of which Sanskrit represents the grammatically disciplined variety. But in fact it typically connotes a literary language and only very rarely is used to mean spoken vernaculars (the usual term for these was *bhāṣā,* speech). Unlike Sanskrit, for which literary theory acknowledges a single, unified register, Prakrit was recognized from a relatively early date to have three or four regional types: Maharashtri (belonging to Mahārāṣṭra), Shauraseni or Sauraseni (belonging to Śūrasena, or Mathurā and environs), Gaudi/Magadhi ("Gauḍa" referring to Bengal; "Magadha," to Bihar), and Lati (belong to Lāṭa, southern Gujarat).[54] Often, however, the term "Prakrit" is used in a more restricted sense to refer specifically to Maharashtri, which eventually became the single primary language of Prakrit literary creation.[55] Employed in the early centuries of literacy (c. 250 B.C.E.–250 C.E.) for public inscription until displaced dramatically and permanently for this purpose by Sanskrit, the Prakrits that we know from actual existing literature are grammaticized dialects. They were in fact not associated with or limited by any regionality and fully shared the commitments and values of Sanskrit literary culture.

A transregional and more or less standardized literary language confronts us in Apabhramsha, too. The name literally refers, once again, to a linguistic trait, that of "degeneration," or the simplification of phonology and morphology, and can pertain both to solecism in general and to the literary language specifically. Daṇḍin distinguishes these two senses, calling the literary language the "dialect of, among others, the Ābhīras," whereas "in scholarly discourse anything that deviates from correct Sanskrit is so named."[56] Although perhaps based ultimately on a Middle Indo-Aryan dialect of the midlands, the Apabhramsha found in literary texts is linguistically unlocalizable, largely without regional variation, and like Prakrit was used ecumenically: in the lyrics in act 4 of the drama *Vikramorvaśīya* (early poems even if not original to the play) by the Śaiva Kālidāsa in fourth-century Ujjayinī; in the *Harivaṃśa* by the Jain Puṣpadanta in mid-tenth-century Karnataka; in the

54. The varieties are named as early as *Nāṭyaśāstra* chapter 17 and *Kāvyādarśa* 1.34–35.

55. On the notion of primary literary languages see later in this chapter. For the use of "Prakrit" in the narrow sense of Maharashtri see *Saptaçatakam* v. 2; *Gauḍavaho* vv. 65, 92; and Upadhye in *Līlāvaī* 1966: 73.

56. *Kāvyādarśa* 1.36. "Ābhīra" is usually taken to refer to a pastoral people in western India. The negative connotations of Apabhramsha were eventually lost but were still alive in the seventh century, when the Vedic textual scholar Bhaṭṭa Kumārila remarked: "The scriptures of the Buddhists are linguistically corrupt and so could not possibly be holy word. . . . When texts are composed of words that are grammatically false—with words of the Magadhan or Dakshinatya languages and even worse, the Apabhramshas of these languages . . . how could their doctrines possibly be true?" (*Tantravārttika* on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.12, p. 164). Kumārila cites an illustration, but its source is unknown; it is not Pali.

messenger poem *(dūtakāvya) Saṃdeśarāsaka* by the Muslim Abdul Rahman in fourteenth-century Multan.

When the Sanskrit theoreticians inform us that *kāvya* is composed in three languages, they mean what they say: three languages alone are fit for literary expression, and others are not. The definition becomes meaningless if "Prakrit" or "Apabhramsha" is taken to refer to local language *tout court;* this would be tantamount to saying that literature is composed in language—an un-Sanskritic tautology. Whatever may have been their original regional specificity, by the time of Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin both the literary Prakrits and Apabhramsha had already been subjected to philological analysis and standardization, and along with Sanskrit were represented as tied to no particular place—and, as we have seen, they were not.

For a history of Sanskrit literary culture this formulation has important implications. Multilingualism is a dimension of the writer's craft for the Sanskrit critical tradition, but this is a multilingualism with two important restrictions. *Kāvya* is composed only in languages of the subcontinent—nothing indicates that literature was thought to exist in other cultural worlds (translations were made from Greek, for example, but only for scientific texts)—and, more important, only in languages that occupy subcontinental space. It is languages that travel, languages available to anyone anywhere in the world where *kāvya* is produced, languages that, as their names imply, transcend ethnic group and in a sense transcend space and time, that are qualified for embodying *kāvya.* Excluded from the world of *kāvya* as conceptualized in the Sanskrit tradition were the numerous vernaculars, from Kannada to Kashmiri, until such time that these languages themselves claimed the right to embody *kāvya* by bursting through to textuality and literariness. This historical transformation, which I call "vernacularization" and which was in full development everywhere in South Asia by the middle of the second millennium, contributed substantially to drawing an outer limit to the existence of a vital Sanskrit literary culture by making the choice of language in the making of literature far more problematic than it had ever been earlier.[57]

From a postcolonial location one tends to think of choice of language as one pertaining to the regional-language writer when confronted with languages of global cultural power such as English or French. But Sanskrit writers were also making a choice when they made literature in Sanskrit, though the precise nature of the choice and the conditions of choosing differed from those of their postcolonial descendants and varied even in precolonialism from epoch to epoch. In the later medieval period this was largely a decision *not* to write in one of the emergent vernaculars. For the greater part of

57. A detailed account of the three-language theory, and the historical practice of vernacularization, is provided in Pollock forthcoming.

the first millennium, however, from the time when we can first refer with historical confidence to the existence of *kāvya,* the choice was more limited, as were the social and cultural preferences it reflected.

For the seventh-century literary scholars Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, the division of literary-language labor among the three transethnic and transregional codes was strictly a function of genre. Thus the dynastic prose poem *(ākhyāyikā),* such as Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* (Life of King Harṣa), was composed in Sanskrit alone, as was the courtly epic *(mahākāvya),* such as Kālidāsa's *Kumārasaṃbhava* (Birth of the divine prince Kumāra); the genre called the *skandhaka,* exemplified by Pravarasena's *Setubandha* (Building the bridge; also known as the *Slaying of Rāvaṇa*), was written in Prakrit alone; the *osara* (no extant example) was composed in Apabhramsha alone; the long narrative tale, such as Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* or Dhanapāla's *Bhavisattakaha* (Tale of what is to be), could be written in Sanskrit or Apabhramsha.[58] The link between language choice and genre both in theory and practice is old and enduring, and is probably constitutive of Prakrit and Apabhramsha literariness. Prakrit in these discussions refers, let us note again, only to Maharashtri, for Shauraseni and the rest with rare exceptions ceased to have independent literary existence after the second or third century and appear only in drama or related genres.

Indeed, it is language use in drama that helps us understand how, although three languages are prescribed for literature throughout most of Sanskrit literary theory, other languages are not only mentioned in that theory but can in fact make their appearance in literature. Early on it was recognized that drama was written "in a mixture of languages," as Daṇḍin puts it.[59] This precept invites us to distinguish—and to read traditional accounts of literary language as distinguishing—between what we may call primary and secondary languages for literature. The former consist of those used in the creation of an entire literary work, that is, the three cosmopolitan idioms. These alone can constitute what a twelfth-century writer called the "body of a literary text." While these "primary" languages were chosen for a given work on the basis of its genre, "secondary" languages were those used for mimetic

58. *Kāvyādarśa* 1.37; *Kāvyālaṅkāra* of Bhāmaha 1.28. See Ratnaśrījñāna on *Kāvyādarśa* 1.37, where his reference to *Setubandha* is intended to illustrate the *skandhaka.* Other writers add further detail. For Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, the independent lyric verse *(muktaka)* could be written in any of the three literary languages, Sanskrit, Prakrit, or Apabhramsha—and we have examples in all three languages, though these become increasingly rare for the latter two—but language restrictions applied to other genres. Thus, certain minor types of story literature called "short story" *(khaṇḍakathā)* and "full story" *(sakalakathā)* were written in Prakrit (*Dhvanyāloka* 3.7, p. 323, with Abhinavagupta there).

59. *nāṭakādi tu miśrakam, Kāvyādarśa* 1.37; cf. Abhinavagupta on *Dhvanyāloka* 3.7. Ratnaśrījñāna on *Kāvyādarśa* 1.32, however, explains "mixture" to be that of the three literary languages.

purposes. They appear in drama in direct discourse (royal women always speak Shauraseni, ruffians Magadhi, and so on), and in a few other literary works, such as the tale *(kathā),* where reported speech is prominent.[60] Thus, aside from imitative uses of language to provide local color in drama and similar dialogue genres, language choice for making literature, in the wider literary culture of which Sanskrit was part, was shaped by factors utterly different from that which governs writing today: the use of one's so-called natural language. In fact, it may not be going too far to claim that it is the exclusion of natural language from the realm of literature that to a significant degree defines Sanskrit literary culture.

The single factor we have so far identified as regulating literary language choice, namely, genre, cannot wholly have determined that choice. For one thing, a genre like *kathā* could be written in any of the three languages. For another, other genres said to be restricted to particular languages, such as the various species of courtly epic, the Sanskrit *mahākāvya,* the Prakrit *skandhaka* or *āśvāsaka,* are themselves virtually indistinguishable from each other—except for their language (and the metrical form associated with it). It is not easy to believe that a writer would select a genre first and then the language appropriate to it; some commitment to a literary code had to come first, and the choice of genre from among those available to the language in question would follow. What would a commitment to a literary code consist in? Why would a writer choose to write in Sanskrit rather than in Prakrit or Apabhramsha? This is a fundamental question, or so one would think, but it has not been posed in literary scholarship as clearly as one would expect. A recent work called *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit—Pali—Prakrit,* for example, hardly addresses the issue at all, the title notwithstanding.[61] No doubt one answer for all cases is improbable, since the nature of commitment to language demonstrably changed over time. Assumptions widely shared in modern scholarship are worth considering if only to avoid their errors: One is that such a choice was never actually made, since before colonialism and modernity began their deplorable work of linguistic reduction, Indian poets were always multilingual; another is that religious community

---

60. "These four languages [Paishachi is included] are the ones that may constitute the body of a poem," *Vāgbhaṭālaṅkāra* 2.1. Daṇḍin implies this mimetic use when he says, "A *kathā* is composed in all languages" *(Kāvyādarśa* 1.38). The *Kuvalayamālā,* a "mixed tale" *(saṃkīrṇakathā)* completed in Jalor in 799, announces that it is "composed in the Prakrit language, written down in the letters of the Marahatta region. As a curiosity the story is also told in Sanskrit when needed for [i.e., when reporting] another's speech, and here and there made with Apabhramsha, as well as demonstrating the Paishachi speech" (p. 4, vv. 11–12); it also provides numerous examples of reported speech in various Indian languages and dialects. Further materials on primary and secondary in Sanskrit literary theory may be found in Pollock forthcoming.

61. Lienhard 1984. On p. 49 brief reference is made to the "preferences" purportedly created by the language traditions of the different religions.

SANSKRIT LITERARY CULTURE

regulated cultural commitments and membership in such a community accordingly determined language choice in advance.

The first explanation would seem to find support in the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* (Inquiry into literature) of Rājaśekhara, a court poet in early-tenth-century Kānyakubja and Tripur. In this partially preserved encyclopedia of literary art the author comments on the question of languages in literature:

> A poet must first of all fashion himself. He should ask himself: What is my inborn talent; what are my strengths with respect to languages? What does society favor? What does my patron favor; what kinds of poetic assemblies does he occupy himself with; what is he emotionally attached to? The poet should then adopt a particular language—so say the authorities. But Rājaśekhara holds that while it is true a specialized poet works under such constraints, for a poet who knows no intellectual limitations all languages are as much within his command as a single one. Moreover, a given language is adopted by virtue of [its prevalence in] a given region, as it is said, "The people of Gauḍa [Bengal] are devoted to Sanskrit, the people of Lāṭa [south Gujarat] are fond of Prakrit, the people of all Mālava, the Takkas [Panjabis], and the Bhādānakas employ their own Apabhramsha, the people of Avanti, of Pariyatra, and of Daśapura [Chattisgarh] use Bhutabhasha [Paishachi]. The poet who dwells in mid-Madhyadeśa is expert in all [these] languages."[62]

Again, we should note the premise here that literature can be made in only three primary languages (or four, including Paishachi), albeit a range of secondary languages may be used for mimetic purposes.[63] But while this restriction to cosmopolitan codes for literature is in evidence everywhere, Rājaśekhara's ideal image of a poet's unlimited creativity in all four languages seems to be just that, an ideal. If we examine the actual literary-historical record available to us—admittedly, counterexamples may have vanished—it is remarkable how very few writers produced literature in different primary languages.

Three who come first to mind were all scholars as well as poets: Rājaśekhara himself composed one play wholly in Prakrit (it is the only such play, and doubtless an experiment), all the rest of his oeuvre being in Sanskrit; Viśvanātha (first half of the fourteenth century), a literary theorist, tells us he wrote one Prakrit poem besides his Sanskrit works; and Ānandavardhana, in addition to a courtly epic in Sanskrit, wrote a text in Prakrit "for the education of poets," most likely a textbook on aesthetic suggestion that naturally would use the language in which this style had first manifested itself in

62. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* pp. 50–51.

63. That the former are uppermost in the author's mind is shown by the fact that these transregional languages are microcosmically configured in the literary assembly of the ideal king (pp. 54–55). In his play *Bālarāmāyaṇa* 1.11 it is obvious that when Rājaśekhara describes himself as "expert in all languages" he means the three plus Paishachi.

South Asian literature.[64] Aside from such scholar-poets, writers composing works in more than one primary literary language were rarities. Muñja, king of the Paramāras and Bhoja's uncle (d. c. 996), appears to be the only Sanskrit poet who produced a serious corpus of verse in Apabhramsha as well as Sanskrit (both only fragmentarily preserved); the stray Apabhramsha verse attributed to this or that Sanskrit poet tells us little. Writers we know only as Prakrit poets have Sanskrit verses ascribed to them in anthologies, but such ascriptions are unverifiable; and not a single such poet is elsewhere associated with a Sanskrit work. The tendency we find in the cosmopolitan languages holds true for poets composing in regional languages as well. The tenth-century Kannada writers Ponna and Ranna, for example, may have called themselves "emperor poet in both languages," but they clearly derived this title from the occasional Sanskrit verse included in their Kannada works. Those few cases of primary text production in both Sanskrit and a vernacular for which we have the evidence of extant texts are wholly exceptional.[65]

It is difficult not to conclude from all this that aside from dramatic mimesis and the occasional pedagogical demonstration or tour de force, multilinguality has a purely imaginary status in Sanskrit literary culture. In actual fact, a writer was a Sanskrit writer or a Prakrit writer or an Apabhramsha writer or—at a later date, and with very different cultural-political resonances—a vernacular writer. The mid-eleventh-century Kashmirian Kṣemendra is instructive here. He advises the aspiring poet of talent to "listen to the songs and lyrics and *rasa*-laden poems in local languages . . . to go to popular gatherings and learn local languages," but he seems not to have taken his own

64. In the *Sāhityadarpaṇa,* Viśvanātha mentions his (lost) Prakrit *kāvya Kuvalayāśvacarita* (Life of Kuvalayāśva) in the *vṛtti* on 6.326; his Sanskrit *Rāghavavilāsa* in the *vṛtti* on 6.324. On Ānandavardhana's Prakrit *Viṣamabāṇalīlā,* in addition to his Sanskrit *Arjunacarita,* see Pischel 1965: 12, and Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan 1990: 10–11.

65. The exceptions to the rule of Sanskrit monolinguality include Vedāntadeśika (fourteenth century) in Tamil (and very occasionally, for the demonstration effect, in Prakrit); Śrīnātha (fifteenth century) in Telugu; and Vidyāpati (fifteenth century) in Maithili. In *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.65, King Harṣa of Kashmir (fl. 1075) is credited with *sarvabhāṣākavitvam,* "literary skill in all languages," but if this means the ability to *produce* literature in all languages no evidence is available to support it. On Muñja see Bhayani 1993: 262–66. Ānandavardhana, in describing how the use of different languages multiplies the possibilities of meaning, cites a verse of his own written (possibly ad hoc) in what his commentator calls "Sindhī" (*Dhvanyāloka* p. 544). The Sanskrit verse 723 in *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* is attributed to Pravarasena, elsewhere to Bilhaṇa or to one Kaṅka; eleven poems have come down under the name of Vākpatirāja. Viśvanātha says he wrote a *praśastiratnāvalī* (praise poem of a notable featuring a string of titles) in sixteen languages (cf. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 6.337), and many writers boast of their mastery of the six or even the canonical eighteen languages. When such claims are not simply expressions of scholarly (and not creative) mastery or mere bragging, they represent limited experiments.

advice. A large portion of his literary corpus has been preserved, and there is not a scrap of anything but Sanskrit.[66]

If the explanation of multilinguality does not hold and premodern Indian writers did in fact actively make a choice—from among transregional and not natural languages, and with the genre constraints on language only as a consequence of choosing—we are back to searching for the grounds of the choice. Here most scholars would resort to the second assumption mentioned: that affiliation to religious community underwrote the choices that were made. Yet this is entirely unhistorical with respect to early literary culture. The force of the religious explanation derives, on the one hand, from what are interpreted as ancient and ever-valid injunctions by the founders of non-Vedic religions, such as Buddhism and Jainism, to propagate their tenets in non-Sanskrit or even local language, and on the other, from the widespread modern assumption of an exclusive and exclusionary concomitance between Brahmanism and Sanskrit. Both views are false.

As often, what was done in practice is more instructive than what is claimed in texts, and in practice none of this logic obtains. If early Buddhism was hostile to Sanskrit, by the first or second century of the common era a complete canon of Buddhist scripture in Sanskrit was in existence, and the creativity in Sanskrit of Buddhist poets is massively in evidence. We possess or know of major works from at least a half-dozen masters by 600 C.E.[67] This literary production has little, in some cases nothing, to do with the religious identity or beliefs of the writers. This is fully demonstrated by the poetry of Dharmakīrti (c. 650), the literary scholarship of Ratnaśrījñāna (900) or Dharmadāsa (1000?), the metrical studies of Jñānanaśrīmitra (1000), or the anthological work of Vidyākara (1100). Aside from the occasional Buddhist theme or Buddhist deity hymned in the prelude of a work, there is hardly anything we can point to as constituting a Buddhist literary aesthetic. Not only did Buddhism not stop Buddhists from writing Sanskrit literature, but when they did write, their behavior was not recognizably Buddhist. The Jains, for their part, may have composed their early scriptures in a form of Prakrit, but they eventually adopted Sanskrit as well, among other languages. In Karnataka, for example, in the ninth century they turned decisively to Sanskrit for the production of their great poetic histories with the *Ādipurāṇa* of Jinasena II. Other Jain poets produced less specifically sectarian poetry in Sanskrit, such as the monumental mixed prose-verse narrative of Somadevasūri, the *Yaśastilakacampū* (The *campū* of Prince Yaśastilaka, 959). At the same time they wrote dramatically new work in Kannada (Pampa's courtly epics of the mid-ninth century)

66. *Kavikaṇṭhābharaṇa* 1.17, 2.11, pp. 65, 69 ("poems in local languages," *deśabhāṣākāvya;* "lyrics," *gāthā*).

67. These include Aśvaghoṣa, Mātṛceṭa, Kumāralāta, Haribhaṭṭa, Candragomin (or whoever wrote the play *Lokānanda*), Dignāga, and Āryaśūra. See also Hahn 1993.

and Apabhramsha (Puṣpadanta's *Mahāpurāṇa* [Great *purāṇa*] of 970). None of the important meanings of such literary-language experimentation can be captured through an explanation based on religious identity. On the contrary, literature, as Bhoja put it memorably, is nonsectarian.[68]

Attention to the historical record helps us unthink the supposed concomitance of Brahmanism and Sanskrit as effectively as it does that between non-Brahmanism and non-Sanskrit.[69] In the archaic period Brahmanism eschewed the use of Sanskrit in the nonliturgical realm, and it was within the political context of new ruler lineages from West and Central Asia that Sanskrit first came to be used for public written forms of royal eulogy, and possibly for literature itself. Staunchly Brahmanical lineages to the south such as the Sātavāhanas (c. 100 B.C.E.–250 C.E.) held to the old ways and supported no literary production whatever in Sanskrit. It is perhaps within such a context, where there obtained a pronounced cultural sensitivity about the very different discursive domains of Prakrit and Sanskrit, that we may come to understand something about the creation of the earliest extant Prakrit poetry. The great Maharashtri Prakrit anthology, *Gāhākoso* (Treasury of lyrics; also known as *Gāhāsattasaī,* The seven hundred lyrics), is a compendium of the sophisticated culture—a non-Sanskritic but largely *vaidika* culture—of the kings and poets of the Sātavāhana court. It is composed in an idiom imitative of rural life (bordering in fact on a secondary, mimetic function of the language) for an audience at once urban and urbane, as the seventh-century poet Bāṇa clearly understood when he spoke of the collection as cultured *(agrāmya)* despite its rustic *(grāmya)* content.[70] Sarvasena's *Harivijaya* (Viṣṇu's conquest) and Pravarasena's *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative *Setubandha* register the continuing commitment to the realm of Prakrit on the part of the Sātavāhana successor rulers—Vaiṣṇava rulers—of the northern Deccan.[71]

That Prakrit poetry continued to be composed by writers in the *vaidika* tradition (or at least writers who were neither Buddhist nor Jain) long after this date seems to represent more than anything else an aesthetic choice

---

68. *sāhityasya sarvapārṣadatvāt,* *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 398 (cf. Ratneśvara on *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhā-bharaṇālaṅkāra* 3.3).

69. To those outside the Sanskrit cultural order, however, these distinctions might be blurred and all learned discourse in Sanskrit might be thought of as Brahmanical; thus, it seems, was the case for Amīr Khusrau (d. 1325), for whom Sanskrit was squarely identified with the Brahmans (see Alam, chapter 2, this volume).

70. *Harṣacarita* v. 13. The point is argued in Tieken 1995.

71. The Vākāṭaka dynasty, to which these kings belonged, ruled c. 250–500. On Sarvasena (fourth or early fifth century) see Kulkarni 1991. A long tradition of misidentifying Pravarasena (actually Pravarasena II of the Vākāṭaka line, r. c. 400–410) with a Kashmiri king of that name began with Kalhaṇa (*Rājataraṅgiṇī* 3.354) and has oddly been continued by Kosambi in *Subhāṣitaratnakośa,* p. lxxxv, and Lienhard 1984: 234–35. It is corrected first, I believe, in the editor's note in *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* p. 217; cf. also Mirashi 1963: lvi.

shaped by the character of the language itself, its earliest literary uses, and its particular modes of expression—a choice perhaps tinged with nostalgia for a vanished age of imagined simplicity and naturalness. This last factor may be sensed at the beginning of Koūhala's beautiful and influential Maharashtri romance, *Līlāvaī* (c. 800), a work that breathes in every verse mastery of the most sophisticated Sanskrit literary culture. When the author's mistress asks him for a tale, he responds, "Ah, my love, you will make me look ridiculous for my lack of learning in the arts of language. Far from telling a great tale, I should in fact keep silent." To this the mistress replies, "Any words that clearly communicate meaning are good; what care we for rules? So tell me a tale in Prakrit, which simple women love to hear—but not with too many localisms, so that it's easy to understand." Throughout this exchange, the artifice of artlessness is hard to miss, as is the massive learning required to appear simple.[72] Other aesthetic values inform Vākpatirāja's historical biography of Yaśovarman of Kānyakubja (c. 725), the *Gauḍavaho.* "From time immemorial," the poet explains, "it has been in Prakrit, and in that language alone, that one could combine new content and mellow form. . . . All words enter into Prakrit and emerge out of it, as all waters enter and emerge from the sea." At the same time, he seems to have been aware that the language was, for his milieu, culturally residual: many men, he says with a certain defiance mixed with melancholy, "no longer understand [Prakrit's] different virtues; great poets [in Prakrit] should just scorn or mock or pity them, but feel no pain themselves."[73]

Whatever the causes of the desuetude of Prakrit, it is a fact that *vaidika* as well as Jain and, indeed, nonreligious cultures could and did express themselves effectively in the language. This is equally true, if less well known, of Apabhramsha. Most of the texts in this language for the first half-millennium of its literary existence (up to 1000 or so) have been lost, but we know from citations in later works that to write in Apabhramsha implied no tie whatever to any particular religious community. It was used by all kinds of poets: Brahmanical (for instance, Caturmukha and Govinda, pre-ninth century), tantric

---

72. *Līlāvaī* vv. 38, 40–41 ("arts of language," *saddasattha;* "what care we for rules," *kiṃ lakkhaṇeṇ amha;* "localism," *desi*). The choice of language here no doubt is also partly related to the fact that the *Līlāvaī* concerns the romantic history of King Hāla Sātavāhana and Līlāvatī, princess of Siṃhaladvīpa.

73. *Gauḍavaho* vv. 92–93, 95; see Suru's note on v. 95 (contrast Bodewitz and van Daalen 1998: 44). The faulty transmission of the language in late-medieval manuscripts of dramas show how alien it had become to the average reader; cf. Coulson 1989: xli ff., though as observed in note 78 below, scholars continued to study the language for centuries. The two beautifully inscribed if perhaps pedestrian Prakrit poems from Bhoja's court, both *Avanikūrmaśataka,* may have had more to do with the pedagogical environment of the school where they were installed than with any other literary purpose (EI 8: 241–60; for other grand and large inscribed Prakrit texts see *Archaeological Survey of India, 1934–35,* Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1937, p. 60).

Buddhist (such as Kānha and Saraha, tenth century, eastern India), and Muslim (Abdul Rahman, fourteenth century, western India).[74] And it implied no tie to religious expression, either. Many of the early citations are in fact erotic stanzas of a sort familiar from the Prakrit tradition. And they strive to create a similar rural ambience while displaying full mastery of Sanskrit poetics. We find countless verses like the following:

> What kind of poison vine is this that grows in the herders' camp,
> which can make a strong man die if it isn't wrapped around his neck?

> The god of love invented the strangest arrow in the world,
> one that can kill you if it strikes—and kill you if it doesn't.

> He didn't break the hedge or make a sound,
> I didn't see him at the door.
> I've no idea, mother, how my lover
> could enter so quickly into my heart.[75]

The elegant simplicity of such poetry is immediately recognizable to readers at home in the Prakrit tradition. But Apabhramsha could also be used in a very different voice:

> Śrāvaṇa was in one eye, Bhādrapāda in the other,
> Māgha in her pallet bed spread upon the ground;
> in her cheek Autumn, in her limbs Summer,
> Mārgaśirāḥ in the sesame field of her joy;
> and on the simple girl's lotus-pond face
> deep Winter took up position.[76]

---

74. For recent surveys see Vyas 1984 and Bhayani 1989b; Sarma 1965 provides a useful review of scholarship on Apabhramsha in Hindi and Gujarati. On Caturmukha, author of a courtly epic on the churning of the ocean of immortality, see Bhayani 1958; Govinda's poem on the life of Kṛṣṇa is cited in the *Svayambhūchandas* (Bhayani 1993: 224). A *Karṇaparākrama* in Apabhramsha is mentioned in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*.

75. All three verses are from the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (which cites nearly seventy, though this number pales in comparison to its more than 1650 Prakrit verses), p. 421 (Bhayani 1989a: 8; the paradox explicit in the verse is resolved by the realization that the poet is talking about a girl, further suggested by the feminine of the Apabhramsha word for "necklace"); p. 478 (Bhayani 1989a: 12); p. 422 (Bhayani 1989a: 9). Similar materials are preserved in the third section of Hemacandra's grammar, including three of the four verses treated here, and in his *Chandonuśāsana* (cf. Alsdorf 1937: 73–110; Vyas 1982). A lovely extended poem called a *carcarī* and composed in Apabhramsha (though called simply "Prakrit") is given in the mid-twelfth-century royal encyclopedia *Mānasollāsa:* It is a verse about Holi, meant "to be sung at the spring festival in the Hindolaka *rāga*" (see *Mānasollāsa* vol. 3, p. 33, vv. 303–303). Master 1949–1951: 412 discusses an Apabhramsha *dohā* from *Kuvalayamālā* that he considers the "earliest recorded" example.

76. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 376 (Bhayani 1989a: 7). Bhoja understands Māgha as Mādhava, spring, which leads him to interpret its metonymy as the fresh plants associated with spring that are meant to cool down the woman's body. Compare the English madrigal: "April is in my mistress'

Judging from the commentary on this poem, this is a text taken to embody the most courtly of poetic techniques. Besides illustrating the genre known as "miscellany" by showing the simultaneous presence of all the seasons in the lovelorn woman, the verse displays all six types of verbal powers (from direct denotation to metonymy-mediated-by-metonymy) that, as the commentator says, "one can find in the works of the greatest poets."[77]

All this said, there is also no question that there was a growing trend—not easy to date but beginning in the early second millennium—toward a reduction in language options. It seems to have become virtually impossible for non-Jain authors to write in Apabhramsha after about 1100; Brahmanical works after Bhoja's time and non-Jain works after the *Saṃdeśarāsaka* may not exist at all. The same largely holds true of Prakrit, which was more or less completely abandoned, again to the Jains—though occasional literary experiments, and philological interest, continued outside the Jain world at least up to the mid-eighteenth century.[78] For reasons that remain unclear but seem present in the development of the regional literary cultures, too, there were forces at work in the later medieval period that gradually narrowed the spectrum of choices available for literary expression for everyone and at the same

---

face, and July in her eye hath place, and in her bosom lies September. But in her heart there lies a cold December." (I thank Carolyn Bond for this reference.)

77. *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇālaṅkāra* p. 135 ff., which presupposes the kind of discussion introducing the citation in *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* chapter 7 ("miscellany": *prakīrṇaghaṭanā*). To give the flavor of this elaborate analysis: The six substantival locatives and "simple girl" are all (1) direct *denotations,* the last two ("sesame field of her joy," "lotus-pond face") are used (2) *metaphorically* (via the shared qualities of attractiveness [as a place where girls go to meet their lovers] and beauty, respectively). The four month-names (Śrāvaṇa, Bhādrapāda, Māgha, Mārgaśirāḥ) are used (3) *metonymically* (referring to the drizzle, downpours, cold, and frost, respectively, associated with them [Mārgaśirāḥ is also the season when sesame fields, her place for secret rendezvous, are mown]), and although directly denoted, the seasons, since they cannot be simultaneously present, are communicated not by the denotation that expresses reals *(tathābhūtārtha)* but by (4) *denotation that expresses unreals* (*tadbhāvāpatti,* cf. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 354 ff.). The verb "has taken up residence" is used in (5) a *transferred sense,* which leads us toward a (6) *metonomy mediated by metonymy (lakṣaṇalakṣita).* "To take up position" in its primary sense is used of kings and their armies; used in a transferred sense with reference to a season, the verb implies the presence of all the season's accoutrements, its effectivity, power, etc., and thereby the powerful consequences of its action mentioned in the verse. Furthermore, each season or month, by metonymically expressing the woman's powerful pain of separation from her lover, at the same time metonymically expresses her powerful love for him. The metonymical use of Śrāvaṇa and Bhādrapāda— their drizzle and showers—point metonymically toward the girl's constant crying and, through yet a further metonymy, to her yearning for reunion with her lover. (A Sanskrit version of this poem is cited by the *Bālapriya* commentary in *Dhvanyāloka* p. 149.)

78. See Upadhye in *Līlāvaī* 1966: 36 on Rāma Pāṇivāda of Kerala. Serious Brahmanical scholarship on Prakrit is demonstrated by the important grammars produced in seventeenth-century Bengal (Mārkaṇḍeya and Rāmaśarma), and by the learned commentary on the *Rāvaṇavaho* composed, again from Bengal, at the end of the seventeenth century (*Rāvaṇavaho* 1959: xi ff.).

time made those choices seem all the more inevitable. Indeed, it was at this time that Sanskrit began to develop a concomitance with Brahmanism far more invariable than it had had for the previous thousand years.

Prior to this period, however—and thus for most of the history of Sanskrit literary culture—writers chose to be Sanskrit writers from a range of language options, and since multilinguality was not one of these, they had to choose. Choice was determined in part by genre, in part by aesthetic considerations, especially social register (the degree of rusticity or sophistication implied by the theme). Yet another condition, as yet unmentioned and more elusive, concerns the sphere of circulation. One writes to say something in particular and to a particular audience, and chooses a language appropriate for both message and reader. To choose to write in Sanskrit, even from the earliest period, was to choose a cosmopolitan readership of truly vast proportions. I say more about the circulatory space of Sanskrit literature later, but in the context of the question of language choice it is worth observing that it extended far beyond the subcontinent, into Central Asia and as far as the islands of Southeast Asia. Neither Prakrit nor Apabhramsha, to say nothing of regional-language literature, commanded anything remotely comparable to this kind of audience.[79] Only a Sanskrit poet could make the boast Bilhaṇa makes about his work: "There is no village or country, no capital city or forest region, no pleasure garden or school where learned and ignorant, young and old, male and female do not read my poems and shiver with pleasure."[80]

Nor was this an empty boast. Consider just one case from the early period of Buddhist Sanskrit poetry. We no doubt find a range of languages used for the inscription of the Buddha's word (or what could be taken for the Buddha's word) and for monastic rules of discipline. None of this local-language material—Gandhari, for example—circulated very far beyond the limits of its vernacular world. The works of the first great Buddhist Sanskrit poets, however, such as Aśvaghoṣa (second century) and Mātṛceṭa (not later than 300), were read not only in northern India but in much of Central Asia. In Qizil and Sorčuq (in today's Xinjiang region of China), manuscript fragments have been found bearing portions of Aśvaghoṣa's dramas and his two courtly epics, *Saundarananda* (The story of handsome Nanda) and *Buddhacarita*

79. Neither appears to be found later in Central Asian manuscripts or is preserved in any Southeast Asian literary tradition. Pravarasena is mentioned once in an inscription of Yaśovarman of Khmer country (c. 900) (Majumdar 1974: 16), though I doubt this is anything more than second-hand name-dropping. Brajbhasha enjoyed a transregional status in north India during the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries (see McGregor, chapter 16, this volume), at the end of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan epoch, and attracted writers such as Keśavdās who in an earlier epoch would have composed in Sanskrit.

80. *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.89 ("country," *janapada*).

(Deeds of the Buddha). Mātṛceṭa's poetic hymns circulated even more widely, to the northern branches of the Silk Road, where the surviving fragments of his texts outnumber all others. A late-seventh-century account of his work by a Chinese pilgrim in India suggests the possibilities for near-universal dissemination that a great Sanskrit poem could have:

> In India numerous hymns of praise to be sung at worship have been most carefully handed down, for every talented man of letters has praised in verse whatever person he deemed most worthy of worship. Such a man was the venerable Mātṛceṭa, who, by his great literary talent and virtues, excelled all learned men of his age. . . . [His] charming compositions are equal in beauty to the heavenly flowers, and the high principles which they contain rival in dignity the lofty peaks of a mountain. . . . Through-out India everyone who becomes a monk is taught Mātṛceṭa's two hymns.[81]

This range of circulation was made possible not so much by the religious universalism of Buddhism as by the literary universalism of Sanskrit and the aesthetic power—beauty "equal . . . to the heavenly flowers"—that it could evince. This at least is the inference suggested by the spread of nondenominational and nonreligious Sanskrit poetry in Southeast Asia, where by the ninth or tenth century at the latest, literati in Khmer country were studying masterpieces such as the *Raghuvaṃśa* (Dynasty of Raghu) of Kālidāsa, the *Harṣacarita* of the early-seventh-century prose master Bāṇa, and the *Sūryaśataka* (Hundred verses to the sun) of the latter's contemporary, Mayūra.[82]

Accordingly, when poets chose to write in the Sanskrit language, they were choosing, along with a certain aesthetic, a certain readership—in this case a cosmopolitan, virtually global readership. And they did this, we may accordingly infer, because they had something cosmopolitan, something global, to say.

THE TIMES OF SANSKRIT LITERARY CULTURE

Problems similar to those encountered in thinking about the literary and what are taken to be its defining features beset the question of historicity. We find a tension between, on the one hand, the need to understand how readers and writers of Sanskrit fashioned and thought of their literary culture and, on the other hand, contemporary theoretical positions arguing that any text can be literature depending on what one wants to do with it (reasonable po-

---

81. I-tsing, who also translated Mātṛceṭa's *Śatapañcāśatkastotra* into Chinese; see Shackleton Bailey 1951: 4.

82. Clear allusions to *Raghuvaṃśa* are found in the Pre-Rup Inscription of the mid-tenth century (*Inscriptions du Camboge,* vol. 1, p. 73 ff., vv. 164, 194, etc.). Bhāravi and Mayūra, among other poets, are elsewhere named (cf. Majumdar 1974: 16).

sitions, given the unruliness of texts in the face of literary rules). A similar tension between the views from inside and outside appears as we try to grasp what Sanskrit writers did and did not understand about their existence in literary time. On the one hand, the visions of the past that Sanskrit poets themselves had, and that constitute what history meant to those who made it, have a first-order significance for us. On the other hand, this tradition offers no clear conception of literary change, and no way of describing what became of Sanskrit literary culture over time. That a literary community perceived nothing of its own development may tell us some important truth, but it cannot very well be the entire truth. Inevitably, therefore, we sometimes need to step outside a tradition to see what cannot be seen from within.

The history we are concerned with here is not the raw chronological sequence of authors and texts. The many histories of Sanskrit literature available make this as unnecessary as it is conceptually uninteresting. It is more purposeful to press on the historical pressure points of literary culture in history: when Sanskrit literature begins and when it ends—or whether it does neither, and what is assumed even in asking such questions. Understanding what it meant for *kāvya* to begin (if it began) will give us some sense of what it is. The process by which it died (if it died) will give us some sense of what had been necessary to keep it alive.

Sanskrit Literature Begins

A view from within of the history of Sanskrit literary culture is made possible by the unexpected presence of what we might term the ethnohistorical habit of Sanskrit writers. I call it unexpected in part because scholarship has ignored it, but in part because of the concern Sanskrit literature so often evinces in trying to escape time no less than space.

Around the seventh century the convention was invented (and quickly adopted everywhere) of prefacing a literary work with a eulogy of poets past *(kavipraśaṃsā)*. Bāṇa, author of the *Harṣacarita* (c. 640), the first Sanskrit literary biography that takes a contemporary as its subject, seems to have been the first to use it. This is not to say that earlier writers never refer or allude to predecessors. In a well-known passage in the prologue to Kālidāsa's drama *Mālavikā and Agnimitra,* an actor complains to the director, "How can you ignore the work of the great poets—men like Dhāvaka, Saumilla, Kaviratna— and present the work of a contemporary poet like Kālidāsa?" to which the director famously replies, "Not every work of literature is good just because it is old, or bad just because it is new."[83] This exchange contains several fea-

---

83. *Mālavikāgnimitra* 1.2. Variants give Bhāsa for Dhāvaka and Kaviputra for Kaviratna. Somila *(sic)* is the author of the *Śūdrakakathā,* which is cited in Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa.* Cf. also

tures of the eulogy mode to come. For one thing, it implies a canon of literature in which the author seeks a place, affiliating himself to the lineage of his predecessors by the very act of naming them. For another, it suggests that a precondition for entering the canon is innovation—making literature that makes some kind of history. In the more formal eulogies what constitutes this history, for different writers at different times, takes on a more organized structure.

The temporality of the eulogies is only one of their intriguing features. In addition, a number of the more general propositions about Sanskrit literary culture argued earlier in the chapter find corroboration, and some new insights emerge about communities of readers and standards of taste.[84] A literary sphere at once multilingual and restricted is projected: Only the three cosmopolitan languages are ever mentioned (all three, incidentally, share the praise-poem convention), never Tamil, Marathi, or any other regional language, and no writer is ever shown to be master of more than one language.[85] The linguistic diversity that poets saw as making up their unified sphere is expressed in terms of genre diversity. Bāṇa's praise-poems in fact offer a survey of the main varieties of literature by mentioning their foremost representatives or innovators: the tale *(kathā)* in Sanskrit prose (or Prakrit or Apabhramsha verse) in the Sanskrit *Vāsavadattā* of Subandhu (c. 600); the prose biography *(ākhyāyikā)* in the lost Prakrit work of Āḍhyarāja; the Sanskrit courtly epic *(mahākāvya)* in Kālidāsa, and Prakrit courtly epic *(skandhaka)* in Pravarasena; the Sanskrit, Prakrit, or Apabhramsha lyric or anthology of lyrics *(muktaka* and *kośa)* in the Prakrit collection of Sātavāhana; the drama *(nāṭaka)* in Bhāsa (300?).[86] The boundaries of *kāvya* are everywhere affirmed; other forms, such as ancient lore *(purāṇa),* are excluded.[87] Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* is included, however—further evidence that its place in textual taxonomies was long in tension with the history of its reception, at least among working poets.

Sūktimuktāvalī of Jalhaṇa, p. 43, v. 49, where in a verse attributed to Rājaśekhara, "Rāmila and Somila" are mentioned as joint authors of the *Śūdrikakathā (sic)* (noted in Raghavan 1978: 806).

84. The account that follows is based on five *kavipraśaṃsā:* Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* (Kanauj, c. 640); Daṇḍin's *Avantisundarīkathā* (Kāñcīpuram, c. 675); Uddyotanasūri's *Kuvalayamālā* (Jalor, 779); Dhanapāla's *Tilakamañjarī* (Dhārā, c. 1020); Someśvara's *Kīrtikaumudī* (Anhilapatana, c. 1250). For further detail see Pollock 1995c.

85. Apabhramsha eulogies of poets are found from the beginning of the extant tradition, that is, from Svayambhū (c. 900), cf. Bhayani 1993: 205. Vernacular language eulogies unsurprisingly name cosmopolitan models: The *Sāhasbhīmavijaya* of Ranna (982), for example, celebrates both Kannada and Sanskrit poets (1.8–9).

86. The lost work of Hariścandra, named a *gadyabandha,* or prose text, by Bāṇa, may have been the mixed prose-verse composition called the *campū,* the one major genre missing from Bāṇa's list.

87. An exception is the Jain author Jinasena II, who in his *Ādipurāṇa* (837) eulogizes a number of writers of genres other than *kāvya,* such as Siddhasena, who is praised as a logician (vv. 42–55).

A distinct, if unanticipated, division of literary communities manifests when we look at these eulogies across their whole history. Buddhist poets seem to never be mentioned, despite their decisive contribution to the development of Sanskrit courtly epic (Aśvaghoṣa), drama (Kumāralāta), verse-prose composition (Āryaśūra), and religious lyric (Mātṛceṭa).[88] Only Jain poets, by and large, include praise of Jain poets. This kind of community compartmentalization needs more analysis, but some things are already clear. For example, whereas Jains alone read certain kinds of Jain literature (their version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* found no resonance whatever outside their own traditions), many of them—as Hemacandra or Jinasena demonstrate dramatically—were eager to read anything.[89]

The poems also offer some insight into the standards of literary judgment, sometimes exasperatingly vague standards to be sure, that were used by writers themselves. Command and charm of language, power of description, formal mastery, and sometimes emotional impact, are emphasized, but rarely moral discernment and never mastery of the elements that make up the practical criticism of today, such as plot, characterization, or voice (this distribution of concerns was shared, generally speaking, by Sanskrit commentators, too). Obviously, the praise of past writers also creates a literary canon by representing the representative and providing accounts of what counts in literary history. The criteria of selection at work are, again, unclear, and contradiction between the praise-poems and pragmatic canonization—that effected through quotation in literary treatises, for example, or anthologization—is not unknown. Astonishingly absent from the praise-poems are two names associated with the most powerful lyric poetry in India: Amaru and Bhartṛhari.[90] At the same time a self-canonization is at work, for through his eulogies a poet is affiliating himself to a cultural lineage and asserting his place within it. As such, these verses reveal not so much inert traditions handed down from the past as orders of significance shaped in the interest of each particular present.

---

88. Citations of Buddhist literary texts in works on literary theory (aside from the commentary on Daṇḍin by the Buddhist Ratnaśrījñāna) are very rare. Ānandavardhana quotes two poems of Dharmakīrti, whom he names (*Dhvanyāloka* pp. 487–90), and Rājaśekhara anonymously cites Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* 8.25 (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā* p. 18). I find no more.

89. Jinasena's *Pārśvanāthābhyudaya* famously appropriates Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*. Hemacandra wrote a *Kāvyānuśāsana* that sought to summarize the whole prior history of poetics (a text profoundly indebted to Bhoja). Yet in the *kavipraśaṃsā* of Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* only Jain poets and scholars are mentioned. One exception to community compartmentalization is the praise-poem of the Brahman Someśvara, though this was composed in thirteenth-century Gujarat in a literary world dominated by Jains.

90. Neither is mentioned even in the eulogies assembled in anthologies. The sole exception I find is a verse on Amaru by Arjunavarmadeva, his thirteenth-century commentator (*Sūktimuktāvalī* p. 48, v. 101).

The temporality of the eulogies is perhaps their most elusive quality, except in point of chronology. Readers familiar with the rudiments of Sanskrit literary history will note with wonderment that Someśvara in the thirteenth century can provide a reasonably accurate chronological survey of well over a thousand years of literary creation. And this was a chronological interest hardly peculiar to the Jain milieu in which that poet worked; it is shared with Daṇḍin, who lived six centuries earlier.[91] Even where the chronology of the praise-poems may be awry, the interest in establishing a historically ordered ancestry remains undeniable. Chronological exactitude is not, of course, of equal concern to all Sanskrit ethnohistories. Some scholars have found more evidence for India's supposed deficiency in historical intelligence in a work like Ballālasena's late-sixteenth-century *Bhojaprabandha* (The story of Bhoja), where Kālidāsa (fourth century), Mayūra (650), Māgha (650), and Bhavabhūti (700) are placed together along with Jyotirīśvara Kaviśekhara (1475) at King Bhoja's court (1011–1055).[92] But much testimony besides the praise-poems, not least the temporally punctilious inscriptional discourse, suggests that Ballālasena was not living in a timeless (let alone mindless) universe, but that he was imaginatively telescoping a whole literary tradition into an ideal place and time in order to examine the cultural economy of Sanskrit in what was considered its most perfected courtly embodiment.

In any case, the praise-poems make it clear that to see oneself connected to a cultural practice with a great past, and to know something of the temporal structure of that past, were important values for Sanskrit writers. In this, participants in the literary sphere may be thought to have differed little from their colleagues in other sectors of Sanskrit culture, where the authorizing function of lineage affiliation *(paraṃparā)* is everywhere in evidence. What this past might have meant to them as a process of change through time, however, is another matter altogether. The chronologies are merely catenated, with poets linked to poets in such a way that nothing historical separates Kālidāsa in the fourth century from Yaśovīra in the thirteenth; there is no narrative to tell of decline or progress, or to suggest the strangeness or difference of the past. All generations of Sanskrit poets were coeval; the past was never seen as different and never passed away.

Such coevality may in part be seen as a function of the specific nature of Sanskrit literary ideology. This generated and enforced a model of language,

91. Daṇḍin unquestionably meant to present his predecessors in chronological order. His list: Vyāsa, Vālmīki, Subandhu, *Bṛhatkathā,* Śūdraka, Bhāsa, Sarvasena, Kālidāsa, Nārāyaṇa, Mayūra, Bāṇa, Dāmodara (*Avantisundarī* vv. 2–22; cf. Mirashi CII 5: 29, 49). Someśvara's: Vālmīki, Vyāsa, Kālidāsa, Māgha, Bhāravi, Bāṇa, Dhanapāla, Bilhaṇa, Hemasūri, Nīlakaṇṭha, Prahlādanadeva, Bhoja, Muñja, Naracandra, Vijayasena, Subhaṭa, Harihara, Yaśovīra (*Kīrtikaumudī* 1.7 ff.).

92. "Absurd," "utter lack of chronological sense," according to the translator (Gray 1950: 8); on the Jain *prabandha* literature cf. Sewell 1920 (who throws out the baby of historicality with the bath water of imprecision).

form, and, often, content that was meant to be largely abstracted, isolated, and insulated from the world of historical change—this despite the ever-deeper historicity that historical change was to bring about (as was the case in Vijayanagara-era texts). In this we should perceive not failure but a core dimension of Sanskrit's cultural victory: In part it was thanks to Sanskrit's brilliant apparatus of grammar, prosody, and poetics, providing stability no less than dignity, that it effectively did escape time. But in part, the coevality of the praise-poems was owing to the very history of Sanskrit cultivation. The generations of Sanskrit poets could be thought of as simultaneous because in one important sense they were. They continued to be read and copied, discussed and debated, and to provide important models of artistic fashioning for uninterrupted centuries. However scholars might wish to periodize Sanskrit literary culture, it is crucial to bear in mind such local procedures, by which, as part of its fundamental self-understanding, the culture sought to resist all periodization.

That said, the praise-poems all concur in declaring that Sanskrit literary culture began. No one regards the tradition of literature to be without origin, like the Veda, or attempts to locate an origin in God, the way many Sanskrit knowledge-systems envision their textual history as a series of abridgements of a Perfect Text originating with Śiva, Brahmā, the Sun, or other deity. The praise-poems are unanimous in their conviction that literature had a beginning and that it began with Vālmīki. In this they agree with the widespread tradition, far older than the oldest eulogy, that holds the *Rāmāyaṇa* to be the first poem *(ādikāvya)*. "Vālmīki created the first verse-poem," proclaimed the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa in the second century, when he himself was in the process of creating what may have been the first courtly epic, one heavily influenced by Vālmīki.[93] In fact, the *Rāmāyaṇa* thematizes its own innovation at its start, in the remarkable metapoem that represents the sage as inventing something unprecedented. Yet what we are to make of this universal conviction is not immediately apparent. What did Vālmīki actually do that was new?

When Aśvaghoṣa attributes to Vālmīki the creation of the first verse-poem *(padya),* he cannot simply mean versified language. Whatever the Veda's place in textual typologies, the fact that it consists of metrical texts (long antedating Vālmīki) was denied by no one. Indeed, its commonest name is *chandas,* "the Verse" (as another well-known collection in the West came to be called "the Book"). The particular verse-form that constitutes Vālmīki's primal poetic utterance, the eight-syllable quatrain *(anuṣṭubh, śloka),* is used in a large num-

---

93. *Buddhacarita* 1.43. Aśvaghoṣa himself used Vālmīki's narrative to structure his account of the life of the Buddha—and perhaps meant to link his own innovation to the first poet's in the same way as he linked his hero Siddhārtha to the Rāghava dynasty in his second epic (*Saundarananda* 1.21). See Pollock 1986: 28.

ber of versified Vedic texts. What Aśvaghoṣa meant by *padya* is undoubtedly versified *kāvya,* as *gadya* signifies unversified *kāvya* and not simply prose (which in fact is also attested from the early Vedic period). But this still does not tell us what Vālmīki invented in inventing versified *kāvya,* or in other words, what is "first" about the first poem.

There are at least three ways of examining this question, or any other question in the history of a literary culture. We can listen (1) to the text itself, or (2) to the tradition of listening to the text, or (3) to whatever we can hear in the world outside the text and the tradition. When we do the second and try to reconstruct the tradition of the interpretation of Vālmīki's primevality, it is puzzling to discover how thin it actually is. Everyone in South Asia knows that Vālmīki was the first poet, but no one tells us why. After Aśvaghoṣa's attribution we find only passing allusions. Kālidāsa refers to the *Rāmāyaṇa* as Vālmīki's "personal discovery" *(upajñā)* in the same way that grammar is Pāṇini's; Bhavabhūti in the early eighth century mentions Vālmīki's formal innovation, as does Rājaśekhara in the early tenth.[94] But there is nothing more, not even among the phalanx of commentators (perhaps a dozen over the five-hundred-year period beginning around 1000) who cherished and pondered the significance of every syllable of the text. That Vālmīki effected a break in literary-cultural history seems somehow an assumption that derives its power not from any corroborating tradition of analysis and argument but from the poem's own assertion of primacy, and the manner in which it is made.[95]

The structure and character of this assertion, contained in the metanarrative account in the first four chapters of Vālmīki's work, add their own complications, and listening to the text in pursuit of some logic of events in the creation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* requires more than just hearing. "Vālmīki closely questioned Nārada," the work begins, "and asked him, 'Who in this present-day world is a man of qualities?'" The abrupt inquiry receives no justification and perhaps needs none, for the problem of moral will that is found at the origin of Sanskrit literature and that continues to shape much of its history is ever with us. Nārada, a kind of deus ex machina whose function, however, is to inaugurate action rather than conclude it, here responds to Vālmīki's question with a synopsis of the principal action of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story. It is as if the poet were receiving the legend of Rāma as it may have existed in

94. See *Raghuvaṃśa* 15.63 (and *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.4.21), and *Uttararāmacarita* (beginning from 2.5). According to Rājaśekhara, Sarasvatī, "out of good will toward Vālmīki . . . secretly made over to him beautifully versified language" *(sacchandāṃsi vacāṃsi)* (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā* p. 7).

95. According to a late commentator, although the authority of a text obviously cannot be established by the text's own claims to authority, that of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is based on the fact that it was composed by an absolutely reliable witness, the supreme sage Vālmīki (Mādhavayogin's *Kataka,* vol. 1, p. 30). Presumably no further corroboration was required.

some unadorned, popular oral form (in much the same way, in fact, that Aśvaghoṣa was to take a documentary Middle-Indic version of the life of the Buddha and turn it into a courtly Sanskrit poem).

The critical moment in the narrative comes when, taking leave and musing over the tale Nārada has told, Vālmīki sees an act of violence at the riverside: a hunter shoots one of a mating pair of birds, and the poet in his pity *(śoka)* bursts out with a curse that has the form of verse *(śloka),* the linguistic affinity here corroborating an ontological affinity in accordance with ancient belief. Astonished at his own spontaneous invention, the poet returns to his dwelling to find waiting for him Brahmā, the supreme deity of Sanskrit knowledge, with his four faces constantly reciting the four Vedas. Brahmā explains that Vālmīki has just created verse and has done so through the god's will. He commands him to compose in verse the full story of Rāma, both the public and private doings, and assures him that all he tells in his poem will be absolutely true. As Vālmīki begins to meditate, the whole of the story enters his consciousness; he becomes truly the omniscient narrator, and using his new formal skills he transforms the legend into *kāvya.* He teaches the entire poem, word for word, to two young ascetics, Kuśa and Lava, who are shown to memorize the whole of the text and chant it "just as they were taught it," and who perform the work in the presence of Rāma himself. What we are listening to or reading when we read or hear the *Rāmāyaṇa* is what Rāma himself once heard—and those who sang it to him were in fact his two lost sons. The truth of Rāma's moral vision, and the veracity of the text in which it is embodied, are certified by the protagonist himself and the sons who are his second self. The poem is not only "sweet," self-conscious in its rhetoric and aesthetic, but a "mimetically exact account," a perfect representation of what really happened.[96]

The text itself, then, as well as the many later ethnohistorical accounts, affirms that Sanskrit literature had its beginning in Vālmīki's work. And this accords with the categories of later theory, which as we have seen radically differentiates *kāvya* from all earlier textuality (Veda, *purāṇa,* and the like). But to repeat: exactly what began with the *Rāmāyaṇa,* what was new and made it *kāvya* and nothing else, are questions that stubbornly persist, and it is no easy matter to provide historically sensible answers. At this point we may try our third approach and attempt to supplement the arguments of the text and the tradition with whatever else we can discover of literary reality.

While the claim to formal innovation at the most literal level of octosyllabic verse is clearly anachronistic, there is more formal complexity to the *Rāmāyaṇa* than this, and it may be in the range of its complex meters and other techniques of prosody and trope, less common in earlier forms of tex-

---

96. *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.4, especially vv. 12 and 16 (and, for the role of god's will in the creation of verse, see 2.30: *macchandād evā te brahman pravṛtteyaṃ sarasvatī*); cf. Pollock 1984: 82–83.

tuality, that a measure of its newness lies. Perhaps, however, it is somehow the fact that the vehicle for such formal features is Sanskrit itself, rather than some other form of Old or Middle Indo-Aryan. The text may be elusive here, but surely it intimates something significant by the authorizing presence of Brahmā, the very voice of Sanskrit. More subtly, the text hints that its newness resides not so much in form and linguistic medium but in its recording in metrical Sanskrit of something previously not thought worthy of registering in such a way. Unlike the Veda with its accounts of transcendent and mythic experience, it is the personal response to human experience that fundamentally marks the *Rāmāyaṇa* and all Sanskrit *kāvya,* even when the theme itself is transcendent and mythic. "I was overcome with pity"—the poet speaks in rare first person—"this issued forth from me; it must be poetry and nothing else." It was to become a staple of later Sanskrit criticism that the literary work expresses the emotional subjectivity of the writer: only the poet who is himself a man of passion can create a poetic world of passion.[97] On this view, it is because the poet himself felt pity that there can exist the poetry of pity *(karuṇarasa)* traditionally held to lie at the core of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Perhaps it is this conception of experience and textuality that was viewed as unprecedented. Then again, what made the poem new could be the more mundane but decisive factor that it was a text committed to writing when this was still a relatively new skill in the subcontinent. Or, finally, perhaps *kāvya* began in the sense that, for the first time, the culture found one of its examples useful or important enough to preserve—or rather, the culture preserved it precisely because it was the sole example of its kind, a first poem without a second.

These issues are so hard to disentangle because they are in fact historically entangled. Innovations in form, genre, subject matter, language, medium, and mentality all combined to condition the emergence of Sanskrit *kāvya.* Two of these in particular, the use of the Sanskrit language as such for the production of *kāvya* and the widespread adoption of writing and its impact, merit closer if necessarily brief attention; for if we do not understand that Sanskrit itself, in a sense, no less than writing *began,* we cannot understand how Sanskrit literature itself could.[98]

When discussing the word *saṃskṛta* and its primary meanings I alluded to the language's ancient associations with Vedic liturgy and related practices of knowledge and ritual. That at some epoch Sanskrit emerged from the liturgical realm to which it had largely been restricted and became available for

---

97. So Ānandavardhana: *śṛṅgārī cet kaviḥ kāvye jātaṃ rasamayaṃ jagat* (*Dhvanyāloka* p. 498). For brief remarks on the expression theory of art and its fate in Sanskrit criticism, see Pollock 1998b.

98. A fuller consideration of the two questions, from which the following is compressed, is available in Pollock 1996 and forthcoming.

new cultural functions such as *kāvya* and the inscribed political praise-poem *(praśasti)* associated with *kāvya* is not in doubt. What remains disputed is when this happened, and under what conditions. Inscriptions and testimony from nonliterary texts, among other evidence, combine to suggest that the invention of *kāvya* was relatively late, not long before the beginning of the common era—that is to say, as many as eight centuries or more after the Sanskrit language in its archaic form was first attested on the subcontinent.

For the first four centuries of literacy in South Asia (beginning about 250 B.C.E.), Sanskrit was never used for inscriptions, whether for issuing a royal proclamation, glorifying martial deeds, commemorating a Vedic sacrifice, or granting land to Brahman communities. The language for public texts of this sort was Prakrit. Abruptly in the second century, and increasingly thereafter, Sanskrit came to be used for such public texts, including the quite remarkable *kāvya*-like poems in praise of kingly lineages. Nothing suggests that prior to this time there were any comparable inscriptional texts that have since been lost. What epigraphy establishes for us is not the latest date for the existence of literature in Sanskrit (as is usually assumed) but rather the earliest. It provides evidence not of a renaissance of Sanskrit culture after centuries of supposed Jain and Buddhist countercultural hegemony (another old and still common view) but of the invention of a new kind of Sanskrit culture altogether.

This conclusion is exactly what is suggested by the testimony of other realms of cultural activity. From among the vast library of early Sanskrit texts, no evidence compels belief in the existence of *kāvya* before the last centuries B.C.E., if that early. Our first actual citations from Sanskrit *kāvya* are found in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (Great commentary) on the grammar of Pāṇini. The materials he cites, if astonishingly thin for a work on the Sanskrit language some 1500 printed pages in length, suggest a state of *kāvya* reasonably developed in form and convention.[99] The problem is not the data of literary culture in the *Mahābhāṣya,* however meager, but the date of the author, Patañjali. The evidence usually adduced for an early date is ambiguous and meager; the most compelling arguments place him no earlier than the middle of the second century of the common era.[100]

The ideology of antiquity and the cultural distinction conferred by sheer age have seduced many scholars into attempting to push the date for the in-

---

99. Patañjali, however, refers to a poet by name only once, mentioning "the poem composed by Vararuci" (*vārarucaṃ kāvyam,* on 4.3.101) (this is also the single use of the word *kāvya* in the sense of "literature" in the entire *Mahābhāṣya*). He mentions three literary works, the *ākhyāyikā*s, or prose narratives, *Vāsavadattā, Sumanottā* (on 4.2.60), and *Bhīmarathā* (on 4.3.87), though we do not know for a fact that any of these were in Sanskrit. Note that Prakrit works were often referred to by Sanskrit names (*Setubandha, Pañcabāṇalīlā,* etc.).

100. Frauwallner 1960: 111.

vention of *kāvya* deeper into the first millennium B.C.E. Everywhere, however, we run into problems. The arguments most recently offered for an early date of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the final (or so-called monumental) form we have it today—before the rise of Buddhism in the fifth century B.C.E.—are unpersuasive. The conceptual world of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* which knows and reproduces core features of late Maurya political thought, is post-Aśoka (after 250 B.C.E.). Attributions in anthologies of *kāvya* verses to the grammarian Pāṇini (whose own date is largely conjectural but is conventionally placed in the mid-fourth century B.C.E.) are late and devoid of historical value. The corpus of plays discovered in Trivandrum in the early 1900s and ascribed to Bhāsa, which have been fantastically dated as early as the fourth century B.C.E., have been shown in a recent careful assessment to derive most probably from the Pallava court of the mid-seventh century. The very late date of the commencement of literary theory (not before the sixth century) suggests strongly that the object of its analysis was late as well. Consider that in Kashmir, the site of the most intense creativity in theory, the earliest *kāvya* we can locate in time with any confidence (the poet or dramatist Candra[ka] being undatable) is the (lost) work of Bhartṛmeṇṭha from the mid-sixth century.[101] Thus, inscriptions, testimonia, citations in literature, and the history of literary theory, to say nothing of philology—every piece of evidence hard and soft—prompt us to place the development of *kāvya* in the last century or two before the beginning of the common era. Moving it back appreciably before this date requires conjecture every step of the way and a fragile gossamer of relative dating.

If with the soberest accounts we locate the invention of Sanskrit *kāvya* near the beginning of the common era, we cannot easily dissociate it from the dramatically changed political landscape of southern Asia at the time, when ruler lineages from Iran and Central Asia had newly entered the subcontinent. Little of the precise nature of their social and political order is understood—the collected inscriptions issued by the principal groups, the Śaka and Kuṣāṇa, would not fill a couple of dozen printed pages. Some scholars may be right to see in their activities merely the consecration of a new trend rather than its creation. Yet the willingness that others show to link the new

101. See Goldman 1984: 18–23 on a pre-fifth-century date for the *Rāmāyaṇa* (contrast Pollock 1986: 23 ff.); Warder 1972–: vol. 2 (1974), pp. 103 ff. on "Pāṇini"; equally dubious is his early-third-century B.C.E. date for a Sanskrit drama by "Subandhu," pp. 110–11. On the Pallava connection of some of the Bhāsa plays see Tieken 1993 (if the character of the Prakrit some of the plays exhibit seems to require a somewhat earlier dating, nothing requires placing them before the second or third century). Candraka is mentioned in *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 2.16, after what Kalhaṇa calculates as more than a thousand years of Kashmiri history (colophon of chapter 1), and is the very first poet mentioned in a work preoccupied with literary history. Note, too, that the earliest complex metrical inscription in Sanskrit is the Mora step-well record of 50 B.C.E., part of which is in the *bhujaṅgavijṛmbhita* meter.

expansion in the ancient prestige economy of Sanskrit with their presence is, I believe, fundamentally correct.[102] For one thing, these new courts underwrote, or promoted, the development of new forms of cultural production, such as the political praise-poem, which appeared in Sanskrit for the first time in 150 C.E.—and what an extraordinary innovation it must have seemed, to behold the language of the Veda and sacred learning used in public in praise of a ruling Śaka overlord. For another, it is around this era that textual communities previously antagonistic to Sanskrit, such as Buddhists (many of them patronized by these ruling groups), began to adopt Sanskrit for both scriptural and literary purposes. The literary-cultural values that first came into prominence in this period were to remain core values of Sanskrit literature. The royal court, for instance, would become the primary arena for the creation and consumption of *kāvya*. The universalist aspirations that marked the political formations of the time would mark Sanskrit literature as well, and would limit any tendency toward localism or historical particularity. In every other area of literary communication—from lexicon, metric, tropes, and poetic conventions to character typology, narrative, plot, and the organization of elements that create the emotional impact of a work—a universal adherence to a normative aesthetic is discernible. To write *kāvya,* whether in Tamil country or Kashmir, in Kerala or Assam, was to engage in an activity whose rules, like those of chess or politics, were everywhere the same—though, again like the rules of chess or politics, they only regulated the moves and did not determine the outcome. Moreover, correctness in literary-language use and the informed appreciation of literature not only would come to define cultural virtuosity but would become signs of kingly virtue: every king must be a learned king, and learned above all in *kāvya,* both in creating and appreciating it.

Echoes of all these developments can be found in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa,* both as a poem and as a cultural practice. For example, at its core it is poetry about polity, offering an extended meditation on the nature of the king: at once a divine being, capable of transcendent acts of power (stimulating the aesthetic emotion of *vīra,* the feeling of the heroic), and a human being, for whom suffering is ineluctable (stimulating the aesthetic emotion of *karuṇa,* the feeling of sadness). Its social milieu is courtly, too: the text shows itself to be performed before king Rāma, as it was performed in fact before countless overlords. Everywhere that the text circulated it carried a vision of kingly behavior—and a vision of the practice of *kāvya* as well—that everywhere inspired emulation. And, to return to the question of beginnings, the fact that

102. Sylvain Lévi's article of 1904, though extreme in some of its formulations and flawed in some of its particular arguments, is nonetheless an important, and unjustly ignored, contribution to the debate. The arguments were restated by Sircar in 1939, and have yet to be adequately answered.

the *Rāmāyaṇa* was the first text to use the word *saṃskṛta* in reference to the language it uses may reflect that it was the first to use that language for the kind of text it is.[103]

Another reason for the *Rāmāyaṇa's* status as first poem may have to do with its relationship to writing and the possibility that it was one of the earliest major texts to be preserved, if not composed, in written form. We have become accustomed to hearing of the importance of printing for the creation of literature in modernity. What marks the true watershed in South Asia is writing, along with its complex relations with a changing but enduring oral culture. From the middle of the third century B.C.E., when scholars in the Maurya chancellery brilliantly adapted the imported technology of writing to Indic language use, literacy spread across the subcontinent and beyond, never to be lost, with such dramatic consequences for literary creation and preservation that, in comparison, the later transition to print seems almost a historical footnote.[104]

The mid-third century is, I have suggested, the outermost historical limit of Vālmīki's *kāvya.* Some formative relationship to writing, then, cannot be ruled out a priori. Yet the manuscript tradition is sui generis. It is impossible to reconstruct an archetype; instead, the work must have been written down at different times and places, as transcriptions of oral performances of a more or less memorized text (attempts to show the presence of standard oral improvisational techniques have been unconvincing). At all events, it may have been the very impulse to preserve the work through the new technology of writing that contributed to its status as the primeval poem. The representation of pure orality that opens the monumental version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* may confirm rather than belie the literacy of its transmission and even origins. The entire metanarrative—Vālmīki's receiving the story orally, spontaneously creating a new versified speech form, using it to compose his *kāvya* through pure contemplation, and teaching it to Rāma's sons, who memorize and perform it orally—displays precisely the kind of reflexivity about the oral and nostalgia for its powers that would be irrelevant if not incomprehensible in a world ignorant of writing. Far from being the documentary account of oral creation and transmission it purports to be, the prelude to the *Rāmāyaṇa* is better seen as an attempt to reimagine orality and recapture its authenticity in a post-oral world. As a staged oral communicative situation, it closely parallels narratives of beginnings in other newly literate, and self-consciously literate, cultures.[105]

---

103. *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* 5.28.18, *vāk saṃskṛtā,* "Sanskrit speech."

104. A general review of recent scholarship on writing in India is offered by Salomon 1995.

105. On the Old French *chansons de geste* see Gumbrecht 1983: 168; the literacy underlying the very exemplum of oral metanarratives, the dream of Caedmon, is argued by Irvine 1994: 431 ff. The manuscript history of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is discussed in Pollock 1984.

Such speculation aside, there can be no doubt that Sanskrit literary culture was thoroughly imbued with and conditioned by writing from its earliest period. More precisely stated, it is writing itself that made *kāvya* historically possible as a cultural practice. So little studied is this question that we fail to realize just how literate Sanskrit literary (and general) culture was, as well as the degree to which writing was constitutive of literature in both the cosmopolitan and vernacular periods. At the same time, we need to recognize that the role of writing was conditioned by the enduring ideology of orality, along with the actuality of oral performance.

That the participants in Sanskrit literary culture were thoroughly familiar with writing from an early date is repeatedly confirmed by the casual references to the practice in Sanskrit *kāvya* itself. In the works of Kālidāsa, for example, literacy is represented as a common and unremarkable skill.[106] Later, of course, for a poet like Rājaśekhara (fl. 930), writing material constitutes "basic equipment of the science of literature" (though the real basic equipment, he notes, is *pratibhā,* genius), and the daily routine of the poet is unthinkable without it.[107] This is so even for poets who, unlike Rājaśekhara, worked outside the court, such as the author of the tenth-century *Śivamahimnaḥ stotra* (Hymn to Śiva's greatness): He was only hyperbolizing his own real practice when he wrote this lovely verse:

> If the inkwell were the ocean and the ink as black as the Black Mountain,
> if the pen were a twig of the Wishing Tree and the manuscript leaf the earth,
> if the writing went on forever, and the Goddess of Learning herself were to
>   write,
> even then the limit of Your powers could never be reached.[108]

A drier India might have preserved for us the hard evidence to show that the age of Sanskrit oral composition and transmission ended when the age of *kāvya* began. But the oldest manuscript remains of *kāvya* that we do possess, second- or third-century fragments of the work of Aśvaghoṣa discovered in Central Asia, testify by their very existence that Sanskrit literature circulated not in oral but in written form, and that it was consumed, so to speak, through the eye: read and studied and annotated on birch bark or palm leaf.[109]

---

106. The scene in *Śākuntala* in which the rustic heroine writes a letter to her urbane lover on a lotus leaf and reads it aloud (after 3.68) is deservedly celebrated; but we also find the celestial nymph Urvaśī writing a letter on birch bark to Purūravas (*Vikramorvaśīya* act 2.11 f.), and learn that the Vidyādhara women have magical materials available for writing their own love letters (*Kumārasaṃbhava* 1.7). See Malamoud 1997: 87–89, 99.

107. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* p. 50 ("basic equipment of the science of literature," *kāvyavidyāyāḥ parikara*).

108. *Śivamahimnaḥ stotra* v. 32.

109. Some of the fragments are provided with interlinear glosses from the hand of an attentive Tocharian reader. See Hartmann 1988.

This is not to imply that reading was the sole mode of consuming *kāvya,* let alone that oral knowledge was obsolescent. If literacy had become commonplace and writing central to the creation and reproduction of Sanskrit literary culture, other evidence suggests how different this was from the culture of modern literacy. Kālidāsa may tell us how the young prince Raghu, "by learning how to write, gained access to all things made of language *(vāṅmaya)* as if gaining access to the sea by way of a river," but he also shows us another prince who, though he learned to write as a child, only "acquired all the fruits of political wisdom when he frequented those mature in oral knowledge."[110] If the culture of *kāvya* is unthinkable without writing—and we have to pass over in silence here the many features of style, structure, and intertextuality that are constitutive of Sanskrit literature and unavailable in a purely oral world—literacy in premodern India should never be equated directly with learning (as we might assume from the notion of the *litteratus* in Latinate Europe). Nor should it be taken as the sole or even the principal mode of experiencing *kāvya.* That mode remained listening—but listening to a manuscript being read aloud. This was so even for supposedly popular oral forms such as ancient lore *(purāṇa).* A seventh-century work dramatically describes for us a professional reader. And a striking figure he is: dressed in the finest cloth of Pauṇḍra, eyes jet-black with *kohl,* lips brilliant red from chewing betel nut, he places his book before him on a reading stand. Untying the book he opens it to the place marked by a bookmark for the morning reading, takes up a sheaf of manuscript pages and then,

> As the brilliant white glints from his teeth seem to wash away the dirty ink from the letters with sparkling water, or to bestrew the book with a shower of white petals, he reads out the ancient lore spoken by the God of Wind. And as he does, he charms the listeners' minds by the sweet modulation of his recitative *[gīti],* sounding like the anklets of Sarasvatī herself, Goddess of Speech, who must be dwelling inside his mouth.[111]

For public readings of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* we have massive evidence, but even *kāvya* occasionally thematized its own literate-oral performance. In his twelfth-century courtly epic Maṅkha describes how he read out his work from a written text (the act that in fact constituted its publication) before a large audience at his brother's literary salon. Maṅkha's depiction of the magic by which inscribed letters are transformed into sound (written with the description of the *purāṇa* reciter in his memory) serves well to suggest the fascination that literacy continued to exercise in a culture

110. *Raghuvaṃśa* 3.28, 18.46 ("oral knowledge," *śruta*).
111. *Harṣacarita* pp. 85–86 ("professional reader," *pustakavācaka;* "marked by a bookmark for the morning reading" [or: "marking the portion read by the morning reader"], *prābhātikaprapāṭhaka;* "modulation," *gamaka*).

where orality remained, in some measure, alive. When his guru, Ruyyaka, the celebrated literary theorist, invited him to recite his poem, Maṅkha

> spread out his manuscript-book: The leaves appeared to be hidden under hundreds upon hundreds of letters—so many dark drops of ichor flowing from the temples of the cow elephant that was Sarasvatī, Goddess of Learning.
>
> The letters—black pearls of the jewelry of the Goddess of Speech—irresistibly attracted his eyes. And having spread the book out he calmly recited his poem in a voice that rang like the anklets of the Goddess of Knowledge dancing inside his mind.
>
> And as his poem took to its unearthly path and entered their ears, the listeners showed their pleasure by constantly shaking their heads, while the dark stubble on their cheeks stood erect and seemed to make manifest the letters of poems their ears in times past had drunk in, and were now expelling.
>
> Like specks of dust from the feet [or: words] of the Goddess of Speech, the rows of letters thus made manifest, at every step [or: word] and in consonance with the poem, brought forth a miracle: On gaining entrance into their ears [dustlike though these black letters were,] they produced teardrops in the eyes of those good men, in equal measure to their joy.[112]

The reading at an end, Maṅkha made an offering of the "book of the poem," the form in which it ultimately existed, to the Great God Śiva. Both writing and recitation, it is clear, were constitutive of literary culture, as well as of each other.

Such oral performance, along with the well-documented (if unfamiliar) power of memorization that operates in a tradition where texts are objects for listening, constitutes one importantly different feature of the medium of Sanskrit (and generally South Asian) literature in comparison with other forms. But there are additional and larger consequences for Sanskrit literary culture as a whole that derive from this persistent orality. For one thing, if literature is communicated largely through oral performance, then in addition to whatever significations and functions we may imagine, it represents a social, indeed almost a collective or even congregational, phenomenon. As such it typically speaks, thematically, to the concerns of a social collectivity and will change as the relevant collectivity changes, as happens under

---

112. *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 25.142–45. ("spread out his manuscript-book," *vyastārayat pustakam;* "recited," *paṭhan;* "feet/words," *pada;* "in consonance with the poem," *kāvyavaśaṃvada,* presumably meaning that the letters when recited conveyed exactly the information that the poem—conceived as something separate from its graphic realization—intended to convey; "book of the poem," *kāvyapustakam*). See also 25.10 for public recitation as a kind of publication, and 25.150 for the author's ritual offering of his book to Śiva.

conditions of vernacularity. For another thing, Sanskrit poetry in recitation came alive in the minds of listeners in a way that purely bookish literature—works of mute, dead letters such as those of Western modernity—can hardly do. This is a fact that takes on visible shape in the manuscript histories of many poems. The literary work of Bhartṛhari (sixth century), for example, shows what it can mean for fully literate literature—produced by a literate poet and via inscription—to enter the vortex of oral reproduction. The manuscripts of his *Śatakatrayam* (The three hundreds) show countless variants—not scribal errors or learned corrections but clearly oral variants in what by any standard still counts as fundamentally a literate culture. A living tradition, then, carries costs for contemporary text-critical and other literary scholarship. Or perhaps better put: The text as unitary entity—however much this is required by the participants' own insistence on authorial intentionality—is constantly and in some cases irremediably destabilized by the messy business of bringing literature to life in a world of oral performance.

Whichever factor, or more probably, combination of factors, we decide to take as decisive and however we then choose to answer the question of why Sanskrit literature is said to begin, we should not lose sight of the fact that it is said to begin at all. Somewhere in the Vālmīki story lies embedded the important truth that at some time, and for the first time, a new kind of text came to be composed in Sanskrit: one that was formally innovative, crucially dependent on the new technique of inscription, this-worldly in its social location, centrally concerned with the realm of human emotion, and for which a new name, *kāvya,* would be used. This all occurred in a new world, too, where new social-political energies and practices were coming into being that would shape Sanskrit literature for the next millennium—until those energies dissipated and practices changed so much that a living literary culture could no longer be sustained.

Sanskrit Literature Ends

Even if the beginnings of Sanskrit *kāvya* elude precise location in time, the very fact of its commencement is unanimously asserted by the Sanskrit tradition and not open to doubt from historical scholarship. But can we say the same thing about its end? Considering the fact that India's Sahitya Akademi (Academy of Letters) awards prizes for literature in Sanskrit as one of the twenty-two officially acknowledged living literary languages, one might be inclined to argue that Sanskrit literary culture has not in fact ended. What is undeniable is that its vital signs have changed over time. If we look at three episodes of change—Kashmir after the twelfth century, sixteenth-century Vijayanagara, and Delhi-Vārāṇasī in the seventeenth century—it may be possible to learn something about the mortality of this culture, and what in the

intellectual, social, or political spheres had been required to keep it fully alive.[113]

Sanskrit literary culture in Kashmir, as noted earlier, does not enter history before the sixth century (with the poet Bhartṛmeṇṭha), but by the middle of the twelfth century more innovative literature was being written there than perhaps anywhere else in South Asia. The audience before which Maṅkha read out his *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* indicates the vibrancy of literary culture in the 1140s. In addition to Ruyyaka, the greatest literary theorist of the century, and Kalhaṇa, author of the remarkable historical poem *Rājataraṅgiṇī,* a host of men were present who embodied the literary-cultural values of the age: Trailokya, "who was as accomplished in the dry complexities of science as he was bold in the craft of literature, and thus seemed the very reincarnation of Śrī Tutātita" (i.e., Kumārila); Jinduka, who "bathed in the two streams of [Mīmāṃsā] thought, of Bhaṭṭa and Prabhākara, and thereby washed off the pollution of the Kali age," and who at the same time wrote "goodly verse"; Jalhaṇa, "a poet to rival Murāri and Rājaśekhara"; Maṅkha's brother Alaṅkāra, who wrote literary works that "circulated widely in manuscript form" and made him the peer of Bāṇa.[114] In short, this was a time and place where the combination of intellectual power and aesthetic sophistication was manifested that marked Sanskrit literary culture at its most brilliant epochs. What makes this particular generation of Sanskrit poets so noteworthy, however, is that it turned out to be Kashmir's last.

Within perhaps fifty years, creative Sanskrit culture in Kashmir all but vanished. The production of literature in all of the major genres ceased. The last *mahākāvya* was written around 1200. No more drama was produced, whether historical or fictional *(nāṭaka; prakaraṇa),* no more prose or verse romance *(kathā)* or historical narrative *(ākhyāyikā);* no more collections of lyric poetry *(śataka, kośa).* The wide repertory of forms was reduced to the *stotra* (hymn or prayer), hitherto near the margins of literary culture. No new literary theory was ever again produced; the last such work dates from the late twelfth century. And as a whole the generation immediately following Maṅkha's is a near-total blank.[115] When in the fifteenth century Sanskrit literary culture again manifested itself in Kashmir, at the court of Sultan Zain-

113. This section is abridged from Pollock 2001.

114. *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 25.26 ff. ("circulated widely in manuscript form," *patralabdhadūragati,* v. 46). Except for stray anthology citations, the works of all the writers mentioned have been lost.

115. One exception is Jayānaka, who left Kashmir in search of patronage and found it in Ajmer, where around 1190 he wrote the *Pṛthvīrājavijaya,* a remarkable literary biography of Pṛthvīrāja III Chauhan (cf. Pollock 1993). Aside from Jayānaka's poem, the only text we know of from the entire century and a half following Maṅkha is the *Stutikusumāñjali* of one Jagaddhara, c. 1350–1400, a grammarian. The last *mahākāvya* is the unambitious *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* of Jayaratha, and the last major literary-theoretical text is the *Alaṅkāraratnākara* of Śobhākaramitra (both twelfth to thirteenth century).

ul-ʿābidīn (r. 1420–1470), it was a radically diminished formation in respect to both what people wrote and how, historically, they regarded their work. Nothing shows this more poignantly than the major texts from the court: two appendices to Kalhaṇa's history, *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (by Jonarāja and his student Śrīvara). Both lament the disappearance of poets, and both readily admit to a creative inferiority that is anyway unmistakable.[116] No Kashmiri Sanskrit literature ever again circulated outside the valley, as it used to do. Many important literary works survived through recopying in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but virtually all originate from the twelfth century or earlier. Despite the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*'s habit of noting the great writers and scholars that populated earlier courts, neither of its continuations mentions any Sanskrit works either for the three-hundred year interval separating them from Kalhaṇa or for their own periods.[117] In brief, we did not lose the great post-1200 Sanskrit literature of Kashmir; it was never written. The kind of Sanskrit literary culture that remained alive in Kashmir was a culture reduced to reproduction and restatement.

How are we to account for the fact—which we can now see was a fact—that one of the most intensely creative sites for the production of Sanskrit culture in twelfth-century South Asia collapsed by the thirteenth century and was never to be revived? One factor seems to have been transformations in the social and political spheres, "troubles in the land," as Jonarāja put it around 1450, "or, perhaps, the evil fate of the kings themselves."[118] With accelerating intensity during the first centuries of the millennium what we might identify as the courtly-civic ethos of Kashmir came undone. One cannot read in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* itself the account of the start of this collapse without being numbed by the stories of violence, treachery, madness, suicide, impiety, and insurrection. Already in the mid-twelfth century the court had ceased to be a source of inspiration to the creative artist; no one shows this better than Maṅkha himself. The picture we get from Jonarāja's account of the three centuries separating him from Maṅkha and Kalhaṇa is likewise one of near total dissolution of orderly life in urban Kashmir, to be set right only by Zain-ul-ʿābidīn a century after the establishment of Turkic rule in Kashmir, around 1420. It is not easy to grasp the deep reasons for the two hundred years of social implosion before this time—during which "Hindu" rule, to use Jonarāja's idiom, continued, and the presence of Turks in the

116. *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Jonarāja vv. 6, 13, 26; *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Śrīvara 1.1.9–12, 3.6. Cf. 1.1.12 in particular: "Not a single great poet is left to teach the men of today, who have so little talent for poetry themselves."

117. Jonarāja offers nothing on this order. When Śrīvara does mention literary production among his contemporaries, it is *deśa,* or regional, literature, by which he meant *Persian,* not Kashmiri (as 1.4.39 shows).

118. *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Jonarāja, v. 6.

valley was insignificant—but what is clear is that when it occurred, Sanskrit literary culture imploded with it.

Different circumstances seem to account for the slow depletion of energy in Sanskrit literary culture in Vijayanagara. Named after its capital city in Karnataka, this remarkable transregional political formation ruled much of India below the Vindhya mountains from the Arabian Sea to the borders of Orissa between 1340–1565. In stark contrast to Kashmir at the time, Sanskrit literary production here was continuous and intense, and the domain of cultural politics of which it formed part was far more complex. For this was a multilingual empire, where literary production occurred also in Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu. In Telugu especially, a large amount of strikingly new literature was produced through Vijayanagara courtly patronage, including the poetry of Śrīnātha and Tikanna; the emperor Kṛṣṇadevarāya (r. 1509–1529) himself used Telugu for his most important work, and one of the great texts of political imagination in the sixteenth century, the *Āmuktamālyadā* (The girl who gave her garland to God).[119]

Vijayanagara's Sanskrit literature, by contrast, presents a picture of an exhausted literary culture. It is difficult, in fact, to identify a single Sanskrit literary work that continued to be read after it was written, that circulated to any extent beyond the domain where it was composed, that attracted a commentator, was excerpted in an anthology, or entered a school syllabus. Much may have been destroyed when the city was sacked in 1565, but the works of the major court poets and personalities survive. One of the more compelling questions these works raise is how they survived at all.[120] The vital literary energies of the time had been rechanneled into regional languages; nothing shows this better than the different reception histories of two texts of the period. Kumāravyāsa's Kannada *Bhārata* (c. 1450) not only circulated widely in manuscript form but came to be recited all over the Kannada-speaking world, as the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* itself had been recited all over India a thousand years earlier. By contrast, the Sanskrit *Bhāratāmṛta* (Nectar of the Bhārata) of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's court poet, Divākara (c. 1520), lay inert in the palace library as soon as the ink was dry and remains unpublished to this day.

Sanskrit literary culture did retain social importance, and it continued to be taken seriously as a state enterprise. The celebrated minister and general Sāyaṇa, in the early decades of the empire, may have been more attracted to religious and philosophical textual work (his editing and commentarial

119. See Narayana Rao, chapter 6, this volume. On the paucity of courtly Kannada literature from Vijayanagara see also Nagaraj, chapter 5, this volume.

120. These include Aruṇagirinātha Ḍiṇḍima's *Rāmābhyudaya* (court of Devarāya II, r. 1424–1446); Divākara's *Bhāratāmṛta* (court of Kṛṣṇadevarāya); Rājanātha Ḍiṇḍima's *Acyutarāyābhyudaya* (court of Acyutadevarāya, r. 1530–1542), and poems attributed to several princesses and queens, starting with Gaṅgādevī's *Madhurāvijaya* (court of Bukka).

labors on the Vedas reached industrialized magnitude during the reigns of Harihara I [1336–1357] and Bukka [1344–1377]), but he also produced a new treatise on literary criticism and an anthology of poems.[121] Many of the later governors responsible for the actual functioning of the empire had a cultural literacy that exceeded the mere scribal and accountancy skills some have ascribed to them; they were men of considerable learning, if again only reproductive, and not original, learning.[122] But perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this scholarly reproduction was its qualitative superiority to the literary creativity of the period.

Something of the dilemma of Sanskrit in Vijayanagara—a literary culture at once politically fundamental and aesthetically enervated—can be suggested by a glance at a Sanskrit drama written by the emperor Kṛṣṇadevarāya himself, the *Jāmbavatīpariṇaya* (Marriage of Jāmbavatī). In its mythopolitical character—it celebrates the king's historic conquest of Kaliṅga—the work is typical of almost all the rest of Sanskrit literary production in the Vijayanagara world, whose very hallmark is the prominence of the project of empire to which it is so thoroughly harnessed. Virtually all the drama left to us is state drama; the long poems are *carita*s, *vijaya*s, or *abhyudaya*s (poetic chronicles, accounts of royal "victory," or comparable accounts of "success"), detailing this campaign and that military victory. All these genres have a long history, no doubt, but in comparison with the previous thousand years of Sanskrit poetry the Vijayanagara aesthetic is emphatically historicist-political. Perhaps this is one reason why none of these works, over the entire history of the existence of the empire, was able to outline its immediate context. Such at least is the inference one may draw from the manuscript history of the works, the absence of commentators, the neglect from anthologists, the indifference of literary analysts and teachers. In Vijayanagara Sanskrit was not dying as a mode of learned expression; Sanskrit learning in fact continued unabated during the long existence of the empire, and after. Something else—something terribly important—about Sanskrit literature here seems moribund. The realm of experience for which Sanskrit could speak literarily had palpably shrunk, as if somehow human life beyond the imperial stage had outgrown Sanskrit and required a vernacular voice. This shrinkage accelerated throughout the medieval period, leaving the concerns of empire, and finally the concerns of heaven, as the sole thematics.

Only once more would the larger realm of human experience find ex-

121. The treatise *Alaṅkārasudhānidhi* is unpublished; cf. Sarasvati 1968. The anthology *Subhāṣitasudhānidhi* was edited by K. Krishnamoorthy in 1968.

122. On the culture of the *daṇḍanāyaka*s contrast Stein 1989: 124. Consider Sāḷuva Goppa Tippa Bhūpāla (a *daṇḍanāyaka* of Devarāya II), who wrote an important (and the only printed) commentary on Vāmana's late-eighth-century Kashmiri treatise on literary theory in addition to producing original works in Sanskrit on music and dance.

pression and make literary history in Sanskrit: in the poetry of Jagannātha
Paṇḍitarāja (d. c. 1670). And this was in a much reinvented form and un-
der circumstances more radically novel than the time and the place—Delhi,
1650—might suggest. In his literary oeuvre and in the course his life took,
Jagannātha marks a point of historic break in the history of Sanskrit literary
culture. His movements as a professional writer traveling in quest of pa-
tronage from region to region and court to court—from Andhra to Jaipur
and Delhi, and from Udaipur to Assam—show that the transregional space
that Sanskrit literature had occupied during the two preceding millennia
(which I map later in the chapter) persisted well into the seventeenth cen-
tury despite what are often represented as discontinuities in the political en-
vironment with the coming of the Mughals in the preceding century. In the
same way, Jagannātha's life as a court poet, and much of the work that he
produced in that capacity (like his panegyrics to the kings of Udaipur, Delhi,
and Assam), was no different from the lives and works of poets centuries
earlier. His masterpiece of literary analysis, the *Rasagaṅgādhara* (The Gaṅgā-
Bearer [Śiva] of aesthetic emotion), participates as a full and equal inter-
locutor in a millennium-long debate on the literary and shares the same as-
sumptions, procedures, and goals.

Yet Jagannātha marks a historical end point in a number of important
ways. If it can be said that his ontogeny recapitulated the phylogeny of San-
skrit literary culture, this was probably the last such case; we know of no later
poet who circumambulated the quarters of Sanskrit's cosmopolitan space.
While we should not exaggerate his artistic power, still, no later poet produced
literary works that achieved the wide diffusion of his *Rasagaṅgādhara* and of
his collection of poems, the *Bhāminīvilāsa* (Play of the beautiful woman). His
literary criticism is rightly regarded as the last original contribution to the
ancient conversation; thereafter all is reproduction. And if his panegyrics
are conventional—after all, they were meant to be—one senses in his lyrics
some new sensibility. In the stories that have gathered around his life, too,
he became the representative of the historical change that marked the new
social realities of India and made the late-medieval period late. For he is de-
scribed as a Brahman, belonging to a family hailing from the bastion of or-
thodoxy and tradition in the Veṅgināḍu region of Andhra Pradesh, who fell
in love with a Muslim woman and met his death—whether in despair or re-
pentance or defiance the legends are unclear—by drowning in the Gaṅgā
at Vārāṇasī.

Something very old died when Jagannātha died, but also something very
new. What was new in his literary oeuvre had much to do with his social mi-
lieu, the Mughal court of Shāhjahān (r. 1626–1656), where he was a client
of both Prince Dārā Shukoh and the courtier Āsaf Khān. The sometimes star-
tling intellectual and social and aesthetic experiment that marked this world
marked Jagannātha, too. What it meant for Sanskrit, Persian, and vernacu-

lar poets to gather in a common cultural space in Shāhjahānābād is an un-studied question. But Jagannātha's oeuvre suggests two important areas of innovation, one in the relationship between Sanskrit and both vernacular and Persian literature, the other in the kind of subjectivity that could find expression in literature.

A late-seventeenth-century history recounts Jagannātha's association with the great musician Tansen, and a collection of popular religious songs in the vernacular is attributed to him as well. None of this material has been pub-lished, let alone studied.[123] But it all would be consistent with hints in his writing of an important and perhaps new interaction with regional poetry. A verse in the *Rasagaṅgādhara,*

> Her eyes are not just white and black but made of nectar and poison.
> Why else, when they fall on a man, would he feel at once so strong and weak?

is almost certainly adapted from an earlier poem in Brajbhasha, and a verse of the great poet of the preceding generation, Bihārī Lāl, corresponds to one found in the *Bhāminīvilāsa.*[124] These examples are likely to be the tip of an iceberg. If we could see all of it, we would know what we do not at present know: how familiar Sanskrit and vernacular poets were with each other's work, what it meant to adapt poetry from one language into another, and what it was in the first place that influenced a poet's choice to reject his ver-nacular (and no longer just Prakrit and Apabhramsha) and continue to write in Sanskrit.

A similar new relationship with Persian literature is suggested by some po-ems included in Jagannātha's oeuvre concerning a Yavanī (Muslim) woman named Lavaṅgī. The historical reality of the poet's liaison with her is less im-portant than the fact that the verses about her got attached to his literary corpus, and to no one else's—and that they are verses of a sort written by no one either before him or after:

> I don't want royal elephants or a string of fancy horses,
> I wouldn't give a second thought to money, if Lavaṅgī,
> with those eyes that flash, those breasts that rise
> as she raises the water jug, were to say to me Yes.

123. The history is the *Sampradāyakalpadruma,* v.s. 1729 (= 1673) of one Viṭṭhalanātha, also called Manarañjana Kavi, who claimed to be a grandnephew of Jagannātha. Cf. Athavale 1968: 418, who also mentions the collection of Vaiṣṇava *bhajans, Kīrtanapraṇālīpadasaṃgraha.* It is not clear whether the author is the same Jagannātha.

124. "Her eyes are not just white": compare *Rasagaṅgādhara*, p. 365 (= *Paṇḍitarājakāvyasaṅ-graha* p. 58, v. 76), and *Bihārīratnākar* app. 2, v. 123; compare also *Bhāminīvilāsa* in *Paṇḍitarā-jakāvyasaṅgraha* p. 62, v. 127 (= *Rasagaṅgādhara* p. 258) and *Satsaī* v. 490. Mathuranath Shastri was the first to suggest (though he did not identify) the vernacular parallels in the Sanskrit in-troduction to his edition of *Rasagaṅgādhara* (1939: 28).

> Dressed in a dress as red as a rose,
> Lavaṅgī—with breasts heaving
> as she places the water jug on her head—
> goes off and takes along in the jug
> all the feeling in all the men's hearts.

> That Yavana girl has a body soft as butter,
> and if I could get her to lie by my side
> the hard floor would be good enough for me
> and all the comforts of paradise redundant.[125]

Part of what seems new here is probably due to a cultural conversation with Indo-Persian poetry made possible by Jagannātha's social location (he is credited with knowledge of Persian). For Lavaṅgī is assuredly a Sanskrit version of the *maḥbūb,* the ever-unattainable beloved of the Persianate lyric whose unattainability is epitomized by otherness: being a Christian (or Greek or Armenian) in earlier Persian *ghazal*s, or a Hindu in later Indo-Persian poetry, as in the following verse from the celebrated Khusrau (1253–1325):

> My face becomes yellow because of a Hindu beloved,
> O pain! He is unaware of my condition.
> I said, "Remove the weariness of my desire with your lips."
> He smiled and said, *"nāhī, nāhī."*[126]

Beside this new willingness to draw sustenance from Persian and vernacular traditions in order to reanimate Sanskrit poetry, Jagannātha's work evinces a significant new personalization of the poetic. While this seems to recover something from the distant past—the extraordinary energies of, say, Bhartṛhari—it adds something unprecedented, too. No one in Sanskrit literature had spoken in quite so self-referential a way before:

> He mastered *śāstra* and honored every rule of Brahman conduct;
> as a young man he lived under the care of the emperor of Delhi;
> now he has renounced his home and serves Hari in Madhupur.[127]
> Everything Paṇḍitarāja did he did like no one else in the world.

No one before had dared to make Sanskrit poetry out of personal tragedy, the death of one's child, for example:

---

125. *Paṇḍitarājakāvyasaṅgraha* p. 190, vv. 582, 584, 585. Sharma rightly remarks that nothing indicates that the verses about her are not Jagannātha's—in fact, quite the contrary (*Paṇḍitarājakāvyasaṅgraha* 1958: viii). The alternative view fatuously holds the poems to be "the production of his enemies" (Sastri 1942: 21). The *Sampradāyakalpadruma* (see n. 123) affirms that Jagannātha "married the daughter of a Sāha," a Muslim *(sāhasutā gahi).*

126. I am grateful to Sunil Sharma for allowing me to use his translation.

127. That is, Mathurā. There is a well-attested variant, "in the city of Śiva," that is, Vārāṇasī. It is there that, according to tradition, Paṇḍitarāja died.

> You didn't care how much your parents would worry,
> you betrayed the affection of your family. My little son,
> you were always so good; why did you run away
> to the other world?

let alone the death of one's wife:

> All pleasures have forgotten me;
> even the learning I acquired
> with so much grief
> has turned its back.
> The only thing that won't leave my mind,
> like an immanent god,
> is that large-eyed woman.

> Your beauty was like the food of gods to me
> and in my mind transformed into poetry.
> Without it now, most perfect of women,
> what kind of poet can I ever be?[128]

To be sure, there are complications to a simple interpretation of these verses, especially the last two, as autobiographical effusions of the poet.[129] But to participants in the culture who copied and recopied and circulated his texts, it seemed as reasonable that the greatest Sanskrit literary critic and poet of the age should compose a sequence of verses on the death of his wife as that this wife should have been a Muslim. Whether he married her or not, somehow the age demanded that he should have; whether he wrote the verses or not, someone did, and for the first time in Sanskrit. From all this, a certain kind of newness was born—but stillborn. There was to be no second Jagannātha.

Sanskrit learning as such certainly continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Sanskrit literature continued to be written. A colonial survey, for example, provides information on hundreds of new works composed in early-nineteenth-century Bengal. With rare exception, however, none of these entered onto school syllabi, none attracted commentarial attention, and most never circulated beyond the village in which they were composed. The depletion that such a pragmatics of literary culture suggests was no mere function of local transformations in Bengal, such as changes in patterns of patronage with the dissolution of the great landed estates; it is found throughout the Sanskrit cultural world, in courtly environments as well as rural. The Maratha court of Tañjāvūr in the early eighteenth century, for example, was a place of intense transformation, increasingly linked to a new

---

128. *Paṇḍitarājakāvyasaṅgraha* p. 78, v. 32; p. 90, v. 4; pp. 69–70, vv. 3, 10.

129. The interpretation of these and a number of poems in the *Karuṇavilāsa* is complicated by Jagannātha's own analysis of them in his *Rasagaṅgādhara* (examined in Pollock 2001).

world economy and intercontinental cultural flows (visitors and missionaries from Europe were common). Vernacular-language literary production showed considerable flair, and indeed, Sanskrit scholarship was of a high order.[130] But only one writer at the court stands out from the mass, Rāmabhadra Dīkṣita, and while two of his works, the *Patañjalicaritam* (The life of Patañjali) and the *Śṛṅgāratilakabhāṇa* (The satiric monologue of erotic ornament) retain interest for the quality of the imagination at work and the liveliness of the language, these texts, to say nothing of the rest of his oeuvre, hardly represent literary production commensurate with the dynamism of the time and place.[131] And what has been said of the state of Sanskrit literary vitality found at Tañjāvūr could be said of Jai Singh II's Jaipur in the early eighteenth century, or Krishnaraja Wodeyar's Mysore at the beginning of the nineteenth. Sanskrit literary production, while prominent, appears to have remained wholly internal to the palace. Not a single Sanskrit literary work of the period transcended its moment in time in the way, for example, that the work of Bihārī Lāl, chief poet at the court of Jai Singh's father, proved capable of doing.

In the south as in the north, at dates that vary in different regions and cultural formations, Sanskrit writers had ceased to make literature that made history. The reason for this, in the case of the nineteenth-century Burdwan literati interviewed by early colonial officers, is assuredly not their aspiration to fashion a literary-cultural order in which the fourth-century master Kālidāsa would have found himself perfectly at home; even less is it their failure to create literature to our own contemporary liking. Sanskrit literature ended when it became a practice of repetition and not renewal, when the writers themselves no longer evinced commitment to a central value of the tradition and a feature that defined literature itself: the ability to make literary newness, "the capacity," as a great Kashmiri writer put it, "to continually reimagine the world."[132]

It is no straightforward matter to configure these three endings of Sanskrit literary culture—and there are certainly others, with other characteristics— into a unified historical narrative. Some generalizations are nonetheless possible. Unlike old Greek literature, which ended with a single political act, the closing of the Academy by Justinian in 529, Sanskrit literature knows no

---

130. One new or newly invigorated form was the multilingual operetta, see Peterson 1998. Sanskrit scholars included Ḍhuṇḍhi Vyāsa, who composed his remarkable treatise on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Dharmākūtam,* and a valuable commentary on the *Mudrārākṣasa.*

131. See Raghavan 1952: 41 ff.

132. *prajñā navanvonmeśaśālinī pratibhā matā / tadanuprāṇanājīvadvarṇanānipuṇaḥ kaviḥ / tasya karma smṛtaṃ kāvyam* (Genius is the intellectual capacity to continually reimagine the world. It breathes life into description, and when a poet has achieved mastery in this, he produces work that can be called "poetry"). The verse is attributed to Bhaṭṭa Tauta (fl. 950) and cited by Ruyyaka in his commentary on *Kāvyaprakāśa* 1.1.

abrupt and singular moment of termination.[133] Instead, like the later history of Latin, Sanskrit's literary decline was entropic. At the same time, and because of this very entropy, Sanskrit, like Latin though not so self-consciously, was the object of periodic renewals: forced rebirths stimulated by the politics of this or that region, as in the fifteenth-century Kashmiri sultanate of Zain-ul-ʿābidīn, or at the court of Krishnaraja Wodeyar in eighteenth-century Mysore.

These periodic renewals never succeeded, however. Other deeper forces of change were at work. These may not be easy to specify, but one may quickly dismiss the commonest explanation, which traces the decline of Sanskrit culture to the coming of Muslim power. Even the highly condensed evidence presented here proves how false this reading is. What sapped the strength of Sanskrit literature was not "alien rule unsympathetic to *kāvya*" and a "desperate struggle with barbarous invaders."[134] It was more often than not the case that the barbarous invader sought to revivify *kāvya*. What destroyed the literary culture of Sanskrit were much longer-term cultural, social, and political changes. Although there were additional social sites for Sanskrit literary production and consumption, in late-medieval Kashmir the enfeeblement of urban political institutions that had previously underwritten Sanskrit seems to have been an especially significant force in the erosion of Sanskrit literary creativity (a process that had begun a full two centuries before the establishment of Turkic rule). In Vijayanagara, it was in part a heightened competition among new languages seeking literary-cultural dignity. But these factors did not operate everywhere in the same degree. There were no powerful exemplars of literary vernacularization in Kashmir to stimulate the kind of competition Sanskrit encountered elsewhere; if anything it may have been the new supraregional idiom of Persian that challenged Sanskrit's preeminence. In Vijayanagara the institutional structure of Sanskrit literary culture remained fully intact, but literary expression was increasingly constrained by an imperial historicist project. Those who had anything literarily new to say, beyond the celebration of imperial power, said it in Telugu or Kannada; those who did not continued to write in Sanskrit.

The communicative competence of readers and writers of Sanskrit during the late-medieval and early-modern periods remained largely undiminished throughout India. Even in the north, where political change had been most pronounced, great scholarly families continued to reproduce themselves without interruption, and ceased to do so only when a conscious decision was made to abandon Sanskrit in favor of the increasingly more com-

---

133. Fuhrmann 1983.
134. Warder 1972–: vol. 1, pp. 8, 217, where he continues the fantasy: "In the darkest days *[kāvya]* kept the Indian tradition alive. It handed on the best ideals and inspired the struggle to expel tyrannical invaders."

pelling vernacular. A good example here is Keśavdās, the great Brajbhasha poet at the court of Orccha in the early seventeenth century, who, though born into a distinguished Sanskrit family, self-consciously chose to become a vernacular poet.[135] And it is Keśavdās and others like him—Bihārī Lāl and the rest—whom we recall from this place and time, and not a single Sanskrit creative writer (in other domains, such as philosophy and law, Sanskrit remained unchallenged, as the work of someone like Mitramiśra, a legal scholar at Orccha, shows full well). For reasons that in each case demand careful historical analysis, at different times and in different places but increasingly everywhere, it became more important—politically, socially, and aesthetically more urgent—to speak locally rather than globally. Sanskrit, the idiom of a cosmopolitan literature, died over the course of the long vernacular millennium in part, it seems, because cosmopolitan talk made less and less sense in an increasingly regionalized world.[136]

THE PLACES OF SANSKRIT LITERARY CULTURE

Literary culture is a phenomenon that exists not just in time but also in space. There are at least three ways we might think of the location of literary culture: as discursively projected by the texts themselves, as concretely embodied in their dissemination, and as conditioned by the sites of production and consumption. The discursive projection of space happens narratively (where stories take place) as well as critically (in spatial frameworks of literary analysis); such representations are internal to the tradition, and, again, are of first-order significance. The concrete embodiment of literary culture is produced by the circulation of manuscripts, and by their potential transformation in transit through processes of localization. The circulatory space of manuscripts and the conceptual space of discourse do not necessarily overlap, and asymmetries are as instructive as convergences. Finally, the sites of production and consumption concern the social locations (court, temple, school, and so on) that help shape the primary meanings and significations of literature.

The sociotextual community for which a literature is produced derives a portion of its self-understanding as a community from the very act of hearing, reading, performing, reproducing, and circulating literary texts. The conceptualization of space in literature and the embodiment of this concept in people are often importantly related to political formations, which exercise power over persons in space. Given the often close relationship between polity and cultural space, and the possibility that South Asian polity was something very different from what we know from European experience, the

---

135. See McGregor, chapter 16, this volume.
136. For further discussion see Pollock 1998a and 1998c.

places of literary culture present as complex a problem as its times. This is especially so in the case of Sanskrit, in view of the role it has increasingly been called upon to play in the construction of post-Independence culture: as the classical past that has prefigured, and thereby given legitimacy to, the modern nation.

Mapping Sanskrit Culture

It is astonishing to find, once we begin to look, how often literary narratives project Sanskrit culture as a spatialized phenomenon. This is not to claim for Sanskrit something unique or to imply that all the spaces Sanskrit literature creates are of the same conceptual order. But the very fact that producing a framework of reference is so dominant a concern has something of general importance to tell us about the character of Sanskrit literary culture, and the kind of frameworks it does produce has something very particular to tell us.

The maps that Sanskrit *kāvya* texts generate are often complex, producing a range of relevant spaces above and beyond the geographical, though physical place remains always central. Were we to possess an adequate history of the messenger poem *(dūtakāvya),* one of the most prolific genres in the South Asian literary world and one that by definition charts movement through space, we could demonstrate the shifting boundaries, and the varieties, of literary domains.[137] The earliest example in Sanskrit, the *Meghadūta* (Cloud messenger) of Kālidāsa, in fact offers a set of overlapping transparencies, so to speak, as the cloud journeys from periphery to center through a range of cultural landscapes. Most prominent is the topographical, as the cloud proceeds from the plains of the northern Deccan, Mālava, and the midlands, north to the mountains of the high Himalayas and its destination, Alakā, the magical kingdom of Kubera, overlord of demigods.[138] At the same time, a sociosexual landscape is recapitulated in the movement from the naive country girls and pastoralists' wives of the rural world to the urbane and beautiful ladies of the city of Ujjayinī and finally to the perfect woman, the hero's lover, in Alakā. Again, a more strictly literary-cultural landscape emerges as the cloud travels from the rustic, Prakritic world of the south to a sophisticated

137. On the *Pavanadūta* see later in the chapter, and Freeman's account, chapter 7, this volume, of the Malayalam (or Manipravalam) examples.

138. From Rāmagiri (Rāmtek, near present-day Nagpur) the cloud proceeds via the Āmrakūṭa and Revā rivers to Vidiśā in the Daśārṇa country, via the Vetravatī and Nirvindyā streams to Avanti and its town Viśālā, and then by the Śiprā river to the city of Ujjayinī. From Ujjayinī the cloud passes over other small rivers to Daśapura, Kurukṣetra, and on to the foothills of the Himalayas, Mount Kanakhala near Hardwar, the Krauñcarandhra Pass, Mount Kailāsa, Lake Mānasa, and Alakā.

courtly, decidedly Sanskritic world, with its consummation in the divine realm that Sanskrit poetry imagines as its ultimate referent.[139]

In the *Buddhacarita* (Deeds of the Buddha; second century), Aśvaghoṣa plots out the important locales in the life of the Buddha in northern and eastern Magadha (modern Bihar) as the prince pursues both a spiritual and physical quest, from one vision of the world to another (as represented by the teachers Bhṛgu, Arāḍa, and Udraka) and from his birthplace in Kapila-vastu to the site of his triumphs in Rājagṛha. A thousand years later, Bilhaṇa maps the literary courts important to a traveling poet in 1080, as he describes himself leaving home in Kashmir for the great centers of Sanskrit culture in the midlands, Gujarat, and the western coast, until finally he finds patronage at the court of the Western Cāḷukyas in the central Deccan.[140] Five centuries later still, the two demigods whose wanderings form the narrative frame of Veṅkaṭādhvarin's *Viśvaguṇādarśacampū* (The mirror of universal traits, c. 1650) take an aerial tour of India. They move quickly from Badarikāśrama in the Himalayas, Ayodhyā, Kāśī (Vārāṇasī), and Gurjaradeśa before beginning their more leisurely tour of the shrines and sites of southern India: the Nāyaka capital at Senji, the great temples and monasteries dedicated to Viṣṇu in southeast Andhra and Tamilnadu (while noticing the new English town of Madras on the coast) and those at Melkote in southern Karnataka and Uḍīpi on the west coast.[141] In all three cases, important circuits are being projected, whether of pilgrimage, patronage, or spiritual power—as in Kālidāsa's case circuits of topography, modalities of feeling, and culture—each specific to its historical moment.

To this diverse selection of mappings—imaginative, biographical, and re-ligiocultural (and others could easily be added)—across one and a half mil-lennia of Sanskrit literary culture we can juxtapose a far more significant and dominant macrospace plotted first and most insistently in the *Mahā-bhārata*.[142] This vast spatialization, largely bounded by the subcontinental

139. I have profited from discussion with my former student Yigal Bronner on the maps of the *Meghadūta*.

140. *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.87–101. Bilhaṇa traveled to Mathurā, Kānyakubja, Prayāga, Vārāṇasī, Mount Kālañjara and Ḍāhala country, or Tripur, in central Madhya Pradesh, thence to Saurāṣṭra (where he wrote the drama *Karṇasundarī* for the Chālukyan king Karṇa) and Koṅkana before proceeding to Kalyāṇa. The journey has something of an exile about it, and the writer longs to return home to "the good people of Kashmir" (v. 103). See further on the history of late twelfth-century Kashmir earlier in the chapter.

141. Most recently discussed in Narayana Rao et al. 1992: 1–12.

142. Other varieties requiring other kinds of analyses include the network of kingdoms de-scribed by the wanderings of the princes in the seventh-century *Daśakumāracarita;* the cultural geography of the *Samayamātṛkā* of Kṣemendra, whose heroine's picaresque adventures map the very self-consciously bounded world of eleventh-century Kashmir (*Laghukāvyasaṅgraha* pp. 355–66); and works like the Jain *Kuvalayamālā,* where pilgrimage, trade, and politics all seem to com-bine as the prince wanders from Jalor in the west to Bījāpur, Mathurā, and eastward to Vārāṇasī.

sphere, accompanies, even constitutes, most of the key narrative junctures in the epic tale itself: when the hero Arjuna departs on his exile at the beginning of the tale; when his brother Yudhiṣṭhira dispatches his four brothers to conquer the four directions in preparation for his imperial consecration; when war is declared and troops gather; when, after the war, the victors perform the horse sacrifice to confirm their universal dominion; and lastly, when the brothers renounce their overlordship and begin their "great departure," performing a last circumambulation of the world—of the sort repeatedly described and charted—to gain power over which their family had been destroyed and which they fittingly take leave of as they prepare to die.[143]

As in the case of the ethnohistorical praise-poems, it is the very existence, and the insistence, of this geography that merit attention, rather than its precision. In this the *Mahābhārata* may be doing nothing unusual; spatialization is a defining concern of much epic literature. But that is exactly the point. Each epic creates a relevant world, for which its vision of culture and power makes sense; and if this world can rightly be said to have created the epic in the first place, the epic recreates it in turn by its very narrative of location. A preeminent example here is the *Rāmāyaṇa,* a text also preoccupied with the geography of heroic action, epitomized by the spectacular aerial tour of the subcontinent during Rāma's homeward journey.[144] Its spatial vision was to some degree actualized in the Vijayanagara empire, which was founded

143. More detail is available in Pollock forthcoming. Arjuna charts a path from Indraprastha (near modern Delhi) north to Gaṅgādvāra and into the eastern Himalayas, southeast to Naimiṣa (Avadh region), east to Kauśikī (Mithilā), southeast to Gayā, and further to Vaṅga (eastern Bengal), south down the Kaliṅga (Orissan) coast, over to Gokarṇa on the west coast of present-day Karnataka, north to Prabhāsa and Dvārakā in Kathiawar (Gujarat), northeast to Puṣkara in Rajasthan, and thence back to Indraprastha (*Mahābhārata* 1.200–210). For the *digvijaya,* Arjuna proceeds to the north (Ānarta [north Gujarat], Kashmir, and Balkh [northern Afghanistan]); Bhīma to the east (Videha [Mithilā], Magadha, Aṅga [east Bihar], Vaṅga, Tāmralipi [south Bengal coast]); Sahadeva to the south (Tripur, Potana [north of Hyderabad], the lands of the Pāṇḍyas, Drāviḍyas, Coḍrakeralas, Andhras [peninsular India]); and Nakula to the west (Marubhūmi [Thar desert], Mālava, Pañcanada [Panjab], as far as the Pahlavas [Persia]) (*Mahābhārata* 2.23–29). The sacrificial horse wanders from Trigarta [Himachal Pradesh] to Prāgyotiṣa [western Assam], Maṇipūra, Magadha, Vaṅga, Cedi, Kāśī, Kosala, Draviḍa, Āndhra, Gokarṇa, Prabhāsa, Dvārakā, Pañcanada, and Gāndhāra (*Mahābhārata* 15.73–85). On their *mahāprasthāna* the Pāṇḍavas travel first to the Lauhityā (Brahmaputra) river in the east, "by way of the northern [i.e., northeastern] coast of the ocean to the southwest quarter," then to Dvārakā and from there to Himavān, Vālukārṇava (the great Ocean of Sand) and Mount Meru (*Mahābhārata* 17).

144. The journey from Laṅkā to Ayodhyā passes over the sea and the causeway at the southern shore, to Mount Hiraṇyanābha, Kiṣkindhā, Mount Ṛśyamūka, Pampā, Janasthāna, the Godāvarī river, Mount Citrakūṭa, the Yamunā and Gaṅgā, Śṛṅgaverapura, and home (*Rāmāyaṇa* 6.111; a beloved scene reworked in a number of *Rāmāyaṇa* retellings, from *Raghuvaṃśa* [chapter 13] onward; especially rich is Rājaśekhara's *Bālarāmāyaṇa* 10.26–96). The *Rāmāyaṇa* geography is more exoticized than that of the *Mahābhārata* and has provoked fantastic readings over the past century (see the brief comments of Goldman 1984: 27–28, and Lefeber 1996: 29–35).

where it was in northern Karnataka in part because of the site's historical *Rāmāyaṇa* associations. *Mahābhārata* space is recreated in later inscriptional accounts of royal conquest, which in turn find their way back into *kāvya*. The pillar inscription of Samudragupta (r. 335–376), for example, plots an epic space of Gupta power and was itself transformed into courtly epic by Kālidāsa in his account of the dynasty of the sun kings in the *Raghuvaṃśa* (chapter 4).[145] If the literary geography of power in Sanskrit culture sometimes sought and achieved a kind of symmetry with the aspirations of historical agents, these aspirations themselves often seem to have been shaped by literature.

The epic macrospace has, to be sure, a later history of its own. A range of vernacular domains of culture and power were to be defined in relationship to it when the transregional formation of Sanskrit, and accompanying visions of empire, gave way during the course of the second millennium to new, more regionalized forms of polity and culture. Such is the case with the earliest complete vernacularization of the *Mahābhārata,* Pampa's Kannada-language *Vikramārjunavijaya* (c. 950). Here the epic world has been shrunk to the narrower sphere where the Kannada language and the emerging forms of postimperial polity had application.[146] But the compression of space even finds expression in Sanskrit itself in the late medieval period. We have already observed how the *Viśvaguṇādarśacampū* projects a new circuit of religion and polity in seventeenth-century south India. In the same way, the *Pavanadūta* (Wind messenger) of Dhoyī, a poet at the court of Lakṣmaṇasena of Bengal in the late twelfth century, creates a new region of power by combining two illustrious models of Sanskrit spatialization already mentioned: Raghu's conquest of the quarters in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* and the journey of the cloud in his *Meghadūta.* In Dhoyī's poem the spring wind, carrying to Lakṣmaṇasena a message from a lovelorn nymph in the imaginary city of Kanakanagarī in Kerala, follows a path from Mount Malaya on the southwest coast to Bengal that retraces the king's putative conquest of the southern quarters. But the narrative of this journey is perfunctory and clearly only preparatory to the detailed account of Gauḍa (western Bengal) itself.[147] It is the region that has now begun to count, even for the writer of cosmopolitan Sanskrit.

Congruent with the subcontinental sphere projected narratively in the *Mahābhārata,* and in the many *kāvya* works influenced by it, is the geocultural framework found in the second-order accounts of literature in the Sanskrit tradition—a framework shared by most forms of Sanskrit thought during the age of *kāvya* and employed for the analysis of every sociocultural

145. See Ingalls 1976: 16 n. for references to earlier scholarship.
146. See Pollock 1998c: 50–51.
147. The descriptions of Suhma, Triveṇī (the Delta), and Vijayapura (the Sena capital) occupy the greater part of the work (vv. 27 ff.).

phenomenon, from the distribution of female sexual types to forms of customary law. A brief account of the notion of the Ways-of-writing *(mārga* or *rīti)* can illustrate this well.

The different styles of composing Sanskrit literature, based on features of phonology, semantics, and syntax, formed a component of literary analysis from at least the late seventh century, when Daṇḍin described them in detail in the first chapter of his *Mirror.* To these Ways regional appellations were given—at first just two: Gauḍa, the writing way of Gauḍa (Bengal) in the (north)east, and Vaidarbha, the writing way of Vidarbha (Berar) in the south. It is probable that the distinctions foundational to the theory of the Ways were originally apprehended by southern poets writing Sanskrit with sensibilities shaped by the Dravidian languages of south India; the range of diagnostics employed for differentiating the two styles is consistent with marked tendencies in the two language families, and in fact southern writing is defined by the presence of features "inverted" or absent in the north.[148] But whatever the true origins of the distinction, from the early period of Sanskrit literature the Ways were available for use by writers all over the Sanskrit world—something especially evident after the eighth or ninth century when the Ways were linked with emotional register (southern style was reserved for erotic poetry, northern style for heroic).

The notion of regionalized styles took on a life of its own after the late eighth century, when a Kashmiri critic, Vāmana, made it the core idea of his literary theory. The primary interest of later thinkers was to multiply literary Ways to fill out the subcontinental terrain. Besides the two of the oldest tradition, later scholars distinguished Ways of the midlands, of Gujarat, and of the zone between them (Avantī), of Bihar in the northeast, of Surat in the west, and, in the south, of Āndhra, and of Tamil country.[149] Some kind of cultural politics underlay this multiplication; it is as if it were increasingly exigent for every region to be represented on the map of literary style. And it would seem reasonable to attribute this once more to the actual and ever more prominent demarcation of vernacular literary spheres in the early second millennium.

Yet for the writers of Sanskrit literary criticism, such regional differences are not perceived as actually regional at all. As stylistic options, the Ways of literature evinced as little local difference as the Sanskrit literary idiom itself. Writers everywhere wrote "southern" poetry in exactly the same way. And

148. In southern writing there is a de-emphasis of certain consonants prominent in Indo-Aryan languages; analytical as opposed to nominalized usages; primary as opposed to etymologically derived words; and descriptive as opposed to troped discourse. See further in Pollock 1998a.

149. Vāmana added *pāñcālī (rīti):* Rudraṭa (c. 875), *lāṭīyā;* Bhoja, *āvantikā* and *māgadhī;* Śāradātanaya (c. 1100–1130), *saurāṣṭrī* and *drāviḍī;* Śiṅgabhūpāla (c. 1330), *āndhrī.*

this is precisely what we would expect: To participate in a cosmopolitan cultural order such as that of Sanskrit meant precisely to occlude local difference, or rather, to make the local universally standard. Accordingly, what the Ways served to suggest in the first instance was not the regionality of Sanskrit but precisely its transregionality: Sanskrit is everywhere. However insistent on mapping stylistic places Sanskrit writers may have been, what they showed thereby was how Sanskrit pervaded all places. And the writers demonstrated this by producing a literature that sought to escape place no less than time. The fact that it is as impossible to identify where a Sanskrit work was composed as it is to identify when, unless we are explicitly informed, shows how often they succeeded.

It is, furthermore, precisely because it represented a cultural totalization of this sort that *mārga,* or the culture of the Way (now in the singular), would come to constitute the counterpart to the culture of Place *(deśī).* The new binary opposite of the Way and the Place, which emerged around the tenth century in regional-language discourse, became the principal conceptual framework by which southern vernacular intellectuals sought to make sense of their complexly dialogical relationship to Sanskrit literary culture.[150]

Regionality and Recension

Both the narratives of Sanskrit literary space and the analytic framework of literary thought, such as the discourse on the Ways of writing, project a much smaller world than Sanskrit literature historically occupied. As epigraphical evidence shows, almost simultaneously with the beginnings of the public literary inscription of Sanskrit in South Asia, an identical cultural practice, with identical kinds of texts and documents and discourses, made its appearance throughout the regions now known as Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam, and Indonesia. As far as we can judge from the evidence of epigraphy, these lands of Southeast Asia participated as fully in the culture of the Sanskrit cosmopolis as did South Asia itself. Indeed, to think of South and Southeast Asia in this epoch as separate areas makes little sense; the processes of cosmopolitanization and vernacularization occurring in the one region were identical to what we find in the other at the same period; Java and Kannada country in the tenth century offer a remarkable illustration of this.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that Sanskrit remained a central feature of the cultural-political life of much of Southeast Asia for a thousand years from the fourth century onward—and the fact that the literati of those worlds mastered the entire range of Sanskrit literary practice, displayed this mastery in

---

150. This matter is considered in detail in Pollock forthcoming. For briefer remarks, see Pollock 1998a, Nagaraj, chapter 5, and Narayana Rao, chapter 6, this volume.

grand public inscriptions, and produced on its model vernacular literature of great power—the lands of mainland and maritime Southeast Asia were never included in the narratives of epic journeys, in other maps of *kāvya,* in the doctrine of the Ways, or in any other cognitive geography from the subcontinent. We can account for this in some part by the actual history of Sanskrit in Southeast Asia. Aside from the political poems of the inscriptions (which are themselves fully realized texts of their kind and sometimes spectacular in their grandeur), we cannot confidently point to the creation of a single new work of Sanskrit *kāvya* during the entire seven or eight centuries of cosmopolitan culture in Cambodia, Java, or elsewhere in the area. But the absence itself is enigmatic, and it yields to no easy explanation.

These eastern reaches of the Sanskrit cosmopolis excepted, the internal maps of literary texts and the discursive frameworks of literary theory do have some significant objective correlates. Foremost among these is the range of distribution of Sanskrit literary manuscripts, of which the *Mahābhārata* again provides a model case. Leaving aside manuscripts disseminated through migration, for the preservation of which no habit of reproduction ever developed,[151] the spread of *Mahābhārata* manuscripts largely followed the boundaries represented so frequently in the text itself. These are visible in what modern (and in some cases premodern) scholars have identified as the principal "recensions" deriving from the different script traditions: Nepali, Bangla, Grantha (Tamilnadu), Malayalam (Kerala), Nagari (comprising north-central India down to Maharashtra and Gujarat), and Sharada (Kashmir and much of west Panjab). There exists no Afghan recension of the *Mahābhārata,* nor Tajik, Burmese, Cambodian, Cham, or Javanese.

Many of the names applied to these *Mahābhārata* recensions—some of which, again, are indubitably precolonial, such as *gauḍīyasaṃpradāya,* the Bengal vulgate—might be taken to imply that in the course of its diffusion the text itself became regionalized, that there is something significantly Bangla about the Bengal vulgate. Indeed, the same might be assumed for Sanskrit literary culture as a whole, since we can identify regional recensions for countless texts. And accordingly, the supraregionality that so many other factors of Sanskrit literary culture promote would seem to have been counteracted at the level of the text itself. In fact, such an assumption would be false. Nonetheless, examining some dominant traits of Sanskrit manuscript culture and the regional writing systems on which it is based is helpful in understanding the literary objects under consideration. We need to remember that everything we read when we read a Sanskrit text has been copied

---

151. These include such things as a manuscript of the *Ādiparvan* donated to a temple in Cambodia in the seventh century (the Prasat Prah That inscription), or the eleventh-century Old Javanese version of the epic that is one part Sanskrit *pratīka* and nine parts vernacular adaptation.

and recopied for centuries—a textual devotion, under environmental conditions of unusual severity, that is hard to parallel in world culture and that has preserved for us the works of the greater number of the canonical poets earlier discussed.[152] Obviously, the less we understand of this process, the less we understand of the product.

In contrast to all other quasi-global cultures of the premodern past, the Sanskrit order enforced no fixity of the written sign. If elsewhere language and script were as a rule mutually exclusive of all other language-script combinations (Latin was written only in the Roman script, for example), the adoption of Sanskrit literary culture proceeded independently of logographic uniformity. Sanskrit writers wrote the exact same language, with equal success, in scores of different graphic forms, including those that we now call Brahmi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Bangla, Newari, Sinhala, and Javanese.[153] The specific modality of writing would thus appear to be wholly irrelevant to a history of Sanskrit literary culture.

Conventional wisdom holds, however, that the very diversity of graphic realizations, and their growing distance from each other over time, had an enormous impact on Sanskrit literary history, especially in respect of regions and recensions. Most scholars assume that writing styles and manuscript traditions formed closed systems: Given the regional exclusivity of scripts—or what is taken to be their exclusivity—Sanskrit literary texts are said to have developed versions peculiar to writing traditions, and hence recensions tended to become regionalized. In addition, the more localized the script, the less it communicated with others and thus the purer the textual tradition it is thought to contain; Malayalam (in Kerala) and Sharada (in Kashmir) are usually offered as the model instances.[154]

There is some truth to this conventional view, but it needs important qualification. Scripts in precolonial South Asia seem to have represented as

152. Major early works that have disappeared are in fact relatively few: Aśvaghoṣa's (or Kumāralāta's) *Sūtrālaṅkāra,* the texts of Saumilla and Kaviratna, Hariścandra's *Śūdrakakathā,* the real plays of Bhāsa, the *Hayagrīvavadha* of Bhartṛmeṇṭha, the collected poems of Dharmakīrti. Other sectors of cosmopolitan literary culture fared far worse. Almost all Apabhramsha literature before the tenth century has vanished, and much non-Jain Prakrit literature.

153. Although all South Asian and many Southeast Asian scripts derive ultimately from Brahmi, by the second half of the first millennium they were thoroughly regionalized and differentiated. Thus, for example, the Kathiawadi style of the Maitrakas of Valabhī (sixth-seventh centuries), the proto-Kannada style of the Bādāmi Cāḷukyas (sixth-seventh centuries), and the proto-Bangla style of the Pālas (ninth-tenth centuries), have lost all appearance of kindredness (Dani 1986: 108 ff.).

154. See for example Katre 1954: 29–30. For the prominence of such views in the text-criticism of the epics, cf. e.g., Sukthankar 1927: 82: the Sharada version of the *Mahābhārata,* he asserts, was protected by its "largely unintelligible script and by the difficulties of access to the province."

little a barrier to supralocal communication as regional languages.[155] And although most scholars who accept the sharp image of impermeable script traditions are prepared to blur it by acknowledging the circulation of literati and manuscripts—which, besides being vast and relatively rapid, is what makes Sanskrit textual criticism uniquely problematic—we know from the textual history of early works like the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and later works like the *Nāgānanda* of Harṣa (r. 590–647) that even Malayalam manuscripts were accessible and legible to scholars in lands as distant as Kashmir or Nepal.

Little systematic knowledge is available about the lives of literary texts in Sanskrit, especially post-epic texts, since the critical editing of works in which the logic of variation itself has been taken as an object of study has scarcely begun.[156] The textual traditions of important Sanskrit works regularly fall into recensions that editors would have us think of as regional. A recent edition of the *Raghuvaṃśa,* for example, identifies five such traditions: eastern *(gauḍa),* western *(nāgara),* Kashmiri *(kāśmīra),* southern *(dākṣiṇātya),* and north-central *(madhyadeśīya);* the *Nāgānanda* likewise shows five (Nepal, Tibet, north India, the Deccan, and south India). But what we do not understand very well for either the *Raghuvaṃśa* or the *Nāgānanda*—and they seem to be representative of many Sanskrit works—is how such regional recensions developed and what, beyond script identity, their regionality actually consists in.[157]

Beside the limited influence of script, the provenance of commentators is likely to be a key factor in textual regionalization. Commentators were editors as much as exegetes, and the editions they established often became dominant in a given region (these, too, however, circulated widely outside their script area, so much so that the commentaries of the tenth-century

155. It seemed unreasonable to Katre to assume that professional copyists could be acquainted with more than one "or at most two scripts," but substantial evidence suggests that mastery of different writing systems was widely valued (cf. *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 3.17; EI 12: p. 280, v. 78; EI 19: 51). Negative evidence includes mistranscriptions from unfamiliar scripts (cf. Dvivedi 1986: xvi–xvii; Vādirāja cited by Raghavan 1941–1942: 6; Stein 1900: v). Further doubts about the "writing-system premise" that underlies epic text-criticism and the reality of regional versions have recently been raised by Grünendahl 1993.

156. The critical editing of Sanskrit literary texts is in its infancy. Outside of the two epics, Hillebrandt's *Mudrārākṣasa* (1912), Kosambi's *Śatakatrayam* (1948), Miller's *Gītagovinda* (1977), Coulson's *Mālatīmādhava* (1983), Dvivedi's *Kālidāsa* (1986) and a few Kālidāsa volumes published by the Sahitya Akademi almost exhaust the twentieth-century list. We have no detailed accounts of the textual history of many great works, from *Kirātārjunīya, Śiśupālavadha, Daśakumāracarita, Harṣacarita,* and *Kādambarī* onward. This is a consequence of the sheer number of manuscripts available for any important text, their paleographic complexities, and practical difficulties of simply gaining access to them.

157. See Dvivedi in *Kālidāsagranthāvalī* 1986: xliv. Hahn 1991 (who argues that none of the five *Nāgānanda* versions can be derived from any other).

Kashmiri scholar Vallabhadeva were studied assiduously in fifteenth-century Āndhra). Just how such editions were established also largely escapes us, as do the text-critical principles they were based on. We do know that commentators typically collected and compared manuscripts in order to constitute their text. In some instances efforts were made to secure copies from all over the subcontinent. This is famously the case with the *Mahābhārata* editor of late-seventeenth-century Vārāṇasī, Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara, who tells us he gathered "many manuscripts from different regions and critically established the best readings."[158] This may well have been the case with skilled *kāvya* editors, too.

As for what constitutes the correct or the best reading and the criteria for establishing it, scholars then as now differed—and they differed, then as now, on the basis of principles and not whim. One of the earliest extant commentators on *kāvya*, Vallabhadeva (fl. 950, Kashmir), often chose a reading on the principle of difficulty and the antiquity such difficulty suggests: "This must be the ancient reading precisely because it is unfamiliar." Or he might combine principles of antiquity and aestheticism: "The old reading in this verse is more beautiful." Yet authenticity has its limits for Vallabha; like other commentators he will rewrite a verse in order to save his author from a supposed solecism.[159] The willingness of some editors to emend, whether on the basis of grammatical deviation or supposed aesthetic or logical fault, was a source of worry to poets, such as this twelfth-century Kashmiri poet working at the court of Ajmer:

> Noble learning, however pure in itself,
> should not be applied to emending the works of good poets.
> Holy ash is not scattered, in hopes of purification,
> on water one is about to drink.[160]

Yet in fact, emendation was restrained or resisted by many commentators, who took care, as did one fifteenth-century scholar of Āndhra, to assure read-

---

158. *Mahābhārata* with the commentary of Nīlakaṇṭha, vol. 1, introduction, v. 6: *bahūn samāhṛtya vibhinnadeśān kośān viniścitya ca pāṭham agryam.*

159. Thus Vallabha replaces the Vedic word *triyambaka* (Three-Eyed, a name of Śiva) with an everyday synonym (*maheśvaram,* Great God), for "Since the *[svarabhakti] y* in *triyambaka* is permitted [by grammarians] only in the Veda and not in this-worldly writing *(bhāṣā),* we must here instead read 'Great God'" (commentary on *Kumārasaṃbhava* 3.44, cf. 3.28). For his first principle see 1.46, *aprasiddhatvād ārṣaḥ pāṭhaḥ,* regarding the reading *(līlā-)cikurām (-caturām,* as per Aruṇagiri and Mallinātha), the Sanskrit version of the familiar maxim *lectio difficilior melior est*; for the second, 2.26, cf. 2.37, *jaratpāṭho 'tra ramyataraḥ.*

160. *Pṛthvīrājavijaya* (Victory of Pṛthvīrāja, c. 1190) 1.14: *viśodhane satkavibhāratīnāṃ śuddho 'pi pāṇḍityaguṇo na yogyaḥ / na kṣipyate bhasma viśuddhikāmair apāṃ hi pātavyatayoddhṛtānām.* Kṣemendra similarly attacks grammarians and logicians as hostile to poetry, *Kavikaṇṭhābharaṇa* 1. 15, 19, 22.

ers that they were transmitting exactly what they found in their manu-
scripts.[161] Generally editor-commentators sought to establish as coherent and
authoritative a text as they could on the basis of the materials available to
them *(āgata)* rather than conjectured *(kalpita).*

Such practical criteria have something important to tell us about the model
of textuality at work: Some readings are not only objectively more beautiful
(ramya) than others, or contextually more sensible *(yukta)* or more clearly what
is intended by the author *(vivakṣita),* but are also older or more original *(jarat;
ārṣa);* some may clearly be corruptions *(apapāṭha)* and in need of emenda-
tion *(śodhana),* and some are just as clearly interpolations *(prakṣipta)* and must
be rejected.[162] Text-critical practices of this sort are common among com-
mentaries on not only epics but also *kāvya.* It is thus by no means unusual
for Arjunavarmadeva (fl. 1215), editor-commentator of the *Amaruśataka,* to
reject a number of verses as the interpolations of a second-rate poet satisfied
even with the anonymous fame of having his work included in Amaru's col-
lection.[163] And when taken as a whole these practices suggest a model of tex-
tuality at once historicist-intentionalist and purist-aestheticist—standards
that, if obviously contradictory, are perhaps not fatally so. That is to say, texts
were held to be intentional productions of authors, whose intentions could
be recovered by the judicious assessment of manuscript variants. At the same
time, literary texts were *lakṣyagrantha*—instantiations of the rule-bounded-
ness *(lakṣaṇa)* of Sanskrit literary production in terms of grammar, lexicon,
prosody, and the poetics of sound and sense—and when conflict arose, they
had to yield to the superior claims of the rules.

What we do not find, however, among the text-critical practices, editor-

---

161. Mallinātha in the introduction to his *Raghuvaṃśasaṃjīvinī (nāmūlyaṃ likhyate kiñcit).*
For a good example of emendation based on logic see Māṇikyacandra on *Kāvyaprakāśa* (ed.
Mysore), vol. 2, p. 372.

162. An important discussion of general principles is found in the work of early-fourteenth-
century scholar and religious reformer Madhva (and his commentator Vādirāja). The expla-
nation of the meaning of *śāstra*s such as the *Mahābhārata,* he tells us,

> has to be provided by way of the sentences of the text themselves [and not through dis-
> courses invented by our own imagination, com.]. But people interpolate passages in the
> text *[prakṣipanti],* suppress passages that are there *[antaritān kuryuḥ]* or transfer them
> *[vyatyāsaṃ kuryuḥ]* to elsewhere in the text whether by mistake or intentionally. Many
> thousands of manuscripts have disappeared and those that are extant are disordered.
> So confused can a text have become that even the gods themselves could not figure it
> out. *Mahābhāratatātparyanirṇaya* 2.2–5.

The Sanskrit text of Vādirāja's commentary here is cited in Gode 1940.

163. *Amaruśataka* pp. 46–47. Arjunavarmadeva's grounds for rejection of supposedly inau-
thentic verses are purely aesthetic: "These jangling lines will simply give learned men a head-
ache"; "She 'takes his breath away,' like a witch, no doubt"; "'her beauty [saltiness] doubles my
thirst' must have been written by a ditchdigger in the Sambar salt lake." Text-critical procedures
among *Rāmāyaṇa* commentators are discussed passim in the notes to Pollock 1986 and 1991.

ial principles, or reading protocols of commentators is anything marked by or conducive to regional difference, the occasional vernacular gloss aside. Premodern philology is standardized throughout the Sanskrit world. Likewise, nothing in any sense regional accompanied the regionalization of scripts and the production of regional recensions. The language of the southern recension of the *Mahābhārata* or of the Bangla recension of the *Śākuntala,* for example, is as little marked as southern or Bangla as is its material culture or mentality. All recensions of the epic transmit the epic's transregional talk and thought and realia, as all recensions of the *Śākuntala,* whether Bangla or Malayali, transmit the talk and thought and realia of courtly culture.[164] Norms of literary form and aesthetics that were universal in their self-understanding universally found application. The diversity and localism of scripts, editors, and recensions did nothing of significance to localize or diversify the cosmopolitan world of Sanskrit literary culture.

The Social Sites of Sanskrit

In addition to the conceptual maps of writers and critics, and the actual routes taken or boundaries created by the inscription, editing, and circulation of texts, the relevant "places" of Sanskrit literary culture include the sites of its production and consumption in the social world. That Sanskrit *kāvya* was above all a courtly practice may not be news, though we still lack a serious study of exactly what kind of practice this was. Yet the court was not its exclusive social space.

The oldest extant anthology of Sanskrit poetry is a twelfth-century compilation called the *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* (Anthology of well-turned verse). This was the work of the abbot of a Buddhist monastery at Jagaddala in what is now Bangladesh. While the anthology provides many insights into the elements of practical literary consciousness—about standards of selection and canonicity, the principles of organizing the literary universe, the status of and knowledge about authorship—its social location is very puzzling: What do we make of the fact that a collection of this-worldly poetry, three-quarters of it dealing with the physical love of men and women, was prepared at an institution for Buddhist renunciates?

Anthology-making has a long history in Sanskrit and Prakrit literary culture. If we leave aside the ancient testimonies of spiritual awakening in Pali *(Thera-* and *Therīgāthā),* this begins with a text mentioned earlier, the Maharashtri Prakrit *Gāhākoso* (Treasury of lyrics, or *Gāhāsattasaī,* the seven hundred lyrics), attributed to King Hāla of the Sātavahana dynasty (c. third cen-

---

164. In the case of the *Śākuntala* itself, a recent article finds "regional" variation explainable on entirely nonregional grounds: the inflated (Bangla) recension is argued to be the stage version; the shorter (Nagari) text, the "author's" version (Bansat-Boudon 1994).

tury). It is remarkable that virtually every one of the important anthologies of whose provenance we have any knowledge turns out to have been, like the *Gāhākoso* itself, the work of intellectuals associated with royal courts. A rash of such anthologies is found at the beginning of the second millennium (another manifestation of a widespread, if poorly understood, proliferation of encyclopedism throughout Sanskrit culture of the period).[165] The *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* may fit this pattern. The Jagaddala monastery had close ties to the Pāla dynasty—it was there Pāla kings received royal consecration—and it makes sense, too, that those who were likely recruited as tutors to the court would be expected to be familiar with the literature the court cultivated.[166] Other hypotheses can no doubt be framed to explain why Buddhist monks had the kind of library such an anthology presupposes. Perhaps this sort of literature was a prompt to meditation on the defilements—or a pleasurable source of them. But whatever the truth of the matter, the presence of erotic poetry in this monastic community (unlike the presence of manuscripts of Juvenal in the monastery of Montecassino) was scarcely accidental: If we can infer anything, it is that Sanskrit literature was seriously cultivated far beyond the assembly of the king—an impression strengthened by a second feature of the anthology, its choice of materials.

In addition to the eulogies of gods and kings and poets, the verses that chart a woman's erotic history from childhood to old age, and the other long-cultivated topics of Sanskrit poetry, the *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* includes a generous selection of the poetry of rural life, rural joy, and rural misery. This kind of material, much of it written by tenth-century poets of Pāla Bengal, Yogeśvara chief among them, is not readily found elsewhere, either in other anthologies or in independent works (one of the earliest *kāvya* texts, the *Harivaṃśa,* excepted). And it reveals a world of concerns of Sanskrit literature—and may imply other sites of its production and consumption—of which we would otherwise have little idea. One might be prone to suppose that, again, like a Theocritan pastoral or indeed, like the *Gāhākoso* itself, this poetry of village and field, as it has been called, is a courtly vision of the rural, designed for urban and urbane listeners. But it is hard to sustain this facile interpre-

165. The *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* by Śrīdharadāsa was produced at the court of Lakṣmaṇasena of Bengal in 1205; the *Sūktimuktāvalī* by Jalhaṇa at the Devagiri court of the Yādavas in 1258; the *Subhāṣitaisudhānidhi* by Sāyaṇa at the court of Harihara I (r. 1336–1357) or Bukka (r. 1344–1377) of Vijayanagara; the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* by Śārṅgadhara at the court of the Śākambharī Chauhans in 1363; the *Subhāṣitāvalī,* substantially reedited by Śrīvara, at the court of Zain-ul-ʿabidīn of Kashmir, c. 1450 (it is likely to have been originally composed c. 1150). On the far earlier *Thera-* and *Therīgāthā,* see Collins, chapter 11, this volume. The new drive toward cultural totalization is signaled by, inter alia, a new genre called the *dharmanibandha* (compendium of moral action, on which see Pollock 1993), and by such royal encyclopedias as the *Mānasollāsa,* considered later in this chapter.

166. Kosambi in *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* pp. xxxi–xxxix.

tation in the face of verses like the following (I give them in the lovely trans-
lation of Daniel Ingalls):

> Somehow, my wife, you must keep us and the children
> alive until the summer months are over.
> The rains will come then, making gourds and pumpkins grow aplenty,
> and we shall fare like kings.
>
> The children starving, looking like so many corpses,
> the relative who spurns me, the water pot
> patched up with lac—these do not hurt so much
> as seeing the woman from next door, annoyed
> and smiling scornfully when every day my wife
> must beg a needle to mend her tattered dress.
>
> I wear no golden bracelet
> bright as the rays of autumn moon,
> nor have I tasted a young bride's lip
> tender and hesitant with shame.
> I have won no fame in heaven's hall
> by either pen or sword,
> but waste my time in ruined colleges,
> teaching insolent, malicious boys.[167]

Both the provenance of the *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* and the materials it con-
tains point toward social worlds—far from the court—where Sanskrit liter-
ature was very much alive, and this is an impression corroborated by, among
other things, inscriptions reporting local endowments for training in *kāvya*
and related arts.[168] And on the evidence of contemporaneous narratives from
the Kashmir valley, at the other end of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan world, we
may expand this social universe beyond the monastery and the village (or
the village school) to include two other important sites: the temple and the
private urban dwelling. In the early ninth century, a councillor named
Dāmodaragupta at the celebrated court of King Jayāpīḍa (r. 779–813, the
patron also of the literary scholars Udbhaṭa and Vāmana) wrote a unique
narrative poem, the *Kuṭṭanīmata* (The madam's handbook). The centerpiece
of the work is the tragic love story of prince Samarabhaṭa and the actress
Mañjarī, whom he meets at a temple of Śiva where he has gone to offer wor-

---

167. Ingalls 1968a: 257, 276. Ingalls was the first to call attention to the "Sanskrit poetry
of village and field" (1954), though in his fine essay on the *Harivaṃśa* (1968b) he curiously ne-
glected to trace its long history.

168. See for example EI 13: 326 ff. (929 C.E., western Karnataka: *sāhityavidyā* is taught, along
with grammar, *arthaśāstra, itihāsa*); EI 5: 221–22 (1112 C.E., western Karnataka: *kāvya* and *nāṭaka*
are taught in addition to the Vedas, grammar, and philosophy); EC 7 (Beḷagmi inscription,
Sk. 102: in the Kōḍimaṭha, "all poems, dramas, comedies" are taught along with philosophy, gram-
mar, *purāṇa,* and *dharmaśāstra*).

ship. Seated amid a crowd of male dancers, musicians, singers, merchants, and guild masters, the prince asks to see some entertainment and is addressed by a drama instructor who has recently immigrated from Kānyakubja:

> Do not expect skill in a dramatic performance where the members of the audience are merchants and the performers prostitutes. My student-actresses and myself, by contrast, have recently arrived here, taking refuge in this holy temple, now that great King Harṣa has passed away. But my students are desolate and only rarely, out of anxiety of not having any income at all, do they move their hands and feet in presenting the *Ratnāvalī*.[169]

The director invites the prince to watch one act of Harṣa's famous play performed by the all-female troupe, Mañjarī taking the lead role of Sāgarikā. At the end of the performance, the prince expresses his appreciation with a learned critique and presents the director with a house and a plot of land.[170]

The theater in old South Asia, even the Sanskrit theater, could thus be as much a popular entertainment as it typically was elsewhere in the world. That it took place in the temple importantly stretches our sense of that institution in premodern India (though the kind of court-temple division in literary production, found for example in later Āndhra, is not known here).[171] It is accessible not just to princes but to guild masters and merchants; and it is sustained by strictly material transactions—hardly what we think of as courtly culture.[172]

Distant from the court, too—if not quite so distant—was the literary salon, of which a memorable description is provided by Maṅkha at the time of the recitation of his courtly epic, which I discussed earlier. This took place at the home of his brother in Pravarapura (present-day Srinagar) around the year 1140. Due no doubt to the unprecedented royal abuses in twelfth-century Kashmir that helped to bring Sanskrit literary culture to an end, the court had more or less ceased to command the sympathies of the subjects, and kingly power was irrelevant to Maṅkha's life as a poet and to the theme of his poem:

> How fortunate am I that Sarasvatī, Goddess of Speech, willful though she may be, has prompted me to praise no one but Śiva.

> Away with those whose speech, though immersed in Sarasvatī, Goddess of Speech [bathed in the river Sarasvatī], dirties itself like a drunken woman with the filth of praise given to kings.

169. *Kuṭṭanīmata* vv. 794–96.
170. *Kuṭṭanīmata* vv. 739–947.
171. See Narayana Rao, chapter 6, this volume; and contrast Freeman, chapter 7, this volume. On the temple theater of medieval Gujarat, see Yashaschandra, chapter 9, this volume.
172. Dāmodaragupta's description is corroborated by a wide range of other evidence, including, for example, the prologues to Bhavabhūti's plays, which inform us that they were performed at the popular festivals of Ujjain.

> The vision belonging to Sarasvatī is befouled by a poet when rendered sub-
> servient to kings.[173]

Maṅkha's work is uncontaminated by the evil of praising kings; "All poets,
yourself excepted," he is told by the ambassador from the Koṅkana, "have
served only to teach men how to beg."[174] Royal power has become irrelevant
not only to literature but to literary culture. The venue of the recitation of
Maṅkha's poem amounts to a kind of inchoate literary public sphere, con-
sisting of scholars, literati, and men of affairs from home and abroad—but
no king. Yet it seems to have been a sphere that could not be sustained for
long.

We are thus obliged to acknowledge a wide range of social locations for
the production and consumption of Sanskrit literature, though its primary
site, the main source of patronage and of the glory *(yaśas)* conferred by the
approbation of the learned, undoubtedly always remained the royal court.
And it is *kāvya* as courtly practice that we need to understand if we are to un-
derstand the heart of Sanskrit literary culture.[175] One important and unex-
ploited document to help us is the *Mānasollāsa* (The mind's delight, also
called *Abhilāṣitārthacintāmaṇi* [Wishing gem for all things desired]), a royal
encyclopedia composed around 1130 at Kalyāṇa (in the northeast of present-
day Karnataka) during the reign of King Someśvara III, the last of the great
overlords of the Western Cāḷukya dynasty.

Part of the new encyclopedism of late medieval India, the *Mānasollāsa* rep-
resents a summa of kingly action, touching on everything from the acquisi-
tion and consolidation of political power to its physical and intellectual en-
joyment. In the last category are included the entertainments of learned
discourse *(śāstravinoda)* and of storytelling *(kathāvinoda)*.[176] The section ac-
tually commences with the entertainment of arms *(śastravinoda)*, where the
king himself comes forth to display his mastery of various weapons. This is
followed by learned discourse; displays by elephant drivers and horsemen;
diversions such as dueling, wrestling, and cockfighting; and finally, singing,
instrumental music, dancing, and storytelling. Whether acting as spectator
or participant, the king is centrally involved in all these activities as con-
noisseur and critic.

The *sabhā,* or cultural assembly, of the king includes not just courtiers,
ministers, and the like but also, prominently, masters of all the verbal arts:
scholars, makers of poems, experts in vernacular languages (who are employed

173. *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 25.5, 8, 9.
174. *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 25.112.
175. See further in Lienhard 1984: 16 ff.; Smith 1985: 87 ff.; Tieken 1992: 371 ff.
176. See *Mānasollāsa* vol. 2, pp. 171 ff.. vv. 197 ff.; and vol. 3, pp. 162–65, vv. 1406–32,
respectively.

principally for singing, not for literature), reciters of *kāvya,* epic rhapsodists, and genealogists. For the entertainment of learned discourse these are supplemented by disputants and exegetes, men learned in the *śāstra* and skilled in the arts of language, "practiced in the three precious [knowledges]"—grammar, hermeneutics, and logic—"creators and interpreters, men who are adept at versification and who know the principles of sweet poetry, and who are knowledgeable in all languages."[177]

The entertainment of learned discourse begins when the king commands the poets to recite a lovely poem, and during the recitation he is shown to reflect on the poem's good qualities and faults. The protocols of critical reflection are supplied by the text as well:

> Words make up the body of a literary text, meaning is its life-breath, tropes its external form, emotional states and feelings its movements, meter its gait, and the knowledge of language its vital spot. It is in these that the beauty of the deity of literature consists.[178]

This précis is then expanded into a detailed account of the elements of literary knowledge that a royal connoisseur in central India at the end of the twelfth century was expected to possess and apply: the expression-forms *(guṇa)* and the different Ways (or Paths, *rīti*) of writing; the basic concepts and common varieties of meters; the major figures of speech; the features of the principal genres; and the components and operation of the primary aesthetic moods. The king listens to this talk about literature and reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of the poems he has heard recited.[179]

The penultimate entertainment—before the entertainment of magical ointments and powders that render a person clear-sighted or invisible or enable him to walk on water—is storytelling. After the king has finished his daily duties, dined, and rested, he summons men to tell him stories about the deeds of heroes in the *Mahābhārata,* the *Rāmāyaṇa,* ancient lore *(purāṇa),* or the *Bṛhatkathā,* from plays or courtly epics. The storytellers should be eloquent and cultured men who believe in the truth of the duties demanded by the moral law *(dharma),* men young in years but mature in intellect, who are "axes to fell the tree of sadness, fires to burn the tinder of despondency, moons to swell the ocean of passion, suns to open the lotuses of desire."[180]

---

177. *Mānasollāsa* vol. 2, p. 155, vv. 3–5 ("creators and interpreters," *utpādaka, bhāvajña;* "the principles of sweet poetry," read *madhurakāvya-*).

178. *Mānasollāsa* 4.197–206 (vol. 2, pp. 171–72; the passage cited is vv. 205–6). "The knowledge of language its vital spot" *(śabdavidyāsya marma):* the most vulnerable point in a literary text is its correct use of language.

179. *Mānasollāsa* vol. 2, pp. 172–189, vv. 4.205– (404, misnumbered).

180. *Mānasollāsa* vol. 3, p. 62, v. 1410.

There is a third section of the work, the entertainment of singing *(gītavinoda),* where something of the literary may pertain as well. But here all that earlier in the text has been said to constitute *kāvya*—above all, the special unity of sound and sense, and the preeminence of cosmopolitan language— no longer applies with any force.[181] A verse that still circulates among pandits tells us:

> Children understand song, beasts do too, and even snakes. But the sweetness of literature—does even the Great God himself truly understand?[182]

This brings us close to what the literary could mean as a twelfth-century courtly attainment. The practice of Sanskrit literary culture was, in the first instance, an intellectual endeavor. It consisted of theoretically informed reflection on normativity and thus presupposed active knowledge of all the categories of literary understanding. Without these there could be no analysis and so no "intellectual delight." And it was at once a coherent discursive science *(śāstra)* and one entertainment *(vinoda)* among others. It was no more instrumental to power in any direct or overt way—no more concerned with the attainment or constitution or legitimation of power—than the king's display of weaponry or his understanding of cockfighting. *Kāvya* was above all a component, and perhaps the supreme component, of royal competence and distinction, of royal pleasure and civility.

In the primeval moment of Sanskrit literary culture, the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is recited before the hero of the tale, and in this moment much that characterizes the entire history of the culture is encapsulated. The location of the performance is the royal court, whose fortunes were by and large to be the fortunes of *kāvya.* Where the court collapsed, as in thirteenth-century Kashmir, an entire creative literary tradition, however great, could collapse with it; when its presence crowded *kāvya* too closely, as in Vijayanagara, the very life breath could be taken from the poetry. The language of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was no quotidian idiom of any historical court, but rather a language of the restricted domain of cosmopolitan culture. It was chosen for this text from among other languages because of its peculiar aesthetic and cultural— and not religious—associations, not least its cosmopolitanism, precisely commensurate at the level of the political with the imaginative projection of power in Rāma's heroic progress across the macrospace of the subcontinent and in the new order he creates. When this order of cosmopolitan power

181. For further analysis of this section, particularly its relevance for a history of vernacularization, see Pollock forthcoming.

182. A version is cited by the glossator *ad* Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 5.1, p. 72.

gave way in the early centuries of the second millennium to a range of new, vernacular polities, Sanskrit literary culture began to give way too. As for the tale itself, everything being told is of course already known to the listener— Rāma lived it, after all. He is not listening for the plot, and what he derives from listening is not a particular form of knowledge. Systematic thought, the way things really were in the past, moral action—these are the concern of other knowledges and textual forms. Yet Rāma listened and was transfixed. Was it the Way of writing that captured him? Or was it what he could catch echoing in the text, a something that was meant without being said? Or was it the feelings represented there that could make him feel beyond himself, even when those feelings were his own?

Knowing something of the history of Sanskrit literary culture and the unparalleled power it exercised in premodern Asia may not answer such fundamental questions, which long preoccupied the best minds in the Indian world. But it at least may suggest why they bothered with them at all.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

CII   *Corpus inscriptionum indicarum*
EC   *Epigraphia carnatika*
EI   *Epigraphia indica*

Primary Texts

Ādipurāṇa of Jinasena. 1993. Edited by Pannalal Jain. 4th ed. New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanapith.

Alaṅkārasarvasva of Ruyyaka. 1893. Edited by Durgaprasad and Kashinath Pandurang Parab. Kāvyamālā 35. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Amaruśataka of Amaruka, with the *Rasikasaṃjīvanī* commentary of Arjunavarmadeva. 1889. Edited by Durgaprasad and Kashinath Pandurang Parab. Kāvyamālā 18. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya. 1969. Edited by R. P. Kangle. 2d ed. 3 vols. University of Bombay Studies: Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali, no. 1. Bombay: University of Bombay.

Avantisundarī of Daṇḍin. 1954. Edited by K. S. Mahadeva Sastri. Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 172. Trivandrum: University of Travancore.

Bhāratāmr̥tam of Divākara. MS. Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras. R no. 3717, R no. 3002.

Bihārīratnākar of Bihārī Lāl. 1965. Edited by Jagannathdas Ratnakar. Vārāṇasī: n.p.

Br̥hatsaṃhitā of Varāhamihira. 1966. Edited by Avadhvihari Tripathi. 2 vols. Sarasvati Bhavan Granthamala 97. Vārāṇasī: Varanseya Sanskrit Vishvadiyalaya.

Buddhacarita of Aśvaghoṣa. 1936. Edited by E. H. Johnston. Lahore: University of the Punjab. Reprint, Delhi, 1972.

Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana, with the *Locana* of Abhinavagupta. 1940. Edited by Pattabhirama Shastri. Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office. (Also edited by K. Krishnamoorthy. Dharwar: Karnatak University Press, 1974.)

Gāhākoso. See *Saptaçatakam.*

Gauḍavaho of Vākpatirāja. 1975. Edited by N. G. Suru. Ahmedabad: Prakrit Text Society.

Harṣacarita of Bāṇa. 1937. Edited by Kashinath Pandurang Parab. 6th ed. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Inscriptions du Cambodge. 1937–1966. Edited and translated by G. Coedès. 8 vols. Collection de textes et documents sur l'Indochine 3. Paris: E. de Boccard.

Inscriptions of Kambuja. 1953. Edited by R. C. Majumdar. Calcutta: Asiatic Society.

Jāmbavatīpariṇayam of Kṛṣṇadevarāy. 1969. Edited by B. Ramaraju. Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi.

Kālidāsagranthāvalī. 1986. Edited by Revaprasad Dvivedi. 2d. rev. ed. Vārāṇasī: Banaras Hindu University.

Karṇasundarī of Bilhaṇa. 1888. Edited by Durgaprasad and Kasinath Pandurang Parab. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Kāvyādarśa of Daṇḍin. 1936. Edited by D. T. Tatacharya. Tirupati: Shrinivas Press.

Kāvyalakṣaṇa [= *Kāvyādarśa*] of Daṇḍin. 1957. Edited by A. Thakur and U. Jha. Darbhanga: Mithila Institute.

Kāvyālaṅkāra of Bhāmaha. 1928. Edited by B. N. Sarma and Baldeva Upadhyaya. Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.

Kāvyālaṅkāra of Rudraṭa. 1928. Edited by Durgaprasad and Wasudev Laksman Shastri Panshikar. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Kāvyālaṅkārasārasaṃgraha of Udbhaṭa. 1982. Edited by N. D. Banhatti. 2d ed. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Kāvyamīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara. 1934. Edited by C. D. Dalal et al. 3d ed. Baroda: Oriental Institute.

Kāvyānuśāsana of Hemacandra. 1964. Edited by Rasiklal C. Parikh and V. M. Kulkarni. 2d ed. Bombay: Sri Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya.

Kāvyaprakāśa of Mammaṭa. 1965. Edited by Vamanacharya Jhalkikar. 7th ed. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Kāvyaprakāśa of Mammaṭa, with the commentaries of Māṇikyacandra and Ravi Bhattacharya. 1974. Edited by N. S. Venkatanathacharya. Mysore: Oriental Research Institute.

Kīrtikaumudī of Someśvara. 1961. Edited by Punyavijaya. Singhi Jain Granthamālā 32. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Kṣemendralaghukāvyasaṅgraha 1961. Edited by E. V. V. Raghavacharya and D. G. Padhye. Hyderabad: Sanskrit Academy, Osmania University.

Kumārasaṃbhava of Kālidāsa with the commentary of Vallabha [= Vallabhadeva's Kommentar (Śāradā-Version) zum Kumārasaṃbhava des Kālidāsa]. 1980. Edited by M. S. Narayana Murti. Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland. Supplementband 20.1. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.

Kuṭṭanīmata of Dāmodaragupta. 1924. Edited by T. M. Tripathi. Bombay: Gujarati Printing Press.

Kuvalayamālā of Uddyotanasūri. 1959. Edited by A. N. Upadhye. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavana.

Laghukāvyasaṅgraha of Kṣemendra. 1961. Edited by E. V. V. Raghavacharya. Sanskrit Academy Series 7. Hyderabad: Sanskrit Academy, Osmania University.

Līlāvaī of Koūhala. 1966. Edited by A. N. Upadhye. Singhi Jain Series 31. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Mahābhārata. 1927–1966. Edited by V. S. Sukthankar et al. 19 vols. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Mahābhārata, with the commentary of Nīlakaṇṭha. 1929–1933. Edited by Ramachandrashastri Kinjawadekar. 6 vols. Poona: Chitrashala Press.

Mahābhāratatātparyanirṇaya of Madhva. 1992. Edited by Vidya Niwas Mishra. Vārāṇasī: Ratna.

Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali. 1962–1972. Edited by Franz Kielhorn. 3 vols. 3d ed. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Mālavikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa, in *Kālidāsagranthāvalī* 1986.

Mānasollāsa of King Someśvara. 1925–1961. Edited by G. K. Shrigondekar. 3 vols. Gaekwad Oriental Series 28, 84, 138. Baroda: Oriental Institute.

Mīmāṃsādarśana. 1970–1976. Edited by K. V. Abhyankar and G. Joshi. 5 vols. Anandashrama Sanskrit Series 97. Poona: Anandashrama Press.

Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata, with the commentary of Abhinavagupta. 1992. Vol. 1. Edited by K. Krishnamoorthy. 4th ed. Baroda: Oriental Institute. (Also edited by Madhusudan Shastri, 3 vols. Vārāṇasī: Banaras Hindu University, 1973–1978.)

Paṇḍitarājakāvyasaṅgraha (Complete Poetical Works of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha). 1958. Edited by Aryendra Sharma. Sanskrit Academy Series 2. Hyderabad: Sanskrit Academy, Osmania University.

Pavanadūta of Dhoyī. [c. 1926]. Edited by Chintaharan Chakravarti. Calcutta: Sanskrit Sahitya Parishat.

Prasthānabheda of Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī. 1966. Edited by G. B. Kale. Anandashrama Sanskrit Series 51. Poona: Anandashrama Press.

Pṛthvīrājavijaya [of Jayānaka]. 1941. Edited by Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha and Chandradhar Sharma Guleri. Ajmer: Vedic Yantralaya.

Purātanaprabandhasaṅgraha. 1936. Edited by Jinavijaya. Calcutta: Abhisthata-Singhi Jaina Jnanapitha.

Puruṣaparīkṣā of Vidyāpati. 1881 (*śaka* 1803). Edited by Kalidasa Shastri. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Raghuvaṃśa of Kālidāsa. 1993. Edited by Revaprasad Dvivedi. Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Rājataraṅgiṇī of Jonarāja. 1967. Edited by Srikanth Kaul. Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Institute. (Also edited by Raghunath Singh. Vārāṇasī: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1972.)

Rājataraṅgiṇī of Kalhaṇa. 1892. Edited by M. A. Stein. Bombay: Education Society's Press. Reprint, Delhi, 1960.

Rājataraṅgiṇī of Śrīvara and Śuka. 1966. Edited by Srikanth Kaul. Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Institute.

Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. 1960–1975. Edited by G. K. Bhatt et al. Baroda: Oriental Institute.

Rasagaṅgādhara of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha. 1939. Edited by Mathuranath Shastri. Kāvyamālā 12. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Rāvaṇavahamahākāvyam of Pravarasena. 1959. Edited by Radhagovinda Basak. Calcutta: Sanskrit College.

Śābarabhāṣya of Śabara, in *Mīmāṃsādarśanam.* 1970–1976. Edited by K. V. Abhyankar and G. Joshi. 5 vols. Poona: Anandashrama Press.

Saduktikarṇāmṛta of Śrīdharadāsa. 1965. Edited by Sures Chandra Banerji. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya.

Sāhityadarpaṇa of Viśvanātha. 1967. Edited by Krishnamohan Shastri. Kashi Sanskrit Series 145. Vārāṇasī: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.

Sāhityamīmāṃsā. 1984. Edited by Gaurinath Shastri. Vārāṇasī: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University.

Saṃdeśarāsaka of Abdul Rahman. 1998. Edited and translated by C. M. Mayrhofer. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Saptaçatakam des Hala. 1881. Edited by Albrecht Weber. Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 7.4. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus.

Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇālaṅkāra of Bhoja. 1979. Edited by Biswanath Bhattacharya. Vārāṇasī: Banaras Hindu University.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati of Śārṅgadhara. 1915. Edited by Peter Peterson. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha of Mādhava. 1978. Edited by V. S. Abhyankar. 3d reprint. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Satsaī of Bihārī Lāl. 1977. Edited by Sudhakar Pandey. Vārāṇasī: Nagaripracarini Sabha.

Saundarananda of Aśvaghoṣa. 1928. Edited by E. H. Johnston. London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford. Reprint, Delhi, 1975.

Śiśupālavadha of Māgha. 1902. Edited by Durgaprasad and Sivadatta. Revised by Vasudev Lakshman Sastri Pansikar. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Śivamahimnaḥ stotra of Puṣpadanta. 1938. Edited by R. Panasikar Shastri. Haridas Sanskrit Series 68. Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.

Śrīkaṇṭhacarita of Maṅkha. 1887. Edited by Durgaprasad and Kashinath Panduranga Parab. Kāvyamālā 3. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Śṛṅgāraprakāśa of Bhoja. 1998–. Edited by V. Raghavan. Harvard Oriental Series 53. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. One volume published to date. (Also edited by G. R. Joyser. 4 vols. Mysore: Coronation Press, 1955–c. 1969.)

Stutikusumāñjali of Jagaddharabhaṭṭa. 1964. Edited by Shrikrishna Pant et al. Vārāṇasī: Acyutagranthamala.

Subhāṣitaratnakośa of Vidyākara. 1957. Edited by D. D. Kosambi and V. V. Gokhale. Harvard Oriental Series 42. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Subhāṣitasudhānidhi of Sāyaṇa. 1968. Edited by K. Krishnamoorthy. Dharwar: Karnatak University.

Sūktimuktāvalī of Jalhaṇa. 1938. Edited by Embar Krishnamacharya. Gaekwad's Oriental Series 82. Baroda: Oriental Institute.

Tantravārttika of Kumārila, in *Mīmāṃsādarśana* 1970–1976.

Tilakamañjarī of Dhanapāla. 1991. Edited by N. M. Kansara. Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology.

Vāgbhaṭālaṅkāra of Vāgbhaṭa. 1895. Edited by Sivadatta and Kashinath Pandurang Parab. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press.

Vāyupurāṇa. 1885. [No editor.] Bombay: Venkateshvara Steam Press.

Vikramāṅkadevacarita of Bilhaṇa. 1964. Edited by Vishwanath Shastri Bharadvaj. 3 vols. Vārāṇasī: Samskrit Sahitya Research Committee of the Banaras Hindu University.

Vikramorvaśīya of Kālidāsa, in *Kālidāsagranthāvalī* 1986.

Secondary Texts

Alsdorf, Ludwig. 1937. *Apabhraṃśa-Studien.* Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 22.2. Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft.

Athavale, R. B. 1968. "New Light on the Life of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 48/49: 415–20.

Banerji, S. C. 1965. *Cultural Heritage of Kashmir: A Survey of Kashmir's Contribution to Sanskrit Literature.* Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

Bansat-Boudon, Lyne. 1992. *Poétique du théâtre indien: Lectures du Nāṭyaśāstra.* Paris: École française d'Extrème-Orient.

———. 1994. "Le texte accompli par la scène: Observations sur les versions de Śākuntala." *Journal asiatique* 282: 280–333.

Basu, Ananthanath, ed. 1941. *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835 and 1838) by William Adam.* Calcutta: University of Calcutta.

Bhattacharya, Dinesh Chandra. 1944. "Vidyāsāgara's Commentary on the Mahābhārata." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 25: 99–102.

Bhayani, Harivallabh Chunilal. 1958. "Caturmukha, One of the Earliest Apabhraṃśa Epic Poets." *Journal of the Oriental Institute,* Baroda, 7 (3): 214–24. Reprinted in Bhayani 1993.

———. 1989a. "Appendix 1: The Apabhraṃśa Passages from Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa,*" and "Appendix 2: Restoration of the Text of the Apabhraṃśa Passages in Bhoja's *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa.*" In *Prakrit Verses in Sanskrit Works on Poetics,* edited by V. M. Kulkarni. Delhi: Bhogilal Leherchand Institute of Indology.

———. 1989b. *Apabhraṃśa Language and Literature: A Short Introduction.* Delhi: B. L. Institute of Indology.

———. 1993. *Indological Studies: Literary and Performing Arts, Prakrit, and Apabhramsa Studies.* Ahmedabad: Parshva Prakashan.

Bodewitz, H. W., and L. A. van Daalen. 1998. "Vākpatirāja's Gauḍavaha." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Südasiens* 42: 41–66.

Bronner, Yigal. 1998. "Double-Bodied Poet, Double-Bodied Poem: Ravicandra's Commentary on the Amaruśatakam and the Rules of Sanskrit Literary Interpretation." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 26: 233–61.

———. 1999. "Poetry at Its Extreme: The Theory and Practice of Bitextual Poetry *(śleṣa)* in South Asia." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda Kentish. 1977. *Coomaraswamy.* Edited by Roger Lipsey. Vol. 1, *Selected papers: Traditional Art and Symbolism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Coulson, Michael. 1989. *A Critical Edition of the Mālatīmādhava.* Revised by Roderick Sinclair. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Dani, Ahmad Hasan. 1986. *Indian Palaeography.* 2d ed. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Dasgupta, S. N., and S. K. De. 1962. *A History of Sanskrit Literature: Classical Period.* Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press.

De, S. K. 1960. *Bengal's Contribution to Sanskrit Literature.* Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyaya.

Deshpande, Madhav. 1993. *Sanskrit and Prakrit: Sociolinguistic Issues.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Dundas, Paul. 1996. "Jain Attitudes towards the Sanskrit Language." In Houben 1996.

Frauwallner, E. 1960. "Sprachtheorie und Philosophie im Mahābhāṣyam des Patañjali." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Südasiens* 4: 92–118.

Fuhrmann, Manfred 1983. "Die Epochen der griechsichen und der römischen Literatur." In *Der Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachhistorie,* edited by Bernard Cerquiglini and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Gerow, Edwin. 1977. *Sanskrit Poetics.* Vol. 5, fasc. 3 of *History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Stuttgart: Harrassowitz.

———. 1994. "Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics as a Speculative Paradigm" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114 (2): 186–208.

Gode, P. K. 1940. "Textual Criticism in the Thirteenth Century." In *Woolner Commemoration Volume,* edited by Mohammad Shafi. Lahore: Mehar Chand Lachhman Das.

Goldman, Robert, trans. 1984. *The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.* Vol. 1, *Bālakāṇḍa.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gonda, Jan. 1963. *The Vision of the Vedic Poets.* Disputationes Rheno-Trajectinae 8. The Hague: Mouton.

Granoff, Phyllis. 1995. "Sarasvatī's Sons: Biographies of Poets in Medieval India." *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* 49 (2): 351–76.

Gray, Louis H. 1950. *The Narrative of Bhoja (Bhojaprabhandha), by Ballāla of Benares.* New Haven: American Oriental Society. American Oriental Series vol. 34.

Grünendahl, Reinhold. 1993. "Zur Klassifizierung von Mahābhārata-Handschrfiten." In *Studien zur Indologie und Buddhismuskunde,* edited by Reinhold Grünendahl et al. Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. 1983. "Schriftlichkeit in mündlicher Kultur." In *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation,* edited by Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, and Christof Hardmeier. Munich: Wilhelm Fink.

Hahn, Michael. 1991. *The Recensions of the Nāgānanda by Harṣadeva.* Vol. 1, *The North Indian Recension.* New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan.

———. 1993. "Notes on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature: Chronology and Related Topics." In *Genshi Bukkyo to Daijo Bukkyo: Watanabe Fumimaro Hakushi tsuito kinen* (Fumimaro Watanabe commemoration volume), edited by Egaku Maeda. Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo.

Haksar, A. N. D., ed. 1995. "Sanskrit Literature." Special issue of *Indian Horizons* 44 (4).

Hardy, Friedhelm. 1994. "Creative Corruption: Some Comments on Apabhraṃśa Literature, Particularly Yogīndu." In *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature: Research Papers, 1988–91,* edited by Alan W. Entwistle and Françoise Mallison. New Delhi: Manohar; Paris: École Française d'Extrème-Orient.

Hartmann, Jens-Uwe. 1988. *Neue Aśvaghoṣa- und Mātr̥ceṭa-Fragmente aus Ostturkistan.* Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften, philol.-histor. Klasse. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

Houben, J. E. M., ed. 1996. *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language.* Leiden: Brill.

Ingalls, Daniel H. H. 1954. "A Sanskrit Poetry of Village and Field: Yogeśvara and His Fellow Poets." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75: 119–31.

———. 1968a. *Sanskrit Poetry, from Vidyākara's Treasury.* Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

———. 1968b. "The *Harivaṃśa* as a *Mahākāvya.*" In *Mélanges d' indianisme á la mémoire de Louis Renou.* Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard.

———. 1976. "Kālidāsa and the Attitudes of the Golden Age." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96 (1): 15–26.

Ingalls, Daniel H. H., Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan, trans. 1990. *The Dhvanāloka of Ānandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta.* Harvard Oriental Series 49. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Irvine, Martin. 1994. *The Making of Textual Culture: "Grammatica" and Literary Theory, 350–1100.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Katre, S. M. 1954. *Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism.* Poona: Deccan College.

Keith, A. B. 1923. *Classical Sanskrit Literature.* Calcutta: Association Press; London, New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1928. *A History of Sanskrit Literature.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kölver, Bernhard. 1971 *Textkritische und philologische Untersuchungen zur Rājataraṅgiṇī des Kalhaṇa.* Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Supplementband 12. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

Krishnamacariar, M. 1906. *A History of Classical Sanskrit Literature.* Madras: Vaijayanti Press. 2d ed. Madras: Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams Press, 1937. Reprint, Delhi, 1970.

Krishnamoorthy, K. 1970. "What is 'Sāhitya'"? In *Sanskrit Learning through the Ages,* edited by G. Marulasiddaiah. Mysore: Oriental Research Institute.

Krishnaswami Ayyangar, S. 1919. *Sources of Vijayanagar History.* Madras: University of Madras Press. Reprint, Delhi, 1986.

Kulkarni, V. M. 1991. *Sarvasena's Harivijaya.* Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology.

Lefeber, Rosaland, trans. 1996. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki.* Vol. 4, *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lévi, Sylvain. 1890. *Le theatre indien.* Paris: E. Bouillon. Reprint, Paris, 1963.

———. 1904. "On Some Terms Employed in the Inscriptions of the Kashatrapas." *Indian Antiquary:* 163–74 (originally *Journal asiatique* 1902).

Lienhard, Siegfried. 1984. *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit—Pali—Prakrit.* Vol. 3, fasc. 1 of *History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Majumdar, Ramesh Chandra. 1974. *Study of Sanskrit in South-East Asia.* Calcutta: Sanskrit College.

Malamoud, Charles. 1997. "Noirceur de l'écriture: remarques sur un thème littéraire de l'Inde ancienne." In *Paroles à dire, paroles à écrire,* edited by Vivianne Alleton. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

Master, Alfred. 1949–1951. "Gleanings from the Kuvalayamālā Kahā I: Three Fragments and Specimens of the Eighteen Desabhāsās," and "Gleanings from the Kuvalayamālā Kahā II: Specimens of Prose Apabhraṃśa and Middle Indian Mixed with Sanskrit." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13: 410–15 and 1004–16.

McCrea, Lawrence. 1997. "The Teleology of Poetry in Medieval Kashmir." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

Minkowski, Christopher Z. In press. "Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara and the Genre of *Mantra-rahasyaprakāśikā.*" In *Proceedings of the Second International Vedic Workshop,* edited by Y. Ikari. Kyoto.

Mirashi, V. V. 1963. *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas.* Corpus inscriptionum indicarum 5. Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.

———. 1981. *The History and Inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas and the Western Kshatrapas.* Bombay: Maharasthra State Board for Literature and Culture.

Müller, F. Max. 1859. *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature so far as it illustrates the primitive religion of the Brahmans.* London: Williams and Norgate.

Narayana Rao, V., et al. 1992. *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamil Nadu.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Nilakanta Sastri, K. A., and N. Venkataramanayya. 1946. *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History.* 3 vols. Madras: University of Madras Press.

Nitti-Dolci, Luigia. 1938. *Les grammairiens prakrits.* Paris: Librairie d'Amerique et d'Orient.

Peterson, Indira Viswanathan. 1998. "The Evolution of the Kuravanci Dance Drama in Tamil Nadu." *South Asia Research* 18: 39–72.

Pischel, Richard. 1965. *Comparative Grammar of the Prakrit Languages.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1984. "The *Rāmāyaṇa* Text and the Critical Edition." In *The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* vol. 1, *Bālakāṇḍa,* translated by Robert P. Goldman. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———, trans. 1986. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki.* Vol. 2, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———, trans. 1991. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki.* Vol. 3, *Araṇyakāṇḍa.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1993. "Rāmāyaṇa and Political Imagination in India." *Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (2): 261–97.

———. 1995a. "Literary History, Indian History, World History." *Social Scientist* 23 (10–12): 112–42.

———. 1995b. "Public Poetry in Sanskrit." In Haksar 1995.

———. 1995c. "In Praise of Poets: On the History and Function of the *Kavipraśaṃsā.*" In *Ānandabhāratī: Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy Felicitation Volume.* Mysore: DVK Murthy.

———. 1996. "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, A.D. 300–1300: Transculturation, Vernacularization, and the Question of Ideology." In Houben 1996.

———. 1997. "'Tradition' as 'Revelation': Śruti, Smṛti, and the Sanskrit Discourse of Power." In *Lex et Litterae: Essays on Ancient Indian Law and Literature in Honour of Oscar Botto,* edited by S. Lienhard and I. Piovano. Turin: Edizioni dell'Orso.

———. 1998a. "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular." *Journal of Asian Studies* 57 (1): 6–37.

———. 1998b. "Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* and the Problem of *Rasa:* A Historical Introduction and Annotated Translation." *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* 70 (1): 1–73.

———. 1998c. "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000–1500." In *Early Modernities,* edited by Shmuel Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter. *Daedalus* 127 (3): 41–74.

———. 2001. "The Death of Sanskrit." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43 (2): 392–426.

———. Forthcoming. *Cosmopolitan and Vernacular before Modernity: Culture and Power in South Asia to 1500.*

Raghavan, V. 1941–1942. "Uḍāli's Commentary on the Rāmāyaṇa." *Annals of Oriental Research,* 1–8.

———. 1952. *Śāhendravilāsa of Śrīdharaveṅkaṭeśvara.* Madras Government Oriental Series. Tiruchi: Kalyan Press.

———. 1963. *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa.* 2d ed. Madras: Punarvasu.

———. 1978. *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa.* 3d. ed. Madras: Punarvasu.

Raja, K. Kunjunni. 1980. *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature.* Madras: University of Madras.

Renou, Louis. 1956. *Histoire de la langue sanskrite.* Lyon: Editions IAC.

———. 1959. "Sur la structure du kāvya." *Journal asiatique* 247: 1–113.

Salomon, Richard. 1989. "Linguistic Variability in Post-Vedic Sanskrit." In *Dialectes dans les littératures indo-aryennes,* edited by C. Caillat. Paris: Collège de France.

———. 1995. "On the Origin of the Early Indian Scripts." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115 (2): 271–79.

Sarasvati, D. C. 1968. "*Alaṅkārasudhānidhi* Attributed to Sāyaṇa." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 48–49: 253–86.

Sarma, Govardhan. 1965. "Apabhraṃśa kā Vikās." In *Muni Śrīhajārīmal smṛti-granthai,* edited by Śobhācandra Bhārill. Delhi: Udyogasala Press.

Sastri, V. A. Ramaswamy. 1942. *Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja.* Annamalainagar: Annamalai University Press.

Sewell, Robert. 1920. "The Dates in Merutunga's 'Prabandha Cintamani.'" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 333–41.

Shackleton Bailey, D. R. 1951. *The Śatapañcāśatka of Mātṛceṭa.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shulman, David. 1991. "Towards a Historical Poetics of the Sanskrit Epics." *International Folklore Review* 8: 9–17.

Sircar, Dines Chandra. 1939. "Inscriptional Evidence Relating to the Development of Classical Sanskrit." *The Indian Historical Quarterly* 15: 38–46.

———. 1965. *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization.* Vol. 1, *From the Sixth Century B.C. to the Sixth Century A.D.* 2d ed., rev. and enlarged. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.

———. 1983. *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization.* Vol. 2, *From the Sixth to the Eighteenth Century A.D.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Sivaramamurti, C. 1952. *Indian Epigraphy and South Indian Scripts.* Madras: Printed by the Director of Stationery and Printing on behalf of the Govt. of Madras.

Smith, David. 1985. *The Haravijaya of Ratnākara: An Introduction to Sanskrit Court Poetry.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Srinivasan, Srinivasa Ayya. 1980. *On the Composition of the Nāṭyaśāstra.* Reinbek: Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen.

Stein, Burton. 1989. *Vijayanagara.* Vol. 1, pt. 2 of *The New Cambridge History of India.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stein, M. A. trans. 1900. *Kalhaṇa's Rājataraṅgiṇī.* 2 vols. Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989.

Sukthankar, V. S., ed. 1927. *Mahābhārata Ādiparvan.* Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Thieme, Paul. 1982. "Meaning and Form of the 'Grammar' of Pāṇini." *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 8/9: 3–34.

Tieken, Herman. 1992. "Style and Structure of Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṃsā,* with special reference to chapter 10 on the relation between king and poet." In *Ritual, State and History in South Asia: Essays in Honour of J. C. Heesterman,* edited by A. W. van den Hoek et al. Leiden: Brill.

———. 1993. "The So-Called Trivandrum Plays Attributed to Bhāsa." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Südasiens* 37: 5–44.

———. 1995. "Prākṛt Poetry: Hāla's Sattasaī." In Haksar 1995.

Tubb, Gary. 1985. "Śāntarasa in the *Mahābhārata.*" *Journal of South Asian Literatures* 20 (1): 41–75. Reprinted in *Essays on the Mahābhārata,* edited by Arvind Sharma. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

Vijayanagara Sexcentenary Commemoration Volume. 1936. Dharwar: Vijayanagara Empire Sexcentenary Association.

Vyas, Kantilal Baldevram. 1982. *Apabhraṃśa Grammar of Hemacandra.* Ahmedabad: Prakrit Text Society.

———. 1984. "Apabhraṃśa: Its Origin, Literature and Grammatical Structure." *Brahma Vidyā* 44 (1–4): 1–38.

Warder, A. K. 1972–. *Indian Kāvya Literature.* 6 vols. to date. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Weber, Albrecht. 1852. *Akademische Vorlesungen über indische Literaturgeschichte.* Berlin: Ferd. Dümmler. 2d ed., 1876; Hindi translation, Lahore, 1885.

Winternitz, Moriz. 1908–1922. 3 vols. *Geschichte der indischen Literatur.* Leipzig: C. F. Amelang.

The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan

Muzaffar Alam

Persian has been an integral part of South Asian culture, and the life of northern India (or Hindustan) in particular, for centuries. Recognizing and appreciating the marks of Persian influence, though these are perhaps less visible today than they were in, say, 1800, are nevertheless crucial for understanding northern Indian literary and political culture. The same is true, if to a lesser degree, for other parts of India, though some regions, such as the Deccan, were also considerably affected by Persian over the centuries. The period examined in this chapter is between the twelfth and the nineteenth centuries, when Persian influence was at its apogee in northern India. Much has been written about this phenomenon over the years, though usually within the framework of a straightforward narrative. Where an analysis has been attempted, it has usually been limited to a comparison of the features of the so-called Indian style or Indian usage *(sabk-i Hindī* or *istiʿmāl-i Hind)* in Persian with those of the dominant Iranian style. And though political and social factors that lie outside the strict framework of a literary narrative have been noted, their role has seldom been examined in any detail.[1] It is my purpose not only to contextualize Indian Persian, but also to argue that the "Indian style" has a longer history than has often been realized. *Sabk-i*

1. In English, Ghani's account (1929–1930 and 1941) is still the best account of the career of Persian in Hindustan. Schimmel (1973) is useful, but sketchy; Hasan (1952) is selective and is ineffective in removing the impression that Browne (1951–1953) has created. Rypka (1968) is good, but only for some poets like Bīdil. In Urdu a very comprehensive description is avail-

Hindī should not be understood as solely the articulation of Mughal India during the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries (1526–1857); rather, it had its roots in the early-medieval efflorescence under the Ghaznavids (977–1186) in Lahore with Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān during the eleventh century, reaching a first maturity at the time of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. It continued to evolve in the context of medieval Sufism before being redeployed in Mughal times after a possible detour through Herat. These developments can only be understood if one takes into account the political and social context not only in South Asia but also in the post-Mongol Perso-Islamic world. The zenith of the *istiʿmāl-i Hind* in Mughal times also needs to be evaluated anew through a rereading of contemporary controversies on the question, for which the interpretations offered by scholars of Iranian Persian are not always adequate. Here, too, comparative examination of the political cultures of Mughal India and Safavid Iran (1501–1722) is central to understanding both the literary trajectories taken and the manner in which rivalries were posed and understood by contemporary controversialists.

South Asia had of course interacted for two millennia with traditions emanating from Old and Middle Persian. The region came in contact with the emergent New Persian culture sometime around the third quarter of the ninth century, when Sindh was integrated into the Saffarid kingdom by Yaʿqūb bin Abī Lais̱. Persian was still evolving then as a language of literary expression in the Islamic East. Toward the end of the tenth century, the presence of Persian in Sindh, Multan, and Panjab was further strengthened by the growing importance of the Ismāïʿīlī presence there.[2] A more formal relationship of the language with the subcontinent formed later, in the wake of the establishment of Ghaznavid power in Panjab in the eleventh century. In the area around his capital, Ghazna, the celebrated ruler Maḥmūd (998–1030) and his vizier, Khvāja Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad Maymandī, created

---

able in three thick volumes in Maḥmūd 1971a, 1971b, 1972. The best in Urdu are the writings on selective themes by Ḥāfiẓ Maḥmūd Shērānī (1968) and S. M. ʿAbdullāh (1967, 1968, and 1977). The new Persian language and literature specialists refuse to come out of the criteria prescribed by modern Iranian scholars (cf. ʿĀbidī 1984, for instance).

2. Ghani 1941: 74–75; Sālik 1957: 523. To be noted in this connection: (1) Sindh and Multan, being close to its borders, had age-long links with Iran; (2) the Sindhis seem to have fought with the Iranians against the Arabs during the early years of the expansion of Islam; (3) a number of Shīrāzīs (Fārs) were in the army of the Umayyid general Muḥammad bin Qāsim when he invaded and conquered Sindh; (4) the Abbasid Caliph al-Muʿtamad assigned Sindh and Multan to the Saffarids, and Persian was virtually the official language under Yaʿqūb bin Lays̱; and (5) when Maḥmūd of Ghazna chased the Qarmatis in Multan and Sindh, it was in Persian that the Friday sermons were delivered from the pulpits of the mosques in Multan.

a major center of Persian culture that was inherited from Bukhara of the Samanids (819–1005). This was the context within which the great Firdausī composed the *Shāh-nāmah,* and which also enabled the development of a particular literary form, the *qaṣīdah* (a long poem in the nature of an ode or elegy).[3] Maḥmūd of Ghazna was also responsible for instituting the position of *malik al-shuʿarāʾ* (poet laureate), which after his rule was absorbed into the Timurid court traditions in Herat in the fifteenth century and eventually reached the height of its importance in Mughal India. It was only much later, in the nineteenth century, that the Qajars in the Iranian plateau took on board this innovation. To my mind, the post of *malik al-shuʿarāʾ* was crucial for the development of a certain style of courtly patronage of literature. From Ghazna the New Persian literary culture spread farther east in the eleventh century to Lahore, significantly sometimes called "little Ghazna," a major staging post for Ghaznavid ventures in Hindustan. In a first phase, the Muslim presence in the city seems to have been dominated by plunder-seeking frontier warriors (*ghāzī*s), but over time large numbers of Persian-speaking people reportedly settled around Lahore. The city, which had emerged as an important political center of the eastern Ghaznavids in the eleventh century, gradually attracted scholars and literary figures from Iran, Khurasan, and Māwarā-an-nahr.[4] Panjab thus witnessed the beginning and flowering of a high Persian literary tradition. Persian texts of the time of the first Ghurid ruler, ʿAlā al-Dīn Jahānsūz (1149–1161), stated that among the areas where Persian verse had cast its shadow and was appreciated was "the periphery [or the districts] of the land of Hind" *(aṭrāf-ibilād-i Hind),* referring to the Panjab.[5] Among the poets associated with this region and its vicinity were the great Abū al-Faraj Rūnī and Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān, acclaimed by Persian literary critics as innovators and masters of a new diction.

Later, in the wake of the Turkish conquest of northern India in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, Persian flourished farther east, in Delhi and beyond. As part of the new political developments of the thirteenth century, Persian speakers entered the region—including soldiers and adventurers from as far as the Qara Khitaʾi and Qipchaq regions. The sultans of Delhi between 1206 and 1290 extended generous patronage to Persian scribes, writers, and poets. The short-lived kingdom of Nāṣir al-Dīn Qabāchah (1205–1228) in Uchch also played host to some of the best Persian poets and writers. Significantly, the first major *tazkirah* (a critical anthology of Persian poetry), *Lubāb al-Albāb* (The essence of wisdom) of Sadīd al-Dīn Muḥam-

3. Bosworth 1963: 131–34; 1968: 37; Nazim 1931: 157–59.
4. Latif 1892: 353.
5. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 89.

mad ʿAufī (d. c. 1252), was compiled at Qabāchah's court.[6] When Chinggis Khān invaded the Perso-Islamic world, this trickle of scribes, savants, and holy men became a flow of some importance, and a truly significant elite migration into northern India began. The migrants included members of distinguished ruling families; there were also many men of learning *(ʿulamāʾ)* and Sufis. The Persian traditions of these groups were thus rooted more deeply in the northern Indian world. The sultanate of Delhi patronized these men of learning and piety with revenue grants (*imlāk, auqāf, idrārāt, vaẓāʾif,* etc.), which were often located in the countryside. Thus a gradual penetration of Persian into small towns and rural centers began through these beneficiaries of the state's largesse. Quarters in the cities were given the names of towns and ethnic groups located elsewhere in the Persian-speaking world (such as Atābakī, Khvārazmshāhī, Samarqandī, and Khatāʾī); and rural centers, too, were often named anew, or when freshly founded were given names from the new Persian vocabulary. Later waves of migration accompanied political and social turmoil in Central and South-Central Asia: In the wake of the empire-building of Timur in the late fourteenth century additional groups sought refuge in northern India, while in the fifteenth century the Afghan sultans of Delhi and Jaunpur encouraged their clansmen to settle in the Gangetic plain as far east as Bengal and Bihar.[7]

From one perspective, then, northern India became a part of the Perso-Islamic world in precisely the same way as did Transoxania, Ghazna, or Ghur. Just as Bukhara, Tirmiz, Nishapur, Isfarain, Sabzavar, and Herat were important in this cultural landscape, so too Delhi and Lahore acquired a place there and a reputation. In the thirteenth century there was a certain degree of cultural integration with a coherent Perso-Islamic identity (in opposition to the Arab culture) that is identified with the term "ʿAjam." The Persian-speaking residents of Delhi and Lahore seem to have considered themselves a part of this world of ʿAjam, as is made apparent by ʿAufī's description in his anthology, which he terms "an anthology of the poets of ʿAjam" *(ṭabaqāt-i shuʿarāʾ-i ʿAjam),* the implicit contrast surely being with the poets of the Arab cultural zone.[8] The word "ʿAjam," used by the Arabs in the first centuries of Islam and even earlier as a term of contempt for those they considered inferior to them in language and literature, was thus seized upon and used in a self-assertive manner not only by those who lived on the Iranian plateau but by those who inhabited the larger Persian world.

There were few new developments in genre in the Persian written in South Asia. There were also some far more significant changes in terms of style, though in general, developments were uneven. The *maṡnavī* (narrative

6. Khan 1970: 96–97.
7. Nizami 1961: 75–98; Rashid 1969: 2–14; Kumar 1992: 76–234.
8. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 61–62.

poem) form of narrative poetry, which had seen an early efflorescence with Amīr Khusrau, did not develop or flourish a great deal thereafter. But fields like lexicography and philology generally saw particular development in South Asia, as did a number of shorter poetic forms such as the *ghazal* (love lyric). Among the possible innovations in generic terms were such narrative forms as the *dāstān* (fable) and *malfūẓ* (conversation, table talk), the latter associated with a Sufi context: the recounting of conversations of spiritually enlightened figures.[9] These forms are not my primary concern here, however; instead I concentrate on developments in the field of poetry, which has in particular been marked by debate and controversy.

POETRY AND PROSE UNDER
THE EARLY SULTANS OF NORTHERN INDIA

Abū ʿAbdullāh Rozbih bin ʿAbdullāh al-Nukatī of Lahore (d. 1091?) was perhaps the first poet of Persian expression born in India. ʿAufī mentions him among the poets of the Ghaznavid era and praises the pithiness of his compositions.[10] Unfortunately, practically nothing about his life and works is known; only a few verses, recorded by ʿAufī and borrowed from him by later biographers, have survived. On the basis of these verses it is difficult to assess the quality of his poetry, but as the first Persian poet of India he certainly occupies a special position.

Abū al-Faraj Rūnī and Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān were the two major poets during the Ghaznavid era. Abū al-Faraj came from Rūn, a village (no longer existent) near Lahore, and was hence called al-Rūnī. He flourished during the reign of Sultan Ibrāhīm of Ghazna (1059–1089) and died sometime after 1099.[11] The greatness of Abū al-Faraj as a poet is attested to by two facts: first, he is still known traditionally as Ustād Abū al-Faraj, and second, Anvarī (d. 1187), one of the greatest Iranian writers of *qaṣīdah,* professedly imitated his style:

> Let it be known that I am Abū al-Faraj's slave in poetry;
> when I saw it, I became eager for it.[12]

---

9. There is no single good work in English on the trajectory of these genres in Indian Persian. In Urdu there is considerable material compiled by Persian language and literature specialists, summed up in Maḥmūd (1971a, 1971b, and 1972). Writings on the history of Urdu literature are also useful. Bruce Lawrence (1978) has an excellent book on pre-Mughal Sufi *malfūẓ.* Shamsur Rahman Faruqi has recently published a comprehensive work on Urdu *dāstān* (1999b).

10. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 544–45.

11. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 728–32.

12. Cited in Husain 1985: 36–37; Rūnī 1968 (1347), introduction to *Dīvān.* Mudarris Raẕavī, the editor of Anvarī's *Dīvān,* comments on Abūal-Rūnī's influence on Anvarī's *qaṣīdah*s. Anvarī

Elsewhere Anvarī praises his patron through metaphors drawing on the poetic stature of Abū al-Faraj and of Farrukhī, a poet at the court of Maḥmūd of Ghazna:

> In profundity, the cavalry of your fortune is like the poetry of Abū al-Faraj,
> and in sweetness, the reservoir of your pleasure is like the verses of Farrukhī.[13]

Centuries later, ʿUrfī Shīrāzī (d. 1591) placed Abū al-Faraj at the same level as Saʿdī and Khāqānī; while ʿUrfī's contemporary, the Mughal poet laureate Fayẕī, considered Abū al-Faraj's poetry as the source of his own poetic sensibility:

> The taste of joy that one can take from poetry
> I took from the verses of Abū al-Faraj.[14]

According to one modern Iranian literary critic and historian, Abū al-Faraj in a way laid the foundation for the majestic *qaṣīdah* diction of Anvarī. He discarded the style developed and perfected in the Samanid period and pursued generally by the early Ghaznavid *qaṣīdah* writers; in its place, he invented a new *qaṣīdah* diction.[15] Further, while in the early phase of Persian poetry few poets excelled in more than one form of versification, Abū al-Faraj was acclaimed as a master not simply of the *qaṣīdah* but of the *rubāʿī* (quatrain) as well. Some of his *rubāʿī*s are on a par with the best of this genre:

> So long as the breath of life is left in me,
> my head will be full of the desire for wine and *sāqī;*
> the task I chose to do was just this much,
> all the rest was incidental.[16]

The other great early Indian Persian poet, Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān (d. 1121), was the proud pupil of Abū al-Faraj. Masʿūd's family, which enjoyed an eminent position and was learned and well-to-do, originally belonged to Hamadan. One of Masʿūd's near ancestors, most probably his father, seems to have come to Lahore in connection with state service and settled there. Masʿūd was born in Lahore sometime between 1046 and 1048. He rose to a high position in state service, played a prominent role in the politics of his day, and passed through several unhappy vicissitudes of life.[17]

1985 (s. 1364), 2: 1053, 1055, 1061, 1063, 1100, 1101, 1102, 1103. (All translations in this chapter are my own, unless another published translation is cited.)

13. Anvarī 1985 (s. 1364), 2: 434; cf. Husain 1985: 38 (citing the *Dīvān,* Lucknow, 1897: 754).

14. Husain 1985: 38–39.

15. Ṣafā 1959 (s. 1338): 471.

16. Rūnī 1968 (s. 1347): 136.

17. Husain 1985: 34, 52–60.

Masʿūd was a versatile and a prolific poet and left three *dīvān*s (collections of verse), one each in Persian, Arabic, and Hindui/Hindvi.[18] His Arabic and Hindvi *dīvān*s are lost, while the Persian one has been published many times. During Masʿūd's last days, Sanāʾī, the well-known philosopher-poet of Ghazna, prepared a collection of Masʿūd's verses, which shows the high esteem in which Masʿūd was held by contemporary non-Indian Persian writers.[19]

Masʿūd is at his best in his *ḥabsīyāt* (verses composed in prison). These poems, characterized by pathos and emotion, are unparalleled in their power; and biographers and critics within the Persian tradition have concurred through the centuries that they possess a high degree of eloquence and poetic artistry. Perhaps only Khāqānī's *ḥabsīyāt* bear comparison. A pronounced and proud presence of self marks Masʿūd's poetry. Many of his verses are autobiographical and narrate both his failures and his accomplishments.

> Alas, Lahore! How can you exist without me?
> How can you shine without the brilliant sun?
> Once decorated by the garden of my verses,
> how can you now exist without the violet, tulip, and lily?
> Your dear son has suddenly been separated from you—
> are you wailing for him in pain and grief?
> You were a forest of flowers and I, a lion in this forest.
> Having once been with me, how can you now exist without me?[20]

Many other poets and scholars, in addition to Nukatī, Abū al-Faraj, and Masʿūd, lived and flourished in Ghaznavid Panjab. These include men closely associated in one capacity or another with state power, such as ʿAṭā bin Yaʿqūb Rāzī, the poet who was imprisoned in Lahore for the last eight years of his life by order of Sultan Ibrāhīm Ghaznavī and who had spent most of his earlier time in India. Another is Abū Naṣr-i Fārsī, the *vazīr* of Sultan Ibrāhīm, who served as the *sipāh sālār* and deputy governor of Lahore during the viceroyalty of Amīr Sherzād bin Sultan Masʿūd III (1098–1114). Other poets of the time have been compared by writers like ʿAufī to prestigious poets of the Samanid and western Ghaznavid courts, such as Rudakī and ʿUnṣurī, respectively.[21]

By the time the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) was first established, Persian had fully evolved as a literary language throughout Central Asia. To take an interest in Persian arts and letters was considered a mark of refinement

18. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 733. Hindui/Hindvi is also spelled "Hindavi," the difference having to do, some think, with the derivation of the term (whether derived from "Hind," India, or from "Hindu").

19. Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 21, editor's introduction; Nūrīyān 1996 (s. 1375): 30–40; Subḥānī 1998 (s. 1377)a: 36–49; Sharma 1999.

20. Husain 1985: 93–97 ("forest" is literally "meadow").

21. Khan 1970: 18–19.

and sophistication. No monarch, however brilliant his record of military achievement, could aspire to fame in the world of culture at home or abroad without generous patronage to Persian poets and scholars. So when they came to have sway over India, the Turks—notwithstanding their military and administrative preoccupations in their newly conquered territories—took keen interest in literary activities and generously patronized Persian poets and men of letters. Persian was the language of their courts and culture.

Among the noted poets and writers of the first century of the Delhi Sultanate were Ḥasan Niẓāmī (d. c. 1230), the author of the *Tāj-al-Maʾāṣir* (The crown of glories), which is discussed later in this chapter;[22] Tāj al-Dīn Rīzah, or Sangrīzah, (d. 1266–1276), an important Indian poet and a noble who was closely associated with court circles; and Muʾayyad Jājarmī (d. c. 1300), an Iranian scholar who translated into Persian from the Arabic Imām Ghazzāli's *Iḥyā-i ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (Revival of the sciences of the faith) at the behest of Sultan Iltutmish, thus contributing to the consolidation of Persian religio-literary developments in the epoch. It would not be out of place to also mention Shahāb Mehmara of Badaun (d. c. 1285), the great Indian Persian poet, scholar, and teacher of Amīr Khusrau, who was attached to the court of Rukn al-Dīn Fīrūz; as well as Minhāj-i Sirāj (d. c. 1266), the celebrated chronicler and court historian of Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd and the compiler of the famous history in Persian, the *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*. The celebrated Amīr Khusrau (d. 1325), the greatest of the pre-Mughal poets, and his close friend, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī Dihlavī (d. 1328), were among the later poets who received patronage from the Khaljī and the Tughlaq sultans of Delhi in the years from 1290 to 1424.[23]

Early in the thirteenth century, Uchch in Sindh, which in those years was very nearly a rival political pole to Delhi, also witnessed remarkable Persian literary activities. Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn Qabāchah, whose seat of government was Uchch, was a great patron of arts and learning. His chief minister, ʿAyn al-Mulk Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ḥusain bin Abī Bakr al Ashʿarī, also patronized literature lavishly. ʿAlī bin Hamīd al-Kūfī, translator of the *Chach-nāmah;* Muhammad ʿAufī, author of the *Lubāb al-Albāb* and the *Javāmi ʿal-Ḥikāyāt va Lavāmi ʿal-Rivāyāt* (The compendium of stories and flashes of traditions), and Minhāj-i Sirāj, compiler of *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, are among the many writers who, on arriving in India, went directly to Uchch. Unfortunately, the names of only a few of the multitude of poets and scholars who thronged that court are known to us. A certain Majd al-Dīn, according to ʿAufī, prepared an exhaustive anthology of the works of the court poets of Qabāchah. But the work

22. Manuscript copies of the text are found in the Asiatic Society Library, Calcutta, and in the Asafiya Library, Hyderabad. See also Niẓāmī 1998. A new edition by S. A. H. ʿĀbidī is forthcoming.

23. Aḥmad 1971: 207–37; Husain 1985: 103–51; Khan 1970: 70–86, 116–35, and 143–46.

is lost. ʿAufī mentions only a few of the many poets attached to Qabāchah's court on the plea that he was a newcomer, not fully acquainted with the court's earlier poets, accounts of whom had been provided, he notes, along with their compositions, by Majd al-Dīn.[24]

For a short while, toward the close of the thirteenth century, Multan was also an important center of Persian literature. Prince Muhammad, the eldest son of Balbān, had been appointed to the viceroyalty of Multan by his father. The prince was a great lover of Persian literature, and his assembly thronged with accomplished scholars and poets, Amīr Khusrau and Ḥasan Dihlavī being the most prominent among them. The prince twice invited to India Shaykh Saʿdī, the great poet of Shiraz, and reportedly even sent him travel expenses. On both occasions, however, Saʿdī excused himself on account of his old age. Saʿdī is also reported to have said once that India did not need Saʿdī since it already had Khusrau.[25]

Kashf al-Maḥjūb (Disclosure of the secret), a Sufi treatise by Shaykh ʿAlī bin ʿUsmān al-Hujvīrī (d. after 1089), is the only noted prose composition from Ghaznavid Panjab. Thirteenth-century India, however, saw numerous works in prose, the most notable among them being Ḥasan Niẓāmī's *Tāj al-Maʾāsir,* ʿAufī's *Lubāb al-Albāb,* and Minhāj-i Sirāj's *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī.* The *Tāj al-Maʾāsir* has long been held up "in the East," to quote Charles Rieu, "as a model of elegant composition . . . . The book was started as a historical record of the brilliant achievements of Quṭb al-Dīn Aybak, but it ended up in a fine piece of prose literature, which, though imitated in all the subsequent ages, could not be matched."[26] The book opens with the conquest of Ajmer at the hands of Muʿizz al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghūrī, in the year 1191, and ends with the appointment of Prince Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd, the eldest son of Iltutmish, to the governorship of Lahore in the year 1217.[27]

Lubāb al-Albāb, a *tazkirah,* as noted earlier, was the first major anthology of Persian poetry, in the strict sense of the word, to have been produced anywhere. There is a reference to an earlier anthology in Persian, entitled *Manāqib al-Shuʿarāʾ* (The virtues of poets), had been prepared by one Abū Ṭāhir al-Khāṭūnī. The *Majmaʿ al-Navādir* (Compendium of rarities), or *Chahār Maqālah* (Four essays) of Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī Samarqandī, compiled in Ghur under ʿAlā al-Dīn Jahānsūz, also comments on some poets and their poetry. Al-Khāṭūnī's work, however, was probably not known to ʿAufī; it has not survived. And *Chahār Maqālah* was principally meant to be a discourse on the code of conduct for the four essential components of a successful and stable royal court, namely, the *dabīr* (secretary), *shāʿir* (poet), *munajjim* (astrologer), and *ṭabīb* (physician).

24. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 905–15; Siddiqui 1992: 6.
25. Baranī 1862: 67–68; Ghani 1941: 393–94.
26. Rieu 1879: 239–40; Khan 1970: 75; Schimmel 1973: 13.
27. For a detailed examination of the *Tāj al-Maʾāsir,* see Khan 1970: 76–77.

The *Lubāb,* compiled in 1222 at Uchch, was dedicated to ʿAyn al-Mulk al-Ashʿarī, the chief minister of Nāṣir al-Dīn Qabāchah. An enormous work in two volumes, it is divided into a preface *(muqaddimah),* two sections *(faṣl),* and twelve chapters *(bāb).* The preface is a dedication and includes, besides the usual praises of God and the Prophet *(ḥamd* and *naʿt),* a long encomium to the author's patron, ʿAyn al-Mulk. The first section treats of the origin of human speech and its division into poetry and prose. The second section is a sort of foreword claiming that the *Lubāb* is the first written biography of Persian poets. Of the twelve chapters, the first four deal with the beginning of poetry and its significance and meaning. The fifth and the sixth are devoted to short descriptions and select poetical compositions by different kings, rulers, nobles, ministers, and administrators of Iran, who wrote poetry either for pleasure or informally. The seventh chapter is comprised of short accounts of and select verses from the scholars and divines of Transoxiana, Khurasan, Nimroz (Sistan), Iraq, Ghazna, Jibal (Ghur), and Lahore and its dependencies. The remaining five chapters contain short notices of and selections from 163 professional and other full-fledged poets of whom thirty belong to the Tahirid, Saffarid, and Samanid periods; twenty-nine to the Ghaznavid era; and fifty to the Saljuq period. Fifty-four are roughly the author's contemporaries, and four of these are the court poets of Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn Qabāchah. The total number of authors covered is about 300, and the time span some four hundred years.

The *Lubāb* was composed almost three centuries before Daulatshāh Samarqandī's celebrated *Taẕkirat al-Shuʿarāʾ*, which was the first *taẕkirah* written outside India (completed about 1487). But Daulatshāh makes no mention of the *Lubāb.* It is possible he never saw a copy of the text, though he does refer to al-Khāṭūnī's *Manāqib* as one of his sources. It is also not unlikely that he wished to project himself as the author of the first comprehensive Persian anthology.[28]

As other commentators have observed, ʿAufī is often not very particular about the dates and biographical details of the poets' lives. In some cases he notes only the poet's name, and his selection of verses is also not of a consistently high order.[29] In addition, his comments on the poems' literary qualities seem motivated by the logic of punning and playing on the letters and the words that comprise the poets' names, rather than giving a reasoned evaluation of their worth. To cite some examples:

Azraqī Heravī: Of whose speech the revolving blue sky *[falak-i azraq-i davvār]* is jealous to the point of vertigo *[davvār],* the rotations *[advār]* of the stars have

28. Khan 1970: 99–102.
29. Cf. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 100–101. Further references to the *Lubāb* appear parenthetically in the text.

failed to produce his match; he is the king of the army of rhetoric, the moon of the heaven of eloquence.

Jaballī: The mountain *[jabal]* of excellence and skill, bright star in the sky of greatness, the learned sage, commander of a wide [lit. in Arabic *wasīʿ*, a derivative of *vasʿat*] field of excellence, as his name was ʿAbd al-Wasīʿ.

Rūḥānī: Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Rūḥānī, the spirit *[rūḥ]* of whose speech was like the soul *[rūḥ]* to the body, whose poetry was a release *[rāḥat,* another word composed of *r* and *ḥ]*.

Sirājī: Lamp *[shamʿa, sirāj]* of the assembly of the learned, brilliant light of heaven, which is illumined from the incandescence of his genius, the scholars of Khurasan of his time lit a candle to dispel the thousand layers of darkness.

Qaṭrān ʿAżudī Tabrīzī: Before whom all poets were a mere drop *[qaṭrān]* while he was an ocean, perfect in craft, dexterity, and elegance.

ʿImād: Like the principal support *[ʿimād]* of the pavilion of excellence, chief *[ʿamīd,* from the root *ʿa, m,* and *d,* the three together as in *ʿimād]* of the territory of learning, master of the poets of the time, leader of the learned of the age, ruler of the army of wisdom, moon of the heaven of speech.[30]

Surprisingly, ʿAufī excludes from his work some of the noted poetic masters, such as Asadī Ṭūsī, Nāṣir-i Khusrau, and ʿUmar Khayyām. Still, it would be unjust to neglect the importance of the *Lubāb,* our only source for the names of a number of early poets, together with hundreds of their verses in a diversity of genres. The *Lubāb* is also important because it apparently seeks simultaneously to create an audience in a nearly carved-out subdomain of ʿAjam and to cater to the literary demands of this audience.

It is interesting to consider in this context ʿAufī's other work, the *Javāmiʿ al-Ḥikāyāt va Lavāmiʿ al-Rivāyāt.* The *Javāmiʿ,* comprising a vast collection of stories and widely considered a classic of the Persian language, was begun in Multan in 1232/33 and was completed when the author moved to the Delhi of Sultan Iltutmish. It is divided into four large volumes, each comprising twenty-five chapters, with over two thousand stories in all. These contain accounts of the kings and princes of pre-Islamic Persia, episodes from the history of early Islam, and anecdotes concerning the scholars and Sufis from almost the entire area inhabited by Persian and Turkish speakers. Containing counsel, reflections on statecraft, and examples of virtuous religious conduct,[31] ʿAufī, through this text as through his *Lubāb,* aimed to preserve the traditions of ʿAjam, which in the assessment of the Muslim intelligentsia of the time were to form a part of

30. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 573–74, 591, 769, 810, 701, 744.
31. Khan 1970: 109–15; Schimmel 1973: 13; Siddiqui 1992: 9–37.

their collective memory, and to inscribe this memory in an appropriate landscape.

One index of the spread of Persian as a language of culture is the growth of the corpus of translations of the Arabic classics into Persian. Among the most notable translations was the *Chach-nāmah,* a translation of *Minhāj al-Dīn va al-Mulk* (Pathway of faith and rulership) done by ʿAlī bin Ḥamīd bin Abī Bakr Kūfī around 1216.[32] Ghazālī's *Iḥyā-i ʿUlūm al-Dīn* was the second important work to be rendered into Persian. It was translated by Majd al-Dīn Abū al-Maʿālī Muʾayyad bin Muḥammad Jājarmī at the request of Sultan Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish's *vazīr,* Niẓām al-Mulk al-Junaidī. Only fragments of this translation are available today.

Another important Arabic work translated in this period is the *Kitāb al-Ṣaidala fī al-Ṭibb* of Abū Rayḥān Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048). The translation was prepared by Abū Bakr bin ʿAlī bin ʿUs̱mān al-Kāshānī about 1214, on his own initiative. He sought to make it a means of introduction to Sultan Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish. The work deals with simples *(mufradāt)* and the properties of medicinal plants, minerals, and the like. The work is also important for linguists and philologists, as it provides equivalent names for most of the herbs and minerals in Arabic, Greek, Syriac, Jurjani, Khvarazmi, Persian, Hindi, and Sindhi.[33]

INDIAN ELEMENTS IN PERSIAN

Persian was associated with the ruler and the court, but the world of Persian literary culture was not confined to the political elite alone. The reach of Persian in this period is best reflected in the smattering of Hindvi words, concepts, and metaphors in the language. Words such as *pānī, chandan, rānā,* and *tāl* appear in the early verses; the teeth of the beloved are compared to red rubies (reflecting the chewing of betel), and rain clouds (rather than the breeze) carry the message from the lover to the beloved.[34] The notion of *bahār* (spring) is virtually transformed in Masʿūd's poetry, for he identifies it as the Indian rainy season. In more than one of his *qaṣīdah*s, where he mentions *bahār,* he actually describes the rainy season:

> *A Description of Bahār and Praise of Sulṭān Maḥmūd*
> *(Vaṣf-i Bahār va Madḥ-i Sulṭān Maḥmūd)*
>
> With [the advent of] the spring the flying cloud dived
> into the sea to bring out from it the unstrung pearls.

---

32. The name of the author of the original Arabic book is uncertain, but a remark by the translator suggests that this may have been Khvāja Imām Ibrāhīm. See Schimmel 1973: 12.

33. Khan 1970: 136–57.

34. Rasheed 1996: 89, 95, 109, 121; Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 527.

> The barren waste is bedecked with pearls from the cloud;
> the earth, with beauty like the rosy face
> of the heart-ravishing beloved;
> the wind, with delightfulness like the temperament of the wise.
> With greenery all around, the earth seems a green sea.
> Above the ocean, a green dome.
> The earth with raindrops is the Paradise of munificence;
> the wind with the laughter of the lightning is the mount Sinai.
> The land alongside the river is aglow with robes of ruby hue
> that make its waters look like red wine.[35]

Again:

> *Praising the Bahār and Eulogizing Sayf al-Daulah Masʿūd*
> *(Vasf-i Bahār va Sitāyish-i Sayf al-Daulah Masʿūd)*
>
> It seems as if the wind and the cloud became the maids attending
> on the garden beloved.
> While one helped her dress, another lifted her veil.
> Bejeweled with pearls and gems, it appeared
> as if a new bride were coming out into the pavilion
> from behind the curtain.
> The cloud appeared like a handsome lover,
> with skirts drawn up and head held high with pride.
> From the rolling sky water gushed in buckets,
> in spurts, yes, that is how the water flowed from the water wheel.[36]

Further:

> O rainy season, the spring of Hindustan,
> deliverance from the tortures of summer,
> you heralded the advent of the month of Tir
> and again I got relief from the heat.
> All around, you lead an army of clouds;
> in nobility you raise your head high.[37]

That in these poems *bahār* acquires a new meaning is a small gesture toward a measure of autonomy for the Persian literary tradition in India. Later, in Amīr Khusrau's poetry at the beginning of the fourteenth century, this autonomy, or Indian identity, became more pronounced. Khusrau excelled in almost all the forms and genres. He innovated upon the traditions of earlier masters and thereby set an example for the later Indian poets. He rose so much in prestige that even some of the great poets outside India, like Jāmī

---

35. Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 11.
36. Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 39.
37. Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 562. Tir is the fourth Iranian solar month.

(d. 1492), took pride in imitating him.[38] Of particular significance is Khusrau's response to ʿUbayd, his contemporary, when the latter pointed to the blemishes in the *maṣnavī*s that Khusrau had written in response to the *Khamsa* (Set of five) of Niẓāmī of Ganja (d. 1140–1207). Khusrau, it is said, retorted with these lines:

> I am an Indian Turk, I reply in Hindvi;
> I have no Egyptian candy with which to speak to an Arab.[39]

In other words, Khusrau was even willing to identify his Persian as Hindvi, the "language of India." This assertion goes well with his boastful claim to excellence in Hindvi:

> Since I am an Indian parrot, to tell you the truth,
> ask in Hindvi, that I may respond to you with elegance.[40]

A measure of the Indianization of Persian is also discernible in Masʿūd's poetry. Masʿūd's works include descriptions of the Persian months *(māhhā-i Fārsī),* the Persian days of the month *(rūzhā-i Fārsī),* and the seven days of the week *(rūzhā-i hafta).*[41] These are similar in form and intent to a genre called *bārahmāsa* (songs relating to the twelve-month cycle), found in medieval poetry all over northern India. The simple poems of a *bārahmāsa* narrate the passing of the months and the moods of the seasons in terms of deeply personal feelings. The genre embodies a significant way of reckoning time, which is not to be measured simply in straightforward, chronological terms. The value of time is judged in terms of the emotions that it arouses; it lies in one's personal experience. The movements of heavenly bodies assume significance because they generate conditions for experiencing the emotions. There are two basic types of *bārahmāsa:* literary ones and those handed down orally as village traditions. The succession of months is a fundamental component, but the number of months is not necessarily twelve. The songs known as *chaumāsa*s, *chaymāsa*s, and *aṣṭamāsa*s (cycles of four, six, and eight months, respectively) belong to same category. These are in some cases mere catalogs of seasonal festivals and read like a kind of calendar.[42]

The Jain tradition preserves a work called the *Bārah Navaū* (Twelve praises) to which Masʿūd's *Māhhā-i Fārsī* bears close resemblance. The *Bārah Navaū,* of unknown authorship, is a poem of thirteen stanzas, recently edited from a manuscript discovered at Patan in Gujarat and dated to the late twelfth century. It consists of a panegyric to a Jain sage named Dharamsūri, set in

38. Cf. Sabahuddin 1982: 42.
39. Khusrau 1988: 204.
40. Khusrau 1988: 205.
41. Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 654–69.
42. Vaudeville 1986: 7–14, 27–33.

the form of a *bārahmāsa.* The whole poem is paratactic in structure, moving between the months of the year and the virtues of Dharamsūri himself. The first verse introduces Dharamsūri:

> Hear the praise of Dharamsūri,
> jewel of the three worlds.[43]

The first and last stanzas describe the month of Sāvan (Śrāvaṇa, July-August), and there is mention of blue lotuses and jasmine flowers, clouds, dancing peacocks, and so on. The poem then turns to Dharamsūri, whose glory "is like the sun," and then passes to the month of Bhadon (Bhādra, August-September).

Masʿūd's *Māhhā-i Fārsī* (Iranian months), *Rūzhā-i Fārsī* (Iranian days), and his *Rūzhā-i Hafta* (Days of the week) are poems of twelve, thirty, and seven stanzas, respectively, in praise of the sultan. Although the *Bārah Navaū* is regarded by its editor as the oldest *bārahmāsa,* in fact Masʿūd's *Māhhā-i Fārsī* is the oldest known *bārahmāsa* in an Indian language. Masʿūd's Persian poems were written around the late eleventh century, about one hundred years earlier than the *Bārah Navaū.* There may have been something in the Indian tradition earlier than Masʿūd on which he modeled his poems, such as the Sanskrit genre of the *ṣaḍṛtuvarṇana* (description of the six seasons). These poems describe the seasons of the Indian year and suggest the association of the pleasures of love with descriptions of nature.[44] Even so, Masʿūd's *Māhhā* is so far the oldest known *bārahmāsa* written in India.

The poems in the *Māhhā,* which are in the form of *qaṣīdah*s, are colorful descriptions of joy in alignment with the astrological attributes of the twelve months of the year, the thirty days of the month, and the seven days of the week. The sultan must be eulogized because his generosity, concern for justice, and administrative skills have turned the world into heaven. Whether the influence of the stars is ominous or auspicious, the world is full of joy, and for this we owe praise to the king. The dominant mood in these poems is pleasure and joie de vivre:

> *The Second Solar Month*
> *(Urdībihisht māh)*

> [The month of] Urdī has made the world a heaven.
> Wine is permitted in heaven [even] for the clerics.
> Come, relax and ask for wine—
> it is a disgrace for you to be without wine.
> The meadow, the garden, the mountain, and the plain

---

43. Quoted in Vaudeville 1986: 18.

44. I follow Nahata, whose discussion of the Jain and Persian works is summarized by Vaudeville 1986: 18–23.

are pervaded with the precious beauty of Urdībihisht.
The garden of roses laughs and the cloud begins to weep;
the birds sing and the seeds begin to sprout.
Many a bonnet you would find woven by the steward of Paradise;
many a dress you would see spun by the *houri*s,
as though in the territory of Malik Arsalān.
The rose, the amber, and the musk are all mixed.
He is the king, the keeper of the world, for whose country
the high sky has struck a strong convenant.[45]

The Eleventh Solar Month
(Bahman māh)

It is the month of Bahman, let us drink the wine;
in the month of Bahman, there should be pleasure.
Whosoever is wise in this world
desires the soul-stirring joy.
For today the singer and the *saqi*
have brought the harp and the wine
to the royal gathering;
the king Malik Arsalān, Mas'ūd's son,
will enjoy himself and drink wine.
There is none as generous as he,
there is none as manly as he.
O king, as long as
the sun and the sky keep the world warm and cold,
shine on your friends like the sun,
hover over foes like the sky.[46]

In course of time the *bārahmāsa* developed as a part of medieval Indian folk poetry. Nearly all such poems concern the pain of separation *(viraha)* endured by a young wife pining for the return of her beloved throughout the twelve months of the year. In these *bārahmāsa*s of the *viraha* type the description of nature is intimately joined to the expression of the heroine's sorrow. The songs are essentially women's songs wherein the four months of the rainy season—the season of love, intimacy, and renewal of life—are given more importance than the other months of the year.

A typical *viraha bārahmāsa* is placed on the tongue of a *virahiṇī*, a woman tormented by the absence of her lord. A number of verses borrowed from village *bārahmāsa*s are included in the ancient Rajasthani ballad known as *Dholamarura Duhā.* In that famous legend, which has inspired so many miniature paintings in Rajasthan, two heroines in turn appear as sorrowing *virahiṇī*s, pining for their common husband, Dhola. Some *bārahmāsa*s, mostly of

---

45. Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 654.
46. Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 658.

the "didactic" type, seem to have been inserted in the folk epics composed in medieval times by Hindu, as well as Muslim Sufi, poets. This is especially the case with the *maṅgal* literature of medieval Bengal and the Sufi Hindvi *maṣnavī*s composed in the *premākhyāna* tradition from the fourteenth century onward, the most notable of them the *Candāyan* of Mullā Dā'ūd (c. 1379).[47]

It is remarkable that no medieval Indian Persian poet followed Mas'ūd in writing such poems and that in the later medieval Indo-Persian tradition this aspect of Mas'ūd's work was wholly forgotten. It is not unlikely that because of the royal and urban character of Persian, interaction with the Indian rural poetic tradition was regarded as beneath Persian's stature. Mas'ūd's Hindvi poetry has also not survived. This may have included *bārahmāsa*s, *chaumāsa*s, *chaymāsa*s, and *aṣṭamāsa*s, though not necessarily describing *viraha*. Mas'ūd may also have composed "spring songs" *(phāgu* or *basant)* in Hindvi. At present, however, this is mere speculation.

PERSIAN BEYOND THE COURT

Sermons *(taẕkīr)* in the king's court and nobles' establishments, as well as in army camps, public places, and bazaars, played a role in the cultural exchange between the Persian-speaking settlers and the indigenous societies. Frequently composed in good Persian prose, these sermons were often studded with lines from classical Persian poetry as illustrations.[48] The commoners and soldiers became familiar with these specimens of poetry and carried them to places generally inaccessible to the new immigrants.

Sufi centers *(khānqāh)* were another religious institution that played a critical role in popularizing the Persian language and encouraging the evolution of a Persian literary tradition. The Sufi center was the common meeting ground for a wide range of people, cutting across religious affiliations. The desire of the devotees to learn Persian intensified when they realized that their Sufi masters' *malfūẕāt* (conversations), letters, and other writings were in Persian. The language in the Sufi treatises, *malfūẕ* included, was generally of the high literary register.[49] The Sufi orders, the Chishtīs in partic-

47. Vaudeville 1986: 14–18, 37–42.

48. Compare Dihlavī 1913 (H. 1332): 52, 86 for the accounts of Niẓām al-Dīn Abū al-Mu'ayyad and Qāẓī Minhāj-i Sirāj, for instance. Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliyā is reported to have cited verses of high literary value (62–66) that he picked up in the assemblies of sermon *(taẕkīr).*

49. Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī Dihlavī, the compiler of Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn's conversations, *Fawa'id al-Fu'ād,* was one of the two great fourteenth-century poets of Persian (Amīr Khusrau being the second). He was known for his *ghazal*s and is remembered as "the Sa'dī of India." Ḥamid Qalandar, the compiler of the other fine *malfūẕ* collection from the times of the Delhi Sultans (1206–1526), was a scholar of high order. He was also a poet and made a collection of his poems, but unfortunately his *dīvān* did not survive (Chirāgh-i Dihlī 1959: editor's introduction).

ular, also integrated the local ideas, phrases, and poetic expressions in their texts.[50] The emergence of spurious *malfūẓ* collections is of special interest to us here. There are at least five such *malfūẓ* from the thirteenth century, for instance.[51] A number of other such collections are mentioned by Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliyā and his disciple Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn Chirāgh, "the Lamp," of Delhi.[52] They prompt a range of important questions: Who were the authors of these works? Who read them? What was creating the demand for this genre of Persian literature? Research into these questions would provide us with a sharper picture of the expanding frontiers of Persian in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century India.

Finally, it is significant that the arrival of Persian in India nearly coincided with the first complete Persian translation from Arabic of the Sanskrit collection of animal fables, the *Pañcatantra*. This translation, titled *Kalīlah va Dimnah,* was undertaken by Abū al-Maʿālī Naṣrullāh bin ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ had translated an earlier Pahlavi version into Arabic. *Kalīlah va Dimnah* was among the first works to introduce the Indian world to the Islamic people. One can assume that as it circulated, its stories would trickle down to the Indians, who in turn would tend to compare the Persian version with the memory of these tales in the Indian psyche passed down by word of mouth. The *Kalīlah va Dimnah* aroused great interest among both the Turko-Persians and the indigenous people. This is reflected in some measure by the reported collation of a translation called *Anvār-i Suhailī,* prepared at the Herat court, with the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra.* Two more versions—one entitled *Panchākiyānah* and the other, by Abū al-Faẓl, titled *ʿIyār-i Dānish*—were prepared at Akbar's court in the sixteenth century.[53] Another Indian fable, *Ṭūṭī-nāmah,* was translated from Cintāmaṇi Bhaṭṭa's Sanskrit work, *Śuka-saptati* (Seventy tales of the parrot) in the fourteenth century by Ẓiyā al-Dīn Nakhshabī. In Sufi circles, the *Haṭhayoga,* a work on bodily and spiritual dis-

50. For a discussion on aesthetics of expressions in a verse, see Niẓām al-Dīn 1992: 154; Manērī 1985: 569–83. There are innumerable citations in medieval Indian *malfūẓ* from the Hindvi poetry, highlighting its emotive appeal and affability.

51. These thirteenth-century *malfūẓ* are: *Anīs al-Arwāḥ,* the collection of the discourses of Khvājah Usmān of Hārvanī (d. 1220), said to have been prepared by his renowned disciple, Khvājah Muʾīn al-Dīn Ḥasan Sijzī of Ajmer (d. 1235); *Dalīl al-ʿĀrifīn,* the collection of the talks of Khvājah Muʾīn al-Dīn Ḥasan Sijzī, said to have been prepared by his disciple, Khvājah Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Aushī Kākī (d. 1235); *Fawaʾid al-Sālikīn,* the collection of the utterances of Khvāja Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Aushī Kākī, said to have been prepared by the discourser's disciple, Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar of Ajodhan; *Asrār al-Auliyā,* the collection of the conversations of Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar (d. 1265), reportedly prepared by his disciple and son-in-law, Badr al-Dīn Isḥāq; *Rāḥat al Qulūb,* another collection of the discourses of Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn, said to have been prepared by his eminent disciple, Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliyā.

52. Habib 1974: 385–433.

53. For a detailed discussion of various translations, see Maḥjūb 1970 (s. 1349): 122–225.

cipline first translated into Arabic in Bengal, was also rendered into Persian early in the fourteenth century. The indigenous imagery thus gradually became a part of Persian literary style through the translation of Indian texts. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Quddūs Gangohī's *Rushd-nāmah* and Mīr ʿAbd al-Vaḥid Bilgrāmī's *Ḥaqāʾiq-i Hindi* were extensions of this process in the sixteenth century.[54]

These developments show the expanding territory of Persian and also imply its gradual Indianization—which, according to some, meant the dilution of the purity of the earlier Persian speech. The result of this is perhaps what began to be identified, by the time of the Afghans (c. 1450–1650), as the *lahja-i Hindustāniyān* (Indian style), *Hindustāniyānah* (Indian), or *ravish* (style) of the people of Hindustan.[55] Attempts to standardize the language must have been made in response. It is in this context that the development of Persian lexicography in India may be appreciated. Only four dictionaries were compiled in Iran during the thousand years between the tenth and the nineteenth centuries. India, on the other hand, offered no fewer than sixty-six dictionaries during this period, and it is likely that others were produced that are no longer extant. Most of these dictionaries were compiled before 1526, when the Mughal period began. The proliferation of dictionaries at one level certainly validates our contention about the dissemination of the language. But it is also true that this lexicographical exercise came from the purists, who wanted to protect and promote a high literary culture and to ensure conformity to the universal standards of the language. Thus while the early dictionaries served as tools for language learning, these were also intended, perhaps above all else, to cater to a certain literary taste. Most of the dictionaries were meant to be manuals for what is termed *sukhanfahmī* ("appreciation of poetry," in this context). They reflect a demand on the part of learners to appreciate and comprehend the higher reaches of literary expression. The *Muaʾyyid al Fuẓalāʾ* (1519), compiled by Muḥammad bin Shaykh Lād of Delhi, was the first dictionary in which the compiler avowedly intended that the work assist the reader in learning the language. This trend picked up during the Lodī period, by which time many Hindus had begun to learn Persian in order to enter state service. Notably, the dictionaries also echoed the linguistic developments in the larger Persian-speaking world. Earlier lexicons tended to emphasize native Persian and Arabic words, despite the predominance of Turks at the Delhi court. It was only by the late fifteenth century that separate sections for Turkish words in Persian began to appear, as in Shaykh Ibrāhīm Qavvām Farūqī's *Sharaf-nāmah-i Manerī* (1472).[56]

54. Rizvi 1978: 132–33, 335–43, 359–62; Digby 1975: 1–66.
55. Qureshi 1965: 49–50.
56. Aḥsān 1971: 386–401.

POETRY OF ʿAJAM AND INDIA

varā-i-shāʿirī chīz-i digar hast.
Beyond poetry, something else exists.
ĀẒARĪ

New Persian symbolized the vanquished ʿAjam's endeavor to conquer the Arab conquerors culturally. Since there was little in ancient ʿAjam to enable it to build its literary culture, it did not hesitate to borrow and appropriate from the Arabs, even as the latter were also portrayed as lacking in culture. In the early phase of New Persian there was thus a heavy influence of the Arabic literary canon on Persian literature and poetry. This was true of the Persian literary tradition in India as well, its distinctive features aside. One can discern the influence of ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Muʿtazz's work and S̱aʿālbī Nīshāpūrī's *Yatimat al-dahr* on the early Persian writings.[57] ʿAufī, who, we have noted, in early-thirteenth-century Multan compiled the first comprehensive biographical dictionary of Persian poets, observes that in the beginning, the Persian poets carefully studied the styles of the language and literature of the Arabs and examined in depth and appreciated fully the different forms of their poetry, vocabulary, and prosody. Arabic diction thus emerged as the primary model of Persian creative writing.[58]

Gradually Persian poetics began to chart a course of its own. And in this, its association with India was not inconsequential. The first known treatise on Persian literary canons, titled *Tarjumān al-Balāghah,* was compiled by Muḥammad bin ʿUmar Rādūyānī (copy c. 1114). Rādūyānī emphasizes as the most distinctive feature of good poetry that each line in a poem should approximate the others in grandeur and beauty *(baithā-i mulāʾim).*[59] The most important early book dealing with poetics interalia was the *Chahār Maqālah* of Niẓāmī ʿArūẕī Samarqandī (d. 1164), the noted poet and writer at the court of ʿAlā al-Dīn Jahānsūz in Ghur. For Niẓāmī, the poet, together with the *dabīr* (secretary/writer) and astrologer, was integral to good political management. Poetry was to glorify and eulogize the court and thus earn favors from the king. But poetry also occupied a crucial, causative role in the order of the universe *(umūr-i ʿiẓam ra dar niẓām-i ʿālam sabab shavad),* and it granted perpetuity to the poet's reputation. Poetry was a noble art; the poet was expected to have command over a variety of sciences, in particular rhetoric and prosody *(har ʿilm dar shiʿr bakār mī ravad).* Poetry, Niẓāmī said, should engage with the accomplishments of past and present poets. The poet should carefully choose his words without being verbose or convoluted. Niẓāmī disapproved of the use of commonplace words. Poetry should dis-

---

57. Ghani 1971a: 243–44.
58. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 60–70.
59. Cf. Ghani 1971a: 245.

play a harmony of words and be pleasing, fresh, and smooth. Accordingly, the ideal poet was of noble character, possessing the incisiveness of mind to appreciate details, and had the power to present small matters as big, and vice versa. He could clothe good in the dress of evil and project the bad in a good form *(nīkū dar khilʿat-i zisht va zisht dar ṣūrat-i nīkū)*. A good poet, said Niẓāmī, through his words could inspire bravery, blissfulness, joy, and anger.[60] Thus poetry for Niẓāmī was not only a source of joy; it had serious didactic roles to perform, too.

Around the same time as Niẓāmī wrote his *Chahār Maqālah,* Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ of Balkh (d. 1177) compiled his treatise on rhetoric called *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr fī Daqāʾiq al-Shiʿr.* Vaṭvāṭ included in his book a long discourse on Arabic poetry and a discussion of several new figures of speech.[61] To him the best word is "like a soft, beautiful, transparent body, which shows the meaning straight, unhindered, without mediation and casts such a spell on the reader or listener that he becomes totally oblivious of the existence of words." The compatibility between the form *(ṣūrat)* and the meaning *(maʿnī)* should be such that the form itself assumes the garb of meaning.[62] This was certainly a step forward in the history of Persian aesthetics, but nothing compared with the way the new aesthetic expressed itself in the poetry of Firdausī. Firdausī's poetry was fired by the experiences and the feelings of one witnessing the predicament of ʿAjam subsequent to its subordination to the Arabs. Firdausī intended his poetry to infuse spirit into the soulless body of ʿAjam: "With this Persian I have resurrected ʿAjam." As his mission was to resurrect the dead, his verses were also meant to inspire high cultural and ethical values:

> I have made the world like heaven with poetry.
> No one has sown the seeds of poetry better.[63]

The Persian literary canons thus developed not very far from the Indian frontier, and, in fact, not strictly inside Iran itself. The collections of works in ʿAufī's anthology reflect these developments. *Qaṣīdah* is given prominent place in his discourse; in his understanding, poetry in the main consisted of

60. Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī Samarqandī 1955 (s. 1334): 18–19, 49–58.

61. ʿAbbās Iqbāl (1929 [s. 1308]) does not include this discussion in the edition of the text he prepared based on the earliest manuscript preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

62. Ghani 1971a: 247.

63. Firdausī 1870, 1: 15 (*dībāchah* [editor's introduction]); 1990 (s. 1369), 1: 102–3. These lines are from the *Hajv* Firdausī is believed to have written for Sulṭān Maḥmūd, and are cited in many editions of the *Shāh-nāmah.* Some scholars have expressed doubts regarding their authenticity; see Shērānī 1968, and Darakhshan 1995 (s. 1374). The question awaits fuller treatment. Notably, the verses of the *Hajv* are cited in many medieval texts and have long been part of the living memory of Firdausī's text.

high-flown language and hyperbolic praise of king and nobles: the poet's creative, hyperbolic language turns black into white, bronze into gold.[64] It may be noted that Aristotle placed hyperbole among the metaphorical devices and regarded metaphor as the true mark of the poetic mind.

In the thirteenth century a major work titled *al-Muʿjam fī Maʿāyīr-i Ashʿār al-ʿAjam* (The book of the principles of the poetry of ʿAjam) was compiled by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Qays al-Rāzī. For Rāzī also, the edifice of poetry stood on exaggeration *(ghulū-i mufrīṭ),* even on lies *(kiẕb)* and fabrication *(zūr).*[65] The hallmarks of poetry were grand language and verbal richness— rhetorical devices by which the poetry acquired majesty. As Persian poetry drew on the rich tradition of Arab poetry, it also inspired ʿAjam to march on triumphantly. The poetry of Abū al Faraj Rūnī and Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān, in particular their *qaṣīdah*s celebrating the Ghaznavid rulers' "victorious" campaigns in India, resonated with this triumph. Masʿūd's poetry echoed his master's ambition to extend the frontiers of ʿAjam:

> May you build a thousand palaces like the palace [of Madaʾin] in India.
> May you capture a thousand kings like the Sassanian emperor one after
> > another.[66]

The triumphant march of ʿAjam was arrested by the Mongols' incursions in the thirteenth century. Nishapur and many cities in the Persian world were decimated. The destruction wrought by the Mongols shook the very basis on which ʿAjam had built its edifice of culture and lifestyle. The trauma triggered a process of introspection and rethinking, which is reflected in the works of the post-Mongol poets of Iran, most notably in the poetry of Jalal al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) and Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Saʿdī (d. 1291).

Saʿdī's poetry was noted for its grace, softness, and elegant expression of tender yet complex experience of love and grief. Rūmī, on the other hand, interpreted religion afresh. He claimed:

> I picked up the substance from the Qurʾān
> and threw the bone to the dogs.
> The tunic, the turban, and the external knowledge,
> I threw them all in the flowing river.[67]

He emphasized a measure of catholicity and the reconciliation of apparently irreconcilable phenomena.

This mood is also discernible in Rāzī's definition of poetry in *Muʿjam.* Rāzī

64. ʿAufī 1982 (s. 1361): 61–62.
65. Rāzī 1959 (s. 1338): 199–200.
66. Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān 1984 (s. 1363): 35.
67. Rūmī 1976: 202. For a discussion, see Khalīfah 1990: 35.

stressed the element of thought in poetry; poetry should be well considered, well thought out *(sakhun-i andīshīdah).* He also discussed the *ghazal,* a significant form of Arabo-Persian poetry that now emerged as an important vehicle to express the new anguish of the time. Rāzī suggested that the word *ghazal* was derived from the pitiful cry for help that the gazelle raises when confronted by hunting dogs. But in the final analysis, *ghazal* for Rāzī remained, as earlier, a story of love and beauty, a dialogue between lover and beloved, a further extension of aspects of already fully developed forms of poetry, in particular the *tashbīb* in the *qaṣīdah.*[68] The content of the *ghazal* to him was romance, the ordinary human love stories of women.[69]

India, too, experienced the disastrous consequences of the rise of the Mongols. A large part of the resources of the early Turkish empire in India was mobilized to defend the northwestern frontiers against the Mongols, who threatened on occasion even to destroy the seat of power in Delhi.[70] Many families from the Perso-Turkic world migrated to northern India and settled in Delhi and other major cities, bringing with them memories of the desolation of their ancestral lands. In Indian Persian creative writing one can hear the echoes of the cries of tormented souls.[71] The poetry of Amīr Khusrau and Ḥasan Sijzī (d. 1327) bear the influences of Rūmī and, especially, Saʿdī. The "thoughtful poetry" *(sakhun-i andīshīdah)* described by Rāzī now turned ablaze with Khusrau:

> The fire of thought burns inside me, one ligament to another.
> May God forgive him in whose bone this rages as a fever.[72]

As Khusrau praises things Indian, he advocates a cultural adjustment and appropriation in the Indian context, taking inspiration from Rūmī, in view of the politicocultural turmoil in the contemporary Perso-Islamic world. His poetry perhaps derives its unique literary flavor from his social mission. Thus, native Indian imagery is appropriated by Khusrau and glorified so as to project to his readers an Indian tradition as rich as that of Central and West Asia, and worthy enough to be appropriated within the newly emerg-

68. *Tashbīb,* also called *nasīb,* formed the opening part of a *qaṣīdah.* It celebrated love, extolled the details of the beauty of one's mistress, and highlighted the varying shades of emotions felt for her. From this form the *ghazal* later evolved. The words and expressions used in *tashbīb* were chosen with special care; they were expected to be soft, sweet, and supple, for the poet also intended to win and attract the attention of his audience, in particular the master praised in the *qaṣīdah.* Some Arab poets are reported to have narrated the true tales of their love in *tashbīb* (Rāzī 1959 [s. 1338]: 413–15).

69. Rāzī 1959 (s. 1338): 415–16.

70. Jackson 1999: 103–22, 217–37.

71. Kumar 1992: 76–234.

72. Khusrau 1973: 49.

ing Indo-Persian culture. The language, in the process, also becomes further indigenized.[73]

The poetry of Ḥasan Sijzī assimilated the elegance and the grace of Saʿdī; Khusrau's combined an extraordinary artistry with thoughtfulness and a latent social agenda. He knew about the havoc that the Mongols had wreaked in the Islamic East. He had heard the tales of woe and grief from the victims and had himself experienced terrible agony at the hands of the Mongols when he was captured from the camp of Prince Muḥammad. He was much more than a mere litterateur, being closely associated with the administration and politics of the consolidation of Muslim power in India. For him, poetry was not simply an expression of grief; it was comprised of noble ideas as well.[74]

The *ghazal* matured in the work of Ḥāfiẓ of Shiraz (d. 1398), who set the standards of high poetry in the subsequent period. The *ghazal* now ceased to be the story of love alone; it came to embody and express the secrets of the universe. Thus was laid the foundation of Mughal Indian Persian literary culture.

TOWARD A NEW IDENTITY FOR PERSIAN

The cultural underpinnings of New Persian poetry were spread, between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, throughout nearly the entire non-Arab Muslim world, even though its linguistic moorings were confined to the Iranian plateau. It was not simply the people of the plateau who identified themselves with New Persian. For over three centuries after its rise, the principal centers where the emergent Persian literature was cultivated were sustained by non-Iranian Turkish rulers. A large number of early poets, writers, and scholars, including Rūdakī (d. 940), the first major New Persian poet, hailed from non-Iranian lands.[75] Persian symbolized ʿAjam's endeavor to conquer the Arabs culturally, and a literary culture based on New Persian encom-

73. There have been three distinct stages or levels, not necessarily chronological, in the formation of Indian Persian. At first, only a smattering of Indian words, including expressions like *shaḥna-i mandī* and *bīṛa-i tanbūl,* was allowed to mix into Persian, and only to a limited extent, as necessary. By the fourteenth century, when the Indians had mastered the language, a new and different style *(ravish-i dīgar),* delicately blended with sweet and delicious Indian artifices *(maṣnūʿāt-i shīrīn),* began to emerge. The development of an independent diction in poetry under the Mughals marked the zenith of Indian Persian. Now difficult, terse, and abstruse Indian ideas were integrated into Persian, and the best poetry in Iran, Central Asia, and India aspired to excel in this diction.

74. Baranī 1862: 359–60.

75. Noteworthy here are that the territory of what was then Khurasan covered a considerable part of modern Central Asia and Afghanistan, and that among the first great patrons of Persian literary culture were Maḥmūd, his successors, and their allies and rivals in Ghazna and Ghur in Afghanistan.

passed Iran, Central Asia, Afganistan, Anatolia, and northern India—its western parts in particular.

Amīr Khusrau excelled at poetry and composed thousands of verses, including his famous parallels to the verses of the legendary Niẓāmī of Ganja. He boasted of an Indian prose style mixed with delightful artifices *(maṣnū'āt-i shīrīn),* the relish of which was unknown to "the ice-crunchers" *(yakh-shikanān)* of Khurasan and Transoxiana.[76] This famous line of Ḥāfiẓ of Shiraz was a testimony to the appreciative audience of Persian poetry and thereby to an advanced level of Persian literary culture in north India:

> All the Indian parrots will turn to crunching sugar
> with this Persian candy, which goes to Bengal.[77]

Sadid al-Dīn ʿAufī and Daulatshāh Samarqandī, authors of the two major *taẕki-rah*s, also asserted that the literary world of Persian extended far and wide. They listed the achievements of Iranian and non-Iranian poets in equal terms. On Daulatshāh's literary map, Central Asian, Afghan, and Indian towns like Badakhshan, Balkh, Bukhara, Ghazna, Herat, Khajend, Samarqand, Delhi, and Lahore occupied the same prominence as Iranian cities such as Astrabad, Kashan, Shiraz, Tus, and Yazd. While evaluating the poetry of Amīr Shāhī, a fifteenth-century poet, Daulatshāh evokes the excellences of the Persian verses of a wide world, from Delhi to Shiraz and Isfahan: "Scholars agree that the poetry of Amīr Shāhī combines the passionate ardor *[soz]* of Khusrau, the grace of Ḥasan [of Delhi] with the delicacies of Kamāl [of Isfahan] and the elegance of Ḥāfiẓ [of Shiraz]." Delhi, then, was on par with Isfahan or Shiraz in creating the best in Persian poetry.[78]

In the wake of new social and political configurations that began in the late fourteenth century, however, the linguistic diversity of the different parts of the Persian world tended to become more pronounced. Persian steadily came to be identified as the language of the Iranian plateau. With the establishment of Timurid power in Iran, the Iranians began to crave a distinct political self-definition. The assertion of an exclusive politicocultural identity intensified in the fifteenth century as part of resistance to Turkish and Timurid domination, leading to the formation of a consolidated Iranian identity with the rise of the Safavids in the early sixteenth century. The socioreligious upheavals of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries

76. Khusrau 1875: 66.
77. Ḥāfiẓ 1972: 172.
78. Daulatshāh Samarqandī 1901: 426. It is significant that while evaluating the poetry of Jāmī, Daulatshāh, who rates Jāmī as one of the best poets of all times, invokes the contributions of both the "sugar-crunching parrots of India" *(ṭūṭiyān-i shakkar-shikan-i Hind)* and the brave people of sweet speech of Fārs *(shīrīn zabānān va fārisān va mayadān-i Fārs)* (1901: 483).

represented the early stages of this assertion. Portrayals of the Turk in Persian poetry in Iran at this stage are also worth special mention. Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, for instance, at first welcomed Timur, who he expected would deliver Iran from the disorder *(fitna)* that had afflicted his time:

> Arise to give a hearty welcome to that Turk of Samarqand
> from whose gentle breath spreads the fragrance of the breeze of the river Muliyan.

But soon he realized that Timur and his people only exacerbated the sad plight of his countrymen. He said:

> Do not give your heart to the Turks; look how ungrateful
> the Turks of Samarqand have been to the people of Khwarizm.

And

> My heart did not seek succor from the beautiful eye of this cup-bearer *(saqi)*
> since it knew well the habit of that black-hearted Turk.

Ḥāfiẓ then believed that only an Iranian hero could save his country from devastation:

> I have burnt in the well of patience for that candle [beloved] of Chigil.
> The king of the Turks is oblivious of my condition. Where is Rustam?[79]

As a consequence of these political developments Persian was increasingly represented as the language exclusively of Iran. Ḥāfiẓ, to quote the great poet again, called for an unalloyed Iranization of the New Persian:

---

79. Ḥāfiẓ 1972: 412, 407, 58, and (again) 412:

> *khīz tā khāṭir badān Turk-i Samarqand dihīm*
> *kaz nasīmash bū-i jū-i Mūliyān āyad hamī.*
>
> *ba Turkān dil madih Ḥāfiẓ babīn ān bīvafāʾīhā*
> *ki bā Khvārazmiyān kardand Turkān-i Samarqandī.*
>
> *dilam zi nargis-i sāqī amān nakhvāst bajān*
> *chirāki shīva-i ān Turk-i dil siyāh dānist.*
>
> *sokhtam dar chāh-i ṣabr az bahr-i ān shamaʿ-i chigil*
> *shāh-i Turkān ghāfilast az ḥāl-i mā kū Rustamī.*

There are variations in the readings of the text. The Delhi edition (1972: 407, 412), for instance, has *zulfi-i ḥūriyān* (tresses of the hours) instead of *jū-i Mūliyān* (the river Muliyan [in Bukhara]). In the second verse quoted, *khūbān* (beloved), *tīgh-i zabān* (sword of the tongue), and *makkārān-i Alwand* (the cheats of Alwand) replace *Turkān, Khvārazmiyān,* and *Turkān-i Samarqand.* Apparently such readings were preferred in the texts in vogue in Mughal Hindustan, which the Delhi edition draws upon. See also the editions of Muḥammad Riẓā Nāʾīnī Jalālī and Naẕīr Aḥmad (Tehran, 1971 [1350]) and Muḥammad Riẓā Nāʾīnī Jalālī and Nūrānī Iqbāl (Tehran, 1993 [1372]).

> Sing, O sweet and melodious-voiced singer,
> a Persian verse in the Iraqi tune.[80]

Once the Iranians had reclaimed Persian as theirs alone, the people and the nations who associated with them culturally were welcome to fall in line, but not to innovate. Interestingly, the Iranian success in establishing a culturally restrictive control over Persian was abetted by significant politicocultural developments beyond the Iranian plateau as well. Not only was Persian given up in favor of Turkish in the Anatolia area among the Ottomans, but north of the river Amu the Uzbek language was poised to dominate as a part of the assertion of the Uzbek political identity.

In India, the sixteenth century saw the enhancement of regional literary cultures, largely by those very individuals and institutions that promoted Persian. Sultan Ibrāhīm ʿĀdil Shāh, who ascended the throne in Bijapur in the Deccan in 1536, is reported to have proclaimed Hindvi (in this case, referring to Marathi) as the language of his government, entrusting all the important administrative and financial offices to the Brahmans.[81] Further, from the Barid Shahi Sultanate of Bidar (1503–1619) we have some inscriptions both in Persian and Marathi, while in Golconda the vernacular was given the honor of being the language of the sultan. Ibrāhīm Quṭb Shāh encouraged the growth of Telugu, and his successor, Muḥammad Qulī Quṭb Shāh, patronized and himself wrote poetry in Telugu and Dakani.[82] ʿAbdullāh Quṭb Shāh instituted a special office to prepare royal edicts in Telugu *(dabīrī-yi farāmīn-i Hindvi)*. While administrative and revenue papers at local levels in the Qutb Shahi Sultanate were prepared largely in Telugu, the royal edicts were often bilingual.[83] The last Qutb Shahi sultan, Abū al-Ḥasan Tānā Shāh, sometimes issued his orders only in Telugu, with a Persian summary given on the back of the royal edicts *(farmāns)*.[84] Northern India also witnessed the elaboration of Hindvi, which gradually incorporated much of Persian culture—in particular through Sufi centers—and then expressed it forcefully in its poetry. There were hardly any notable Persian writers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, while Malik Muḥammad Jāyasī's *Padmāvat,* a Hindvi reworking of an Indian fable, represented the best expression of Islamic Sufi ideas in this period.[85] In spite of their close association

80. Ḥāfiẓ 1972: 411: *basāz ay muṭrib-i khvushkhvān-o-khvushgū / ba shiʿr-i Pārsī, ṣaut-i ʿIrāqī.*

81. Firishtah 1864 (H. 1281): 49; Khāfī Khān 1925: 206–7.

82. Sherwani 1967: 44–45; Joshi and Sherwani 1973: 395–96.

83. Shīrāzī 1931: 36, 41; Joshi and Sherwani 1973: 40, 48.

84. Compare Andhra Pradesh State Archives, *farmān*s dated (a)H. 1088 (1677), about a land grant; (b)H. 1090 (1679), pertaining to the weekly marts of Wanepur, Ibrahimpattan; (c)H. 1093 (1682), about a land grant; and (d)H. 1087 (1676), about the construction of a temple at Wanepur, Ibrahimpattan.

85. Qureshi 1965: 50; Husaini 1988. On the later Persian translations of Jāyasī's work, see note 105, and Phukan 2000.

with Persia, most of the Afghan chiefs could not speak Persian, and Persian does not appear to have been the preferred language at their court.[86] Hindvi was recognized as a semi-official language by the Sūr sultans (1540–1555), and their chancellery rescripts bore transcriptions of Persian contents in Devanagari script. The practice is said to have been introduced by the Lodīs (1451–1526).[87]

Yet later, under the Mughals, India was to witness its most productive—perhaps even incomparable—efflorescence of Persian literary culture. Indeed, Mughal literary culture has been celebrated primarily, if not exclusively, for its extraordinary excellence in Persian poetry and prose. Yet instead of being treated as part of an ʿAjam-wide Persian literature, Mughal literary culture was virtually subordinated to the Iranian. This is reflected in the narrowing world of the *tazkirah*s, in particular those compiled by Iranian authors, as well as in the raging controversy around Indian usage *(istiʿmāl-i Hind)* and the definition and assessment of good poetry.

But before examining these matters it is proper to identify the conditions that encouraged the phenomenal rise of Persian under the Mughals, after a century or more of decay. This needs special attention because these conditions were independent of the heritage of the earlier Indo-Persian regimes and also because the Mughals were themselves Chaghtai Turks. And we know that, unlike the Mughals, the other Turkic rulers outside of Iran, such as the Ottomans in Turkey and the Uzbeks in Central Asia, showed no comparable enthusiasm for Persian. Indeed, in India also, Persian does not appear to have been prominent at the courts of the early Mughals. Bābur (d. 1530), the founder of the Mughal empire, wrote his memoir in Turkish. The prince was a noted poet and writer of Turkish of his time, second only to ʿAlī Sher Navaʾī (d. 1526).[88] Turkish was also the first language of his son and successor, Humāyūn (d. 1556). Turkish poetry enjoyed an appreciable audience at his court even after he returned from Iran, reinforced with Persian support to reconquer Hindustan.[89] Further, Bairam Khān—a most notable early Mughal noble, virtually in full command of the affairs of state during the early years of Akbar's reign (1556–1605)—also made his mark as a poet in Turkish.[90] The rise of Persian in Mughal court culture and the heavy Iranian overtones of Mughal Persian are due to the convergence of certain factors within the trajectory of Mughal politics. Among them, early contact with Safavid Iran deserves special notice.

86. Bābur 1970: 459–60.
87. Momin 1971: 28.
88. Köprülü 1960; Hasan 1985: 192–93.
89. Reis 1975: 47, 49–51.
90. Bairam Khān 1971.

PERSIAN UNDER THE MUGHALS

A large number of Iranians accompanied Humāyūn on his return from Iran, where he had taken refuge following his defeat by the Afghans.[91] They assisted him in reestablishing Mughal rule in Hindustan. Later, Akbar encouraged them to join the imperial service to help him confront the ambitious Chaghtai nobles. (Earlier, Iranians had also helped Bābur in his fight against the Uzbeks, following the destruction of the Timurid power in Herat.)[92] Especially worth noting is Akbar's unusual interest in promoting social, cultural, and intellectual contacts with Iran. In 1585/86 Ḥakīm Humam, a brother of the famous Ḥakīm Abū al-Fatḥ Gīlānī, was sent to Turan and Iran on a mission to increase friendly contacts *(dostī o āshnāʾī)* between the people there and the emergent Mughal empire by identifying the literati and persuading them to come settle in India.[93] The emperor also commissioned the famous poet Fayżī Fayyāżī (d. 1595) to submit a report on the prominent literati of Iran, based on which he sent an invitation to Chalapī Beg and issued orders to an Iranian trader to make arrangements for the scholar's journey to India. On his arrival, Chalapī Beg was made the principal teacher at a royal college *(madrasah)* at Agra. Earlier, the travel expenses of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Naqīb, who had communicated his wish to Akbar to join the Mughal court, were also defrayed by the emperor.[94]

Akbar's efforts to engage Iranian literati received an encouraging response from Iran. A large number of Iranian Persian writers and poets came to India, many in search of a better fortune, others fleeing from the religious or political persecutions of the sectarian Safavid regime. Akbar's India earned distinction as the place of refuge, an abode of peace *(dār al-amān)* where the wise and the learned received encouragement.[95] How Akbar succeeded in creating conditions in his territory to welcome the Iranian scholars, religious nonconformists though some might have been, is illustrated by the story of Mīr Sharīf Āmulī's arrival in India as recorded by Mullā ʿAbd al-Qādir Badāunī, the well-known historian of Akbar's time. Āmulī, who was a Nuqṭavī, was made welcome by Akbar and his courtiers, in Badāunī's view, because of the extraordinarily tolerant atmosphere in India.[96] This was largely

91. An earlier version of this section appeared in Alam 1998.

92. Richards 1993: 11, 19; Hasan 1985: 40–43.

93. Gīlānī 1968: 116–20.

94. Abū al-Fażl 1886: 747; Heravī 1979: 35, 203; Islam 1979, 1: 106–7, 116–20.

95. Qazvīnī 1961 (1340): 809; Hasan 1952; Ahmad 1976.

96. Badāunī 1869, 2: 253. The Nuqtavī sect was founded in Iran in the fifteenth century by Gīlānī, an excommunicated member of the Ḥurūfī sect established in the fourteenth century

true, but the generous welcome extended to the Iranian scholars may also have been due to the emperor's desire to pay back the Mughals' debt to the Iranians for their support in reconquering India.

Under the Safavids, Iran had turned to an orthodox form of Shiism, in a very narrow sense of the term. In Mughal India, on the other hand, the space for accommodating oppositions and conflicts was widening, subsequent to the Mughal policy of *ṣulḥ-i kull* (peace with all). The policy, as is well-known, was a result of Akbar's bold initiatives, but it could also be explained in light of Mughal India being a country where people with diverse beliefs and social practices had learned to live together, occasional clashes notwithstanding. The nonconformist and dissident Iranians, who included a large number of literati, therefore found a natural refuge in India. As an ambitious ruler in obvious competition with the Iranian shah, Akbar also tried to exploit this situation to extend the frontiers of his authority into the Safavid domain. He even wrote personal letters to some noted Iranian scholars.[97]

By extending generous invitations to the Iranians, Akbar intended to neutralize the awe with which the Iranian shah was regarded by the Mughals because of the Safavids' help to Bābur and Humāyūn. Whether he could achieve this is not my principal concern here. The Mughal emperor's desire to bring "the exalted [Iranian] community close to him spiritually and materially *[ṣuvarī va maʿnavī]*"[98] prepared the ground for many Iranians to make India their second home. Iranian talent flourished better in Mughal India than in its native land. Soon the belief became widespread in Iran that a visit to India promised material comforts and an honored position. According to an oft-cited verse of the poet Salim Tehrani:

> The means of acquiring perfection do not exist in Iran.
> Henna did not acquire color till it came to India.[99]

As India drew close to Iran culturally, Persian began to attain status as the first language of the king and the Mughal court. Among the first literary

---

by Faẓlullāh Astrabādī. The Nuqtavīs considered the atom of dust *(nuqta-i khāk)* to be the origin and the first element of human life; all other elements rose out of it. All the Nuqtavī ideas, which often ran counter to the orthodox tenets of both Sunni and Shia Islam, were developed around this concept. The Nuqtavīs also believed in transmigration of souls. Since Akbar was also a nonconformist, in search of "truth," he encouraged the Nuqtavīs, who were persecuted in orthodox Shia Safavid Iran, to settle in India.

97. Islam 1983: 351–73.

98. Islam 1983: 357, 368; also Islam 1979: 101.

99. See Browne 1951–1953, 4: 166; Sultan 1978: 109 (citing from Salīm's *Dīvān,* MS, National Museum, New Delhi). Gulchīn-i Maʿānī 1990 (1369): 566–82 discusses Salīm's poetry but ignores this well-known verse, conflicting as it does with Maʿānī's explanation of the Iranians' reasons for migrating to India.

works of the reign of Akbar, at a time when he was consolidating Mughal power in India, was the preparation of a Persian translation of *Bābur-nāmah*. Ironically, the translator was ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān, the son of Bairam Khān, who, as noted earlier, was also a poet of Turkish. But it was not just Bābur's memoir that was to be rendered into Persian; the emperor also desired that the sources of the new court history, recording Mughal achievements, be redacted in Persian. Humāyūn's sister, Gulbadan Begum, had written the *Humāyūn-nāmah* in Persian, even though Turkish was the native tongue of both the princess and her husband, Khiẕr Khvājah Khān. Indeed, Annette Beveridge, who translated Gulbadan's account into English, suspects that the book was originally composed in Turkish. Similarly, the other two accounts of Humāyūn's time, *Taẕkirah Humāyūn va Akbar* (History of Humāyūn and Akbar) and *Taẕkirat al-Wāqiʿāt* (Account of the happenings) were meant to serve as sources of Abū al-Faẕl's history, *Akbar-nāmah*. Their authors, Bāyazīd Bayāt and Jauhar Āftābchī, respectively, could manage little beyond a "shaky and rustic" Persian. Jauhar, in fact, had the language of his account revised and improved by Ilāhdād Fayẕī Sirhindī, the reputed litterateur and philologist who authored the dictionary *Madār al-Afāẕil* (The orbit of the learned) before presenting it to the emperor.[100]

Akbar did not have any formal education. Important books were therefore read out to him regularly in his assembly hall. His library consisted of hundreds of prose and verse texts in Arabic, Persian, Hindvi, Greek, and Kashmiri. But the books that the emperor listened to repeatedly were all in Persian.[101] According to one report, Akbar could compose verses in Persian and Hindvi, but the Mughal sources generally record only his Persian couplets, and we have to wade through them to find the few Hindvi verses attributed to him.

Further, Persian poets generally enjoyed royal patronage at Akbar's court. Among the Muslim rulers of northern India, Akbar was possibly the first to formally institute the position of *malik al-shuʿarāʾ* (poet laureate) at the court. Awarded only to a Persian poet, this position continued until Shāhjahān's time (1626–1656). With the sole exception of Fayẕī Fayyāẕī, the *malik al-shuʿarā*s during this period were all Iranians: Ghazālī Mashhadī, Ḥusain Sanāʾī, Ṭālib Āmulī, Kalīm Kāshānī, and Qudsī Mashhadī. Further, of the 59 poets who were rated the best among the 1000 poets of Persian who had completed a *dīvān* or written a *masnavī,* only 9 could be identified as non-Iranians.[102] Again, a large number of other Persian poets and writers—81 according to Niẕām al-Dīn Bakhshī and 168 according to Badāunī—received the patronage of the emperor or his nobles. Over a hundred poets, and thirty-

---

100. Gulbadan 1972: 79; Ethé 1903, 1: 222.
101. Abū al-Faẕl 1873: 271.
102. Abū al-Faẕl 1872: 617–18.

one scholars, were associated with the establishment of the courtier ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān alone.[103]

Persian thus emerged as the language of the king, the royal household, and the high Mughal elite. Akbar's son and successor, Jahāngīr (1605–1627), was not skilled in Turkish, but he had his own style in Persian and wrote his memoirs in an elegant prose. He was also a good judge of Persian poetry and composed some verses and *ghazal*s.[104] It was for him that Jāyasī's *Padmāvat* was translated into Persian, but the work was recognized only as an Indian fable *(afsānah-i Hindi)* without any bearing on Islamic mysticism. Still later, with his volumes of letters and edicts, Aurangzeb (1658–1707) established himself as one of the fine prose writers of his time.[105] The formal abolition of the institution of *malik al-shuʿarāʾ* affected little the supreme status of Persian. Indeed, late-seventeenth-century northern India witnessed numerous native poets of high standard in Persian, including the great Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Qādir Bīdil (d. 1720) and Nāṣir ʿAlī Sirhindī (d. 1696).

Akbar was also the first among the Indo-Muslim kings of northern India to formally declare Persian the language of administration at all levels.[106] Thus, it was not simply the royal household and the court that bore the Iranian impress; the Iranians were seen everywhere in the government offices as officials *(mutaṣaddī*s*)* and minor functionaries, even though they were not in exclusive control of these offices.[107] A substantial part of the administration was carried out by the indigenous Hindu communities who had earlier communicated officially in some form of Hindi. Their adoption of Persian is of even greater consequence to the development of Persian literary culture than the presence of Irani poetry. They learned Persian and joined the Iranians as clerks, scribes, and secretaries (*muḥarrir*s and *munshī*s). Their achievements in the language were soon to be extraordinary. This development was reinforced considerably by Akbar's reform in the prevailing primary and secondary education, influenced again by the Iranian Mīr Fatḥullāh Shīrāzī. The Hindus began to learn Persian in Sikandar Lodī's time. Badāunī mentions a person called simply "Brahman" as an Arabic and Persian teacher of this period.[108] Akbar's enlightened policy and the introduc-

103. Badāunī 1869, 3: 171–288; Nahāvandī 1931: 9–114 and 115; Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad 1927, 2: 484–520. Evidently, many of the Mughal poets were also from Central Asia, but few of them could earn a coveted place in Mughal courts. Muṭribī Samarqandī (1977) notes some Central Asian poets in his reports on his meetings and conversations with Jahāngīr.

104. Jahāngīr 1864: 103, 245, 303, 316, 431; Muṭribī Samarqandī 1977: 44, 48–49, 56–61, 66.

105. Compare editor's introduction to Bazmī (1971 [1350]) for numerous Persian renderings of *Padmāvat;* and also the recently edited and published volumes of Aurangzeb's writings compiled in his time by Ḥusaynī (1990), Kashmīrī (1982), and Qābil Khān (1971).

106. Ṭabaʾṭabāʾī 1876: 200.

107. Ḥamīd al-Dīn 1912: 53.

108. Badāonī 1869, 2: 323.

tion of nonreligious themes into the syllabi at middle levels stimulated a wide application to Persian studies. Hindus—Kayasthas (of the accountant and scribe caste) and Khatris (of the trading and scribe caste of the Panjab) in particular—joined *madrasah*s in large numbers to acquire training in the Persian language and literature, which now promised good careers in imperial service.

Akbar's educational reform pertained in the first place to the learning of the Persian alphabet and basic vocabulary. Children were no longer to spend much time on the alphabet, as had been the earlier practice. After learning and practicing the shapes and names of the letters, they were required to commit to memory some Persian couplets or moral phrases and thus gain a sense of the ethos of the language at a very young age. Then they studied the prescribed curriculum, which included ethics *(akhlāq),* arithmetic *(ḥiṣāb),* notations peculiar to arithmetic *(siyāq),* agriculture *(falāḥat),* measurement *(maṣāḥat),* geometry, astronomy, physiognomy, household economy *(tadbīr-i manzil),* the rules of government *(siyāsat-i mudun),* medicine, logic, mathematics *(riyāẓi),* and physical and metaphysical *(ṭabʿī* and *ilāhī)* sciences.[109]

At the advanced level, works of the classical masters were studied in order to acquire proficiency in Persian composition and poetry. Texts prescribed at this stage were Shaykh Sāʿdī's classics, *Būstān* and *Gulistān,* for literary prose and verse; and for ethics, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* of Khvājah Nāṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī and its later recensions: *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Davvānī and *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī* of Mullā Ḥusain Vaʿiẓ al-Kāshifī. From these texts the students were expected to learn about the good and bad qualities of human beings, socially approved etiquette and moral values, principles and norms of family organization, and state politics. For history, the students generally read about Islam, Mongols, and Turks in Central Asia and Persia in Khvāndamīr's *Ḥabīb al-Siyar,* Mīrkhvānd's *Rauẓat al-Ṣafā,* and Ḥamdullāh Mustaufī's *Tārīkh-i Guzīdah.* Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī's *Ẓafar-nāmah* was prescribed for an appreciation of Timur's achievements. Later, Abū al-Faẓl's *Akbar-nāmah,* together with his works on *inshāʾ* (draftsmanship), also figured as essential readings.[110] Most of the students discontinued their studies after completing their secondary education, since that was sufficient qualification for employment on the clerical staff in local *daftar*s (offices). The accounting department was the most attractive because it promised better salaries. The job of *munshī* (secretary) was a difficult task— "a whole life was required to acquire proficiency in that art."[111]

Initially, the teachers in charge of these *madrasah*s were often the masters from Fārs and Shiraz *(ustādān-i Fārs va Shīrāz).* But in time, Indians—

109. Abū al-Faẓl 1872: 201–2; Law 1916: 161–71.
110. ʿAbdullāh 1967: 240–43.
111. Momin 1971: 41–42.

including Hindu masters—also began to teach. Their writings, in particular the specimens of their *inshāʾ,* formed part of the Persian syllabi at various levels.[112]

In India "there was always a 'set ready and a fixed caste *[jamīʿ]*' of work-men of every profession and trade, for any employment, to whom vocation descends as a family heirloom."[113] So too, the trainees for government positions crystallized into "a fixed caste" of scribes, accountants, and secretaries. The son of a clerk *(muḥarrir)* was destined to be a clerk not because he pre-ferred this profession but in order to keep up the family tradition, and if he worked hard, he would rise to the status of a chief secretary *(mīr munshī).* In most cases, the *munshī* families trained their own relatives, a father teaching his son either under his direct care or through correspondence. This is il-lustrated best in a fascinating document: the advice of the famous *munshī* Chandrabhān Brahman to his son Khvājah Tej Bhān:

> Initially, it is necessary for one to acquire training in *akhlāq* [the system of norms]. It is appropriate to listen always to the advice of elders and act ac-cordingly. By studying the *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī, Akhlāq-i Jalālī, Gulistān,* and *Būstān,* one should accumulate one's own capital and gain the virtue of knowledge. When you practice what you have learned, your code of conduct will become firm. The main thing is to be able to draft in a coherent manner, but at the same time good calligraphy also possesses its own virtues and earns you a place in the assembly of those of high stature. O dear son! Try to excel in these skills. And together with this, if you manage to learn accountancy *(siyāq)* and scribal skills *(navīsindagī),* that would be even better. For scribes who know accoun-tancy as well are rare. A man who knows how to write good prose as well as ac-countancy is a bright light even among lights. Besides, a *munshī* should be dis-creet and virtuous. I, who am among the *munshī*s of this court that is the symbol of the Caliphate, even though I am subject to the usual human errors, am still as discreet as an unopened bud, though possessing hundreds of tongues.
>
> Although the science of Persian is a vast one, almost beyond human grasp, to open the gates of the language one should read the *Gulistān, Būstān,* and the letters of Mullā Jāmī to start with. When one has advanced somewhat, one should read key books on norms and ethics, as well as history books such as the *Ḥabīb al-Siyar, Rauẕat al-Ṣafā, Rauẕat al-Salāṭīn, Tārīkh-i Guzīda, Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī, Ẓafar-nāmah, Akbar-nāmah,* and other similar books that are absolutely necessary. The benefits of these will be to render your language elegant, and also to provide you knowledge of the world and its inhabitants. These will be of use when you are in assemblies of the learned. Of the master poets, I am setting down here the names of some whose collections I read in my youth. When you have some leisure, read them; they will give you both pleasure and relief, increase your abilities, and improve your language. They are Ḥakīm

112. Nadvī 1971: 28–29.
113. Momin 1971: 42.

Sanā'ī, Mullā Rūm, Shams Tabrīz, Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Shaykh Saʿdī, Khvājah Ḥāfiẓ, Shaykh Kirmānī, Mullā Jāmī; also other poets and masters of rhetoric, for instance Mullā Rūdakī, Ḥakīm Qaṭrān, ʿAsjadī, ʿUnṣurī, Firdausī, Farrukhī, Nāṣir-i Khusrau, Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Kamāl Ismāʿīl, Khāqānī, Anvarī, Amīr Khusrau, Ḥasan Dihlavī, Ẓahīr Fāryābī, Kamāl Khajendī, Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī Samarqandī, ʿAmīq Bukhārī, ʿAbd al-Vāsiʿ Jabalī, Rukn Sā'in, Muḥyī al-Dīn, Masʿūd Bek, Farī al-Dīn, ʿUs̱mān Mukhtārī, Nāṣir Bukhārī, Ibn-i Yamīn, Ḥakīm Sūzanī, Farīd Kātib, Abū al-ʿAlā Ganjavī, Azraqī, Falakī, Saudā'ī, Bābā Fighānī, Khvāah Kirmānī, Aṣafī, Mullā Binā'ī, Mullā ʿImād, Khvājah ʿUbayd Zā-kānī, Bisāṭī, Luṭfullāh Ḥalvā'ī, Rashīd Vaṭvāṭ, Asīr Akhsikatī, and Asīr ʿUmānī.

May my good and virtuous son understand that when I had finished reading these earlier works, I then desired to turn my attention to the later poets and writers and started collecting their poems and *mas̱navī*s. I acquired several copies of their works, and when I had finished them, I gave some of them to my disciples. Some of these are as follows: Ahlī, Hilālī, Muḥtasham, Vaḥshī, Qāẓī Nūr, Nargis, Makhfī Ummīdī, Mīrzā Qāsim Gunā Ābādī, Mullā Zabānī, Partavī, Jabrānī, Ḥiṣābī, Ṣabrī, Ẓamīrī, Rashkī, Ḥassānī, Halākī, Naẓīrī, Nāu'ī, Nāẓim Yaghmā, Mīr Ḥaydar, Mīr Maʿṣūm, Naẓīr, Mashhadī, Valī Dasht Bayāẕī, and many others who had their own collections *[dīvān],* and *mas̱navī*s, and whose names are too numerous to be listed in this brief letter.[114]

From the middle of the seventeenth century, the departments of accountancy and draftsmanship and the offices of revenue minister *(dīvān)* were mostly filled by the Kayastha and Khatri *munshī*s and *muḥarrir*s. Harkaran Dās Kambūh of Multan is the first known Hindu *munshī* whose writings were taken as models by later *munshī*s. Chandrabhān Brahman was also influential, rated second only to Abū al-Faẕl, and wrote poetry of high merit.[115] Then followed a large number of Kayastha and Khatri *munshī*s, including the well-known Mādho Rām, Sujān Rāi, Malikzādah, Ānand Rām "Mukhliṣ," and Bindrāban "Khvushgū," all of whom made splendid contributions to Persian language and literature and whose writings formed part of the syllabi of Persian studies at *madrasah*s. Certain fields hitherto unexplored or neglected found skilled investigators, chiefly Hindus. In the philological sciences, the Hindus produced excellent works in the eighteenth century. *Mirʾāt al Iṣtilāḥ* of Ānand Rām "Mukhliṣ" (d. 1751), *Bahār-i ʿAjam* of Tek Chand "Bahār," (d. 1766), and *Muṣtalāḥāt-i Shuʿarāʾ* of Siyālkotī Mal "Vārastah" (d. 1766) are among the most authoritative Persian lexicons compiled in India. These scholars' Persian grammars and commentaries on idioms, phrases, and poetical proverbs show their wide-ranging research, sensitivity to literary excellence, and overall accomplishment in Persian language and literature.[116]

The masters of the Persian classics found an increasingly appreciative au-

---

114. ʿAbdullāh 1967: 241–43, who cites the passage from Brahman's *Chār Chaman.*
115. Momin 1971: 215–20, 228–34; Faruqui 1966.
116. ʿAbdullāh 1967: 121–68.

dience among literate town-dwellers, as well as among village-based revenue officials and other hereditary functionaries and intermediaries.[117] All Mughal government papers, from the imperial orders *(farmān)* to the bonds and acceptance letters *(muchalka* and *tamassuk qabūliyat)* composed by the village intermediary *(chaudharī),* were prepared in Persian. There was no bookseller in the bazaars and streets of Agra, Delhi, or Lahore who did not sell anthologies or collections of Persian poetry. The *madrasah* pupils in general were familiar with the Persian classics.[118]

In two separate documents, one an *arẕdāsht* (a letter sent from an official to the emperor or to an official of higher rank) addressed to Emperor Akbar and the other a *dastūr al-ʿamal* (administrative manual) meant to be a handbook for officials, Abū al-Faẕl, the premier ideologue and the *mīr munshī* of the Mughal empire, suggested as essential readings Ṭūsī's *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī,* Ghazālī's *Kīmiyā-i Saʿādat,* and the *Maṣnavī* of Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.[119] In Abū al-Faẕl's own era, these were normally available only to the high nobles. By Shāhjahān's time, however, these books and many similar titles began to figure as routine readings even among the literate town-dwelling Hindus associated with the Mughal state.

Persian was thus something approaching a first language for many Indians. They appropriated and used Perso-Islamic expressions like *Bismiʾllāh* (with the name of Allah), *lab ba-gūr* (at the door of the grave), and *ba-jahannam rasīd* (damned in hell) as their Iranian and non-Iranian counterparts did. They also sought out and appreciated the Persian renderings of traditional Indian texts. Lest they be forgotten,[120] certain religious scriptures were translated in full into Persian by individual Hindu authors.

If for Hindus the prospects for good careers and direct access to some ancient scriptures—traditionally not available to non-twice-born and now available in Persian—provided incentives for learning Persian, for the Muslims the language acquired a kind of religious sanctity. Jamāl al-Dīn Injū, author of *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī,* a major comprehensive Persian lexicon of Jahāngīr's time, dwells at length on the point that Persian, together with Arabic, is the language of Islam. Even the Prophet of Islam, he reports from various sources, knew and spoke Persian and spoke highly of the merits of the people of Pārs. Injū cites verses from the Qurʾān in appreciation of the people of Pārs for their bravery and courage to fight for a noble cause. Faith *(īmān),* accord-

117. Even in Bengal, the administrative papers prepared and issued in the name of the local Hindu intermediaries were in Persian. Persian *inshā,* indeed, had influenced Bangla prose (Acharya 1994).

118. Badāunī 1869, 2: 285.

119. Abū al-Faẕl 1863 (ʜ. 1280): 57–67.

120. This is how Gopāl bin Govind justifies translating the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Persian in the preface to his translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (for a description, see Blochet 1905: 222).

ing to Injū, is integral to the character of the people of Pārs; they would have acquired the true faith even if it were far in the sky. Injū began to compile the *Farhang* at Akbar's request, and since it was completed after the emperor's death, it was dedicated to his son, Jahāngīr.[121]

There was certainly wide cultivation of Persian studies among the generally Hindvi-speaking *shurafā'*—the middle-order Muslim landed magnates, the revenue-free landholders in the rural areas, those who had religious grants *(a'imma, vazīfa)* in towns, and petty officials. Even ordinary literate Muslims, such as soldiers, were now expected to read simple Persian. In Shāhjahān's time, treatises on religious disputations in simple prose were written for common poor Muslims in order to prevent them from falling into the Brahmanical "trap" and from leaning toward innovation, idolatrous practices, and infidelity. One such treatise, *Ḥujjat al-Hind,* as its anonymous author claims, was translated from Hindvi into simple Persian for the benefit of "the Muslims who live in the villages" where "the elites are generally infidels."[122]

MUGHAL POLITICAL CULTURE AND PERSIAN

Learning, knowledge, and high culture thus began to be associated with Persian at many levels in Mughal Indian society. General command over idiomatic Persian was a matter of pride; deficiency in elegant self-expression meant cultural failure. For Mīrzā Muḥammad Bakhsh Āshūb, a noted poet and writer of the later Mughal era, a major failure of Ṣamṣām al-Daulah Khān-i Daurān, the well-known early-eighteenth-century Mughal noble, was his inability to speak good Persian; Khān-i Daurān generally spoke in Hindvi. On occasion he would embellish his conversation with Persian couplets and hemistichs, but with a remark that "for an Indian, to speak in Persian is to make oneself the butt of ridicule."[123]

Khān-i Daurān, however, was an exception. In general, Persian was considered the only effective language in which to express cultural accomplishments. Persian came to be recognized as the language of politics in nearly the whole of the subcontinent.[124] This status received nourishment from the Mughal power it sustained, and the belief that Persian was the most functional, pragmatic, and accomplished vehicle of communication remained unshaken even after the Mughal empire had, for all practical purposes, collapsed. Mīrzā Asadullāh Ghālib (d. 1869), the last of the great Mughal poets, believed that the depth, complexity, and variety of his ideas could be

121. Injū 1972 (1351): 14–22, 4, 10.

122. *Ḥujjat al-Hind,* fols. 11.

123. Āshūb: fols. 726.

124. Persian continued to be the privileged language of power until the early nineteenth century. For its position in the English East India Company territories, see Cohn 1985.

conveyed only through Persian words. Note the poet's plea to his audience to evaluate him on the strength of his Persian compositions, even as he earned a high place in literature with his Urdu poetry:

> See my Persian [poetry] so that you may see colorful pictures of many hues. Pass over my Urdu collection; it's only a sketch.[125]

The inner strength of the language was no less important in the Mughal ruling elite's choice of Persian as the medium for their culture. The Mughals aspired to evolve a political culture that overarched the diverse religious and cultural identities of India. Persian, under the circumstances, promised to be the most appropriate vehicle to communicate and sustain such an ideal. Indians across the subcontinent, from the banks of the river Sindh to the Bay of Bengal, knew Persian well. If Amīr Khusrau is to be believed, as early as the fourteenth century "Persian speech and idiom enjoyed uniformity of register throughout the length of four thousand *parasang*s of India, unlike the Hindvi tongue, which has no settled idiom and varies every hundred miles and with each new group of people."[126] As late as the eighteenth century Hindvi had not evolved a uniform idiom even in northern India. Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Khān Ārzū (d. 1756), a noted eighteenth-century poet, writer, and lexicographer, mentions Gwaliori, Braj, Rajputi, Kashmiri, Haryanavi, Hindi, and Punjabi as diverse authentic forms of Hindvi, along with the dialects of Shāhjahānābād (Delhi) and Akbarābād (Agra).[127] Sanskrit, or *Hindi-yi kitābī* (Hindi of the book), as Ārzū calls it, could have been chosen in place of Persian as a language of the empire. But as Mīrzā Khān, the author of *Tuḥfat al-Hind,* noted in Aurangzeb's time, Sanskrit was not regarded by the Indians as an ordinary human tongue; it was a language of the gods or of heaven *(deva bāṇī; ākāś bāṇī).* The language was too sacred, too divine. No barbarian *(mleccha)* would have been allowed to pollute it by choosing it as a symbol and vehicle of his power. No *mleccha* could have used it to create the world of his vision. Prakrit, by contrast—which was *pātāl bāṇī,* the language of the underworld, of the snakes—the Mughals considered too low to appropriate for lofty ideals. Braj, or Bhakha, the language of this world, was only a regional dialect. Furthermore, Bhakha, in the Mughal view, was suitable only for music and love poetry.[128]

Persian poetry, which had integrated many themes and ideas from pre-Islamic Persia and had been an important vehicle of liberalism in the medieval Muslim world, helped in no insignificant way in creating and sup-

125. Ghālib 1967: 161.
126. Khusrau 1988: 173.
127. ʿAbdullāh 1968: 75.
128. Mīrzā Khān 1977 (н. 1356), 1: 51–52.

porting the Mughal attempt to accommodate diverse religious traditions. Akbar must have gotten support for his policy of nonsectarianism from the general ethos of Persian *ghazal*s and from verses like the ones of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, whose *Maṣnavī* the emperor heard regularly and nearly learned by heart:

> Thou hast come to unite,
> not to separate.
> The people of Hind understand the idiom of Hind;
> the people of Sindh appreciate their own.[129]

We hear the echoes of such messages in Mughal Persian poetry as well.

The Persian poets also generally disapproved of mere formalism. Fayẓī Fayyāẓī had the ambition of building "a new Ka'ba" out of stones from the Sinai:

> Come, let us turn our face toward the new altar.
> Let's bring the stones from Sinai and build a new Ka'ba.[130]

The Mughal poets portrayed the pious *(zāhid)* and the *shaykh* as hypocrites. Instead, the eternal divine secrets were to be sought from the master of the wine house *(mughān),* and in the temple rather than in the mosque:

> Give up the path of the Muslims
> if you desire to come to the temple of the Magi and see the esoteric mysteries.[131]

The idol *(but),* to them, was the symbol of divine beauty; idolatry *(but-parastī)* represented the love of the Absolute; and significantly, they emphasized holding the Brahman in high esteem because of his sincerity, devotion, and faithfulness to the idol. To Fayẓī it was a matter of privilege that his love for the idol led him to embrace the religion of the Brahman:

> Thanks to God, the love of the idols is my guide;
> I follow the religion of the Brahman and Āẕar.[132]

The temple *(dayr, but-kadah),* the wine-house *(may-khānah),* the mosque, and the Ka'ba were the same to 'Urfī; the divine spirit pervaded everywhere:

> The lamp of Somnāth is [the same as] the fire at Sinai;
> the light spreads from it in all directions.[133]

129. Rūmī 1976, 2: 173.
130. Fayẓī 1983 (s. 1362): 470.
131. Fayẓī 1983 (s. 1362): 470.
132. Fayẓī 1983 (s. 1362): 53.
133. 'Urfī 1915: 44.

This feature of Persian poetry remained unimpaired even when Aurangzeb sought to associate the Mughal state with Sunni orthodoxy. Nāṣir ʿAlī Sirhindī (d. 1696), a major poet of Aurangzeb's time, echoed ʿUrfī's message with equal enthusiasm:

> The image is the same behind the veil in the temple and the *ḥaram*.
> Though the firestones vary, there is no change in the color of the fire.[134]

To a poet, neither the mosque nor the temple is illumined by divine beauty; the heart *(dil)* of the true lover is its abode. The message of the poetry was thus to aspire to the high place of love for God. Ṭālib Āmulī raised the call to transcend the difference of *shaykh* and Brahman:

> I do not condemn unbelief, nor am I a bigoted believer.
> I laugh at both the *shaykh* and the Brahman.[135]

Persian thus facilitated the Mughal cultural conquest in India—a conquest, as ʿUrfī declared, that was intended to be bloodless:

> We have received wounds, we have scored victories,
> but the hues of our garments have never been stained with the blood of anyone.[136]

The desire to build an empire where both *shaykh* and Brahman could live with minimal possible conflict necessitated the generation of adequate information about the diverse traditions of the land. Akbar's historian, Abū al-Faẓl, was not content in his *Akbar-nāmah* with a mere description of the heroic achievements of his master; he concluded his account with what he calls the *Āʾīn* (Institutes) of Akbar. Particularly notable are the third and, above all, the fourth books of the *Āʾīn*. The former contains a survey of the land, the revenues, and the peoples or castes in control of the land; the latter "treats of the social conditions and literary activity, especially in philosophy and law, of the Hindus, who form the bulk of the population, and in whose political advancement the emperor saw the guarantee of the stability of his realm."[137] Further, to make the major local texts accessible and thus to dispel ignorance about the Hindu traditions, Akbar took special care in the rendering of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Persian.[138] These translations were followed, in Akbar's own time and later, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by Persian renderings of a large number of texts

---

134. Sirhindī 1872: 15.
135. Ṭālib Āmulī 1967 (s. 1346): 668.
136. ʿUrfī 1915: 3.
137. Blockmann 1965; cf. Jarrett 1978.
138. Mujtabai (1978: 60–91) lists with brief descriptions the Mughal Persian translations of the Hindu scriptures.

on Indian religions, Hindu law and ethics, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, romance, moral fables, and music.[139]

Persian literary culture had a certain logical connection with the Mughal political ideology. It helped generate and legitimate the Mughal policy of creating out of heterogeneous social and religious groups a class of allies. Like the emperor and his nobility in general, this class also cherished universalist human values and visions.

While the most sublime and accomplished Persian poetry was produced in India in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the eighteenth century was the richest in terms of the number and varieties of both prose and poetic works. Seventy-seven of the Persian poets who lived during the first half of the eighteenth century found a place of honor in the *tazkirah,* entitled *Majmāʿ al-Nafāʾis,* of Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Khān Ārzū, who was the greatest linguist and lexicographer of his age.[140] One of the many other *tazkirah*s written in this period, ʿAlī Ibrāhīm Khalīl's (d. 1793) comprehensive *Ṣuḥuf-i Ibrāhīm,* notes 460 northern Indian poets of the eighteenth century whose works he considered of worth. Fifty-six of these were non-Muslims.[141]

MUGHAL PERSIAN POETRY

The Mughal age constituted a significant stage in the development of Persian literary sensibility. The poetry of this epoch was marked by an outspoken spirit of innovation and experimentation, yet not without due regard for the earlier literary heritage of Iran as well as Central Asia. In Central Asia at the court of the late Timurids, Daulatshāh Samarqandī and ʿAlī Sher Navāī had tried to establish a canon. The poetry of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492) represented the achievements in the poetics of the late Timurids in Central Asia. This tradition was later refined and reformulated by Bābur. The emphasis had hitherto been on rhetorical artistry, even as Bābur also pointed to the importance of idea *(maʿnī)* and ecstasy *(ḥāl),* together with color *(rang),* in a good poem. In Iran there were attempts similar to Bābur's, like the ones by Sām Mīrzā, a contemporary of Bābur, to revise the standards of literary criticism. Simultaneously, however, Bābā Fighānī Shīrāzī (d. 1519) made a plea for poetry that concerned itself with routine matters of love but at the same time invested old words with fresh new meaning.[142]

Mughal poetry signified a fine blending of rhetorical excellence and grandeur of thought, in which thought occupied a superior position; and

139. Rizvi 1975: 203–22.
140. Ārzū: MS.I.O. 4015.
141. Khalīl 1981; ʿAbdullāh 1967: 19, 69–84.
142. Ghani 1971a: 455–61; Losensky 1998: 195–212.

while ʿAbū al-Faẓl emphasized the splendors of ideas, his poet brother, Fayẓī, advocated their sublimity and emotional texture:

> Do not be surprised if there are no dregs in my poetry
> because I have refined this wine by filtering it through the heart.[143]

The following verse by Ghanī Kashmīrī (d. 1688) may be the best description of Mughal poetry's many-sided splendor:

> The luminous presence of your beauty set me to poetic thought.
> You applied the henna and I created colorful themes.[144]

All this was a marked feature of *tāzah-gūʾī* (freshness in composition), the major tenet of Mughal poetry.[145] The call for new and fresh themes was heard throughout the Mughal age. Fayẓī detested imitation *(taqlīd):*

> How long should one look to others for ideas?
> How long should one be generous with the wealth of others?[146]

He then invited his audience to break with the past:

> Come, destroy the glitter of the bazaar,
> push the thorn into the gardener's eye.
> The arrogance of those who wear their cap askew [i.e., the beloveds]
>   has exceeded all limits;
> be bold and twist the ends of their turban,
> go past the Kaʿba, sipping the goblet,
> pull down walls and door in drunkenness.[147]

For Fayẓī, poetry and the poetic imagination transcended the ordinary world. The poet was to scale heights insurmountable for an average human soul:

> I walk where a step is a stranger,
> I speak from a place where breathing is a stranger.[148]

The Mughal poet thus aspired to unearth "the secret treasures of the unseen world" *(ganjīna-i asrār-i ghaib).* To Naẓīrī, poetry was divine:

> Do not think the story I narrate comes by itself.
> Come close to me, and you will hear a Voice.[149]

---

143. Abū al-Faẓl 1879: 381; Fayẓī 1983 (1362): 405.
144. Ghanī 1931: 101.
145. Nahāvandī 1931, 3: 848; Shiblī 1988: 21; ʿAbdullāh 1977: 114–26.
146. *qaṣd-i khayāl-i dīgarān tā ba kay / jūd ba māl-i dīgarān tā ba kay.* Fayẓī 1983 (s. 1362): 519; Hādī 1978: 150.
147. Fayẓī 1983 (s. 1362): 484; Hādī 1978: 150.
148. Fayẓī 1983 (s. 1362): 256; Hādī 1978: 90.
149. Naẓīrī 1961 (s. 1340): 101.

The beginnings of some elements of *tāzah-gūʾī* can be traced in the poetry of Bābā Fighānī, but its most distinguishing feature in the Mughal period was its humanism, and here its achievements were unprecedented.[150] While Fayẕī gave a call to go beyond the limits of the beloved's coquetry, ʿUrfī celebrated the enlargement of self where the lines between the success and failure of an individual, on the one hand, and his concerns for humanity, on the other, become blurred:

> In my heart the sorrows of the world turn into the sorrows of love.
> In my goblet an immature wine matures.[151]

It is risky to explain the nuances of poetry in terms of concrete social and political conditions. Still, the valuing of *tāzah-gūʾī* and the concern for humanity in Mughal poetry emerged and flourished in a literary environment specific to the time. It is significant that while the Mughal poets celebrated the victories of their patrons, they also gave expression to the susceptibilities of the vanquished in their poetry. They narrated the sufferings of others with the same intensity as they lamented their own afflictions. The wounded ego of the vanquished thus found in this poetry compensation, in some measure, for what it had lost:

> I have nothing but bitter tears drenching my sleeves;
> [even] if I have honey, I sell it for poison in return.
> Whoever has his house in my neighborhood,
> I keep him happy with my cries of suffering.
> My love takes me from temple to idol and idolhouse;
> I am ashamed to come face to face with those who follow the path of
>> faith.[152]

The poets of the Mughal age were aware that the new poetry was expanding the realm of art beyond its erstwhile frontiers. Enthralled by its newness, they were possessed by a sort of collective ego, even though each of them diverged from the others and experimented with new images and tropes in his own individual style. Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Qādir Bīdil, for instance, had little in common with ʿUrfī, yet he seems aware that they belonged to the same group of "new composers":

---

150. For a discussion of Fighānī, see Raẕiyah 1974: 135, and ʿAbdullāh 1977: 114–26; Losensky 1998: 193–249.

151. ʿUrfī 1990 (s. 1369): 4.

152. Naẓīrī 1961 (s. 1340): 294. To paraphrase: Suffering and sorrow have become an integral part of my life. Sweetness and comfort suit me no longer; I find myself uneasy with things pleasant and joyful. I thus give away to others whatever little I have of joy and take from them their suffering in return. I do not, however, protest my plight and loss, being unwilling to disturb the peace of those who live in my neighborhood.

> As my poetic thoughts were reflected in the light of the "new" composers
> margins drawn on the pages of *dīvān*s become as colorful as a peacock's
> wings.[153]

Nāṣir ʿAlī Sirhindī (d. 1696), sensitive to the accomplishments of the Mughal poet, emphasized the difference between Indian diction and that which found favor with the Iranians and declared boastfully: "The Iranian nightingale possessed little [comparable] to the grandeur of the Indian peacock."[154]

INDIAN PERSIAN VERSUS IRANIAN PERSIAN

It was the Iranians' enviable cultural strength as well as their ancient prestige that enabled them to continue dictating terms, to a certain extent, to the Persian poets in Mughal India. While Indian Persian diction matured under the Mughals, Iranian idiom remained the reference point, the pole star of literary and idiomatic speech. This is reflected in, among other things, the concern for the purification of Persian *(taṭhīr-i Fārsī)*. The objective of the Persian lexicon that Akbar had asked Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain Injū of Shiraz to prepare in his name was to purge the language of non-Iranian words and expressions. The drive for purification continued. Injū's *Farhang* and Abū al-Qāsim's *Majmaʿ al-Furs Surūrī* (1626), were considered the standard lexicons during the first half of the seventeenth century. By the middle of the century, however, Mullā ʿAbd al-Rashīd Thattawī felt that a new dictionary should be compiled. According to him, in the dictionaries by Injū and by Abū al-Qāsim certain Arabic and Turkish words were enlisted without clarifying that they were not Persian, and the diacritics *(iʿrāb)* of many words were wrongly indicated. ʿAbd al-Rashīd composed his *Farhang-i Rashīdī* in 1663 and was sharply critical of the "errors" in *Farhang* and *Surūrī*. Other principal Persian philological works of the Mughal period, including *Sirāj al-Lughat* of Ārzū, *Mirʾāt al-Iṣṭilāh* of Ānand Rām "Mukhliṣ," *Muṣṭalaḥāt-i Shuʿarāʾ* of Siyālkotī Mal "Vārastah," and *Bahār-i ʿAjam* of Munshī Tek Chand "Bahār," were written in the eighteenth century. They were composed mainly to update the vocabulary in light of the current usage in Iran.[155]

The practice of Mughal lexicons was in sharp contrast to the approach of pre-Mughal Persian authors, such as Amīr Khusrau of the early fourteenth century. He had disapproved of the Khurāsānī idiom and had noted that in India, Persian was written and pronounced according to the standard of Tu-

---

153. Bīdil 1922 (ʜ. 1341): 81. *ba fikr-i tāza-gūyān gar khayālam partav andāzad / par-i ṭāʾūs gardad, jadwal-i aurāq-i dīvānhā.*
154. Sirhindī 1872: MS Jamia Millia, fol. 6b. Cf. Ghani 1971a: 391.
155. Blockmann 1868–69.

ran. In prose particularly, the models were the authors of Transoxiana: the writings of Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ and Bahā al-Dīn of Khvarazm, for instance, were studied and followed by Indian Persian writers. Khusrau may be said to have consolidated or even to have inaugurated a new Indo-Persian style.[156] For the lexicographers of the fourteenth century, the speech current in Shiraz, Māvarā-an-nahr, and Farghana represented nothing but dialects of the same Persian tongue. Their lexicons included words used in Fārs, Samarqand, Māvarā-an-nahr, and Turkistan. As a matter of routine, they often provided Hindvi synonyms of Persian words.[157]

The attempts during the Mughal period by Indian Persian to acquire an autonomous position were feeble and exceptional. Ārzū, for instance, defends the *taṣarruf* (intervention) of masters like Mīrzā Bīdil. In fact, in his bid to legitimize the use of Indian words in Persian, he earned the distinction of being the first to discover and point out the correspondence *(tavāfuq)* between Persian and Sanskrit.[158] Not only in *Sirāj al-Lughat* and *Chirāgh-i Hidāyat* but also in his linguistic-grammatical treatise, *Muṣmir,* he discusses this at length and shows how the two languages are similar. It was a great achievement, and he was conscious that it was great. He writes:

> To date no one, excepting this humble Ārzū and his followers, has discovered the *tavāfuq* [lit. agreement, concord] between Hindi [Sanskrit] and Persian, even though there have been numerous lexicographers and other researchers in both these languages. I have relied on this principle when assessing the correctness of some of the Persian words, which I have illustrated in my books *Sirāj al-Lughat* and *Chirāgh-i Hidāyat.* It is strange that even the author of *Farhang-i Rashīdī* and those others who lived in India neglected the *tavāfuq* between these two languages.[159]

Ārzū also led a literary debate against Shaykh ʿAlī Ḥazīn (d. 1766), an eminent Iranian poet who came to India in 1734 and settled in Benares. Ḥazīn was generally dismissive of Indian Persian poetry as not measuring up to Iranian literary and linguistic standards.[160]

Moreover, the spurt of production of *taẕkirah*s in eighteenth-century India, with an unusually confident definition of what was good in Persian literature, was also meant to highlight Indian achievements. These were

156. Khusrau 1875: 66; 1988.

157. Husaini 1988: 201–26. Compare, for instance, Badr-i Ibrāhīm's *Farhang-i Zufān-i Gūyā* (1989), which is one of the early such lexicons compiled sometime around 1370.

158. Interestingly, Ārzū's theory of *tavāfuq* is similar to and apparently an earlier indigenous version of William Jones's declaration in 1785 of the relationship among the classical languages, which in turn laid the ground for the development of comparative philology. But Jones does not mention Ārzū.

159. Ārzū 1991: 221.

160. Ārzū 1981; also editor's introduction.

scarcely noticed by later Iranian critics and writers, however. In contrast to the early *tazkirah*s, wherein the world of Persian stretched from India to the Caspian Sea, in Safavid and post-Safavid *tazkirah*s the Iranians accorded Iran an exceptionally prominent place. Such prejudices, for instance, are glaring in the *tazkirah*s of Muḥammad Ṭāhir Naṣrābādī (d. 1781) and Luṭf ʿAlī Beg Āẕar (d. 1780). Naṣrābādī dispatches the accounts of the non-Iranian poets in just under 24 pages—fourteen for Central Asian poets and a little over seven for the Indian poets—while he devotes over 220 pages to contemporary Iranian poets.[161] Naṣrābādī was familiar with Mughal literary culture and had friends and relatives who lived in India. Ironically, his own poetry shows the clear influence of Kalīm Kāshānī (d. 1650) and Mīrzā Ṣāʾib (d. c. 1669), major poets of the Indian style, and he even indicates that for a fuller appreciation of the civilized world one has to journey through and understand the vast land between Iraq (southern Iran) and India. He cites a quatrain while evaluating the verses of Mīrzā Ṣābir, an Iranian poet of his own time:

> O free-living friends! I wish to be in your company;
> I want to fly away from this narrow suffocating world;
> I seek strength to travel in my head
> through the land of India and the open fields of Iraq.[162]

Āẕar's mid-eighteenth-century *Ātishkadah* (Fire temple) turns to ashes not simply the high qualities of Mughal poetry but also the achievements of hundreds of Indian Persian poets. The book lists over 850 poets from Iran, Turan, and the three *vilāyat*s (territories) of India, namely Delhi, Kashmir, and Deccan, yet only about twenty of them are identified as Indian. Further, Āẕar's account of Amīr Khusrau is very brief, without any significant expression highlighting the qualities of Khusrau's poetry; this is in sharp contrast to the account given in the fifteenth century by Daulatshāh, which uses a number of adjectives of praise.

Most of the Indian *tazkirah* writers, however, like Ārzū, Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād Bilgrāmī *(Khazānah-i ʿĀmirah),* ʿAlī Ibrāhīm Khān Khalīl *(Ṣuḥuf-i Ibrāhīmī),* and Brindāban Khvushgū *(Safīnah),* maintain a certain balance, as in earlier *tazkirah*s, in listing and assessing the poets from across the lands of Persian literary culture. But many, indulging as if in a kind of polemic with their Iranian counterparts, mention only Indian poets as if to suggest that real Persian literature thrived equally, if not more, in India. Lachhmī Nārāyan Shafīq Aurangābādī's *Gul-i Raʿnā* (A beautiful rose; 1767) and Shaykh Ghulām Hamadānī Muṣḥafī's *ʿIqd-i Surayyā* (The string of gems; 1784), for example, list the achievements of the Indian poets only; while Mīr Ghulām ʿAlī Sher Qaʾānī's *Maqālāt al-Shuʿarāʾ* (The speeches of the poets; 1750), ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Lāhorī's

---

161. Naṣrābādī 1938 (s. 1317): 432–51, 211–432.
162. Naṣrābādī 1938 (s. 1317): 64, 66.

Mardum-i Dīdah (The pupil of the eye; 1761), Ẓulfiqār ʿAlī Mast's *Riyāẓ al-Vifāq* (The meeting garden; 1814) and Ghulām ʿAlī Mūsā Riẓā's *Guldastah-i Kar-nātak* (A bouquet of flowers of Karnatak; 1832) list the poets of Sindh, Panjab, Benares, Calcutta, Karnatak, and Madras. As if to assert how prolific and popular were the Persian poets of India, Mīr ʿAbd al-Vahhāb Daulatābādī's *Tazkirah-i Bīnazīr* (The matchless *tazkirah*) focuses on the poets of only one period, whereas Mohan Lāl Anīs's *Anīs al-Aḥibbāʿ* (A companion of the friends; 1782) comprises the accounts of the disciples of just one Indian master poet, Mīrzā Fākhir Makīn (d. 1814).[163]

To reinforce further the feeling that Mughal India by no means lagged behind in Persian literary achievements, there is an emphasis in some *tazki-rah*s on the widespread vogue of poetic soirées *(majālis o maḥāfil)* even while Mughal imperial power was in decline. Persian literary gatherings were then an integral part of Indian culture. Some *tazkirah* writers, like Ārzū *(Majmaʿ al-Nafāʾis)* and Qudratullāh Qāsim *(Majmūʿah-i Naghz),* also note that a number of poets came from artisan and "low" professional groups.[164]

THE DEBATE OVER INDIAN PERSIAN DICTION

A notable feature of some *tazkirah*s is the words they use to evaluate the level of excellence in poetry. Muḥammad Afzal "Sarkhvush," who compiled his *Kalimāt al-Shuʿarāʾ* (Discourses of poets) in 1682, was principally concerned with the rich and colorful images and the fresh themes and ideas of the poetry of his own time (the period of Jahāngīr, Shāhjahān, and Aurangzeb, 1605–1682), an era when the unfolding of philosophical and aesthetic ideas *(maʿnī yābī)* reached the height of its development *(miʿrāj-i kamāl).* In his *Hamīshah Bahār,* a *tazkirah* of the Mughal poets compiled in 1723, Kishan Chand Ikhlāṣ (d. 1748 or 1754) provides a wide range of features that he considered distinctive of good poetry. These include *maʿnī āfrīnī* (to create a new idea/meaning), *maʿnī yābī* (to unfold and discover an idea/theme), *maʿni nigārī* (to depict an idea in writing), *maʿānīhā-i dilāvīz* (heart-ravishing ideas/themes), *maʿānīhā-i barjasta* (spontaneous ideas), *maʿni bandī* (to weave, contrive, and compose an idea), *maʿānīhā-i gharīb va badīʿ* (far-fetched and novel ideas), *maʿānīhā-i baʿīd al-fahm* (ideas difficult to comprehend), *talāshhā-i tāzah, mazāmīn-i tāzah* (search for new themes and ideas), *zihn-i diqqat pasand* (predilection for nuance and subtlety), *īhām* (ambiguity, double entendre), *istiʿārāt-i bī andāzah* (innumerable metaphors), *anvaʿ-i badāʿi va ṣanāʿi* (variety of rhetorical devices) and *fikr-i dūr az kār* (abstract, remote idea).[165] Without further comparative research it is difficult to say definitively

163. Naqavī 1972: 167–68.
164. Naqavī 1972: 172–73.
165. Ikhlāṣ: Aligarh MS. See also Pritchett, chapter 15 in this volume.

whether the Iranian *tazkirah*s used the same terms to mark the qualities of good poetry. This seems quite unlikely, however, for these terms used by Ikhlās to define good poetry indicate the very qualities that later Iranian commentators criticized as the elements of *sabk-i Hindī*.

Indian-style diction, *sabk-i Hindī*, as against *sabk-i Khurāsānī* and *sabk-i ʿIrāqī*, at one level signified the continuity and reiteration of the translocal identity of New Persian at a time when Iran made a case for itself, within the narrow Safavid boundaries, as the land of Persian. (Māwarā-an-nahr and Anatolia by that time had turned in large measure to Turkish.) The term *sabk-i Hindī*, however, has often been used in Iranian writings to point to the abstruse ideas expressed in Mughal poetry. The Iranian critics considered such ideas outlandish, convoluted, and twisted, disturbing the flow, elegance, and even the basic principle of poetry. Notable in this connection are the invectives of Luṭf ʿAlī Beg Āzar and Shaykh ʿAlī Ḥazīn.

Ḥazīn derided the Indian poets as "crows." For him, only Fayżī and his historian brother, ʿAbū al-Fażl, were of some consequence *(dar zāghān-i Hind az īn dū birādar bihtar-i bar nakhvāsta)*, but even these two were ultimately treated as "crows" rather than "nightingales." He considered the writings of Bīdil and Nāṣir ʿAlī totally meaningless, beyond comprehension, useful only as a comic gift for the delectation of his friends in Iran *(agar murājaʿat ba Īrān dast dihad barāʾi rīshkhand-i bazm-i aḥbāb rah āvardī-yi bihtar azīn nīst)*.[166] Commenting on the verses of Ṭālib Āmulī (d. 1626) and Mīrzā Ṣāʾib—both Iranians but also major poets of *sabk-i Hindī*—Āzar did not simply express his strong dislike for their style but also judged it a major factor in the decline of classical Persian poetry. Later, in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Riżā Qulī Khān Hidāyat (d. 1872) and Malik al-Shuʿarāʾ Muḥammad Taqī Bahār (d. 1951) used even harsher words to air their criticism of the Mughal poets. To Hidāyat, the Indian style was "nonsensical"; to Bahār it was "infirm," "spineless," and even if it "possessed novelty," it was crowded with "feeble" and "unattractive" ideas, wanting in eloquence. While one can explain the modern critics' attacks in terms of the influence of the new, Western aesthetics, continuity from earlier times cannot be altogether ruled out. Traces of this criticism are discernible in the works of many other noted twentieth-century Iranian litterateurs and literary critics.[167] The writers of other parts of ʿAjam, however, did not share this dismissive attitude. In fact, in recent times the attitude of even Iranian critics has begun to show signs of change, and they have begun to count Amīr Khusrau, Bīdil, Mīrzā Ghālib, and even Iqbāl among the great Persian poets.[168] Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān

166. Ārzū 1981: 28, introduction.

167. Yarshater 1988: 252–59; Shihābī 1937 (s. 1316): 13, 80.

168. Yarshater 1988: 258–59 n.; Subḥānī 1998 (s. 1377)a: 96. This change is illustrated in some important works on Bīdil, Ghālib, and Iqbāl published in recent years by Iranian schol-

and Abū al-Fāraj Rūnī, however, are yet to be recognized by these critics as harbingers of the Indian style; they prefer to classify them among the poets of the Khurāsāni and ʿIrāqī styles.

The shaping of *sabk-i Hindī* signified a dialogue between the Persian language and the Indian cultural ethos. It developed as a result of constant interaction between the literary matrices of India, on the one hand, and of Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia on the other. It implied the use of words and phrases, as well as the appropriation and integration of ideas, from the Indian world into Persian. This diction had its inception with Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān and Amīr Khusrau during the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, and first showed signs of stability in fifteenth-century Herat, where were gathered the best of ʿAjam culture. Among other things, Herat played a role in nurturing the ideas of Bābā Fighānī of Shiraz, who lived there during his formative years. *Sabk-i Hindī* matured and scaled new heights under the Mughals in the *tāzah-gūʾī* of Fayżī, ʿUrfī, and Kalīm; the imagination of Ṣāʾib; and the abstract images, tropes, and allegories of Bīdil. Persian poetry achieved this grandeur, as the noted Mughal writer Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād Bilgrāmī (d. 1786) maintained, by assimilating Indian ideas. And this was not the last of its accomplishments; the poetry was to soar still higher and excel. Bilgrāmī wrote:

> It should be known that Hindi [Sanskrit?] poetry is very old, as is evident from the study of the books of the Indians. The rule is that art gets perfected when ideas blend with each other *[ba-talāḥuq-i afkār]*. From the time of Sultan Maḥmūd [eleventh century] to this age of ours, Persian poetry has [thus] traveled far and wide, having risen from the lowly earth to the very sky *[az zamīn tā falak al-aflāk]*. This does not mean, however, that there are no new ideas left to be composed. For, maintaining that ideas have been exhausted implies the possibility of loss and decrease in the infinite source of the divine bounties. God is far greater and more gracious than that. The drinkers will keep emptying vessel after vessel until the last day of the world, yet they will have exhausted not even a drop from His winehouse.
>
>> [Qurʾanic verse] Say: If the ocean were ink [wherewith to write out] the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if we added another ocean like it, for its aid.[169]

---

ars and literary critics, such as Muḥammad Riżā Shafīʿī Kadkanī, Fakhr al-Dīn Ḥijāzī, and Muḥammad ʿAlī Islāmī Nadūshan. Centers for studies in Bīdil's poetry have been instituted in Tehran, Esfahan, and Shiraz. Iqbāl's prose writings, including *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* have also been translated into Persian.

169. This seems to be addressed specially to those who believed that the "Indian, or Safavid" marked the decline of classical Persian poetry. These two paragraphs are from Bilgrāmī 1871: 5–6.

Īhām, which Amīr Khusrau claimed to have invented, was one of the most distinctive new features of this *sabk.* As a rhetorical device *īhām* was not new in Persian poetry. ʿArūzī Samarqandī in his *Chahār Maqālah* used the word in the plain sense of "imagination"—and also a derivative of the word, *muhāmah* (imaginary)—while defining poetry. In his view, the task of the poet was, in the first place, arrangement *(ittisāq)* of imaginary propositions *(muqaddamāt-i muhāmah)* and blending of fruitful analogies to make a small thing appear great and a great thing small. Second, the poet should act on the imagination *(īhām)* and thus excite the faculties of anger and desire in such a way that by this act of imagination *(ta badān īhām)* he could affect men's temperaments, causing, on the one hand, depression and constriction *(inqibāẓ)* and, on the other, expansiveness and exaltation *(inbisāṭ)* that would help in accomplishing great things in this world.[170] Samarqandī used the term *īhām* in its straightforward dictionary sense, imagination, but Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ in his *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr* described *īhām* as a poetic artifice:

> *Īhām* in Persian means to create doubt. This is a literary device, also called *takhyīl* [to make one suppose and fancy], whereby a writer *(dabīr),* in prose, or a poet, in verse, employs a word with two different meanings, one direct and immediate *(qarīb)* and the other remote and strange *(gharīb),* in such a manner that the listener, as soon as he hears that word, thinks of its direct meaning while in actuality the remote meaning is intended.[171]

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Qays al-Rāzī, author of *Al-Muʿjam fī Maʿāyir-i Ashʿār al-ʿAjam,* the second major work in Persian rhetoric and prosody, defined *īhām* in almost the same words.[172]

The new thing in Khusrau's discussion of *īhām* was the suggestion that a poet might use a word, or a combination of words, in as many senses as he could *(ẕul vujūh)* and that all these could be simultaneously intended—each direct, equally true *(durust),* logical, and sensible.[173] To some degree Khusrau rejected the suggestion that *īhām* implied deception. He showed a special liking for *īhām;* over half of the descriptions of the qualities in Persian poetry that he boastfully describes as his inventions in his *Ghurrat* are devoted to *īhām* of one or the other sort. He expects in the reader a certain general intelligence and skill at reading poetry; the meanings in poetry, even with *īhām* employed, are discernible, radiant *(roshan rū),* and clearer and brighter than even a mirror *(muvajjahtar az āʾīna).* He wants the reader to concentrate and to keep thinking on and around the verse *(gird-i bayt nikū bigardad);* if the reader finds any difficulty, it is due to his incompetence

---

170. Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī Samarqandī 1955 (s. 1334): 49.
171. Vaṭvāṭ 1929 (s. 1308): 39.
172. Rāzī 1959 (s. 1338): 355.
173. Khusrau 1988: 195–99.

(kundī-yi kalūd-i khāṭir-i ū). While there was concern for a certain order or standard in the literary creation, the reader or listener was also expected to be imaginative and erudite. The language of poetry is intricate, complex, multilayered, and often deceptively simple, and its meanings are intertwined, subtle, and difficult to grasp.

The Sufi religious circles resonated with echoes of this aspect of Indian Persian literary culture. Sayyid Muḥammad Gīsūdarāz (d. 1422) is reported to have compiled a treatise in which he discussed the true meanings of selected *īhām* verses. He was followed later in this enterprise by Mīr ʿAbd al-Vāḥid Bilgrāmī (d. 1608). Bilgrāmī compiled a treatise *(risālah)* with explanatory notes on the *ghazal*s of Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī.[174] Of greater interest still is his commentary on Hindvi (Brajbhasha) songs (1566). His interpretative endeavor to find Islamic meanings for the evidently non-Islamic words is fascinating. "Krishna" and Kṛṣṇa's other names in Hindvi, Bilgrāmī writes, mean the Prophet Muḥammad and sometimes the perfect man *(insān-i kāmil).* Sometimes it indicates the creation of the human world in relation to the Unity of Being *(vaḥdat al-vujūd).* The word *gopī* (cowherdwoman) refers to an angel, or sometimes to the reality of mankind. Braj and Gokul (Kṛṣṇa's home) stand for the three ontological realms: the *jabarūt,* the highest point in the spiritual world; the *nasūt,* or physical world; and the *malakūt,* or intermediary psychic world. The Gaṅgā and the Yamunā (or Kālindī) represent the rivers of *vaḥdat,* the ocean of *maʿrifat* (gnosis), or the streams of creation or contingent existence. The *muralī,* or *bānsurī* (Kṛṣṇa's flute), refers to the appearance of existence out of void; Kaṃsa (Kṛṣṇa's evil uncle) symbolizes the *nafs,* the devil, and sometimes the *sharīʿah* prior to the advent of Islam; Yasodhā (the foster mother of Kṛṣṇa) indicates divine mercy; Mathurā (Kṛṣṇa's birthplace) signifies temporary stations in *maʿrifat;* and Dwārakā (Kṛṣṇa's final dwelling place) the permanent stage, *maʾād* (final destination), or the ultimate station of mystical pursuit.[175]

Most historians have seen such readings mainly in the context of Hindu-Muslim religious interaction. But this is a somewhat reductive treatment of a complex issue. Furthermore, the *maṣnavī*s of Sanāʾī, ʿAṭṭār, and Rūmī were also interpreted allegorically by medieval scholars. Rather, to read Indo-Persian poetry in this manner may be seen in the light of the extended connotative power of *īhām,* which creates space for possible meanings far removed from the explicit. Unlike Vaṭvāṭ and Rāzī's discourse on poetics, there was little distinction between the *qarīb* (familiar, close, obvious) and *gharīb* (strange, remote, subtle). "A verse by itself has no fixed meaning," proclaimed the great mystic Shaykh Manērī near the end of the fourteenth century. "It is the reader/listener who picks up an idea consistent with the subjective con-

---

174. Bilgrāmī 1981: 19.
175. Bilgrāmī 1957 (v.s. 2014); Rizvi 1978: 359–62.

dition of his mind."[176] A verse is like a mirror; having no image of its own, it reveals only the image of the person who looks into it. So also, the literariness and aesthetic quality of a poem are not to be judged simply in terms of its external composition and rhetorical ornaments.

The gap between the Iranian and Indian views of *sabk-i Hindī* cannot be explained away simply in terms of the ethnic and geographical location of the critics. Differences in the nature of knowledge of poetry, the definition of poetry, the autonomy and innovativeness of the poet, and issues of communication *(iblāgh)* as well as of reception are also factors. Sām Mīrzā, a sixteenth-century Safavid prince and a literary critic in Iran, evaluated a verse in terms that were close to those of the eighteenth-century Mughal writer Ārzū; on the other hand, an Indian poet, Abū al-Barakāt Munīr Lāhorī (d. 1645), was the first to denounce the achievements of the *tāzah-gū* maestros.[177] Munīr, as it happens, was also one of the first Indian writers to explicitly debunk the claims to superiority of the Iranians. Thus, while some elements of India-Iran rivalry exist in this debate, the question is far too complex to be reduced to this dimension alone.

We may also note here that with Munīr's essay, Persian literary criticism emerged as an independent genre. In Persian, as we know, the evaluation of poetry is generally found in *tazkirah*s, either systematically compiled or, on occasion, developed from notes in the margins of books or notebooks *(bayāz).* Sometimes a political chronicle composed purportedly to extol the achievements of the patron/ruler would end with a section on poets and scholars at the court, together with some comments on their compositions. Lexicographical compilations prepared with the intention of elaborating meanings of words also offered evaluations of verse. After Amīr Khusrau's *Ghurrat al-Kamāl,* Munīr's treatise of the mid-seventeenth century, together with the subsequent eighteenth-century literary debates on both the grammar of poetry and the sensitivities of the audience, introduced high standards of literary criticism.[178]

Munīr opens his essay on Mughal poetry with a description of an imagined literary assembly *(maḥfil, majlis)* in which his contemporaries discuss, evaluate, and highlight the qualities, new ideas, and refreshing combinations of words in the poetry of the four great *tāzah-gū*s: 'Urfī, Ṭālib, Zulālī, and Ẓuhūrī. The assembly praises their achievements beyond the limits of truth, thus casting aspersions on the masters of the past. Munīr feels constrained to intervene, but he realizes that he would not be listened to; for in his time, he thinks, it is age, wealth, Iranian origins, and aggressiveness, more than ability and knowledge, that carry weight. He therefore occupies a corner seat

176. Manērī 1985: 573. For further discussion of *īhām,* see Faruqi, chapter 14 in this volume.
177. Munīr 1977: 3–7.
178. See Pritchett, chapter 15 in this volume.

in that literary gathering. Still, for the sake of justice he has to demonstrate the weaknesses of the new poetry of the *tāzah-gū* style. So in his treatise he cites several verses by these four poets to illustrate his point.[179]

Munīr's criticism, even though he tends to couch it in terms of an Iran-India clash, centers on the question of communication, the poet's rapport with the audience. He argues that some of the words and metaphors these poets use are bizarre and totally unfamiliar, and they thus fail to produce any impact on the reader/listener. Munīr, however, was not quite fair in his attack. Much of his hostility arose from his refusal to regard as legitimate the development of certain new features in the diction of poetry, a point that later in the eighteenth century was well brought out by Ārzū. Munīr stuck to the old use of words and did not subscribe to the belief that a change in grammar was necessary if a poet was to convey new ideas. Ārzū commented:

> Much of Munīr's criticism derives from the fact that he mistakes *istiʿārah bil-kināyah* [submerged or implied metaphor] for *iẓāfat-i tashbīhī* [simile]. Indeed, with the later poets, particularly those of Akbar's time and those who came after and followed them, metaphor assumed a completely new significance; the link between the intended idea and the word used metaphorically became very tenuous. This usage, you may say, is the divider between the styles of the ancient and the later poets. Only those who have mastered this art can appreciate this point. Those among the later poets who do not consider this [change in usage] to be of any significance, continue with the old style. Abū al-Barakāt Munīr imitates Amīr Khusrau and therefore is critical of these four poets.[180]

Indeed, even in terms of communication, the Mughal litterateurs and connoisseurs *(mardum-i muʿtabar)* were already familiar with the new development. However, Ārzū's position vis-à-vis Munīr is judiciously balanced. He explains that if a certain looseness of expression *(sustī, nāhamvārī)* is found in the writings of these poets, it is precisely because they attempted to "speak freshly." However, he does not hesitate to support Munīr as well, declaring on several occasions that "truth is on Munīr's side" *(ḥaq ba jānib-i Munīr ast).*[181]

Ārzū was also of the view that a literary style could be appreciated only if it was standardized. Thus he compiled dictionaries and initiated philological discourses not simply to disseminate Persian but to set norms for the literary in Persian. It was also for this reason that when he joins issue with the Iranian poet and critic Shaykh ʿAlī Ḥazīn, he attaches special value to the authority *(sanad)* that came from the master poets and writers of the past. He was in favor of innovation and constant change in both time and space, in consonance with the diverse social and literary traditions of the wide world

179. Munīr 1977: 7–29.
180. Ārzū 1977: 53–54.
181. Munīr 1977: 36, editor's introduction.

of Persian. He therefore wrote a rejoinder to Munīr even as the latter targeted Iranian poets.

While Ārzū made a strong statement in favor of the continuation of the translocality of Persian, he did not try to establish, as, for instance, Munīr did, the place of his own country by simply citing the examples of the major Indian Persian poets or by demonstrating his own achievements. He raised a point of principle by insisting on maintaining a distinction between the spoken language *(zabān-i muḥāvarah)* and the language of poetry *(zabān-i shiʿr).*[182] He held that mastery over the *zabān-i shiʿr* required a certain level of literacy and a knowledge of rhymes and rhetoric. In some geographical areas a language close to the literary language might be in use, whereas in other areas of the same literary culture there could be several spoken languages. Thus Iranians were certainly the masters of spoken Persian, and here the Indians might be far behind them because Hindvi, not Persian, was their language of social communication. This did not imply, however, that Indians could not be masters of literary Persian, since Persian grammar and rhetoric were very much a part of the literary pursuits in India. India had long been integrated into the Persian literary world.

Such a theory could have emanated only from Ārzū's observation of the Indian literary scene. In India, he saw masters of *Hindī-yi kitābi* (Hindi of the book, or Sanskrit) who came from regions having different spoken languages. A person who used Hindi/Urdu as his daily language could have command over Persian literature in the same way as a speaker of Telugu or a Brajbhasha could be a master poet of Sanskrit. It was not only Ārzū who illustrated this with his own example; Muḥammad ʿAẓīm S̲abāt, the son of one of Ārzū's contemporaries, Mīr Afẓal S̲ābit, also demonstrated forcefully the command of an Indian over Persian poetry. S̲abāt did so, however, as a rejoinder to Ḥazīn's criticism of his father's poetry.[183]

Ārzū's position perhaps also owes something to the existing political conditions. In the mid-eighteenth century the Mughal empire had declined and the image of universality that the Mughal state had created for itself was in danger of being shattered. In Ārzū's advocacy of the translocality of Persian there is a desire to relocate himself in the larger literary world. In this process, a glint of transregional Islamic identity often shimmers, but there were many forces working to the contrary, too. Ārzū's major supporter in this was Ānand Rām "Mukhliṣ," a well-known Hindu Persian writer of the period. Indeed, it is arguable that instead of emphasizing a pan-Islamic identity, as seen in the writings of the noted eighteenth-century theologian Shāh Valī-Allāh (d. 1762), Ārzū was invoking a pan-literary identity. He thus also represented in the In-

182. Ārzū 1981: 75–76.
183. Ārzū 1981: 30–40, editor's introduction.

dian social and political context the tradition of accommodation and assimilation that cut across sectarian and ethnic identities.

Many of the Iranians who settled in India, including the poet ʿAlī Qulī Khān Vālih Dāghistānī (d. 1756), supported Ārzū's position. Vālih noted the Indian view in his *tazkirah, Riyāz al-Shuʿarā*, and sent it to Iran. During the second half of the eighteenth century, Mīr Muḥammad Muḥsin further clarified and elaborated upon this position. On the other hand, some Indians, such as Fatḥ ʿAlī Khān Gardezī, wrote about it disapprovingly. As a matter of fact, even some who advocated the translocality of Persian, like Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād Bilgrāmī, had reservations about Ārzū's position.[184] But the argument of the editor of Ārzū's *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*—that Siyālkotī Mal Vārastah was among the arch enemies of Ārzū's view—needs reconsideration. Such an interpretation can be sustained only if we take the debate in terms of conflict between the two individuals—Ārzū versus Ḥazīn—or between Iran and India. Vārastah seems in fact to have taken the same position as Ārzū, making a plea for enforcing that position further. Significantly, Vārastah is said to have studied in Iran for about three decades with the objective of compiling a dictionary of idioms and phrases, which he called *Muṣṭalāḥāt-i Shuʿarā*. The dictionary does reaffirm Ārzū's view that while speakers of a language may have an edge over the others in *zabān-i muḥāvarah,* for command over *zabān-i shiʿr* it was not necessary to use the language of daily speech. The fact that the compiler of *Bahār-i ʿAjam*—who is clearly not an opponent of this position—incorporates Vārastah's finding in the second edition of his dictionary indicates that at one level they all held a similar view. It may also be noted that in his dictionary Vārastah supported many definitions with verses from Indian Persian poets.[185]

The claim for India's distinct share in Persian literature, and for Indian writers' and poets' equal mastery over Persian, became muted by the mid-nineteenth century. The backbone of Persian was broken under the British regime, when its status as a language of power was lost as the new rulers aimed to replace it with English and also encouraged the vernaculars.[186] Urdu took the place of Persian. The high spirit of the eighteenth century was gone, and the mastery of Iranians alone, even in *zabān-i shiʿr,* was everywhere conceded. Thus Imām Bakhsh Ṣahbāʾī (executed in 1857) not only supports Ḥazīn but also proclaims in unqualified terms that for him tradition and authority *(sanad)* are where the Iranians identify them to be.[187] This amounted to accepting that Iran was not only a country where Persian was a spoken tongue;

184. Cf. Ārzū 1981, editor's introduction.
185. ʿAbdullāh 1967: 169–99.
186. Macaulay 1870: 255.
187. Ārzū 1981: 51–61, editor's introduction.

it was also the sole normative center of Persian literary culture. Even Ghālib, the great Urdu/Persian poet of the nineteenth century, had to invent a fictitious Iranian figure, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, as his *ustād* to establish his credibility in Persian, his claim as a master poet of the language notwithstanding. On the other hand, some Indian masters may have realized that they could thrive in the literary and poetic world only if they wrote and composed in their own *zabān-i muḥāvarah*. Ṣaḥbāʾī's formula was, at any rate, a pragmatist's solution for peace among the competing Indian tongues in the face of the overwhelming political power of the rival of all these languages, namely, English:

> I sat down to arrive at peace,
> determined to work hard at it.
> Look at me, ending the dispute of friends.
> Look at the strength of my resolve!
> I well knew both sides of the matter,
> yet I hoped to achieve peace.
> One was with sword; the other, dagger in hand.
> I cast my glance on either side.
> Were Justice but to open her eyes,
> a hundred [hidden] scenes would be revealed.
> My heart tilts to neither side,
> I place neither one over the other.
> O Ṣaḥbāʾī! Enough of this tale.
> Let silence prevail, and with it, courtesy.[188]

CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced the career of Indian Persian from its origins in the early medieval period to its last great moments in the opening years of the nineteenth century. The beginnings of Indian Persian closely followed chronologically the establishment of the canon of New Persian elsewhere, and the great literary burst associated with Abū al-Faraj Rūnī and Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān was separated by only a few decades from writers like Firdausī, whose career was in turn linked to that of the Ghaznavids. The second phase of Persian literature, which may have been conditioned by the Mongol turbulence in the Islamic East, marked the transition from the *qaṣīdah* form, with its more or less heroic tenor, to forms characterized by a greater suppleness and pathos, and having themes that occupy a softer register than works of the first phase. These changes, which may be seen in Persian literature in general, find direct echoes in the case of Indian Persian, where the great figures of the second phase include Amīr Khusrau and Ḥasan Dihlavī. In both of these early phases there was broad consensus on an inclusive con-

---

188. Ṣaḥbāʾī 1878 (H. 1296): 201–2 (1862 ed.: 162–63).

cept of ʿAjam as embracing the world from Afghanistan to Anatolia. Centers like Lahore, Multan, and Delhi—as well as the great cities of Transoxania, which had also emerged as centers of Persian learning and literature—aspired to participate in this world side by side with the urban centers of the Iranian plateau. Subsequently, this ecumene fragmented, despite the efforts of a number of political powers to reunite it, of which the most noted is probably that of Timur in the last decades of the fourteenth century. In Iran, in response to these trends toward unification a notion of "Iranian-ness" emerged—associated with an assertive sectarianism (Twelver Shiism under the Safavids) and a number of other social and religious movements—that was destined to separate Iran from the rest of the Persian-speaking and Persian-writing world. And in the sixteenth century, Māwarā-an-nahr and the Ottoman domains turned increasingly toward Turkish.

The case of South Asia stands somewhat apart from that of the rest of the Persian world. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, vernacular languages (subsumed generally under the category of Hindvi) began to emerge in northern India even within the contexts of power and administration, but the reemergence of Persian under the Mughals in the late sixteenth century put paid to this trend. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as the pull of the Mughal and provincial Indian courts drew vast numbers of litterateurs, the Mughals emerged as the sole viable alternative to Iran as a center of Persian literature. The production in this period was so enormous and of such quality that commentators in both Safavid and post-Safavid Iran were obliged to pay attention, no matter how much repugnance they may at times have expressed. However, in order to analyze what they termed the "Indian style" *(sabk-i Hindī)* of the Mughal period, modern Iranian critics (beginning with Malik al-Shuʿarāʾ Bahār) have adopted a largely chronological framework, arguing that Persian literature was dominated first by the Khurāsānī style, then by the ʿIrāqī style, and finally—in the Mughal period—by the Indian style, which on account of its purportedly "over-ripe" or "baroque" character marked in their eyes the decline of classical Persian poetry. This influential schema has a number of disadvantages, including that it renders the history of Indian Persian in the pre-Mughal period either insignificant or incomprehensible. The argument of this chapter, on the contrary, is that there are several advantages in taking a long view of Indian Persian—from the time of Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān down to the early nineteenth century—and that the entire development can indeed be viewed as the history of the Indian style. Moreover, the evolution of Indian Persian can best be understood in terms of the synthesis between the themes and aesthetics of Indian vernacular (and perhaps even classical) literatures and the Persian that was practiced in northern India. A clear recognition of this fact can be found as early as the eighteenth century in the remarks of Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād Bilgrāmī.

The revival of Persian in the Mughal period must also be understood in terms of the relationship between northern India and Iran concerning the pragmatics of the Persian language. The Mughals seemingly felt culturally inferior in this regard, such that they reinjected Indian Persian with heavy elements drawn from Iran, rather than permitting an autonomous trajectory for Indian Persian in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This may be seen in, among other evidence, the nature of lexicographic practice in the Mughal domains and the attempts at language "reform" and "purification," from which even such savants as Abū al-Faẕl were not entirely exempt. These attempts eventually led to sharp disagreements and debates among writers and critics, of which I have noted an important example concerning the intervention of Munīr Lāhorī in the mid-seventeenth century. But the controversy reached a crescendo only in the eighteenth century with the debate around the so-called Indian usage *(istiʿmāl-i Hind)*. I have argued that crucial elements in these debates includes not only vocabulary and cultural identity, but also deeper aesthetic and even philosophical questions concerning the very nature of poetry itself, as evident in the *taẕkirah*s compiled in India in the eighteenth century. Some voices in this debate also seem to have called for the reestablishment of a single world of Persian poetic discourse, implying a nostalgia for the early medieval world of ʿAjam. One of the major participants in the debate, Ārzū, stressed the importance of tradition *(sanad)* in defining what the poetry of his time should aspire to. By the eighteenth century, the elite *(shurafāʾ)* of the Mughal empire had invested heavily in Persian as a part of their cultural identity, even as Persian invested them with a cosmopolitan character that another language might not have afforded.

The attempt at defining a translocal Persian identity ran parallel to that articulated along lines of religion, save that here the key factor for giving shape to a universe of belonging was the "secular" attribute of language. This is not to argue that Indian Persian was entirely devoid of a religious character, for in India vast compilations, translations, and commentaries on religious questions were made in Persian as well as in Arabic. Yet on the whole, the balance remained on the side of "secular" literature, and it may even be argued that this nonsectarian catholicity had always been written into the very nature of Persian, from the Samanid period on. The character and traditions of Persian thus were well-suited to the demands of kingship in the Indian context, and the two entered into a happy marriage of convenience to a certain degree. Even during the Mughal decline, Indian Persian retained a demonstrable vigor for as long as it was associated with the successor states. The death knell was sounded when Persian, the language of power par excellence, was divorced from power—first under the East India Company and then under direct British rule. Macaulay would allow, in his celebrated Minute of 1835, that "Hindee" might be permitted as "a part of an English educa-

tion," for he did not perceive it as a threat to the scheme of cultural and po-
litical transformation he had in mind. On the other hand, he wrote in the
same document, "To teach [the Indians] Persian, would be to set up a rival,
and as I apprehend, a very unworthy rival, to the English language."[189] Per-
sian was unworthy in the aesthetic judgment of Macaulay, but it was still threat-
ening enough to be deliberately set aside. The career of Persian did not, of
course, come to an end in India in the late nineteenth century. Yet its di-
vorce from power and the dismantling of the cultural coordinates within
which it had functioned for the greater part of the second millennium meant
that by the twentieth century it would have a more arcane and secondary
character than it had once possessed. Persian became, in these circumstances,
the language of Iran, and in India came to be associated above all with a cer-
tain register of Urdu.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Abdullāh. 1954. *Tārīkh-i Dāʾūdī.* Edited by Shaikh Abdur Rashid. Aligarh: Depart-
    ment of History, Aligarh Muslim University.

'Abdullāh, S. M. 1967. *Adabīyāt-i Fārsī meñ Hindūvoñ kā Ḥiṣṣah.* Lahore: Majlis-i
    Taraqqī-yi Adab.

———. 1968. *Mabāḥis.* Delhi: Kutubkhāna Naẕīrīa.

———. 1977. *Fārsī Zubān va Adab: Majmūʿa-i Maqālāt.* Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqī-yi
    Adab.

'Ābidī, Sayyid Amīr Ḥasan. 1984. *Hindūstānī Fārsī Adab.* Edited by Sharīful Ḥasan
    Qāsemī. Delhi: Indo-Persian Society.

Abū al-Faẕl. 1863 (H. 1280). *Inshāʾ-i Abū al-Faẕl.* Vol. 1. Lucknow: Navalkishor.

———. 1872. *Āʾīn-i Akbarī.* Vol. 1. Edited by H. Blockmann. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

———. 1873. *Akbar-nāmah.* Vol. 1. Edited by Āghā Aḥmad ʿAlī and ʿAbdur Raḥīm.
    Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

———. 1879. *Akbar-nāmah.* Vol. 2. Edited by Āghā Aḥmad ʿAlī and ʿAbdur Raḥīm.
    Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

———. 1886. *Akbar-nāmah.* Vol. 3. Edited by Āghā Aḥmad ʿAlī and ʿAbdur Raḥīm.
    Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Acharya, Promesh. 1994. "Pedagogy and Social Learning: *Tol* and *Pathshal* in Ben-
    gal." *Studies in History* (n.s.) 10 (2): 255–72.

Ahmad, Aziz. 1969. *An Intellectual History of Islam in India.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh
    University Press.

———. 1976. "Safawid Poets and India." *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian
    Studies* 14: 117–32.

———. 1999. *Studies in the Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment.* Reprint, Delhi:
    Oxford University Press.

Aḥmad, Ẕuhūruddīn. 1971. "Shuʿarāʾ." In *Tārīkh-i Adabīyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pākistān*

189. Macaulay 1870: 255.

va Hind, vol. 3, *Fārsī Adab I (1000–1526),* edited by Muḥammad Baqar and Vaḥīd
Mirzā. Lahore: Punjab University.

———. 1974. *Pākistān meñ Fārsī Adab kī Tārīkh.* Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqī-yi Adab.

Aḥsān, ʿAbd al-Shukūr. 1971. "Lughat." In *Tārīkh-i Adabīyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pākistān
va Hind,* vol. 3, *Fārsī Adab I (1000–1526),* edited by Muḥammad Baqar and Vaḥīd
Mirzā. Lahore: Punjab University.

Alam, Muzaffar. 1998. "The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics." *Modern Asian Studies* 32: 317–49.

Anṣārī, Nūr al-Ḥasan. 1969. *Fārsī Adab baʿAhd-i Aurangzeb.* Delhi: Indo-Persian Society.

Ansari, Zoe. 1988. *Khusrau kā Zehnī Safar.* Delhi: Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdu.

Ansari, Zoe, and Ali Yawar Jang, eds. 1975. *Life, Times and Works of Amir Khusrau
Dehlavi.* New Delhi: National Amir Khusrau Society.

Anvarī. 1985 (н. 1364). *Dīvān-i Anvarī.* Edited by Muḥammad Taqī Mudarris Raẓavī.
2 vols. Tehran: Vizārat-i Farhang va Āmūzish-i ʿAlī.

Ārzū, Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Khān. 1977. *Sirāj-i Munīr.* Edited by S. M. A. Ikram. Islamabad:
Iran Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies.

———. 1981. *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn.* Edited by S. M. A. Ikram. Lahore: Punjab University.

———. 1991. *Muṣmir.* Edited by Reḥāna Khātūn. Karachi: Institute of Central and
West Asian Studies, Karachi University.

———. *Intikhāb-i Majmaʿal-Nafāʾis.* MS.I.O. 4015. Indian Office Library, London.

Āshūb, Mīrzā Muḥammad Bakhsh. *Tārīkh-i Shahādat-i Farrukh Siyar va Julūs-i Muḥammad Shāh.* MS. Or. 1832. British Museum, London.

ʿAufī, Sadīd al-Dīn Muḥammad. 1973. *Javāmiʿal-Hikāyāt va Lavāmiʿal-Rivāyāt.* Edited
by Muṣaffā Karīmī. 3 vols. Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān.

———. 1982 (s. 1361). *Lubāb al-Albāb.* Edited by Muḥammad Qazvīnī, Edward G.
Browne, and Muḥammad ʿAbbāsī. Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Fakhr-i Rāzī.

Āzād, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. 1917. *Sakhundān-i Pars.* Lahore: Mufīd-i ʿĀm.

Āzar, Mīrzā Luṭf ʿAlī Beg. 1957–1999 (s. 1336–1378). *Ātishkadah.* Edited by Ḥasan
Saāʿdat Nāṣirī and Ḥasan Muḥaddis̱. Tehran: Amīr Kabīr. (MS Supplément Persan 1327. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.)

Aʿzmī, Shoʿaib. 1985. *Fārsī Adab baʿ-ahd-i Salāṭīn-i Tughlaq.* Delhi: Maktaba Jāmiʿa.

Bābur, Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad. 1910. *Dīvān.* Edited by Denison Ross. *Journal of the
Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* (n.s.) 6: 1–43.

———. 1970. *Bābur-nāmah.* English translation by A. S. Beveridge. Delhi: Oriental
Reprints.

Badāunī, ʿAbd al-Qādir. 1869. *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh.* Vols. 2 and 3. Edited by Maulavī
Aḥmad ʿAlī and Nassau Lees. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Badr-i Ibrāhīm. 1989. *Farhang-i Zufān-i Gūyā.* Edited by Naẕīr Aḥmad. Patna: Khudā
Bakhsh Oriental Public Library.

Bahār, Malik al-Shuʿarāʾ Muḥammad Taqī. 1991 (s. 1370). *Sabk-shināsī.* Tehran: Amīr
Kabīr.

Bairam Khān. 1971. *Dīvān.* Edited by Sayyid Ḥusāmuddīn Rāshidī and Muḥammad
Ṣābir. Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi.

Banī Isrāʾīl, Muḥammad Amīn. *Majmaʿal-Inshāʾ.* MS Supplément Persan 461. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Baranī, Ẕiyā al-Dīn. 1862. *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī.* Edited by Sayyid Aḥmad Khān. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

———. 1957. *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī.* Vol. 1. Edited by Shaikh Abdur Rashid. Aligarh: Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University.

Bazmī, ʿAbd al-Shukūr. 1971 (s. 1350). *Dāstān-i Padmāvat.* Edited by Amīr Ḥasan ʿĀbidī. Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Iran.

Bīdil, Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Qādir. 1922 (H. 1341). *Kullīyāt.* Kabul: Da Pohnī Maṭbaʿ. (Also in 2 vols., Navalkishor, 1875.)

Bilgrāmī, Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād. 1871. *Khizānah-i ʿĀmirah.* Kanpur: Navalkishor. (MS Polier 2– Supplément Persan 946. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.)

Bilgrāmī, Mīr ʿAbd al-Vāḥīd. 1957 (v.s. 2014). *Ḥaqāʾiq-i Hindī.* Hindi translation by S. A. A. Rizvi. Kashi: Nagari Pracharini Sabha.

———. 1981. *Sabʿa Sanābil.* Urdu translation by Muftī Muḥammad Khalīl Barakātī; introduction by Muḥammad Ayyūb Qādirī. Bheondi, Maharashtra: Riẓvī Kitābghar.

Blochet, Edgar. 1905. *Catalogue des Manuscrits Persans de la Bibliothèque Nationale.* Vol. 1. Paris: Leroux.

Blockmann, H. 1868–69. "Contributions to Persian Lexicography." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* 37, pt. 1: 1–72.

———. 1965. Preface to *Āʾīni Akbarī,* English translation. Delhi: Oriental Reprints.

Bosworth, C. E. 1963. *The Ghaznavids.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

———. 1968. "The Development of Persian Culture under the Early Ghaznavids." *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 6: 33–44.

———. 1977. *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Browne, Edward G. 1951–1953. *A Literary History of Persia.* 4 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Canfield, R. D., ed. 1991. *Turco-Persia in Historical Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chirāgh-i Dihlī, Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn. 1959. *Khayr al-Majālis.* Edited by K. A. Nizami. Aligarh: Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University.

Cohn, Bernnard. 1985. "The Command of Language and the Language of Command." In *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society,* edited by Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Darakhshan, Mahdi. 1995 (s. 1374). "On Ferdawsi's Verses to Sultan Mahmud." In *Proceedings of International Congress in the Commemoration of Ferdowsi,* edited by Gholam Reza Satudeh. Tehran: University Press.

Daulatshāh Samarqandī. 1901. *Taẕkirat al-Shuʿarāʾ.* Edited by Edward G. Browne. London: Luzac & Co.

Digby, Simon. 1975. "ʿAbd al-Quddūs Gangohī (1456–1537): The Personality and Attitudes of a Medieval Indian Sufi." In *Medieval India—A Miscellany,* vol. 3, edited by K. A. Nizami. Delhi: Asia Publishing House.

Dihlavī, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq. 1913 (H. 1332). *Akhbār al-Akhyār.* Kanpur: Maktba Mujtabāʾī.

Ethé, Hermann. 1903. *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office.* Vol. 1. Oxford: Horace Hart.

Faruqi, Shamsur Rahman. 1998. "Unprivileged Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India." *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 13: 3–30.

———. 1999a. *Urdū ka Ibtidāʾī Zamāna: Adabī Tahẕīb aur Tārīkh ke Pahlū.* Karachi: Aaj.

———. 1999b. *Sāḥirī, Shāhī, Sāhibqirānī: Dāstān-i Amīr Hamzah Kā Mutabaʿa,* vol. 1
Delhi: Qaumī Kaunsil baraʾi Farugh-i Urdu Zabān.

Faruqui, Abdul Hamid. 1966. *Chandrabhān Brahman: Life and Works with a Critical Edi-
tion of His Diwan.* Ahmadabad: Khālid Shāhīn Fārūqī.

Fayẕī Fayyāẕī, Abū al-Fayẕ. 1973. *Inshāʾ-i Fayẕī.* Edited by A. D. Arshad. Lahore: Majlis-i
Taraqqī-yi Adab.

———. 1983 (s. 1362). *Dīvān.* Edited by A. D. Arshad. Lahore: Punjab University/
Tehran: Furūghī.

Firdausī, Abū al-Qāsim. 1870. *Shāh-nāmah.* 4 vols. Lucknow: Navalkishor.

———. 1990 (s. 1369). Edited by Jules Mohl, with a Persian translation of the
introduction by Jahāngīr Afkārī. 4 vols. 3d. ed. Tehran: Āmūzish-i Inqilāb-i
Islāmī.

Firishtah, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm. 1864 (H. 1281). *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī* (better known as
Tārīkh-i Firishta, vol. 2). Lucknow: Navalkishor.

Foltz, R. 1996. "Two Seventeenth Century Central Asian Travellers to Mughal In-
dia." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (3d. series) 6 (3): 367–77.

Ghālib, Mīrzā Asadullāh. 1967. *Kullīyāt-i Ghālib.* Vol. 1. Edited by Sayyid Murtaẕā
Ḥusayn Fāẕil. Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqī-yi Adab.

Ghani, Abdul. 1929–1930. *A History of Persian Language and Literature at the Mughal
Court (Babur to Akbar), in Three Parts.* Allahabad: Indian Press.

———. 1941. *Pre-Mughal Persian Poetry in Hindustan.* Allahabad: Allahabad Law Jour-
nal Press.

———. 1971a. "Tanqīdī Shuʿūr kā Irtiqā." In *Tārīkh-i Adabīyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pāk-
istān va Hind,* vol. 3, *Fārsī Adab I (1000–1526),* edited by Muḥammad Bāqar and
Vaḥīd Mirzā. Lahore: Punjab University.

———. 1971b. "Tanqīdī Shuʿūr kā Irtiqā." In *Tārīkh-i Adabīyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pāk-
istān va Hind,* vol. 4, *Fārsī Adab II,* edited by Maqbūl Badakhshānī. Lahore: Pun-
jab University.

Ghanī, Muḥammad Ṭāhir Kashmīrī. 1931. *Dīvān.* Lucknow: Navalkishor.

Gīlānī, Abū al-Fatḥ. 1968. *Ruqʿāt-i Abū al-Fatḥ Gīlānī.* Edited by M. Bashīr Ḥusayn.
Lahore: Punjab University.

Glünz, Michael. 1996. "Poetic Tradition and Social Change: The Persian *Qasida* in
Post-Mongol Iran." In *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa,* edited by Stefan Sperl
and Christopher Shackle. 2 vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Gopāl bin Govind. Persian translation of *Rāmāyaṇa.* MS, Bibliothèque Nationale de
France, Paris.

Gulbadan, Begam. 1972. *Humayūn-nāmah.* Persian text edited and English transla-
tion by A. S. Beveridge. Reprint, Delhi: Idārah-i Adabiyāt-i Dellī.

Gulchīn-i Maʿānī, Aḥmad. 1990 (1369). *Kārvān-i Hind.* 2 vols. Mashhad: Āstān-i Quds
Rīẕavī.

Habib, Muhammad. 1964. "Chishti Mystic Records of the Sultanate Period." In *Pol-
itics and Society during the Early Medieval Period (Collected Works of Professor Muham-
mad Habib),* edited by K. A. Nizami, vol. 1. Delhi: Peoples Publishing House.

———. 1974. "Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi." In *Politics and Society during the Early
Medieval Period (collected works of Professor Muhammad Habib),* edited by Kh. A.
Nizami, vol. 1. Delhi: Peoples Publishing House.

Hādī, Nabī. 1978. *Mughaloñ ke Malik al-Shuʿarāʾ.* Allahabad: Asrār Karīmī Press.

Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī. 1971 (н. 1350). *Dīvān.* Edited by Muḥammad Riẓā Nāʾīnī Jalālī and Naẕīr Aḥmad. Tehran: Sāzmān-i Umūr-i Farhangī.

———. 1972. *Dīvān.* Edited with Urdu translation by Qāzī Sajjād Ḥusayn. Delhi: Sabrang Kitābghar.

———. 1993 (s. 1372). *Dīvān.* Edited by Muḥammad Riẓā Nāʾīnī Jalālī and Nūrānī Afẕāl. Tehran: ʿIlmī.

———. 1997 (s. 1376). *Dīvān.* With English translation. Tehran: Vizārat-i Farhang va Irshād-i Islām.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn. 1912. *Aḥkām-i ʿĀlamgīrī.* Persian text with English translation, notes, and a life of Aurangzeb by J. N. Sarkar. Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar.

Hasan, Hadi. 1952. *Mughal Poetry: Its Cultural and Historical Value.* Madras: Islamic Literary Society.

Hasan, Mohibbul. 1985. *Babur: Founder of the Mughal Empire in India.* Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Heravī, Mullā Qātiʿ. 1979. *Taẕkirah Majmaʿal-Shuʿarāʾ-i Jahāngīr Shāhī.* Edited by Muḥammad Salīm Akhtar. Karachi: Institute of Central Asian and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi.

Ḥujjat al-Hind. MS Add. 5602. British Museum, London.

Husain, Iqbal. 1985. *Early Persian Poets of India.* Patna: Patna. (Urdu translation by Qāẕī ʿAbd al-Vāris̲ under the title *Hindustān ke Qadīm Fārsī Shuʿarāʾ.* Patna: Bihar Urdu Academy, 1987.)

Husaini, Sayeda Bilqis Fatema. 1988. *A Critical Study of Indo-Persian Literature, 1414–1526.* New Delhi: CAAL/School of Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Ḥusaynī, Ashraf Khān. 1990. *Raqāʾim-i Karāʾim.* Edited by S. Azizuddin Husain. Delhi: Idārah-i Adabīyāt-i Dellī.

Ikhlāṣ, Kishan Chand. *Hamīshah Bahār.* MS Fārsiya Akhbār 181. Aligarh Muslim University, University Collection, Aligarh. (Published version edited by Vahīd Qurayshī. Karachi: Anjuman Taraqqi-yi Urdu Pakistan, 1973).

Injū, Mīr Jamāl al-Dīn Shīrāzī. 1972 (1351). *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī.* Vol. 1. Edited by Raḥīm ʿAfīfī. Mashhad: Mashhad University Press.

Islam, Riazul. 1983. "Akbar's Intellectual Contacts with Iran." In *Islamic Culture and Society: Essays in Honour of Aziz Ahmad,* edited by Milton Israel and N. K. Wagle. Delhi: Manohar Publications.

———, ed. and trans. 1979. *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations, 1500–1750.* Vol. 1. Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi.

Jackson, Peter. 1999. *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jahāngīr, Nūr al-Dīn. 1864. *Tūẕak-i Jahāngīrī.* Edited by Sayyīd Aḥmad Khān. Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University.

Jālibī, Jamīl. 1993. *Tārīkh-i Adab-i Urdū.* 2 vols. 5th ed. Delhi: Educational Publishing House.

Jarrett, H. S., trans. 1978. *Āʾīn-i Akbarī.* Vol. 3. Reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Joshi, P. M., and Sherwani, H. K., eds. 1973. *History of Medieval Deccan.* Vol. 1. Hyderabad: Print & Publications Bureau, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Juzjānī, Minhāj-i Sirāj. 1963/64. *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī.* 2 vols. Edited by ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī.

Kabul: Afganistan History Society. (English translation by H. G. Raverty. Delhi: Oriental Reprints, 1970.)

Kadkanī, Muḥammad Riẓā Shafīʿī. 1992 (s. 1371). *Shāʿir-i Āʾīnahā: Barrasī-yi Sabk-i Hindī va Shiʿr-i Bīdil.* Reprint, Tehran: Āgāh.

Kashmīrī, ʿInāyatullāh Khān. 1982. *Kalimāt-i Ṭayyibāt.* Edited by S. Azizuddin Husain. Delhi: Idārah-i Adabīyāt-i Dellī.

Kāẓim, Muḥammad. 1873. *ʿĀlamgīr-nāmah.* Edited by Khādim Ḥusayn and ʿAbd al-Ḥayy. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Khāfī Khān, Muḥammad Hāshim. 1925. *Muntakhab al-Lubāb.* Edited by K. K. Aḥmad and Woseley Haig. Vol. 3. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Khalīfah, ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm. 1990. *Tashbīhāt-i Rūmī.* Lahore: Idārah-i S̲aqāfat-i Islāmiyah.

Khalīl, ʿAlī Ibrāhīm. 1981. *Ṣuḥuf-i Ibrāhīmī.* Edited by ʿĀbid Raẓā Bedār. Patna: Khudā Bakhsh Oriental Public Library.

Khan, Mumtaz Ali. 1970. *Some Important Persian Prose Writings of the Thirteenth Century A.D. in India.* Aligarh: Department of Persian, Aligarh Muslim University.

Khātūn, Reḥāna. 1987. *Aḥvāl va Ās̲ār-i Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Khān Ārzū.* Delhi: Persian Department, University of Delhi.

Khushḥālchand. *Nādir al-Zamānī.* MS. Or. 1654. British Museum, London.

Khusrau, Amīr. 1875. *Iʿjāz-i Khusravī.* Vol. 1. Lucknow: Navalkishor.

———. 1950. *Nuh Sipihr.* Edited by Vaḥīd Mirzā. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1973. *Kulliyat-i Ghazliyat-i Amir Khusrau.* Edited by Iqbāl Ṣalaḥ al-Dīn and Sayyid Vazīr al-Ḥasan ʿAbidī. Lahore: Packages Ltd.

———. 1988. "Dībāchah-i Ghurrat al-Kamāl." In *Khusrau-nāmah,* a special number of *Majallah-i Taḥqīqāt-i Fārsī,* edited by Sharīf Ḥusain Qāsemī. Delhi: Department of Persian, Delhi University.

Kirmani, Waris. 1984. *Dreams Forgotten: An Anthology of Indo-Persian Poetry.* Aligarh: Department of Persian, Aligarh Muslim University.

Köprülü, Fuad. 1960. "Babur—Literary Works." In *Encyclopedia of Islam,* edited by H. A. R. Gibb et al. New ed. Leiden: Brill.

Kūfī, ʿAlī bin Ḥamīd bin ʿAbī Bakr. 1939. *Chach-nāmah.* Edited by ʿUmar bin Muḥammad Dāʾudpota. Delhi: Laṭīfī Press for Majlis-i Makhṭūṭāt-i Fārsiyah, Hyderabad.

Kumar, Sunil. 1992. "The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate." Ph.D. diss., Duke University.

Lāhorī, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. 1866. *Pādshāh-nāmah.* Vol. 1. Edited by Kabīr al-Dīn and ʿAbd al-Raḥīm. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Latif, Syed Muhammad. 1892. *Lahore: Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities.* Lahore: New Imperial Press; reprint, Lahore: Oriental Publishers, 1981.

Law, N. N. 1916. *Promotion of Learning in India during Mohammadan Rule.* London: Longmans, Green.

Lawrence, Bruce. 1978. *Notes from a Distant Flute: The Extant Literature of Pre-Mughal Indian Sufism.* Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy.

Losensky, Paul E. 1998. *Welcoming Fighani: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal.* Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. 1870. "Educational Minute." In *The Proceedings and Transactions of the Bethune Society.* Calcutta: Bethune Society.

Maḥjūb, Muḥammad Jaʿfar. 1970 (s.1349). *Darbārah-i Kalīlah va Dimnah.* Tehran: Khvārazmī.

Maḥmūd, Sayyid Fayyāẓ, ed. 1971a. *Tārīkh-i Adabīyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pākistān va Hind.* Vol. 3, *Fārsī Adab I (1000–1526),* edited by Muḥammad Bāqar and Vaḥīd Mirzā. Lahore: Punjab University.

———. 1971b. *Tārīkh-i Adabīyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pākistān va Hind.* Vol. 4, *Fārsī Adab II,* edited by Maqbūl Badakhshānī. Lahore: Punjab University.

———. 1972. *Tārīkh-i Adabīyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pākistān va Hind.* Vol. 5, *Fārsī Adab III,* edited by Sayyid Fayyāẓ Maḥmūd, S. W. H. ʿAbidī, and A. Ghanī. Lahore: Punjab University.

Manērī, Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Aḥmad Yaḥyā. 1985. *Maʿdan al-Maʿānī.* Urdu translation by Sayyid Shāh Qasīm al-Dīn. Bihar Sharif, Nalanda: Maktaba-i Ḥarf, Khānqah-i Muʿaẓẓam.

Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān. 1984 (s. 1363). *Dīvān.* Edited by Nāṣir Hayyirī. Tehran: Gulshāʾī.

———. 1985 (s. 1364). *Dīvān.* 2 vols. Edited by Mahdī Nūrīyān. Esfahan: Kamāl.

Mīrzā, Luṭf ʿAlī. 1986. *Taẕkirah-i Gulshan-i Hind.* Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy.

Mirzā, Vaḥīd. 1949. *Amīr Khusrau* (Urdu). Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.

———. 1974. *The Life and Works of Amīr Khusrau.* Reprint, Delhi: Idārah-i Adabīyāt-i Dellī.

Mīrzā Khān bin Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad. 1977 (s.1356). *Tuḥfat al-Hind.* Edited by Nūr al-Ḥasan Anṣārī. Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān.

Moayyad, Heshmat. 1988. "Lyric Poetry." In *Persian Literature,* edited by Ehsan Yarshater. New York: Bibliotheca Persica.

Momin, Mohiuddin, 1971. *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals: From Babur to Shah Jahan (1526–1658).* Calcutta: Iran Society.

Muḥsin Fānī. 1860 (ʜ. 1270). *Dabistān-i Maẕāhib.* Lucknow: Navalkishor, 1904 (Iranian edition, edited by Raḥīm Riẕāzādah, 2 vols., Tehran: Ṭahūrī, 1983 (s. 1362).

Mujeeb, M. 1995. *Indian Muslims.* Reprint, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Mujtabai, F. 1978. *Aspects of Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations.* Delhi: National Book Bureau.

Munīr, Abū al-Barakāt Lāhorī. 1977. *Kārnāmah-i Munīr.* Edited by S. M. A. Ikram. Islamabad: Iran Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies.

Muṭribī Samarqandī. 1976. *Taẕkirat al-Shuʿarāʾ.* Edited by A. G. Mirzoyef. Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi.

———. 1977. *Khāṭirāt-i Muṭribī.* Edited by A. G. Mirzoyef. Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi. (English translation by Richard C. Foltz under the title *Conversations with Jahangir.* Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 1998.)

Nadvī, Abū al-Ḥasanat. 1971. *Hindūstān kī Qadīm Islāmī Darsgāhen.* Azamgarh: Dār al-Muṣannifīn.

Nadvī, Najīb Ashraf. 1981. *Muqaddimah-i Ruqʿāt-i ʿĀlamgīrī.* Azamgarh: Dār al-Muṣannifīn.

Nahata, Agaracanda. c. 1953 (v.s. 2010). "Bārāhmāsa kī prācīn paraṃparā." Anusīlan, varṣa 6.

Nahāvandī, ʿAbd al-Bāqī. 1931. *Maʾās̲ir-i Raḥīmī.* Edited by Maulavī Hidāyat Ḥusayn. Vol. 3. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Naʿīmuddīn. 1995. *Hindūstān mein Fārsī Adab Dihlī Salṭant se Qabl.* Delhi: Nazia Printers.

Naqavī, ʿAlī Riżā. 1964 (s. 1343). *Taẕkirah-navīsī-yi Fārsī dar Hind va Pākistān.* Tehran: ʿIlmī.

———. 1972. "Shuʿarāʾ ke Taẕkire (1707–1857)." In *Tārīkh-i Adabīyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pākistān va Hind,* vol. 5, *Farsi Adab III,* edited by Sayyid Fayyāż Maḥmūd, S. W. H. ʿAbidī, and A. Ghanī. Lahore: Punjab University.

Naṣrābādī, Muḥammad Ṭāhir. 1938 (s. 1317). *Taẕkirah.* Edited by Vaḥīd Dastgirdī. Tehran: Armaghān.

Naṣrullāh Munshī, Abū al-Maʿālī bin ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. 1996 (s. 1375). *Kalīlah va Dimnah.* Edited by Manūchihr Dānishpazhūh. Tehran: Hīrmand.

Nazim, Muhammad. 1931. *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Naẓīrī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nishāpūrī. 1961 (s. 1340). *Dīvān.* Edited by Maẓāhir Muṣaffā. Tehran: Amīr Kabīr.

Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad, Khvājah. 1927. *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī.* Vol. 2. Edited by B. De. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Niẓām al-Dīn Auliyā, Shaykh. 1992. *Favāʾid al-Fuʾād,* compiled by Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī. (English translation by Bruce Lawrence under the title *Morals of the Heart.* New York: Paulist Press, 1992.)

Niẓāmī, Ḥasan. 1998. *Tāj-al-Maʾāṣir.* English translation by Bhagwat Saroop. Delhi: Saʿūd Aḥmad Dihlavī.

Nizami, K. A. 1961. *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century.* Aligarh: Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University. Reprint, 1974, Delhi: Idārah-i Adabīyāt-i Dellī.

———. 1966. *Studies in Medieval Indian History and Culture.* Allahabad: Kitāb Maḥal.

Niẓāmī ʿArūżī Samarqandī. 1955 (s. 1334). *Chahār Maqāla.* Edited by Muḥammad Qazvīnī and Muḥammad Mūʿīn. Tehran: University Press.

Nūrīyān, Mahdī. 1996 (s. 1375). *Bar Kūhsār-i Bī-Faryād: Barguzīdah-i Qaṣāʾid-i Masʿūd-i Saʿd-i Salmān.* Tehran: Jāmī.

Phukan, Shantanu. 2000. "Through a Persian Prism: Hindi and "Padmāvat" in the Mughal Imagination." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

Qābil Khān, Shaykh Abū al-Fatḥ. 1971. *Ādāb-i ʿĀlamgīrī.* Edited by ʿAbd al-Ghafūr Chaudharī. 2 vols. Lahore: Punjab University.

Qazvīnī, ʿAbd al-Nabī. 1961 (s. 1340). *Taẕkirah-i Maykhānah.* Edited by Aḥmad Gulchīn-i Maʿānī. Tehran: Iqbāl.

Qureshi, Waheed. 1965. "Indian Persian." In *Studies in Pakistani Linguistics,* edited by Anwar S. Dil. Lahore: Research Group of Pakistan.

Rahman, M. L. 1970. *Persian Literature in India during the Time of Jahangir and Shahjahan.* Baroda: Department of Persian, M. S. University.

Rasheed, ʿAbdur. 1996. *Fārsī meñ Hindī Alfāẓ.* Delhi: Maktabah Rābiṭah.

Rashid, A. 1969. *Society and Culture in Medieval India.* Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay.

Rāzī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Qays. 1959 (s. 1338). *Al-Muʿjam fī Maʿāyīr-i ʿAshʿār al-ʿAjam.* Edited by Muḥammad bin ʿAbd al-Vahhāb Qazvīnī and Mudarris Riżāvī. Tehran: Iqbāl.

Rażiyah, Akbar. 1974. *Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl va Āṣār-i Bābā Fighānī Shīrāzī.* Hyderabad: Shalīmār Publications.

Reis, Sidi Ali. 1975. *The Travels and Adventures of Turkish Sidi Ali Reis.* Translated by A. Vambery. London: Luzac & Co.

Richards, J. F. 1993. *The Mughal Empire.* Vol. 1, pt. 5 of *The New Cambridge History of India.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rieu, Charles. 1879. *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum.* Vol. 1. London: British Museum.

Riẕvī Adīb, Masʿūd Ḥusayn. 1993. "Urdū kī Qadīm Lughat." *Journal of Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library,* Patna. Special issue.

Rizvi, S. A. A. 1975. *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign, with Special Reference to Abuʾl Fazl (1556–1605).* Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

———. 1978. *A History of Sufism in India.* Vol. 1. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Rūmī, Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn. 1976. *Mas̱navī-yi Maulānā Rūm.* Edited by Qāẕī Sajjād Ḥusayn. Vols. 1 and 2. Delhi: Sabrang Kitābghar.

Rūnī, Abū al-Faraj. 1968 (s. 1347). *Dīvān.* Edited by Maḥmūd Mahdavī-Dāmghānī. Mashhad: Bāstān.

Rypka, Jan. 1968. *History of Iranian Literature.* Translated from the Dutch by P. van Popta-Hope. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company.

Sabahuddin Abdur Rahman, Syed. 1982. *Genius of Amir Khusrau.* Delhi: Idārah-i Adabīyāt-i Delli.

Ṣafā, Ẕabīḥullāh. 1959 (s. 1338). *Mukhtaṣar dar Tārīkh-i Naẓm va Naṣr-i Fārsī.* Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Ibn-i Sīnā.

Ṣahbāʾī, Imām Bakhsh. 1878 (H. 1296). *Qaul-i Fayṣal, Kullīyāt-i Ṣahbāʾī II.* Kanpur: Niẓāmī Press. (First edition 1862).

Sālik, ʿAbd al-Majīd. 1957. *Muslim S̱aqāfat Hindūstān mein.* Lahore: Idārah-i S̱aqāfat-i Islāmiah.

Sarkhvush, Muḥammad Afẕal. 1942. *Kalimāt al-Shuʿarāʾ.* Edited by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Maḥvī Lakhnavī. Lahore: ʿĀlamhīr Press. (MS Anquetil-Supplément Persan 835 and 836, OL 35906.31. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.)

Schimmel, Annemarie. 1973. *Islamic Literatures of India.* Vol. 7, pt. 5 of *A History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Sharma, Sunil. 1999. "Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān and the Topos of Exile in Ghaznavid Poetry." *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 5: 40–57.

———. 2000. *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān of Lahore.* Delhi: Permanent Black.

Shērānī, Ḥāfiẓ Maḥmūd. 1968. *Maqālāt-i Ḥāfiẓ Maḥmūd Sherānī.* Fayẕī. 1959–1970. Vol. 4. Edited by Maẓhar Maḥmūd Shērānī. Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqī-yi Adab.

Sherwani, H. K. 1967. *Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah: Founder of Haiderabad.* Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

Shiblī Nuʿmānī. 1988. *Shiʿr al-ʿAjam.* Vol. 4. Azamgarh: Dār al-Muṣannifīn.

———. 1991. *Shiʿr al-ʿAjam.* Vol. 3. Reprint, Azamgarh: Dār al-Muṣannifīn.

Shihābī, ʿAlī Akbar. 1937 (s. 1316). *Ravābiṭ-i Adabī-yi Īrān ba Hind.* Tehran: Chāpkhānah va Kitābfurāshī-yi Markazī.

Shīrāzī, Mīrzā Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Ṣāʿidī. 1931. *Ḥadīqat al-Salāṭīn.* Edited by S. Aṣghar ʿAlī Bilgrāmī. Hyderabad: Idārah-i Adabīyāt-i Urdū.

Siddīqī, ʿAbd al-Majīd. 1964. *Tārīkh-i Golkconda.* Hyderabad: Idārah-i Adabīyāt.

Siddiqui, I. H. 1992. *Perso-Arabic Sources of Information on the Life and Conditions in the Sultanate of Delhi.* Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Sirhindī, Ilāhdād. *Madār al-Afāẓil.* 4 Volumes, edited by Muḥammad Bāqar. Lahore: Punjab University.

Sirhindī, Nāṣir ʿAlī. 1872. *Dīvān.* Lucknow: Navalkishor. (*Dīvān-i Nāṣir ʿAlī Sirhindī.* MS B385, Jamia Millia Islamia, Dr. Zakir Husain Library, New Delhi.)

Subḥānī, Taufīq H. 1998 (s. 1377)a. *Guzidah-i Masʿūd-i Saʿd-i Salmān.* Tehran: Nashr-i Qaṭra.

———. 1998 (s. 1377)b. *Nigāh-i ba Tārīkh-i Adab-i Fārsī-yi Hind.* Tehran: Vizārat-i Farhang va Irshād-i Islāmī.

Sultan, Zakira. 1978. "Indo-Persian Literature during the Period of Shah Jahan, 1037/1628–1068/1658." Ph.D. diss., University of Delhi.

Ṭabaʾṭabāʾī, Ghulām Ḥusayn. 1876. *Siyār al-Mutaʾakhkhirīn.* Vol. 1. Lucknow: Navalkishor.

Ṭālib Āmulī. 1967 (s. 1346). *Kullīyāt-i Ashʿār-i Malik al-Shuʿarāʾ Ṭālib Āmulī.* Edited by Ṭāhirī Shihāb. Tehran: Sanāʾī.

Thattavī, ʿAbd al-Rashīd. 1958 (1337). *Farhang-i Rashīdī.* Edited by Muḥammad ʿAbbāsī. 2 vols. Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Bārānī.

ʿUrfī, Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn Shīrāzī. 1915. *Dīvān.* Kanpur: Navalkishor.

———. 1990 (s. 1369). *Kullīyāt.* Edited by Javāhar Vajdī. Tehran: Sanāʾī.

Vālih Dāghistānī, ʿAlī Qulī Khān. 1870. *Riyāz al-Shuʿarāʾ.* Habibganj Fārsī. MS no. 14.1.1960.

Vaṭvāṭ, Rashīd al-Dīn Balkhī. 1929 (s. 1308). *Hadāʾiq al-Siḥr fī Daqāʾiq al-Shiʿr.* Edited by ʿAbbās Iqbāl. Tehran: Majlis.

Vaudeville, Charlotte. 1986. *Barahmasa in Indian Literatures: Songs of the Twelve Months in Indo-Aryan Literatures.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas.

Yarshater, Ehsan. 1986. "Persian Poetry in the Timurid and Safavid Periods." In *The Cambridge History of Iran,* vol. 6, edited by P. Jackson and L. Lockhart. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1988. "The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress or Decline?" In *Persian Literature,* edited by Ehsan Yarshater. New York: Bibliotheca Persica.

Zilli, I. A. 2000. "Development of *Inshā* Literature to the End of Akbar's Reign." In *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies,* edited by M. Alam, F. N. Delvoye, and M. Gaborieau. Delhi: Manohar Publications.

The Historical Formation
of Indian-English Literature

Vinay Dharwadker

LOCATING INDIAN-ENGLISH LITERATURE IN HISTORY

The first text to be composed in English by an author of Indian origin was *The Travels of Dean Mahomet, A Native of Patna in Bengal, Through Several Parts of India, While in the Service of The Honourable The East India Company, Written by Himself, In a Series of Letters to a Friend,* which appeared in print in two volumes in Cork, Ireland, in 1794.[1] Din Muhammad had emigrated from India a decade earlier at the age of twenty-five, probably had converted to the established Protestant church in Ireland shortly afterward, and had married a young woman from the Anglo-Irish gentry. At the time he wrote his book, he lived in Cork in comfortable financial circumstances, supporting his wife and children by working as a domestic supervisor on a large estate. His marriage as well as his employment gave him access to the city's upper-class society, then the most prosperous in Ireland after Dublin's, thriving on maritime trade with the newer colonies of the British empire. In early 1793, when he advertised a proposal to publish his *Travels* by subscription, and personally visited prominent families in southern Ireland to raise money for his venture, his social status as an immigrant Indian was sufficiently secure, as Michael H. Fisher remarks, for "a total of 320 people [to entrust] him with a deposit . . . long in advance of the book's delivery." The appearance of the two-volume edition the following year evidently enhanced "his personal prestige among the elite of Cork," and though the work attracted "little lasting attention from the British public," it contributed at least tangentially to his distinction in later life in England, where

1. See Fisher 1997.

he resettled around 1807 and worked as an entrepreneur until his death in 1851.[2]

Din Muhammad's biography and literary career inevitably raise a number of historical, interpretive, and theoretical questions. How did he achieve the proficiency in English and the broad acculturation to British and European ways of life that he possessed when he migrated to Ireland as an adult in the last quarter of the eighteenth century? How did he acquire the sophisticated knowledge of eighteenth-century English literature and print culture that seems to be encoded in his epistolary travel narrative and autobiography set in early British-colonial India? What social, political, and economic conditions in Patna and the Bengal province before his time, and between his birth in 1759 and his departure in 1784, could have prepared him for the transformations he underwent after immigration—a linguistic shift from Bangla, Hindustani, and Persian to English, a religious shift from a mixture of Islam and Hinduism to Protestant Christianity, and an occupational shift from subaltern soldier to household manager, writer, restaurateur, and innovative physical therapist? What role, if any, did his literate Indian multilingualism play in his thinking and writing in English, or in his representations of India to an Anglo-Irish audience at that early date? What were his purposes in composing and publishing his *Travels* with such close attention to detail, why did he choose to cast his material in the epistolary travelogue form, and what larger historical and cultural dynamics did he initiate? Was he merely an anomaly, or was he representative of an entire class of phenomena that had just begun to take shape in his lifetime and was to accumulate a great deal of cultural momentum over the next two centuries? In any case, what made his extraordinary life story between 1759 and 1851 possible in the first place?

Some of these questions can be answered by digging deeper into the particulars of his career and background, but when we do so we discover that the man as well as his published writing can be reconstructed historically only as the direct or indirect causal effects of a number of discrete social, economic, political, and aesthetic processes. That is, the historical agent we now identify as Din Muhammad turns out to be an irreducibly composite figure, different parts of whose life and personality seem to be constituted by rather different contextual determinants. He and his book are as much the products of the history of the Muslim elite that ruled Awadh and Bengal in the late Mughal period, the history of the British army in India during its precolonial and early colonial phases, and the international history of race relations and interracial marriages in the early British empire, as they

2. For Din Muhammad's life and its contexts, consult the preface and chs. 1 and 3 in Fisher 1997; for further details, see Fisher 1996. The quotations here are from Fisher 1997: 137, 179, and 141.

are of the social history of the English language on the subcontinent since the end of the sixteenth century, and the history of British representations of India since the Renaissance.[3] This composite quality is not peculiar to Din Muhammad or his text: when we turn to other Indian-English writers and works, we find that they, too, appear to be dispersed historically across an array of mediating material and cultural phenomena. In one perspective, in fact, the history of Indian-English literature that Din Muhammad inaugurates and anticipates appears to be little more than an aggregate of several histories unconnected to literature, each of which determines a portion of its literary trajectory but also absorbs it into a diversionary turbulence.

Literatures and literary cultures are located in history most often at the intersection of multiple, crisscrossing histories, but the contextual complexity of Indian writing in English may be peculiar to it and to other literatures of its kind. The source of the complexity lies in the double relation of literature to language and of language to its users. The general relation between a literature and its language is identical to the specific relation between a given utterance (or text) and the particular verbal medium in which it is articulated. This relation makes the existence of the language a necessary (but not a sufficient) condition for the existence of the literature, and consequently embeds the history of the writing in the history of the medium of its composition. The nesting of literature in language and of literary history in linguistic history becomes more elaborate, however, when the language in which a particular population composes, circulates, and consumes a literature is historically alien to it. When individuals and groups practice literary production in a language of foreign origin, the history that enables them to do so branches into three distinct histories and three separate necessary conditions. One is the history of the particular modes of contact that link the community to a foreign language and its native users and that comprise the necessary condition for the transfer of the language from native to non-native users; another is the history of the new community's acquisition of literacy in the foreign language which, by the basic definition of literature as a body of *writing,* is a prerequisite for any literary activity in it; and the third is the history of the community's broad acculturation to the ways of life, thought, and expression represented by the foreign language, which also is essential for successful textual production in it. The consequence of the necessity of contact, literacy, and acculturation is that concrete social, political, economic, and aesthetic elements—different from those present in its indigenous environment—actively penetrate the language in its alien

3. Fisher deals with the first three of these histories in detail, and touches on the fifth, in *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* and *The First Indian Author in English;* here I complement his work by focusing on the fourth history, namely, the social history of English in India since the late sixteenth century.

setting, even as they affect the history of its use as a medium of communication there, as well as the history of the literature that comes to be embedded in it over time. The history of English in India therefore diverges from its history in England, as well as its history in the other British colonies; the history of Indian writing in English differs from the history of, say, Canadian, Jamaican, Nigerian, or Australian writing in English; and both these histories, in turn, are located at the intersection of several social, economic, political, and cultural histories that are unique to the subcontinent.

Given the diversity of the factors that contribute to the formation of a figure like Din Muhammad, or of the collective and cumulative lines of development that come after him, the early history of English as a language in India proves to be the most cogent and efficient starting point for a comprehensive critical account of Indian writing in English. The arrival, establishment, and spread of this foreign language starting in the late sixteenth century conjointly establish the very possibility of the (future) existence of an Indian literature in English, generate the particular conditions that help to translate the potential into actuality by the end of the eighteenth century, and launch the discursive dynamics that propelled Indian-English literary culture through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the same time, the social processes that domesticate English in India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries explain some of the unexpected features of the first published text in the tradition: why, for example, Din Muhammad casts it as a travel narrative, why he chooses the form of "a Series of Letters to a Friend," or why he is at once a belated imitator and an unprecedented original in the multiple discourses that intermingle around him.

THE ARRIVAL OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

Contrary to untested commonplaces in the existing scholarship on Indian-English literature, English launched its history on the subcontinent two decades before the birth of the East India Company.[4] The first person to think, speak, and write in this language on Indian soil in historical times most likely was Father Thomas Stephens, a Roman Catholic who escaped religious persecution in Elizabethan England by joining the Society of Jesus (based in Rome) in 1578, and persuading his superiors to let him sail for the Jesuit mission in India the following year. Stephens, who came to be known among Indians as Father Estavam, lived in Salsette and Goa for over thirty-five years, studied Indian languages, and composed a mixed Marathi-Konkani version of the Gospel known as the *Christian Purana,* which was published posthumously in Goa in 1640. Despite his position as the first Englishman on the

---

4. I refer especially to Srinivasa Iyengar 1973, chs. 1 and 2, and Naik 1982, ch. 1.

subcontinent, however, and even in spite of his scholarly and evangelical interests, Stephens did not produce an English text intended for publication, limiting his output in this language to a series of personal letters to his father in England.[5]

The first Englishman to compose a text or portions of a text in English in India that appears to have been intended for the print medium was a close contemporary and temporary acquaintance of Stephens. The Company of Merchants of the Levant received its royal letters patent in 1581 and organized an expedition to India two years later, seeking to secure trading concessions from Emperor Jalaluddin Akbar at his capital, Fatehpur Sikri. The expedition team consisted of John Newbury, a merchant and adventurer who served as its leader; Ralph Fitch, also a merchant; William Leedes, a jeweler; and James Story, a painter. The group sailed from London on February 12, 1583, and made its way safely to the Strait of Hormuz, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. But the Portuguese, who controlled all the sea routes in the Indian Ocean region throughout the sixteenth century, arrested the four Englishmen on the suspicion of being Protestant spies and sent them to be interrogated and imprisoned in Goa, where they arrived on November 29, 1583. The Portuguese officials in the colony brought in their only local Englishman, Stephens, as an interpreter and intermediary, thus setting up the first community of native speakers of English on Indian soil.[6]

This, however, proved to be short-lived. Story evaded an Inquisition-style treatment by promising to join the Society of Jesus, but refused to do so after his release; he was arrested and deported a few years later, and died in a shipwreck on his way to Europe in 1592. Newbury, Fitch, and Leedes resisted the pressure to join the Jesuits, were released reluctantly by the Portuguese under a deal brokered by Stephens, and escaped from Goa in 1584 or 1585, to travel to Fatehpur Sikri, their original destination. Akbar apparently liked Leedes' handiwork as a jeweler and employed him at court, but there is no record of his activities after 1585. Newbury presented himself to the emperor and then decided to return to England over land (via Lahore, Persia, and Aleppo or Constantinople) but disappeared in north India without a trace. Fitch journeyed alone eastward across the Gangetic plain to "Bengala and . . . Pegu" and turned southward to Melaka, from where he sailed to arrive safely in England in 1591—the only one of the first five Englishmen in India to reach English shores again.[7]

Fitch sent letters from the subcontinent to fellow merchants in London, and kept notes or journals during his travels across what are now India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia. On his return to England,

5. See Correia-Afonso 1969: 58 n. 9, 103, xvii; and Edwardes 1973: 32.
6. Refer to Edwardes 1973: 19, 21–31.
7. See Edwardes 1973: 32–33, 44–45, 77, 7; the quotation is from 77.

he compiled an account of his eight years in the East which, when it appeared in Richard Haklyut's *Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* in 1599, became the first comprehensive representation in print of an Englishman's personal experience of India. While Stephens was little known to his countrymen, Fitch came to be celebrated in his own lifetime as a pioneering explorer in what later became a period classic of English literature, Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612). Despite the fame, however, Fitch lived in London in relative obscurity after 1606, possibly as a leather merchant, and died there in uncertain circumstances around 1616, the same year that Stephens passed away in India.[8]

The historical significance of Stephens and Fitch may be disproportionate to their actual accomplishments as writers, but both separately and together they occupy primary positions in two large bodies of writing: British literature about India and Indian literature in English. Besides being the first to use English in its spoken and written forms on the subcontinent, and the first to produce English texts in India that have survived in the historical record, Stephens and Fitch were also the prototypical representatives of two entire classes of historical agents—the missionary and the merchant—that were to dominate the history of British evangelism, trade, conquest, and colonization over the next four and a half centuries. Most vitally, these two men between them launched the enormous discourse that cumulatively represents what may be called "the British experience of India."

Between the 1580s, when Stephens and Fitch arrived independently in Goa, and the 1780s, when Din Muhammad landed in Cork, the English language accumulated a substantial archive of the Englishman's personal experience of the subcontinent, recorded in manuscript and print mostly in the three genres that the original missionary and merchant had used: the personal letter from and about India; the more carefully organized epistolary eyewitness account of people, places, and events in the Indian environment; and the formal travel narrative or memoir, frequently emplotted as a quest, structured by certain descriptive, expository, and argumentative motifs, and textured by a series of stylistic conventions.[9] In the final decade of the eighteenth century, when Din Muhammad, still a relatively recent immigrant, decided to articulate his own knowledge of India for a primary audience of Anglo-Irish merchants, soldiers, and administrators associated directly or indirectly with the East India Company and its territories on the subcontinent, he positioned it in an intricate relation to the British discourse on India that had disseminated itself in the society around him. He placed

8. Refer to Edwardes 1973, and Wolpert 1993: 140. Fitch's text appeared in vol. 5 of Haklyut's twelve-volume compendium, as cited by Edwardes 1973: 173, 175. On Haklyut and Drayton, see Helgerson 1992, chs. 3 and 4.

9. Fisher 1996: 212–33 discusses some aspects of travel literature.

his *Travels* thematically, structurally, and stylistically on a continuum with the genre of the travelogue that dominated that discourse in the eyes of the British reading public of the time, but he reoriented the form rhetorically in order to represent a distinctively "Indian understanding of India." This reorientation was potentially radical and conflictual, since it sought to correct the misimpressions that were current in the British representations of the subcontinent at the end of the eighteenth century. As a matter of prudence and politic civility, Din Muhammad therefore scripted his text as "a Series of Letters to a Friend," publicly addressing an idealized Anglo-Irish reader who would be attached and sympathetic to India, would be bound by friendship to an Indian with whom he shared an experience of the colony, would be generously willing to arrive at a common understanding of the complex world of the subcontinent across racial and civilizational differences, and therefore would be capable of looking at that object of experience and knowledge from a new angle of vision without perturbation.[10] In doing so, however, Din Muhammad established two rather different connections with the powerful discourse that Stephens and Fitch had launched two hundred years earlier. On the one hand, he started a new discourse about India in the *same* language, generic configuration, and stylistic canon as theirs; on the other hand, however, he articulated his representation of an alternative Indian understanding of India explicitly as a *counter*-discourse to theirs. Din Muhammad's modulations of tone, form, and detail in his *Travels,* in fact, quietly masked what seems perfectly obvious on hindsight: that the first text in English composed by an Indian was already and fully a countertext, and that it inaugurated a historical dynamics in which a high proportion of subsequent Indian writing in English has been driven by the desire to question, correct, or displace British representations of India.[11]

In retrospect, the principal consequence of this remarkable innovation has been to intensify the energy around the discourse initiated by Stephens and Fitch and, at the same time, to multiply the actors and kinds of actors involved in its production and reproduction. The discourse that cumulatively represents the British experience of India, starting in manuscript around 1579 and entering the domain of print in 1599, can therefore be thought of as having engendered a multipolar, cross-cultural contestation over the power to represent India to a reading public in English. Along one axis, writers of British origin from successive generations after Stephens and Fitch have competed with each other to expand, consolidate, and appropriate the power to represent the British experience of India, individually as well as collectively. Along the other axis, starting with Din Muhammad in 1794, writ-

10. Fisher analyzes Din Muhammad's rhetoric in Fisher 1996, ch. 5.

11. On countertexts in Indian literatures, see Ramanujan 1989: 187–216; on counterdiscourse in Anglophone literatures, see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, especially 168–69.

ers of Indian origin have come to contest the British representations of India on an ongoing basis, developing an equally comprehensive counterdiscourse in English on the Indian understanding of India, which attempts to share, deny, diffuse, arrogate, or redistribute that power. Against this backdrop, the competitive symmetry between Fitch's and Din Muhammad's texts—inaugural printed works in their respective discursive formations—is disarmingly exact. Both texts authenticate themselves as inscriptions of personal experience and eyewitness testimony, and both plot heroic, pioneering journeys across much the same terrain on the Gangetic plain in north India, even though they stand almost exactly two centuries apart and view their respective objects with different eyes. This cultural contestation manifests itself in a relatively mild and miniaturized form between Fitch and Din Muhammad, yet it constitutes one of the principal motivations of Indian writing in English throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

ZONES OF INTERRACIAL CONTACT AND ACCULTURATION

The inception of the British discourse about India and the inception of its Indian counterdiscourse are intimately related in time and structure, but the two events are separated by almost two centuries. The interval is so protracted because the second event could occur only after the conditions that made it possible had come into existence and had mobilized the social processes capable of actualizing the potential they predicated. Before an author of Indian origin could compose and publish a recognizably literary text in English, the language had to establish itself as a common medium of communication on the subcontinent, had to become accessible to Indians individually and in groups, had to draw them into its practice of literacy, and had to acculturate them more broadly to the ways of life, thought, and expression it represented. This process proved to be uneven and uncertain: although the East India Company received its first charter the year after Ralph Fitch published his account of the East, during the steady erosion of Portuguese power and the rapid ascendancy of the Dutch in the Indian Ocean in the first half of the seventeenth century, England neither invested sufficiently in the Company, nor granted it the long-term trade monopoly and the consistent Parliamentary support that might have made it financially secure or commercially competitive.[12] Under these circumstances, the Company's presence on the subcontinent remained desultory and ineffective for several decades, until the trend reversed itself under Oliver Cromwell's government in the Interregnum, and then under Charles II after the Restoration. In 1657 Cromwell issued the Company a charter that, in Stanley Wolpert's words, "in-

12. See Wolpert 1993: 142–48.

augurated the first permanent joint stock subscription, which became the capital base of a newly revitalized company that thus embarked upon its modern phase of corporate immortality"; and, after his Restoration in 1660, Charles II empowered the Company "to coin money, to exercise full jurisdiction over all English subjects residing at its factories or forts, and to make war or peace with 'non-Christian powers' in India," so that "The merchant adventurers of London . . . became a virtual state unto themselves, and acted accordingly whenever east of [the Cape of] Good Hope." The most tangible consequence of this reversal of fortune was that in the last four decades of the seventeenth century—some eighty years after Stephens and Fitch and his companions had landed in Portuguese Goa—more than one hundred British factors came to live and work in India.[13] This established a stable and sizable community of Englishmen on the subcontinent for the first time in history. As a medium of practical communication, English thus came into regular and continuous use in the Indian environment only around 1660, when the East India Company's factories finally started to prosper along the Malabar and Coromandel coasts. But as it emerged on the margins of India this community of migrant and itinerant English-speakers evolved a cumbersome framework, in which certain types of Indians could interact regularly and closely with Englishmen, their lifestyles, their ideas and principles, and their modes of communication; and from which English could leak out into Indian society, largely under the pressures of survival and practicality, as much as 175 years before the language came to be transmitted through educational institutions sponsored by the colonial government.

The social mechanisms that enabled English to migrate from its community of migrant native speakers to groups of potential Indian users consisted of four primary zones of interracial contact and acculturation.[14] These four zones were first formed between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, but they continued to serve as the most common sites of British-Indian interaction afterward, modifying their structures and functions with changing circumstances in the colonial and postcolonial periods, and accommodating the additional space of acculturation that appeared when English education was institutionalized in India in the mid-nineteenth century. Although the primary contact zones were formed on the grid of precolonial British and European trading centers on the subcontinent, they derived their historical efficacy—as causes, enabling conditions, or mediating

13. All the quotations here are from Wolpert 1993: 147.

14. For colonial contact situations in linguistics, see Holm 1988, chs. 1 and 2, and Romaine 1988, ch. 1. In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation,* Mary Louise Pratt argues that European imperialism creates "contact zones" that are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt 1992: 4; quoted in Fisher 1997: xxi).

factors—from a form of historical and cultural energy exterior to them that was injected into them by the very agents they ended up shaping or constituting. The energy that actualized contact and acculturation in the zones was located in early-modern literate Indian multilingualism, which manifested itself prior to and outside the new zones of East-West interaction specifically as a product of the high cosmopolitan culture of the Mughal order under the successive regimes of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan.[15] As I shall suggest later, the Indian acquisition of verbal proficiency, literacy, and acculturation in English before the beginning of colonial rule, as well as the emergence of the first generation of Indian writers in English at the end of the eighteenth century, are primarily the offshoots of literate Indian multilingualism in motion in the spaces of interracial contact, which may be described as follows.

The Zone of Employment

From the beginning, as Bernard S. Cohn observes, "the business of the company was conducted through Indian middlemen and brokers."[16] Starting around 1660, hundreds of literate Indians converged on the British factories to serve a range of functions, from in-house record keeping and translation under the supervision of the Company's writers and factors, to interpretation and commercial negotiation alongside the factors and junior merchants in the urban and rural markets.[17] These Indians belonged to a loosely defined late-Mughal class of protoprofessionals called *dubhāṣī*s, whose history from the mid-seventeenth century onward is summarized aptly by Burton Stein:

> Indian speakers of the English language appeared very early in the colonial encounter; they were called *dubashis* (literally, those with two languages) in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century world of small European trade centres, and had successively learned Portuguese, Dutch, French and English as before them others had learned Persian in order to serve [the] Mughals. The East India Company in Madras, and later in Calcutta and Bombay, employed them as intermediaries to link Company officials with the markets that they sought to control. To the dubashis were later added a larger group of English speakers who served in the first of the territories which the Company acquired by purchase in Bengal and Madras. Formal schooling played little part in the acquisition of English and other European languages; instruction was obtained from family elders who often had menial jobs with the Europeans. Indeed, the numerous clerks of the East India Company's commercial, and later legal and

---

15. Consult Marek 1968: 711–34.
16. See Cohn 1990: 503.
17. On the Company's writers, factors, and junior and senior merchants, see Marshall 1976: 10–11.

political, offices learned their jobs by sitting with relatives who were employed by the Company. They learned to write and keep the records without pay until they were proficient enough to be employed themselves. English-medium schools came later, and enrollments there increased rapidly during the later nineteenth century.[18]

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the *dubhāṣī*s came to occupy two specific types of position with their British employers. One was that of the literate multilingual clerk-interpreter, who mediated between Englishmen, on one side, and Indians in the marketplace and in the Mughal bureaucracy, on the other; and who used English (and possibly Portuguese) with the former and Persian or an Indian language with the latter, handling documents in roman, Persian-Arabic, and one or more Indian scripts. The other type of position involved serving an individual Company official as a personal agent or manager, in which case, as William Bolts put it in 1772, a *dubhāṣī* was at once "interpreter, head book-keeper, head secretary, head broker, the supplier of cash and cash keeper and in general also secret keeper."[19] While the clerical *dubhāṣī*s remained anonymously in the historical background, many of the personal *dubhāṣī*s (commonly called *baṇiyā*s, banyans, or banians in colonial Bengal) became prominent and powerful *comprador*s, in the original Portuguese sense of this word. As P. J. Marshall reminds us:

> All Europeans of any consequence employed banians. Nominally their status was servile and they performed some menial tasks, such as managing their master's household and his personal spending. But the banian of a prominent European was a man to be reckoned with. The Governor's banian presided over a court in Calcutta. Men like Gokul Ghosal [a *kulīn* Brahman], banian to Harry Verelst, or Cantu babu [Krishna Kanta Nandy], banian to Warren Hastings, were among the richest and most influential members of the Indian community in Calcutta.[20]

While widespread criticism of the corruption of Company officials and their *dubhāṣī*s and *baṇiyā*s (when involved together in private trade) led Governors-General Cornwallis and Wellesley to dismantle the institution of the personal agent at the end of the eighteenth century, the consolidation of Orientalism as an essential part of the colonial state under Warren Hastings created a third type of position for *dubhāṣī*s. In this case, literate multilingual Indians who had been trained as scholars in the major subcontinental styles of learning were hired as assistants to colonial administrator-scholars and Orientalist scholars, serving as their so-called native informants in the Persian, Sanskrit, Dravidian, and middle and modern Indo-Aryan tradi-

18. See Stein 1998: 264–65.
19. Refer to Marshall 1976: 45, and Cohn 1990: 503.
20. See Marshall 1976: 45.

tions.[21] In the course of the eighteenth century, these three types of *dubhāṣī*s—the clerk-interpreter, the personal manager, and the indigenous scholar—became the principal embodiments of Indian multilingualism in motion inside the zone of employment with the British. They were the first Indians to become literate in English.

From the early eighteenth century onward, Indians also sought and found employment with the British in two other domains. One comprised domestic service in British households: after about 1725, it became socially obligatory for Englishmen in India to maintain large domestic retinues in the notorious Nabob style, and this led to the partial Anglicization of a significant segment of Indian society.[22] The other domain was defined by service in the Company's army, which had covenanted English officers and an assortment of European, African, and Asian soldiers in subaltern ranks, including many lower-class men from Britain and steadily increasing numbers of Indians from various social ranks. In the nineteenth century the British army began to recruit Indians heavily from the lower Hindu castes (including untouchables), from communities converted to Islam and Christianity, from other religious groups (especially the Sikhs), and from marginalized ethnic communities (for example, the Gurkhas of Nepal); but around the mid-eighteenth century it was still seeking and accepting Muslim soldiers from the Mughal army, Hindu Kshatriyas, and first- and second-generation Anglo-Indian *mestizo*s, many of whom came from literate, well-placed families and communities. The Anglocentric ethos and discipline of the Company's army quite rigorously Anglicized its subaltern soldiers and its large population of camp followers, thereby transmitting English to several additional segments of Indian society.[23]

Even around the beginning of the colonial period, this zone of acculturation was part of a much larger sphere of employment in which Indians worked for various European trading companies and—on a much smaller and more selective scale by the end of the eighteenth century—certain types of Englishmen and Europeans worked for the so-called Indian princes and princely states.[24] The specific internal structure of the zone of employment changed as the Company's rule entered its high colonial phase after 1818—and especially after 1835, when the *dubhāṣī*s gave way to modern middle-class Indian professionals with formal English education. As I show later, this zone has undergone a massive transformation after decolonization and within the postcolonial diaspora. Throughout its history, however, the zone of employment has remained important because, starting in the mid-seventeenth cen-

---

21. Consult Cohn 1990, chs. 15 and 20; also see Cohn 1987.
22. See Cohn 1990: 439, and MacMillan 1988, ch. 9; also refer to Spear 1963.
23. These generalizations draw on Fisher 1996, chs. 3 and 4, and Marshall 1976: 15–18.
24. See, for example, MacMillan 1988: 43, and Cohn 1990: 450–57.

tury, it brought significant numbers of Indians in close daily contact with the British, exposed literate and multilingual Indians to the English language, and required them to learn to speak, read, and write it for practical purposes. Within the first one hundred years of its existence, this zone had success-fully acculturated three or four generations of Indians "on the job." The ear-liest Indian writers in English—Din Muhammad, C. V. Boriah, and Ram-mohun Roy—encountered and learned to speak English, acquired their English literacy, and adapted themselves to British and European culture in the course of their employment, using the resources they already possessed as literate Indian multilinguals.

The Zone of Marriage and Family

Although the Company's first charters excluded women inhabitants from its factories, Englishwomen started to travel to the subcontinent as early as 1617. Over the rest of the seventeenth century, a total of several hundred English-women came out to India for various reasons, but at any given moment the number of Englishmen exceeded the number of Englishwomen on the sub-continent by a factor of many.[25] As the Church prohibited Christians from marrying non-Christians, Englishmen made ingenious alternative arrange-ments under these constraints. Some married European women of other na-tionalities; some married the widows or daughters of Portuguese men, since the widows—mostly women of Hindu origin—were already converts to Christianity, and the daughters were Luso-Indians raised as Christians; some took Indian wives, who had to convert to Christianity before the marriages could be solemnized; and some—willing to live with the social consequences of their decisions—took Indian mistresses, who did not have to be subjected to conversion.[26] Within and outside marriage, Englishmen had many chil-dren by Indian women: C. A. Bayly estimates that by 1788 there were more than 11,000 *mestizo*s living in the British coastal territories.[27] Most of the chil-dren of these interracial marriages and liaisons were baptized and brought up as Christians, and especially because Indian communities tended to cast out converts to Christianity as well as those who married across racial bound-aries, the Anglo-Indian *mestizo*s identified themselves strongly with the white, European Christian community on the subcontinent. From early in the eigh-teenth century Englishmen secured distinct advantages for their Anglo-Indian children, who received preferential treatment, for example, in em-

25. Refer to MacMillan 1988, esp. ch. 1, and Russell-Wood 1992: 58–64 and 109–12.
26. Among other sources, see Cohn 1990: 425, 456–57, and 502–3 for several specific in-stances; and Marshall 1976: 23, and Fisher 1996: 250 for useful overviews.
27. See Bayly 1988: 70.

ployment with the Company's army.[28] In effect, at this level, the logic of racial intermixture in India in the eighteenth century reversed what had evolved by that time in the New World, where interracial children (fathered by white slave owners on black slave girls) were invariably classified as blacks and hence were subject to slavery.[29]

Starting in the late seventeenth century, the zone of interracial marriage and family Anglicized a large number of Indian women, and sometimes also their original families. Anglo-Indian children usually grew up with English (the father tongue) as their first language at home, and often with an Indian language (the mother tongue) as a second, frequently pidginized and creolized, medium of communication. As Christian children, they were nurtured in a well-defined though heterogeneous (and internally divided) community of British, European, Eurasian, and Indian Christians. They shared a literate Anglocentric culture with their parents and, like their Indian mothers, they were deeply acculturated to Western ways of life, thought, and expression.[30]

The zone of marriage and family was part of a larger sphere of East-West racial mixtures on the subcontinent, which included the much more extensive Luso-Indian community in Portuguese India, and the much smaller Franco-Indian and Dutch-Ceylonese creole communities in south India and Sri Lanka.[31] The zone became culturally problematic in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as racial lines hardened in colonial India, numerous British families came out to live on the subcontinent, and more British women—like Adela Quested in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*—traveled to the colony to seek out and marry rich and powerful young Englishmen.[32] The zone was also structured by a gender asymmetry from the start: marriages and liaisons between Englishmen and native or *mestizo* women were far more acceptable than relationships with the gender identities interchanged. Starting in the eighteenth century, some Indian and *mestizo* men did marry white women, but usually at a great cost on the European as well as the Indian side. Although Indian princes and upper-class and upper-caste men had more access to European women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly within Europe itself, the resistance to such relationships remained high until the diaspora partially dismantled it after Independence.[33]

28. See Marshall 1976: 15–17, and Fisher 1996, chs. 3 and 4.

29. On the color line in the United States, consult the entries "race," "miscegenation," and related topics in Andrews, Foster, and Harris 1997. On slavery in British India, see the analysis in Stein 1998: 216–20.

30. See, for example, MacMillan 1988: 47, and Russell-Wood 1992: 58–64 and 109–12.

31. Luso-Indians are discussed at various places in Russell-Wood 1992, and Subrahmanyam 1993.

32. I refer here to the broad discussion in MacMillan 1988, ch. 4, and the theme of marriage in Forster [1924] 1985.

33. For instances, consult Fisher 1996: 240 and 248–51; also see Cohn 1990: 529 and 540.

The significance of the zone of interracial marriage and family is that it quickly became a site of literate Anglicization on the fringes of Indian society and produced a number of important Indian-English writers, or at least affected the lives and careers of several figures in the tradition, from the earliest historical phase. Din Muhammad's marriage to Jane Daly in Cork in 1786 was crucial to his formation as a writer; Henry Derozio, the first poet in Indian-English literature, was the son of a Luso-Indian father and an English mother, which contributed directly to his remarkable career; and Michael Madhusudan Dutt, a paradigmatic nineteenth-century figure, first married a Scottish woman and then a Frenchwoman, both of whom influenced his writing.[34] Equally importantly, this zone has produced a unique group of Indian-English poets and prose writers in the post-Independence period which, among others, includes Anita Desai, Dom Moraes, Aubrey Menen, Ruskin Bond, Eunice de Souza, Melanie Silgardo, Charmayne D'Souza, Santan Rodrigues, and Raul D'Gama Rose.[35]

The Zone of Religious Conversion

The zone of religious conversion may be taken to define the space of the conversion of Indians to Christianity and the general influence of Christian missionaries on Indian society. This zone appeared historically at an early date: the evangelical work of Catholic missions in Portuguese India began around the turn of the sixteenth century, and that of Protestant missions (initially from England and Holland) commenced elsewhere on the subcontinent in the seventeenth century.[36] However, since Christian evangelism and conversions induced disturbances and even violent reactions in Indian society, the directors and stockholders of the East India Company (together with the Crown and Parliament) prohibited missionary activity in the Company's territories, removing the stricture only in 1813. During the long period of exclusion, British missionaries operated out of the territories of other European powers on the subcontinent: in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for example, the Serampore Baptist Mission survived under the protection of a Danish mission in a small pocket in Srirampur, north of Calcutta. After the revision and renewal of the Company's charter in 1813, British missionaries flourished in colonial India, with the Bishop of Calcutta

34. On Din Muhammad, see Fisher 1996: 208–9. For information on Derozio and Dutt, see Alphonso-Karkala 1970, ch. 2. I discuss these two writers further in the section "The Inventors of Indian-English Aesthetics."

35. On Anita Desai, see Mack 1995, 2: 2767–70. On Moraes, see King 1991, chs. 6 and 7. On de Souza, Silgardo, and D'Souza, see de Souza 1997: 37–47, 27–36, and 82–88. On Rodrigues and Rose, see King 1992: 129–31 and elsewhere.

36. See, for example, Correia-Afonso 1969, and Laird 1971: 1–2.

representing the high Anglican church and administering a bishopric that extended initially from South Africa to Australia.[37]

Conversion to Christianity for Indians meant Europeanization in language, literacy in at least one European language, and a broad acculturation to Western ways of life. In Portuguese Goa, conversion implied fluency and literacy in Portuguese (and usually, given Portuguese educational policy, also in Spanish and French), whereas in British India it frequently entailed a literate Anglicization.[38] This relation of conversion to language acquisition is permanently foreshadowed and encoded in the inaugural moment of the history of Indian print culture: the world's first printed book containing a text in an Indian language, the *Cartilha* of 1554, published in Lisbon, contains a translation of scripture into Thamiz (a Dravidian language proximate to Tamil) prepared by three literate bilingual Indian converts to Roman Catholicism, who were able to participate in the project (supervised by a European Jesuit) because they had already acquired literacy in Portuguese.[39] In terms of proportions of colonially subjugated populations, Christianization in British India was less extensive than in Portuguese India, since Portuguese state policies and church policies were much more coercive throughout—including, as they did, the introduction of the Inquisition into Goa in 1560 and its application to Goan Catholics as late as 1812.[40] Nevertheless, conversion in British India exercised a powerful force on some seven million converts in all, especially in relation to linguistic and cultural Anglicization: when placed on a continuum with the zone of interracial marriage and family, the zone of conversion produced a high proportion of the major Indian-English writers of the nineteenth century, from Henry Derozio and Michael Madhusudan Dutt to Govin Chunder Dutt, his brother Girish, and his daughters Toru and Aru (the first two Indian women poets in English), to Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (the first Indian woman prose writer in English). The rate of conversion decreased in the twentieth century, but this zone has continued to produce Indian-English writers, Jayanta Mahapatra and Deba Patnaik being two intriguing instances in recent times.[41]

Even when they did not convert Indians to Christianity, missionaries from England, Scotland, Ireland, and America had a strong, long-term effect on the transmission of the English language and its culture to Indians. In a specific case, such as Rammohun Roy's, his Unitarian supporters and cor-

37. On the Serampore Mission, see Dharwadker 1997: 108–33; and on the Anglican church, consult Laird 1971, introduction.

38. Refer to Russell-Wood 1992: 198–99.

39. See Dharwadker 1997; also consult Kesavan 1985: 16.

40. This is discussed in Russell-Wood 1992: 188.

41. On conversions, consult Spear [1965] 1979: 163–164. On Derozio, M. M. Dutt, and G. C. Dutt and his family, see Alphonso-Karkala 1970, chs. 2 and 5. On Ramabai, refer to Tharu and Lalita 1991, 1: 243–55; and on Mahapatra and Patnaik, see King 1992: 47.

respondents—in Calcutta, Great Britain, and the United States—shaped many aspects of his religious thought, social activism, and polemical writing in English, Bangla, and Persian.[42] More generally, despite the restrictions imposed on them, Christian-missionary schools and colleges have been the most influential English-medium institutions in the nongovernmental sector of Indian education in the colonial and also the postcolonial periods. As in the nineteenth century, a high proportion of Indian-English writers in the twentieth century were educated at or professionally associated with English-medium missionary institutions, the notable examples including Bharati Mukherjee (Loreto Convent, Calcutta), Eunice de Souza and Adil Jussawalla (St. Xavier College, Bombay), and Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, I. Allan Sealy, Mukul Kesavan, and Makarand Paranjape (St. Stephen's College, Delhi).[43] As I argue later, in spite of its historical-cultural primacy in the diffusion of English in India and the formation of Indian-English literary culture, the zone of conversion and Christian influence underwent a perceptible internal reversal in the twentieth century.

The Zone of Friendship and Social Relations

As a space of contact and acculturation, the zone of friendship emerged around the second quarter of the eighteenth century, when English and Indian men appear to have formed their first consequential personal relationships, not through voluntary association between equals but through mutual dependence and indebtedness, both literally and metaphorically, on the fuzzy edges of the zone of employment. If some of the closest social bonds in the precolonial period were between young Company officials and their personal *dubhāṣī*s, in the early colonial period they were between Orientalist administrator-scholars and missionary-scholars and their Indian assistants and collaborators.[44] Starting in the late eighteenth century, British-Indian friendships based on mutual respect, depth of personal feeling and commitment, shared attitudes, and common intellectual and artistic interests were founded in a variety of contexts: the colonial literary examples include Din Muhammad, Godfrey Evans Baker, and William A. Bailie; Rammohun Roy, William Adam, Lant Carpenter, William Ellery Channing, and Joseph Tuckerman; Henry Derozio, David Drummond, and John Grant; Pandita

42. Roy's supporters are discussed in Kopf 1979: 3–15. Also see Hay 1988: 15–35, and Tagore 1966.

43. On Mukherjee, for example, see Alam 1996; on de Souza, see King 1992, chs. 8 and 9, and de Souza 1997: 37–47; on Jussawalla, see King 1992, ch. 13; on Ghosh, Sealy, and Tharoor, see Nelson 1993: 137–45, 385–90, and 433–37.

44. A number of such relationships are described in Marshall 1976, and Cohn 1987.

Ramabai and Dorothea Beale; and Manmohan Ghose and Laurence Bin-
yon.[45] British-Indian friendships expanded greatly and became immensely
complicated by the early twentieth century: the networks of interracial con-
tacts surrounding Rabindranath Tagore, Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal
Nehru, E. M. Forster, and C. F. Andrews between 1910 and 1940, for exam-
ple, indicate the pivotal role that this zone has played in the development
of prose in English in relation to India.[46] In all such cases, friendships and
social relations across racial and national boundaries vitalized the writers,
stimulated their literary activities and intellectual growth, increased their de-
gree of acculturation, and contributed directly to their readerships and rep-
utations. This zone has a literary dimension in itself, in that its actuality ap-
pears to contradict the bleak perspectives on East-West friendship that have
been thematized in British as well as Indian writing about India in the twen-
tieth century.[47]

As the foregoing descriptions suggest, in their formative period, between
about 1660 and 1760, each of the four primary contact zones drew certain
types of Indians into its ambit, introduced them to the English language, en-
abled them to Anglicize themselves in oral and written communication, ex-
posed them to Western cultures at close and even intimate range, and pro-
vided them with the space necessary for a life-transforming acculturation. The
crucial dynamic factor in the initial diffusion of English was the prior literate
bilingualism or multilingualism of many of its Indian participants: this pro-
vided them with the resources to add another language to their repertoire,
even in the absence of systematic training. Without this active literate Indian
multilingualism, the contact zones could not have introduced English into
specific segments of Indian society: the necessity of this condition is evident
from the failure of these zones to induce productive literacy in English among
those groups that did not possess a prior literate Indian bilingualism.[48] The
earliest historical impact of the primary contact zones was to produce the first
Anglicized Indians by the turn of the eighteenth century, well before the be-
ginning of colonial rule; as I argue in what follows, the effect of these zones
almost a century later was to produce the first Indian writers in English.

45. Consult Fisher 1996; Kopf 1979; Tagore 1966; Alphonso-Karkala 1970; Tharu and Lalita
1991, vol. 1; and Ghose 1974.

46. On Tagore see, for instance, Thompson 1993; on Tagore as well as Andrews, see Trivedi
1989; on Gandhi and Nehru, respectively, see Nanda [1958] 1981, and Gopal 1989; on Forster,
consult Furbank 1977.

47. Refer, for example, to the texts by Kipling, Forster, and Rao cited in note 148.

48. Spear notes that the Hindus among the Indian converts to Christianity were "drawn
mainly from the lower castes" ([1965] 1979: 164) and so, by implication, would lack literacy
in an Indian language. For a different ambiguation of the link between literacy and Chris-
tianization among low-caste Hindu converts in early-nineteenth-century north India, see
Bhabha 1994, ch. 6.

The first three Indian writers in English—each of whom, at different his-toriographical moments, has been celebrated as the earliest author in the tradition—entered the history of this literature at the intersection of diverse historical processes. We now know that the earliest of these writers was Din Muhammad who, as Michael H. Fisher tells us, was born in 1759 into a fam-ily that belonged to the "Muslim service elite of Patna," with kinship ties to the Nawabs who ruled Bengal and Bihar in the third quarter of the eigh-teenth century, and with relatives at the provincial court in Murshidabad. The family belonged to the landholding class and on the paternal side prob-ably was descended from Indian converts to Islam, while on the maternal side it had "strong links to the indigenous Brahmanic-Hindu culture of the Ganges plain." Din Muhammad grew up in a household that preserved both sides of its religious-cultural heritage; he is likely to have been bilingual in Bangla and Hindustani (or a speech variety of the Patna region), and he knew Persian and learned either the Nagari or the Bangla script at an early age.[49]

Shortly before Din Muhammad was born, his father joined the Indian ranks of the East India Company's Bengal Army, and he followed his father and his elder brother when, as Fisher notes, "At age eleven, he attached him-self to a teenage Anglo-Irish patron: Ensign Godfrey Evan Baker." Baker had just arrived in India from Cork, where his father, a prospering Anglo-Irish merchant, had recently been elected mayor of the city. He paid Din Muham-mad's mother four hundred rupees (a large lump sum, under the circum-stances) for the boy's services as a camp follower. Over the next fifteen years in the Bengal Army, the boy "rose from camp follower to . . . market master and then subaltern officer [in the Indian corps] as Baker rose [from cadet to lieutenant and then] to his captaincy and independent command" in the English corps.[50] It is likely that over this long and close personal association with Baker, as also with other British and European officers and soldiers in the field of military operations, Din Muhammad acquired sufficiently strong skills in speaking, reading, and writing English to serve his patron excep-tionally well. The bond between the two men was such that in 1784, at the age of twenty-five, Din Muhammad left India with Baker and emigrated to Ireland, living in Cork and working for the Baker family on its prosperous estate for the next twenty-three years. For several months after his arrival, he attended a school to improve his spoken and written English, but his brief formal education was interrupted permanently when he met a young, middle-class Anglo-Irish student named Jane Daly. They fell in love, eloped,

49. My summary and quotations draw on Fisher 1996: 2, 113, and 115.
50. These quotations are from Fisher 1996: 2, 131, 147, 47, and 2.

and were married in 1786; the marriage lasted until Jane's death in 1850. About six years after the wedding Din started to plan and write his *Travels,* and he spent 1793–1794 raising subscriptions and putting his manuscript through the press personally. About thirteen years after the book's publication, he and Jane moved with their children to London to begin a new, independent life, which makes a fascinating cultural narrative of its own.[51] What is clear from the first half of his life story, however, is that Din Muhammad was formed as a writer in a foreign language by the close contact between mid-eighteenth-century literate Indian bilingual culture and British culture, first in the zones of military service and personal friendship on the subcontinent, and subsequently in the zones of interracial marriage, domestic employment, social relations, and conversion to Christianity. The formal schooling in spoken and written English that he received in Cork for several months in or around his twenty-sixth year (when he was placed among much younger students), obviously contributed to his later literary and entrepreneurial success, but it primarily sharpened the Anglicized linguistic and social skills that he had already acquired in his teens in India.

Like Din Muhammad, both Cavelli Venkata Boriah—whom K. R. Srinivas Iyengar and M. K. Naik, writing in the 1970s and 1980s, place at the chronological beginning of Indian writing in English in the first decade of the nineteenth century—and Rammohun Roy—whom virtually all scholars locate at the tripartite beginning of Indian-English literature, modern Indian literature as a whole, and Indian modernity itself—also were formed as writers in the networks linking indigenous multilingual literacy and specific zones of East-West acculturation. Boriah was a *dubhāṣī* in the scholar-translator tradition who joined the new Orientalist bureaucracy in the Madras Presidency in the late 1790s, becoming a field assistant to Colonel Colin Mackenzie, later the Company's first surveyor-general. In Naik's words, Boriah was "A master of a number of languages including Sanskrit, Persian, Hindustani and English," whom Mackenzie praised as "a youth of the quickest genius and disposition." Boriah had studied mathematics, geography, and astronomy, and wrote poetry in his mother tongue, Telugu; for the Company, he "discovered ancient coins and deciphered old inscriptions" and gathered ethnographic information from other Indians, as he did for his "Account of the Jains" (written around 1803).[52] He belonged to a literate, multilingual Vaiṣṇava Brahman group associated with administration that probably had emigrated from the Andhra region to Tamilnadu in the late Mughal period, and he learned English in a relatively short time from contact with English speakers in the colonial workplace—outside the framework of institutional English education. The force of literate multilingualism in

---

51. See Fisher's account in Fisher 1996, chs. 6 and 7.
52. The quoted passages are from Naik 1982: 13.

Boriah's short life could not have been accidental: many years after his "Account of the Jains" was published posthumously, with Mackenzie's help, in *Asiatic Researches* in London in 1809, his elder brother, Cavelli Venkata Ramaswami, produced two pioneering works in English. One was a rendering of Araśanipāla Veṅkaṭadhvarin's early-seventeenth-century Sanskrit poem, *Viśvaguṇadarśana,* probably the first literary translation into English by an Indian to enter print (in 1825); the other was an account of more than one hundred Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, and Sanskrit poets of different periods in *Biographical Sketches of the Dekkan Poets* (1829), the first Indian-English work of literary biography, most likely modeled on Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* (1779–1781).[53]

Rammohun Roy was the most accomplished of the early Indian-English writers, but his background can be summarized more easily than either Din Muhammad's or Boriah's because it is more familiar. Born in 1772 into a *kulīn* Brahman family of Bengal, he learned Persian at home from a *munśī* hired as a tutor, and probably also in Patna. As Stephen Hay observes:

> His mother's family, who were shaktas devoted to goddess-worship, insisted he steep himself as well in Sanskrit learning at Banaras, the Hindus' most sacred city. Rammohun apparently preferred Persian to Sanskrit culture, and with it the Islamic rejection of the use of images in worship. At sixteen he clashed with his parents over the practice of image worship. His father may have ordered him out of the house, for he then set off on his own, traveling up into Bhutan or Tibet, where he both studied the Tibetan form of Buddhism and angered its monks by criticizing their worship of lamas.[54]

In the late 1790s, Rammohun "began acquiring property in land and lending money to young British civil servants," and in 1804 he joined the Indian staff of the Company's Revenue Department, thus playing two roles that were strongly associated with the *dubhāṣī*s of the late eighteenth century.[55] He acquired most of his knowledge of the English language and of European culture "on the job" in the Company, particularly between 1809 and 1814, when he was posted in Rangpur, in northern Bengal, as the assistant to a British revenue officer, John Digby.[56] As Hay notes concerning Roy, "By 1815, when he was in his early forties, he had grown wealthy enough to retire from his post in the revenue service and to settle in Calcutta," where he began his

---

53. On Ramaswami, see Naik 1982: 21–22.

54. The word *kulīn* describes a family or clan ranked high in the social and ritual hierarchy; a *munśī*, in this context, is a scholarly teacher of Persian and Urdu; *śākta*s are Śaiva devotees of Śakti, Devī, Kālī, or Durgā, often in a left-handed Tantric tradition; and a *lāmā,* literally "superior one" in Tibetan, is an experienced spiritual preceptor who guides initiates in Vajrayāna Buddhism (on *lāmā,* see Harvey 1990: 134 and 218). The quotation is from Hay 1988: 15.

55. See Hay 1988: 15; and Naik 1982: 14.

56. See Tagore 1966: 13, and Srinivasa Iyengar 1973: 30.

later multidimensional career as a writer and reformer. During the period from 1815 to 1833, Roy worked simultaneously in the Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Bangla, and English intellectual traditions, learned Hebrew (from a Jewish tutor in Calcutta) as well as Greek, and published his own texts in English, Bangla, and Persian and, occasionally, in Sanskrit and Hindustani.[57]

Rammohun Roy was a product—in the strongest, most positive sense of this term—of the complex interactions between a literate, multilingual Indian culture and the English language and European print culture. More than anyone in the tradition before or after him, he embodied the full logic of multilingual literacy at the intersection of multiple cultures—Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Indian, Anglo-European—in his life as well as his writing. He composed his first published work, *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* (A defense of monotheism, 1803) in Persian, with a preface in Arabic; he most likely also wrote the anonymous *Javaj-e-Tuhfat-ul Muwahhidin* (A response regarding a defense of monotheism, c. 1820), a Persian rejoinder to Zoroastrian attacks on the earlier work.[58] Starting in 1815, he published nearly thirty major texts in Bangla, including *Vedānta Grantha* and *Vedānta Sār* (The book of Vedanta; The essence of Vedanta; both 1815), accounts of Upanishadic thought; Bangla translations of five Upaniṣads—the *Kena* and *Īśā* (both 1816), the *Kaṭha* and *Māṇḍūkya* (both 1817) and the *Muṇḍaka* (1819); *Bhaṭṭachāryer Sahit Bicār* (Discussions with Brahmans, 1817) and *Cariti Praśner Uttar* (Answers to four questions, 1822), important responses to orthodox Brahman criticism of his interpretation of the Upaniṣads; *Gosvāmir Sahit Bicār* (Discussions with orthodox Vaishnava Brahmans, 1818), an attack on Hindu polytheism and image worship; and *Sahamaran Biṣaye Prabartak o Nibartak Sambād* (A debate, pro and con, on the subject of *sati,* 1818) and *Sahamaran Biṣaye Prabartak Nibartak Dvitīya Sambād* (The second debate, pro and con, on the subject of *sati,* 1819), two critiques in dialogue form.[59] Starting in 1816, he published an equally diverse series of English texts, which included translations of three Upaniṣads: the *Kena* and *Īśā* (both 1816) and the *Muṇḍaka* (1819); *Translation of an Abridgement to the Vedanta* and *A Defence of Hindu Theism, in Reply to the Attack of an Advocate for Idolatry at Madras* (both 1817), the latter long regarded as the first original composition in English by an Indian; *Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness* (1820) which, in Sisir Kumar Das's understatement, started "a serious debate on theological issues between Rammohun and the Christian missionaries," especially the Baptists

---

57. Quoted from Hay 1988: 15–16. On Roy's languages, see Tagore 1966: 9–10, 13, and 20–21, and the entries on Roy in Lal 1991: 3707–9.

58. Roy's first Persian text is discussed in Tagore 1966: 10–13; on the second, see Das 1991: 442.

59. On the Bangla texts, see Tagore 1966: 30–32, and Lal 1991: 3707–8.

at Srirampur; and *Exposition of the Practical Operation of Judicial and Revenue Systems of India* (1831), which demonstrated that by 1825, the British had already repatriated a total of about 100 million pounds from India to England.[60]

Din Muhammad, Boriah, and Roy entered the primary contact zones with multilingualism and literacy already at their disposal, but the specific linguistic and cultural resources each brought into play were different and had strikingly divergent textual outcomes. What the three men had in common were a remarkable self-assurance in their use of the English language, an equally notable control over their materials and themes, and complex authorial intentions or designs embedded in carefully crafted verbal textures, with multiple rhetorical orientations toward projected audiences. They further shared a characteristic that differentiated them prospectively, as a group, from their Indian successors in English, who entered the print medium after the first quarter of the nineteenth century: they produced primarily instrumental prose texts designed to have definite social or political effects. All three had well-defined literary skills and interests, but they subordinated the aesthetic dimension of their English writing to its social instrumentality.[61]

What distinguished them most clearly from each other were their particular proportions and combinations of literariness and pragmatism, their chosen genres and their inflections of existing generic conventions, and their self-positionings within the larger discursive dynamics of writing in the English language. Din Muhammad's writing was primarily in the narrative and expository modes, whereas much of Roy's work in English combined exposition with polemical argument on controversial social, economic, political, historical, and religious issues. Both Din Muhammad's *Travels* and Boriah's "Account of the Jains" belonged to the discourse that represents Indian understandings of India in English and stood in a contestatory relation to the British discourse on India, but neither text was aggressively argumentative. In contrast, Roy's works not only contested certain British (and Christian) representations of India, but also complicated the Indian counterdiscourse internally by using it to contest conservative Indian understandings of India, thereby propelling modern Indian writing, in English as well as other languages, into its overtly reformist mode. In this sense, Din Muhammad's and Boriah's shared purpose was to produce an *epistemological change* in relation to the object of knowledge called "India" without resorting overtly to

60. On the English texts, refer to Srinivasa Iyengar 1973: 30–34; Naik 1982: 14–18; Lal 1991: 3708–9; and Tagore 1966: 14–30, respectively. The quotation is from Das 1991: 442. Roy's *Exposition* is discussed in Tagore 1966: 42.

61. All three writers were also poets. Din Muhammad wrote some verses in English; see Fisher 1997: 136. On Boriah, see Naik 1982: 13. On Rammohun's Bangla poetry, see Tagore 1966: 32, and Lal 1991: 3708; also consult Hay 1988: 34.

social or political activism, whereas Roy's conscious (and consciously disturbing) intention was to initiate a change—in relation to India, in relation to the West, and within India itself—that was at once epistemological, social, political, *and* religious.

Between them, Din Muhammad, Boriah, and Roy thus constructed an elementary form of the dynamics of critique, countercritique, and self-reflexive critique that became central to Indian-English literary culture after them. They were able to do so because they entered the field of discourse in English from cultural locations outside the circumference of British colonial control or domination: their prior immersion in the Indian multilingual and multicultural world of literacy in Bangla, Hindustani, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Telugu, and Tamil, together with a knowledge of Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism in practice, introduced powerful *pre*colonial and *non*-colonial elements into their interactions in specific contact zones and into their constructions of discourse in English. In fact, the literate Indian multilingualism that these three writers carried into the contact zones carved out a permanent aperture inside the discursive formation of Indian-English literature through which the precolonial, the noncolonial, and the colonial (and, most recently, the postcolonial) have constantly leaked into each other, differentiating this body of writing from British literature about India. Given the fact that this aperture was already open inside the earliest Indian-English texts, it is possible to maintain that causally, Indian writing in English cannot be solely or entirely a colonial phenomenon. The strong form of this thesis would be that the cultural contestation between Indian and British representations of India, and within Indian-English literature itself, is not merely a case of "Western stimulus and Indian response"; that Indian writing in English is not homogeneously a literature of complicity, collaboration, or mimicry; and that the originality of its texts, particularly in the twentieth century, cannot be predicted by, or predicated on, its supposed genesis in the mind-body of colonialism.

THE INVENTORS OF INDIAN-ENGLISH AESTHETICS

The Indian-English writers who entered print for the first time in the 1820s and 1830s, together with most of their successors, were markedly different from the first three writers in the tradition. The new writers, who define a long nineteenth century from about 1825 to 1925, collectively started a process of inventing Indian literariness in English in a highly aestheticized and self-conscious form, and continued it through several phases until the arrival of the modernist and Progressive Writers' movements in the last two decades of the colonial period. As some of these writers and their admirers attest, their goal most often was to compose texts that emphasized "beauty of expression and sentiment," and that produced an experience of linguis-

tic, imaginative, and intellectual pleasure and satisfaction in their readers.[62] Such a shift from instrumental writing to aestheticized expression took place in concrete and often unique circumstances, however, and therefore can be understood only through the details of their biographies and texts. Five Indian-English writers of the long nineteenth century—Henry Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, and Sarojini Naidu—constitute particularly instructive examples, but I shall discuss only the first two here.

Chronologically, the earliest aesthetic innovator was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, whose father, Francis Derozio, was Luso-Indian and whose mother, Sophia Johnson, was English, the sister of an indigo planter in Bhagalpur, Bihar. In 1815, at the age of six, Henry entered the Dhurmtollah Academy, a strictly secular school operated by a Scottish poet and scholar named David Drummond, and over the next seven years or so he "read widely in English literature" under the latter's guidance.[63] Around 1823, however, Derozio was "obliged to leave school," and he worked as a clerk at a British mercantile firm in Calcutta for two years before his uncle, Arthur Johnson, offered him more congenial employment on the indigo estate in Bhagalpur. But Derozio soon returned to Calcutta, where he worked briefly as an assistant to John Grant, a classical scholar and the influential editor of *The Indian Gazette,* who had been impressed by the boy's accomplishments at Drummond's school and had printed some of his early Bhagalpur poems in the *Gazette.* In 1826, in J. B. Alphonso-Karkala's words, "On Grant's recommendation, the young poet was appointed lecturer [or preceptor] in English literature and history at Hindu College, which, by that time, had become the intellectual center for young Bengalis."[64] Over the next five years, as David Kopf notes, Derozio

> inspired a whole generation of Westernizing radical intellectuals known historically as Young Bengal. Under him, students read John Locke on civil liberty and natural rights; Rousseau on the justification of a representative democracy; David Hume on the bankruptcy of metaphysics; Voltaire on the supremacy of reason, enlightenment, and good taste; Bentham on the reformation of the legal system to achieve the most happiness for the largest number; and . . . Tom Paine on liberty and the flowering of the human spirit.[65]

62. See, for example, the quotations from Edmund Gosse on Toru Dutt in Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 112–14; and from Laurence Binyon on Manmohan Ghose (together with the tribute by Rabindranath Tagore and the comments by W. B. Yeats, T. Sturge Moore, Walter de la Mare, Oscar Wilde, Laurence Binyon, and John Freeman) in Ghose 1974: 224–25 and 247–57.

63. See Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 35; on secular English-medium schools, also consult Kopf 1979: 44–45.

64. See Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 36.

65. Quoted from Kopf 1979: 43.

Derozio organized an extracurricular discussion group for his students; it expanded quickly and led to the founding of the Academic Association, which attracted many Indian as well as European intellectuals in Calcutta. The discussions in these two forums focused on "all problems of life," ranging over "free will, fate, faith, meanness of vice, patriotism, attributes of God, and idolatry," and "championed the fashionable ideas of progress" as well as "an optimistic vision of mankind's future" centered around Enlightenment humanism.[66] But Derozio's free thinking, together with the radical activism he inspired in his students, sparked off strong protests from parents as well as Christian missionaries, forcing the college to ask him to curtail his extracurricular activities. When he persisted, outraged Hindu parents charged him with "corrupting the minds of the youth," and demanded that "Mr Derozio, being the root cause of all evil and public alarm should be discharged from the college." The administration sought his resignation, but the twenty-one-year-old poet submitted "a spirited rejoinder" in which he denied "all the charges" and "affirmed his deep love of intellectual freedom."[67] Ultimately dismissed from his position at Hindu College early in 1831, Derozio turned to journalism, launching a newspaper, *The East Indian,* with the support of his Indian and European friends. But his effort to establish a new career for himself was cut short when he died of cholera on December 26, 1831, a few months before his twenty-third birthday—thereby fulfilling a prophecy that a *saṃnyāsin* is said to have made, that "he would not live for more years than there were letters (23) in his name."[68]

Derozio published two books, *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakir of Jungheera, a Metrical Tale, and Other Poems* (1828), before he turned nineteen.[69] He emerged from the zones of interracial marriage and Christian upbringing in India, the one early Indian-English writer to grow up monolingual in English. But his formal education between 1815 and 1823 hybridized his background considerably: Drummond's secularism at the Academy infused him with post-Christian humanism and Europeanized him with training in the French and German traditions, so that at the end of the 1820s he wrote a critique of Immanuel Kant and also translated essays by the eighteenth-century French scientist Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis.[70] Moreover, as writers and scholars, Drummond and Grant taught Derozio the craft of verse and prose and disciplined his aesthetic sensibility, thereby nurturing

66. The first two quotations are from Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 36; the last two, from Kopf 1979: 43.
67. Refer to Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 36–37.
68. Consult Das 1991: 456–57; also see Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 37.
69. For bibliographical details, see Das 1991: 451–52; also consult Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 37. For analyses, see Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 37–43, Srinivasa Iyengar 1973: 34–37, and Naik 1982: 22–24.
70. Mentioned in Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 37.

his lyricism; his prosodic competence; his willingness to experiment with a wide range of meters, rhyme schemes, and stanza forms; his ability to develop images as well as allusions; and even the "romantic passion" with which, in Alphonso-Karkala's words, he "identified himself with his native land and wrote purely on Indian themes with a reformer's zeal."[71] The shift toward literariness in Indian-English writing that Derozio initiated around 1827–1828 is palpable in his poems, particularly the "Sonnet to the Pupils of the Hindu College":

> Expanding like the petals of young flowers
>   I watch the gentle opening of your minds,
> And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
>   Your intellectual energies and powers,
> That stretch (like young birds in soft summer hours)
>   Their wings to try their strength. O! how the winds
> Of circumstance, and freshening April showers
>   Of early knowledge, and unnumbered kinds
> Of new perceptions, shed their influence,
>   And how you worship Truth's omnipotence!
> What joyance rains upon me, when I see
>   Fame in the mirror of futurity,
> Weaving the chaplets you are yet to gain—
>   And then I feel I have not lived in vain.[72]

Derozio's particular interests in secular philosophy, humanism, and Romanticism combined with his Eurasian genealogy and Anglocentric upbringing to articulate a new literary position with respect to India. On the one hand, as Percival Spear suggests of the Young Bengal movement in general, he "regarded the whole structure of [contemporaneous] Hinduism as superstitious and archaic," and therefore attacked such practices as *sati* (as in his long narrative poem, "The Fakir of Jungheera").[73] On the other hand, since he was acutely conscious of being "neither exclusively European nor Indian" (as Edward Farley Oaten puts it), and England remained remote despite his Europeanization, he developed a passionate love for an "imagined" India (in Benedict Anderson's sense of the term) that can only be described as the first expression of romantic nationalism in Indian literature, as in "To India—My Native Land":

> My country! in thy days of glory past
>   A beauteous halo circled round thy brow,
> And worshipped as a deity thou wast.

---

71. Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 43.
72. Reproduced in Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 40.
73. Quoted from Spear [1965] 1979: 163.

> Where is that glory, where that reverence now?
> The eagle pinion is chained down at last,
>   And grovelling in the lowly dust art thou:
> Thy minstrel hath no wreath to weave for thee
>   Save the sad story of thy misery!
> Well—let me dive into the depths of time
>   And bring from out the ages that have rolled
> A few small fragments of those wrecks sublime,
>   Which human eye may never more behold;
> And let the guerdon of my labour be,
>   My fallen country, one kind word for thee![74]

Derozio—the first to call India "Mother"—thus positioned himself squarely inside the Indian critical discourse put into circulation by Rammohun Roy (one of the founders of Hindu College), and aestheticized the Indian criticism of India as well as the Indian countercritique of the British discourse that disparaged the histories and cultures of the subcontinent.[75]

The mediations of Indian multilingualism and the zones of British-Indian acculturation by secular Western-style education, Europeanization, proto-nationalism, and Romantic aesthetics that we find in Derozio's life go much further in Michael Madhusudan Dutt's career. Madhusudan was born in 1824 in Sagardanri, a village in Jessore District (now in Bangladesh), the son of Rajnarain Dutt, a prominent lawyer in Calcutta, and Jahnavi Devi, who came from a well-placed *zamindar* family. He attended the village school, where he learned Bangla, some Sanskrit and Persian, and arithmetic; at age seven, he also attended afternoon sessions at a *maulavi*'s school, where he acquired facility in Persian. At home, in the evenings, Jahnavi Devi often read aloud from the two ancient epics in their popular Bangla versions, Krittivasa's *Rāmāyaṇa* and Kāśīrāmdās's *Mahābhārata,* and from two Bangla *maṅgalkāvya*s, Mukundarāma's *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* and Bhār̄atachandra's *Annadāmaṅgal.* In 1832, after two younger sons had died in infancy, Rajnarain and Jahnavi moved with Madhusudan to Calcutta, where they lived as a nuclear family (an unaccustomed style) in their house in Kidderpore. For the next five years, Madhusudan attended a grammar school near the courthouse, learning English, Latin, and Hebrew, and in 1837, he joined Hindu College, where he excelled in English and mathematics. Although Derozio had been dismissed from the college in 1831, his legacy of free thinking, Europeanization, and radicalism persisted among the Young Bengal students of Madhusudan's age, now energized by the teaching of Captain David Lester Richardson, a minor

74. Oaten is quoted and Derozio's sonnet is reproduced in Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 43 and 40, respectively. On the nation as a construct of the imagination, refer to Anderson 1983.

75. On Roy's role in founding Hindu College, consult Srinivasa Iyengar 1973, ch. 2, and Kopf 1979, ch. 2; also see Tagore 1966: 28–29.

English poet and a Utilitarian. In 1841–1842, when he was seventeen, Madhusudan began writing poems in English, a number of which appeared in the leading English-language literary journals in India, such as *The Bengal Spectator* and *The Calcutta Literary Gazette.* By this stage he had read William Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, George Crabbe, Robert Burns, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, Thomas Campbell, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth, Thomas Moore, and Lord Byron, and had come to admire the last three greatly (with John Milton added to this group later). At Hindu College Madhusudan already exhibited the extravagance and the extravagant Europeanization that made him notorious in Calcutta in the 1860s and 1870s and impoverished him in his final years: according to Amalendu Bose, as a teenager he "dressed as a dandy," "yearned" to visit England, and acted out a "deep admiration for things European—manners, social life, literature, food and drink, philosophy," and music, which foreshadowed his subsequent social distinction as "the first Indian to smoke cigarettes, rolling them himself," and as one of the first Indians to be admitted to the bar at Gray's Inn, London.[76]

By 1842 Madhusudan had firmly resolved to travel to England. His parents, alarmed that their only surviving son might undertake the proscribed journey across the black waters, attempted to distract him (in early 1843) by arranging his marriage to a Hindu girl. But the young man eluded them—and kept alive his hope of going abroad—by disappearing from the college, hiding in Fort William for two days, and converting to the Church of England at a special ceremony conducted by Archdeacon Dealtry on February 9, 1843. Unable to live with his family any more and unable to continue at Hindu College because he was homeless, Madhusudan—now christened Michael—lived successively with Dealtry and other missionaries, before enrolling in November 1844 as a lay student at the residential Bishop's College, which prepared Indian Christians to become clergymen and mission school teachers. Though shocked by Michael's conversion, Rajnarain and Jahnavi continued their generous financial support, and he visited them regularly at the Kidderpore house—until a crisis occurred in 1847. Rajnarain, one of the three most successful Indian advocates in Calcutta at the time, had always practiced law in Persian. In 1847, however, a dozen years after it had become the official language of British administration, English also became a language of the lower courts, thereby greatly diminishing Rajnarain's income. The financial strain caused a quarrel between father and son, and when Rajnarain stopped his allowance altogether, Michael decided to move to Madras.[77]

76. The biographical details are from Bose 1981, chs. 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8; also refer to Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 45–50. The quotations are from Bose 1981: 12 and 18.

77. Refer to Bose 1981, ch. 2.

Starting around Christmas 1847, Michael lived in Black Town, Madras, working as an usher (assistant teacher) and later as a second tutor at the free day-school for boys attached to the Church of England's Madras Male and Female Orphan Asylum. While there, he fell in love with Rebecca McTavish, a Scottish inmate of the girls' hostel at the Asylum, and married her in 1848. During the next eight years Michael and Rebecca had four children and lived on his limited income, which he supplemented by working as a journalist in English; early in this happy phase of his life he wrote and published the last of his English poetry, including three long works in verse.[78] Of these, "Visions of the Past," composed in 1848 but left unfinished in thirteen fragments, dealt with Christian themes and was the first Indian poem in English blank verse, a prosodic form that Michael was to transplant subsequently into Bangla. "The Captive Lady," also composed around 1848, was a long narrative poem in the iambic meter, divided into a prologue in pentametric quintets and two cantos in rhyming octosyllabic couplets (the latter modeled on Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron), with epigraphs for canto 1 from Byron and for canto 2 from Thomas Moore. Following Chand Bardai's thirteenth-century Rajasthani *Pṛthvīrājrāso,* Michael's poem retold the legend of Prithviraj III, the last Chauhan king of Delhi before the turn of the twelfth century, his elopement with the Princess of Kanauj (the daughter of his greatest political enemy), and the lovers' immolation on the same funeral pyre after Muhammad Ghuri's victory over Prithviraj in the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192. The third text, "Rizia, the Empress of Ind," was a verse-play that appeared anonymously in installments in seven consecutive issues of *The Madras Circulator and General Chronicle* in 1848–1849, dramatizing the history of Sultana Raziyya, the first woman to rule Delhi (in the mid-thirteenth century), and blueprinting the play on the same theme that he was to produce in Bangla in the next decade. At the end of this intensely creative two-year period, Michael collected the first two of these pieces and some lyric poems in *The Captive Ladie* (1849), his only published book in English.[79]

In 1856, by which time both his parents had died, Michael decided to move back to Calcutta, but he separated permanently—apparently without acrimony—from Rebecca and their children, who continued to live in Madras under the Anglicized name of Dutton, without any contact with or financial support from him. By 1858, Michael had married Henrietta, a Frenchwoman deeply enamored of Bengal and the Bangla language, with whom he had a daughter and son. The return to Calcutta and the second marriage, together with the persuasions of his Indian as well as English friends, precipitated his decision at the age of thirty-five to stop writing po-

78. See Bose 1981, ch. 3.
79. See Bose 1981, ch. 3, and also consult Alphonso-Karkala 1970: 46–50. On Prithviraj Chauhan, see Thapar 1966: 235–36.

etry in English. Between 1859 and 1873, he became the pioneering modern poet and dramatist in Bangla, a contemporary of Bankimchandra Chatterjee and a precursor of Rabindranath Tagore.[80]

Michael Madhusudan Dutt is a paradigmatic figure in—and for—the history of Indian literatures in the middle of the nineteenth century. Like Din Muhammad three generations earlier, he lived in all four primary contact zones: employment with the British (both inside and outside the state sphere); marriages to two European women; conversion to the high Anglican church; and close friendships and life-long social relations with Anglo-Europeans. His acculturation to the West in these zones was extended and intensified by three other mediating factors: his education in Western-style institutions in India from 1832 to 1847 (including a grammar school, Hindu College, and Bishop's College), which Europeanized him for life; his sojourn in Europe between 1862 and 1867 with Henrietta and their children, which finally gave him the opportunity to experience life in England and Europe at first hand, though in great poverty and in utter—sometimes suicidal—misery; and his late formal education in England, which enabled him to practice law on his return to India in 1867. He wrote poetry, journalistic prose, and personal letters in English, applying a wide-ranging knowledge of the English poetic tradition from Shakespeare to his own late-Romantic and early-Victorian contemporaries, and composed verse texts that were technically more experimental and demanding than those of the Indian-English poets before him, which made him a literary model for the next two generations in this tradition. He also combined a versatile Indian multilingualism, centered on the poetic traditions of premodern Bangla, Persian, and Sanskrit, with an astonishing multilingualism in non-Indian languages that ranged over English, Latin, Hebrew, French, and later in life, Greek, German, and Italian. Starting in his late teens, he pushed acculturation to its logical limit by Europeanizing and Christianizing himself; starting in his mid-thirties, he then brought his Indian and European multilingualism to its logical conclusion by choosing to invest his creative energies in his first language—his mother tongue—while widening his multilingual horizons even more. He thus established the paradigm that for the past 150 years has governed the careers of several hundred Indian writers: they have cultivated Indian as well as European multilingualism and acculturated themselves to the cosmopolitan cultures of modernity, yet have concentrated on becoming literary innovators in the indigenous languages of the subcontinent.

At the same time, Dutt also lifted the aestheticization of Indian-English writing to the next level—in his intentions if not successfully in his practice.

80. Consult Bose 1981, chs. 3, 4, 7, and 8 and the epilogue; also refer to Dharwadker 1979: 32–35. For information on Chatterjee and Tagore, consult Hay 1988: 130–39 and 277–88; and Das 1991. See also Kaviraj, ch. 8 in this volume.

Not only did he focus largely on Indian themes, intertextualizing them, as Derozio did, with legendary, historical, and literary sources in the subcontinent's past; he also attempted to bend English usage, within the limits of English prosody, toward an imitation of the syntax, imagery, and figuration of the Indian languages, particularly Bangla and Sanskrit.[81] He thus consolidated a principle and a practice of Indianizing literary English in its very texture, treating English as a medium of translation within the field of original composition in English itself—a strategy that came to distinguish Indian-English literature as a whole after his time. In working through this cluster of literary choices, however, Dutt also added an original twist to the dynamics of British-Indian cultural contestation. On one side, he Europeanized himself so aggressively and publicly that he seemed entirely complicitous with the imperial mission of the metropolis. On the other side, he also decolonized himself earlier than most of his Westernized Indian contemporaries, by becoming a poet and dramatist in Bangla and by reversing the counter-critique of British representations of India via writing on Europe and European themes in Bangla. Thus, while in England and France, he wrote *caturdaśī-padī*s (sonnets) in Bangla to Victor Hugo and Lord Tennyson, and on Dante's six-hundredth birth anniversary, he sent a Bangla sonnet on the poet to King Victor Emmanuel of Italy, perplexing various correspondents. When he composed his Bangla sonnet on "The Palace and the Park at Versailles," it contained no image of the site in France but offered, instead, a lyrical invocation of Indra's palace, Vaijayanta; his mentor, the *ṛṣi* Bṛhaspati; and his miraculous son by Kuntī, Arjuna.[82] Dutt's poetic countercritique thus penetratingly Indianized Europe itself, foreshadowing by almost 125 years the most famous moment in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), in which Gibreel Farishta, hovering over London, decrees the fabulous postcolonial "tropicalization" of the metropolis.[83]

A juxtaposition of Henry Derozio and Michael Madhusudan Dutt with other Indian-English poets of the long nineteenth century—especially Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, and Sarojini Naidu—reveals an important pattern.[84] The shift around 1825 from the instrumentality of writing for epistemological, social, and political purposes to the literariness of verbal composition was not a retreat into mere aestheticism. Rather, the reorientation that these poets pursued reflected a substantive change in the enabling con-

81. Alphonso-Karkala (1970: 49) suggests this.

82. This is analyzed in Bose 1981: 83–88.

83. Consult Rushdie [1988] 1989: 354–55; for commentary, see Edmundson 1989: 62–71, and Spivak 1989: 79–99.

84. On Toru Dutt, consult Alphonso-Karkala 1970, chs. 3 and 5. On Manmohan Ghose, refer to Alphonso-Karkala 1970, ch. 2; Ghose 1974; and Ghose 1975. On Sarojini Naidu, see Naravane 1980. On all three writers, also consult the relevant portions of Srinivasa Iyengar 1973, and Naik 1982.

ditions of Indian textual production in English: whereas the first three writers in the tradition were products of various contact zones with little or no formal education in English, most of the aesthetic innovators of the next four generations were formed in the same contact zones but with institutional training in English and its literature and, in some cases (notably, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, and Sarojini Naidu), with education or acculturation in England itself. A simple but important consequence of this transition from instrumental writing to aesthetic production, under the influence of formal English education, was that it initiated a shift from prose to verse as the exemplary literary category.

The reorientation also indexed a change of perspective on the social efficacy of Indian writing in English, its relation to real and imagined audiences, the pressures of the ongoing contestation between British and Indian representations of India, and the particular circumstances in which the contestation had to be carried out. The concentration on lyricism and the technicalities of versification in various poetic genres from Derozio to Naidu was aimed not at an ideal of "art for art's sake," in Walter Pater's or Oscar Wilde's sense of this phenomenon in England in the 1870s or the 1890s, but, rather, at the acquisition and application of artistry that matched, or could match, the artistry of contemporaneous British poets and poetry. The nineteenth-century Indian-English aesthetic innovators seem to have been impelled by a desire to demonstrate that, in spite of their cultural and political handicaps, they could develop the same degree of verbal facility, technical virtuosity, mellifluousness, and imaginative inventiveness as their more celebrated counterparts in Great Britain. If Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, and Manmohan Ghose craved the approval of fellow writers and critics in England, they did so not because they were infected with "colonialitis," as R. Parthasarathy has said in Ghose's case, but because they dreamed (impossibly) of being acknowledged as artistic equals.[85] The aestheticization of Indian-English writing in the long nineteenth century thus was an integral part of the dynamics of cultural contestation begun by Din Muhammad and complicated by Rammohun Roy: it displaced the ongoing real-world conflict between India and Great Britain from the political and economic spheres into the aesthetic sphere, so that the war of colonization and resistance, almost in Clauswitzean terms, was now fought—and lost—by the "other means" of pure literariness. It is therefore possible to suggest, in retrospect, that this long century of aestheticism was a century of subterranean warfare over anything but—or over much more than—literature and literariness.

The nineteenth-century aesthetes had limited talents and energies, and their actual accomplishments were smaller than their aspirations: the most

85. Compare Parthasarathy 1979, and the comments by Edmund Gosse and Laurence Binyon cited in note 62.

talented writers of the period wrote in their mother tongues, investing their energies in the creation of the other modern Indian literatures. The Indian-English poets were also hampered by their aesthetic anxieties, being unable to transform their milieux and times to the same extent that Bankimchandra Chatterjee, C. Subramania Bharati, and Rabindranath Tagore, for instance, were able to transform theirs.[86] Nevertheless, this group of writers started a legacy of significant proportions. On a small scale, they discovered the means to combine Indian poetic materials with Indian sensibilities within the limits of English prosody, infusing this medium with motifs from classical Indian literature and Indian history, legend and folklore, to construct the first explicit forms of literary Indianness in English. On a larger scale, they prepared a blueprint of Indian-English aesthetics that envisioned some of the actual building that was to occupy the twentieth century.

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The lives and literary careers of the writers of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries were mediated by specific, overlapping zones of contact and acculturation, with formal English education playing an increasingly influential role through the nineteenth century. In addition to acculturation in Western-style schools and colleges, however, two general processes contributed directly to the consolidation of Indian-English writing and its epistemological, sociopolitical, and aesthetic functions in this period. One was the diffusion of English beyond the early contact zones, leading to the formation of a new political economy of language and class on the subcontinent, and to a lasting association between this language and the modern Indian middle and upper classes. The other was the establishment of Indian print culture within the framework of colonial subjugation, which determined the constraints and freedoms as well as the economic conditions of the marketplace under which Indian-English literary culture had to sustain itself. These two developments, which need to be described in some detail, affected the conditions that were to give birth to important trends in Indian writing in English in the twentieth century.

The Political Economy of Language and Class

As the East India Company concentrated its colonial power in stages from 1757 to 1818, English moved outward from the primary zones of contact into three wider domains: the sphere of colonial administration, the Indian market sphere, and the Indian social sphere at large. In this process of dispersion,

---

86. On Chatterjee and Tagore, consult the references cited in note 80; on Bharati, see Ramanujan 1999, ch. 18.

English changed its status from that of a language identified with one group of European traders on the coastal margins of India to that of a language of power. But as it did so, it had to displace a number of other languages from their older positions of dominance in the Indian state, market, and social spheres, thereby creating a new linguistic order on the subcontinent.

When Company officials began to use English for governance in Bengal in the late 1750s, the language entered a sphere regulated by Persian, which had been installed as the official language of the Mughal state under Akbar in 1582 (shortly after Stephens, and just before Fitch and the Newbury expedition, arrived in Goa).[87] Since the Company derived its legitimacy as the administrator of its territories from the limited position it occupied within the Mughal imperial order, it had to conduct a significant portion of its state affairs in Persian, so long as the Mughals remained in power—even if only nominally—at their court in Delhi.[88] This meant that from the start, the English language had to share discursive power in the colonial state sphere with Persian, and the Company had to build and maintain an extensive, cumbersome, and cost-inefficient bilingual bureaucracy to perform its administrative functions. British officials could use English freely for their internal affairs and their communications with the Crown, Parliament, and the Company's board of directors and stockholders in Great Britain. But since most of the British were not sufficiently proficient in spoken and written Persian, Indian employees from the multilingual *dubhāṣī* tradition had to handle the bulk of the official discourse in that language and, when needed, in the indigenous Indian languages.[89] The situation of English in the state sphere did not change until 1835, when Governor-General William Bentinck and his Council in Calcutta unilaterally declared English the sole official language of British-Indian administration, adopting Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education to support the formal training of Indians in English under the new dispensation. The legislative events of 1835, in effect, removed British India from its subordinate and interstitial position within the late Mughal order and resituated it within the global British imperium on the basis of language, rejecting the bilingual equation with Persian in favor of a monolingual ascendancy in which English could assert a fresh form of power over the legal subjects of the colonial state on the subcontinent.[90]

As English started to spread from the early contact zones to the domain of state-subject relations in the late 1750s, it also began to infiltrate Indian markets as the language of a new political regime. However, the domain of

87. The status of Persian in India is discussed in Marek 1968: 723.
88. See Wolpert 1993, chs. 13 and 14; also consult Spear [1965] 1979, ch. 10, and Fisher 1993, ch. 1, especially 9–12.
89. See Cohn 1987 and 1990: 521–46.
90. Refer to Spear [1965] 1979, ch. 10, especially 127.

international trade and finance in the Indian Ocean region, from the Cape of Good Hope to Macao and Melaka, was saturated by Portuguese (together with its pidgins), which had become the lingua franca in the market sphere around 1550 and retained its primacy even after Holland, England, and France eroded Portugal's maritime power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During the careers of Robert Clive, Warren Hastings, and William Jones in India, for example, and around the time that Din Muhammad left India, "market Portuguese" was the language of international transactions throughout the Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta regions.[91] It took nearly half a century after the commencement of British colonial rule for English to displace Portuguese, and English did not emerge as the principal medium of communication in this domain until around 1800. When it did so, however, its dominance in the marketplace contributed directly to its general recognition in Indian society as a prestige language—almost a quarter-century before the India Education Act of 1835 raised it to the status of the sole official language of British India.

Around the time that it completed its displacement of Portuguese, English also began to spread across the subcontinent and its indigenous society, beyond specific contact zones. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, this diffusion was aided significantly by Western-style English-medium education in schools and colleges in the nongovernmental sector. The first English schools in British territories had appeared almost one hundred years earlier: one in Cuddalore, near Madras, in 1717; another started by Richard Cobbe, a chaplain, in Bombay in 1718; and a third endowed by the Thomlinson family in Calcutta in 1720. Moreover, since the turn of the century, Christian missions located outside British India, British educators and entrepreneurs within it, and Indian associations and charities interested in Westernization had vocally promoted English education among Indians.[92] But this phenomenon gathered momentum quite dramatically after the revision and renewal of the Company's charter in 1813, even though the colonial government did not support it administratively or financially for another twenty-two years. As William Carey, the Baptist missionary-scholar of Srirampur recalled this period wryly in his memoirs, "Every Englishman in straitened circumstances—the broken-down soldier, the bankrupt merchant and the ruined spend-thrift—set up a day school."[93] Starting around 1813 and accelerating after the administration's adoption of an Anglocentric educational policy in 1835, English thus spread quite widely through certain seg-

91. Consult Russell-Wood 1992: 191–93, and, more broadly, Subrahmanyam 1993, chs. 8 and 9. Unlike Hastings and Jones, Clive never learned Persian or an Indian language; his second language was "market Portuguese."

92. See Srinivasa Iyengar 1973, ch. 2, especially 26.

93. Quoted in Bose 1981: 10.

ments of Indian society, creating a new balance of power among the various languages that Indians could and did use on a daily basis, particularly in their pursuit of wealth and power.

This dispersion of English in the first half of the nineteenth century across the Indian social sphere (as distinguished from the state and market spheres) was part of a new political economy of language and class, since the use of English by Indians was now implicated deeply in the formation of the modern professions and a modern middle class in the Indian economy. Starting sporadically in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and continuing more consistently in the second, Indians in particular social categories learned English and Westernized themselves primarily because verbal proficiency, literacy, and acculturation in this language would enable them—at least in theory—to become clerks, administrative assistants, revenue officers, accountants, lawyers, magistrates, teachers, journalists, and businessmen in the colonial economy. For mid-century Indians (as in the representative case of Michael Madhusudan Dutt), English thus metonymically represented increased social and economic mobility, professional rewards, community empowerment, individual growth and freedom, and the satisfactions of modernity and modernization.[94] But this emergent political economy of language and class was complicated by the fact that English had to spread through the multilayered structure of the Indian social sphere, and therefore could not occupy an uncontested position of power among the everyday languages of the subcontinent.

The position of English in the social hierarchy of languages varied by indigenous community, political configuration, and geographical location. Within British territories, for any social group aligned with the colonial professions and occupations, English was the language of the professional sphere and, as such, often had to coexist with two (if not three) Indian languages, each with its own sphere of everyday use. One of these was the language that the members of the group used primarily or exclusively in the domestic sphere, as the medium of communication in the household and its limited economy, and in the network of family relations within and around it. Another was the language—sometimes different from that of the domestic sphere—which the members of the group used in its Indian community sphere to maintain an array of vital relations beyond the web of kinship. A third language in this series usually was an Indian lingua franca, different from the language or languages of the household and the community, which had to be used for general transactions in the local or regional marketplace. At least until Independence, and frequently after, even the most Anglicized Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Jains were reluctant to use English in their do-

---

94. Consult Bayly 1983: 195–96, and Cohn 1990, ch. 15.

mestic and community spheres, treating them as linguistically incompatible with the colonial workplace.[95]

While such a linguistic differentiation of household, community, profession, and market became quite commonplace in the modern Indian middle and upper classes that had been formed in the colony by the end of the nineteenth century, a different political economy of language and class emerged in the Indian states outside British territories. In the so-called native states, most of which had accepted the principle of British paramountcy on the political and economic planes by the mid-nineteenth century but conducted their internal affairs with a measure of cultural independence, English did not become the principal language of the royal courts or their administrations. Certainly in the less modernized princely states and sometimes even in the more Anglicized ones, the ruling elite, the bureaucracy, the commercial class, and the classes that controlled the agricultural and financial sectors of the economy carried on their activities in either a community language or a regional Indian lingua franca. Many of the privileged and powerful groups in the native states were quite thoroughly Anglicized by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but they reserved English for their transactions with the British colonial state and its representatives, with British or European employees, associates, or visitors at court, and with migratory middle-class Indian professionals from other parts of the subcontinent. Thus, in the political economy of most of the Indian states, a restricted sphere of English was differentiated from the administrative-commercial sphere of a regional lingua franca (or a community language elevated to that role), as well as from the spheres of specific community and domestic languages. But the position of English in this hierarchy was ambiguous: on the one hand, it was superior to the regional lingua franca, since it was reserved for transregional and international transactions, while on the other, it was also inferior, since it was excluded from the circuits of local and regional power. In British territories as well as in Indian states, English thus did not *re*place one or more Indian languages, but *dis*placed them as it jostled for a position in a new hierarchy of languages in everyday use.

Cumulatively, the institutionalization of English education in British India, its gradual dispersion in the sphere of the colonial state until it became the sole official language of the colony, its parallel diffusion in the marketplace for international transactions, and its emergence as a medium of communication used in specific contexts by middle- and upper-class Indians had four major consequences for Indian-English literary culture. The first was that literate Indian multilingualism acquired its characteristic tripartite modern structure, in which English, an Indian lingua franca, and an Indian domes-

95. An interesting account of this linguistic configuration appears in Tandon 1961, chs. 1 and 2. Also see King 1989, especially 184–187.

tic language came to coexist in the linguistic repertoire of many educated middle-class Indians. In its high literary and cultural form, this threefold multilingualism brought together English, either Sanskrit or Persian, and a modern Indian mother tongue (whether Indo-Aryan or Dravidian) with literacy in two or three different script systems. Between about 1850 and 1975, most Indian writers engaged in textual production in English were equipped with this particular type of multilingualism.[96] The second consequence was that Indian writing in English, like acculturation to the West more broadly, came to be strongly associated with writers and readers of middle- and dominant-class backgrounds, so that even in the post-Independence period, Indian-English literature has been almost exclusively associated with privilege and power. This has meant that since about 1850, Indian-English authors as well as readers have had to struggle with, for, and against their peculiar class interests to a much more visible extent than their counterparts in the indigenous Indian languages.[97] The third consequence was that the linguistic-social developments of the nineteenth century created a basic map that more or less determined the geographical distribution of the centers of Indian-English literary production over the following century. On this map, the regions comprising many of the princely states have remained much less Anglicized than those comprising a few highly modernized native states, and the latter, in turn, have remained less Anglicized than the three Presidencies and the urban centers of British India. As a result, most notable Indian writers in English have emerged from a relatively small set of cities and towns that became prominent in the nineteenth-century political economy of language and class: Bombay, Baroda, Delhi, Lahore, Srinagar, Mussoorie, Lucknow, Allahabad, Patna, Calcutta, Darjeeling, Cuttack, Hyderabad, Madras, Trivandrum, Bangalore, and Mysore. The locations of Indian-English culture in the past two centuries therefore have been geographically and socially more exclusive than the locations of Indian-language literary cultures.[98] The fourth consequence was that after British India was placed under Crown rule in 1858, English rapidly became the intellectual lingua franca of the three presidencies, jostling with Sanskrit, Persian, and Hindi-Urdu as the common medium of learning, debate, activism, and transregional communication. This meant that in practice, from about 1860 to 1947, the subcontinental "public sphere"

96. Raja Rao, for instance, describes this type of multilingualism in his preface to *Kanthapura,* which I discuss in the final section of this chapter. A. K. Ramanujan also discusses it in his *Collected Essays* (1999, ch. 18).

97. For more extended discussions of this and related issues, refer to Dharwadker 1994c: 185–206; 1994b: 237–41; and Dharwadker and Dharwadker 1996: 89–106. In addition, see Das 1995.

98. These generalizations draw on the biographies of the writers cited in this chapter, particularly in the sections "Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial Fiction and Prose" and "The Dominance of the Diaspora."

was partitioned between two "foreign" languages (English and Persian) and two Indian languages (Sanskrit and Hindi-Urdu)—an uneasy condition that has persisted after Independence, with Hindi and English as equally (though differently) contested official languages of the republic.[99]

The Effects of Print Culture

From around the beginning of the nineteenth century, the characteristics of Indian writing in English have also been mediated strongly by the particular history of print culture on the subcontinent. Among the major literatures of Indian origin, Indian-English writing is the only one that did not pass through a phase of scribal reproduction and manuscript circulation. Its appearance in history, in fact, coincided closely with the formation of a modern print culture in India, following the protracted transfer of print technology from Europe to the subcontinent between the mid-sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries.[100] One of the primary factors that affected Indian print culture at this stage was the British colonial state itself, which by definition could not and did not allow its Indian subjects to constitute a civil society in the form that this institution had taken under the influence of Enlightenment thought in eighteenth-century England, France, and Germany. Nor could the Company, in the interests of its own survival, permit Indians to construct a European-style liberal public sphere in the medium of print: it engendered instead a far more restricted colonial sphere of publication and publicity.[101] In this sphere, the colonial administration closely monitored and regulated the use and flow of print in its territories, often with an authoritarian application of its censorship laws centered around libel and sedition. However, since the British were self-consciously trapped from the start in the contradiction of being "democrats at home but despots abroad," the print culture they molded on the subcontinent was also, paradoxically, protoliberal in its outline.[102] Thus, the force of colonial censorship was counterbalanced, to some extent, by three important features of the print medium in British India: Indians could and did make extensive financial and cultural investments in print technology and its products and institutions; print media were subject to restricted market competition, but within the limits set by the state, the competition was real, so that published texts could achieve an important measure of expressive and communicative freedom; and the protocols of expression and representation fell far short of the ideals of civil society and the liberal-democratic public

---

99. Consult, especially, Das 1991, chs. 1, 2, and 6; 1995, ch. 2; also see Brass 1990, ch. 5.

100. This is discussed further in Dharwadker 1997.

101. On the public sphere and civil society, see Dharwadker 1997, especially 114–117 and 130 n. 23.

102. See Dharwadker 1997, especially 116.

sphere, but they were sufficiently flexible to nurture the growth of multiple, divergent, and critical discourses in print.[103] Under the peculiar combination of constraints and freedoms that constituted the colonial sphere in British India (which was different from the print sphere that emerged in the Indian states), the intersection of the print medium and the process of representation (which, historically, has been inexorably literary as well as political) induced two large-scale transformations in the dynamics of Indian writing in English, as also in the modern Indian languages. One was the differentiation of mutually contestatory British and Indian representations of India into more specific rhetorical orientations toward India, which were related to particular market segments in the economy of print. The other was the generation of a new set of interlinked ideological positions, cultural locations, political identities, and modes of representation that resituated Indian writers with respect to India and the British empire. Once these series of orientations and positions had been formulated in the nineteenth century, they changed the internal kinetics of Indian-English literature.

The first of these transformations involves a long series of discursive shifts. The British representations of India that commenced with Thomas Stephens and Ralph Fitch in the 1580s and 1590s shared a rhetorical orientation toward object and reader that remained fairly consistent for the next 150 years or more. This orientation projected India as a place of wealth and wonder; a destination of heroic journeys; a land of opportunities and adventures; a fertile field for evangelical missions; and hence, a desirable object in the economic, political, and religious imagination of the English nation. In the decades leading up to and just after the inception of colonial rule, however, the British discourse on India bifurcated into two conflicting discourses, one which continued to treat the subcontinent in *heroic* terms and one which took a critical, often *satirical* stance toward it. The two orientations became interlocked after the mid-eighteenth century, since British writers sometimes combined them in a single text, either praising indigenous Indian society and criticizing the British and their activities in it, or more often, portraying Englishmen as heroes and denigrating Indian politics, history, religion, and culture. When Din Muhammad initiated the representation of Indian understandings of India in English, he attempted to redress the excesses in both these combinations of the heroic and the satiric in existing British depictions of the subcontinent; and when Rammohun Roy complicated the discursive contestation, he bifurcated Indian discourse itself into a branch of satirical self-criticism and a branch of heroic self-transformation at the collision point of East and West. As Orientalism (much of which valorized indigenous Indian culture) gathered momentum in the colony as well as in

---

103. Refer to Dharwadker 1997; also see Chatterjee 1995, and Roy 1995.

Europe in the early nineteenth century, and as the Anglicist movement (which was critical of Indian culture) accumulated force among Whigs, evangelicals, and Utilitarians in Great Britain as well as India, a third rhetorical orientation appeared in the discourse about the subcontinent, mediating the incommensurability of heroic and satiric representations. This was the orientation defined by a conjunction of rational argument and empirical evidence, which treated India as an object of dispassionate epistemological investigation and sought to persuade readers without resorting to the prejudices of heroic narrative or satirical attack. In the long run, however, the rational-empirical discourse on India itself was divided and dispersed between the heroic and satiric traditions around it, so that its so-called objective methods of inquiry were absorbed into the textual politics of praise and blame. The historical importance of this development from the mid-eighteenth century onward is that both British and Indian representations of India steadily differentiated themselves into distinct heroic, satiric, and rational-empirical strands in the print medium. These specific orientations toward the subcontinent have greatly diversified the dynamics of representation and contestation within and between the two national traditions over the past one hundred years.[104]

Such a structured multiplication of discourses about India has had concrete material-cultural consequences for Indian writing in English during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Publishers as well as writers have aimed each rhetorical orientation or combination of orientations at a specific readership in the literary marketplace, so that each discourse has come to be implicated in a cycle of demand and supply in the economy of print. Henry Derozio and Toru Dutt, for example, constructed a lyrical heroic discourse about India that appealed to a small but well-defined liberal, anticolonial audience in nineteenth-century England and British India; whereas Sarojini Naidu constructed a similar discourse that in the early and mid-twentieth century appealed to a community of Anglicized Indian nationalists in the presidency regions.[105] In contrast, in the postcolonial period, Nirad C. Chaudhuri produced satirical nonfictional prose that catered especially to postwar British, American, and Commonwealth readers with a distaste for indigenous and modern India; whereas Salman Rushdie has capitalized on a combination of satiric and heroic fiction about historical and contemporary India aimed at cosmopolitan readers, but not at traditionalist or nationalist readers.[106] In further contrast, the Subaltern Studies historians, work-

104. This process is discussed in greater detail in Dharwadker 1989, ch. 1. Also refer to Dharwadker 1993.

105. On Derozio and Dutt, see Alphonso-Karkala 1970; on Naidu, consult Naravane 1980.

106. On Chaudhuri, refer to Srinivasa Iyengar 1973: 590–600, and Naik 1982: 264–70. On Rushdie, consult Afzal-Khan 1993, ch. 4.

ing on the fringes of Indian-English literary culture, have developed a heroic and rational-empirical discourse on indigenous India that specifically targets a worldwide audience of anticolonial intellectuals and activists.[107] Indian-English as well as British textual production in the heroic, satiric, and rational-empirical modes thus has energized an ideological connection between author and reader and, at the same time, has been energized by an economic connection between discourse and market segment.

The second transformation initiated by the peculiar circumstances of print culture in the colonial sphere involved the generation of a series of discursive positions in Indian-English writing—and in modern Indian culture on a wider scale—quite apart from the heroic, satiric, and rational-empirical representations of the subcontinent. In this arena, the primary object of representation was not India in or by itself, even though it remained a constant master referent; instead, the process of representation focused on the mutually constitutive, conflictual interactions between *empire, nation, village,* and *city.* This processual complex emerged in Indian culture over the course of the nineteenth century, and in its most general form it may be described as a series of "subject-positions" that Indians came to occupy under colonial rule, as follows.[108]

One subject-position was that of collaboration, in which an Indian aligned himself (or, interchangeably throughout, herself) with the colonizer, reproducing the ideology of imperialism in his discourse and valorizing the culture of the metropolis over the indigenous culture of the colony or protonation. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Din Muhammad and C. V. Boriah entered the field of English discourse potentially as mimics of colonialist and Orientalist discourse; as the century progressed, the collaborator came to be embodied most vividly in the *babu,* the eagerly complicitous native clerk in the colonial bureaucracy, who was satirized heavily in Bankimchandra Chatterjee's fiction in Bangla and, much later, in the characters of Banerrji in G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) and Saladin Chamcha in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988).[109] A second subject-position was that of Indian provincialism or traditionalist revivalism, in which an Indian located himself literally or figuratively in the Indian village and oriented himself against both foreign empire and Indian city in order to produce a discourse of cultural authenticity. The strongest articulations of this position in nineteenth-century print were Dayananda Saraswati's *Satyārtha-prakaśa* (1875) in Hindi, the founding text of the Arya Samaj movement,

---

107. See, for example, Guha and Spivak 1988, especially the foreword by Edward W. Said.

108. Three of these subject-positions are discussed at length in Dharwadker 1997.

109. On Chatterjee, see the sources cited in note 80; also refer to Chatterjee [1986] 1993, ch. 3, and Raychaudhuri 1988, ch. 3. On Desani, consult Desani [1948] 1986; and see comments in Naik 1984, ch. 11. On Rushdie, see the sources cited in notes 83 and 106.

and Swami Vivekananda's writings in English, which urged the revival, justification, and mobilization of Indian tradition against Westernization, modernity, and cosmopolitanism and, in an important reversal of Hegel's projection of India, emphasized the superiority of Indian spiritualism to Western materialism.[110] A third subject-position was that of nationalism or protonationalism, in which an Indian advocated resistance or opposition to colonial domination, and sought to establish solidarity in an inclusive, subcontinental (rather than provincial) concept of Indianness or national identity. This position was articulated in early forms in Henry Derozio's poems and in the first Indian short story in English, Kylas Chunder Dutt's "A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945" (published in Captain Richardson's *Calcutta Literary Gazette* in 1835), which futuristically envisioned a heroic, armed Indian uprising against British rule in the mid-twentieth century.[111] The fourth subject-position was that of cosmopolitanism or cultural ambidexterity, in which an Indian located himself in the contemporaneous Indian city as a site of invigorating cultural ambivalence, distancing himself from empire, village, and nation, but borrowing from all three to produce a discourse of modernity and reform, and arguing against mere traditionalism and authenticity, mere nationalistic fervor, and mere Westernization. This position was represented early in the nineteenth century in the works of Rammohun Roy and late in the century in the speeches, essays, reports, and books of M. G. Ranade.[112]

Each of the four subject-positions that appeared in the Indian cultural sphere and in print in the nineteenth century was constituted dynamically in its differentiation from the other three positions, with which it interacted conflictually, continuously, and untranscendably. Each position was a condensation point for a historical process, a geographical location, an ideology, a cultural identity, a corresponding political strategy, and a characteristic mode of representation and style of writing (the last of which split further into the heroic and satiric genres). This multitiered complex may be represented structurally and schematically as a series of semiotic squares that semantically *parallel* each other and, in effect, decode what Indian writers encrypt in their texts, as in table 3.1.[113]

110. For information on Dayananda and Vivekananda, see Hay 1988: 52–62 and 72–82; and Das 1991.

111. On Derozio, consult Alphonso-Karkala 1970, ch. 2; and on Dutt, refer to Das 1991: 80.

112. Cultural ambidexterity is defined in Dharwadker 1997: 120–24. On Roy, see the sources cited in notes 58–61. On Ranade, see Hay 1988: 102–13.

113. On the semiotic square, see Jameson 1981: 46–49 and elsewhere. In the interests of concision, my chart reduces the various relations among the four elements of each square (such as contrariness, contradiction, and implication) to a uniform relation of opposition ("versus"); for the more complex version of this semiotics, see Greimas 1987, particularly ch. 3.

TABLE 3.1

Semantic Level	Semiotic Square		
Historical processes	Westernization vs. Modernization	vs. vs.	Traditionalization vs. Indianization
Locations	Empire vs. City	vs. vs.	Village vs. Nation
Ideologies	Imperialism vs. Cosmopolitanism	vs. vs.	Provincialism vs. Nationalism
Identity positions	Mimicry vs. Ambidexterity	vs. vs.	Authenticity vs. Solidarity
Political strategies	Collaboration vs. Reform	vs. vs.	Revival vs. Resistance
Discourses	*In the Heroic Mode*		
	Colonialist vs. Modernist	vs. vs.	Traditionalist vs. Nationalist
	In the Satiric Mode		
	Antinationalist vs. Antitraditionalist	vs. vs.	Antimodernist vs. Anticolonialist

This structure within the colonial sphere complicated the dynamics of intra- and inter-cultural contestation and of intertextured heroic, satiric, and rational-empirical representations of India in Indian-English writing because it *re*located India within a perpetual four-sided confrontation involving empire, nation, village, and city. As I show at length in the next two sections, the mutual interactions of imperialism, provincialism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism launched in the nineteenth century were to achieve their full literary embodiment in the Indian writing in English of the late colonial and early postcolonial decades and, with significant modifications, in the postcolonial diaspora.

LATE COLONIAL AND EARLY POSTCOLONIAL FICTION AND PROSE

By the beginning of the second quarter of the twentieth century, the social, economic, and political changes of the preceding one hundred years or so had modernized the Indian-English writer's environment both materially and culturally. In the urban centers of British India as well as the more prosperous and progressive Indian states, members of the middle class now frequently chose to be educated in English-medium institutions and to pursue professional careers in medicine, engineering, industry, education, journalism, business, law, and government. The contemporary town and city had been invaded by the paraphernalia of modernity: bicycles, trains, and cars; the telegraph, the photograph, the phonograph, and the typewriter; industrial manufacture, mass production, and modern advertising; and newspapers, magazines, books, and libraries. On the coast, the modern port had been besieged by steamships and ocean liners. By 1925 the Gandhian movement had engaged the passions of many writers and artists, and, within the decade that followed, the spectrum of left-wing politics—from Fabian socialism to Leninist anti-imperialism and Stalinist collectivism—had attracted an entire generation of intellectuals and activists.[114] The everyday environment of young Indian-English writers even by the late 1920s and early 1930s was more crowded, more diverse, more fast-paced and technologically complicated, more connected to events abroad, more cosmopolitan, and more rootless and alienated than the one their predecessors had inhabited at the turn of the century.

The Indian-English writers who entered the domain of print for the first time in the altered and accelerated world of the second quarter of the twentieth century rejected the aestheticism of the previous one hundred years and, with it, the dominance of verse and poetry. The primary innovators of this period—R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and G. V. Desani—found that their interests and energies required the liveliness, immediacy, malleability, and capaciousness of prose for proper articulation, and they therefore chose the novel, the novella, the short story, the essay, and the personal sketch as their preferred forms. In contrast to the high aesthetic aims of the nineteenth-century poets, their discursive intentions belonged to the low mimetic mode, in which a writer confronts and represents contemporary reality and everyday life, individual experience, shared social phenomena, and the unfolding events of current local and national history. The chosen style of the late colonial decades (and, subsequently, of the early post-Independence decades) therefore turned out to be realism, which brought together psychological realism and social realism, and within the latter cat-

114. See Das 1995, chs. 1 and 3.

egory, both humanist social realism and Marxian socialist realism. If the poets of the long nineteenth century had achieved a limited yet remarkable aestheticization of Indian-English literature, then what the prose writers of the late colonial decades accomplished was the literary invention of Indian contemporaneity, a formation in which the writing of a period succeeds in minutely yet comprehensively representing the *Lebenswelt,* or "lived world," of the times.[115] But this contemporaneity was not monolithic: it was fragmented and energized by the class affiliations, ideological motivations, and rhetorical orientations that had pluralized Indian-English literature and its cultural contexts by the end of the nineteenth century. The internal contestation among the discourses of authenticity, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and complicity that drove the fiction and prose of the 1925–1975 period may therefore be described as follows.

Authenticity

The first ideological position to be articulated in late colonial realism was that of provincialism and Indian authenticity, whether celebrated in a heroic mode or situated ironically in an antiheroic framework. Whereas the nineteenth-century poets had tried to Indianize and thus authenticate their writing by composing lyric, dramatic, and narrative poems on distinctively Indian themes, especially by intertextualizing their verse in English with folk and literary materials from the subcontinent's past, some of the fiction writers of the 1920s and 1930s attempted directly to (re)locate their narratives thematically and aesthetically in the Indian village. Narayan, Rao, Anand, and Desani contributed significantly and differentially to this cultural shift, but Narayan's construction of an authentically Indian narrative location proved to be particularly durable and influential, partly because it was unique. In the fifteen novels that he published over six decades (from *Swami and Friends* [1935] to *The World of Nagaraj* [1990]) Narayan focused almost exclusively on the possibilities of innovation latent in the form known in modern British literature as the ironic comedy of manners.[116] He appropriated and altered this form at three basic levels: he composed his texts in relaxed, idiomatic English, paring down the verbal texture to a figural minimum; he used this style to translate a fluid mode of oral Indian storytelling into written representation and print; and he employed it to explore the changes—initiated by the moral dilemmas of its inhabitants and the incursions of modernity from the outside world—in the slow-paced, traditional

115. On the low mimetic mode, consult the first essay in Frye 1957. On realism and its varieties, refer to Martin 1986, ch. 3, and Dharwadker 1995.

116. For information and commentary on Narayan, consult Afzal-Khan 1993, ch. 1; also see Srinivasa Iyengar 1973, ch. 18. For additional commentary, see Walsh 1982, and Kain 1993.

(predominantly Hindu) existence of a fictional place called Malgudi, set in contemporary central south India. The specific topography of Malgudi continues to be especially interesting in this context: although Narayan portrayed it on the surface as a small town, his short stories, prose sketches, autobiographical writings, and novels gradually suggested that it was what the twentieth-century Marathi novelist Vyankatesh Madgulkar once called a "village without walls," so that its principal social dynamics was that of traditionality and provinciality under siege.[117] Narayan's characteristic narrative strategy in this regard was to add an anagogic level of meaning to his otherwise humanist realism by introducing a thick layer of Hindu myths into the psychodrama of Malgudi, whereby the personalities and actions of its twentieth-century characters frequently paralleled or replicated those of gods, epic heroes, and villains in ancient, archetyped social conflicts and psychological struggles.[118] Within his minimalist aesthetics, Narayan's characteristic trope was understated verbal and structural irony, which as William Walsh points out, turned his novels into "comedies of sadness," "blending exact realism, poetic myth, sadness, perception and gaiety" in such a way that Malgudi became a microcosm where "things flow, an infinite variety of things, of men and manners, relations and women, avocations and degrees, joys, disappointments and disasters. To the author this is the nature of reality; to the characters living their day to day life, it is what they will, perhaps, with a moderate kind of happiness, finally accommodate themselves to."[119]

Given the "principle of balance" that structures Narayan's low-key, almost antiheroic narratives, what emerges, in Fawzia Afzal-Khan's words, is

> a harmonious coexistence symbolizing unity, a wholeness, toward which Narayan's protagonists are constantly progressing and which they must achieve if they are to mature fully. The wholeness—which . . . becomes a hollowness for Salman Rushdie . . . —is possible in the Malgudi of Narayan's novels because it is a world rooted in Indian myth and tradition, a town that is still pastoral in its innocence of the political reality of modern, twentieth-century India. . . . Here, what matters most is not how the natives deal with the aftermath of political fragmentation, but whether they will achieve an authentic and sincere identity as Indians in an "authentic" Indian setting.[120]

The extratextual irony of Narayan's "village without walls" is that its way of life—its perpetual mediation between tradition and modernity, old village

117. For brief comments on Vyankatesh Madgulkar's village in *Bāṅgarawāḍī* (1955), see Das 1995: 851; also consult Deshpande and Rajadhyaksha 1988: 167–68.

118. On the anagogic level of meaning, see the second essay in Frye 1957, especially 116–28; on Narayan's use of myth, see Afzal-Khan 1993, ch. 1.

119. Quoted from Walsh 1982: 59, 168.

120. The phrase "principle of balance" is from Walsh 1982: 59; the quoted passage is from Afzal-Khan 1993: 27–28.

and potential new city—has been so pervasively eroded by post-Independence economic, technological, demographic, and political transformations that it now exists only inside his fiction.

Nationalism

Starting in the 1920s and 1930s, late colonial Indian-English writers also constructed a second ideological position for themselves in the discursive space of the nation, national solidarity, and anticolonial nationalism, at once complementary and opposed to the position of provincial authenticity. The combination of national solidarity and anticolonial nationalism further distinguished itself from various types of revivalist nationalism (which may or may not be directed at colonialism) and from cosmopolitan patriotism (which may reject all forms of nationalism), producing a literature marked by nation-centered Indianness and collective resistance to imperialism.[121] The primary influence on this branch of Indian writing in English was that of Gandhian nationalism which, despite its frequently criticized reactionary and revivalist tendencies, remained distinct from a cluster of more provincial nationalisms developed by the Arya Samaj, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh.[122] The specific feature of Gandhian nationalism that affected the late colonial Indian-English novel was its superposition of the emergent Indian *nation* on the Indian *village,* such that the village ceased to be an isolated, self-enclosed place and, instead, became the transformative site of anticolonial national consciousness and national action. The paradigmatic novel of the village as the theater of national identity formation was *Kanthapura* (1938), in which Raja Rao—like Michael Madhusudan Dutt some seventy years earlier—pushed Indianness beyond the limits of thematization and into the form and aesthetics of representation itself.[123] The novel tells the story of how Gandhi's swaraj movement penetrates a traditional, peaceful village and a British-owned coffee estate in central south India in the 1920s, how the villagers—including the women—risk nonviolent protests against the colonial regime, and how the regime's violent retaliation, together with the very logic of modernization, destroys and thereby transforms the village.[124]

121. On revivalism and revivalist nationalism in colonial India, see Hay 1988, chs. 2, 4, 5, and 7. On cosmopolitan patriotism, consult Appiah 1997: 617–39.

122. These three organizations are discussed in Hay 1988: 52–62, 159–71, 289–95, and 359–65; Wolpert 1993; and Brass 1990: 15–17, 77–78, respectively. These organizations are the forerunners of the Jana Sangh, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and the Bharatiya Janata Party, among others, in the post-Independence period.

123. Refer to Rao [1938] 1967. For commentary, consult Narasimhaiah 1973, and Sharrad 1987.

124. On Gandhi's ideas and the swaraj movement, see Iyer 1986–1987, and 1993; and Jack 1994.

Rao's remarkable aesthetic improvisation was to use an old woman (a Brahman widow) belonging to the (former) village as the narrator, to develop her narration in the rough and dense style of a folk *sthalapurāṇa* (an oral history of a particular place, composed and transmitted in the local language over many generations), to structure the story as a performance text, and at the same time, to weave the English texture as a stream-of-consciousness monologue modeled after James Joyce, so that *Kanthapura* was also a highly crafted, experimental high-modernist novel. Unlike Michael Madhusudan Dutt's experiments in translating Sanskrit and Bangla diction into English, Rao's brilliant grafting of oral-folk puranic storytelling in Kannada onto written novelistic representation in the heroic-mimetic mode in English prose was aesthetically successful, opening the way to subsequent Indian-English experiments in hybridization of language, form, and style that intensified with G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) and led up to Salman Rushdie's improvisations from *Midnight's Children* (1980) to *The Ground beneath Her Feet* (1999).[125] As I suggest at the end of this essay, such a melding of Indian and Anglo-European textual and aesthetic elements has enabled Indian-English literature to achieve literariness by subcontinental as well as Anglophone norms, to translate "Indian life" into a "foreign" language, and at the same time, to domesticate that medium by filling it with the long shadows of the languages of the Indian *Lebenswelt*. In the case of *Kanthapura,* this interpenetration of cultures was particularly striking because Rao carried it out at the double site of superposed village and nation and in the contestatory political voice of uncompromising anticolonialism.

Cosmopolitanism

Distancing themselves from Narayan's provincial Malgudi and Rao's nationalistic Kanthapura, some writers of the 1925–1975 period developed a discourse of cosmopolitanism, which was centered on the contemporary Indian city, mediated ambidextrously between Indian and Western cultures without committing monologically to either, and was driven by a subcontinental agenda of self-reform, alternative development, and indigenized modernity.[126] In its heroic mode, this discourse has been modernist and postmodernist (where both modernism and postmodernism are mediated by Indianness), and in its satiric mode it has been antirevivalist or antitradition-

---

125. On Desani, refer to note 109. On Rushdie, see the sources cited in notes 83 and 106. I have referred to the following important works by Rushdie: *Midnight's Children; Shame; The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey; The Satanic Verses; Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981–1991; East, West: Stories; The Moor's Last Sigh;* and *The Ground beneath Her Feet*. In addition, consult Rushdie and West 1997.

126. Cultural ambidexterity is analyzed further in Dharwadker 1997: 120–24.

alist on the one hand and anticolonialist on the other (and hence frequently distant from both village and empire).[127] Of the three basic forms that Indian-English cosmopolitanism took in the 1925–1975 period, the first was defined by Nehru's Fabian socialism and modernizing secularism, which attempted to define, celebrate, and reproduce India's "unity in diversity."[128] The second was shaped by Marxist socialism, which pushed cosmopolitanism toward a different kind of internationalism, opposed to the globalizing tendencies in liberal capitalism.[129] Both types of socialism differentiated themselves from Gandhian nationalism, which seemed to them at once antimodern and anticosmopolitan; and both were motivated by an ideal of historical progress grounded in the theory and practice of science. But whereas Nehruvian socialism aligned itself with a secular-scientific rationality that rejected religious ritual and dogma and therefore privatized religion, and that promoted planned economic modernization in the interests of nation building, Marxist socialism was impelled by its scientific critique of capitalism, religion, and liberal democracy to dismantle the nation-state and nationalism (in its religious as well as secular forms), and to pursue the ideal of social justice in a classless society. The third form of Indian cosmopolitanism evolved alongside the other two, deriving its ideological force from a combination of liberal humanism, Enlightenment universalism, and Anglo-American high modernism. Locating itself in a framework of progressive enlightenment and improvement—as contrasted to the stagnation and retrogression it attributed to province and village, traditionality and revivalism—this humanistic cosmopolitanism came to focus its attention on individuals, personal relationships, and individualism; on the importance of individual rights, social equality, and democratic institutions to Indian modernity; on the essential role of the rule of law and the principle of checks and balances in the subcontinent's public life; and sometimes, more loosely, on the Utilitarian-democratic ideal of the greatest good for the greatest number.[130]

A detailed mapping of cosmopolitanism is necessary because in the 1925–1975 period as well as the post-1975 diaspora, most Indian-English writers have identified themselves with one or another, or some combination, of its three versions. Socialist cosmopolitanism—both Nehruvian and Marxist, with the two often intertwined—took deep root in twentieth-century India, defining the social and economic program that dominated state policy and na-

127. On modernism and postmodernism in Indian writing, see Dharwadker 1994b and 1994c.

128. On Nehru, see Srinivasa Iyengar 1973, ch. 15, Gopal 1989, and Wolpert 1993.

129. On the various communist and socialist parties in India, see Brass 1990, ch. 2, especially 72–76; on literary socialism, see Das 1995, ch. 3.

130. On the humanist basis of such a cosmopolitanism, see Davies 1997, ch. 2, especially 41–47.

tional cultural life for the first three decades after Independence.[131] This combination gave birth to a large literature of "social conscience," which, starting with the formation of the Progressive Writers Association in 1935, adopted a pro-subaltern and anti-elitist position on key issues concerning the economy, social practices, civic and political institutions, and individual, community, and national welfare.[132] The paradigmatic texts of pro-subaltern cosmopolitanism in the 1930s were Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936), which became proletarian classics in English and in eastern European translations in the Soviet-bloc countries in the high period of socialist realism.[133] The interacting discourses of Nehruvian, Marxist, and humanist cosmopolitanism also produced an extensive materialist and cultural critique of imperialism in the post-Independence period, starting again with Desani's *Hatterr,* which in Salman Rushdie's words, was "the first great stroke of the decolonizing pen" in Commonwealth literature. Over time, this discourse expanded to include the searching critiques of the East-West encounter in Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960); Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* (1956), *Possession* (1963), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), and *Shalimar* (1982); Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* (1985) and *Journey to Ithaca* (1995); and in the diasporic fiction of Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh.[134]

In addition, the Indian version of liberal-humanist cosmopolitanism generated a parallel discourse on India and the West during this period, resulting in fiction that was aesthetically more accomplished than socialist realism and, partly in response to the latter, also relatively more apolitical. This humanistic cosmopolitanism found its most persuasive articulation in the work of Anita Desai, whose later career has overlapped with the history of the Indian-English literary diaspora. From the 1960s onward, Desai's cosmopolitan novels and short stories became lexically and syntactically more highly wrought than Narayan's or Anand's, being concerned often with explicating the minds and characters of their protagonists through interior monologues modeled on Virginia Woolf's high-modernist stream-of-consciousness style. Like Narayan but unlike Anand and Rao, Desai came to see herself primarily as an aesthetic and moral craftswoman rather than as a vocal social critic or political activist. Yet her fiction—especially from *Clear Light of Day* (1980) to *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1989)—focused frequently on the social complexities

131. See Brass 1990 and Wolpert 1993, ch. 23.
132. Consult Das 1995, ch. 3.
133. On Anand, see Srinivasa Iyengar 1973, ch. 17; and Naik 1982: 155–60.
134. Rushdie's phrase is from Rushdie 1982a: 8. On Rao's novel, refer to Narasimhaiah 1973, ch. 3, and Sharrad 1987. On Desai, Markandaya, and Rushdie, consult Afzal-Khan 1993, chs. 2, 3, and 4, respectively. On Amitav Ghosh, refer to the essays by A. N. Kaul, Suvir Kaul, Meenakshi Mukherjee, and Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan in Ghosh 1995: 253–309.

of middle- and upper-class Indian life, and on the devastating effects of family, society, and history on innocent or helpless individuals, particularly when they are plunged unwittingly into violent political events (such as the Partition in *Clear Light of Day,* and World War II and the Holocaust in *Baumgartner's Bombay*). A substantial portion of her early and late fiction—particularly *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), and *Clear Light of Day* (1980)—has also concentrated on middle-class Indian women characters, exploring their lives systematically and sympathetically in rich, realistic detail, and confronting difficult social issues (problem marriages, unexpected pregnancies, widowhood, lifelong disabilities, and emotional dependencies) without resorting to a strident feminist rhetoric.[135] Her writing thus has centered on individuals but has incorporated powerful social, historical, and political components, even though she has treated the latter obliquely, through the trope of indirection or suggestion (which parallels the classical Sanskrit device of *vakrokti*).[136] Desai's humanist aesthetics may be best characterized as a sensuous classical aestheticism, which has subordinated her social and political interests to the rigors of verbal refinement and imaginative resonance, and has allowed such interests to surface only as supplementary textual effects. What has been distinctive about Desai's body of humanist-cosmopolitan work is its capacity to transmute the conventional late-modernist comedy of urban manners (as contrasted to Narayan's "serious comedies" of provincial manners) into a searching tragicomedy in a middle-class Indian city setting, or into a searing tragedy in an international landscape.

Collaboration

The enlargement and intensification of the national freedom movement after Mahatma Gandhi's return to the subcontinent in 1915 and the influence of his swadeshi campaign on Indian literary thinking in the 1920s and 1930s—which encouraged Indians to reject the English language, along with all English goods—made it virtually impossible for an Indian to criticize India or to praise the British in the final decades of colonial rule.[137] Indian-English collaborative discourse, however, survived this phase and resurfaced strongly just after Independence as a fourth ideological position in the newly constituted national public sphere, particularly in the voluminous prose writings of Nirad C. Chaudhuri. In a series of books beginning with *The Autobio-*

135. On Desai, see Afzal-Khan 1993, ch. 2, and Mack 1995, 2: 2767–71. In addition to the novels cited in Afzal-Khan 1993: 181, I have referred to Desai 1995.

136. *Vakrokti,* or obliqueness, is discussed in Dimock 1974: 115–16, 138.

137. On Gandhi's concept of swadeshi, consult the works cited in note 124; on its influence on Indian literatures, refer to Das 1995, ch. 3.

graphy of an Unknown Indian (1951) and continuing up to *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* (1993)—another installment of his autobiography—Chaudhuri defined the core of voluntary postcolonial complicity with the ideology of imperialism. In his biographies of Friedrich Max Muller (1974) and Robert Clive (1975), in works of social criticism such as *The Intellectual in India* (1967) and *Culture in a Vanity Bag* (1976), in accounts such as *A Passage to England* (1959), and in works of historical and ideological criticism such as *The Continent of Circe* (1966) and *Hinduism* (1979), he rejected practically every aspect of indigenous Indian society, arguing that whatever is valuable on the subcontinent is a legacy of British colonization and Westernization.[138] Starting in the mid-1960s, Chaudhuri's unrestrained and unrepentant Anglophilia found unexpected corroboration in the work of V. S. Naipaul, who, as a descendant of agricultural workers from Uttar Pradesh indentured in Trinidad and Tobago in the mid-nineteenth century, returned to the subcontinent as an observer at the center of Anglophone Caribbean and postcolonial writing and on the fringes of Indian-English literary culture. Naipaul's three New Journalistic travel-accounts, *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), indicted historical and post-Independence India from a partial-outsider's point of view as virulently as Chaudhuri's books did from an insider's perspective.[139] The critique of India that Chaudhuri and Naipaul refurbished between them may be interpreted as stemming from a "self-hatred" that, as Fawzia Afzal-Khan says of Naipaul,

> drives him incessantly to demarcate the difference between what he is today (an inhabitant of the world of "light") and what his distant past (with its link to India) was (a world of "darkness"). What he is today, he repeats obsessively . . . is an Anglicized West Indian with a remote Indian ancestry—with the emphasis on "Anglicized." "London," he writes, "had become the center of my world, and I had worked hard to come to it." . . . As the westernized native par excellence, Naipaul succumbs to the syndrome of alienation so astutely described by Frantz Fanon: "At a given stage, [such a writer] feels that his race no longer understands him, or that he no longer understands it. . . ." In so doing, Naipaul creates a literature of self-hatred that duplicates Orientalist strategies of containment . . . [to create] a symbol of petrified societies enshrouded in perpetual darkness.[140]

138. On Chaudhuri, consult the sources cited in note 106; also see his obituary in *Time* (August 16, 1999: 21), which appeared the week I completed this chapter.

139. On Naipaul, see Afzal-Khan 1993: 5–13. I have referred to three of Naipaul's works: *An Area of Darkness; India: A Wounded Civilization;* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now.* On the last of these, also see Dharwadker 1994a: 319–24. For his recent autobiographical reflections on India, see Naipaul 1999a and 1999b.

140. See Afzal-Khan 1993: 10–11.

Articulating a vision in which India is representative of the postwar Third World, and "the Third World in general is a nightmare of history" that the complicitous postcolonial writer "seeks desperately to avoid by living in the world of light—the West," figures like Chaudhuri and Naipaul have reinvigorated the satiric attacks on India and Indianness that have been characteristic of evangelical, Anglicist, and colonialist British discourse since the eighteenth century, and that became prominent in Indian writing during the Bengal Renaissance in the nineteenth century.[141] At the same time, they have also provoked countercritiques from Indian-English writers and scholars such as Nissim Ezekiel, Dilip Chitre, and Harish Trivedi. The rift between satiric and heroic representations of India has thus been deepened by Indians themselves.[142]

As the foregoing discussion indicates, the fertility of Indian writing in English in the closing decades of colonial rule and the first few decades of political freedom has immensely complicated the historical dynamics of this literature. Where Din Muhammad had launched a discursive contestation between Indian understandings and British experiences of India, where Rammohun Roy had initiated a contestation over India itself within the larger contestation with the West, and where the poets of the long nineteenth century—from Henry Derozio to Sarojini Naidu—had multiplied the levels of contestation by adding the aesthetic plane to the ongoing conflicts on the political, economic, and social planes, the writers of the 1925–1975 period quadrangulated the entire process with their polarization of the ideological incommensurabilities of empire, village, nation, and city. This great broadening of the literary scope of Indian writing in English in the second and third quarters of the twentieth century defined the turbulence within which the postcolonial Indian diaspora began to hammer out its separate cultural identity in the last quarter of that century.

THE DOMINANCE OF THE DIASPORA

In the last few decades of the twentieth century, the very centers of Indian-English literary culture appear to have migrated from the subcontinent, as writers of the Indian diaspora—particularly in Great Britain and North America—have rapidly and increasingly come to dominate the international literary marketplace in the English language. Migrant and itinerant writers have energized Indian writing in English in most of its historical phases: Din Muhammad and Rammohun Roy at the inception; Toru Dutt and Manmohan Ghose before the close of the nineteenth century; Sarojini Naidu, Mulk

---

141. The quotations here are from Afzal-Khan 1993: 13.
142. See, for example, Ezekiel 1974: 71–90, and Trivedi 1979: 31–32. Dilip Chitre's critique of *India: A Wounded Civilization* appeared in *New Quest* (Pune) in 1978.

Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and G. V. Desani in the late colonial period; and Nirad Chaudhuri, Ved Mehta, Santha Rama Rau, Aubrey Menen, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, Adil Jussawalla, and A. K. Ramanujan, among others, in the early postcolonial decades.[143] Despite such precedents, however, the literary-cultural output of the contemporary diaspora has metamorphosed the inner kinetics of Indian-English literature on an unprecedented scale.

The diaspora has perceptibly modified the four primary zones of contact that have provided a social framework for Indian-English literary culture since the late eighteenth century, the principal change being that the zones are now geographically relocated overseas. In its foreign setting, the zone of employment retains the structural characteristics it has possessed since the final decades of the nineteenth century, because a high proportion of Indians abroad continue to consist of professionals in private-sector and state-sector service. But the zone now brings Indian professionals into contact with people of many more races and nationalities than it did in the colonial period on the subcontinent, absorbing them into a radically multicultural and multilingual international white-collar workforce. It also attracts much higher numbers of educated Indian women into a wider array of professions than before, especially in North America, which has contributed generally as well as concretely to the growth and dissemination of Indian women's writing and intellectual work, Indian feminist and gender-centered discourse, and Indian women's sociopolitical activism across international borders. Well-educated, professionally successful, and financially secure diasporic and itinerant Indians in the zone of employment abroad currently constitute networks of a few million Anglicized, Europeanized, or Westernized men and women scattered around the globe. This fragmented yet interlinked community has produced many of the newest authors of Indian origin in English, besides serving as an extensive, enthusiastic international readership for contemporary Indian-English writing.[144]

The zone of marriage and family is perhaps the zone that has altered the most in its internal structure, transmuting itself into a fuzzy domain of varied interracial and intercultural social-sexual relations. More members of the middle- and upper-class populations of Indian origin now marry across racial, religious, and linguistic borders than at the midpoint of the century, and Indians of both sexes also explicitly adopt alternative sexual lifestyles in interracial diasporic settings. A high proportion of the younger writers in

143. On Mehta and Rama Rau, consult Nelson 1993: 199–206, 357–62; also see Srinivasa Iyengar 1973: 515 and 471–72. On Menen, see Naik 1982: 3, 270. On Ezekiel, Jussawalla, and Ramanujan, refer to King 1992, chs. 6, 7, 12, and 13; and on Ezekiel and Ramanujan, also consult King 1991, chs. 2, 3, 4, and 5.

144. Refer to Clarke, Peach, and Vertovec 1990, and van der Veer 1995.

English from the Indian diaspora have acculturated themselves to the Anglophone West in this blurry zone, consequently affecting the racial, cultural, and sexual aspects of Indian writing in English even within India. The zone of interracial marriage in the diaspora mediates the work, for instance, of Bharati Mukherjee, Meena Alexander, and Sujata Bhatt, among women writers, and of Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh, among male writers; and its sexual and familial boundaries are ruptured by the thematization, for example, of homosexuality in Agha Shahid Ali's poetry, of bisexuality in Vikram Seth's poetry and fiction, and of lesbian identity and queer politics in Suniti Namjoshi's verse and prose.[145]

The zone of religious conversion, however, which had such powerful effects in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, has continued a trend that was consolidated in the early twentieth century. This is the trend of internal reversal within the zone, so that it has increasingly become the space of Indian resistance to conversion, especially to Christianity, over the past one hundred years. The great majority of writers of Chinese, Korean, Philippine, Indonesian, African, and Caribbean origin who are classified as Asian-American, immigrant, or postcolonial writers in the Anglophone West today consists of descendants of old or recent converts to Christianity.[146] In contrast, many of the Indian-English writers in the diaspora come from non-Christian backgrounds and continue to occupy a remarkable spectrum of identities and backgrounds in relation to religion. Although much of Indian writing in English remains broadly secular in content and perspective (given the predominance of cosmopolitanism noted earlier), the sheer diversity of the religious backgrounds of its authors—and hence also of their related ethnic, linguistic, regional, and cultural origins on the subcontinent—constitutes one of the great strengths and sources of fascination of this literature: by background, for example, Salman Rushdie, Saleem Peeradina, and Agha Shahid Ali are Muslim; Bharati Mukherjee, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Chitra Divakaruni Banerjee, Anjana Appachana, and Amit Chaudhuri are Hindu; Meena Alexander, I. Allan Sealy, and Ruth Vanita are Christian; and Rohinton Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Ardashir Vakil are Parsi.[147]

The zone that has expanded the most in scope and effect in the diaspora is that of intercultural friendship and social relations. In this space, net-

145. On Mukherjee, consult the sources cited in note 43. On Alexander and Bhatt, as well as Ali, Seth, and Namjoshi, refer to Nelson 1993: 1–14, 23–28, 291–98, and 401–6. On Rushdie and Ghosh, see notes 43, 83, 106, 125, and 134.

146. Consult, for example, Cheung 1997.

147. On Rushdie, see notes 83, 106, and 125; on Mukherjee, Tharoor, and Sealy, see note 43; on Ghosh, see notes 43 and 134; on Ali, Seth, and Alexander, see note 145; on Peeradina, refer to King 1992; and on Mistry, see Nelson 1993: 207–18.

working with other Indians in the diaspora and on the subcontinent has proved vital for the maintenance of the Indian component in a culturally ambidextrous, cosmopolitan identity, whereas daily or regular contact with non-Indian friends, neighbors, colleagues, and associates has been essential for the Anglicized or Westernized component. The primacy of this division of cultural loyalties in the diaspora has contributed to the extensive revision of two key features of Indian writing in English. Along one track, the interspersion of continuous contact with Indians as well as non-Indians has altered Indian writers' conceptions of what constitutes their Indianness and what the limits and possibilities of the East-West encounter are, especially with reference to the influential earlier formulations on the latter subject by Rudyard Kipling, E. M. Forster, and Raja Rao.[148] Along the other track, the constant exposure to the Anglophone West in much of the diaspora has radically changed the very language of Indian writing in English, shifting away from the bookish Oxbridge norm of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries toward a plethora of national, international, colloquial, generic, and experimental styles. There still may be no Indian English as distinctive as African-American, Jamaican, Irish, Nigerian, Fijian, or Australian English, but the distinction of recent Indian-English writing may be precisely that it appropriates almost every available variety of the language with its omnivorous cosmopolitan appetite.[149]

The diaspora also frames a series of other reversals that spill beyond a cartography of well-defined zones of contact and acculturation. Since the late eighteenth century, Indians have migrated steadily to most parts of the globe so that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there are more than ten million people from India or of Indian origin in more than 130 countries.[150] The emigrations in successive generations have been mediated by recursive economic and social factors, but the displaced communities in different locations have developed diverse relations to India. Indian immigrants and their descendants in Fiji and Malaysia, for instance, differ from each other in their attitudes toward and actual connections with India, as they also differ from their counterparts in, say, Australia and New Zealand, the Middle East, East Africa, Western Europe, the Caribbean, the United States, and Canada. Among Anglophone writers of Indian origin, this geographically articulated diversity generates a corresponding spectrum of

---

148. Kipling's most famous line on this theme, of course, is "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Forster's skepticism surfaces in the conclusion of *A Passage to India,* cited in note 32. Rao's classic statement is *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), analyzed at length in Sharrad 1987.

149. On Indian English, see Kachru 1982.

150. For statistics from the 1980s, see Clark, Peach, and Vertovec 1990, especially 1–29.

conceptions of India, Indian religions and cultures, and especially of Indianness, that is directly related to the psychosocial effects of displacement and dislocation.[151]

The most interesting of these effects may be the literary consequences of living at a distance from the subcontinent and of raising families—both Indian and interracial—outside it. A historical aspect of this phenomenon is that in the colonial period, most *mestizo* children of partially Indian origin were brought up *in India,* whereas at the beginning of the twenty-first century, most such children are raised *outside* the subcontinent. If, between the early eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, the great majority of Anglo-Indians grew up in India with England as a remote but much-longed-for "true home," in the post-Independence diaspora most children of Indian and interracial origins have grown up or are growing up with the subcontinent as a distant, exotic "other home" in their imaginations.[152] Coupled with the geographically articulated diversity of diasporic conceptions of India, this reversal has powerful consequences for the representation of India in writing: it undercuts the verisimilar constructions of India and Indianness that Indian-English writers living on the subcontinent canonized for themselves and their readers during the late colonial and early postcolonial decades, and it leads to a renewed exoticization—practically a re-Orientalization—of India in diasporic writing.[153] This exoticization, which is also a fresh commodification of India in the global literary marketplace, is most visible in the antirealistic representations in Salman Rushdie's later fictions, especially from *The Satanic Verses* (1988) to *The Ground beneath Her Feet* (1999), as well as in the more realistic depictions in, say, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and *The Holder of the World* (1993), and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* (1995) and *The Mistress of Spices* (1997).[154] The diaspora's appropriation of the power to represent India in the international print sphere in the 1980s and 1990s is such that its portrayals of India as "a land of fantasy"—to echo Hegel's phrase from 1830—has now infected Indian writing in English on the subcontinent itself.[155]

The complex formation of the diaspora has resulted in another large-scale reversal in the evolving Indian-English tradition. Socially and economically,

151. On diasporic Indians in different national and continental settings, see the relevant chapters in Clark, Peach, and Vertovec 1990, and van der Veer 1995.

152. Refer particularly to Kain 1997.

153. Consult Dharwadker and Dharwadker 1997, especially the conclusion.

154. Refer to Rushdie's novels, cited in note 125; Mukherjee 1989 and 1993; and Divakaruni 1996 and 1997.

155. Refer to Hegel [1899] 1956: 139. On the diaspora's influence on writing in India, see Dharwadker 1999.

the dispersal of Indians around the globe has been a multilayered and multicentered phenomenon, so that Indians from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds on the subcontinent have translated themselves into other hierarchies of rank and status in their adopted societies.[156] But the new immigrant and itinerant *writers* of Indian origin come overwhelmingly from privileged-class backgrounds on the subcontinent as well as outside it. The biographies of Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Agha Shahid Ali, Meena Alexander, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, and Amitav Ghosh, for instance, show that their migrations and traveling identities do not cross or disturb class boundaries as they move back and forth between the upper levels of Indian society and the upper levels of British, American, and European society.[157]

The strong, almost uniform affiliation of the diasporic writers as a group with the dominant classes has reversed some of the social, economic, and political trends in the Indian-English literature of the preceding fifty years or so. The diasporic writers have largely marginalized the search for distributive and restitutive social justice that motivated the anti-elitist and pro-subaltern writers of the late colonial and early postcolonial decades. In contrast to the social commitments of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, G. V. Desani, Adil Jussawalla, Arun Kolatkar, and even R. K. Narayan and Anita Desai, the attitudes of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Divakaruni Banerjee, Meena Alexander, Agha Shahid Ali, Shashi Tharoor, and Amit Chaudhuri seem unapologetically elitist, and even those of Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh resemble the attitudes of, say, the mid-twentieth-century British champagne socialists that George Orwell satirized.[158] The shift in class alignments from the 1925–1975 period to the post-1975 period thus is closely connected not only to the thematic and stylistic changes in this transition—diasporic writing swerves away from the realities of the subcontinent, rejecting realistic representation in favor of magic realism, fabulation, and discursive constructionism—but also to comprehensive material-ideological changes. This implies that the exoticization of India and the hegemony of magic realism in diasporic writing—which, in this case, signifies escapism in relation to the problem of social injustice—are not merely aesthetic choices or developments;[159] rather, they are the discursive complements of a socioeconomic and ideological upheaval in the very kinetics of Indian-English literary culture. The full extent of this upheaval may be most evident in the style,

---

156. Consult Clark, Peach, and Vertovec 1990, and van der Veer 1995.

157. Sources on these writers are cited in notes 35, 43, 106, 125, 134, 135, and 145.

158. I refer here to George Orwell's satire in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1942). See Ash 1998.

159. See Afzal-Khan 1993 for her discussion of realism and social responsibility (especially 15–18, 21–26, and 59–61); and for her and Timothy Brenan's respective critiques of magic realism and its "failure" in Rushdie's case (143–44). The latter reference is to Brenan 1989.

content, and design of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), as also in its material-cultural contexts and its astonishing international literary-commercial success.[160]

The emergent ideological structure of Indian writing in English after 1975 alters the specific ideological paradigms established in the preceding fifty years, but does not disturb their abstract interrelations. Revivalism and the quest for authenticity reappear in the diaspora as a nostalgia for a home and an India that have ceased to exist. In R. Parthasarathy's recent poetry, for example, the nostalgia has taken the form of a pan-Dravidian cultural provincialism that may be insularly aesthetic rather than politically active, yet retrieves and repetitively celebrates the ancient Dravidian past in the heroic mode, at a historical as well as geographical distance.[161] The contrary of this reactionary provincialism in the diaspora is a mostly apolitical, deeply aestheticized cosmopolitanism, as represented by Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music* (1999), Amit Chaudhuri's *Afternoon Raag* (1993), and Anjana Appachana's *Listening Now* (1998).[162] The diasporic discourse of collaboration now celebrates immigration and assimilation to the West in the heroic mode, particularly with reference to the melting-pot multiculturalism of the United States, as in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988).[163] The most intricate and productive of these ideological locations may be that of immigrant solidarity and anti-neocolonialsm, which valorizes a heroic resistance to the racism of North American and European societies and celebrates a subversive hybridity. This combative postcolonialism also powerfully satirizes the colonial and neocolonial West, seeking to overturn the existing (im)balance of power in order to enact a postcolonial revenge against the metropolis from its interstices and margins. This last ideological position in the diaspora is most fully articulated in Salman Rushdie's *The Jaguar Smile* (1987), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), and in the critical and theoretical writings of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha.[164] The striking literary ramification of this extensive ideological work within the diaspora is that it can be (and has been) done most effectively in various forms of prose, and therefore reinforces the massive elevation of prose over poetry that has characterized Indian-English literary culture in the twentieth century.

160. For a discussion of Roy, refer to Dharwadker and Dharwadker 1997, and Dharwadker 1999. On different aspects of Roy, see the other essays in Dhawan 1999.

161. See, for instance, Parthasarathy's poems in Parthasarathy 1992 and 1996. Also refer to Parthasarathy 1994, especially the conclusion. For Parthasarathy's background, see Nelson 1993: 311–316, and King 1992.

162. Desai's novel is cited in note 135. The other works mentioned here are Seth 1999, Chaudhuri 1993, and Appachana 1998.

163. See Mukherjee 1988.

164. Rushdie's works are cited in notes 83 and 125. See Spivak 1993, and Bhabha 1994.

ENGLISH AND THE INDIAN LANGUAGES

The process of the internal self-differentiation of Indian writing in English into multiple, incommensurate, and contestatory discourses that I have traced over a period of more than two centuries in the foregoing pages is connected closely to its identity as a literature, especially to one of its central concerns: the representation of India, Indians, and Indianness. Even as it relocates the subcontinent on an interactive grid demarcated by empire, nation, village, and city, and thus shifts away from an essentialist definition of Indianness, contemporary Indian-English literature persists in its effort to arrive at a comprehensive representation of Indian ways of life. Its special problem still is that it wishes to do so in a medium that was originally foreign to the culture it seeks to represent, and that it has had to domesticate continuously over the past two centuries for such an objective. But even as various social mechanisms have enabled English to be at home in India and among Indians, the language has retained an indissoluble final fraction of its alienness: Indian writing in English is still not a body of writing in an unmistakably "Indian" English. Raja Rao attempted to conceptualize this problem six decades ago, in his preface to *Kanthapura* (1938):

> The telling [of the story in this novel] has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word "alien," yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up— like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.[165]

It is now possible to suggest that the difficulty is not only one of representing something Indian in an alien language but, more precisely, also one of "translating"—carrying across—an object from its "natural" linguistic habitat into an adjacent, different linguistic space. Even as it serves as a medium of "original" composition, English in Indian-English literature also has to serve as a medium of *translation,* of *re*-presentation across a gap of irreducible foreignness, into which Indian authors render their particularized versions of India, Indianness, or Indian ways of life. In this specific sense, Indian literature in English is as much an original literature as a literature *of* translation, though in itself it is not a body of texts translated from the Indian lan-

---

165. Quoted from Rao [1938] 1967.

guages. In its accumulation over two centuries as a body of translations, Indian-English literature has overcome its predicaments—as a literature written in a "foreign" language and as a "bastard child" of colonialism—by making itself inseparable from India as one of the subcontinent's many translated bodies.[166]

This nebulous effect of translation is most perceptible when we stand back from individual authors and works and let their cumulative resonances play on our readerly memories, feelings, and imaginations. When we do so, we find that the translatory effect of Indian-English writing is embedded in the concrete relation of English to the Indian languages. One of the objects that Indian-English literature as a whole renders into the medium of English is the Indianness that resides "naturally" in the various indigenous languages of the subcontinent—the composite, specifically Indian quality which, in a Heideggerian and Derridean vocabulary, may be said to have its "being" in the "house" of the Indian languages.[167] The prose of Mulk Raj Anand and Khushwant Singh resonates with the rhythms and images of Panjabi; the verse of Shiv K. Kumar and Agha Shahid Ali echoes the music of Urdu; the poetry of A. K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy and the fiction of R. K. Narayan capture the clipped cadences and ambiguities of the Tamil language and of Tamil life; the novels and stories of Raja Rao and Anjana Appachana reverberate with spoken Kannada; the experimental poems of Sujata Bhatt, Dilip Chitre, and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra are strongly flavored with Gujarati, Marathi, and Hindi styles of expression, respectively; Nissim Ezekiel, Adil Jussawalla, Eunice de Souza, Arun Kolatkar, Salman Rushdie, and Rohinton Mistry verbally reenact the multilingual hodgepodge of Bombay; Jayanta Mahapatra lets us listen to the hypnotic, abstract stillness at the heart of Oriya; and Amitav Ghosh and Amit Chaudhuri, among others, carry us into the sensuous ebb and flow of Bangla.[168] This intertexture of the Indian languages and English, however deeply mediated by other factors, is not a mirage: by now, after nearly two centuries of continuous aesthetic refinement, the highly crafted "English" of Indian-English literature is full of the long shadows of the Indian languages. The indigenous languages are among the social, political, and aesthetic elements that have penetrated the English language in its alien environment on the subcontinent, and like other precolonial and noncolonial presences, they have leaked continuously into this literature through the aperture that opened inside it two hundred years ago. To the great distinction of Indian-English writers and their collective creativity, this

166. See Prasad 1999.

167. Refer to Derrida 1982.

168. Sources on most of the writers mentioned in this paragraph are cited in the preceding notes. On Singh, see Srinivasa Iyengar 1973: 498–504, and Naik 1982: 220–21. On Kumar, Bhatt, Chitre, Mehrotra, and Kolatkar, see King 1992; and on Bhatt, also see Nelson 1993: 23–27.

shadowy interspersion constitutes a pervasive, internal "decolonization" of English at the level of language itself. And, in the logic of intercultural contestation and "post"-colonialism, that—perhaps—is exactly as it should be.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Afzal-Khan, Fawzia. 1993. *Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel: Genre and Ideology in R. K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, and Salman Rushdie.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Alam, Fakrul. 1996. *Bharati Mukherjee.* New York: Twayne.

Alphonso-Karkala, John B. 1970. *Indo-English Literature in the Nineteenth Century.* Mysore: Literary Half-Yearly, University of Mysore.

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Andrews, William L., Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris, eds. 1997. *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Appachana, Anjana. 1998. *Listening Now.* New York: Random House.

Appiah, Anthony. 1997. "Cosmopolitan Patriots." *Critical Inquiry* 23: 617–39.

Ash, Timothy Garton. 1998. "Orwell in 1998." *The New York Review of Books* 45, no. 16: 10–14.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures.* London: Routledge.

Bayly, C. A. 1983. *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1988. *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire.* Part 2, vol. 1 of *The New Cambridge History of India,* edited by Gordon Johnson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture.* London: Routledge.

Bose, Amalendu. 1981. *Michael Madhusudan Dutt.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Brass, Paul R. 1990. *The Politics of India since Independence.* Part 4, vol. 1 of *The New Cambridge History of India,* edited by Gordon Johnson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brenan, Timothy. 1989. *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Chatterjee, Partha. [1986] 1993. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse.* Reprint, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 1995. "The Disciplines in Colonial Bengal." In *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal,* edited by Partha Chatterjee. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Chaudhuri, Amit. 1993. *Afternoon Raag.* London: William Heinemann.

Cheung, King-Kok, ed. 1997. *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chitre, Dilip. 1978. Critique of *India: A Wounded Civilization,* by V. S. Naipaul. *New Quest* (Pune), 1978.

Clarke, Colin, Ceri Peach, and Steven Vertovec, eds. 1990. *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cohn, Bernard S. 1987. "The Command of Language and the Language of Command." In *Subaltern Studies V,* edited by Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1990. *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Correia-Afonso, John. 1969. *Jesuit Letters and Indian History 1542–1773.* 2d ed. Bombay: Oxford University Press.

Das, Sisir Kumar. 1991. *A History of Indian Literature, 1800–1910. Western Impact: Indian Response.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

———. 1995. *A History of Indian Literature, 1911–1956. Struggle for Freedom: Triumph and Tragedy.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Davies, Tony. 1997. *Humanism.* London: Routledge.

Derrida, Jacques. 1982. "Difference." In *Margins of Philosophy,* translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Desai, Anita. 1995. *Journey to Ithaca.* New York: Penguin.

Desani, G. V. [1948] 1986. *All About H. Hatterr.* Reprint, New Platz, N.Y.: McPherson and Company.

Deshpande, Kusumawati, and M. V. Rajadhyaksha. 1988. *A History of Marathi Literature.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

de Souza, Eunice, ed. 1997. *Nine Indian Women Poets: An Anthology.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Dharwadker, Aparna. 1999. "The Exercise of Memory and the Diasporization of Anglophone Indian Fiction." In *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary,* edited by R. K. Dhawan. New Delhi: Prestige.

Dharwadker, Aparna, and Vinay Dharwadker. 1996. "Language, Identity, and Nation in Postcolonial Indian English Literature." In *English Postcoloniality: Literatures from Around the World,* edited by Gita Rajan and Radhika Mohan Ram. Westwood, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

———. 1997. "Indian English Literature: Literary and Commercial Success." In *India at Fifty,* edited by V. N. Narayanan and Jyoti Sabharwal. New Delhi: Sterling.

Dharwadker, Vinay. 1979. "The Past, the Present, and the Poet." *The Humanities Review* (New Delhi) 1: 32–35.

———. 1989. "The Future of the Past: Modernity, Modern Poetry, and the Transformation of Two Indian Traditions." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

———. 1993. "Orientalism and the Study of Indian Literatures." In *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia,* edited by Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

———. 1994a. "Dalit Poetry in Marathi." *World Literature Today* 68: 319–24.

———. 1994b. "Indian Writing Today: A View from 1994." *World Literature Today* 68: 237–41.

———. 1994c. "Modern Indian Poetry and Its Contexts." In *The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry,* edited by Vinay Dharwadker and A. K. Ramanujan. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1995. Introduction to "South Asia." In *Global Voices: Contemporary Literature from the Non-Western World,* edited by Arthur W. Biddle. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Blair Press, Prentice Hall.

———. 1997. "Print Culture and Literary Markets in Colonial India." In *Language*

Machines: Technologies of Literary and Cultural Production, edited by Jeffrey Masten, Peter Stallybrass, and Nancy J. Vickers. New York: Routledge.

Dhawan, R. K., ed. 1999. *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary.* New Delhi: Prestige.

Dimock, Edward C., Jr., et al. 1974. *The Literatures of India: An Introduction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. 1996. *Arranged Marriage: Stories.* New York: Anchor.

———. 1997. *The Mistress of Spices.* New York: Anchor.

Edmundson, Mark. 1989. "Prophet of a New Postmodernism: The Greater Challenge of Salman Rushdie." *Harper's Magazine* 1675 (December): 62–71.

Edwardes, Michael. 1973. *Ralph Fitch, Elizabethan in the Indies.* New York: Barnes and Noble.

Ezekiel, Nissim. 1974. "Naipaul's India and Mine." In *New Writing in India,* edited by Adil Jussawalla. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Fisher, Michael H., ed. 1993. *The Politics of the British Annexation of India, 1757–1857.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1996. *The First Indian Author in English: Dean Mahomed (1759–1851) in India, Ireland, and England.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———, ed. 1997. *The Travels of Dean Mahomet: An Eighteenth-Century Journey through India.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Forster, E. M. [1924] 1985. *A Passage to India.* Reprint, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Frye, Northrop. 1957. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Furbank, P. N. 1977. *E. M. Forster: A Life.* London: Secker and Warburg.

Ghose, Lotika. 1975. *Manmohan Ghose.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Ghose, Manmohan. 1974. *Selected Poems,* edited by Lotika Ghose. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Ghosh, Amitav. 1995. *The Shadow Lines.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Gopal, Sarvepalli. 1989. *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography.* Abridged ed. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien. 1987. *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory.* Translated by Paul J. Perron and Frank H. Collins. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Guha, Ranajit, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds. 1988. *Selected Subaltern Studies.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, Peter. 1990. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hay, Stephen, ed. 1988. *Sources of Indian Tradition,* 2d ed. Vol. 2, *Modern India and Pakistan.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Hegel, G. F. W. [1899] 1956. *The Philosophy of History.* Translated by J. Sibree. Reprint, New York: Dover.

Helgerson, Richard. 1992. *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Holm, John A. 1988. *Pidgins and Creoles.* Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Iyer, Raghavan, ed. 1986–1987. *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi.* 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

———, ed. 1993. *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Jack, Homer A., ed. 1994. *The Gandhi Reader: A Sourcebook of His Life and Writings.* Rev. ed. New York: Grove Press.

Jameson, Fredric, 1981. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Kachru, Braj B. 1982. "South Asian English." In *English as a World Language,* edited by Richard W. Bailey and Manfred Gorlach. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kain, Geoffrey, ed. 1993. *R. K. Narayan: Contemporary Critical Perspectives.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

———, ed. 1997. *Ideas of Home: Literature of Asian Migration.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Kesavan, B. S. 1985. *History of Printing and Publishing in India: A Story of Cultural Reawakening.* Vol. 1. New Delhi: National Book Trust.

King, Bruce. 1991. *Three Indian Poets: Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Dom Moraes.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1992. *Modern Indian Poetry in English.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

King, Christopher R. 1989. "Forging a New Linguistic Identity: The Hindi Movement in Banaras, 1868–1914." In *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance, and Environment, 1800–1980,* edited by Sandra B. Freitag. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kopf, David. 1979. *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Laird, M. A., ed. 1971. *Bishop Heber in Northern India: Selections from Heber's Journal.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lal, Mohan, ed. 1991. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature.* Vol. 4, *Navaratri to Sarvasena.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Mack, Maynard, ed. 1995. *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces.* Expanded ed., 2 vols. New York: W. W. Norton.

MacMillan, Margaret. 1988. *Women of the Raj.* London: Thames and Hudson.

Marek, Jan. 1968. "Persian Literature in India." In *The History of Iranian Literature,* edited by Karl Jahn. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Marshall, P. J. 1976. *East India Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Martin, Wallace. 1986. *Recent Theories of Narrative.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Mukherjee, Bharati. 1988. *The Middleman and Other Stories.* New York: Grove Press.

———. 1989. *Jasmine.* New York: Fawcett.

———. 1993. *The Holder of the World.* New York: Fawcett.

Naik, M. K. 1982. *A History of Indian English Literature.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

———. 1984. *Dimensions of Indian English Literature.* New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.

Naipaul, V. S. 1978. *India: A Wounded Civilization.* New York: Vintage.

———. [1964] 1981. *An Area of Darkness.* New York: Vintage.

———. 1990. *India: A Million Mutinies Now.* New York: Penguin.

———. 1999a. "Reading and Writing." *The New York Review of Books* 46, no. 3: 13–18.

———. 1999b. "The Writer and India." *The New York Review of Books* 46, no. 4: 12–16.

Nanda, B. R. [1958] 1981. *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography.* Reprint, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Narasimhaiah, C. D. 1973. *Raja Rao.* New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann India.

Naravane, Vishwanath S. 1980. *Sarojini Naidu: An Introduction to Her Life, Work and Poetry.* New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Nelson, Emmanuel S., ed. 1993. *Writers of the Indian Diaspora: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Parthasarathy, R. 1979. "Indian-English Verse: The Making of a Tradition." *The Humanities Review* (New Delhi) 1: 14–19.

———. 1992. "Kannaki" and "The Attar of Tamil." *Chicago Review* 38: 58–59.

———. 1994. "Tamil Literature." *World Literature Today* 68: 253–59.

———. 1996. "Deepavali," "Night Sweat," and "One or Two Places." *World Literature Written in English* 35: 95.

Prasad, G. J. V. 1999. "Writing Translation: The Strange Case of the Indian English Novel." In *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice,* edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi. London: Routledge.

Pratt, Mary Louise. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.* London: Routledge.

Ramanujan, A. K. 1989. "Where Mirrors Are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflections." *History of Religions* 28: 187–216.

———. 1999. *The Collected Essays of A. K. Ramanujan.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Rao, Raja. [1938] 1967. *Kanthapura.* Reprint, New York: New Directions.

Raychaudhuri, Tapan. 1988. *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Romaine, Suzanne. 1988. *Pidgin and Creole Languages.* London: Longman.

Roy, Tapti. 1995. "Disciplining the Printed Text: Colonial and Nationalist Surveillance of Bengali Literature." In *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal,* edited by Partha Chatterjee. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Rushdie, Salman. 1982a. "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance." *The Times* (London) July 3, 1982, p. 8.

———. 1982b. *Midnight's Children.* New York: Avon.

———. 1987. *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey.* New York: Viking.

———. [1988] 1989. *The Satanic Verses.* New York: Viking.

———. [1983] 1989. *Shame.* New York: Vintage.

———. 1991. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991.* New York: Viking.

———. 1994. *East, West: Stories.* New York: Pantheon.

———. 1995. *The Moor's Last Sigh.* New York: Pantheon.

———. 1999. *The Ground beneath Her Feet.* New York: Henry Holt.

Rushdie, Salman, and Elizabeth West, eds. 1997. *Mirrorwork: Fifty Years of Indian Writing 1947–1997.* New York: Henry Holt.

Russell-Wood, A. J. R. 1992. *A World on the Move: The Portuguese in Africa, Asia, and America, 1415–1808.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Seth, Vikram. 1999. *An Equal Music.* New York: Broadway.

Sharrad, Paul. 1987. *Raja Rao and Cultural Tradition.* New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.

Spear, Percival. [1965] 1979. *A History of India.* Vol. 2. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Spear, T. G. P. 1963. *The Nabobs.* London: Oxford University Press.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1989. "Reading *The Satanic Verses.*" *Public Culture* 2: 79–99.

———. 1993. *Outside in the Teaching Machine.* New York: Routledge.

Srinivasa Iyengar, K. R.. 1973. *Indian Writing in English.* 2d ed. New York: Asia Publishing House.

Stein, Burton. 1998. *A History of India.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. 1993. *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History.* London: Longman.

Tagore, Saumyendranath. 1966. *Raja Rammohun Roy.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Tandon, Prakash. 1961. *Punjabi Century: 1857–1947.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thapar, Romila. 1966. *A History of India.* Vol. 1. London: Penguin.

Tharu, Susie, and K. Lalita, eds. 1991. *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present.* 2 vols. New York: Feminist Press at City University of New York.

Thompson, E. P. 1993. *Alien Homage: Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Trivedi, Harish. 1979. "Nirad Chaudhuri: Provocation and Politics." *The Humanities Review* (New Delhi) 1, no.2: 31–32.

———. 1989. Introduction to *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist,* by Edward Thompson. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

van der Veer, Peter. 1995. *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Walsh, William, 1982. *R. K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wolpert, Stanley. 1993. *A New History of India.* 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Literature in Southern Locales

4

Three Moments in the Genealogy
of Tamil Literary Culture

Norman Cutler

This essay focuses on a few key moments in the genealogy of Tamil literary culture that are described and enacted in, respectively, (1) the autobiography of the great textual scholar and editor U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar (1855–1942), which treats approximately the first half of his life; (2) histories of Tamil literature that emerged as a genre of scholarship in the twentieth century; and (3) a fifteenth-century literary anthology titled *Puṟattiraṭṭu* (Anthology of poems on the exterior world). I have chosen each of the three for the insights it affords into ways of cognizing and using literature at particular points in time and in particular environments, and also because each, in a sense, represents a distinct mode of making and performing Tamil literary culture. Thus the aim of this chapter is to illuminate three historically located perspectives on Tamil literature, rather than to offer an omniscient master narrative.

At the same time, certain recurrent themes provide a mechanism for identifying salient areas of similarity and difference in some of the forms that Tamil literary culture has taken throughout its history. These include the ways the domain of Tamil literature has been constituted in different intellectual environments and at different points in time; the variable degree to which Tamil literature has been viewed through a historical lens; the degree to which literary culture and other cultural domains, such as religion or politics, have been interconnected or separate; and the relative prominence of written and oral modalities in the composition, transmission, and consumption of literature. While this chapter does not illuminate these issues for all of Tamil literature throughout the entire expanse of its history, it aims to establish a framework that can be used to extend the present explorations to other moments in the genealogy of Tamil literary culture.

LITERARY CULTURE IN LATE-NINETEENTH-CENTURY TAMILNADU

In 1887, U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar (1855–1942), the scholar who today is synonymous in many people's minds with the Tamil Renaissance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, published a critical edition of *Cīvaka-cintāmaṇi* (The wishing-stone tale of Jivandhara; tenth century) a long narrative poem of the early tenth century attributed to the Jain poet Tiruttakkatēvar.[1] This was Cāminātaiyar's first major editorial venture in a long and distinguished career devoted largely to recovering, editing, and publishing Tamil literary texts that, for many generations, had disappeared from the prevalent curricula of Tamil learning. Indeed, these texts played virtually no role in Cāminātaiyar's own education. Cāminātaiyar witnessed momentous developments in the constitution and (re)configuration of the Tamil literary world during his lifetime. His education and early career were deeply embedded in a literary culture that was closely intertwined with Hindu sacred geography, devotional expression, and social practice. He is generally singled out as the most prolific, if not necessarily the earliest, participant in the movement to recover a corpus of texts, and their concomitant literary culture, that largely lay outside of and predated the horizons of the literary world in which he himself was raised.[2] Reading Cāminātaiyar's autobiographical account of his life and career, one would never guess that he lived during a period when new fictional prose genres such as the novel and short story entered the field of Tamil letters.[3] It is important to keep in mind that while he was largely responsible for extending the horizon of the Tamil literary past, many of his contemporaries were involved in blazing new literary pathways into the future.[4]

Cāminātaiyar's prolific output includes close to one hundred published books; these are primarily editions of traditional Tamil texts but also include some original works. Among the latter are his autobiography and a biography of his teacher, T. Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai (1815–1876).[5] Besides intro-

1. The story of the hero of this long narrative in verse follows Vādībhasiṃha's *Kṣattracu-ḍāmaṇi* (Crest-jewel of Kṣatriya power), itself based on Guṇabhadra's *Uttarapurāṇa* (The lore of the later epoch), completed in 897/98 C.E. (Zvelebil 1995: 169).

2. After Cāminātaiyar, the best-known figure in this movement is probably the Sri Lankan Tamil scholar C. V. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai (1832–1901). Among his contributions are editions of two of *Tolkāppiyam*'s three sections, published respectively in 1868 and 1885.

3. Cāminātaiyar 1982. The autobiography was also published in an abridged version by Cāminātaiyar's student Ki. Vā. Jakannātan (Cāminātaiyar 1958), and the abridged version has been translated by S. K. Guruswamy (Cāminātaiyar 1980). More recently, Kamil V. Zvelebil has translated the unabridged text of the autobiography (Cāminātaiyar [1990] 1994). In his autobiography Cāminātaiyar treats only the first half of his life, through the year 1899.

4. Cāminātaiyar's lifetime encompassed that of C. Subramania Bharati (1882–1921), who is often referred to as the "father of modern Tamil."

5. Cāminātaiyar 1986. The biography is available in a very abbreviated translation by K. Guruswamy (Cāminātaiyar 1976).

ducing the reader to a fascinating cast of characters, both works are enormously valuable for the insights they provide into the cultural and literary worlds inhabited by Cāminātaiyar and his teacher.

Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai was renowned for his phenomenal talents as a poet, especially his ability to mentally compose long passages of verse, seemingly without effort. His career as a poet, scholar, and teacher was closely intertwined with traditional patronage relationships, primarily within the Tamil non-Brahman Śaiva community. Piḷḷai's income was derived primarily from two sources: commissions he received to compose poetic works for patrons (sometimes individuals, sometimes groups who pooled their resources), such as poems that celebrate particular Śaiva sacred places in Tamilnadu; and employment as a resident Tamil scholar and teacher at the Śaiva monastic center located at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai in Tañcāvūr district, one of the wealthiest and most influential sectarian institutions in the area.[6]

Cāminātaiyar became Piḷḷai's pupil in 1871, only five years prior to Piḷḷai's death. Although his tutelage under Piḷḷai was relatively brief, Cāminātaiyar would have us understand that the relationship between the non-Brahman guru and the Brahman disciple was extraordinarily close, equaling if not surpassing the bonds of blood kinship. Cāminātaiyar was sixteen years old when he joined Piḷḷai's coterie of pupils. Cāminātaiyar attended classes Piḷḷai conducted for the monks who resided at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai and also served his teacher by transcribing on palm leaves the original compositions that Piḷḷai composed mentally and dictated to him. In virtually every instance the creative process culminated in a formal debut *(araṅkēṟṟam)*[7] before an audience composed of the work's patron(s) and other guests; and customarily, upon completion of the debut ceremony, Piḷḷai received ritual honors and cash payment.

After Piḷḷai's death in 1875, Cāminātaiyar remained at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai and pursued the final stage of his formal education, receiving training from Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, head of the monastery, in Śaiva philosophy and various literary *(ilakkiyam)* and grammatical *(ilakkaṇam)* texts.[8] Simultaneously, he

6. The three most important Śaiva monasteries headed by non-Brahmans in Tamilnadu are located in Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, Tarumapuram, and Tiruppaṉantāl, all in Tañcāvūr district. The first two of these, being parent institutions that exercise authority over subsidiary monasteries, are most properly identified by the appellation *ātīṉam.*

7. Literally, ascending the stage. In modern-day Tamil culture the term most often designates the first public dance recital given by an adolescent girl.

8. In the traditional scheme of things texts are classified as either "literature" *(ilakkiyam)* or "grammar" *(ilakkaṇam).* The Tamil word *ilakkiyam* is derived from Sanskrit *lakṣya* (that which is defined, described, or designated), and *ilakkaṇam* is derived from Sanskrit *lakṣaṇa* (that which defines, describes, or designates). These terms highlight the complementarity of the two textual categories. The category of *ilakkaṇam* is further divided into the subcategories phoneme/grapheme *(eḻuttu),* word *(col),* subject matter *(poruḷ),* meter *(yāppu),* and poetic figures *(aṇi).*

was given responsibilities for instructing monks and laymen attached to the monastery *(maṭha;* in Tamil, *maṭam).* Cāminātaiyar's career as resident literary scholar at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai was relatively short-lived, however. In 1880, Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār, a former pupil and close associate of Piḷḷai, convinced Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar to release Cāminātaiyar from his duties so that he could accept the position of Tamil pandit at the Government College at Kumpakōṇam, a position hitherto held by Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār himself. Thus Cāminātaiyar entered a professional scholarly world, different from but not totally unconnected to the one he had inhabited up to that time.

It was near the beginning of his career as an employee of the college that Cāminātaiyar first became aware of an early Tamil literary culture that lay almost entirely outside the scope of his training. As he tells in his autobiography, the rediscovery of ancient Tamil literature began with a courtesy call that Cāminātaiyar paid to a government official, Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār, who was newly stationed at Kumpakōṇam. Mutaliyār was known to be devoted to literature, and he initiated the interview by quizzing Cāminātaiyar on the texts he had studied. Cāminātaiyar describes how he confidently reeled off a long list of texts he had studied with Piḷḷai and other teachers, only to meet with an indifferent response from Mutaliyār. Apparently Mutaliyār was hoping to find someone who had studied old Tamil texts such as *Cīvakacintā- maṇi, Cilappatikāram* (The ankle bracelet; c. fifth century), or *Maṇimēkalai* (lit. The jeweled girdle, also the name of the story's heroine; c. sixth century). Cāminātaiyar was dumbfounded by this response, since he had never even seen copies of these texts, let alone studied them. Nor did he know anyone else who had studied them. It so happened that Mutaliyār had a copy of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* in his possession, but he had been searching in vain for a scholar who was qualified to guide his reading of the text. Somewhat rashly, Cāminātaiyar volunteered to take on the task, and thus he began to delve into a text about which he had hitherto been completely ignorant.

As it turned out, though *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was unknown to Cāminātaiyar and others whose literary education was shaped by late-medieval Hindu culture, in the Tamil Jain community the text was revered and actively studied. He sought out and cultivated relationships with Jain scholars, with whose help he familiarized himself with the text. Ultimately he embarked on the project of collecting manuscripts and publishing a critical edition. It appears that though the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was initially unknown to Cāminātaiyar and many of his contemporaries, it actually played a vital role in the literary culture of a small segment of the educated population of Tamilnadu of their day. Cāminātaiyar's contribution was to greatly expand the text's audience and to formulate a critically sound edition of the text. Moreover, Cāminātaiyar's work on this text led him to unearth other, earlier literary texts that seem to have been almost completely unknown to nineteenth-century audiences. Cāminātaiyar became aware of these texts through references in

the fourteenth-century commentary on *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* by Naccinārkkiṉi-yar. Unable to trace these references, Cāminātaiyar's curiosity was piqued, and he embarked upon the detective work through which he ultimately recovered many of the masterpieces of early Tamil literature.

But let us now backtrack—not to the chronologically oldest stratum of Tamil literature, but to the moment in Tamil literary history represented by Cāminātaiyar's early career, prior to his discovery of these ancient texts, and consider some of the defining features of this moment.

Language

Cāminātaiyar would have the reader of his autobiography believe that his passion for Tamil was all-consuming and that no other language held even the slightest appeal for him. But it is also clear that he did not live in a monolingual environment. Cāminātaiyar's father, Vēṅkaṭacuppaiyar, was a professional singer, and like most musicians of the south Indian classical tradition, his repertoire included songs composed in Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit. Vēṅkaṭacuppaiyar envisioned a similar career for his son, but while Cāminātaiyar proved to be a good student of music, and especially of Tamil, he showed no particular aptitude for either Sanskrit or Telugu. Cāminātaiyar failed to perform well in Telugu studies under a teacher whom his father had sought out for him, and subsequently, in his own words, "both Telugu and Sanskrit receded far into the distance."[9]

Though references to English in Cāminātaiyar's autobiography are scant, it is clear from several scattered remarks that by the mid-nineteenth century, English education had made definite inroads in south India, and mastery of English was often viewed as the key to a prosperous and successful career. However, in the Śaiva sectarian context that framed the early phase of Cāminātaiyar's career, it was Sanskrit, the traditional lingua franca of Indian intellectual life, that was the significant linguistic other in Cāminātaiyar's intellectual world, rather than the language of India's imperial rulers.

While Cāminātaiyar gives the impression that both he and his teacher, Piḷḷai, were virtually monolingual in Tamil, Sanskrit learning and Sanskrit texts did play a significant role in the intellectual and literary world they inhabited. This is apparent in Cāminātaiyar's description of the educational and scholarly endeavors at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai. For instance, we learn that Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, head of the monastery, had sound knowledge of Tamil, Sanskrit, and music. We also learn that the monastery supported scholars who specialized in all three fields of learning. The most lavishly staged event at the monastery was the annual celebration in honor of its founder, Na-

---

9. Cāminātaiyar 1958: 36.

macivāya Mūrtti. The event was attended by scholars, musicians, monks, and lay devotees who traveled to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai from all over Tamilnadu. Describing his first experience of the Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai founder's day, Cāminātaiyar reports seeing congregations of Sanskrit scholars versed in various learned treatises, as well as ritual specialists engaged in recitation of sacred texts. Meanwhile, the Tamil *Tēvāram* hymns and other canonized Tamil Śaiva poems were performed to musical accompaniment by *ōtuvār*s, the traditional non-Brahman reciters of this corpus.[10]

Sanskrit impinged on Piḷḷai's intensely Tamil world in another way. Among the many texts Piḷḷai composed on commission were *sthalapurāṇa*s (Tamil, *talapurāṇam*), mythological narratives on particular sites, especially Śaiva temples, in Tamilnadu. Piḷḷai often based his poetic descriptions of these sites and his narrations of their sacred history on Sanskrit prototypes. He would apparently find someone to translate the relevant Sanskrit text into Tamil prose, and he would use this as a starting point for his own poetically elaborated version in Tamil verse.[11]

The Institutional Setting and Curriculum of Literary Study

Cāminātaiyar lived during a time of great cultural transformations. It was then that the transition from a textual tradition based on palm leaf manuscripts to one based on printed, critically edited texts was taking place. There was also an important transition in the area of educational practice. Cāminātaiyar acquired his knowledge of Tamil literature, grammar, and poetics primarily by seeking out guidance from teachers versed in these subjects. For Cāminātaiyar this traditional mentoring process culminated in the five years he spent as a member of Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai's inner circle of pupils. To the extent that Piḷḷai's career as a teacher was integrated into the routines of the Śaiva monastery at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, the monastery provided an institutional setting for Cāminātaiyar's education. Cāminātaiyar's training groomed him to teach pupils in much the same manner, and after Piḷḷai's death he served as resident Tamil scholar for a period of time at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai. However, his career as a teacher shifted to a different institutional setting when he succeeded Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār as Tamil pandit at the Government College at Kumpakōṇam.

10. The *Tēvāram* hymns, by the poets Tiruñāṉacampantar (seventh century), Tirunāvukkaracar (seventh century), and Cuntaramūrtti (eighth century) are canonized as the first seven of the twelve *Tirumuṟai* (Sacred arrangement), the sacred scripture of Tamil Shaivism. Selections from the *Tēvāram* as well as other selections from the *Tirumuṟai* are recited ritually in Tamil Śaiva temples and in temple festival processions by *ōtuvār*s.

11. The Sanskrit texts that recount legends associated with sacred places belong to the genre of *māhātmya* (legends of greatness).

Cāminātaiyar's account of his student days, of classes in literature conducted at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, and of Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai's career as a teacher, scholar and poet,[12] as well as his description of his own early career as a teacher of Tamil, provide a detailed picture of the contents of a traditional Tamil literary education and career during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The autobiography affords a more vivid picture of the educational environment at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai than it does of the Government College. It would appear that many of the same texts were taught at both institutions and that a similar mode of instruction—a passage-by-passage exegesis of the text—was employed in both settings. But there were also differences. At the Government College classes seem to have been larger, and there would have been less opportunity for one-on-one contact between teacher and pupil. Further, the means for assessing students' progress differed (students at the college sat for examinations), and the degree program at the college included subjects that played no role in the curriculum at the Śaiva monastery.[13]

Cāminātaiyar studied with several teachers, both Brahmans and non-Brahmans, prior to his tutelage under Piḷḷai. At Ariyilūr, where Cāminātaiyar's father was employed as court musician by the local zamindar, Cāminātaiyar was sent to study with Kiruṣṇa Vāttiyār, an elderly teacher known to be well-versed in Tamil literature. Cāminātaiyar mentions some of the texts he was introduced to at this time, which included collections of moral maxims, such as *Ātticūṭi* (The chaplet of *ātti* flowers), *Mūturai* (Ancient sayings), *Nālaṭiyār* (The quatrains), and *Tirukkuṟaḷ* (The holy book in *kuṟaḷ* meter) and a number of poems belonging to the *catakam* genre.[14] Cāminātaiyar comments that some of these texts, such as *Nālaṭiyār* and *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, were beyond the comprehension of young students like himself and his class-

12. Cāminātaiyār refers to Piḷḷai as *āciriyar* (Skt. *ācārya*). The semantics of this term comprehends all of these roles.

13. During the 1880s the curriculum at the college at Kumpakōṇam would probably have been similar to the one instituted at Madras University in 1854. In the general education branch the subjects covered in the senior department included English literature, history, moral philosophy, political economy, mathematics, and natural philosophy. In the junior department it included grammar, English reading and writing, geography, elementary history, English composition, geometry, and algebra. Both departments included study of vernacular languages (Satthianathan 1894: 47–48). I am grateful to Eliza Kent for this information.

14. All four of these texts are collections of moral maxims in verse. *Ātticūṭi* and *Mūturai* are attributed to the female poet Auvaiyār (tenth or twelfth century). *Nālaṭiyār*, a Jain anthology, was compiled by Patumanar (seventh century). *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, attributed to the legendary poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar, is probably the earliest and certainly is the most prominent among these texts. It is usually dated around the fifth century.

Catakam (Skt. *śataka*) poems, consisting of one hundred verses, were very popular until the first quarter of the twentieth century and were considered especially well suited for beginners in literary study. Many of these recounted legends associated with particular territories of Tamilnadu (Zvelebil 1995: 127).

mates, but Kiruṣṇa Vāttiyār nevertheless insisted that they memorize verses from these texts.

Later the family moved to Ku<u>nn</u>am, where Cāminātaiyar studied with the village accountant, Citamparam Piḷḷai, who was known for his special mastery of the complex literary genres known as *pirapantam* (lit. text), as well as *Tiruviḷaiyāṭa<u>r</u>purāṇam* (The lore of the sacred sports; seventeenth century), a poetic account of myths associated with the city of Maturai and environs as a locale sacred to Śiva. Up to this point Cāminātaiyar's education had been confined to literary texts; during the next phase of his education he turned to grammar, meter, rhetoric, and poetics. The standard texts on these subjects include the thirteenth-century grammar *Na<u>nn</u>ūl* and a manual on meter titled *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai* (Stanzas on the ornament of meter; late tenth century?), both of which Cāminātaiyar was introduced to at this time. In hindsight, all of the preceding merely served as a prelude to the years Cāminātaiyar spent with Piḷḷai, under whose guidance he studied a wide array of literary and grammatical texts, none of which, however, predated the tenth century.

We can surmise from Cāminātaiyar's account that in the literary culture that informed his education, most Tamil literary (as opposed to grammatical) texts were assigned to one of two large and not very precisely defined categories: *pirapantam* on the one hand and *purāṇam* and *kāviyam* on the other. *Pirapantam* (Skt. *prabandha,* text), according to a formulation that first appears in the sixteenth century, comprises ninety-six literary genres, though comparison of the contents of different lists of the genres comprising *pirapantam* yields a much higher composite number.[15] In the many references he makes to texts he studied with Mī<u>n</u>ātcicuntaram Piḷḷai and to Piḷḷai's own compositions, Cāminātaiyar mentions the genres of *tiripu antāti, yamaka antāti, piḷḷaittamiḻ, ulā, kalampakam,* and *kōvai,* all of which are usually classified as *pirapantam.* Among these, *tiripu antāti* and *yamaka antāti,* in particular, provided a virtuosic poet such as Mī<u>n</u>ātcicuntaram Piḷḷai ample opportunity to indulge his taste for language play.[16]

In contrast to the relatively short *pirapantam* texts,[17] the narrative poems classified as *purāṇam* (ancient lore) and *kāviyam* (or *kāppiyam;* Skt. *kāvya,* ornate poem) are long. Among the conventions associated with this category

15. These lists are found in a genre of text known as *pāṭṭiyal.* The earliest extant *pāṭṭiyal* text is *Pa<u>nn</u>irupāṭṭiyal* (The twelvefold rule of poetry; tenth century?) in which seventy-four *pirapantam* genres are described.

16. In Tamil prosody, as in Sanskrit, *yamaka* (pair) denotes a technique whereby a string of syllables is repeated in a line or stanza, yielding different meanings in each instance, often through changes in the way word boundaries are demarcated. *Tiripu* is a similar technique, the difference being that the strings differ in one syllable.

17. Another term often applied to the collective corpus of genres designated by the term *pirpantam* is *ci<u>rr</u>ilakkiyam* (*ci<u>r</u>u,* small; *ilakkiyam,* literary text).

are various set pieces used to introduce a text's subject, such as lengthy descriptions of the locale in which the story takes place. It is clear from Cāminātaiyar's comments that according to conventional wisdom, a student should have a good grounding in the study of *pirapantam* texts before undertaking the comparatively advanced study of *kāviyam* texts.

It was after Piḷḷai's death and under the direction of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar that Cāminātaiyar, in partnership with another advanced student, undertook concentrated studies of *Pāratam, Pākavatam,*[18] and various *kāviyam* and *pirapantam* texts. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar also instructed him in the Tamil Śaiva Siddhanta *śāstra*s[19] and various grammatical texts.

While many of the texts Cāminātaiyar studied would be considered minor or obscure by modern-day students of Tamil literature, there are several notable exceptions, such as Kampaṉ's *Irāmāvatāram* (The incarnation of Rāma), or *Kamparāmāyaṇam* (Kampaṉ's *Rāmāyaṇa*), and *Tiruttoṇṭarpurāṇam* (The lore of the sacred devotees), or *Periyapurāṇam* (The great lore), by Cēkkiḷār. Both of these are twelfth-century *kāviyam* texts that enjoy great prestige and are widely read and studied today. It comes as no surprise that the curriculum of study at the Śaiva Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai monastery and its branch *maṭha*s should include *Periyapurāṇam,* the canonized account of the lives of the Tamil Śaiva saints, the *nāyaṉmār.* It is perhaps somewhat less expected that toward the end of his life Piḷḷai conducted classes on the Vaiṣṇava *Kamparāmāyaṇam* at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai at the request of Cāminātaiyar and other senior pupils. This is one indication, among several found in Cāminātaiyar's autobiography and his biography of Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, that Kampaṉ's *kāviyam* belongs to a literary realm that at the time was not delimited by Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava loyalties. (This is not equally true of the Śaiva *Periyapurāṇam.*) Piḷḷai, an orthodox practicing Śaiva, we are told, copied Kampaṉ's entire text in his own hand three times and gave two of these copies to his most devoted patron-pupils, keeping the third for his own use.[20]

A contemporary reader who is even minimally familiar with Tamil literary history will probably be struck as much by the absences in this summary of the curriculum that shaped Cāminātaiyar's education as by the texts and genres he mentions. For instance, we hear nothing of the eight anthologies

18. There are several Tamil renderings of the Mahābhārata story. The most famous version was composed by Villiputtūrar Āḻvār, who lived during the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century. This, most likely, is the version Cāminātaiyar studied. There are several Tamil versions of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa.* Cāminātaiyar does not indicate which he studied.

19. The fourteen Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta *śāstra*s, the earliest systematic expositions of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta theology, are attributed to six authors who lived between the twelfth and the early fourteen centuries. The heads of several non-Brahman Tamil Śaiva monasteries trace their preceptor lineage to the authors of these texts. The pivotal text among these is *Civañāṉapōtam* (The teaching of the knowledge of Śiva) by Meykaṇṭār, who lived during the thirteenth century.

20. Cāminātaiyar 1976: 22–23.

(eṭṭuttokai) and ten long poems *(pattuppāṭṭu)* that constitute the *caṅkam* corpus,[21] nor do we read of the so-called twin epics *(iraṭṭaikkāppiyaṅkaḷ), Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai,* attributed, respectively, to Jain and Buddhist authors. Likewise, a glaring hiatus in the list of grammatical texts he mentions is the absence of *Tolkāppiyam* (The ancient poetry), which is now considered the earliest and most important text of its kind. The great watershed in Cāminātaiyar's career was his discovery of the existence of these very texts, and the special place he occupies in the history of Tamil literary scholarship derives primarily from his dedication to the cause of bringing them to light. Largely through the efforts of Cāminātaiyar and a few others, the contours of the Tamil literary universe he knew as a student were radically changed. This has had far-reaching repercussions for Tamil speakers' sense of both their linguistic and intellectual history and the degree to which the Tamil literary academy is or is not coincident with Tamil Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

Besides the early classical texts, other texts, composed much later, were absent from Cāminātaiyar's literary education. Many of these may be described as belonging to quasi-popular genres, such as Kōpālakiruṣṇa Pāratiyār's very popular poem, set to music, on the life of the outcaste Śaiva saint Nantanār.[22] Cāminātaiyar's account also points to a de facto distinction between literature proper and texts that function primarily as the focus of personal devotional practice and temple ritual. We learn that Piḷḷai, a devout Śaiva, never missed a day's recitation of poems from *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvācakam* (Sacred utterance),[23] but these poems apparently were not included in the syllabus Piḷḷai taught to his pupils. Cāminātaiyar also mentions that

21. The earliest corpus of Tamil literature includes eight anthologies of relatively short poems (most under fifty lines, some as short as three lines) and ten longer poems ranging in length from 103 to 782 lines. The core of the corpus is thought to have been composed approximately between 100 B.C.E. and 250 C.E., though the dates of certain poems may be considerably later. The poems of this corpus are classified into two broad poetic categories, poems of the "interior world" *(akam)* and poems of the "exterior world" *(puṟam).* The former concerns the love shared by a nameless young woman and young man. The latter is dominated by warriors and members of ancient Tamil royal lineages. This corpus of poetry is commonly referred to as "*caṅkam* literature" *(caṅka ilakkiyam),* because, legend tells us, the authors of these poems belonged to a literary academy *(caṅkam)* that was patronized by the Pāṇṭiya king. The Tamil word *caṅkam* is a loan word (from Sanskrit/Pali *saṅgha*). For excellent English translations of selected poems from the *caṅkam* corpus and a critical discussion of the poems and the literary culture with which they are associated, see Ramanujan 1985.

22. This work grew out of a musical discourse Pāratiyār performed on the life of Nantan, an outcaste to whom Cēkkiḻār (twelfth century) devotes a portion of *Periyapurāṇam,* his hagiographical poem on the Tamil Śaiva saints. Cāminātaiyar writes in his autobiography that Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai disapproved of the work because, in his view, Pāratiyār took liberties with the story, and the text violates certain norms of grammatical usage.

23. See note 9 on *Tēvāram. Tiruvācakam,* an anthology of poems by the ninth-century poet-saint Māṇikkavācakar, is included in the *Tirumuṟai,* the Tamil Śaiva canon, as is the earlier *Tēvāram.*

one of his early teachers had him recite the twenty verses of Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvempāvai* (The holy [song of] our vows) at four o'clock each morning; this was most likely for the benefit of Cāminātaiyar's spiritual development rather than part of his formal literary education.

In Cāminātaiyar's representation of the literary curriculum that formed his education we find that while the texts that constituted this curriculum belonged to various epochs, little importance seems to have been attached to the relative chronology of these texts or the historical circumstances of their composition. It is almost as if the *pirapantam* and *kāviyam* texts that made up this literary world constituted a synchronic textual order. To the extent that different groups of texts within the curriculum were distinguished from one another, the basis for such distinctions was primarily generic rather than historical—for instance, one studied *pirapantam* before studying *kāviyam.* Piḷḷai's own compositions—divided into the two major classes of *pirapantam* and *purāṇam* (the latter should perhaps be regarded as a subset of *kāviyam*)—occupy curricular space on equal, or nearly equal, terms with texts composed centuries earlier.

Patronage

Mīnāṭcicuntarm Piḷḷai's entire career as a poet and scholar was sustained by the patronage he received from a number of sources. His primary patron was the Śaiva monastery at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, and most immediately, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, who was junior head of the *maṭha* when Piḷḷai was officially appointed resident Tamil scholar. Tēcikar later became head of the monastery, and he continued to support Cāminātaiyar for several years after Piḷḷai's death. Piḷḷai conducted classes not only at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai but also at the branch *maṭha* at Māyūram, and he was residing at Māyūram when Cāminātaiyar became his pupil. The monastery and its head were also subjects for Piḷḷai's creative activities; he wrote a *kalampakam* and a *piḷḷaittamiḻ* (two genres classed as *pirapantam*) on Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, head of the monastery previous to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar.[24]

The catalogue of patrons and commissions that filled Piḷḷai's career, culminating with his appointment at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, is long and suggests both the high prestige and the lack of financial security incumbent upon his position. Cāminātaiyar tells us that more often than not Piḷḷai was in debt, and he suggests that Piḷḷai's voluminous output as a poet (he composed at least twenty-two *purāṇa*s and numerous *pirapantam* poems) was sometimes moti-

24. In the *kalampakam* genre fourteen to eighteen different conventional poetic forms (e.g., *ūcal,* swing-song; *vaṇṭu,* bee-as-messenger; *tavam,* on austerities; etc.) are combined under a common thematic umbrella. *Piḷḷaittamiḻ* is a genre in which a divine or human hero/heroine is praised as a small child. See Richman 1997.

vated as much by financial need as by love of poetry. Piḷḷai's activities not only as a poet but also as a teacher were bound up in an economy of patronage. For instance, in 1848, Aruṇācala Mutaliyār, an admirer of Piḷḷai, built and furnished a house for him in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, thereby providing Piḷḷai with not only a residence for himself and his family but also a place to house and teach his pupils. A recurrent theme in Piḷḷai's career is that of accepting pupils of limited financial means and providing them with room and board while they studied with him; in this way he routinely passed on the largesse he received from his patrons to his pupils.

Some of Piḷḷai's wealthy patrons, whether motivated by a love of literature or by the prestige acquired by association with a literary celebrity like Piḷḷai, employed Piḷḷai as a live-in tutor for several months, or even a year, at a time. It was not unusual for Piḷḷai to bring other pupils with him on these occasions. Tēvarāca Piḷḷai, a wealthy businessman and connoisseur of literature who resided in Bangalore, arranged for Piḷḷai to come and tutor him at his home. While in Bangalore, Piḷḷai also continued to teach the pupils he had brought with him as well as to work on a commission he had received to compose a *purāṇa* on the town of Uṟaiyūr. When Piḷḷai took leave of Tēvarāca Piḷḷai to return to Tiruccirāpaḷḷi, he was rewarded with a large sum of money, much more than he expected. As a gesture of reciprocity, Piḷḷai offered to have two of the poems he had composed while residing in Bangalore published under Tēvarāca Piḷḷai's name, arguing that for poets to issue their compositions under the names of the patrons who supported them was sanctioned practice.

Many of Piḷḷai's compositions—*purāṇa*s and *pirapantam*s alike—extol the virtues of a particular locale (or temple or deity) and were commissioned by residents of that locale. Cāminātaiyar gives some information about how these commissions were initiated and arranged. For instance, we are told that some friends and influential people who lived in Uṟaiyūr commissioned Piḷḷai to compose a poetic Tamil version of the Sanskrit *Uraiyūrpurāṇa,* and that preparatory to executing this commission Piḷḷai found qualified scholars to provide him with a Tamil prose translation of the Sanskrit version. Among the influential people who patronized Piḷḷai's creative activities were several who held posts in the colonial administration. One of Piḷḷai's numerous locale-based compositions is a *purāṇa* on the town of Kumpakōṇam, and apparently the commission was initiated by the local government officer.

Though some of Piḷḷai's compositions were published through the efforts and financial support of his admirers, in Cāminātaiyar's account it is not so much the appearance of Piḷḷai's poems in print that marks their entry into the public sphere as their official *araṅkēṟṟam.* This official debut, a cultural event that casts light on the nature of literary composition, performance, and patronage, helps us understand many of the distinctive features of the

literary culture in which Piḷḷai participated. The essential component of the debut was the oral recitation of the text by the text's author, one of his pupils, or someone else so honored before a public audience. If the text was a long one, the recitation was usually conducted on a daily basis over a period of weeks or even months. Cāminātaiyar mentions many such occasions in Piḷḷai's career. Among these are the debuts conducted for the *purāṇa*s he composed on the towns of Uṟaiyūr, Kumpakōṇam, and Perunturai.

At Uṟaiyūr, we are told, a special thatched-palm canopy was erected adjacent to the local temple, and the event was attended by many scholars, people well-versed in erudite Tamil usage, and high-ranking Śaivas. Upon completion of the debut Piḷḷai was presented with traditional honoraria such as jewels and clothing woven with gold thread. The debut of Piḷḷai's *Kumpakōṇappurāṇam,* composed later, was conducted with greater pomp and ceremony. Kumpakōṇam's most prominent residents bestowed silk cloth and other traditional marks of honor upon Piḷḷai, as well as a sum of two thousand rupees raised by public collection. Further, the palm leaves on which the text of the *purāṇa* was written were placed upon an elephant and taken in procession through the town while Piḷḷai was carried in a palanquin, specially purchased for the occasion, by local dignitaries.[25] Piḷḷai composed his *purāṇa*s on Uraiyūr and Kumpakōṇam and presented them to an admiring public prior to Cāminātaiyar's tenure as his pupil. Cāminātaiyar was directly involved, however, in both the composition and the public debut of the *purāṇa* on Tirupperunturai. He served as Piḷḷai's scribe, writing on palm leaves the verses Piḷḷai composed and dictated, and he was also given the responsibility and honor of reading the text aloud to the audience that assembled for the daily debut of each installment of the *purāṇa.*

The scenario for the debut of Piḷḷai's *piḷḷaittamiḻ* on Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, head of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai monastery,was somewhat different. This event took place, as expected, at Tiruvāvaṭuturai, and Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar himself presided, with monks, scholars, and dignitaries in attendance. In his biography of Piḷḷai, Cāminātaiyar's description of the event highlights an exchange of mutually flattering banter between the poet and Tēcikar. This incident suggests that a kind of parity prevailed between the *maṭha*'s leading religious authority and its official poet. We find echoes of this notion in Cāminātaiyar's autobiography, where he describes a kind of mutual teacher-pupil relationship that prevailed between Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar's successor, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, and Piḷḷai, with Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar playing the role of teacher in the sphere of Śaiva philosophy and Piḷḷai playing that role

25. Cāminātaiyar's description of this event is reminiscent of the description of the debut of Cēkkiḻār's *Periyapurāṇam* described in *Cēkkiḻārpurāṇam* by Umāpati Civācāriyar (fourteenth century).

in the literary sphere.[26] A rather different interpretation of the relationship between the two emerges from Cāminātaiyar's account of an incident that transpired during his first visit to Tiruvāvaṭuturai. After Cāminātaiyar, in the company of his teacher, had received an audience with Tēcikar and demonstrated his literary accomplishments, some monks detained him to comment on Piḷḷai's evident fondness for him and Tēcikar's satisfaction with his performance. And one of the monks described Piḷḷai as one who excels in bestowing knowledge and Tēcikar as one who excels in bestowing food and gold.[27]

Cāminātaiyar's record of Piḷḷai's career introduces us to an economy of literary creativity, performance, and patronage in which the currency of exchange was material wealth, talent, reputation, learning, and aesthetic experience. This economy is perhaps brought into focus most clearly in the debut of a newly composed text. Here poem, poet, patron, audience, and oftentimes pupil participate in a single event. While all are key elements in this system, the poet's position is central. In the context of the debut the poem seems to function as the vehicle for bringing forth the poet's genius.[28] The poem is not only a text but a performance event that is incomplete without the presence of the poet. Public recitation serves as a medium of contact between audience and poet, providing a context for audience members to participate in the poet's genius.[29] It is an occasion for the poet's patron(s) to claim a position of prestige within the community. And last, it provides an opportunity for the poet to publicly present his pupil as a supporter and inheritor of his genius.

While the debut may validly be viewed as the keystone for a structure in which status and wealth circulated, poetry should by no means be relegated to the status of a neutral conveyor of social and economic commodities. The aesthetic elements of this system were no less real than its social and economic dimensions. Thus in his description of the debut of Piḷḷai's *purāṇa* on Uṟaiyūr, Cāminātaiyar emphasizes not only the tangible signifiers of honor

26. In order to preserve the fine balance in their relationship, Tēcikar would have the junior monks ask questions on his own behalf, rather than putting himself blatantly in the position of a pupil of Piḷḷai by posing questions to him directly (Cāminātaiyar 1958: 137).

27. Cāminātaiyar portrays Tēcikar in accord with the classical model of beneficence. It seems that especially during the annual Founder's Day at Tiruvāvaṭuturai he freely gave gifts to the monastery's many visitors. The respective Tamil terms for gifts of knowledge, food, and gold that Cāminātaiyar employs are *vittiyātāṉam* [Skt. *vidyādāna*], *aṉṉatāṉam* [Skt. *annadāna*], and *coṉṉatāṉam* [Skt. *svarṇadāna*].

28. In at least two incidents reported in Cāminātaiyar's biography of Piḷḷai the poet is put on the same plane as Kampaṉ (twelfth century), author of the classic Tamil version of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* and he is associated with "the goddess Tamil" *(tamiḻttāy)* (Cāminātaiyar 1976: 59, 65).

29. In a very similar way, I have argued, recitation of the Tamil saints' hymns in the context of temple worship serves as a medium of contact between an audience of devotees and the temple's deity. See Cutler 1987, esp. ch. 3.

THREE MOMENTS IN TAMIL LITERARY CULTURE

presented to Piḷḷai by his patrons but also the audience's appreciation of Piḷḷai's poetry in performance. In keeping with the conventions of the Tamil genre of *talapurāṇam,* Piḷḷai embellishes the puranic story of Uṟaiyūr's sanctity with elaborate descriptive passages, including praise of the the town of Uṟaiyūr and the countryside surrounding it. Cāminātaiyar imagines the audience's aesthetic appreciation of the *purāṇa* as Piḷḷai recited it to them as follows:

> Some enjoyed hearing the celebration of the countryside; some enjoyed hearing the celebration of the town. Some took delight in hearing the description of castes in the section on the town; and the temple officials listened to the descriptions of the town contained in that section with tears in their eyes.[30]

The aesthetic impact that Piḷḷai's compositions made upon their audiences, whether it emanated from the emotional charge imparted to familiar puranic stories or from elaborate word play, is a recurrent theme in Cāminātaiyar's account. This is a point worth keeping in mind, since in more recent appraisals of Tamil literary history, these compositions tend to be devalued as somewhat laborious exercises in technical display.[31]

Memory, Orality, Writing, and Printing

By the latter part of the nineteenth century the printing press had made substantial inroads into Tamil cultural life.[32] Yet despite the fact that some of Piḷḷai's compositions found their way into published form, print culture seems to have played a relatively minor role in his career. While both orality and writing come into play in virtually all of Piḷḷai's activities as a poet and teacher, with regard to writing—whether in the context of composition, reception, or transmission—palm leaf manuscripts are far more prominent than printed books in Cāminātaiyar's narrative.

It appears that Piḷḷai routinely astounded his own pupils and other contemporaries by his ability to extemporaneously compose long, technically complex passages in verse without handling any instruments of writing. When composing a poem, he would usually dictate verses to a scribe, often one of his own students; and we are told that only a scribe with great facility in the use of stylus and palm leaf could keep up with the pace of Piḷḷai's dictation. While most of Piḷḷai's poetry seems to have been composed in such dictation sessions, apparently he sometimes mentally composed long passages of poetry in a kind of reverie and later had them recorded on palm leaves.

---

30. Cāminātaiyar 1986, 1: 132.
31. For instance, Kamil Zvelebil writes, "[Piḷḷai's] elegant difficult, high poetry lacks true vigour and innovating originality" (1995: 437).
32. See Venkatachalapathy 1994.

Writing did, however, play a role in Piḷḷai's composition of his poems be-yond record-keeping and preservation. Cāminātaiyar describes how, when Piḷḷai was dictating his *Tirupperuntuṟaippurāṇam,* periodically Cāminātaiyar would read portions back to Piḷḷai, which Piḷḷai would amend as he saw fit. Finally, Cāminātaiyar would make a clean copy of the revised text on palm leaves.

Aspects of both orality and writing were also factors in Piḷḷai's teaching method. According to Cāminātaiyar, Piḷḷai never consulted a written text when teaching. He had no need to because his memory of the texts was flaw-less. He would recite a verse, explain its meaning, and parse it into phrase units. Sometimes he would also introduce quotations from other texts into his explanations.[33] But though the medium of instruction for these sessions was oral, Piḷḷai would have his pupils make their own copies of the texts he taught on palm leaf manuscripts. And sometimes he would have a student read the verses of the original text from a palm leaf manuscript rather than reciting them himself from memory. Cāminātaiyar was often chosen to do this because, drawing upon his musical talent and training, he could set pas-sages of the text to classical ragas.

The debut of a text, of course, was a predominantly oral event. But the written form of the new work played no small role in this ritual. Probably more often than not, the manuscript served as a script for the public recita-tion, and as we have seen, on at least one occasion the manuscript itself was ritually honored by being paraded triumphantly through the streets.

Social Environment

It is useful to remind ourselves that the literary culture we come to know via Cāminātaiyar's autobiography was the preserve of a limited segment of the Tamil population. As mentioned earlier, Cāminātaiyar's descriptions of Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai's patrons and audiences tend to be couched in generalities—for instance, he mentions that at the end of a debut the poet was gifted with money collected from local residents, without telling us very much about the residents' social identities. Nevertheless, a considerable number of Piḷḷai's students, fellow scholars, and patrons are named in the narrative, and to the extent that their names indicate their social identity, Cāminātaiyar's narrative is populated in part by Tamil Brahmans, such as Cā-

---

33. This is essentially the same format found in traditional written commentaries and sug-gests their oral roots. Cāminātaiyar tells us that when he was teaching at the Government Col-lege he elaborated somewhat on this format: "While teaching literature, stopping with a word-for-word paraphrase will not arrest the attention of the listeners. So I used examples and analogies from real life to draw the attention of the students to the significance of the stanza in question" (Cāminātaiyar [1990] 1994: 349).

minātaiyar himself, and to an even greater extent by high-caste non-Brahmans, primarily Veḷḷāḷas and to a lesser extent Mutaliyārs and Ceṭṭiyārs. The caste name "Piḷḷai," which Veḷḷāḷas traditionally append to their names, is ubiquitous. There are also two Christians who play fairly important roles in this story—C. Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai, a government administrator and author who maintained close ties with Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai throughout much of his career,[34] and Cavērināta Piḷḷai, one of Piḷḷai's most devoted pupils. Furthermore, Mutaliyārs, Ceṭṭiyārs, and especially Veḷḷāḷas are the castes that constitute the social base of Tamil Śaiva sectarianism, which is given quintessential institutional expression in the influential Śaiva monastic centers at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, Tarumapuram, and Tiruppaṉantāḷ.

Cāminātaiyar's account of his own life and his teacher's suggests that during the nineteenth century the cultural activities of at least some Brahmans and high-caste non-Brahmans were largely congruent, much more so than one might expect from certain modern-day politicized readings of Tamil cultural history, according to which Veḷḷāḷas and members of other non-Brahman castes are true sons of the Tamil soil and Brahmans are interlopers from "the North." Furthermore, in Cāminātaiyar's story this community of common interests and sensibilities was largely defined by Shaivism and by the study and appreciation of Tamil literature.[35] Cāminātaiyar, a Smārta Brahman, numbered among his teachers both Brahmans and non-Brahmans; and of course his mentor, Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, was a non-Brahman. Needless to say, certain markers of distinction between Brahman and non-Brahman prevailed—for instance, when Cāminātaiyar traveled with Piḷḷai he did not take his meals with his teacher, and special arrangements had to be made for his food. This was also true at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, an essentially non-Brahman institution, where facilities were nevertheless provided for Brahmans, many of whom were Sanskrit scholars patronized by the non-Brahman monastery.

In Cāminātaiyar's story, segments of the Tamil population other than those just mentioned—lower-caste Hindus and Christians, as well as Muslims—are conspicuous by their absence. Though I do not pursue this point in this chapter, we cannot but wonder what kinds of literary cultures members of these groups participated in contemporaneously with the one Cāminātaiyar describes for us so vividly. Through Cāminātaiyar's autobiography we are introduced to a canonical literary world, but we should not lose sight of the fact that during this time noncanonical genres, many of them exclusively oral, circulated in parallel literary universes—though from the vantage point of

34. Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai is credited with writing the first novel in Tamil, *Piratāpamutaliyār Carittiram* (The life of *Pratāpa Mutaliyār*), first published in 1876.

35. Cāminātaiyar represents both his Brahman father and his non-Brahman teacher as devout Shaivites.

the keepers of the literary canon these texts most likely would not have been recognized as literature.

LITERARY HISTORY AS A MODE OF LITERARY CULTURE

Perhaps the most striking difference between the vision of Tamil literature that informed Cāminātaiyar's education and more modern visions of the Tamil literary sphere is the degree to which each incorporates a chronological dimension. As we have seen, Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai and other participants in a literary culture centered largely at non-Brahman Śaiva monasteries paid little attention to the relative historical placement of the texts they studied and composed. Nor did they categorize the literary domain in terms of historical periods. We have also seen that during his long career Cāminātaiyar played a key role in reformulating the prevailing vision of Tamil literature by bringing to light early Tamil literary texts such as *Cīvakacintāmaṇi, Cilappatikāram,* and many of the *caṅkam* anthologies. The effect of reintegrating these works into the Tamil literary curriculum went beyond a simple expansion of the Tamil literary sphere, however; the rediscovery of these texts at a critical juncture in the evolution of Tamil cultural and political identity also contributed to the historicization of literary studies. Scholars began to take an interest in the historical contexts in which literary texts were produced and to view literary texts as windows on an ancient Tamil cultural past. Further, their understanding of this past was profoundly affected by cultural politics.

The term "Tamil Renaissance" is often applied to the period beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century when Tamil literary culture was altered through the recovery, editing, and publication of the early Tamil classics. This period coincides with the development of a Dravidianist political agenda, popular among certain sectors of the Tamil population, that emphasized the antiquity of Tamil civilization and, most importantly, its essential independence from Sanskritic culture. K. Nambi Arooran observes that there was an "intimate relationship between the Tamil Renaissance and the ways in which Dravidianist sentiment arose. . . . The Dravidian ideology . . . was formulated partly if not largely on the basis of the ancient glory of the Tamils as revealed through literature." In a similar vein, K. Sivathamby writes that "it was Tamil Literature, more than anything else, that was called in to establish the antiquity and the achievements of the Tamils."[36] It therefore comes as no surprise that Tamil literary histories, especially some of the earliest, are informed by issues underlying ongoing debates concerning the Dravidian roots of Tamil culture.

---

36. Nambi Arooran 1980: 12; Sivathamby 1986: 51.

M. S. Purnalingam Pillai (1866–1947) is credited with writing the first comprehensive survey of Tamil literature plotted as a historical narrative. First published in 1904 as *A Primer of Tamil Literature,* a revised and expanded edition appeared in 1929 under the title *Tamil Literature.*[37] Purnalingam Pillai was a professor of English literature at Madras Christian College, and he intended that his work be used as a university textbook. The story of Tamil literary history as he tells it is emphatically underwritten by a Dravidianist ideology. It begins with the first extant Tamil grammatical text, *Tolkāppiyam,* and the poems collected in the *caṅkam* anthologies. For Purnalingam Pillai, as for many like-minded scholars,[38] this corpus lends credence to the view that Tamilnadu was the site of an early Dravidian civilization that predated and flourished independently of the Aryan-dominated North. He interprets the history of Tamil literature as largely a record of the interaction between this civilization and other cultural forces that entered Tamilnadu from the outside. Central to Purnalingam Pillai's representation of Tamil literature are its antiquity, its vastness, and its high moral standards.[39]

Purnalingam Pillai's history exhibits a number of features that are recognizable, though sometimes somewhat modified, in subsequent histories of Tamil literature. Most notably, he subdivides the literary field into chronologically ordered segments: (1) poems collected in the *caṅkam* anthologies and the so-called eighteen shorter works (*patiṉeṅkīḻkkaṇakku;* see discussion of this term later) (The Age of the Sangams, up to 100 C.E.); (2) long narrative poems by Jain and Buddhist authors generically classified as *kāviyam* in Tamil and often referred to as epics in English (The Age of Buddhists and Jains, 100–600 C.E.); (3) canonical poems of the Tamil Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva poet-saints (The Age of Religious Revival, 600–1100 C.E.); (4) works by court poets composed during the reign of the imperial Cōḻas, the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta *śāstra*s, the most influential medieval commentaries on *Tolkāppiyam, Cilappatikāram,* and *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* and the poems of the Tamil *siddha* poets[40] (The Age of Literary Revival, 1100–1400 C.E.); (5) late medieval poetry, much of which was composed and circulated in sectarian communities (The Age of Mutts, 1400–1700 C.E.);[41] and (6) works composed during the

37. Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985. Notably, some of the most influential histories of Tamil literature, and certainly the earliest ones, were written in English.

38. Among the earliest and most influential of these scholars was P. Sundaram Pillai, who is best known as the author of the Tamil drama *Maṉōṉmaṇiyam,* first published in 1891. His views on Tamil literary history appear in his *Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature* (1985).

39. Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985: 1.

40. The corpus of poems attributed to the Tamil *siddha*s generally features a highly iconoclastic form of Shaivism characterized by yogic and tantric themes and a renunciatory ethos. The *siddha* tradition also has close ties with alchemy and healing practices.

41. "Mutt" is an informal transliteration of *maṭha,* which I have translated as "monastery" throughout this chapter.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (The Age of European Culture, 1700–
1900 C.E.).[42] This basic model is followed by many subsequent histories of
Tamil literature, even if they may differ somewhat in specifics.

Purnalingam Pillai's conceptualization of the Tamil literary field differs
from earlier conceptualizations not only because it emphasizes chronology;
it also encompasses texts that would not have been included in earlier mod-
els of literature, such as the canonized poems of the Tamil Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva
saints and the poems of the Tamil *siddha*s. The literary domain *(ilakkiyam)*
as instantiated in earlier models was fairly precisely defined by its relation-
ship with the complementary domain of normative grammar, poetics, and
rhetoric *(ilakkaṇam)*. Later, historicized models of Tamil literature are
defined more globally and less precisely.

Purnalingam Pillai and other authors of global historical surveys of Tamil
literature invented a master narrative of Tamil literary history that incor-
porated works hitherto produced and consumed in largely separate cultural
spheres. Purnalingam Pillai's version reflects a vision of Tamil cultural his-
tory once popular in certain non-Brahman Śaiva circles. According to this
account the ancient Tamilians populated a land mass now largely sub-
merged by the Indian Ocean.[43] These ancient Tamilians were said to be ruled
by the Pāṇṭiya kings, a dynasty famed as great patrons of literature. They wor-
shipped Śiva without the mediation of Brahman priests under the guidance
of four sacred texts *(maṟai)*[44] in Tamil, now lost, that antedated the Sanskrit
Vedas. Those remnants of this ancient civilization that survived the incur-
sion of the ocean constitute the bedrock, so to speak, of Tamil culture as it
has evolved over time, upon which other cultural layers brought to Tamil-
nadu by Buddhists, Jains, Brahmanic Aryans, and later Europeans have been
deposited. While other versions of Tamil literary history may be less com-
mitted to or even take issue with the Dravidianist-Śaiva agenda promoted by
Purnalingam Pillai and others of his ideological bent,[45] there are broad sim-
ilarities in the ways they conceive of the content of the Tamil literary domain

42. The dates given here correspond with the dates Purnalingam Pillai gives in his discus-
sion of periodization in the introduction to his text ([1929] 1985: 1). The book's table of con-
tents is organized according to the same six periods, but the dates given for some are different.

43. The legend of the ocean successively inundating the first two Pāṇṭiya capitals was first
recounted in Nakkīrar's ninth- or tenth-century commentary on *Iṟaiyaṉārakapporuḷ*, a norma-
tive text on the poetics of *akam* poetry, also known as *Kaḷaviyal,* "The Study of Stolen Love" (see
Buck and Paramasivam 1997). This story plays a prominent role in the Dravidianist perspec-
tive on Tamil cultural history.

44. *Maṟai* means literally "that which is hidden" and is also often used to denote the San-
skrit Vedas.

45. For succinct, informative discussions of this agenda see Ramaswamy 1997 and Nambi
Arooran 1980.

and structure it in terms of discrete time periods associated with certain cultural sensibilities.[46]

S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, like Purnalingam Pillai, attempts a master historical narrative in his influential *History of Tamil Language and Literature.*[47] Though he is concerned only with texts produced prior to 1000 C.E., his conception of the content of the Tamil literary domain within this time frame is not substantially different from Purnalingam Pillai's. Yet in other ways the two men were poles apart in their approach to Tamil literary history, especially regarding the relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit, the antiquity of the Tamil literary tradition, and the significance of traditional legends concerning authors and literary institutions.

Vaiyapuri Pillai makes a radical break with Purnalingam Pillai's appropriation of Tamil literary lore, and he aims to establish a chronology of Tamil literature based on rigorously applied scholarly principles. Compared to dates assigned by Purnalingam Pillai and other Dravidianists, he dates many texts relatively late. He also sees Sanskrit as an important catalyst in Tamil literary history. While many present-day scholars respectfully beg to differ with Vaiyapuri Pillai on these issues even as they acknowledge the value of his contributions to the field, during his lifetime his views were regarded by many as nothing short of blasphemous. While Purnalingam Pillai's narrative of Tamil literary history supported a Dravidianist social and political agenda, Vaiyapuri Pillai provided a brief for the opposition in the Tamil culture wars of the 1930s through 1960s.

Different as Purnalingam Pillai's and Vaiyapuri Pillai's perspectives on Tamil literary history may be, their writings nevertheless share a number of themes and concerns that frequently resurface in subsequent literary histories. These include: a historicized perspective on Tamil literature; concern for the relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit; concern for the religious affiliations of texts and authors; a stand on the relevance (or lack thereof) of Tamil literary legends to literary history; and a tendency to highlight certain "great books" as exemplary contributions of Tamil culture to world literature. Conspicuously missing from these and most of the extant narratives of Tamil literary history are: an explicitly articulated concern with the liter-

46. A notable exception is the volume Kamil Zvelebil contributed to the series *A History of Indian Literature* edited by Jan Gonda and published by Otto Harrassowitz. In his introduction Zvelebil writes, "This book was conceived as based, in the first place, on the critical and evaluative approach (distinct from, but not opposed to, a strictly historical approach), and as such, it appeals primarily to the structures which may be designed as major literary types. Tamil literature is here classified principally not by time, but by specifically literary types of organization or structure. It is viewed as a simultaneous order, and the book is concerned with the interpretation and analysis of the works of literature themselves" (Zvelebil 1974: 2–3).

47. Vaiyapuri Pillai 1988.

ary as a category of textual production; an acknowledgment of the existence of a plurality of Tamil literary cultures; ways in which Tamil literature has been institutionalized at different times; and ways in which literary texts are embedded in performative contexts.

Insofar as they share certain presuppositions concerning the Tamil literary sphere, its composition, and its internal articulation, the literary histories of Purnalingam Pillai, Vaiyapuri Pillai, and others who followed in their wake constitute a distinct moment in the genealogy of Tamil literary culture. In the following I focus on a few of the "great books" that invariably receive attention in Tamil literary histories, considering the similarities and differences in the way they are typically incorporated into these narratives. Among these Tamil literary classics, three tend to receive lengthier treatment or to be flagged as especially significant. These are *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* attributed to Tiruvaḷḷuvar; *Cilappatikāram,* attributed to Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ; and Kampaṉ's Tamil rendering of the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

Tirukkuṟaḷ

Tirukkuṟaḷ contains 1330 couplets on a wide range of topics pertaining to family life, society, asceticism, kingship, and the protocols of love. Virtually no definite historical information is available concerning Tiruvaḷḷuvar, the supposed author of the text. According to legend, he was a low-caste weaver. The text has been dated variously by different scholars. Kamil Zvelebil, evaluating the evidence, proposes that the *Kuṟaḷ* was composed during the fifth century C.E.[48] Some scholars hypothesize that Tiruvaḷḷuvar was a Jain, while others vehemently dispute this. But since the text is virtually free of sectarian polemics, the debate over Tiruvaḷḷuvar's religious identity seems of secondary importance. The verses of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* are grouped in "chapters" *(atikāram)* of ten verses each, and each chapter bears a title that putatively, and in most instances fairly obviously, identifies the topic or theme treated in its constituent verses. The chapters are further grouped in three divisions that bear titles corresponding to three of the four "aims of man" (Tamil *uṟutipporuḷ;* Skt. *puruṣārtha*): virtuous behavior in the context of both householder life and a life of renunciation *(aṟam),* prosperity realized through life in the public sphere and good government *(poruḷ),* and pleasure through amorous experience *(kāmam* or *iṉpam).* Some commentators further subdivide these three divisions into two or more subsections.

The evidence for *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s stature as a classic, not only in modern times but also in the past, is considerable. There are ten premodern commentaries on the text, of which five are extant and five have been lost. Quotations from

48. Zvelebil 1975: 124.

or allusions to *Tirukkuṟaḷ* are found in other Tamil literary works, the most frequently cited being verbatim quotations of verses 55 and 360 in *Maṇi-mēkalai*. Yet another indication of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s long-standing eminence is a collection of fifty verses praising *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and Tiruvaḷḷuvar titled *Tiruvaḷḷuvamālai* (tenth century?). Each verse is attributed to a different poet, including, in the early verses of the poem, a disembodied voice, the goddess of speech, Śiva in his manifestation as the poet Iṟaiyaṉār, and many of the poets of the legendary Tamil *caṅkam.*

Scholars have tended to situate *Tirukkuṟaḷ* either as part of the *caṅkam* corpus in the earliest period of Tamil literary history or in a succeeding post-*caṅkam* age. According to certain widely accepted versions of Tamil literary history, the earliest period of Tamil literary production, the *caṅkam* period, which was dominated by a largely native Tamil aesthetic sensibility, was closely followed by an age characterized by a strong didactic bent, due at least in part to the influence of Buddhism and Jainism. The majority of the texts included in the traditional grouping of eighteen shorter works, including *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* are assigned to this later period.[49] Only one other text of the eighteen—*Nālaṭiyār,* said to be an anthology of verses by Jain monks—even remotely approaches *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s visibility among premodern Tamil texts.

The paradigm "eighteen shorter works" postdates the composition of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and the other texts included in this group. The term first occurs in Pērāciriyar's thirteenth-century commentary on *Tolkāppiyam.* It also occurs in other roughly contemporary commentaries on the *ilakkaṇam* texts *Tolkāppiyam* and *Vīracōḻiyam* (eleventh century). The defining criteria for this grouping are purely formal, though most modern literary historians note the preponderance of texts among this group that fall within the category of ethical literature (Tamil *nītinūl*). The term *nītinūl* is attested as early as Parimēlaḻakar's[50] late-thirteenth-century commentary on *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* but this tells us little about the text's status as a distinctively literary work.[51]

We have seen that *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is often located in an era when Buddhism and Jainism were apparently highly influential in the literary life of Tamil-nadu, and that a number of scholars, notably Vaiyapuri Pillai, have argued that the author of this text was a Jain. But over time, and especially in the climate of modern Tamil cultural nationalism, *Tirukkuṟaḷ* has acquired a sig-

49. Eleven of the "eighteen shorter works" are didactic, six fall within the rubric of classical love *(akam)* poetry, and one is a war *(puṟam)* poem.

50. Interestingly, while it has become an article of faith among modern-day critics like M. Arunachalam (1974) that Vaḷḷuvar speaks for an ethical code that is categorically independent of the classical codes of behavior based on caste and stage of life *(varṇāśramadharma),* the most influential of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s medieval commentators, Parimēlaḻakar, employs this paradigm as a frame for his whole interpretive program (Cutler 1992).

51. Notably in this regard, *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s commentators have been concerned almost exclusively with interpreting the text for its content and attend little if at all to issues of poetic form.

nificance that transcends any identification it may once have had with a Jain religious or cultural program. Virtually every religious community represented in Tamilnadu has staked a claim to *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* and especially in certain non-Brahman Śaiva circles one encounters strong resistance to the suggestion that the author of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* was Jain. N. Subrahmanian, somewhat less polemically, locates the composition of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in the framework of a "liberalized Hinduism" that was not adverse to incorporating ideas identified with other religious communities. Other scholars are inclined to emphasize the text's tolerance, eclecticism, and indeed its "universality" without attempting to assign it a specific religious affiliation.[52]

A certain tension haunts this discussion. On the one hand, scholars feel compelled to at least address the question of Vaḷḷuvar's religious affiliation; on the other hand, many end up taking the position that the text transcends sectarianism. This tension can perhaps be traced to *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s career in Tamil cultural history. The text has, in various times and environments, been appropriated by spokespersons for one or another religious tradition. The most noteworthy example is found in the late-thirteenth-century commentary by the Vaiṣṇava Brahman Parimēlaḻakar. Even if specifically Vaiṣṇava themes are not prominent in this, the most influential of the several "old" commentaries on *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* Parimēlaḻakar unequivocally construes the overall plan of the text, as well as specific verses, in terms of Brahmanic paradigms. In recent times, however, Parimēlaḻakar's construction of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* has often been challenged, sometimes respectfully and sometimes adversarily, in favor of other interpretations that downplay any strong association between *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and Sanskritic culture. For some scholars, the *Kuṟaḷ* expresses the values of an early Tamil civilization characterized by a "rationalist" rather than a narrow sectarian sensibility, while for others it represents a unique experiment in ecumenicism.[53]

This tension in the discourse on *Tirukkuṟaḷ* calls attention to what I think is one of the most interesting questions for any exploration of Tamil literary culture(s) in history: How closely are religious sectarianism and literary culture intertwined? On the one hand, *caṅkam* poetry is often described as secular; on the other, the canonical poems of the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva saints and the theologically oriented commentaries on the Vaiṣṇava poems were clearly produced in a sectarian context and have played a major role in the formation and maintenance of sectarian identity.[54] This is not to say that the

52. For examples of resistance to the suggestion that the author of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* was a Jain, see Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985 and Arunachalam 1974; N. Subrahmanian writes of "liberalized Hinduism" (1981: 21); those who emphasize the text's tolerance and eclecticism include Meenakshisundaran 1965 and Varadarajan 1988.

53. For these two positions, see, respectively, Kuḻantai 1949 and Maharajan 1979.

54. Pechilis 1999.

Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva saints were not conversant with the conventions of *caṅkam* poetry; clearly they were.[55] In other areas of the Tamil literary sphere the relation between literature and religion is even more problematic. Many of the texts belonging to *pirapantam* genres have deities or other religious figures as protagonists; but one hesitates to characterize these as sectarian literature on par with, say, the canonical poems of the saints or the long narrative poem *Maṇimēkalai,* whose author argues for the superiority of Buddhism over other religious paths. And how should we regard *Kamparāmāyaṇam,* which is invariably counted among the classics of Tamil literature and frequently as the greatest work in all of Tamil literature? Even if in the narrative Rāma does not always seem to be aware of his own divinity, Kampaṉ clearly portrays Rāma as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Does this necessarily mean that in the eyes of its audience *Kamparāmāyaṇam* is primarily a Vaiṣṇava text? The evidence seems to support an answer in the negative, but the case can be argued, and has been argued, both ways.

The issues of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s religious affiliation and of its relation to Sanskrit sources cannot, of course, be categorically separated. Not surprisingly, Purnalingam Pillai and Vaiyapuri Pillai hold largely divergent views. Purnalingam Pillai emphasizes that the *Kuṟaḷ* "is almost free from the influx of Sanskrit words" and that it "shows the richness and power of the Tamil tongue."[56] In contrast, Vaiyapuri Pillai observes that the percentage of Sanskrit words in *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is higher than in *caṅkam* poems, and he emphasizes Vaḷḷuvar's debt to Sanskrit shastric sources, particularly Manu, Kauṭilya, and Kāmandaka. He observes, however, that Vaḷḷuvar worked significant changes on his sources; in fact, he asserts that Vaḷḷuvar's rendition of the "aims of man"—virtuous behavior, prosperity, and pleasure—is superior to those of his Sanskrit models.[57] But even such exuberant praise of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* failed to satisfy Vaiyapuri Pillai's critics, who argue that he dates the text too late (no earlier than 600 C.E.) and that he exaggerates its links with Sanskritic models.[58]

Cilappatikāram

It is difficult to imagine two premodern Tamil texts more different in form and content than *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and *Cilappatikāram.* Yet in modern discourse on

55. Ramanujan and Cutler 1983; Hardy 1983; Peterson 1989.

56. Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985: 76.

57. Vaiyapuri Pillai 1988: 62. In both the Tamil and the Sanskrit traditions four aims of humankind are enumerated, the fourth being "release" (Tamil *vīṭu;* Skt. *mokṣa*). Scholars have offered a variety of explanations for the absence of a separate section devoted to release in *Tirukkuṟaḷ.* According to Parimēlaḷakar, Tiruvaḷḷuvar confined his project to the first three of the aims because the last cannot be captured through normal discursive means.

58. Arunachalam 1974.

literary and cultural matters these two texts, more than any others, have become emblematic of a distinctively Tamil genius.[59] The two texts may not be very far removed from one another historically, and it is quite possible that the authors of both were Jains.

As in the case of *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* literary historians have offered various dates for *Cilappatikāram,* which is one of the earliest long narrative poems—if not the earliest—in Tamil. It is generally accepted that the author of *Cilappatikāram* based his narrative on an earlier tale. A popular ballad known as *Kōvalaṉ Katai* (The story of Kōvalaṉ), though radically different from *Cilappatikāram* in many respects, is clearly an offspring of the same underlying story.[60] Tradition has it that Iḷaṅkō (the name means young king), the putative author of the text, was the younger brother of Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ, ruler of the Cēra kingdom, and that he became a Jain monk in order to circumvent a prophecy that he would one day displace his brother on the throne. Since Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ is thought to have ruled during the second century C.E., traditionalists date the composition of *Cilappatikāram* in the second century. Others, however, date the text considerably later. Zvelebil hypothesizes that the poem was composed in the mid-fifth century.[61]

Iḷaṅkō drew upon many sources to construct his sophisticated literary work, and not surprisingly, scholars differ in the degree to which they find Sanskritic elements in it. As we would expect, Purnalingam Pillai downplays the Sanskrit connection. Following tradition, he draws attention to the role played by the Cēra king in the composition of *Cilappatikāram* and describes the members of this ancient Tamil dynasty as "great Tamil scholars and patrons of Tamil learning."[62] The territory ruled by the Cēras is understood as having been roughly coterminus with modern-day Kerala, and Purnalingam Pillai cannot restrain himself from chiding the modern Malayalis who "have forgotten their birthright and heritage in their craze for Sanskrit."[63] Vaiyapuri Pillai is true to form in according a much greater role to Sanskrit models in the genesis of *Cilappatikāram.* To properly grasp his location of the text culturally and historically we should recall that he accounts for the composition of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in the context of a Jain program of proselytization in the Tamil country. But, he tells us, something more was needed to capture people's imagination than didactic works such as the *Kuṟaḷ.* This need was supplied by such "national epics" as *Cilappatikāram.*[64]

59. Parthasarathy 1993: 344.

60. For an English translation of one published version of *Kōvalaṉ Katai,* see Noble 1990.

61. Zvelebil 1975: 114.

62. Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985: 125.

63. Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985: 126. See Freeman, chapter 7, this volume, for discussion of the view from Kerala of the relationship between Malayalam, Tamil, and Sanskrit literature.

64. Vaiyapuri Pillai 1988: 98, 100.

R. Parthasarathy, author of the most successful English translation of *Cilappatikāram,* describes the structure of the text as "a collection of thirty distinct long poems, twenty-five of which are story-songs or cantos *[kātai],* and five of which are song cycles that appear at critical junctures and function as choruses unobtrusively commenting on the action." He also postulates a direct line of development from the kinds of relatively short poems found in the *caṅkam* anthologies to a long "poetic sequence" such as *Cilappatikāram.*[65] The thrust of this sort of understanding of the genesis of *Cilappatikāram* highlights its kinship with an indigenous Tamil literary tradition and downplays any notions that the Tamil genre of "poetic sequence" exemplified by *Cilappatikāram* and other roughly contemporaneous poems is fundamentally related to the Sanskrit genre of *mahākāvya.*[66]

Cilappatikāram's twenty-five cantos are composed in the *akaval* meter, the meter used for most of the poems in the *caṅkam* anthologies. In part because the word *akaval* is a derivative of the verb *akavu* (to call, to declaim), scholars have reasoned that the early poems composed in *akaval* meter were originally performed in a declamatory style. The alternative name for this meter, *āciriyappā* (verse of the teachers) suggests an association between verse composed in this meter and learned culture.

In contrast, the five song cycles are composed in meters that many scholars believe were derived from folksongs and were very likely originally set to music when the text was performed. These song cycles invariably receive special attention in discussions of *Cilappatikāram*'s significance in literary history and its merits as a work of literary art. M. Varadarajan regards Iḷaṅkō as the first poet to attempt to give a written form to folksongs and praises the felicitous manner in which Iḷaṅkō uses meter to complement the meaning expressed in these songs.[67] Varadarajan's emphasis on the song cycles accords well with a theme that runs prominently throughout his narrative of Tamil literary history and is to some extent present in the work of other scholars, namely, that the fount of poetic creativity is to be found in folksongs. In this view, folksongs serve as a continuing source of vitality for institutionalized literary culture, and the best Tamil learned literature maintains an active connection with its folk roots. It is probably no coincidence that this assessment tends to devalue any connections between learned Tamil

65. Parthasarathy 1993: 301. "Poetic sequence" is Parthasarathy's translation of the technical term *toṭarnilaicceyuḷ,* which first appears in the twelfth-century text on poetic figures, *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram* (The poetics of Taṇṭi). A *toṭarnilaicceyuḷ,* or poem with interlinked stanzas, stands in contrast to a *tokainilaicceyuḷ,* an anthology of unconnected poems (298, 299).

66. *Cilappatikāram* is traditionally numbered among the *aimperuṅkāppiyaṅkaḷ,* the "five great *kāvya*s" in Tamil; see further on this category in n. 98.

67. Varadarajan 1988: 21, 91. Arguably, some of the earlier poems collected in the *caṅkam* anthology *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* (The five hundred short poems), in their formal design, bear a close relationship to folksongs (Cutler 1980).

literature and Sanskrit literary culture and to highlight connections with local culture.

Cilappatikāram's prominence in narratives of Tamil literary history is not predicated upon its literary merits alone, however. The role that cultural themes play is as great, if not greater, in modern-day understandings of the text. In Parathasarathy's words, "The *Cilappatikāram* speaks for all Tamils as no other work of Tamil literature does: it presents them with an expansive vision of the Tamil imperium."[68] This political vision originates in the notion of the "three kings" *(mūvēntar)* who ruled in the ancient Tamil country and belonged, respectively, to the Cōḻa, Cēra, and Pāṇṭiya lineages. *Caṅkam* poems of the *puṟam* type sketch a political landscape in which rulers of these three dynasties frequently waged war against one another, as well as against lesser chieftains whose spheres of influence were confined to the more remote areas of the Tamil country. The story of *Cilappatikāram* moves through the domains of all three kings, and the text accordingly is divided into three sections *(kāṇṭam)*, named after the capital cities of the three kingdoms—Pukār (Cōḻa), Maturai (Pāṇṭiya), and Vañci (Cēra). The Cōḻa king plays a peripheral role in the story; however, the Pāṇṭiya and Cēra kings are major actors, though their roles are almost diametrically opposed. By hastily and unjustly ordering that Kōvalaṉ be executed as a thief, the Pāṇṭiya king forfeits his right to rule;[69] and when Kōvalaṉ's widow, Kaṇṇaki, appears at his court to confront him with evidence of the injustice he has perpetrated, he immediately acknowledges the gravity of his failure and gives up his life. In contrast, the third section of the text is a panegyric to the glorious rule of the Cēra king, Ceṅkuṭṭavaṉ. It describes his conquest of "northern kings," who are said to have "poured scorn on the Tamil kings,"[70] and his consecration of a memorial stone carried from the Himālaya to create a shrine for Kaṇṇaki, who has been transformed into the goddess Pattiṉi.

The third section of *Cilappatikāram,* in particular, appears to support Parathasarathy's contention that the text presents its audience with a vision of a Tamil imperium. But it is also true that in Iḷaṅkō's political vision Cēra

68. Parthasarathy 1993: 1–2.

69. In poetry the king's scepter frequently functions as a symbol of his fitness as a ruler. The "straight scepter" *(ceṅkōl)* symbolizes the king who upholds dharma, and the "bent scepter" *(koṭuṅkōl)* symbolizes the king who fails to do so. At the moment when the Pāṇṭiyaṉ sentenced Kōvalaṉ to death, his scepter "turned crooked" (Parthasarathy 1993: 168). Note that the same prefixes, which are etymologically related to the nouns *cemmai* (straightness, evenness, excellence) and *koṭumai* (crookedness, severity, cruelty) are used by the author of *Tolkāppiyam* to distinguish "correct [literary] Tamil" *(centamiḻ)* from colloquial Tamil *(koṭuntamiḻ).*

70. Parthasarathy 1993: 233. In this particular passage the Tamil text simply says "kings" *(maṉṉar)*, and Parthasarathy has interpolated the qualifier "northern." However, in other passages the Tamil text explicitly mentions "northern kings" *(vaṭaticai maruṅkiṉ maṉṉar)* and "Aryan kings" *(āriya maṉṉar).*

Ceṅkuṭṭuva<u>n</u> is singled out as the defender of Tamil honor and the chief agent of Tamil military and political power. Iḷaṅkō's sense of political geography seems to operate on two levels. Within the sphere of the Tamil land, the text conveys a degree of rivalry among the three Tamil kings, and at this level *Cilappatikāram* presents a picture that closely matches the political landscape of *caṅkam* poetry. But within the larger sphere of India as a whole, Ceṅkuṭṭuva<u>n</u> appears to act as an agent of all three Tamil kings. For instance, when Ceṅkuṭṭuva<u>n</u> announces his resolve to embark on an expedition to bring a stone from the Himālaya to create a shrine for Kaṇṇaki, his minister replies:

> May your upright rule
> Last for many years! On the bloodstained field
> Of Koṅka<u>n</u> you routed your equals
> Who forfeited their banners with the emblems of the tiger
> And the fish. This news has spread to the four corners
> Of the earth. My eyes will not forget the scene
> Of your elephant among the Tamil hosts that overcame
> The armies of the Koṅkaṇas, Kaliṅgas, cruel Karunāṭa<u>n</u>s,
> Paṅkala<u>n</u>s, Gaṅgas, Kaṭṭiya<u>n</u>s renowned for their spears,
> And the Āryas from the north.
> We cannot forget
> Your courage when you escorted your mother
> To bathe in the swollen Gaṅgā, and fought alone
> Against a thousand Āryas [so] that the cruel god
> Of death was stunned. No one can stop you, if you wish,
> From imposing Tamil rule over the entire world
> Clasped by the roaring sea. Let a message be sent forth:
> "'It is our king's wish to go to the Himālaya
> To bring a stone for engraving the image
> Of a goddess.'" Close it with your clay seal
> That bears the imprint of the bow, fish
> And tiger, emblems of the Tamil country,
> And dispatch it to the kings of the north.[71]

The bow is the emblem of the Cēra, the tiger the emblem of the Cōḻa, and the fish the emblem of the Pāṇṭiya. Thus this passage informs us that after overcoming his Tamil rivals, the Cōḻa and the Pāṇṭiya kings, in battle, Ceṅkuṭṭuva<u>n</u>, representing his two defeated rivals as well as his own Cēra line, has gone to war against rulers throughout India.

Parthasarathy sees in *Cilappatikāram* "a psychological response to the memory of the Aryan penetration of the south, including Aśoka's, that had culminated in the Kaliṅga War of 260 B.C.E." He further claims that "we can see here the beginnings of Tamil separatism that has manifested itself in the

---

71. Parthasarathy 1993: 225.

mid-twentieth century." Similarly, N. Subrahmanian writes, "In thus encompassing the whole of the Tamil country in its epic sweep, *[Cilappatikāram]* has posited a cultural integrity for the Tamils, and through Ilangō, it may be said without fear of serious contradiction, Tamil nationalism got its first expression."[72] Whether or not this last claim is well founded, proponents of modern Tamil cultural nationalism certainly construe Iḷaṅkō's text as a potent symbol of Tamil identity and power. Telling examples are the reworking of the story by the poet Pāratitācaṉ in his *Kaṇṇakip Puraṭcikkāppiyam* (The epic of Kaṇṇaki's revolt, 1962) and Mu. Karuṇāniti's *Cilappatikāram: Nāṭakak Kāppiyam* (*Cilappatikāram:* An epic play, 1967), which was also produced in a film version titled *Pūmpukār.*

Notably, however, when modern-day Dravidianists appropriate *Cilappatikāram* as a statement of Tamil cultural nationalism, they bracket the elements of Iḷaṅkō's rhetoric and ideology that they tend to identify as Aryan importations. For instance, the rhetoric of karmic retribution—a supposedly Aryan ideology—is very strong in *Cilappatikāram*. Consider also that in the story Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ fulfills his destiny not only by forcing the northern kings to acknowledge the prestige of the Tamil kings and creating a shrine for Kaṇṇaki, but also, and ultimately, by performing a great Vedic sacrifice as urged by the Brahman character Māṭalaṉ. While Aryan kings of the north may serve as "the other" against which Tamil political identity is defined in *Cilappatikāram,* at the same time the north, represented by the Himālaya and the Gaṅgā, carries an undeniable prestige. This is brought out tellingly in the following exchange between Ceṅkūṭṭuvaṉ and his councillors when the idea of dedicating a shrine to Kaṇṇaki is introduced. The councillors speak first:

> "An image of her should be made
> With stone brought from the Potiyil hills
> Or from the great Himālaya where the bow-emblem
> Is engraved. Both are holy: one is washed
> By the floods of the Kāviri, and the other by the Gaṅgā."
> The king replied:
> "It does not redound to the good name
> Of kings born in our family of fierce swords
> And great valor to get a stone
> From the Potiyil hills and lave it in the waters
> Of the Kāviri. In the Himālaya live brahmans
> With matted hair, wet robes,
> Three-stringed cords across their chests,
> And the power of their three sacrificial fires. . . . "[73]

72. Parthasarathy 1993: 344; Subrahmanian 1981: 23–24.
73. Parthasarathy 1993: 223.

It is thus evident that if the author of *Cilappatikāram* speaks on behalf of a Tamil imperium, he also employs a rhetoric that emphatically is not exclusively Tamil.

Kamparāmāyaṇam

Because Kampaṉ in the *Irāmāvatāram,* his Tamil rendering of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* builds upon the foundation of Vālmīki's Sanskrit text, Dravidianists have not always embraced this work as readily as they have *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and *Cilappatikāram.*[74] Their ambivalence about the *Kamparāmāyaṇam,* as the text is commonly known, has not, however, significantly eroded Kampaṉ's well-established reputation in the Tamil tradition as *kavicakravartin,* "emperor of poets." Further, while most literary scholars acknowledge the presence of Sanskrit influences in Kampaṉ's text, they also unanimously locate *Kamparāmāyaṇam* squarely within a trajectory of Tamil literary development.

While there is general agreement that Kampaṉ lived and composed his great work in the political sphere of the Cōḻas, his biography and the precise conditions under which he composed his text are no clearer than in the cases of Vaḷḷuvar and Iḷaṅkō. Based on different lines of reasoning from the available evidence, Kampaṉ has been variously assigned to the ninth, tenth, and twelfth centuries. Thus scholars differ as to whether Kampaṉ's era should be located in the early or the late phase of the Cōḻa imperial formation, though in the most recent work the later date tends to be favored.[75] Among Kampaṉ's many acknowledged accomplishments are his mastery of meter, his skill at correlating meter and other sonic dimensions of the text with content, his adaptation of features of *caṅkam* poetry, and the vividness of his characterizations.

Among Tamil literary historians, the Jesudasans offer the most developed evaluation of Kampaṉ's place in Tamil literary history. Though the Jesudasans assert that Tamil epics of the Cōḻa period were "written in open emulation of Sanskrit," and they make a case for Kālidāsa's influence on Kampaṉ, they also conclude that "Kampaṉ has skyrocketed his epic clean out of the Sanskrit atmosphere." In fact, they regard *Kamparāmāyaṇam* as a kind of depository of Tamil literary development in which the three currents of "the Sangam *[caṅkam]* spirit of sheer aesthetic enjoyment, the *Kuṟaḷ* spirit of ennobling ethics, and the *bhakti* spirit of devout worship in the shadow of Sanskritism . . . run into one broad stream."[76] George Hart and Hank Heifetz, in their translation of the Araṇyakkāṇṭam portion of *Kamparāmāyaṇam,* offer a similar list, substituting the early Tamil epics for

---

74. See Blackburn 1996: 28–29.

75. Zvelebil 1975: 317–18; Hart and Heifetz 1988: 2; Shulman 1991: 89.

76. Jesudasan and Jesudasan 1961: 143, 162–63.

Tirukkuṟaḷ—"the poems of the *Caṅkam* age, the *Cilappatikāram* and other early Tamil epics, and the hymns of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava saints"—and they tell us that "such works embodied and passed on an aesthetic with strong realistic elements, great visual delicacy combined with naturalistic precision, and a tropical density of imagery and emotional oscillation."[77] They list among Kampaṉ's sources the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki; ideas gleaned from yoga and the heterodox traditions; Sanskrit *kāvya* literature; basic philosophical ideas of orthodox Indian religion developed in texts such as the *Upaniṣad*s, the *Bhagavadgītā,* and the works of the philosophers Śaṅkara (eighth century) and Rāmānuja (eleventh century); and the *bhakti* movement.[78]

Scholars differ regarding the relative importance of Sanskritic and ancient Tamil literary and cultural elements in *Kamparāmāyaṇam.* Purnalingam Pillai harshly judges the literary and cultural climate of Kampaṉ's age due to "the diffusion of Aryan ideas and Aryan literature." But even though he acknowledges that "Kamban's Ramayanam is an adaptation of Valmiki's," he nevertheless describes Kampaṉ as "the poet of poets and the renowned author of the immortal Tamil epic, Ramayanam."[79] Like some of his contemporaries, Purnalingam Pillai sees in the story a thinly veiled account of the Aryan conquest of south India; but he also reads Kampaṉ's text as a subversive rendition of this story that, upon close consideration, extols Dravidian over Aryan civilization.[80]

For Hart and Heifetz the key to understanding the cultural forces at work in Kampaṉ's text lies in the terms *aṟam* and *maṟam.*[81] According to their reading, *maṟam* signifies an early Tamil social and political order described in the *puṟam* poems of the *caṅkam* anthologies. It is an order characterized by small self-sufficient food-producing units called *nāṭu*s, each of which tends to have its own chieftains and armies, who are dedicated to subduing other similar neighboring units.

---

77. Hart and Heifetz 1988: 7.

78. Hart and Heifetz 1988: 26.

79. Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985: 215, 217. Purnalingam Pillai is not the only literary historian who heaps superlatives on Kampaṉ. The Jesudasans write, "The king of Tamil literature [i.e., Kampaṉ] represents the Tamil mind at its ripest and noblest" (1961: 157). For T. P. Meenakshisundaran, "Kampaṉ is the greatest epic poet of the Tamil land" (1965: 102). M. Varadarajan tells us that "in the Tamil literary firmament Kampaṉ shines like a star, inaccessible to others" (1988: 162). And M. Arunachalam writes, "[Kampaṉ's] Ramayana marks the crowning glory of Tamil literary production" (1974: 114).

80. Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985: 224, 230. See also Purnalingam Pillai [1928] 1996.

81. The following are some of the meanings given for these words in the Madras University Tamil Lexicon: For *aṟam:* moral or religious duty, virtue, performance of good works according to the *śāstra*s, duties practiced by each caste; merit; that which is fitting, excellent; religious faith; wisdom. For *maṟam:* valor, bravery; anger, wrath; enmity, hatred; strength, power; victory; war; killing, murder; injury; vice, sin.

Maṟam is connected with battle and the glorification of the king, who must fight often and well. The valorous army is often characterized as being like Death or . . . like a possessing demon spirit." *Aṟam,* on the other hand, signifies an order "first manifested during the rule of Pallavas in about the sixth century A.D. In this model, the upper-caste landowning non-Brahmins . . . ally themselves with the Brahmins and adopt a Hindu life-style characterized by large kingdoms in which the landowners of each *nāṭu* support the central king in return for his protection from local chieftains and armies. In this second pattern, the upper castes adopt Hinduism with all its characteristically South Indian attributes: respect for Brahmins and the Northern traditions of Hinduism; devotion to Viṣṇu or Śiva; and temple worship.[82]

In Hart and Heifetz's reading of *Kamparāmāyaṇam,* Rāvaṇa represents the older Tamil king and the order signified by *maṟam,* whereas Rāma represents the newer order of *aṟam.* While *Kamparāmāyaṇam* depicts the triumph of the newer dharmic order over the older system, in Kampaṉ's text Rāvaṇa "is a chaotically powerful figure, whose entanglements in deep feeling and rebellions against conventional morality ring more human and conform far more to Romantic ideas of the heroic than the immaculate . . . behavior of Absolute Good." But contrary to Dravidianist readings of *Kamparāmāyaṇam* such as that offered by Purnalingam Pillai, Hart and Heifetz affirm that "there is no question that within the value system of the *Kamparāmāyaṇam* . . . Rāvaṇa is evil, though magnificent and intricate evil."[83]

While Rāma's status as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu is incontestable in *Kamparāmāyaṇam,* the text has not played a role in Tamil Vaiṣṇava sectarianism comparable to, say, that of the poems of the *āḻvār*s. Beginning as early as the late tenth century, these poems have been recited ritually in Tamil Vaiṣṇava temples and have provided a foundation for highly technical theological discourse. In contrast, the Śrīvaiṣṇava Brahmans of Śrīraṅgam, according to legend, were initially hostile to Kampaṉ's text and gave it their approval only after he surmounted a number of obstacles they had set for him.[84]

Several literary historians suggest that *Kamparāmāyaṇam* is more appropriately approached in the context of a nonsectarian literary culture than

82. Hart and Heifetz 1988: 27–28. Hart and Heifetz derive their understanding of these two patterns from the work of Burton Stein (1969).

83. Hart and Heifetz 1988: 23.

84. In the recitation of the poems of the *āḻvār*s in Tamil Vaiṣṇava temples, see Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 639. The difference between *Kamparāmāyaṇam* and the poems of the *āḻvār*s is not entirely clear cut, however. For instance, citations from *Kamparāmāyaṇam* are found in theological commentaries on the poems of the *āḻvār*s. Also, Stuart Blackburn (1996) has recently documented a tradition of shadow puppet performance, based on portions of Kampaṉ's text, at temple festivals dedicated to the goddess Bhavati in the Palghat region of Kerala. For an account of the traditional legend of Vaiṣṇava sectarian resistance to Kampaṉ's text and an interpretation of the legend, see Shulman 1993: 8–13.

in the context of Vaiṣṇava sectarianism. Purnalingam Pillai, who, as we have seen, is strongly committed to the notion of a primordial Tamil Shaivism, insists that Kampaṉ did not compose his text in a Vaiṣṇava sectarian context and that "the morality [of *Kamparāmāyaṇam*] is that of the epic in Tamil-nadu." M. Arunachalam, who also has strong Śaiva leanings, asserts in a similar spirit: "When Kampaṉ chose the *Rāmāyaṇa,* he did not choose it because Rāma was considered the incarnation of Viṣṇu the Supreme Being; he chose it only for the potentialities for epic creation which it offered." Several verses from *Kamparāmāyaṇam* are included in the literary anthology *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* which draws upon a wide range of literary sources. As mentioned earlier, Cāminātaiyar's autobiography reveals that *Kamparāmāyaṇam* was included in the curriculum at the Tiruvāvaṭuturai monastery, a bastion of Tamil Shaivism; and in a recent paper Vasudha Narayanan describes the place of this text in the intellectual tradition of Muslim Tamil speakers.[85]

Yet the impetus to dissociate Kampaṉ from Vaishnavism is not universal. M. Varadarajan contends that Kampaṉ drew upon the devotional spirit of the Vaiṣṇava poet-saints, the *āḻvār*s, and he traces several passages in *Kamparāmāyaṇam* to passages in the *bhakti* poetry of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār (eighth century). And while some have argued that the presiding deity in *Kamparāmāyaṇam* is not so much Viṣṇu as Dharma, Hart and Heifetz note that "Kampaṉ makes his idea of dharma totally dependent on Rāma/Viṣṇu."[86] Perhaps the most telling indication of Kampaṉ's integration into Tamil Vaiṣṇava sectarian culture is that he is the attributed author of a poem praising the Nammāḻvār, though some scholars question his authorship of this work.[87]

What underlies these seemingly contradictory evaluations of *Kamparāmāyaṇa*'s status as a sectarian text? Since detailed information regarding the environment in which the text was composed is lacking, any evidence for Kampaṉ's intentions must come primarily from the text itself; and it can hardly be denied that Kampaṉ's Rāma is represented as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. However, once a text is in circulation, it can conceivably participate in more than one literary culture. That the Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*s cite passages from *Kamparāmāyaṇam* in their commentaries on the *āḻvār*s' poems indicates that the text was incorporated into Tamil Vaiṣṇava sectarian discourse. Yet there is very strong evidence that *Kamparāmāyaṇam* actively participates in a broader

85. Quotations in this paragraph are, respectively, from Purnalingam Pillai [1929] 1985: 223; Arunachalam 1974: 116–17; and Narayanan 1996. On the anthology *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* see later in this chapter.

86. Varadarajan 1988: 165; Jesudasan and Jesudasan 1961: 165–66 (for the argument that the presiding deity in *Kamparāmāyaṇam* is Dharma); Hart and Heifetz 1988: 29.

87. The poem in question is called *Caṭakōparantāti.* Caṭakōpar is an alternate name for Nammāḻvār, generally considered the most important of the Tamil Vaiṣṇava poet-saints. Several other works are also traditionally attributed to Kampaṉ, though his authorship of all of these has been questioned.

literary culture that is not defined in sectarian terms. The text enables its participation in Tamil Vaiṣṇava culture through its understanding of Rāma's character, and in the wider literary culture by drawing upon, for instance, the legacy of *caṅkam* poetry.[88]

The foregoing discussion suggests that the writing of literary histories is itself a distinctive mode of literary culture. Despite their disagreements over particulars, the authors of these histories conceptualize the literary domain in similar ways and ask similar questions about literary texts. They tend to bring similar perspectives to issues concerning the composition of the Tamil literary domain, which works and authors are most worthy of sustained study, and the nature of the relationship between works of literature and their historical environment. One might argue that there is something distinctively modern about the way such issues are raised and confronted in these literary histories—an observation to which I return. This prompts a question: In premodern Tamilnadu, what sorts of analogous projects enact earlier modes of Tamil literary culture? Three in particular come to mind: commentaries on literary texts, compendia of legends concerning the lives of poets, and literary anthologies. In the remaining portion of this chapter I focus on the last of these traditional means of representing, making, and performing Tamil literary culture.

ANTHOLOGIES: A SITE FOR THE REPRESENTATION AND CREATION OF TAMIL LITERARY CULTURE

As K. Sivathamby has so rightly remarked, consciousness of a Tamil literary heritage has deep roots in the past. In Sivathamby's view, the earliest evidence of a self-reflective Tamil literary heritage is the compilation of the *caṅkam* anthologies. Very little is known about the circumstances underlying these anthologizing projects. However, in some instances the colophons that accompany the anthologies give the names of the compilers as well as the names of the rulers under whose patronage the anthologies were compiled, suggesting that these poems were composed and circulated primarily in the context of ancient Tamil courtly culture. Sivathamby has hypothesized that the compilation of the *caṅkam* poems, embarked upon during a period characterized politically by a transition from tribal groupings to territorial sovereignties, was intended "to consolidate the literary gains of the immediate past and thus ensure the continuity of the royal lines."[89]

Complementing, and perhaps roughly contemporary with, the anthologies is the first textual account of the legendary literary academies *(caṅkam)* where, under the patronage of Pāṇṭiya kings, the classical literary corpus was

88. Shulman 1991.
89. Sivathamby 1986: 33.

said to have taken shape. The work in question is Nakkīrar's commentary on *Iṟaiyaṉārakapporuḷ* (Inner themes according to *Iṟaiyaṉār*), a normative text that delineates the conventions of love *(akam)* poetry. The root text and the commentary are usually dated in the eighth century. According to tradition, the author of the root text is none other than the god Śiva, who participated in the activities of the *caṅkam* under the name of Iṟaiyaṉār (the lord). Si-vathamby reasons: "The legend of the Cankam as seen in the commentary of IA is clearly an effort to 'Hinduise' Tamil, especially make it part of the Saivaite tradition. Seen this way the significance of this legend in Tamil lit-erary history is very great. It attempts to take over an obviously Jain and Bud-dhist institution (Sangha) and give it a Hindu form and content."[90] Given his particular interest in the social and political dimensions of literary cul-ture, Sivathamby finds the role played by the Pāṇṭiya kings in this legend even more interesting than its sectarian partisanship. In his view, "construct-ing a royal base for the Cankam in which the Gods themselves take part, le-gitimises, beyond question, the rule of the newly emerging Pandyas." Viewed thus, both the *caṅkam* anthologies and the legend of the Tamil *caṅkam*s may be understood as efforts to relate past literature to current social, political, and religious needs.[91]

Sivathamby also finds this sociopolitical approach a productive way of un-derstanding later landmark developments in the emerging self-awareness of Tamil literary culture. These include the codification of the Tamil *bhakti* po-ems (c. eleventh century) and the somewhat later codification of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta *śāstra*s. Sivathamby reasons that the *bhakti* movement was politically useful to the Pallavas of the Siṃhaviṣṇu (560–580) line and the Pāṇṭiyas of the Kaṭuṅkōṉ (590–620) line. The Jain and Buddhist monas-teries and their economic organizations would have constituted an impedi-ment to the firm establishment of Pallava and Pāṇṭiya power, and rulers of these dynasties would have found in the *bhakti* movement an effective means of confronting this obstacle to their political ambitions.[92]

Sivathamby also calls attention, as others have done, to the close interre-lationship between political structures in the Tamil country, beginning with the Pallavas and further developed under the Cōḻas, and the construction of stone temples where the Tamil *bhakti* poems performed an important litur-gical function. Codification of these poems both contributed to efficient run-ning of the temples and helped "consolidate the very socio-political struc-ture in which the temples operated."[93]

As the formation of the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva canons of *bhakti* hymns is closely

90. Sivathamby 1986: 35.
91. Sivathamby 1986: 36.
92. Sivathamby 1986: 37.
93. Sivathamby 1986: 39.

associated with the rise of the temple as a central religious and political institution in the Tamil country, so the later composition and codification of the Śaiva Siddhānta *śāstra*s are associated with the rise of non-Brahman monasteries in the former heartland of Cōḻa power. We saw earlier in the chapter that these non-Brahman monasteries eventually became an important locus for the preservation and transmission of a wide range of Tamil literary texts by patronizing scholars such as T. Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai.

Puṟattiraṭṭu: *A Fifteenth-Century Literary Anthology*

Sivathamby views the compilation of the *caṅkam* anthologies, the canonization of the poetry of the Tamil Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva saints, and the codification of the Śaiva Siddhānta *śāstra*s as "the major landmarks in the history of the consciousness relating to the Tamil literary heritage and Tamil literary thought" prior to the eighteenth century. He also briefly refers to a few "minor" developments in this history, and he offers as one of these a literary anthology called *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* which was compiled by an anonymous editor, very likely during the fifteenth century.[94] This text may not be especially prominent in present-day Tamil cultural consciousness or literary scholarship, but I suggest that a close study of the logic underlying the choice of texts and the internal organization of this anthology can tell us quite a lot about the nature of Tamil literary culture during a critical phase of its development. Moreover, I would argue that *Puṟattiraṭṭu* is informed by a much greater consciousness of a specifically *literary* heritage than is the case with either the canonization of *bhakti* poetry or the compilation of the Śaiva Siddhānta *śāstra*s.

The poems of the Tamil Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva saints are accorded an important place in the cavalcade of works treated in Tamil literary histories, such as those examined earlier in this chapter. But it is doubtful that in premodern Tamilnadu these poems, though poetically accomplished, were considered in the same textual category as, say, the poems of the *caṅkam* anthologies. Among the issues involved in the distinction I am drawing are contrasting models of authorship—the image of the spontaneous, inspired creativity of the *bhakti* poet-saint versus the acquired skill of the poet-pandit *(pulavar)*[95]—as well as the context of performance and circulation in which a text participates. Certainly by the eleventh century, and possibly somewhat earlier, the *bhakti* hymns had become, first and foremost, liturgical texts and were firmly embedded in the culture of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva temples. Additionally, the Vaiṣṇava hymns of the *āḻvār*s became the centerpiece for elaborate theological commentaries. In contrast to these works, the Tamil tex-

94. Sivathamby 1986: 44.

95. For a discussion of several models of authorship in the Tamil literary tradition, see Shulman 1993.

tual universe includes works that I would identify as more centrally literary. While these may carry sectarian overtones or even have been composed to satisfy a sectarian agenda, they circulated, at least for a period of several centuries, in a realm of discourse that was not defined primarily by religious concerns or delimited by sectarian boundaries. It is such texts that found a place in an anthology like *Puṟattiraṭṭu* and became the object of literary, as opposed to theological, commentary.[96]

The very name of this anthology, which literally means "a collection of *puṟam* (verses)," implies a selective principle—namely, that the verses included belong to the literary category of *puṟam,* the "exterior," public realm, in contradistinction to the category of *akam,* the "interior," domestic realm. The distinction between these categories is of course fundamental to the system of literary conventions that governs the poems collected in the *caṅkam* anthologies, and, with just one exception, each of these anthologies is devoted exclusively to poems belonging to one of these two poetic domains. While *Puṟattiraṭṭu* includes poems found in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and *Patiṟṟuppattu* (second or third century C.E.?), the two early anthologies devoted exclusively to poems of the *puṟam* genre, most of the texts included in *Puṟattiraṭṭu* are of a very different character. This suggests that in post-*caṅkam* times the accepted understanding of the two-fold division of the poetic world into *akam* and *puṟam* expanded to encompass a far greater range of subject matter and poetic forms. A close examination of the structure of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* in tandem with certain commentarial remarks on the structure of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* by Parimēlaḻakar, the most influential of its many commentators, will help to clarify the nature of this expansion.

The Organization of Puṟattiraṭṭu   The arrangement of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* and of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is almost identical. The former was almost certainly modeled directly on the latter, with a few significant, and some perhaps less significant, departures. As we saw earlier, each of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s 1330 verses belongs to a titled "chapter" *(atikāram)* of ten verses, and the text as a whole is divided into broad divisions labeled "virtuous behavior," "prosperity," and "pleasure"—three of the four "aims of man."

Historically, Parimēlaḻakar's commentary on *Tirukkuṟaḷ* has dominated

96. The period spanning the eleventh through the fifteenth centuries was a prolific time for Tamil commentarial discourse. Dating from this period are what have come to be viewed as classic commentaries on *Tolkāppiyam* by Ilampūraṇar (eleventh century), Pērāciriyar (thirteenth century), and Naccinārkkiniyar (fourteenth century); Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary on *Cilappatikāram* (late thirteenth/early fourteenth century); and Parimēlaḻakar's commentary on *Tirukkuṟaḷ* (late thirteenth century), in addition to others (Zvelebil 1973: 247–63). All are examples of what I am calling "literary" commentaries. Contemporary with these are commentaries on the devotional poetry of the *āḻvār*s authored by the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācārya*s. On the latter tradition see Carmen and Narayanan 1989, Clooney 1996, and Venkatachari 1978.

the interpretation of the text's verses and its overall plan, although relatively recently this commentary has come under attack in some quarters for its decisively Brahmanic leanings. With respect to its form, Parimēlaḻakar's commentary conforms to a pattern that is ubiquitous in Tamil commentarial literature. By far the greater part of the commentary is devoted to interpretative paraphrases *(patuvurai)* of each verse and "illuminating information" *(viḷakkam),* which in the commentator's estimation helps the reader clearly grasp the verse's meaning and implications. But certain aspects of the commentary—for instance, introductory comments to each of the text's chapters as well as to each of its three major portions—are geared not so much toward elucidation of specific verses as toward bringing into focus the conceptual plan that organizes the text as a whole.[97]

In these introductory comments Parimēlaḻakar calls upon and effects connections between a number of cultural and literary paradigms, such as the "aims of man," the codes of behavior specific to one's caste and stage of life *(varṇāśramadharma),* and *akam/puṟam.* In his introduction to the third portion of the text—on pleasure—in particular, he lines up the first two "aims of man," virtuous behavior and prosperity, with the poetic category *puṟam,* and he aligns the third aim, pleasure, with the complementary category *akam.* In the context of the *caṅkam* corpus, as we have seen, *akam* poems are love poems and *puṟam* poems are poems of war and kingship, though manuals on poetics tend to treat *akam* as the formally marked category, and *puṟam* as all subject matter that falls outside the *akam* realm.

The anthology *Puṟattiraṭṭu* is divided into two major portions, devoted to the topical rubrics of virtuous behavior and prosperity, respectively, and these in turn are subdivided into chapters. Not only does this basic organizational schema mirror that of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*—with the omission of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s third portion, on pleasure, which, we noted, formally belongs to the realm of *akam* rather than *puṟam* and thus is not germane to this anthology—the titles of the chapters in *Puṟattiraṭṭu* are almost identical to those in the first two portions of *Tirukkuṟaḷ.* The most significant departure is in the final twenty-three chapters of *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* the titles of which are not found in *Tirukkuṟaḷ* but correspond to themes treated in *puṟam* poems of the *caṅkam* anthologies. This further underscores the alignment of the classical poetic categories and the ethical schema of the "aims of man," which has been embraced by this intellectual tradition.

Texts Represented in Puṟattiraṭṭu   The texts represented in *Puṟattiraṭṭu* encompass a large expanse of Tamil literary history, ranging from poems included in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and *Patiṟṟuppattu* to a verse from a Jain *purāṇa* com-

97. For further discussion of Parimēlaḻakar's commentary on *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* see Cutler 1992.

posed possibly as late as the fourteenth century. Quite a few of *Puṟattiraṭṭu*'s texts are included in traditional textual taxonomies, such as the eight anthologies, the eighteen shorter works, the five major *kāvya*s *(aimperuṅkāppiyam),*[98] and the five minor *kāvya*s *(aiñciruṅkāppiyam).* While these paradigms were certainly devised later—and in some cases considerably later—than the compositions they comprise, references to all of them predate the compilation of *Puṟattiraṭṭu.*

The profile of texts represented in *Puṟattiraṭṭu* provides valuable information about the nature of literary culture in fifteenth-century Tamilnadu. Among the thirty-one texts represented, several closely follow the conventional norms of classical *puṟam* poetry, including, of course, the two *caṅkam* anthologies. Of these *puṟam* and *puṟam*-inspired texts, the *caṅkam* anthology *Puṟanāṉūṟu* contributes the greatest number of verses to the anthology— proof enough that during the fifteenth century these poems were known, even if they were effectively lost to Tamil literary culture later on.

Nine texts included among the eighteen shorter works are represented in *Puṟattiraṭṭu.* Most of these would be described by Tamil literary historians as didactic literature *(nītinūl).* However, notably missing from this group is *Tirukkuṟaḷ.* Although none of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s verses is included in *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* a special role is reserved for this, perhaps the most universally honored and most intensively interpreted of all Tamil texts, for as we have seen, *Tirukkuṟaḷ* provides a master blueprint for the anthology as a whole. Among other works belonging to the *nītinūl* genre, two, *Nālaṭiyār* and *Paḻamoḻināṉūṟu,* contribute more verses to *Puṟattiraṭṭu* than any other, and they are generally ranked second and third in order of prominence among Tamil didactic texts after *Tirukkuṟaḷ.*

A third category of texts well represented in *Puṟattiraṭṭu* is the genre of long narratives in verse known in Tamil as *kāviyam.* Verses from three of the five great *kāvya*s and one of the five small *kāvya*s appear in *Puṟattiraṭṭu. Cīvakacintāmaṇi,* counted among the former, is especially well represented.[99]

It comes as no surprise that two didactic texts should contribute a large number of verses to an anthology that is, after all, structured in terms of categories borrowed directly from the most distinguished example of this genre. And clearly, in *Puṟattiraṭṭu* these categories are understood broadly enough

98. This term, which first appears in Mayilainātar's commentary on the grammatical text *Naṉṉūl,* is a verbatim translation of the Sanskrit *pañcamahākāvya* and seems intended to establish a correspondence between the five "great *kāvya*" works of Sanskrit literature and five long narrative poems in Tamil, only some of which are extant. It is complemented by the term *aiñciruṅkāppiyaṅkaḷ,* the "five lesser *kāvya*s," which has no analogue in Sanskrit. It is far from obvious why the texts included in this group should be considered "less" than the "great *kāvya*s." Most modern-day Tamil scholars consider this taxonomy highly artificial, and they tend to dismiss it as having little direct relevance to the texts so classified.

99. Recall that this is the text that changed the course of Cāmiṉātaiyar's career.

to encompass a much larger range of textual production than the traditional didactic corpus. This is evident from the fact that a Tamil *kāvya* and a *caṅkam* anthology contribute, respectively, the third and fourth greatest number of verses to *Puṟattiraṭṭu* out of a roster of thirty-one source texts.

Further, the compiler of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* includes texts by authors known to be Jains, Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas, and Buddhists (in descending number) as well as texts by authors of unknown sectarian affiliation; and the amount of sectarian polemics featured in the source texts varies widely. To whatever degree the source texts were or were not composed to serve such agendas, sectarianism appears to play no significant role in the selection and arrangement of verses from these texts in *Puṟattiraṭṭu*. It would appear that a nonsectarian or transsectarian *literary* culture flourished in Tamilnadu in the fifteenth century—a time when Tamil Shaivism and Shrivaishnavism were well on the way to assuming their mature institutionalized forms. This suggests that literary culture was, at least to an extent, independent of religious sectarianism.

Significantly also, *Puṟattiraṭṭu*'s source texts include both collections of self-contained verses and texts composed of verses that narrate a story. In the terminology of Tamil grammar/poetics these textual categories are known, respectively, as *tokai* (collection) and *toṭar* (sequence). This is not to say that *tokai* texts are all random assemblages of unrelated verses. To the contrary, the verses of many of these texts—*Tirukkuṟaḷ* being a telling example—are fit, either by their authors or later redactors, into highly structured organizational frameworks. The key distinguishing feature between *tokai* and *toṭar* is the element of narrative. One might say, therefore, that in *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* as in comparable anthologies, the principle of *toṭar* is superceded by *tokai,* since the verses selected from narrative texts (e.g., *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and *Kamparāmāyaṇam*) are disengaged from their original narrative context and inserted into a nonnarrative superstructure.

It is also worthwhile to consider the kinds of texts that are not represented in *Puṟattiraṭṭu*. This being an anthology that defines itself as a collection of *puṟam* poems, it stands to reason that it would not include poems traditionally associated with the complementary *akam* category. These would include poems of the *caṅkam akam* anthologies, as well as later poems that share many of the conventions of the early *akam* poems. Also not represented are poems that came to be performed primarily in liturgical settings, most notably the canonized poems of the Tamil Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva poet-saints. This is in keeping with my previous remarks concerning the distinction between texts treated in a culturally specific sense as literature and texts primarily associated with other cultural domains, no matter how literary they may appear to an outsider. But more mysterious is the absence of examples of *pirapantam* genres that may be described as descendants of classical *puṟam* poetry, such as *Nantikkalampakam* (Miscellany on Nandi; anonymous, ninth century), which extols the Pallava king Nandivarman III, or *Kaliṅkattupparaṇi* (The

paraṇi of the Kalingas) by Cayaṅkoṇṭār (twelfth century), a war poem inspired by the conquest of the Kaliṅka country by the Cōḻa king Kulōttuṅka I.

Literature as a Model for Life

George Hart has observed that in India there is a strong tendency to approach literature in moral terms, and that this is frequently achieved through techniques of framing and distancing the literary text.[100] In demonstrating his point Hart does not mention *Puṟattiraṭṭu* or, for that matter, any literary anthologies, but *Puṟattiraṭṭu* seems to be tailor-made to underscore Hart's observation. Here is a collection of verses gleaned from a heterogeneous assemblage of texts and arranged according to a very detailed framework structured by ethical themes. Some of these texts are themselves organized along similar lines, but verses from other source texts, especially long narrative texts, are radically recontextualized in *Puṟattiraṭṭu.*

This process of recontextualization will become clear by looking at a few verses included in *Puṟattiraṭṭu*'s chapters titled "The Greatness of Renouncers" ("Nīttār Perumai") and "Abstaining from Meat" ("Pullāl Maṟuttal"). Both chapters are found in the first portion of the anthology, on virtuous behavior, and the titles of both are also chapter titles in *Tirukkuṟaḷ.* The source texts represented in these chapters include *Nālaṭiyār, Paḷamoḻināṉūṟu* (The four hundred old sayings)*, Cīvakacintāmaṇi,* and *Kamparāmāyaṇam.*

Nālaṭiyār's organization is very similar to that of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*—and by extension, to that of *Puṟattiraṭṭu.* Like the *Kuṟaḷ,* it is divided into three major portions devoted, respectively, to virtuous behavior, prosperity, and pleasure; and some but not all of its forty chapter headings are also found in *Tirukkuṟaḷ.* While the verses of *Paḷamoḻi* are not arranged under the umbrella of the "aims of man," some of its thirty-four chapter titles correspond to chapter titles found in the first two major sections of *Tirukkuṟaḷ.* The structure of the two long narrative texts in this sample, Kampaṉ's *Irāmāvatāram* and Tiruttakkatēvar's *Cīvakacintāmaṇi,* are, of course, completely different. In both cases the narrative is apportioned into books; and in Kampaṉ's retelling of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story, these are further subdivided into shorter narrative segments.[101]

"The Greatness of Renouncers," the third chapter of *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* contains five verses gleaned from three source texts, including one verse from *Paḷamoḻi* and three verses from the Ayōttiyakkāṇṭam of *Kamparāmāyaṇam:*

---

100. Hart 1997: 166.

101. The terms used to designate the narrative divisions of these two texts are taken directly from Sanskrit. Kampaṉ's text follows Vālmīki's Sanskrit example in its division into books *(kāṇḍa).* The thirteen sections of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* are designated *ilampakam,* a term that also denotes the chapters of the Sanskrit *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Skt. *lambaka*).

proem: The precious life-breath sustains life due to the grace of wise people (*ānr̠ōr*).

> Without the support of people
> who are restrained in thought, word, and deed,
> who think deeply and are free of desire,
> the life-breath will perish. (*Pal̤amol̤i* 262)

proem: Renouncers are equal to God (*āṇṭavan̠*).

> In your heart cherish renouncers,
> for they are greater than the Black God [Viṣṇu],
> the God with an eye in his forehead [Śiva], and
> the God who rests upon a lotus [Brahmā].
> They are greater than the five elements,
> and even the Truth. (*Kamparāmāyaṇam,* A.K. 106)

proem: Even the lives of gods are subject to renouncers.

> Innumerable are the gods
> who have been brought to grief
> by the anger of renouncers,
> and innumerable are those
> who have been raised to the heavens
> thanks to their grace. (*Kamparāmāyaṇam,* A.K. 107)

proem: Renouncers control the dictates of fate.

> When even Good Fortune and Bad Fortune
> follow a renouncer's will,
> is there anything of this world or the next
> comparable to the grace of these veritable gods on earth?
>   (*Kamparāmāyaṇam,* A.K. 109)[102]

The clustering of these verses in *Pur̠attir̠aṭṭu* under the topical heading "The Greatness of Renouncers" underscores the important role that framing plays in the interpretive process. The verses included in the anthology are contextualized in at least three ways: first, by the two-fold division of the text in sections devoted respectively to virtuous conduct and prosperity; second, by the more finely calibrated sorting of the selected verses into a large number of thematically defined chapters; and third, by adding proems for each verse. These prefatory glosses are apparently intended to extract a core of meaning from each verse and link together the several verses (often selected from diverse texts) included in a particular chapter to form an integrated statement.

Although *Pal̤amol̤i* is a collection of didactic verses, and the compiler of *Pur̠attir̠aṭṭu* has organized verses selected from various works to, in effect, cre-

---

102. *Pur̠attir̠aṭṭu* 15, 16, 17, 18 (Il̤aṅkumaran̠ 1972: 4–5).

ate a similar kind of text, *Paḻamoḻi* 262 has been recontextualized in its new
setting. The operative word in this verse is *ōmpuvār,* literally "people who pro-
tect, support, or preserve" (translated as "support of people"). In his proem
for the verse, *Puṟattiraṭṭu*'s compiler glosses this word as *āṉṟōr,* "wise people."
The implication that these "wise people" are renouncers follows from the
verse's location in the chapter titled "The Greatness of Renouncers." How-
ever, in the source text, *Paḻamoḻi,* this verse is found in the chapter "Minis-
ters [of the king]," and in his summary statement of the verse's core idea, a
commentator writes: "Good ministers *(amaiccar)* are the cause for living crea-
tures sustaining life."[103] Thus the sense of "protector" in the original verse
has been semantically tailored to fit two different topical rubrics. Appar-
ently, the source text provides raw material that *Puṟattiraṭṭu*'s compiler feels
at liberty to mold into shapes of his own choosing, without regard to its orig-
inal context.

The three verses from *Kamparāmāyaṇam* occur in the source text in the
context of advice offered to Rāma by his family's priest, Vasiṣṭha, at the re-
quest of Daśaratha, Rāma's father. This advice comes just prior to Rāma's
coronation, which of course is subsequently thwarted by Kaikeyī, the mother
of Bharata, his half-brother. These verses, it goes without saying, are far more
likely candidates for inclusion in an anthology like *Puṟattiraṭṭu* than many
other portions of Kampaṉ's text, such as verses devoted to description of for-
est or city scenes or to narration of events. In their didactic tone they are
not so very different from the verses one would find in a text of the *nītinūl*
genre. Nevertheless, in the source text they are embedded in a narrative con-
text, and most Western readers, at least, would interpret their significance
in terms of their contribution to the larger curve of the narrative.[104] But
again, the compiler of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* felt no compunction about extracting them
from their original narrative setting and grouping them with verses that pre-
sumably were felt to be thematically related. Here too, the semantics of the
operative word in the selected verses and the anthologizer's proems are in-
teresting. Both Kampaṉ and *Puṟattiraṭṭu*'s compiler use the word *antaṇar,* a
word of many meanings that, depending on context, can mean either "Brah-
man" or "renouncer." The authors of commentaries on literary texts typi-
cally steer the reader's understanding of such polysemic words along what
they deem to be appropriate channels. Thus, a modern commentator on
Kampaṉ's text tells the reader that in these verses the word *antaṇar* carries

103. Irācamāṇikkam Piḷḷai 1967: 168.
104. This is not to say that only Western readers are disposed toward such a strategy of read-
ing. The modern commentator of one edition of Kampaṉ's text points out that it is especially
appropriate for Vasiṣṭha to lecture Rāma on the virtues of renunciation at this juncture in the
narrative because Rāma himself will soon be exiled to the forest and will be forced to adopt a
renunciatory style of life. Cētupiḷḷai et al. 1959: 114.

the sense of renouncer *(tuṟantavar).*[105] The compiler of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* orients our understanding of this word similarly by including these verses in the chapter "The Greatness of Renouncers."

Puṟattiraṭṭu's chapter "Abstaining from Meat" contains eleven verses gleaned from seven texts, including one verse from *Paḻamoḻi,* two verses from *Nālaṭiyār,* and two verses from *Cīvakacintāmaṇi.* All three of the verses selected from the didactic texts are recontextualized in their transfer from source text to the anthology: The verse from *Paḻamoḻi* is included in the source text's section titled "The Householder's Life" ("Ilvāḻkkai"), and the verses from *Nālaṭiyār* are included in that text's section titled "Avoiding Bad Karma" ("Tīviṇai Accam").

> *proem:* Nothing can save people who eat flesh.

> > Even if people rid themselves of strong, clinging passions
> > and follow the path of virtue,
> > they are doomed
> > like a calf that drowns in the mud on the shore
> > after swimming the ocean
> > if they should ever eat flesh,
> > even in time of distress. (*Paḻamoḻi* 342)

> *proem:* The karma that advances due to breaking legs and eating.

> > When people hunger for crabs,
> > break off their legs, and devour them,
> > their evil deed tracks them down,
> > and they are reborn as lepers
> > with fingerless stumps for hands. (*Nālaṭiyār* 123)

> *proem:* The stomach filled with flesh is a nest filled with bodies.

> > The scores of animals and birds
> > that meet their end in the stomachs
> > of senseless, narrow-minded people
> > are like the corpses of people who have shunned renunciation
> > and languish in sorrow,
> > burning at the cremation ground. (*Nālaṭiyār* 121)[106]

The message of the verse from *Paḻamoḻi* and the first of the *Nālaṭiyār* verses is straightforward: do not eat meat under any circumstances, because meat-eating has dire karmic consequences. The rhetoric of the second *Nālaṭiyār* verse is less clear. Is it intended to inspire revulsion for meat by comparing the flesh of animals and birds to human corpses, or to convince people to shun the worldly life to avoid a fate comparable to that of animals and birds killed for their flesh? Who exactly is the target of this verse, meat-eaters or

105. Cētupiḷḷai et al. 1959: 114.
106. *Puṟattiraṭṭu* 259, 261, 262 (Iḷaṅkumaraṉ 1972: 55).

nonrenouncers? Again, it is an issue of contextualization, and I would suggest that the recontextualization of the verse in *Puṟattiraṭṭu* reorients its rhetoric.

The two verses from *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* included in *Puṟattiraṭṭu*'s section "Abstaining from Meat" read:

> *proem:* People who abstain from meat become gods.
>
>> "Is it better to nourish the body with flesh
>> and end up in hell
>> or to deprive the body
>> and dwell among the gods?
>> Tell me what you think," Cīvakan asked.
>> And the hunter replied,
>> "It is best to abstain from flesh
>> and become one of the gods." (*Cīvakacintāmaṇi* 1235)
>
> *proem:* The distress incumbent upon eating meat is like a ball being tossed aloft.
>
>> O King, who owns rutting elephants
>> that uproot their stakes in their fury,
>> dull-minded people who eat flesh
>> are tossed about by their sin
>> like a ball in the hands of girls
>> wearing bangles of pure gold. (*Cīvakacintāmaṇi* 2765)[107]

The first verse is spoken by *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*'s hero when he meets a hunter and instructs him in the benefits of vegetarianism. Here Cīvakan quizzes the hunter to determine how well he has learned his lesson. The second verse occurs in an episode toward the end of the text in which Cīvakan receives instruction from a Jain monk. Again we find that the narrative context of these verses in the source is of little concern for the anthology's compiler.

The recontextualization of the poems included in *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* and indeed the very existence of the anthology, highlight a broader pattern in traditional Tamil literary culture: the quasi-autonomous status of the individual verse in relation to a textual whole. Many students of Sanskrit literature have noted that Sanskrit poetic theory places comparatively great emphasis on the individual verse and very little on larger issues of textual structure and meaning. This pattern is found as well in the literary culture of Tamil, which, like Sanskrit, has a long history of literary theorization and criticism in the form of normative texts on poetics and literary commentaries. In such an environment one would expect relatively little resistance to literary performances in which textual portions are deployed out of context, that is, detached from their original textual structures. For instance, the descriptive phrase *prasaṅ-*

---

107. *Puṟattiraṭṭu* 267, 268 (Iḷaṅkumaran 1972: 56).

gābharaṇa (ornament for the occasion), which is associated with *Puṟattiraṭṭu,* indicates that the anthology served as a source of literary quotations that speakers might use to embellish an oral discourse.[108] The topical arrangement of verses in *Puṟattiraṭṭu* suggests that the anthology's compiler attended only to the rhetorical potential of individual verses considered autonomously and was not concerned about whether or not their meaning was conditioned by their location in their sources. The compiler actualizes a network of topical affiliations among verses selected from a variety of texts no doubt composed in different places and times and in response to different agendas of authorship and patronage. In somewhat similar fashion, traditional literary commentators are fond of identifying "parallel passages" from various texts that, in their eyes, illuminate the text at hand.

Nevertheless, the example of literary commentary calls attention to the fact that, in traditional Tamil and other South Asian literary cultures, individual verses are not always treated as merely free-floating verbal creations completely detached from any larger textual framework. Obviously, larger textual structures do and must matter. While commentators typically devote most of their attention to the analysis of individual verses, they also frequently attend to the logic that informs higher levels of textual structure. A good example in Tamil is Parimēlaḻakar's commentary on *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* which principally takes the form of verse-by-verse exegesis but also includes introductions, brief as they may be, to each chapter of the text, as well as somewhat lengthier introductions to each of the text's major divisions. And needless to say, there must be something in the textual structure of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* that prompted this commentarial procedure, even if Parimēlaḻakar's comments on individual verses do not always emanate from a vision of the text as a whole. Consequently, the overall effect is a somewhat uneasy equilibrium between the part and the whole, with the part only incompletely contained by and subordinated to the whole.

It is not hard to imagine a similar sort of dynamic operating in, say, Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai's oral discourses for his pupils. A particular text would provide the starting point for his instruction, and in the course of teaching this text he would move through it, verse by verse. But his discourse would focus principally on individual verses considered separately from one another, and it would also include references to parallel verses from many other texts. A *tokai* text such as *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* which is in a certain sense anthology-like to begin with, lends itself to this sort of treatment. But in this literary culture, texts whose verses tell a story receive similar treatment. This is not especially surprising if we keep in mind that these texts are not prose nar-

108. Sivathamby 1986: 44.

ratives. While stories can be told either in verse or in prose, the two media lend themselves to different sorts of creative endeavors. In a verse narrative such as *Kamparāmāyaṇam* or *Cīvakacintāmaṇi,* some verses may be included principally to advance the story line while many others—devoted, for example, to description or to didactic discourse—easily lend themselves to treatment as self-contained verbal creations. The latter may, in fact, reflect a process whereby a story line is expanded and elaborated over time.[109] It may be, therefore, that the verses could so easily be removed from their narrative context and recontextualized because they were, in a sense, inserted into the original context to begin with.

SUMMING UP

Can meaningful comparisons be made between the three moments in the genealogy of Tamil literary culture that provide the focal points of this essay? Will such comparisons enable us to discern the contours of Tamil literary culture as its defining features change in response to and in tandem with changing cultural and historical circumstances? To make such comparisons we require some points of entry, and the following are just a few of many possible "ways in." We might ask, for instance: In the cultural environment that prevails in each of these moments, how closely are literary consciousness and historical consciousness related to one another? What sorts of texts are included in and what sorts of texts are excluded from the realm of "literature proper"? How is literary knowledge institutionalized? What is the relationship between the literary and textuality? In what ways does the literary intersect with, serve, or draw sustenance from other cultural concerns? Cāminātaiyar's autobiography and his biography of Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai are, of course, very different kinds of documents from the literary histories discussed in the second section of this chapter, and both are quite different from a literary anthology such as *Puṟattiraṭṭu.* To the extent that we give credence to his representation of the world in which he and his teacher moved, Cāminātaiyar's writings provide much more direct answers to the kinds of questions posed here. But certainly the histories, and perhaps to a lesser extent the anthology also, afford glimpses into the particular cultural perspectives that produced them and into the nature of the literary as constructed by those perspectives.

The realms of the literary as represented by Cāminātaiyar and by the compiler of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* are related in certain fundamental ways that set these two moments apart from the world envisioned by the literary historians. Per-

---

109. Tamar Reich has analyzed in detail the process by which didactic discourse was interwoven into the core narrative of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* through a complex process of textual expansion (1998).

haps what we are dealing with here is a fundamental distinction between premodern and modern modes of literary culture. In the former, variables such as genre and meter articulate and categorize the literary realm, with the historical location of texts playing a much less central role. This is not to say that the literary domain as constituted in the fifteenth-century anthology and in the curriculum of literary study portrayed by Cāminātaiyar are identical. Indeed, there is relatively little overlap between the texts that Piḷḷai taught his pupils and the texts included in *Puṟattiraṭṭu;* but the two are similar in their seeming lack of concern with the historical origins of the texts they contain. Also, both implicitly acknowledge the complementarity of the textual categories of literature and grammar/poetics, and include texts belonging to both, even if texts of the former type predominate. Further, both emanate from a culture in which the usage and performance of literature—that is, literature as event—predominates over literature as written artifact. The debut of a literary text, as described by Cāminātaiyar, as well as Piḷḷai's manner of instructing his pupils, are essentially oral performances. While we have only scant evidence that enables us to reconstruct the contexts in which *Puṟattiraṭṭu* was deployed, in all likelihood the anthology was intended principally as a source of literary citations for practitioners of traditional oral performance genres.

The worldview that informs the writing of Tamil literary histories in the twentieth century provides a striking contrast to this picture. Literature is plotted on a time line, and the category of literature generally excludes texts on grammar, meter, and poetics. These histories also include kinds of texts that Piḷḷai and the compiler of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* would exclude from the domain of "literature proper," such as *bhakti* poetry. And perhaps most importantly, the literary historians are deeply concerned about the context in which particular texts are produced. This concern extends to the dating of texts, identification of the sectarian affiliations of their authors, and the cultural conditions that prevailed at the time of their composition. And as we have seen, projects of writing Tamil literary history have often served commitments to particular versions of Tamil cultural history or political agendas.

The break between the premodern and modern envisionings of literature is significant. We might well ask: Do these two perspectives share any common ground? Perhaps so obvious that one might tend to overlook it is the fact that in each of the moments explored in this essay, "Tamil literature" is a meaningful category—that is, the Tamil language is axiomatic for the definition of a definable literary realm. This is not to say that the force of literary creation and propagation in Tamil is hermetically sealed off from contact and cross-fertilization with other languages and their literatures. But in each of these moments, there is an underlying sense that the Tamil language provides an arena for the creation of, transmission of, and reflection upon literature.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arunachalam, M. 1974. *An Introduction to the History of Tamil Literature.* Tiruchitrambalam: Gandhi Vidyalayam.

Blackburn, Stuart. 1996. *Inside the Drama-House: Rāma Stories and Shadow Puppets in South India.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Buck, David, and K. Paramasivam. 1997. *The Study of Stolen Love.* Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Cāminātaiyar, U. Vē. 1958. *En Carittiram.* Abridged by Ki. Vā. Jakannatan. Chennai: Tiyākarāja Vilācam.

———. 1976. *A Poet's Poet (Mahavidwan Sri Meenakshisundaram Pillai of Tiruchirappalli).* Translated by K. Guruswamy. Madras: Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library.

———. 1980. *The Story of My Life by Dr. U. V. Swaminathaiyer.* Translated by S. K. Gurswamy. Madras: Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library.

———. 1982. *En Carittiram.* Chennai: Makāmakōpattiyāya akṭar U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar Nūl Nilaiyam.

———. 1986. *Śrī Mīnātcicuntaram Piḷḷaiyavarkaḷin Carittiram.* 2 vols. bound together. Tañjāvūr: Tamiḻp Palkalaik Kaḻakam.

———. [1990] 1994. *The Story of My Life: An Autobiography of Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer.* Translated by Kamil V. Zvelebil. 2 vols. Madras: Institute of Asian Studies.

Carmen, John, and Vasudha Narayanan. 1989. *The Tamil Veda: Piḷḷāṉ's Interpretation of the Tiruvāymoḻi.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cētupiḷḷai, Rā. Pi., et al., eds. and comms. 1959. *Kampar Iyarriya Irāmāyaṇam: Ayōttiyā Kāṇṭam.* Annamalainagar: Annamalai University.

Clooney, Francis X. 1996. *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Cōmacuntarṉār, Po. Vē., comm. 1973. *Cilappatikāram.* Chennai: Teṉintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippuk Kaḻakam.

Cutler, Norman. 1980. "The Poetry of the Tamil Saints." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

———. 1987. *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 1992. "Interpreting Tirukkuraḷ: The Role of Commentary in the Creation of a Text." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112: 549–566.

Gros, François. 1994. "Cinq fois cinq vint-cinq: Autour des commentaires du Livre de l'Amour de Tiruvaḷḷuvar." In *Genres littéraires en Inde,* edited by Nalini Balbir. Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle.

Hardy, Friedhelm. 1983. *Viraha-Bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hart, George L. 1997. "Archetypes in Classical Indian Literature and Beyond." In *Syllables of Sky: Studies in South Indian Civilization in Honour of Velcheru Narayana Rao,* edited by David Shulman. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hart, George L., and Hank Heifetz. 1988. *The Forest Book of the Rāmāyaṇa of Kampaṉ.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Iḷaṅkumaraṉ, Irā., ed. 1972. *Purattiraṭṭu.* Chennai: Teṉintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippuk Kaḻakam.

Irācamāṇikkam Piḷḷai, Ma., comm. 1967. *Paḻamoḻināṉūṟu.* Chennai: Teṉintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḻakam.

Jesudasan, C., and Hepzibah Jesudasan. 1961. *A History of Tamil Literature.* Calcutta: YMCA Publishing House.

Kuḻantai [Pulavar], comm. 1949. *Tirukkuṟaḷ: Kuḻantaiyurai.* Madras: Pāri Nilaiyam.

Maharajan, S. 1979. *Tiruvalluvar.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Meenakshisundaran, T. P. 1965. *A History of Tamil Literature.* Annamalainagar: Annamalai University.

Nambi Arooran, K. 1980. *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism.* Madurai: Koodal Publishers.

Narayanan, Vasudha. 1996. "Asymmetries of Appropriation: Hindus and Muslims in Congruent Tamil Worlds." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Honolulu.

Nilakanta Sastri, K. A. 1955. *The Cōḻas.* Madras: University of Madras.

———. 1966. *A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar.* 3d ed. Madras: Oxford University Press.

Noble, Sally Ann. 1990. "The Tamil Story of the Anklet: Classical and Contemporary Tellings of *Cilappatikāram.*" Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

Pālacuntaram Piḷḷai, Ti. Cu., comm. 1968. *Nālaṭiyār.* Chennai: Teṉintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḻakam.

Parimēlaḻakar, comm. 1973. *Tirukkuṟaḷ Mūlamum Parimēlaḻakar Uraiyum.* Chennai: Teṉintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḻakam.

Parthasarathy, R., trans. 1993. *The Cilappatikāram of Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ: An Epic of South India.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Pechilis, Karen P. 1999. *The Embodiment of Bhakti.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Peterson, Indira V. 1989. *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Purnalingam Pillai, M. S. [1929] 1985. *Tamil Literature.* Tañjāvūr: Tamil University.

———. [1928] 1996. *Ravana the Great: King of Lanka.* Tañjāvūr: Kala Samrakshana Sangkam.

Rajam, V. S. 1992. *A Reference Grammar of Classical Tamil Poetry.* Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.

Ramanujan, A. K. 1985. *Poems of Love and War from the Eight Anthologies and Ten Songs of Classical Tamil.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Ramanujan, A. K., and Norman Cutler. 1983. "From Classicism to Bhakti." In *Essays in Gupta Culture,* edited by Bardwell L. Smith. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Ramaswamy, Sumathi. 1997. *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891–1970.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Reich, Tamar. 1998. "A Battlefield of a Text: Inner Textual Interpretation in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata.*" Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

Richman, Paula. 1997. *Extraordinary Child: Translations from a South Indian Devotional Genre.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Ryan, James. 1985. "The *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* in Historical Perspective." Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley.

Satthianathan, Samuel. 1894. *History of Education in Madras Presidency.* Madras: Srinivasa, Varadachari and Company.

Shulman, David. 1980. *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1991. "Fire and Flood: The Testing of Sītā in Kampan̲'s Irāmāvatāram." In *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia,* edited by Paula Richman. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 1993. "From Author to Non-Author in Tamil Literary Legend." *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies* (Chennai) 10: 1–23.

Sivathamby, Karthigesu. 1986. *Literary History in Tamil: A Historiographical Analysis.* Tañjāvūr: Tamil University.

Stein, Burton. 1969. "Integration of the Agrarian System in South India." In *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History,* edited by R. E. Frykenberg. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Subrahmanian, N. 1981. *An Introduction to Tamil Literature.* Madras: Christian Literature Society.

Sundaram Pillai, P. 1985. *Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature.* Reprint of second edition, 1909. Madras: Pioneer Book Services.

Tamil Lexicon. 1982. 6 vols. Reprint of first edition, 1924–1936. Madras: University of Madras.

Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. 1988. *History of Tamil Language and Literature.* Reprint of 1956 edition. Madras: New Century Book House.

Varadarajan, M. 1988. *A History of Tamil Literature.* Translation by E. S. Visswanathan. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Venkatachalapathy, A. R. 1994. "Reading Practices and Modes of Reading in Colonial Tamil Nadu." *Studies in History* 10: 273–290.

Venkatachari, K. K. A. 1978. *The Maṇipravāḷa Literature of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas.* Bombay: Anantacharya Research Institute.

Zvelebil, Kamil V. 1973. *The Smile of Murugan on Tamil Literature of South India.* Leiden: E. J. Brill.

———. 1974. *Tamil Literature.* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

———. 1975. *Tamil Literature.* Leiden: E. J. Brill.

———. 1989. *Classical Tamil Prosody: An Introduction.* Madras: New Era Publishers.

———. 1992. *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature.* Leiden: E. J. Brill.

———. 1995. *Lexicon of Tamil Literature.* Leiden: E. J. Brill.

<center>5</center>

Critical Tensions in the History of Kannada Literary Culture

D. R. Nagaraj

THE BEGINNING AND CONSOLIDATION OF KANNADA LITERARY CULTURE

The Moment of Historical Differentiation

The first thing one notices about the emergence of Kannada literary culture is that the very notion of literature is linked to the practice of writing; at least it is so according to the Kannada scholars who have considered the literary culture's beginnings. Invariably, every discussion of the formative period of Kannada literature starts with a reference to the Halmiḍi inscription (450 C.E.).[1] The "originary" moment that scholars have posited with Halmiḍi should be viewed in the context of a broader discussion of the relationships between writing, literarization, and inscriptions. In the context of premodern Kannada—to be precise, the archaic period between the fifth and tenth centuries—these three among themselves had come to constitute a certain kind of organic unity. Inscriptions were the first document of the public sphere available in the geocultural region called Karnataka. Moreover, something of a public sphere in its own right was created in the Kannada language using inscriptions. The inscriptions have a certain well-formed conception of the world, the community, and the role of the individual in history; they seek to represent a body of social knowledge, which is put to specific use by a self-conscious agent or political institution. Against this background,

---

1. It has become mandatory to discuss the Halmiḍi inscription while tracing the beginning of Kannada literature. See Mugali 1953, C̱idānandmurti 1970, and Kalaburgi 1988.

<center>*323*</center>

I have chosen to call inscriptions "public narratives," because something that is already prewritten in the society is being reproduced.

I have selected four important inscriptions, all undated but perhaps from around the eighth or ninth century—the ninth century being the period for the first noninscriptional written text in Kannada, the *Kavirājamārga,* a treatise on poetics. The four inscriptions chosen—three from Śravaṇa Beḷagoḷa and one from Bādāmi—document notions of self, polity, and religious ideals.[2] The accumulated material of these public narratives in the linguistic, ideological, and stylistic spheres has a very complex bearing on the making and consolidation of what constitutes the literary in the history of Kannada literary culture. In this section, my purpose is to offer two propositions about these early inscriptions and the special correspondences they have with the courtly epic *(campū)* produced in Kannada from the mid-tenth century on.

The first proposition is that there were significant exchanges between inscriptions as public narratives and literary works, and this special connection posed problems for the formation of the epic imagination and for writing practices between the fifth and twelfth centuries. Only gradually could the epic imagination carve out a distinct identity for itself, an individual place in literary culture. This process is worth studying in some detail because, at the level of tropes and styles, the two look nearly identical. The second proposition is a continuation of the first: the resolution of the problem of exchange between literature and the public narratives of inscriptions and the consolidation of the epic imagination later, in the twelfth century, led to a revolt against the epic practices themselves and the notions of the literary that went into their making.

It is essential to reflect, at least briefly, on the aesthetic and ideological function of the genre of inscriptions. Inscriptions are not exclusively statements of the polity or any one of its components. Rather, they are assertions of certain codes that are recommended for endorsement on the part of the entire social order. The idea of recording an event—making it visible in historical time—and thus adding it to the cultural sedimentation of a community operates behind the practice of carving and installing inscriptions. The ideals and the models of political and ethical behavior that the inscriptions sought to present to the community had long been familiar from Sanskrit and Prakrit language records. In the fifth century the Kannada language was used for this purpose for the first time; it was the first great critical moment in its life, a moment of historical differentiation. All four of the inscriptions I discuss betray a kind of awkwardness, even anxiety, in the newly found grammatical and ideological use of Kannada.

2. I have taken these four documents from Narasiṃhācārya 1975: 1–2.

The Bādāmi inscription records and elaborates on the construction of the social type that we also see in the Halmiḍi record: the individual as the hero of the community. Similarly, the inscription of Śravaṇa Beḷagoḷa, a prominent center of Jain religious power, celebrates the saint Nandisēna and his journey to *dēvalōka,* the world of the gods. In contrast, the two modes of poetry that the tenth-century Kannada poets perfected, the *laukika* (worldly) and the *āgamika* (scriptural), have king and saint, respectively, as their heroes. The verses from the inscriptions can also be woven into the epics of the tenth century, with some corrections. The construction in the inscriptions of the social type of "hero of the community" involves individuals ranging from peasant to prince, thus giving the public narratives the air of a totalizing discourse. These forms of reasoning and feeling are something the epic imagination will later participate in and build on. That the poets themselves had identified their work with inscriptions is evident from the many references to inscriptions in the work of Pampa (tenth century). The first great poet, or *ādikavi,* of Kannada, Pampa had established a very conscious form of exchange with public narratives. He used the images of inscriptions at different levels and in divergent contexts, and indeed identified his work as a kind of larger poetic inscription. This also explains the influence of Pampa and Ranna (late tenth century) on the writers of inscriptions, who though less recognized than the great poets, nevertheless thought of themselves as their siblings.

It is not unreasonable to argue that the *laukika* and *āgamika* modes of creativity developed by Kannada poets of the tenth century were imaginative efforts at poeticizing the material that was already available in inscriptions. This way of reading literary texts also opens up the question of the relationship between codified forms of subjectivity in the public imagination and ways of bringing them into literary spaces. An epic poet in the premodern context in Kannada had special access to a body of codified cultural material of different kinds, mainly related to polity, religions, and sexuality, and he reorganized them in the framework of a familiar story. The greatness of such a poet lies in the way he connected the material and brought to it a kind of coherence; even experiences of rupture could be a part of this connecting process.[3] In other words, the values and purposes that had shaped the inscriptional poets had been appropriated into writerly practices as a whole. Many images that reached great heights in epics, for example, the image of Śrī in tenth-century poetry, appear with the same aesthetic and ideological purpose in inscriptions.[4]

3. This is how the authorial function was seen in premodern Kannada—Pampa, Harihara (thirteenth century), Maṅgarasa III (fifteenth century), and Nijaguṇaśiva Yōgi (fifteenth century) provide ample statements exploring the nature of their creativity and responsibility.

4. See the inscriptions at Beluru (dated 1022), Rona (1022), and Nagai (1058) in Narasiṃhācārya 1975: 8–17.

The question that emerges from all this concerns the relationship and the difference between the poet as an inscription writer and the poet as a literary artist. Historically speaking, the inscriptional poet's role has something special about it. A particular agent has used a language for a very sophisticated form of communication, and an elevated status is attached to such an agent. This is especially so given the social context of inscriptions. The beginning of inscriptional writing in general makes an assertion about the cultural identity of a language. It represents a critical moment in the process of vernacularization, whereby a language seeks and achieves a new kind of dignity and responsibility.

Kannada's moment of historical differentiation has some specific characteristics. First, the unity between institutions of state and religious power was striking. This is an important theme because, as we will see, the twelfth-century Vīraśaiva movement broke this coalition. The genealogy of two crucial categories, *jōḷavali* and *veḷevali,* that appeared in both literary and public narratives gives an interesting twist to this relationship, and changes in their signification signal the creation of an alternative space for literary production. Initially, the term *jōḷavali* referred to one who is committed to the ideals of polity or, to put it crudely, is an employee of a master; the term *veḷevali* meant one who voluntarily gives up his life for his master. But by the thirteenth century, *veḷevali* came to signify a man committed to the ideals of religion. In other words, the oppositional relationship between politics and religion that came about in the twelfth century was new. Second, the moment of differentiation developed a new conception of language itself, which marked a sharp departure from hierarchical conceptions of speech that the Sanskrit cultural formation had sought to legitimize. As Sheldon Pollock puts it, it was the discourse of exclusion that had kept a vast number of *bhāṣā*s, the vernaculars, out of the spheres of literary production.[5] The Kannada language had transgressed the sanctioned boundaries that had until then restricted its use to lower forms of mimetic function and social communication.

What compulsions did states and public institutions experience during the latter half of the first millennium in the geocultural territory of Karnataka that made them use and develop Kannada for larger societal purposes? The creation of a new language out of the spoken forms, and its transformation into a sophisticated medium for larger purposes, are consciously reflected upon and theorized in several texts in Kannada after the ninth century. This problem is merged with the problem of choice of language that existed in this early period. It was only after the twelfth century that Kannada came to be seen as a natural option, something that is evident in the new celebratory

5. Pollock 1998 and chapter 1, this volume.

reflexivity that characterizes the Kannada poet. Sanskrit certainly remained available to them but they did not choose to write in it, although the excessive presence of Sanskrit in their works was inevitable, considering the literary-ideological forces operating in the sites of textual production. More important, all the major authors of Kannada literary culture were quite conscious of the larger responsibility with which the new process of vernacularization had invested them. The whole epoch had experienced the release of social energy at all levels of textual production, which makes their works continue to live even today. This can be seen in the mode of self-identification practiced by Kannada authors in relation to master figures of both Sanskrit and Prakrit. We often find claims that a given poet has excelled Kāḷidāsa by a hundredfold. The identification of Immadi Nāgavarma's (fl. 1042) with the Sanskrit grammarian Śarvavarman, the author of the ancient *Kātantravyākaraṇa,* is typical: "Nāgavarma taught the memory of words *(śabdasmaraṇa)* to the people and they call him the new Śarvavarma."[6] Śarvavarman was supposed to have taught grammar to a Śātavāhana king whose lack of grammatical knowledge had made him a target of ridicule by women of the palace. The story suggests a pedagogical responsibility—or rather, two closely related responsibilities.

Nāgavarma presents himself as responsible for training native speakers of Kannada to relearn their own language through rules of grammar and for equipping them with new forms of self-understanding. He and a whole range of authors before and after him were devoted to building Kannada as a strong language that could compete with Sanskrit or Prakrit. There was, however, another aspect to Nāgavarma's project. He wrote a grammar of Kannada in Sanskrit, the *Karṇāṭakabhāṣābhūṣaṇa* (Ornament of the Karnataka language), leading us to speculate about the purpose of such a text and who its readers might have been. Another interesting work by Nāgavarma, the *Abhidānavastukōśa* (Treasury of significations), a kind of dictionary of Sanskrit for Kannada users, prompts similar reflection. This text relocates the natural, social, and intellectual universes of the Kannada language by providing definitions of nearly eight thousand Sanskrit words. Here the pedagogical function seems more obvious: the dictionary expands the conceptual domain of the language and thereby provides Kannada speakers with a different perspective on experiences of everyday life. The idea was to build a common area of cultural referentiality that could integrate Kannada into the complementary circles of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan cultural order. In the same way, Nāgarvarma's grammar appears above all to be an attempt to establish parity with Sanskrit cosmopolitanism, or at least to negotiate with it on an equal intellectual footing, in the eyes of the participants in the emer-

6. *Kāvyāvalōkana* (Narasiṃhācārya 1967: 95) v. 423.

gent Kannada literary culture. Whatever may be the truth of the matter, both texts represent considerable efforts at cultural translation.

The author who wrote in the domain of early Kannada literary culture saw himself at a critical moment of multiple transgressions, in genre as well as in language. In particular, there were many authors who wrote in more than one genre: *śāstra* and *kāvya* as well as *purāṇa.* Pampa was the first to write both a *kāvya* and a *purāṇa,* though the latter was considered a genre of *ārṣa* texts (works by mythic sages, or *ṛṣi*s), having a set of specifically defined characteristics. When a poet like Candrarāja (1014–1042) wrote the *Mada-natilaka* (Forehead ornament of passion), an adaptation of Vātsayana's *Kā-masūtra* (which incidentally Candarāja asserts he was writing in *posa Kannada* or new Kannada), he claims that he is writing in the *kavimārga* (path of the poets) and also records with pride that his project was approved by the *budha-maṇḍali* (the circle of the learned). The notion of *budhamaṇḍali* is crucial to the emergence of this vernacular literary culture. All texts should be both educative and objects of pleasure, though especially the former. The peda-gogy of building a new cultural community was in operation everywhere in this historic epoch. Most of the poets at this moment saw themselves as *ubha-yakavi,* in the sense that Sanskrit writers of the time gave this term: "one who can write both *śāstra* and *kāvya.*"

The freedom and the challenges experienced by such cultural expecta-tions separate the Kannada writer from his Sanskrit counterparts. Pampa, Ponna, and Ranna wrote both this-worldly epics and sagely texts, or *purāṇa*s, and this was not a matter of merely writing differently. As they moved from one genre to another they had to enter into a different psychological do-main of creativity and a different worldview. Whether such total conversion of sensibility is really possible is another question altogether. The problem of the internal expectations of a genre like *purāṇa* is the source of some of the defining features of Kannada literature. But the theorists of literature, even the Jains who were the most prominent, did not make a fine distinc-tion between *purāṇa* and *kāvya.* In two important anthologies, Mallikārjuna's *Sūktisudhārṇava* (Nectar ocean of well-turned verse; thirteenth century), and Mallakavi's *Kāvyasāra* (Essence of literature; fifteenth century?), poems from fourteen Jain *purāṇa*s are placed alongside *kāvya, śāstra* texts (such as gram-mar and erotica), and even inscriptions, suggesting how open the category of the literary in Kannada could be.

What exactly did the Kannada poets try to achieve by writing in Kannada? One can begin to frame an answer only by first accepting their self-repre-sentation: that they were also quite capable of writing in the languages of the cosmopolitan cultural order, Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha, though this does not of course tell us why they chose not to do so. A theory based on notions of modern sentiment such as restricted inwardness cannot be readily deployed to explain the choice of language by Kannada poets of me-

dieval times. The answer may lie, rather, in the train of identifications that the choice sets into motion. It was a matter of asserting one's choice of the language of the community with which one had elected to identify. To put this in Saidian categories, it was a choice of affiliation, though it might not be the language of filiation in a sociobiological sense.[7] For instance, Pampa wrote in Kannada, though he is thought to have come from a Telugu-speaking family, or at least a Telugu-speaking region.[8] One chooses, it would seem, to become a poet of a particular language. In the context of the South Asian vernaculars, and certainly in the Kannada world, the act of choosing one particular language also entailed that vernacular poets became bearers of certain values that were not accepted by the dominant Sanskrit literary tradition as the authentic voice of the literary or as embodying true cultural authority. This is important to register because, in the high culture, authority was considered to be truth. Compared to the Sanskrit poet's choice, which may be seen as basically aesthetic, the Kannada poet's act of choosing was more complicated. It began as a complement to the agencies of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan world; subsequently, the process took its own course and unleashed new forces. "Folk" structures, of which Sanskrit was almost entirely devoid, also came into the field of literature, thus imposing a limit and a framework for negotiation and exchange with the cosmopolitan formation. The poet of the public narratives was only the first product of the vernacular's interaction with the Sanskrit cosmopolis.

Public Narratives and the Epic Imagination

The line that divides public narratives and poetry has to be theorized in terms of the imaginative spaces that both have at their disposal. An additional problem is the limitation that the site of cultural production imposes on a genre. Judged by its exterior, the public narrative has everything—metrical forms and license to a special use of language—but it has to stop at the boundaries of codified social knowledge. It does not have the freedom to fictionalize. We may illustrate this argument by analyzing an important inscription from Śravaṇa Beḷagoḷa dated 1131 C.E. The document in question records the death of the Hoysaḷa queen, Śāntala Dēvi, an event that captured the imagination of many authors in the twentieth century.[9] Tradition holds that she

---

7. Said 1983.

8. An important inscription at Gaṅgādharam village in Telaṅgāṇa, Andhra Pradesh, installed by the poet's brother Jinavallabha and giving an accurate picture of his family, uses three languages: Kannada, Telugu, and Sanskrit. The problem of Pampa's primary language has been discussed in Telugu scholarship in considerable detail. It has even been asserted that the poet has a "Telugu heart" (see Jagannāthan et al. 1993–1994: 228–30).

9. *Epigraphia Carnatika,* 1972–, 2: 131. Cf. Nāgarājarao 1978.

threw herself from the summit of the Śivagaṅge hills, where she had gone to perform worship at a Śaiva temple. The long narrative begins with a grand eulogy of the king—featuring an impressive string of epithets typical of inscriptions—followed by a lengthy praise-poem of the queen. The writer suddenly interrupts this, however, to record her death in one startling abrupt sentence. "On Monday, the fifth lunar day of the bright fortnight of Caitra, in the Śaka year 1053 [c. 1131 C.E.], the year Virōdhi, she ended her life at the holy place of Śivagaṅge and attained heaven."

One gets the feeling that the writer is keen on getting his account of the queen's death over with, that he is in a hurry. The narrative quickly moves on to a description of the queen's parents. We are told that after hearing the news of her death they, too, committed religious suicide. For any writer this is certainly quite a dramatic episode to recount. Even in terms of religious ideals it demands a deeper treatment than what we see in the inscription. The public record lacks what we might refer to as interiority. The author's principle purpose is to glorify the benefaction that all the actors in the tale have instituted; the occasion and the site of the writing have also conditioned the act of writing. The most important sentence refers to the king as the "alleviator of the poverty of storytellers, bards, and poets."[10] Even death has lost its weight and become a part of the language of gift-giving and the aura of kingship.

Why can we not consider Bokimaiah, the author of the inscription, a poet? The material he had to handle had all the potential to become a literary text. But for Bokimaiah the temple, as a source of signification of material power, was the only thing that mattered; the world of the social gift was the ultimate reality. Bokimaiah and other writers of public narratives seem to have been condemned to a state of creative unfreedom. They had every formal instrument at their command, yet their work clearly lacks something, some element of imagination or sentiment. They had no entry point into the inner worlds of real people. Compare Bokimaiah's treatment of the death of the Hoysaḷa queen with the scene of Bhīṣma's death as explored by Pampa in the *Vikramārjunavijaya*. The family resemblance between the two kinds of writers was only skin deep. While inscriptions before his time celebrated the deaths of warriors, Pampa does something very important, something that enables us to characterize his works as achievements of literary and poetic imagination. Pampa has the freedom to enter into the subjective world of his character, for instance, connecting various moments in Bhīṣma's life and weaving them into a symbolic narrative. As a lifelong *brahmacāri* (celibate), Bhīṣma scrupulously avoided women; even at the moment of death he could not possibly lie on the earth, since in the literary-linguistic imagination the

10. *Epigraphia Carnatika,* 1972–, 2: 129.

earth is a woman. An undated but relatively early inscription from Shimoga district has an identical description of a soldier killed in battle:

> He himself and many others shooting arrows and approaching
> Close, were caught up as in a cage of arms
> And fell as Bhīṣma fell,
> Without touching the ground.[11]

It is difficult to say which of the two writers used the image of Bhīṣma first. Even if one agrees that it was the inscriptional poet who made it available to Pampa—indeed, such exchanges became more and more common after the tenth century—the *ādikavi*'s originality is not diminished. Pampa's Bhīṣma appears as an altogether different figure from what we find in the inscription: a man who faces the deepest truth of his life while dying. This was the achievement of Pampa's fictionalization. Access to a fictional domain through the imagination made Pampa an epic poet; the lack of it forced Bokimaiah and other inscriptional authors like him to remain chroniclers. The family resemblance between the two did not extend very far.

Consensus as the Basis of Literary Culture

> *Śrīvijaya's* Path of the Poet, *for those who feel it,*
> *has become a mirror and lamp.*
> *Śrīvijaya is god; how can I describe him?*[12]
>   DURGASIṂHA *(eleventh century)*

Even by very generous standards this praise looks a bit out of proportion, but Durgasiṃha, who translated the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* into Kannada, is making a very important statement. Śrīvijaya is god indeed for the Kannada literary culture; in fact, he virtually created that culture. His one surviving work, the *Kavirājamārga* (Kingly path of poets), reveals the structure of the conflicts, compromises, and transformations that shaped Kannada literary culture. *Kavirājamārga* is the earliest work in Kannada that is available to us and is also the first text that tried, quite successfully, to legitimate the practices of Kannada literary culture. The text uses both originary and projective modes of legitimation and rightfully earns its description as a "mirror and lamp." The author explains the sedimentary, residual, and emergent literary practices to construct an attractive theory of Kannada literary tradition. The text was a major actor in the process it was trying to theorize. To explain the importance of this text in categories of the cosmopolitan and the vernacular: it is the first Kannada work, next only to the Tamil grammar

---

11. *Epigraphia Carnatika,* 1886–1919, vol. 8, pt. 1: 4 (Rice's dating of 800 C.E. is not reliable).
12. Anantaraṅgācār 1973a: 4.

Tolkāppiyam, that registers a complex process of negotiation and exchange between the two. In many ways the work exhibits a more acute consciousness of certain key problems in the making of vernacular literary cultures than either the *Tolkāppiyam* or the *Līlātilakam,* a grammar of Malayalam from fourteenth-century Kerala.[13]

The *Kavirājamārga* has traditionally been described as a translation of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa,* but one would have to expand to the breaking point the scope of the idea of translation to cover the range of objectives of the *Kavirājamārga.* Śrīvijaya was a theorist of literature at the court of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Nṛpatuṅga, a court that can be described as the perfect model of courtly culture. It is the court that lies at the very heart of this text and fixes the outer limits for its theoretical enterprise.

Some cultures, such as one finds in the West, are fortunate in writing confidently about the making of their literatures. They revel in the excessive clarity and availability of the material. Kannada and other such cultures are fascinating in part precisely because of the fuzziness of their worlds. Why are some works and genres lost in the darkness of history? Was it moths, fire, water, dust, or simple negligence or indifference that physically destroyed the manuscripts and drove them out of circulation, erasing their presence? Natural causes certainly have to be taken into account, but something more historical and cultural was also at work. The disappearances were no doubt due in part to the orthopraxis of others. They have a pattern. In the context of ancient Indian thought, let us recall, the texts of Bādari—who argued that the Shudras are also entitled to institute the Vedic fires and to share in all the privileges that follow—are simply not available. The texts of the materialist philosophers known as the Lokāyatas have also disappeared, almost without trace. We are fortunate that their philosophical rivals chose to present us with the gist of the vanished texts in an intelligible if truncated form.

The absent and the invisible have to be taken as parties in the construction of the literary cultures in South Asia. Many a time they are present outside the system, like lower castes, waiting their turn. In the following, I offer a brief discussion of what is absent in the construction of Kannada literature. The early theorists of literature, including Śrīvijaya, tried to exorcise certain forms, but the ghosts of these forms have returned to haunt the living. The meaning of these metaphorical statements becomes clear in the course of my tale of Kannada literature. I aim, first, to link the question of the forms—if not the authors—that have disappeared to a genealogy of the literary tradition of Kannada, and second, to offer a critique of the conflicts that have shaped the tradition. These two problems can be explored only in the context of a larger theory of cultural formations of premodern India.

13. See Cutler (chapter 4) and Freeman (chapter 7) in this volume.

As things stand now, any initiative to explore the beginnings of Kannada literature takes on the character of a search for missing authors and genres.[14] The literary historian has to behave like a detective, for the missing works have vanished in a process of formalizing and privileging certain literary practices. The *Kavirājamārga* lists authors and forms that have disappeared—or have been removed—from the formal discourse of literature, and hereby shows us that poetics is nothing if not an attempt to negotiate with the political.[15] The *Kavirājamārga* is a fascinating text inviting global comparisons, perhaps especially in its demonstration of the intimate tie between power and culture. It can be treated as a paradoxical occasion for both mourning and celebration: it is at once the statist rejection of certain indigenous forms and the beginning of a magisterial institution called literature.[16] In many languages besides Kannada—including Telugu, Malayalam, and Tamil—the institutional beginnings of literature pose a major problem with reference to the relationship between poetry as a "natural" activity and its formalization as a component of courtly culture. One of the procedures of legitimation of kingship in the Sanskrit thought-world was to invoke the presence of a highly sophisticated literary culture.[17] Codes of power such as one finds in inscriptions also had to be products of a highly developed literary culture. But where does this leave the *dēsi,* or more localized, literary practices?

The *Kavirājamārga* does seek throughout to offer some analysis of local Kannada poetries, though its attitude is sometimes harsh:

> It is difficult to measure the lapses in the multiplicity of forms of Kannadas. Even Vāsuki, the thousand-headed serpent god, would find it frustrating. . . . Poets required the power of the *āgama* [scripture or theory], and without it they consistently pollute Old Kannada.[18]

If Śrīvijaya was sometimes overly faultfinding, or worse, subordinated local practices to high theory, many prominent literary theorists of Kannada feel grateful for his critical genius, since he tried to address the problem of *dēsi*

---

14. Speculation on the literary forms that existed before the ninth century in Kannada literature are offered in Kalaburgi 1973.

15. Among those authors who have disappeared are Asaga, Guṇanandi, Nāgārjuna, and Vimalōdaya. Examples of the literary forms of lower castes such as *bedaṇḍe* and *caṭṭāna*—which appear to be modes of *pāḍugabba* (song verse)—are also no longer extant.

16. Saigūta Śivamara, an author-king who wrote on the eve of the *Kavirājamārga,* had written a *gajaśataka* (Hundred verses on the elephant) that was sung as a pestle-song. Many popular genres such as this were abundant yet did not gain entry into Kannada court literature. See Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī 1978: 484–90.

17. Literary formations are seen as peaceful and even harmonious processes in a culture. Even scholarly treatises on Kannada metrics see nothing unusual about the disappearance of many *dēsi* forms. For an example of this naive complacency, see Karki 1992 (one of the most popular texts on Kannada metrics, by the way).

18. *Kavirājamārga* (Sītārāmayya 1975) 1.46, 48.

in a decisive fashion for the tradition. In fundamental ways, *dēsi* is one of the defining features of Indian literatures—but what exactly is *dēsi?* A simple or straightforward answer is just not possible, and an informed response itself will be a theoretical position on the problem. Is *dēsi* everyday speech? Yes, but *dēsi* is also a cluster of metrical forms and poetic structures. What exactly is the relationship between everyday speech and poetic forms? To translate this question into familiar Western categories, we might refer to oral poetry and poetics.

The theme of *dēsi* can perhaps best be discussed by specifying it at the level of the formal relationship between folk, or oral, and literary epics. If one takes the examples of folk epics like the *Maṇṭesvāmi* and *Madēśvara kāvya*s—two important later works each dealing with the life story of a lower-caste Śaiva rebel-mystic—and compares them to other literary epics, some clear differences in formal processes come to light. First, the folk epic is basically in the form of the *campū,* a mixture of prose and poetry, but the folk *campū* is radically different from its mainstream literary counterpart. The folk narrative has its own forms of self-consciousness and self-reflexivity, but the Sanskrit cultural order is hardly present as a force with which to negotiate. In the case of mainstream literary culture, Sanskrit is a major factor to reckon with: it has to be contested or accommodated. By contrast, folk epics employ everyday speech. In literary epics, everyday speech is under the generic control of a disciplined metrical form, and the *dēsi* meters, essentially various song forms, are transmuted by the active presence of a trained literary mind. It is clear that in the *Kavirājamārga,* Śrīvijaya treated *dēsi* both as a form of everyday speech and also as a repertoire of poetic forms. And at both these levels *dēsi* presented a problem that Kannada literature had to solve in the first stage of its history. This the *Kavirājamārga* sought to do in a decisive manner.

The literary historian, who, as I said, has to double as a detective in cases of texts that have disappeared, should also function as a rights activist. He can use the same lamp to search for what has disappeared and to find out the reason why. Read in this spirit, the *Kavirājamārga* may be charged with having caused the disappearance of multiple forms of folk literary practices, denying them their right to exist in the space of the new literary culture. The imperial redefinition of poetics, such as was effected by the *Kavirāja-mārga,* sought to restructure the mode of the relationship between literary imagination and forms. Any policy statement about the future also implies a specific way of indexing the past; the *Kavirājamārga* makes such a statement with a judicious mixture of liberalism and conservatism in the context of the Sanskrit cultural order. The whole project of the *Kavirājamārga* has to be situated against the background of the emergence of this order and the efforts of the indigenous Kannada literary culture to come to terms with it.

The case of Kannada offers an interesting contrast with Malayalam, as is

evident from a close reading of the first Malayali text of poetics, the *Līlā-tilakam.* Malayalam had to define an identity of its own over against two rivals—Sanskrit and Tamil—unlike Kannada, which had only the one. The emergence of a new literary tradition from the womb of an old power structure is one of the fascinating themes of Indian history. The notion of a universalizing cultural order such as that of Sanskrit has played a crucial role in the making of vernacular literary traditions. The structure of this order is overdetermined by a complex interplay of a variety of forces, foremost among them the forces of political power. The *Kavirājamārga* tried to build an independent literary tradition that could accommodate both the cosmopolitan and the vernacular. The process of organizing a literary culture in Kannada has many parallels with that of other traditions, such as Malayalam. The form and practice of Pattu—songs in non-Sanskrit but also non-Tamil meters—for example, signifies the altered presence of *dēsi* forms in the history of Malayalam.[19]

The author of the *Kavirājamārga* sought to represent the vernacular in the image of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan.[20] Sanskrit was not only the language of the gods, it also behaved like a god itself. By the time the *Kavirājamārga* appeared on the scene, the attempt to create a vernacular double of Sanskrit was at its peak—or so the theorists of poetry would have us think. In fact, Kannada poetry yielded and obeyed its theorists only partially; its self-representations through poetic theory cannot always be taken at face value. Here lies the specificity of the Kannada literary culture. This resistance also suggests that the categories of cosmopolitan and vernacular, functioning as dichotomous opposites, may not be adequate for treating Indian literatures. For the vernacular itself is an act of concealment; in the *Kavirājamārga* we are given only a partial representation of a whole range of other forms that cannot be accommodated in the literary canon. This is so because the vernacular itself mirrors the mirror, so to speak. Śrīvijaya had to recreate Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* in order to chart a new journey. If Daṇḍin had not existed, Śrīvijaya would have had to invent him.

We need to question, accordingly, the belief that a certain kind of consensus exists in the making of a vernacular literary culture. In the world of Kannada a conflict—one that was real if ultimately indecisive—is perceptible between the worldviews of different traditions. Jain polemical texts in Kannada from the tenth and eleventh centuries, for example, deal with the problem of preserving the purity and uniqueness of Jain religious identities.[21] The fact that all rivals used the same vernacular to fight their wars does not

19. Freeman's essay (chapter 7) in this volume throws light on this process.

20. I have drawn on Sheldon Pollock's work on the cosmopolitan and the vernacular in this section; see Pollock 1998.

21. Three authors—Nayasēna, Brahmaśiva, and Vṛttavilāsa—merit special mention here.

reduce the intensity of antagonism. An experience of intimate enmity existed between the *vaidika,* or Brahmanical, forces and the anti-*vaidika* forces, which we may identify by the name anciently given them, the *śramaṇa*s, or renouncers (in this essay the term is used largely in reference to the Jains). And this experience is one of the shaping forces of Kannada literary culture. Except in the case of the *vacanakāra*s, the "makers of utterances" who exploded the continuum of history in the twelfth century as the voice of the Vīraśaivas, or "militant devotees of the god Śiva," conditions of textual production remained the same for both sets of forces. What has as yet to be theorized in this enmity and the literary cultures that variously embodied it is the role of ideology, seen here as religious vision, and its relationship to literary imagination.

Literature as an institution in Kannada was a product of consensus regarding the sanctity of literary forms reached by *vaidika* culture and its adversaries. Every text of poetics is a code of literary conduct mutually assented to. The secular traditions of poetics in Sanskrit and other Indian languages signify an agreement to carry on the war on other battlefields. But ideological differences are the last ones to disappear from the life of the mind, whose habit is to generate mental constructs endlessly.

The only consensus that was reached concerned the rules of the literary game, and correspondences in this domain—uniformity at the level of genres and forms—were little more than matters of family resemblance. Formal consensus is decisive, no doubt, but it can never be total. What contributed to the survival of the vernacular and its uniqueness was not formal consensus but the search for sectarian motifs and meanings. The *śramaṇa*s and the *vaidika*s tried to transform each other; each learned literary techniques and strategies from the other. But at the level of motifs, they sought to retain their distinct identities. A poet's identity is conditioned by his capacity to transform a common theme to yield a specific motif. Identities are shaped by writer-specific motifs and meanings. And at this level—beneath that of form—where a kind of consensual peace reigned, there raged a search for difference and uniqueness for which religious-specific worldviews mattered a great deal.

Along with exchanges and negotiations in the sphere of ideologies, the birth, death, exile, and disguise of metrical genres continued to shape the history of Kannada literature in the early centuries and even beyond. Some of these meters were organically born into Kannada and others were borrowed from Sanskrit and Prakrit. The despised folk forms reappeared as *sāṅgatya* and other verse songs.[22] In addition to negotiations around the phenomenon of metrical systems and forms, the accord linking the vernacular

---

22. The *sāṅgatya* is a metrical form of four lines in which alliteration of the second syllable of each line is a constant and the so-called *aṃśa* prosodic unit is predominant.

to the Sanskrit cultural order was also related to the rejection of a third category. For lack of a better word, I call this category the pluriverse, an unclassifiable grab bag of cultural practices that embraces everything from what is called the folk to the dissident signifying acts one finds in any linguistic community. What in particular I mean by "pluriverse" here is that in the interstices of a speech community there exist realms of linguistic practice that remain outside the normative sphere of a textualizing literary culture. The songs of the Śaiva mendicant-minstrels, for instance, have a presence in the world of folk poetry but they may not find a place in either the Sanskrit cosmopolitan or the Kannada vernacular orders. It is only by prohibiting or at least regulating the entry of such forms into institutional structures that a vernacular literary culture seems able to come into existence.

The unsettling implications of the dissension behind what we often perceive as a unanimity in forming vernacular literature as a polity-related institution can perhaps be made clearer by a comparative point. Vernacular normative texts like the *Kavirājamārga* have prevented, as if by fiat, the making of a fully realized oral epic—a Homeric epic, if you will—in Kannada. The aural-oral forms of poetry had some legitimacy in the traditions of poetry prior to the imperial vision of culture promulgated in the *Kavirājamārga;* the author of the work admits as much himself. But a new historical necessity called all this into doubt. When polities take to literary writing, those outside the centers of power choose to remain in orality. When a literary treatise chooses to dwell on lapses—the third category that I have referred to as the pluriverse—the streets choose to lapse into song. They stay out of the institution called literature. The literary imagination of the streets and the grammar of literature do not go well together.

The Kannada literature constructed as such by the *Kavirājamārga* represents not so much a product of geopolitical territoriality as it does a territoriality of admissible forms. What lies in the landmass between the Kāvērī and the Gōdāvarī, as the *Kavirājamārga* describes "the region of Kannada," is a mosaic of certain metrical structures. But in the period under consideration a privileged linguistic space had emerged: The speech of the area covering the towns of Kisuvoḷal, Mahākōpaṇa, Puligeṟe, and Okkunda was the ideal literary language according to the *Kavirājamārga*—a position endorsed by other poets.[23]

Only a metaphorical space such as the *Kavirājamārga* delineated could include and link together authors who were spread over different regions. For instance: Pampa and Ponna (both tenth century) were identified with the Telugu-speaking region of Andhra country; Ranna (late tenth century) and Kumāra Vyāsa (fifteenth century) were from northern Karnataka; Lakṣmīśa

---

23. *Kavirājamārga* (Sītārāmayya 1975) 1.37.

(sixteenth century) and Ṣaḍakṣari (seventeenth century) were from south-ern Karnataka, and a whole range of authors were dispersed all over the present-day state of Karnataka. Except for the Śaiva *vacanakāra*s of the twelfth century, who had a radically different understanding of the possibilities of the literary in Kannada, all other poets were enthusiastic participants in the literary cultures of the mainstream, irrespective of their regions.

Even the *vacanakāra*s, however—in particular Allama Prabhu (twelfth century)—were keenly aware of the existence of the consecrated literary tra-dition. Allama Prabhu refers to the poets of the past as parrots perched on the three-tiered space of the *vastuka*s and *varṇaka*s, two respected genres practiced by all writers.[24] The *vacanakāra* critique was also a formal revolt; the free-flowing indigenous traditions of orality asserted themselves against the excessive formal disciplines of metrical structures. The basis of the *vacana,* a near-prose form, was in the genre of inspired orality, which even today is a living folk practice.

The indigenous genius was hard to contain. It defied the dictates of the theorists and evolved into new, respectable forms. The history of Kannada prosody (a theme I return to in the next section) is a dazzling story of this struggle, but it is usually told in a very dull way. The *mārga-dēsi* debate, which has seen many remarkable turns in its career, also reaffirms both the ex-egetical cunning of the canonical masters and the equally deft reappearance of the local, the untutorable indigenous, in a different garb. Further, the survival of local indigenous forms leads us to reflect on the nature of the re-lationship between the "folk" and "classical" forms of Kannada literature. The very distinction here, though it holds good up to a certain point, has to be defined carefully. In the long narrative poems of the lower castes, for ex-ample, we see the creative use of forms that come into prominence at the hands of classical poets.[25]

At the level of stories and themes, two typologies emerge in the context of Kannada literature: the monodimensional classical and the multidimen-sional classical. In the first category, the *śramaṇa*s are the most important group, since their stories remain within the confines of high literary culture; there is very little Jain folk literature. The second category is represented by Brahmans and Śaivas, whose folk forms have both produced and reproduced the classical material with certain variations. Particularly in the case of the lat-ter, the folk epics bring to light what is ignored or hidden by the textual or institutional centers of religion. There is a third category of folk narrative, in addition to the Brahmanical and Śaiva, sung by those communities that have stayed outside the framework of the caste system, like forest cowherds and

24. Basavaraju 1960: 96 (v. 641).
25. On the idea of *mārga-dēsi* see Narayana Rao (chapter 6) and Pollock (chapter 1) in this volume.

forest shepherds, whose experiences have not been part of the formalization and canonization process of literature. In other words, the stories and themes of these groups have not found formal expression in the history of Kannada literature. These communities have preserved some of the primordial metrical forms of the Kannada language; the process of policing metrical forms by the consensual institution called literature did not affect them.

Theories of Prosody as Sites of Negotiation

Many of the themes so far touched upon are brought to light when we consider the relationship between the science of prosody *(chandonuśāsana)* and the living metrical forms of the "common folk."[26] Nāgavarma's *Chandombudhi* (Ocean of meters; tenth century), the first text on prosody in ancient Kannada, and several other works of more or less the same period, can help to illuminate the process of reformalization of local literary practices according to the standards of the emergent literary culture.

Chandombudhi came into existence at a historical moment when the Sanskrit cultural order had established hegemony in literary canonization.[27] There is inscriptional evidence to show that the high priests of Sanskrit literary culture were held in great esteem even in Karnataka.[28] Not surprisingly, there is also evidence that *dēsi,* or vernacular, forms, too, were used to measure the popularity of a work. The *Chandombudhi* seeks to effect a synthesis of these two forces—the universalizing Sanskrit and the localized and particular Kannada—envisaging the emergence of consensus as the base of a self-conscious literary tradition. Nāgavarma's is a proposal to submerge differences at the level of theory, a phenomenon that had assumed multiple dimensions when Sanskrit poetics descended on the Kannada scene.[29] And

26. Jayakīrti, a theoretician of the eleventh century, apparently felt that the rules of prosody for Kannada and Sanskrit are one and the same. The list of Sanskrit texts that have influenced the theories of prosody in Kannada is long; especially important are Piṅgala's *Chandaḥsūtra,* Hemacandra's *Chandonuśāsana,* and Kedāra Bhaṭṭa's *Vṛttaratnākara.* The last (c. 1100) was especially popular with the Kannada Jain theorists.

27. *Chandombudhi* and Nāgavarma's *Kannada Chandassu* (titled *Nāgavarma's Canarese Prosody*) were both edited by Kittel in 1875.

28. Nāgavarma speaks of the "proper ancient way of writing and systems of wording" *(ucitapurāṇamārgapadapaddhati).* He also asserts that his work would command the respect of even Kāḷidāsa. Nāgavarma II (twelfth century) clearly names those he regarded as his peers in poetics: Vāmana, Rudraṭa, Bhāmaha, and Daṇḍin (Narasiṃhācārya 1967: x).

29. Literary theorists in India have taken seriously the possibility of reconstructing a non-Sanskrit poetics. Not surprisingly, for reasons of cultural politics—inspired by the anti-Brahman movement—Tamil writers are working on this project seriously. For a discussion of Tamil poetics, see Carlos 1993. An additional problem in this area is that of tracing the origin of non-Sanskritic ideas and their journey to the Sanskrit cosmopolis. Carlos, a leading Tamil theorist, argues in the aforementioned work that *dhvani* was originally a Dravidian idea.

he seeks to do this in a critical domain, that of *chandas,* prosody and metrics, mastery of which by this epoch had became synonymous with literary sophistication. As Nāgavarma puts it, "The bad poet, who roams wearily in the profession of poetry without learning *chandas,* is verily a blind man."[30] Sanskrit had penetrated the Kannada literary imagination quite deeply at the metrical level; most of the Sanskrit syllabic-quantitative verse forms *(vr̥tta),* including the most complicated, had become quite popular with the classical poets of Kannada.[31] Hence Nāgavarma devotes a substantial section of his treatise to a discussion on *samavr̥tta,* which in this context refers to forms that are common to both Kannada and Sanskrit. We should add that Nāgavarma was negotiating not only with pure Sanskrit traditions per se; another tradition demanding recognition was Prakrit, both as a literary language and as a body of other metrical forms and theoretical positions on prosody. Kannada scholarship has treated this as the problem of the influence of two metrical authorities both named Piṅgala, one Sanskrit and the other Prakrit.[32]

The most important part of *Chandombudhi* for the purpose of this essay is a special section that deals with the Kannada-specific metrical forms, which Nāgavarma calls *kannadaviṣayajāti.*[33] This term is in keeping with the habit found in Sanskrit poetics of defining styles as belonging to regions, for instance, *vaidarbhi* and *gauḍi.*[34] Nāgavarma's success lies in his mode of approximation. He graphically describes the presence of Sanskrit metrical forms in Kannada while at the same time successfully grafting Prakrit metrics onto Kannada. At the level of theory, his propositions sound credible and plausible; what he actually does, however, is redescribe certain Kannada forms in the vocabulary of Prakrit sources. Forms, like *ragaḷe,* that were to be made hugely popular by the Śaiva poet Harihara in the thirteenth century were traced to Prakrit; this was also true of forms like the *daṇḍaka.*[35]

30. Kittel 1875, v. 17.

31. For a discussion of the presence of the Sanskrit canon in Kannada inscriptions, see Cidānandamūrti 1966a. The majority of the authors in ancient Kannada believed in the notion of *sarvabhāṣāmayi pravr̥tti* (an all-pervading language tendency), which also became a euphemism for endorsing the canonical values of the Sanskrit literary culture. Only recently have traditional scholars, in the face of the findings of Dravidian linguistics, accepted that Kannada has an origin independent of Sanskrit.

32. There are differences of opinion about the time of the Prākr̥ta Piṅgala. Some scholars date him to the fourteenth century, others deny his historical existence altogether. See Winternitz 1981–1985, 3: 33; and Keith 1928: 35. Kittel (1875: xvi) says that no trace of Piṅgala's influence can be detected in the work of Nāgavarma.

33. Vv. 67, 296, 230.

34. Cf. Pollock 1998.

35. On *ragaḷe,* see Kittel 1875: xxii. If one takes the evidence available in other literatures, Kannada-specific forms like *ragaḷe* and *tripadi* have important siblings in Apabhramsha. The style of the *Cāryagītikośa* reads very much like *ragaḷe.* In *sune suna militta jabe / sāla dhama uia tabe,* for

This suggests two possibilities: First, contrary to the experience with the highly intricate Sanskrit quantitative meters *(vṛtta),* the forms from Prakrit may have naturally integrated themselves with the linguistic genius of the Kannada language. Second, the pure *dēsi* forms may have lent themselves to description in terms of Prakrit. Piṅgala helped *dēsi* forms acquire literary respectability— something denied them in the Sanskrit cultural order. What was difficult to achieve in the context of the Sanskrit universe may have been possible using Prakrit models.

The Prakrit scholar Piṅgala was more useful to Kannada as an idea than as a historically verifiable person. The process of re-formalization was complete, though the *dēsi* forms survived in disguise. But in the history of Kannada prosody, the trinity of Sanskrit, Prakrit, and *dēsi*-Kannada was established permanently. And the Kannada literary tradition as such was seen as a synthesis of Kannada, Sanskrit, and Prakrit. The *dēsi* forms, which became the subject of theorization and canonization, had no self-reflexive theory of their own; they were conceptualized within a cognitive framework alien to them. This marked a crucial moment in their life—the choice between re-formalization and exile. In either case, they would never be the same again.

In other words, metrical forms that were passed off as flowing forth from Prakrit sources may have been not Prakrit at all but instead truly indigenous to Kannada. Prakrit provided these forms with royal insignia, as it were, so they might gain entry and an audience in the court of literature. The category of the so-called *kannadaviṣayajāti* may thus be yet another attempt by the consensual, dominant cultural order to present a respectable version of literary forms that were otherwise held inadmissible.

On the basis of phenomena found in the domain of prosody, then, the following general proposition can be proposed: Kannada literary culture as an institution may be seen as comprising three concentric circles. The tension-ridden yet complementary Brahman and *śramaṇa* groups form the first, core region; the second consists of Śaiva communities; the third is the outer circle, which mainly consists of communities that remained outside the core of the agrarian and artisanal social structures. The last circle comprises the world of what are popularly called "tribal" and "folk" cultures; it is organically linked to the other circles by the co-optation and incorporation of their aesthetic forms, as we see at the level of metrics. It is only by this process of re-formalization—which is alien to these tribal and folk cultures themselves— that they were able to attain "literary" status.

---

example, the prosodic structure bears close comparison with both *ragaḷe* and *tripadi.* See Sen 1977: xxxv. The *daṇḍaka,* a form found in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Kannada, was a species of dance-poetry seen as belonging to the common people, though in Kannada it has features not shared with the other languages. See Shetty 1989: 17–23.

Literary Imagination, Empire, and Secular Poetics

In the making of Kannada literary culture, the interaction of the empire with the paradigms of secular poetics played a major role. Broadly viewed, this interaction can also be described as the conjunction of the courts, the common people, and the nonstatist religious discourse at the level of both themes and forms.

Literary cultures acquire a particular sort of material practice when royal courts are involved in a significant way. In the context of Kannada literature the court had a magisterial conception of literature, one radically different from the practices of poetry from below. The courtly practice of literature was linked to the emergence of the Sanskrit cultural order and to Sanskrit's role in defining the forms of cultural power. The *Kavirājamārga* was the product of an intense negotiation with this order—a theme I return to shortly.

Empire was more effective as an idea than as a political reality in the institutional making of Kannada literature. The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Cāḷukyas of Kalyāṇa were two of the more important dynasties that promoted the ideal of the empire between the ninth and twelfth centuries, and they both were preoccupied with concerns about the inconstancy of Śrī and Rājyalakṣmī, the goddesses of the state.[36] Dynasties were trapped in a state of constant warfare in their ambition to build empires; many a time they were involved in petty wars that had no apparent significance. The formation of the state in Karnataka had elements of a "hollow crown," but there also seems to have been a dimension of make-believe in this category.[37] The "state" sometimes seems to have been like an intensely practiced and necessary ritual lying at the heart of the political imagination. If "empire" means the consolidation of power and consequent phases of peace and tranquility, then empires did not exist in the early centuries of the second millennium. Wars had become an end in themselves. As a result, the historical period we are discussing (the ninth through twelfth centuries) was marked with political violence that shaped the sensibilities of the major poets of the day. The heroic endorsement of war as a political necessity and ideal went hand-in-hand with a certain metaphysical

36. For a listing of the dynasties that offered patronage to Kannada poets until the nineteenth century, see Narasiṃhācārya 1961.

37. The notion of the hollow crown, a metaphor for the substance or the lack of it in state formation, is used in Dirks 1987 with reference to the small kingdom of Pudukottai, south India. A more interesting metaphorical treatment of the making of the state is presented in Geertz 1980. Interestingly, historians who have worked on south India and Karnataka have written like premodern Kannada poets. Their belief in the actual grandeur of the empire has always been quite surprising. The conflict between two visions of state—centrifugal and centripetal—has not acted as a corrective. See Nilakanta Sastri 1955 and Venkata Ramanayya 1935, two texts that were the major influences on the writings of Karnataka historians until recently. Now the work of Stein, Ludden, and Karashima, among others, has replaced that of the Indian scholars.

nausea in the face of violence. The celebration of the ideal of the empire by the statist political discourse and the intense distrust of the same by the religioliterary sensibility are often woven together in the work of a single author.

The division of poetry by the Jains into *laukika* and *āgamika* was one way of negotiating with this hard existential reality. It is almost as if the Jain mind chose to split itself to retain its sanity. The dependency on the state was not only a material necessity for the Jain authors; it also constituted, at the site of textual production, a relation of intimate enmity with all of the ideological, mythical, and epic paraphernalia that formed integral parts of the empire. In the history of Jainism, which has celebrated nonviolence as no other tradition in India has, the ideal of the Jain warrior eventually came to be accepted as normal and even desirable.[38] To be able to digest this cruel irony, the figure of Śrī, Vedic goddess though she was, emerged as an important symbol. Particularly in the work of Pampa and Ranna (second half of the tenth century), Śrī provides a context for commenting on the fickle-mindedness of temporal power. In the *Sāhasabhīmavijaya* (Victory of the bold Bhīma) of Ranna, who was at the court of the Cāḷukya Irivabeḍaṅga Satyāśraya (late tenth century), Śrī is seen as an unethical woman and is bitterly satirized.

Even the *sāmanta*s, or feudatories, had internalized the idea of the empire; they saw themselves as emperors in the making. After all, Arikēsari, the patron of Pampa, was only a *sāmanta* of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, but the poet treats him as an emperor. The petty vassals also reproduced the ideology of empire on a miniature scale. The reality of any particular political hierarchy was apparently treated only as a stage transitional to some other configuration. And the political inscriptions of the time suggest that there operated an optimism of the will having little to do with the reversals in fortune that seem to have really marked the period. If the sword failed to build their empires, the word was a fitting substitute.

Jain writers saw the state as essentially a secular structure, and thus perpetually on the brink of irrationality—a condition almost like inebriation. Multiple dependencies on its institutions seemed to generate in many a desire for the death of all forms of temporal power. Some of the most profound insights of the Kannada poets of the epoch under consideration here were a product of this ambivalence. Pampa, for example, links the body that degenerates with the state that suffers the same fate.[39]

Important changes were occurring in the various religions of the epoch, and literary works of the time were shaped by these tensions. The conflict between *śramaṇa* and *vaidika* belief systems had entered an interesting phase, as the polemical texts of the period show. The uncertainty of political patronage had become an accepted fact on both sides. For the Jains, it was a

38. Dundas 1992: 169–87.
39. *Ādipurāṇa* (Basavaraju 1976) 14.25.

question of preserving their own purity: infiltration by the other was the single most important fear. Brahmaśiva's *Samayaparīkṣe* (Analysis of the doctrine) is a document that powerfully registers this fear. A fundamentalist urge to return to the original state of purity provides it with a satirical tone, but the satire conceals a deep anxiety about the behavior of the community.[40]

Until the twelfth or thirteen century—that is, for the first four or five centuries of its existence—Kannada literature was dominated by a mixed prose-verse literary form called *campū.* This was a truly royal genre, the discursive equivalent of a crown; the poets who practiced it were in fact often those awarded the state title of "poet emperor" as was the case with Ponna, Pampa, and Ranna, three tenth-century poets who were also called "poet-jewels" and who elevated the genre to its glory. The formal complexity of this genre, which consists largely of grand, Sanskrit-derived verses interspersed with often very convoluted art-prose, demonstrates how far the literary had distanced itself from everyday speech. During the age of the *campū,* the poets' attitudes toward the power of Sanskrit meter and the power of the state seem to have almost reproduced each other; whereas the presence of the other, *dēsi* metrical structures and everyday language, quietly distributed among the Sanskritic forms, suggests something of the unease that poets, as a class, felt with court patronage. There was a submerged layer of doubt, even contempt, enveloping the glorification of kingship that was their principal objective—a doubt and contempt that were soon to manifest themselves in the historic transformation of both literary culture and political culture that took place in the late twelfth century.[41]

Against this background it is useful to reflect further on the division of literary production instituted by Jain poets: the *laukika,* or worldly, and the *āgamika,* or scriptural. The *laukika* was basically an allegorical mode, which gave artistic license to poets to merge the epic hero with the poet's patron-king. Pampa made his king, Arikēsari, the Arjuna of his *Bhārata;* in Ranna's work the king became Bhīma. This mode, a kind of symbolic fragmentation of the literary imagination, brings into focus the pattern of complex negotiation involving the Vedic mythic, epic, and historical universes that the Jain poets practiced. These negotiations turned, above all, on the problem of the ethics and aesthetics of representing violence.

Let us examine this problem in the cases of Pampa and Ranna. The clas-

40. For the *Samayaparīkṣe* of Brahmaśiva, see Kulkarni 1958, and, for the second most important Jain polemical work of the period, Vṛttavilāsa's *Dharmaparīkṣe,* see Rāghavēndrarao 1982. Brahmaśiva in particular detests the presence of folk gods among the Jains and declares that "those who organize festivals for folk gods are not Jains but *kāḷa*s [rogues]" (*Samayaparīkṣē* [Kulkarni 1958] 4.123).

41. The classical Jain poets of the tenth century generally attempted to conceal the embarrassment of dependence on court patronage. As Pampa puts it, *peravivudem perarindappudem* (What can others give, what can others do to me?) (*Ādipurāṇa* [Basavaraju 1976] 1.36).

sical *vaidika* poets had no difficulty in dealing with the great Indian epic the *Mahābhārata* even if it meant extolling the virtues of violence. In the heroic epic the literary imagination is not excited if it refuses to celebrate violence at the level of imagery; in fact the real tension in the genre is between a certain philosophical and emotional tiredness about violence and the aesthetic celebration of it. Considering the centrality of nonviolence in *śramaṇa* religiosity, Jain poets like Pampa ought to have experienced emotional, ethical, and philosophical difficulties in accepting the political logic of the *Mahābhārata.* The metaphor-making strategy of Pampa is conditioned by this dilemma. Kṛṣṇa, a god for the *vaidika*s, cannot be accepted as a god by Jains. So Pampa transforms the religious associations into purely aesthetic ones. The sacred is turned into visual beauty; Kṛṣṇa is described as one "who sleeps on the white-foam mattress of the sea."[42] A Jain cannot endorse violence in either ethical or theological terms, but the symbolic fragmentation of the imagination solved this dilemma by placing literary creativity beyond theological considerations. In *laukika kāvya*s the world is dealt with as the world in fact is, but in the *āgamika* texts the repressed problems return. Some of the most moving passages in Pampa deal with the metaphysics of violence and their relation to the state and kingship. In his *Ādipurāṇa* the two brothers Bharata and Bāhubali fight each other for the crown; at the end of the war Bāhubali meditates on the nature of Rājyaśrī, the goddess of the state:

> Bāhubali, the brave and chivalrous hero, saw the wheel
> that stood to his right.
> "Bharata has made a foolhardy attempt
> of fighting me with this," he thought.
> "Curse this, the kingdom of the earth;
> its cravings, its obsessions
> drove my brother, the jewel of mankind, to madness.
> How could it spare the other villains—kings?
> It makes brothers fight each other,
> drives sons from fathers,
> kindles the fire of anger—
> how to live with this Rājyaśrī?"[43]

Disgusted with the evil passions aroused by the quest for political power, Bāhubali decides on renunciation. Bharata becomes the king. The tragic irony of the whole situation is that Bharata is permanently trapped in history, yet Pampa does not pass moral judgment on him. Or to see it differently, it is Bharata who is the hero of Pampa's *Mahābhārata.* The mode of symbolic fragmentation of the literary imagination solved many dilemmas

---

42. *Pampa Bhāratam* (Veṅkaṭanaranappa 1926: 225).
43. *Ādipurāṇa* (Basavaraju 1976) 14.119.

for Pampa and Ranna, true, but it was also disputed. Later Jain poets, such as Nēmicandra and Janna in the thirteenth century, did not approve of this mode and abandoned it.

Pampa and other Jain poets of his era resolved the problem of the relationship between ideology and aesthetics by accepting secular poetics, thus removing the conflicts between *dharma* (duty as such; social and political duty) and *kāvyadharma* (poetic duty). The courtly institution of poetry was constructed in such a way as to facilitate the smooth practice of such a poetics. It also made cross-linguistic borrowing, influences, and imitation possible. However, the fact that the conflict between ideology and aesthetics could be resolved did not mean that larger areas of dissent disappeared from the site of literature. For Kannada poets, Sanskrit poetics on the whole became the most useful model for the secularization of literature. Even at the pan-Indian level, all the fierce internal debates on language, notions of reality, and verifiability of religious experience were dissolved, by about the tenth century, in *rasa* theory. Compared to the *śramaṇa*s, *vaidika* poets did not experience larger tensions of the kind related to theology and poetry. They did not have to resort to symbolic fragmentation—though the very absence of such tensions, it can be argued, made their works fragile and dull.

An interesting contrast to Pampa is the case of Ranna, his contemporary, who evolved a subversive strategy to retain the Jain endorsement of nonviolence. There has been a debate in Kannada scholarship on the nature of the central aesthetic emotion in Ranna's version of the *Mahābhārata.* Devout Jain that he was, how could he celebrate *vīra,* or the heroic sentiment—violence, in fact—as the main aesthetic experience? It seems far likelier that it is *raudra,* or rage, that constitutes the organizing *rasa* of his epic; for the *śramaṇa* poet uses all the analytical strategies of his religious discourse to explore the dark world of human beings and the primal moments of defeat in war, revenge, and bloodthirstiness. Ranna had to tackle another contradiction: as a poet working within the framework of poetic convention he was obliged to celebrate Bhīma and his deeds of violence; as noted earlier, it is with Bhīma that he identifies his patron-king. But the internal possibilities of the story of the war between Bhīma and Duryodhana, and the poet's spiritual propensity to doubt and distrust violence, led him to elevate the status of Duryodhana. The curious artistic strategy of counteridentification that he employs produces a tension that runs throughout his extraordinary *campū.*

THE MAKING AND RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF RADICAL EPISTEMES

New Forms and Alternative Spaces

One of the most important problematics of the history of Kannada literary culture is the emergence of radically new epistemes—core notions about the social and cultural order—and the reformulation of these epistemes over

time. A dramatic instance of such emergence occurred in the twelfth century, when an entirely new communicative form appeared, along with a new religious practice. The movement is popularly referred to by this literary form, which was named, with disarming simplicity, the *vacana* (which means utterance, statement, discourse; an author in the genre was called a *vacanakāra,* or maker of a *vacana*). It is often called also the Vīraśaiva movement, in acknowledgment of the religious group that adopted the *vacana* as one of its principal genres. Along with this new literary form and religious practice, a whole range of new images and radical propositions came into being, marking this moment as one of profound discontinuity. The abrupt appearance of these images and propositions and the new form in which they were embodied suggests that they were born from nothing and nowhere. Any effort to trace the genealogy of the *vacana* form necessarily ends up in offering only possibilities, not certainties. On the other hand, the later reworking of the original twelfth-century epistemes and imagery resulted in their not-so-subtle relocation. In other words, there emerged a rupture between the originary moment and the subsequent processes of recontextualization, when the ideas of the twelfth century were reworked for new social and political contexts in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Rebel *vacanakāra*s were thereby transposed into a part of the very structure they had opposed. The religious tropes and categories that once signified uncompromising rebellion came to convey, in the wake of recontextualization, a very different set of ideals and positions. These divergent historical moments seem to merge to produce an illusion of historical continuity; the great critical moment of the origin appears like an anomaly in an otherwise smooth and unbroken tale. The present-day intellectual practices of the religious community that considers itself the heir of the *vacanakāra*s, if they are to be rightly interpreted, need to be placed in the context of the same hermeneutical exercise, one that began long ago.

The twelfth-century movement and its subsequent recontextualizations indeed constitute a complex phenomenon. Scholars have generally sought to present it as the Karnataka version of a pan-Indian religioliterary movement called *bhakti* (devotion). Yet the complexity and the polyphonic character of the Kannada movement defy the simplistic nature of such readings. Certainly, it has some elements of *bhakti* in it, but the presence of positions opposed to *bhakti* makes such a familiarizing reading untenable. This fact also entails a reexamination of the intellectual use of the category of *bhakti* itself, which is employed naively as an umbrella to cover what are in fact disparate tendencies. I return to this problem later in this essay.

The *vacana* movement was an impassioned revolt against the dominant organized religious institutions and practices of the period and their excessive dependence on the charity of the state and elite. This movement occurred in the last days of the weakened Cāḷukya dynasty, which ruled from

the city of Kalyāṇa. The ruler, Taila III (1149–1162), was executed by Bij-jaḷa, an overlord of the Kāḷacūri lineage, who declared himself emperor in 1162. Basavaṇṇa, a senior official in charge of the treasury in the court of Bijjaḷa, was a Śaiva Brahman by birth who revolted against Brahmanism, threw away the sacred thread, and identified himself with a newly arisen reformist cult within Shaivism whose nature remains as yet unclear to scholars. Basa-vaṇṇa was undoubtedly the chief organizer of the *vacana* movement, and because of his presence there, the city of Kalyāṇa became its center. Other key leaders besides Basavaṇṇa were Allama Prabhu, Cennabasavaṇṇa, Akka Mahādēvi, and Siddharāma. More than two hundred authors from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—mostly from the lower castes, and including more than forty women—are known to have composed *vacana*s.

One major problem impeding efforts to provide a satisfactory historical account of the movement is its genealogy. Who were its ancestors? Where did it begin? What was its relationship to other forms of Shaivism? The an-swers to these questions offered by Kannada scholars are typically condi-tioned by their ideological orientations, which fall into two groups. One is the integrationists, who mercilessly trace each and every notion of the twelfth-century *vacanakāra*s to some Sanskrit source. The second group, the indi-genists, finds the roots of the movement in Kannada-specific contexts. Each approach is only partially useful. The integrationists, represented by one of the best modern scholars of Kannada, are right to locate the key proposi-tions in the intellectual universe that conditioned the growth of Shaivism in general.[44] But source criticism alone cannot explain the uniqueness of the birth of a movement. The evidence supplied by the integrationists using an-cient historical texts, for instance, as also the presence of equally radical Śaiva intellectuals in the neighboring Telugu regions as senior contemporaries of Basavaṇṇa, convinces the contemporary student that there was a larger cir-culation of some sort of radical Śaiva energy. But the integrationists cannot answer the question why such a movement did not erupt at an earlier stage, or in the contemporaneous Telugu-speaking region.

The indigenists have yet to sufficiently theorize the uniqueness of the *va-cana* gesture.[45] What made the movement possible was the coherence of the existential response to the contemporary situation, such that the participants were transformed into a community. The *vacanakāra*s were not simply a tex-

44. The scholar is L. Basavaraju, who has edited a collection of *vacana*s and published a very important book on the question of the Sanskrit ancestry of the *vacana* movement (Basavaraju 1963). In the introduction he forcefully argues that all the major positions of the twelfth-century rebellion can be located in the Upaniṣads and *āgama*s.

45. Cidānandamūrti, M. M. Kalaburgi, and G. S. Shivarudrappa are the major thinkers of the indigenist school.

tual community; the readings of both schools of interpretation impose this construction on them. Ideas and categories alone cannot produce a radical movement of that intensity. If the same materials were available in other geocultural regions as well, how does one explain the fact that it was only in Kannada that they were appropriated and used to transform literary—and spiritual—life? The answer to this question may lie in the history of subjectivity in a language. After all, to take a Heideggerian view, human beings have their habitats in language. The history of Kannada literary culture shows that by the eleventh century the influence of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan order had reached scandalous proportions. In the realm of public poetry, the polity and temple-based religion had established a monopoly over the literary uses of Kannada. The subjective self of the poet had to negotiate with a wide range of mediating conventions and tropes to make even a simple statement. The seriousness of the crisis can be gauged by a cursory glance at the dictionary produced by Ranna, the *Rannakāṇḍa,* where pure Kannada words, spoken in the streets, are translated back into Sanskrit. Whatever the intellectual contexts for which it was produced, this text serves to substantiate the hypothesis that everyday speech did not enjoy wide currency among the intelligentsia for discursive or artistic purposes.

Against this background it can be argued that the *vacanakāra*s' choice to create the form of the *vacana* was primarily an aesthetic one. This position goes against the grain of most Kannada scholarship, however, which holds that for the *vacanakāra*s literature was a mere by-product of a larger social and political project. It has been repeatedly asserted that life hurt them into poetry. But the twelfth century was a historical epoch when an exclusive concern with language and forms could act as a moment of overdetermination. The *vacanakāra*s had no other option but to write in Kannada. The choice of Kannada had once been largely an intellectual gesture, it seems; to compose *vacana*s in Kannada, however, encompassed other and far more radical positions. Such moments of overdetermination are common in the history of a vernacular, when it can suddenly become a vehicle of protest and a carrier of inexplicable aesthetic and social energy. In such contexts, the *bhāṣā*s even seem to appropriate to themselves the role of Sanskrit, in its claim to speak with ultimate authority. It is in their internal spaces, in the vernacular, that radical groups now conducted their struggles.

The real source of the radical energy of the *vacana* movement lay in its ability to keep other socioreligious forces in a state of flux. These forces included the *guru,* or teacher-priest; the *jaṅgama,* or wandering ascetic; and the *liṅga* itself, the aniconic form of Śiva. Only the subjective self of the devotee, called the *śaraṇa* (lit. the refuge) was real, and it was interchangeable with all the other three. The major *vacanakāra*s saw in themselves and in each other a unified state of all three. The strong nondualist current that ran

through the movement superadded a much-needed philosophical justification to treat all the other institutional components—*guru* and so on—as the differential manifestations of a single force.

The fundamental signification of the categories of *guru, liṅga,* and *jaṅgama* becomes clear only in the poetry of the *vacanakāra*s. In other words, *vacana*s translate the abstract categories of the *vacanakāra*s into radical reality. Poetry then acts as an agent for decoding the primary signification of certain religious symbols. The Śaiva categories achieve a stunning transformation because of the way they are embedded in the thick layers of poetic images. The metaphors that surround them make the apolitical categories burn like fire. Poetry makes theology radical in this context. The historicity of poetry provides the context for the conversion of neutral symbols into something more problematic and politically interesting. For instance, the difference between the *vacana*s of Jēdara Dāsimaiah (fl. 1040), who is said to have been the first *vacanakāra,* and those of Basavaṇṇa brings this phenomenon into sharp relief. In terms of formal features, Jēdara Dāsimaiah, whose values had an affinity with those of the twelfth-century poets, more or less prepared the *vacana* for its use by the future masters of the genre. But the making of the new subjectivity is not felt in his works with all the anxiety, tension, transparency, and self-doubt that it carries in Basavaṇṇa, for instance. One cannot escape the specific, primal thrust of the idea of the *jaṅgama* in the context of a poem by Basavaṇṇa that argues that whereas the rich build temples, the *śaraṇa* presents his own body as a temple:

> The rich
> will make temples for Śiva.
> What shall I,
> a poor man,
> do?
>
> My legs are pillars,
> the body the shrine,
> the head a cupola
> of gold.
>
> Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,
> things standing shall fall,
> but the moving ever shall stay.[46]

For the historically minded reader these lines evoke a series of images, of the sort often recorded in inscriptions, that relate to the arrogant display of material power through the construction of temples, the *sthāvara,* or "immobile," which Basavaṇṇa here juxtaposes to the *jaṅgama,* or the "moving"

---

46. Ramanujan 1973: 88.

spirit. Many temple inscriptions of the times tellingly record the agent's pride in achieving worldly success through his special gifts to the god. It often seems as though the god were the beneficiary of the generosity of mortals; often the names of the god and the donor are the same, and one is left wondering who is named after whom. Temple building was no longer an act of gratitude or the signature of a humbled being, as it had been before; it had turned into an assertion of wealth and authority. Basavaṇṇa does not see God in temples; instead, he transforms the human body into a temple. The narrative technique of the poem uses the metaphor of the body to convey humility and then transforms this humility into power.

Such states of ideological paradise cannot last forever. Within a century or so all three crucial categories that made themselves available for the purpose of effecting profound transformation had come to reside comfortably with older conventional practices. The radical phase began to look like a deviation. When did this process of correcting the apparent aberration start? When did the first effort to recontextualize the episteme begin? If one takes the history of literature as evidence, then Harihara (thirteenth century) can be described as the first author to begin the process of revision. But other evidence, including inscriptional narratives, brings hidden actors to light, such as the spiritual master Śivadēva (fl. 1265). There are several narratives with Śivadēva as the hero, preserved in stone inscriptions, to substantiate the claim of his primacy in the history of redirecting the powerful energies of the first *vacanakāra*s.

An inscription from Couḍadānapura in Dharwar district is a case in point.[47] Śivadēva was a major Śaiva leader not only in the geopolitical territory of Banavāsi but in the neighboring areas as well. The context of this inscription—erected by King Mahādēva of the Yādava dynasty, referred to as the newly risen family—is also crucial to understanding the relationship between Virashaivism and ascendant local ruler lineages that were to become increasingly important after the collapse of the Vijayanagara empire three centuries later. Virashaivism helped such dynasties gain cultural legitimacy. Mahādēva was keen to woo Śivadēva, and he was treated like any other powerful guru affiliated with the Kāḷamukha Śaiva sect. Śivadēva's confusion and embarrassment are clear in the narrative; the poet of the stone inscription unexpectedly dramatizes the encounter and presents the scene between Śivadēva and a representative of the king with admirable precision and economy:

> Viceroy of the king: "The best among the caste of kings has ordered me to gift one village to you." Śivadēva laughed and replied, "The whole of three worlds is ours, not just one village."[48]

47. Kalaburgi 1970: 118–29.
48. Kalaburgi 1970: 128.

In the juxtaposition of *tribhuvana* (the three worlds) and *paḷḷi* (village) lies a harsh dismissal of royal power. But then the representative of the king is also quite clever: in the lines that follow he argues that one can reject the gifts of god, but it is certainly not in accordance with *dharma* to reject kingly gifts. The poet dramatizes this statement further by adding the comment: "In this one sentence the entire essence and all the meanings of the *śāstra*s and the Vedas came and took up residence."

Even though Śivadēva still "doubted it in himself," he finally resolved to accept the gifts of the king.[49] The doubt harbored by Śivadēva was not the first of its kind. In this great moment of ambivalence he was linked to Basavaṇṇa, Allama Prabhu, and Akka Mahādēvi, none of whom had any use for royal gifts or association with the state. And it would not be the last of its kind; on the contrary, doubts about the proper relation to royal power would return intermittently to haunt the Vīraśaiva imagination.

When Śivadēva felt that all the three worlds were his, he was close to the spirit of the "originary moment." But by refusing autonomy in the complex transaction between forms of temporal power and religiosity, Śivadēva removed himself at once from the conceptual conditions of possibility of the *vacana*s; the mutual reproduction of the poetics of the *vacana* and the politics of a new religious subjectivity ended here. He had been thrown into a moment that offered an opportunity, however anxiety-ridden, to extend a process of change, but old Shaivism's long-familiar, historic way of being took him into its embrace. The tension between Shaivism and Virashaivism on the moral questions confronting him escaped Śivadēva's understanding entirely.

The *vacana* should be seen not so much as an external form but rather as the convergence of a style of language and an attitude toward authority both religious and secular. It is reasonably clear that the *vacanakāra*s did have a different conception of literature from, and rejected many of the practices of, the dominant literary culture. But any adequate analysis of the *vacana*s requires understanding the kinds of connection literature has with other forms of symbolic production. The self-understanding of the *vacanakāra*s was predicated upon the radical difference between their own discourses and practices in the social, religious, and indeed literary spheres, and the discourses and practices of their contemporary adversaries.

The Śaiva socioreligious structures in pre-twelfth-century India acted as the ideological support system for the royal courts, and these were strict followers of the model of society based on *varṇāśramadharma* (the rules of castes and life stages). The emergence of the Vīraśaiva movement accordingly has to be analyzed in terms of a combination of class and caste forces. To be precise, the service castes of the temples, as well as certain urban groups, acted

---

49. Kalaburgi 1970: 128.

as the vanguard of the movement. If one goes by the inscriptions that were erected in the name of the *vacanakāra*s and the Vīraśaiva saints, a definite difference from established Śaiva structures is evident, especially in the absence of the language of the polity, at least court-related polity. This should not lead us to believe that the Vīraśaiva movement and its later recontextualization were in a state of constant antagonism with the dominant forces and centers of cultural production. Later efforts to reintegrate the Vīraśaiva discourse into the dominant structures of the times were probably undertaken in awareness of the anomaly between the ideals of the *vacanakāra* rebellion and hegemonic forces. My argument here, in essence, is that the later efforts at recontextualization sought to sanitize the twelfth-century movement and present it as yet another, if more authentic, version of the macro-Śaiva discourse. Whenever any large-scale unity of Shaivism is invoked, it certainly works against the specific visions and positions of the twelfth century.

It is in examining the movement's revolt against secular poetics that we capture something of the specificity of its moral vision and political position. Scholarly discussion of the definition of poetry or its ideals as enunciated in premodern Kannada texts has not made the conditions of literary production an important problematic. Instead, it has provided mostly descriptions, which are quite good on their own, and treatment of the states of mind of the poet. No organic relation between the inner life of a literary work and its conditions of production is ever posited, or at least ever theorized. To ask such questions of the *vacana* genre is essentially to start from scratch.

The *vacana* movement defined literary activity in the context of service to the god; at the same time, it eliminated the hegemonic presence of the king from the domain of literature. Basavaṇṇa offers the definition of an ideal poem and its function; he uses the word *nuḍi,* or "speech," to talk about poetry.

> If one speaks, it should be like a necklace of pearls,
> If one speaks, if should be like a dagger of "crystal."
>
> . . . .
>
> If one speaks, the *liṅga* should nod its head in appreciation, yes, yes,
> Lord of the Meeting Rivers.[50]

It is obvious that this statement specifically addresses contemporaneous literary practices, which centered on the king and the court. Basavaṇṇa defines the central feature of the new subjective lyric that he and his colleagues were producing. His definition contains a veiled reference to the royal form of *campū,* which can never be direct and simple. The fact that the *vacanakāra*s did not touch the genre at all speaks volumes about their liter-

---

50. Hiremath 1968: 327 (v. 802).

ary politics, for the *campū* derived its authority not only from its imperial use of the native forms but also from its position in the court. Nor can the *vacana* be derived from any familiar genre of the literary culture of the times, though one can describe it roughly as belonging to the indigenous group. It is a kind of animated prose with regular but very subtle rhythms; it comes quite close to *tripadi* (a three-line verse form comprised of eleven *gaṇa*s, or prosodic units). It has many resonances with the twentieth-century practice of poetry, particularly in its commitment to the use of prose rhythms.

In ideological terms, the revolt embodied in the *vacana* can basically be conceived in terms of its opposition to the nexus of the court, temple, monasteries, and to the elite that formed the basis of this imposing combination. Basavaṇṇa was himself a minister in the court of the Kāḷacūri king, Bijjaḷa, but some of his *vacana*s refer to the very institution of kingship in a cynical, at times disparaging, tone. The only way to explain this tone is to say that he invokes a higher authority, the god himself, to ridicule kingship; but no amount of spiritual language can erase the definite thrust of the antiroyal images. The tone and the tenor of these *vacana*s are directed against the eulogies perfected by the inscriptions of the courts. Aside from Basavaṇṇa, no other *vacanakāra* was connected with the court; and it was Basavaṇṇa, in fact, who emerged as a parallel center of power.

The conception of the literary evident in the creations of the *vacanakāra*s comprises above all an unrestrained subjective expression of the self. They wanted to sing as they pleased. They foregrounded their subjective self before everything else in literary practice, which signifies a firm resolve to stay outside the perimeters of institutionalized poetry and any other form of court-related intellectual activity.

The Image of the Corpse of the King and Its Spin-Offs

One important achievement of the *vacanakāra*s was to expunge the king from the discourse of literature—to slay the king in poetry (as Basavaṇṇa did in fact), and so to bring the image of the king's corpse to the center of the Kannada literary imagination. It had far deeper implications than contemporary scholarship has yet been able to perceive. The corpse of the king signified the utter barrenness of the institutions of kingly authority, but it also gestured toward the soullessness of the religious structures that support such institutions. The temple, the king, and the *rājaguru* (the king's priest-teacher) formed an evil triumvirate, according to the *vacanakāra*s, and any literary culture that needed them was equally evil and degenerate.

We have no contemporary records of the responses of other religions or any other secular agencies to the *vacana* movement. We encounter an eerie yet perhaps understandable silence about it in the inscriptions of the twelfth century. By the time the *vacanakāra*s became the subjects of inscriptional

narratives, a century later, the process of recasting their image had already started.[51] We cannot conclude that the rebellion that had brought about new forms of reasoning and metaphor-making went unnoticed. Notwithstanding the layers of insulation that envelop the literary cultures of the court, this new challenge had some impact on the writing of other authors; even the Jains had to respond to the unprecedented challenge.

This response is suddenly apparent in the works of late-thirteenth-century Jain poets. One can perceive in their *laukika kāvya* a new wariness about the old aesthetic mode of approximation, which had equated the hero of the epic with the patron king.[52] With Nēmicandra in the thirteenth century this kind of political allegory would cease to be produced, in favor of new explorations of the human psyche. What made this Jain poet, who was also an important figure at the Hoysaḷa court, transform the nature of courtly writing? Certainly there were no protests inside Jain discourse against such literary practice on the grounds of either literary theory or spirituality. At that time in Karnataka, Jainism had no internal intellectual resources with which to criticize the nexus between the court, organized religions, and the production of cultural texts. Obviously, Nēmicandra's innovation cannot be explained in terms of achieving originality, since such ideals were quite alien then. Yet the poet chose to write on the theme of love, and he extolled the virtues of imagination. He sought to celebrate the working of the poetic imagination: the *vacanakāra*s had glorified religious subjectivity, and Nēmicandra substituted for it a subjectivity of the literary kind.

> The monkeys might or might not have built the bridge to the sea,
> the feet of Vāmana, the Cosmic Dwarf, might or might not have touched the
>   sky,
> a mortal might or might not have put his feet on Śiva's neck—
> poets created all these in their works.
> What glory then for poets![53]

The *vacanakāra*s had forced the question of the relationship of imagination to the structures of power. The issue of the fashioning of subjectivity was made central to the function of literary creativity, and coupled with this was the problem of the ethics of imagination. The *vacanakāra*s had trans-

---

51. Kalaburgi has published an important study on references to *śaraṇa*s in inscriptions (1970) that, however, suffers from perceiving the *vacana* movement as a single, unified narrative. The reworking of Vīraśaiva history in the Vijayanagara period forms the subject of a University of Chicago dissertation in progress by Prithvidatta Chandrashobhi.

52. For the Jain poet, the king was the very personification of history; the poet's literary creativity was inconceivable without such history. He could always seek to subvert history from within by introducing inexplicable knots into either the plot or the imagery, but history nevertheless remained at the center of his writing project.

53. Quoted in Śivarudrappa et al. 1974–, 3: 431.

lated the ideal of the moral economy of literature into reality by taking the very act of poetry away from the court and relocating it among religious intellectuals who were not absorbed into established institutions.

Quite often in south Indian history the Jains and the Śaivas have shed blood in the name of their faiths, but this time it was through a battle of images that they tried to settle scores. Nēmicandra is important in the history of Kannada literature because he was the first poet to negotiate with the problems created by the *vacanakāra*s. He rose to the *vacanakāra*s' challenge, but he had to do so within the traditions that court culture would allow. He chose to write on the enemy of Śiva, Manmatha, the god of love, who had turned Śiva into a half-woman. Nēmicandra could not have hoped for a better story to take revenge against the Śaivas. His creativity bears all the marks of an invisible battle; he could not make *vīra* (the heroic) the basic *rasa* of his epic. *Śṛṅgāra* (the erotic) became the central emotion; *śānta* (the quiescent) is also addressed, though more as an ideological requirement than as a deeply felt artistic necessity. Nēmicandra's work exhibits numerous paradoxes, which emerged in response to the ideological sorcery practiced by the *vacanakāra*s.

The Jain mode of creativity had to give up its renunciatory origins and resort to a theme of love and sex; from the theme of war it swung as on a pendulum to the theme of love. For after the *vacanakāra*s, the celebration of kingship had lost its ethical moorings as an activity of the imagination. It is hardly coincidental that after about the twelfth century no great *campū*s that couple the patron-king and the hero ever appeared again in Kannada literature. An entire genre and all its connotations were eliminated.

The impact of this image of the king's corpse, metaphorically speaking, changed the landscape of Kannada literature completely. The tone and tenor of this image, which expressed contempt of kingship, posed a deep challenge to courtly literary practices, and an alternative space was made available. The reign of the *campū* had been unsettled by the challenge of a new form, the *vacana,* a form without any credentials in terms of the history of prosody. As noted earlier, *vacana* is a stylized version of the ordinary spoken language form, a style that is still alive today in folk epics. The *vacanakāra*s had raised their revolt at the level of literary theory through the practice of a holistic literary imagination that did not accept fragmentation. The word had to be in the service of the god, who has no history or death. History as a theme was rejected, and all the heavy royal forms that went with history were rejected along with it.

At this juncture, it is useful to try to discriminate among the literary forms discussed under the umbrella category of *bhakti,* a term often used in scholarly discourse in a quite unhistorical and undifferentiated way to refer to a wide range of expressions of protest against orthodoxy that found literary embodiment. Sometimes included in the category of *bhakti* is the *yōgamārga*

(path of bodily discipline), which was followed by the *nātha*s, *siddha*s, and many esoteric sects. This tradition produced rich and profound poetry, but with characteristics differing strikingly from most *bhakti* literature.[54] Saraha and Allama Prabhu are not *bhakti* poets; their insistence on opaque and mysterious modes of metaphor is in stark contrast with the emotionally transparent model of *bhakti*.[55] The aesthetic of *bhakti* poetry is close to the Western romantic poem; the emotional states of either *śṛṅgāra* or *vātsalya* (maternal love) find lyric expression. Yoga poetry, by contrast, rests on the principles of paradox and irony. Its imagery can swing from the abstract to the concrete and back. Many a time it is a combination of *bhakti* and the esoteric yogic streams that produces mystic poetry.

Bhakti was neither a homogeneous nor a unified movement; not all who are typically described as *bhakti* poets shared radical positions on questions of equality or adopted the same kind of *rasa*-centered aesthetics. For instance, many Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* Kannada poets, particularly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cannot be considered radicals; they betray a conservative indifference toward questions of equality. The point to be noted is that in the context of the twelfth-century Vīraśaiva movement, two tendencies contest each other in many ways. The first, represented by Basavaṇṇa and Akka Mahādēvi, is traditional *bhakti;* the second, represented by Allama Prabhu, differs fundamentally from the first. Allama wrote in a highly esoteric and individualized mode that was a product of his multiple interactions with other traditions of mystical experience.[56] The unity of the two tendencies rests at one level on a common perception of social issues, and at another, on common forms of worship and religious symbolism.

Allama Prabhu is unique in the history of Indian literature because of his mode of conceptualization, which interrogates the *rasa* theory. To understand the importance of his contribution, we have to place him in the context of the evolution of *rasa* theory. At one stage, most powerfully expressed by Bhoja in the eleventh century, it was argued that the primal, indeed the only, *rasa* was *śṛṅgāra*. Later in the history of Sanskrit poetry, after the composition of the Sanskrit *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (tenth century) and the rise of the various *bhakti* movements, *śṛṅgāra* was considered a suitable medium to explore the nature of divine experience. Allama's dissent is specifically directed against the use of the mode of *śṛṅgāra* to capture and explore experiences

54. Among Indian theorists of literature I have found only two Hindi writers, Hazārī Prasād Dvivedī and Gopināth Kavirāj, who have been aware of the crucial differences that separate the *bhakti* and *yoga mārga*s. See Dvivedī 1970 and Kavirāj 1964.

55. For a discussion of Saraha, see Sānkṛtyāyana 1957.

56. Allama Prabhu's theories of poetry and religious experience are discussed in Nagaraj 1999, where it is argued that they were a product of an intense debate he conducted with Abhinavagupta, Gorakhanāth, and other Śaiva mystics.

of the divine. Like the *yōgamārgi* theorists, he converted philosophical categories and positions into symbols.[57] Consider these lines:

> The elders went to the pond on the Hill,
> with the onion of the Absolute.
> They are trying to make a curry.
> The Hill cannot boil,
> the curry cannot be cooked,
> and hence there can be no offering.[58]

This poem cannot be understood in isolation; it is a part of the vast philosophical arguments that Allama had with the other Śaiva modes developed, above all, by Abhinavagupta, the great Kashmiri philosopher (fl. 1000). It is built on a series of allusive intellectual propositions, a method rarely used by the followers of the *bhakti* path. The poem is evidently alluding to the *rasa* theory, since Bharata, the acknowledged originator of that theory, uses a culinary metaphor to expound his doctrine. Also, in Bharata's theory *prasāda* (translated here as "offering") is one of the categories of style. In the Śaiva mystical-tantric tradition, the hill is a metaphor for the god, and the pond is a technical metaphor. In his convoluted way, Allama is essentially attacking the notion that *śṛṅgāra* can be the modality of experiencing the divine. Unlike Bhoja, he cannot accept that *śṛṅgāra* can become a vehicle of *prakāśa,* a Śaiva technical category for the Absolute. Allama is not only quarreling with Abhinavagupta and other champions of *rasa* theory, he is also objecting to the poetic practices of his own contemporary, Akka Mahādēvi. She was the first poet to perfect the model of *śṛṅgāra bhakti,* and later even male poets used this image, imagining themselves to be female. But Allama refutes such feminization of the self as the mode of memory and desire.

The Kashmiri Śaiva school, as interpreted by Abhinavagupta, offers a critique of the metaphysics of memory and "recognition," the theory of *pratyabhijñāna,* and Allama refutes it by scrutinizing its implications on two levels, spiritual and aesthetic. At the same time, the political implications of Allama's critique of *śṛṅgāra bhakti* and its basis in the *rasa* theory are far-reaching; they add a new dimension to the radical energies of the Vīraśaiva movement.

Perhaps there was in fact a widely shared disquiet and self-doubt in the traditional and conservative practices of the courtly literary culture of the twelfth century. Even without the active intervention of the *vacanakāra*s, the self-

---

57. Allama Prabhu would have wholeheartedly agreed with Terry Eagleton's formulation that "aesthetics is born as a discourse on the body" (see Eagleton 1990: 13). My concern here, however, is to study the ideological undercurrents that have shaped aesthetics in the context of ancient Kannada poetry.

58. Basavaraju 1960: 38 (v. 251). "Onion," or corn; "the Absolute," *svara,* or more specifically, the Primal Sound; "offering," *prasāda,* with a play on the Sanskrit literary category "clarity."

negation of courtly culture had already begun. The important question from the viewpoint of the positivist-historicist method is the verifiability of the *vacanakāra*s' impact on their contemporaries. For instance, Nēmicandra, who in my view provides important evidence of this influence, lived between 1170 and 1190, and the extent to which his new moves can be traced to his responses to the rebels remains problematic. In one of his verses, defining the traits of the Jain *anuvrata*s, Nēmicandra writes *kolalāgadu kaḷalāgadu . . . pusiyalāgadu*—"you cannot kill, cannot steal, cannot lie," making inevitable the comparison with Basavaṇṇa, who uses the same words in an identical context. Not just the ideas, but the words themselves demand our attention.

After the *vacanakāra*s negated the centrality of kingship and history, it was difficult for even the Jains to cleave to the mode of symbolic fragmentation. The *vacanakāra*s forced a theory of holistic creativity on Kannada literary culture. Jainism in Karnataka around the tenth century had seen a radical resurgence internally in the form of a reformist movement on the part of a group called the *yāpanīya*s. The defining features of this movement were fear of infiltration by Brahman values and intense self-interrogation. Nayasēna (tenth century) in his *Dharmāmṛta* explored the nature of such contamination; he ridiculed, almost in a fundamentalist vein, each and every religion of his times.[59] He saw the state of degradation into which his own religion had sunk, and he raised the question of the ethics of representing violence in religious practices. Jainism had internalized many values, especially from the Mīmāṃsakas (scholars of the Vedas), in terms of violent rituals and the appeasing of lower gods with bloody sacrifices, and this horrified Nayasēna.[60] He once again made the question of violence central to the Jain philosophical and literary imagination, and took upon himself the task of redefining the central features of the *śramaṇa* sensibility. He was distressed that Jainism had accepted the caste ideology and endorsed untouchability, since this signified a state of utter degeneration of the original ideals of Jainism. The mentality of Pampa himself, which had internalized the Brahmanical forms, had become deeply resented.

Multiple Dēsis: *Pampa, Basavaṇṇa, and Harihara*

The literary-cultural significance of the *vacanakāra*s can emerge only if we analyze their activity in the larger historical context of Kannada literature. Their conflictual relationship with their immediate predecessors was in fact one of the central tensions that formed Kannada literary culture in premodern

59. Veṅkaṭarāmappa 1977.
60. The Jain attempt to internalize *vaidika* motifs and metaphors sometimes assumed curious forms. One Jain philosopher even tried to give a Jain slant to the Gāyatrī mantra of the Vedas.

times. We have already noticed that in terms of genre, the *vacanakāra*s produced something entirely new and caused certain major forms such as the *campū* to fall into disuse. Not all previous forms and genres disappeared, of course. Here, as in many epochs of literary history—which can be described as moments of differential simultaneity—a plurality of literary practices continued to exist. But a question larger than genre needs to be asked: In what sense can Pampa and Basavaṇṇa both be said to have participated in one Kannada literary culture?

Pampa and Basavaṇṇa were both *dēsi* writers, to be sure, but only in comparison with Sanskrit. Otherwise, the two seem to have shared little beyond the kernel of Puligeṛe speech—the "essence of Kannada," according to the *Kavirājamārga*—that is common to both. The mode of Pampa's writing may be called universal *dēsi,* whereas Basavaṇṇa and his school represent a regional *dēsi* mode. The universal *dēsi* has deep correspondences with the Sanskrit cosmopolitan style; it is, as we have seen, on entirely intimate terms with Sanskrit models. The grammatical category of *samasaṃskṛta* (that which is equal to *saṃskṛta*), used by premodern theorists of grammar, can to a great extent accommodate its achievements. At the level of nonliterary ideological models, the universal *dēsi* has sufficient variety to emulate and imitate.

The regional *dēsi,* by contrast, registered its beginnings through the *vacanakāra*s, and it shared very little with the universal *dēsi.* Even if it did not make any oppositional statements directly, the regional *dēsi* as such was radically oppositional. The two kinds of texts were produced and circulated in different social sites altogether. Further, at the moment of its origin the regional *dēsi*—as I have noted—held radical positions on caste, state, and organized religion, though these were moderated after their initial, dynamic appearance. The universal *dēsi* managed to keep deeper ideological or religious dissidence under tight control by the mechanism of consensus on the question of what constitutes the literary; that was how Brahman and *śramaṇa* practices achieved a peaceful coexistence, whenever it was possible.

The idea of "regional *dēsi*" should not be taken to imply that this form of literary culture had no larger networks of meanings and images. It, too, invoked for its legitimation other supra-authorities, though these rarely found institutional embodiment. Certain Sanskrit idioms are undeniably present, but these need to be understood more as signaling ethical values as such than as appealing to their Vedic authority. If statements from the Upaniṣads appear in the work of the *vacanakāra*s of the twelfth century, it is on the basis of their moral imagination and not because of their textual status. The regional *dēsi* considered no text sacred; the living word of the *śaraṇa* was given paramount importance. The universal *dēsi* was subjected to ridicule by the *vacanakāra*s because of its slavish obedience to tradition. The *vacanakāra*s tried to build a tradition by opposing the very idea of tradition.

Allama Prabhu provides an interesting insight into the relationship be-

tween poets and the literary tradition when he dismisses the poets as a "bunch of parrots" perched on the top of a tree called tradition.[61] The metaphor of parrots is important because it points toward the central dynamic in the survival of any tradition: reproduction or repetition, creative or otherwise. Tradition requires a strenuous and rigorous observance of rules and procedures; Sanskrit literary culture in particular cannot be imagined without rule-bounded practices. For Allama this vital activity of reproducing culture appears like parroting. An act of critical interpretation, like Allama's perspective on tradition, has the potential to release a new kind of aesthetic energy, which, according to Allama, is also spiritual.

One crucial element of their transformation of Kannada literary culture that helped the twelfth-century *vacanakāra*s maintain their autonomy vis-à-vis structures of power and dominance was their reliance on near-folk practices. The word *vacana* could also signify "prose" in earlier Kannada; the prose that appears in folk *campū*s is in fact referred to as *vacana*. At the level of cultural politics, the very use of such prose represented the poet's liberation from a humiliating dependence on the state with its courtly pomp. The prose form may be said, without too much exaggeration, to have given them the freedom to imagine what was unimaginable in the context of royal power. Even at a later epoch, when Virashaivism became a major force in the production of cultural texts at court or in powerful monasteries, the *vacana*'s approximation to the simple song-form never disappeared. This, the most popular form associated with Virashaivism, could achieve its liberation from the literary practices of any establishment instantly; it did not need to be embedded in a scholarly sphere, as was the case with majestic forms like the *campū*.

The shift from the writerly practices of a secular literary culture to a holistic conception of literary creativity could occur most easily at the noninstitutional site of religion. It has often been noted how long this conception of literary creativity lasted; it is alive even today in Vīraśaiva memory as an ideal. But it eventually lost its oppositional stance and tried to insinuate itself into the regular structures of the court. And so the succeeding history of Kannada literary culture finds the Vīraśaiva literary imagination caught between two competing centers of power: the palace and the monastery. The significance of the *vacanakāra*s lies in their stubborn insistence on bringing the forms of the common folk into literary culture and using them for sophisticated intellectual purposes—sophisticated enough, that even the courtly culture slowly entered into a process of exchange with such practices. It is difficult to say whether this exchange meant the *vacanakāra*s' defeat or—in the long run—their victory.

61. Basavaraju 1960, v. 641.

The *vacanakāra*s had a highly sophisticated yet enigmatic and metaphorical theory of language: a metaphysics of doubt based on the abilities of language to mask and camouflage. They are, generally, wary of the deceitful quality of linguistic practices that claim to capture the truth. When Siddharāma (twelfth century) describes language as impotent, he is really speaking for the majority of the *vacanakāra*s of his time. But his profound doubt does not discourage them from exploring the resources that language has at its command. Allama ascribes to human language a basic quality: its ability to narrate. If contemporary Western language theory reflects on language's fundamental metaphoricity, Allama focuses on another equally important trait: the narrative instinct. The *vacanakāra*s' distrust of formal rhetoric was also quite deep-seated. It was a rejection of both the context and the texts that the previous, or dominant, literary culture had produced. This only shows that the major poets of the movement were aware of the pedagogical training that goes into the making of poetry; they simply chose not to write in those modes.

The major problem confronted by the *vacanakāra*s was the need to unlearn, and they could unlearn only by following one of two strategies. The first was by taking a clear stand on the nature of learning and pedantry. Their contemptuous reading of traditional knowledge reinforced their conviction that there was a need to build a religious kind of subjectivity in the *śaraṇa*. The second was the choice of *vacana* as a form that gave them freedom to display traditional learning on their own terms. Tradition could be beckoned at will, but only in the form of cynical propositions and most often only to be repudiated. The *vacanakāra*s considered neither the Vedas nor their ancillary texts (grammar and the rest of the "six limbs of the Veda") central to their spiritual search; on the contrary, many a time they considered them a hindrance. "The Vedas are a matter of recitation, *śāstra*s are the chatter of the marketplace, *purāṇa*s are only a meeting of goons"[62]—such remarks provided the movement with moments of excess, but they were also its moments of truth.

In terms of the history of literary culture, the process of recontextualizing the epistemes of the originary moment reached its first major stage in the works of Harihara (1180–1250). At the level of technical competence, he was capable of handling the *campū* with considerable sophistication; he even wrote a *Girijākalyāṇa* (Marriage of the mountain-born goddess), which has a special narrative affinity with Kāḷidāsa's great *Kumārasaṃbhava* (Birth of the divine prince Kumāra), though the motif of *bhakti* is more densely interwoven into the Kannada text. Harihara came into his own by making new literature from the older "folk" verse-form called the *ragaḷe,* in which he com-

---

62. Mallapura 1993, *vacana* no. 465, p. 128.

posed poetry of great lyrical force and beauty, though it cannot be called *kāvya* in the traditional sense of the category. He did not write poetry of the courtly sort; instead, he elevated the *ragaḷe* to narrate the tales of the Vīra-śaiva *śaraṇa*s.

More than a formal innovation, Harihara's *Śaraṇacaritamānasa* (The holy lake of the lives of the *śaraṇa*s) marks the first phase of the recontextualization of the Vīraśaiva movement, or rather, it is one component of a larger reintegration of their revolt against the grand narrative of Shaivism. Inscriptions of the period create a genealogy of the *vacanakāra*s by placing them alongside the great Sanskrit writers of the past, Bāṇa, for example, or Kāḷidāsa. Harihara's narrative smuggled in something else again, legitimating the Vīraśaiva *bhakta*s by merging the stories of their deeds with those of the sixty-three ancients of the Tamil Śaiva tradition as found most powerfully in the *Periyapurāṇa* (they would later transit once more into Telugu to create a new narrative of southern Shaivism). In his style and substance, Harihara came to represent a third stream of creativity in Kannada, which might be described as religious *dēsi*. Writers of diverse faiths, like Cāmarasa, Ṣaḍakṣari, Ratnākaravarṇi, and Kanaka Dāsa, can be included in this category. They have certain characteristics in common: They excelled in their use of classical forms like the *campū* and *śataka* (linked sequence of a hundred or so poems), for example, but their command over the metrical intricacies of traditional forms was the very burden they want to shake off. They were deeply inspired by the ascetic ideals of their religious traditions, and they wanted to use their poetic talent to celebrate the god precisely by sacrificing their literary training.

THE LITERARY INTELLIGENTSIA AND THEIR TRAJECTORIES

Strategies of Liberal Theorists

An anthology of poetry, the *Sūktisudhārṇava,* was compiled by Mallikārjuna in the thirteenth century at the court of the Hoysaḷas. The text was put together for the "pleasure and curiosity" of the king, Sōvidēvarāya.[63] This was an important event in the history of Kannada literature. Anthologies in premodern contexts are not only records of the literary tastes of the period but also have prescriptive functions. Moreover, they constitute a significant stage in the growth of the reflexivity of a literary tradition. The *Sūktisudhārṇava* represents an assertive gesture on the part of the courtly literary culture, acting as a model text for the exchange of modes of description between literary narratives and public poetry. Not all that surprisingly, poems de-

---

63. Śivarudrappa et al. 1974–, 3: 582.

picting various kings are included in it wherever possible. The work acts like a textbook for poets; but, equally unsurprisingly, there are no selections whatever from the works of the twelfth-century *vacanakāra*s, an omission confirming what is elsewhere suggested: that professional intellectuals did not consider the *vacana*s literature. The majority of the selections betray a bias toward the practice of literature as a matter of technical perfection in the handling of conventions and tropes. For Mallikārjuna, poetic excellence meant skill in transforming *vyutpatti,* or scholarship, into striking images, similes, and metaphors.

The real surprise in the work, however, and what makes Mallikārjuna's project more complex and interesting than it might otherwise be, is the presence of Harihara's work among the selections. Seen in this light, the *Sūktisudhārṇava* appears to be an effort to rebuild the critical consensus that was shattered during the twelfth century. Although the texts of the *vacanakāra*s themselves were beyond compromise, the partial accommodation of Harihara was an effort to negotiate with the rebels. Mallikārjuna was a liberal who tried to accommodate the *vacanakāra*s by creating a certain representative model for them. One's heart goes out to the theorist—whose self-description was *sarasakavīśvara* (lord of sensitive poets)—for his ambitious efforts. For the secular literary sensibility, poetry was a gesture of friendship with the world; even pain and suffering were to culminate in the pleasures of reading. The *Sūktisudhārṇava* saw itself as a handbook for the sentimentalist;[64] the goddess of poetry cannot be touched by the evil of change or the madness of the real world—though the anthologist was no doubt also aware of the storms of change that had enveloped his literary world.

Mallikārjuna is important for yet another reason. He came from a typical family of the professional literary intelligentsia, whose ideological unity had come under serious threat because of the challenge of the *vacanakāra*s. Mallikārjuna's family boasted some of the major literary intellectuals of his times: Kēśirāja, the greatest theorist of Kannada grammar, was his son; Janna, the prominent Jain poet, his brother-in-law. The family had both Jain and *vaidika* vocations, without any conflict between them. This kind of literary ecumenism, practiced by the professional literary intelligentsia, could not be repeated in the context of another equally important family of writers— the Śaiva family of Harihara and Rāghavāṅka. Harihara, the celebrated poet of the Śaivas, physically abused his cousin Rāghavāṅka (fl. 1225) for having written an epic on the legendary king Hariścandra; one ought not waste one's poetic talent on mortals, he argued, even if they are kings. For Harihara it was not a question of the technical excellence that his ward had attained.

64. *Sūktisudhārṇava* 1.25 (Anantaraṅgācār 1972: 5).

Mallikārjuna, on the other hand, would no doubt have seen Rāghavāṅka's work from the viewpoint of an aesthete.

A definite sense of poetry and notions of excellence were formed through a learned and sophisticated understanding of literature. What mattered to Mallikārjuna was the beauty that is produced by intricate works of style and elaborate aesthetic strategies to portray emotions. The ultimate achievement of ecumenical poetics may lie in its removal of an ethical core from sites of beauty; it even strives to eliminate larger narratives, which invariably requires some kind of conceptual unity. Mallikārjuna had organized his anthology as though it were an independent epic, or *mahākāvya,* with the standard eighteen topics of description.[65] He was writing an imaginary epic, the magnum opus of the Kannada language, to which poets of all periods, faiths, and ideologies would contribute from their works. The implicit whole was imaginary, true, but the parts that were physically present in the text were real.

Mallikārjuna's work can also help us understand the notion of the history of literature as practiced in premodern contexts. Anthologies like the *Sūkti-sudhārṇava* are in a way histories of literatures, written from a different perspective of history. They are constructed according to specific criteria concerning the constituents of the literary, the function and status of a work in the site of cultural production, and the norms of critical evaluation. In his introductory verses Mallikārjuna explains his theoretical premises: only the reinscription of the literary tradition in a work qualifies it for the status of the literary. The history of literature conceived of in the usual Western sense posits a causal relationship between the literature and history of a given society. Such an organizing principle for his text is inconceivable to Mallikārjuna; for him, literary history is the spatial arrangement of formal achievements. Literature is one long unbroken narrative. The Vīraśaiva editors and compilers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, produced radically different anthologies of *vacana*s, doing away with the ecumenical conception of literary history practiced by Mallikārjuna.

Let me delineate more precisely the contours of the crisis that the literary intelligentsia experienced during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The authors who carried the symptoms of the crisis include Harihara and Rāghavāṅka among the Vīraśaivas, and Āṇḍaiah (fl. 1217) and Janna (fl. 1225) among the Jains. The crisis was felt in terms of defining the nature of both literary language and literature itself and was expressed in certain excessive practices that marked the literary transaction over these two centuries. The two problems were linked in determining the major theme of a literary work.

Up to the twelfth century, the ideal of *samasaṃskṛta* (equal with Sanskrit) was accepted as mandatory; that was renounced in the twelfth century. On

---

65. See Pollock, chapter 1 in this volume.

the issue of literary language, Āṇḍaiah took a militant—if somewhat absurd—vow to write only in "pure Kannada," without using any Sanskrit at all. He declares that his intention to write in Kannada "without flashy Sanskrit" is to help realize a long-felt desire of poets. He even uses the word *sakkada,* a Prakrit-derived rather than Sanskrit-derived word, for Sanskrit. Āṇḍaiah does not appear to have a fundamental difficulty with the literary practices of Pampa and his tradition, but he wants to reach the same goal by taking a completely different route.

Āṇḍaiah shows that he was fully aware of the crisis I am characterizing. He could no longer write with confidence in the old mode of public poetry and had to resort instead to the allegorical mode to show his affiliation with that poetry. The story of Kāma that he tells has a longer history, for Jains before him had written of the god of sex and had composed mythological tales in which he defeats the great god Śiva. Now, once again, mythological tales were made to convey the recently intensified conflict between Vīraśaivas and Jains. Āṇḍaiah was certainly self-conscious in the deployment of his strategy of narrative concealment; at the very outset of his work he prays for the enrichment of his "witty style" *(jannudi).*[66] The witty style comprises traits of a complex strategy, not just a clever use of words; it is not punning or the suggestion of a double meaning. Precisely for this reason, Āṇḍaiah's *Kabbigarakāva* (The love-god, protector of poets)[67] does not belong to the category of *śleṣa* epics (those constructed on the principle of thorough-going double entendre), though he achieves the same effect through more subtle ways of handling the suggestive quality of the words. The witty strategy comprises the creation of tropes based on the details of the author's own historical context; wit sparkles through the construction of unusual connections. With the disappearance of the knowledge of the historical worlds to which he refers, the narrative has become more opaque. Not all traditional theorists criticized opacity, of course; it only meant restricted access to the inner core of the text. The literary intelligentsia took great pride in their ability to decode the meanings of an opaque text. But it requires exceptional abilities to decipher that Kāva, or the god of sex, is actually supposed to signify Arhanta, the Jain god!

One feels some sympathy with Āṇḍaiah. He was caught between the new modes of celebrating religiosity developed by Harihara, on the one side, and on the other, the majestic achievements of the *campū* at the hands of Pampa and his contemporaries. He could not sing or write like Harihara, let alone like the *vacanakāra*s. Harihara had a new constituency of committed readers who did not really concern themselves with technical skill. With Hari-

---

66. *Kabbigarakāva* (Jawaregauḍa 1964) 1.1.

67. Kāva (Kāmadeva) almost certainly also refers to the Kadamba king of that name who was the poet's patron.

hara and Rāghavāṅka there was no tension between form and content; Harihara's works in particular may be read as passionate prayers.

Āṇḍaiah, too, wanted to pray. Bendre, the modern Kannada poet, argues that the *Kabbigarakāva* has a deep religious content but the writer's commitment to the *campū* did not allow him the necessary simplicity for prayer.[68] Āṇḍaiah was clearly influenced by Harihara, which becomes evident from his large-scale borrowings of the latter's style. The literary intelligentsia of the times had tried to connect their religiosity and the professional lives. The modes of the consensual anthology and the witty style carry all the tensions of this effort to connect and become authentic. Mallikārjuna, too, had sought to enhance the horizons of literary culture; he even accommodated Harihara. His son, the grammarian Kēśirāja, admired the efforts of Āṇḍaiah, whom he cites in his grammar. The lives of the professional intelligentsia were haunted by the vagaries of history. If differences at the level of religious ideology had separated writers from each other, liberals like Mallikārjuna offered to mediate. His efforts did not succeed, for no anthology with so wide a vision and range ever appeared again in the history of Kannada literature. The birth of Mallikārjuna's anthology shows that the old world was dead. Mallikārjuna thought he could arrange some kind of compromise between the writers of public poetry, the poets of stone, and the ascetic imagination. Harihara and Rāghavāṅka had satirized the very dichotomy: "Ours is the moving inscription, not the stationary inscription on stone."[69]

The experiences of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries invite us to explore the nature of the choices that the intelligentsia was forced to make. Under the moss of cultural exuberance that we see in the inscriptions of this epoch was buried an intense crisis of identity faced by writers in literary and other disciplines. The Vīraśaiva intelligentsia was decidedly both religious and literary; they had a great stake in producing texts that could challenge the intellectual discourses of the times. Everyday life and the useful sciences hardly mattered to them. Although their social base mainly consisted of artisan and other service castes, they never tried to produce any texts of the "useful arts." On the other hand, the Jain intelligentsia turned to everyday life and compiled works of practical knowledge, like Arhaddāsa's *Raṭṭamathaśāstra* (On the science of the rains or clouds; c. 1300). Another text on the science of poisons offers a fascinating taxonomy of eighteen kinds of rats and poisons appropriate to them.

In contrast to other intellectual groups, the Vīraśaiva theorists were exclusively concerned with their relationship to the polity and the politics of knowledge, and in their theories we witness the fascinating process of the

68. Bendre 1974: 463–67.
69. Quoted in Śivarudrappa et al. 1974–, 3: 235.

making of a new politicocultural community. The medium that made this process possible was language, and the procedure was their intense critical engagement with the dominant practices in the domain of literature and religious discourses. By the end of the fifteenth century they had firmly established a new kind of literary intelligentsia, one that owed its allegiance more to centers of religious power than to secular authorities (a model that gradually influenced other groups of the religious intelligentsia). Nor did they have an alternative, for the two newly established states and courts, Vijayanagara and the Bahmanis, had no special use for them. Many authors were associated with Vijayanagara throughout its history, but that court did not produce even a single important Kannada poet of any persuasion. For quite inexplicable reasons, the Kannada authorial imagination at work in Vijayanagara was then at its weakest. It looks as though the maximum cultural energy was spent in producing exegetical literature on shastric texts, thereby serving the ideological consolidation of conservative Hinduism.

The Split in the Literary Intelligentsia

The most important development of the Vijayanagara period (c. 1340–1565) was the amorphous but decisive split in the intelligentsia as a whole, cutting across religious identities. As a rule, one group identified itself with the state and actively worked with the state's projects of legitimation, whereas the other tried to attach its sectarian projects to the state and the court. The Brahman commentators, on the one hand, and the *bhakti* poets of the Vaiṣṇava Mādhva sect, on the other, are a classical example of this division. Between the two groups there was hardly any creative exchange. *Bhakti* poets like Purandara Dāsa and Kanaka Dāsa did not share the Brahman intelligentsia's enthusiastic endorsement of the state or king. Moreover, these and other Vaiṣṇava poets avoided the imperial literary forms like the *campū,* and instead made use of the *dēsi* forms, as had the *vacanakāra*s before them.

The split suffered after the twelfth century by the Vīraśaiva intelligentsia, for its part, was subtle and is more difficult to theorize. One group, of which Kallumaṭhada Prabhudēva and Māyidēva (fifteenth to sixteenth centuries) are important figures, realized that coming to terms with the Sanskrit cultural order was crucial to the success of the Vīraśaiva project within the sphere of the cultural production of the Vijayanagara empire—an idea perhaps always present, if only latent, in the Vīraśaiva imagination. They began an ambitious project to translate Vīraśaiva texts into Sanskrit. A second group was keen on building parallel but not necessarily oppositional institutions for the production and circulation of literary texts. To this end they focused on creating a new narrative whereby the *vacana*s circulating in the oral medium were collected and organized within a loose fictional frame-

work. One of their most important works is the *Śūnyasaṃpādane* (Attainment of emptiness).[70]

It is not easy to find parallels in the history of Indian literatures for the process by which the *Śūnyasaṃpādane* was brought into being. The compilers or editors of the text had to create a hero who would justify their ideological and literary choices. Interestingly, it was Allama Prabhu who became the central figure in their narrative, although he himself had disliked all forms of fictional practice. The Vīraśaiva imagination of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it appears, was rehearsing all of the conflicts in its memory, trying to arrive at a consensual position about the larger implications of these issues for the making of a new textual community. It is likely that these later editors even created some issues that had not existed in the twelfth century. A palpable kind of conservatism is increasingly apparent over the course of the four recensions of the *Śūnyasaṃpādane,* which appeared in the century and a half between about 1420 and 1580. Predictably, perhaps, the last in the series was the most conservative, going so far as to introduce some Brahmanical views on the caste system in a positive light. Allama Prabhu became a symbol of the autonomous imagination of the Vīraśaivas vis-à-vis the court and the king, but the compilers sought to contain the oppositional element that informs his *vacana*s in the pedagogy of the institutionalized religion.

The compilers of the *Śūnyasaṃpādane* knew that the material they were dealing with would not easily be woven into a unified narrative. The first editor, Śivagaṇaprasādi Mahādēvayya, was quite sensitive to the positions of the *vacana* texts that had been handed down. He was also a liberal within the newly consolidated institution of Virashaivism. The question of initiation, which was already becoming the most important criterion for determining the identity of Virashaivism's followers, was used as a unifying narrative theme. Macrointegration with other Śaiva sects was already an everyday reality, but the self-conscious representatives of the Vīraśaiva movement still had to take a definite position on it. Thus Siddharāma, an early-twelfth-century figure of Maharashtra and the most important precursor of the Vīraśaiva movement, was problematized. He had gradually been merged with the new religious movement, but during the fifteenth century the question of his identity was reopened. The first compiler recorded an imaginary (or perhaps traditionally transmitted) discussion between Siddharāma and Allama Prabhu, and concluded that for a man of Siddharāma's stature the ritual of initiation was unnecessary. But the issue was far from settled, and the subsequent editors made Allama retreat from his previous position and required Siddharāma to receive initiation. Virashaivism was trying to develop new abilities as a net-

70. A convenient bilingual edition is available in Nandimath et al. 1965–1972.

work of religious and literary intelligentsia. The experience of the Kāḷamu-khas was certainly available to them as a historical precedent, but they were also different from this earlier Śaiva sect. The Vīraśaivas had a new agenda and directed themselves to a new class that was keen to establish its claims on the public sphere on its own terms.

After the seventeenth century, the centers of Vīraśaiva textual production were located mainly in southern Karnataka, and the process of establishing an ideological reconciliation with Brahmanical institutions assumed far more significance than before. Studies of the Vedas and the *āgama*s from a Śaiva perspective gained renewed force, although within the Vīraśaiva dis-course itself the old conflict between the Basavaṇṇa-centered positions and the ancient Śaiva agencies continued. Each needed the other to define its tradition, and surprisingly, the Vīraśaiva institutions had not lost their radi-cal energy.

With the fall of the Vijayanagara empire in 1565, many lower-caste chiefs asserted their independence and declared their kingship; there was a sud-den rise in inscriptional declarations establishing cultural legitimacy by con-version to Virashaivism. The religion of the rebels provided legitimacy for lower-caste army-unit chiefs, the *pāḷēgār*s. Throughout Karnataka there emerged powerful kingdoms led by Bēḍa-Vīraśaivas, (in present-day terms identifiable as scheduled-tribe Śaivas), and they, too, tried to create and sus-tain the old and essential cultural aura for their kingships. It did not work; we do not have a single important work or author in any genre from these courts. The best intellectuals and writers of the times lived and worked out-side of these Bēḍa-Vīraśaiva kingdoms. The intelligentsia needed something other than the material incentives available at the courts to be attracted to-ward a center of power. The Vīraśaiva monasteries had achieved more sym-bolic power and authority than most of the contemporary courts. They had become centers of textual production and a source of power on their own.

The Keḷadi kingdom seemed to be the one exception, but that, too, faded quickly. The Wodeyars of Mysore were, at one point in time, far below Keḷadi in terms of sheer political power, but they continued to grow and so passed into the colonial phase with some staying power. The Mysore court possessed a social mechanism that facilitated its transition through a complex period. No doubt, the intelligentsia played the decisive role; and its interests were in building bridges simultaneously with the Wodeyars and the colonizers. They wanted to be on good terms with both structures of power, but in terms of their intellectual projects they were keen on reconstituting the familiar conditions of court culture. At Mysore, for the first time, the intelligentsia among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas came into predominance, and they became the lead-ers of the political and intellectual sphere. Historians of Karnataka record with some dismay the emergence of this new group. Śrīvaiṣṇavas had been

present in Karnataka from the thirteenth century onward, but they had produced no literature whatsoever in Kannada. The emergence and consolidation of their intellectual projects is one of the enigmas of the late-medieval history of Mysore. I return to it later.

The Textual Basis of Political Power

Centers of textual production at the court, and alternative structures as well, do not necessarily employ a language for its intrinsic effectiveness as a vehicle for wider communication. Other, internal logics and compulsions determine their choice of language. On the other hand, languages are not passive spectators in the complex negotiations among polity, networks of culture, and civil society. As noted earlier, after the death of Rāghavāṅka around the middle of the thirteenth century, the fortune of the Kannada language experienced a strange split between its wide visibility and dynamism outside the court and its restricted uses and energies within the Vijayanagara polity. This raises an important question about the language policy of Vijayanagara and the fate of Dravidian languages during the Vijayanagara era. The general impression among scholars is that it was a period of variety and achievement, a phase of enthusiastic royal support for Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Sanskrit. Only Sanskrit was something of a lingua franca of the empire.

When did the era of difficult and complex relationships between the court and the alternative spaces of temple or monastery end in Kannada literature? Answering this question is crucial because these two sites—court and monastery—virtually to the exclusion of all others, conditioned the modes of literary production and reception. Notions of the literary had also been crystallized into two specific positions, represented by Pampa on one side and Harihara on the other, though these were in constant interaction. The ascetic exclusivism practiced by Harihara was quite influential in history; he had inscribed the opposition between god and king as dichotomous states of creativity too deep to be erased. To escape from the all-pervading ideological presence of the monastic panopticon, the literary culture developed certain narrative strategies. One was to make the hero or the king himself devoutly religious. This strategy rarely worked, however, since the conventions of the classical courtly epic required the king to enter certain quarters of the city (such as the prostitutes' quarters) and to do certain things (such as hunt) that hardly fit the role of religious hero. Such deep ambiguities mark works like Mallikārjuna's *Immaḍi Cikkabhūpāla Sāṅgatya* (1603). Here the Vīraśaiva prince Tōṭēndra has to indulge in the obligatory narrative scene of hunting. Since this is not appropriate behavior for a Vīraśaiva, Mallikārjuna adopts a curious narrative strategy: members of the hunters' caste go with the prince and do all the gory and violent acts. The prince's hands re-

main, by and large, unsoiled by the blood of the innocent prey. The poet
goes all out to celebrate the skills of hunters:

> The excited hunters gathered;
> Prince Toṭēndra mounted a decorated horse
> and went hunting.

> The wound caused by the bear's bite,
> the wound of the tiger's paws,
> the wound caused by the pouncing boar,
> the wound of the elephant's tusk: the scars
> are the titles of the hunters.

The poet brings the prince before a guru, who is sitting among a group of
devotees of Śiva and who is well-versed in Veda, Vedānta, Śaivasiddānta, and
the words of Basava and other *śaraṇa*s.

> The guru touched the prince's head
> and said, "My son, you have changed for the worse.
> Is it proper faith for good men
> to join with evil and go hunting?

> "For the men of faith who worship
> the feet of Śiva Rājaśēkhara, Crown of kings,
> is it correct to indulge in such vices
> as gambling and hunting?

> "Pain is common to all living creatures;
> so is death.
> Can one kill those beings who are like
> the self though they do not look like it?

> "The old word has declared,
> raising its hands in supplication:
> nonviolence is the ultimate *dharma,*
> which is also *śivadharma,* and its devotees should adhere to it."[71]

Such techniques of circumvention brought a certain awkwardness to the
work of poets who held the ascetic mode in high esteem. They had to come
to terms with two different worldviews and conceptions of poetry. The poet
Nañjunda did not suffer from such ethical qualms. He thought he could
escape the tension between worldviews by giving the hero a higher moral
character and calling. If two sets of values—*mokṣa* (liberation) and *dharma*
(duty)—are juxtaposed in his mind, Nañjunda can take the side of the lat-
ter either because it easily merges with the shastric declaration that the king
is the very embodiment of god on earth, the very manifestation of *dharma,*

71. Kalaburgi and Hiremath 1977: 77 (canto 6, vv. 5–6; canto 7, vv. 8–9), 97 (canto 7,
vv. 17–18).

or, indeed, because ultimately the difference between the two values is non-contradictory. But poets like Nañjunda had to justify to themselves their choice of theme and their conventional modes of treating it; they could not possibly have handled it in a crude secular way. They were certainly aware that one of the powerful streams in the culture would evaluate them negatively, but this might be minimized if the historical-political narrative were embedded in the larger context of *dharma.* (By contrast, Pampa and Ranna did not have the problem of defending their heroes in this fashion; they were Kshatriyas, in any case.) After Nañjunda, at least four or five other such royal narratives were produced up to the eighteenth century.[72] The overriding concern in these texts is with ideological justification, and their dense conservatism excludes from their imagination any traces of tension, the resolution of which could have given them some vitality. These works were written in forms like *campū* and *sāṅgatya,* but they did not rise to the level of the high classical period.

The problem with poets working exclusively within the alternative spaces of *mokṣa* or *dharma* is that the range of experiences they try to cover in their works is too narrow. The impure elements of life, which give poetry its irreplaceable quality, are addressed only to be rejected as ethical aberration. The ascetic mentality tried to abolish the critical distance between the self and the literary imagination; the ethical world sought to constrain the working of the imagination. But a monological conditioning of poetic creativity results in drab and dull religious verse—an exercise in what T. S. Eliot calls the genre of minor poetry—"minor" because major realms of human existence are left out of consideration.

With reasonable certainty one can say that the life and work of the Jain poet Ratnākaravarṇi (fl. 1565) marked the end of this tension between the ascetic and courtly literary cultures. With him one era ended and a new one made its tentative beginnings. Ratnākaravarṇi is important because his work seems to abolish the distinction between physical experiences and their ethical-ideological implications. His poetry has been considered a "synthesis of pleasure and asceticism"—a synthesis that marked the beginning of a new negotiation between two contestations.[73] He is the only poet in the history of Kannada literature who confesses that religious meditation bores him:

> Heed this request, guru: when I am bored
> by meditation,

---

72. These include the *Cikkadēvarājavijaya, Kaṇṭhīravanarasarājavijaya, Keḷadinṛpavijaya,* and *Apramēyacarita,* all of them belonging to the seventeenth century. The last is of special significance because it is a treatise on poetics, which links the categories of literary art with the life of a king of the Wodeyar dynasty of Mysore.

73. Śivarudrappa et al. 1974–, vol. 4, pt. 2: 658–66.

> I would like to tell a story in Kannada, with your permission,
> my lord, placing you at the very beginning.[74]

A number of complex psychological processes, which have a direct bearing on literary activity, are at work here. The very idea of the poet's bold admission that meditation is tedious is scandalously radical, for the basis of religious life is the conviction that meditation is a state of conscious bliss and peace. Through his protagonist, Bharatēśa, Ratnākaravarṇi asserts that he is bored with bliss and peace; he wants to experience other states of being, which are accessible only through fiction. He invites all of the impurities of life into his fiction, but he is not a dilettante, indulging in them as a form of escapism. On another occasion, he reflects, through a series of slippery, double-cutting images, on the nature of meditation itself:

> A decorated elephant is dancing to the tunes of drums and music;
> it has a pot on its head—its meditation.
> The kite-flier focuses his concentration on the kite flying in the sky.

These similes do not convey a sense of solidity; rather, they suggest fragility and uncertainty: the disasters of the pot falling off the head and the kite disappearing into the emptiness of the sky are real possibilities. Ratnākaravarṇi does not offer the images of stability and confidence that religious-minded readers expect. In other words, Ratnākaravarṇi's most important strategy is to play with the very structure of the collaborative production of the meaning of the text. The slippery quality of the imagery makes his readers vulnerable to doubt and indecision. A new, critical moment thus emerged in the history of the relationship between the reader and the poet, one in which the latter had become slightly weary of the former in his capacity of ideological critic.

In the history of Kannada literary culture, the ideological reader has been an important presence. In the precolonial period, readers of this kind had substantial influence in both court and monastery, and innovative poets were necessarily respectful and fearful of them. Such dogmatic readers had well-formed values, backed up by a conservative reading of tradition, regarding the nature of the literary and the moral economy of literature. They were accordingly sources of dismay. In making Bharatēśa the hero of an apparently religious epic Ratnākaravarṇi had to tread carefully; he could not afford to antagonize the dogmatic reader. The introduction and celebration of erotica were not major problems because such descriptions were already available. The conflict between the principles of eros *(smaratattva)* and renunciation *(jinatattva)* was conveniently resolved in the time of Āṇḍaiah; one was integrated into the other. Interestingly, even for the most religious-

---

74. Brahmappa et al. 1967: 1 (canto 1, v. 5).

minded author, sex was not taboo. Janna (thirteenth century), author of an exceedingly grim yet profound work that deals with the merger of sex and violence, also wrote a treatise on erotica, the *Anubhavamukhura,* theorizing on the delightful experiences of lovemaking. This work was part of a long tradition of Kannada literature on the science of sexual pleasures.[75]

An interesting topic for study would be the exchanges that go on between the tropes of sex as codified in an objective science and in a literary epic, which is supposed to document the same as subjective experience. In the work of many poets they appear to be easily exchangeable, for in much poetry, as in *śāstra,* women are treated as types: the *padminī* (lotus-woman) and the like. The dogmatic reader expects an endorsement of these conventional tropes, which are dead yet constantly available to the moments of both production and reception. Texts of erotica are thus crucial to understanding the challenges faced by poets like Ratnākaravarṇi, who were committed to taking their artistic journey beyond the confines of convention. They had to make the familiar unfamiliar.

The aesthetic challenges facing Ratnākaravarṇi were directly related to the events of his life. According to the brief biography of him in Dēvacandra's *Rājāvalīkathāsāra* (Essential history of [Karnataka] kings; early nineteenth century), Ratnākaravarṇi was better known to contemporary society as an erotic poet and an authority on the science of sex. Any claims he may have made to spiritual mastery were not taken seriously and he was treated with disdain:

> The poet became famous at the court of Bhairasa Wodeyar of the Lunar lineage as a *śṛṅgārakavi* or poet of erotic love. He excelled others as a scholar. Yōga Ratnakāra had mastered the ten winds through shastric learning.
>
> The daughter of Bhairasa fell in love with him. He, too, became infatuated with her. To join her he climbed to the top of the palace and by his special wind technique entered the bedroom and made love.
>
> The king came to know of this and attempted to capture him. That very night Ratnākara went to his guru, Mahēndrakīrti, and took the *anukīrti* vow and became an expert in the scriptures. He was immersed in spirituality day and night.[76]

Such a conversion and change in lifestyle did not solve the problem for Ratnākaravarṇi the writer. The rest of this episode is worth describing be-

75. Important works include Candrarāja's *Madanatilaka* (1079), Kavikama's *Śṛṅgārarat-nākara* (1200), Kavimalla's *Manmathavijaya* (fourteenth to sixteenth century), and Dēvarāya's *Amaruśataka* (c. 1410). Many other poets taught the learned reader what to expect from writing on *śṛṅgāra.* As Kallarasa (1467) declared, "If one doesn't dance according to the tunes of the flower-arrow, he is certainly a sheep" (quoted in Śivarudrappa et al. 1974–: vol. 4, pt. 2: 694). This is not an irresponsible endorsement of sex; it is a part of the *dharma* of the householder.

76. Quoted in Śivarudrappa et al. 1974–: vol. 4, pt. 2: 568–69.

cause it illuminates the importance of the dogmatic reader in Kannada literary culture. It was decided that Ratnākara's work, the *Bharatēśvaracarite,* would be carried by an elephant in a procession. But one Vijayakīrti took objection to the book—"Three sentences in the text are opposed to the *purāṇa*s," he declared—and did not accept the poet's defense. It appears that the poet was even refused food. Ratnākara finally ate at his sister's home, but he remained lost in fury. Remembering that "for someone who has achieved knowledge of the self, all castes and communities are one and the same,"[77] he became a Vīraśaiva and wrote its *śāstra*s and the *Basavapurāṇa* (Lore of Basava). Later he repented and produced Jain works, including, in 1557, three *śataka*s (sequences of a hundred verses) to different Jain deities: the *Ratnākaraśataka,* the *Aparājitēśvaraśataka,* and the *Trilōkyaśataka.*

There is no need to accept this story in toto, but in the analysis of literary cultures, tales like this have an important function: they reveal the criteria affecting the reception of an author or a work. In fact, detailed analysis of the stories about poets in premodernity gives us a reasonably precise picture of the unarticulated assumptions that rule a literary culture. The story of Ratnākaravarṇi, full of many significant themes, illustrates the truth of this. That a Jain pontiff *(paṭṭācārya)* objected to just three sentences in his work gives us a clue to the working of the evaluative practices accepted by textual cultures of the time, when the religious and literary-critical authorities were often one and the same. More important, Ratnākaravarṇi exemplifies the birth of what can be called modern subjectivity, in that there is a direct connection between personal life and poetic expression:

> I got caught up in the senses, I am wounded.
> My guru, Mahēndrakīrti, tree of pity, protect me.
> For the pleasure of the eye I flew everywhere,
> I desired a young woman, hallucination went to my head,
> I suffered intolerable pain,
> I am a faded, dingy man now. Save me![78]

Guru Mahēndrakīrti is a historical figure; the poem, accordingly, is autobiographical. The real point of the biographical story is not the freedom Ratnākaravarṇi exercised in leaving his original faith; it lies, rather, in the later exploration of his experiences. He wrote some of the most moving autobiographical poems in the history of the Kannada language with a great deal of spiritual reflexivity. Ratnākaravarṇi was the last poet who had a deep interaction with both sites of literary production, the courtly and the monastic, and he had a tension-ridden relationship with both. Though Ratnākara's hero, Bharatēśa, is more convincing in his search for and gratification of phys-

---

77. Śivarudrappa et al. 1974–: vol. 4, pt. 2: 569 for this and the previous quotation.
78. Śivarudrappa et al. 1974–: vol. 4, pt. 2: 580.

ical pleasures than in his spiritual quest, externally the text appears to give more importance to the ascetic side of his hero. Ratnākaravarṇi was following the codes of the collaborative production of textual meaning and subverting them from within.

Did Ratnākaravarṇi have any other readers besides Jains? The answer is yes, because his influence on the Vīraśaiva and Vaiṣṇava *sāṅgatya* poets of the next century is evident. His texts clearly circulated widely among readers of other faiths, who must have found it easy to ignore their Jain theological trappings. They responded to it from the perspective of an aesthete or secular scholar. This conversion of the self of the premodern reader is important, too; a reader who might be a dogmatic critic in the context of his religious identity could be a purely literary reader for another work. He cannot be described as the unaffiliated reader of modernity, yet he was sufficiently free from religious narrowness to ensure the transsectarian popularity of a writer like Ratnākaravarṇi, and so to constitute an important class in the history of Kannada literary culture.

The monopoly of the courtly and monastic centers of literary production over creative writing came to an end with the appearance in the seventeenth century of a new kind of intellectual represented by Sarvajña, who was not really a poet in the traditional sense of the word. He is often compared with Vēmana of the Telugu tradition, and the two do in fact have a great deal in common. Sarvajña is said to have been an illegitimate child, and the consequent humiliation may have contributed to his turning into a radical. His works, referred to as *vacana*s, are in the *tripadi* form. His wit, satire, humanist values, and anticaste positions have made him available to progressive projects throughout Karnataka. Sarvajña brought creativity and social criticism back to poetry when all centers of literary production had lost them.

The transition from Ratnākaravarṇi to Sarvajña signals the emergence of a literary culture where the phenomenon of the individual author, with its almost modern implications, had come to stay. From Sarvajña onward the social conscience of the "community," that is, an amorphous group cutting across the boundaries of the class of traditional readers, presented itself to the "poet." Not that other traditional sites of literary production were inactive or dead; on the contrary, they were bubbling with new enthusiasm, at least in the case of courtly cultures. At least two courts, which have been mentioned earlier—Keḷadi (1500–1763) and Mysore (1610–1947)—had organized around themselves a cultural intelligentsia capable of writing on diverse subjects.

At the Mysore court, the presence and the production of texts in several languages—Kannada, Telugu, and Sanskrit, mainly—show that some writers were multilingual. For instance, Kaḷale Nañjarāja (1739–1759) wrote works in Telugu and Kannada. This phenomenon is understandable because after the disintegration of the Vijayanagara empire, the court-centered lit-

erary cultures of Telugu dispersed to Tañjāvūr, Madurai, and Mysore. But even writers from purely Kannada-speaking communities took to writing in Telugu, which raises questions again on the relationship between writerly choices and languages. Kempegowda (1513–1569), the builder of the city of Bangalore, wrote *Gaṅgāgaurivilāsa* (The play of Gaṅgā and Gauri), a *yakṣagāna* (verse-play) in Telugu.

Some authors wrote in all three languages—Kannada, Telugu, and Sanskrit. And incidentally, many of these were Vīraśaivas. Clearly, a sense of religious responsibility made them write in several languages; even Tamil became a part of the enterprise. The textual universe of the Vīraśaiva imagination was no longer confined to Kannada, as it sought to sustain a larger south Indian network. Such ambition on the part of Vīraśaiva monastic institutions throws more light on the authority that rested in centers of textual production. Involvement with textual production was evidently one important way of securing power and influence in the public sphere. But why did someone like Kempegowda choose to write in Telugu?

Telugu had certainly been more privileged than Kannada as a language of the courtly culture during the reign of the last Vijayanagara kings, especially Kṛṣṇadēvarāya (d. 1529). Was a certain residual glamour still associated with it? How does this textual power translate itself into sociopolitical authority? One has to focus on southern Karnataka in general and the Mysore district in particular to understand this process. The texts produced at the court of Mysore consist mostly of encyclopedias, epics, religious commentaries, and other *śāstra*s, whereas those at Keḷadi included works on the Vīraśaiva tenets of the faith: the *Vīraśaivadharmaśirōmaṇi* (Crest-jewel of the moral order of the Vīraśaivas) and the *Vīraśaivānandacandrike* (Moonlight to delight the Vīraśaivas). Ironically, it seems that even new converts to Virashaivism from the lower castes, like the *pāḷegāra*s of Hāgalavāḍi, dedicated themselves to the production of Sanskrit texts—a desperate effort to revive the spirit of the Sanskrit cosmopolis as a way of gaining cultural legitimacy for their rule.

From the sixteenth century onward, supralocal Vīraśaiva monasteries emerged in the districts of Mysore, Bangalore, Tumkur, and Chitradurga. For the most part they became important players in the efforts small courts were making to establish hegemony over their regions. These institutions gained visibility and cultural clout, mainly because of the authors and texts they produced. Affairs in the Mysore district, however, were rather different.

The Mysore king Cikkadēvarāja Wodeyar (1674–1704) radically reorganized the internal revenue system of the land. The peasants were adversely affected by the new taxes. And to compound the misery, there came a drought. Peasants rose in rebellion. The slogan was:

> Basavaṇṇa the Bull tills the forest land; Dēvēndra [Indra] gives the rains; why should we, the ones who grow crops through hard labor, pay taxes to the king?

The court decided that the root of this unrest was the Vīraśaiva monasteries and their religious professionals, and a secret decision was made to put down the unrest and rebellion. In 1684 a grand feast for the *jaṅgama*s was arranged at Nañjanagūḍu, the famous Śaiva center and home to the Nañjunḍēśvara temple; after the meal the *jaṅgama*s were given gifts and money. They had to exit the hall one-by-one through a narrow lane; the professional wrestlers of the court murdered each one of them, putting four hundred *jaṅgama*s to death. Later, seven hundred monasteries were destroyed. Astonishingly, this important episode finds no resonance whatever in the Vīraśaiva literature; a strange silence about it seems to be maintained. Why were the monasteries and *jaṅgama*s considered the agents and vanguards of a larger societal unrest? What was the source of the authority of these groups? They were solely engaged in the production and circulation of literary and religious texts. It was clearly that activity that had given them ascendancy, and they were seen, rightly, as the center of an alternative to the court. The production of texts had given these local and supralocal monasteries enormous symbolic power that transformed itself into sociopolitical power.

At the other end of the religious continuum, the predominance of Śrīvaiṣṇava writers—who competed with other Telugu and Sanskrit rivals at the Wodeyars' court in the seventeenth century and who continued as a liaison group with the new forces of Hyder's court at Śrīraṅgapaṭṭaṇa and of colonialism at the end of the eighteenth century—shows that a new mechanism had arisen in Karnataka. The cultural elite as a class had also become the agency responsible for a new kind of intellectual and political negotiation with the forces of colonialism. Meanwhile, a new brand of writer, in the class of Ratnākaravarṇi and Sarvajña—one that was unaffiliated with any established monastery—was wandering throughout north Karnataka writing a vital kind of lyric; with few exceptions, these authors were very unconventional in their lifestyle. The most notable among them were Muppina Ṣaḍakṣari, Śiśunāḷa Sherif, Navalagundada Nāgaliṅgayōgi, and Kaḍakoḷada Maḍivālappa. They composed poetry, remarkable for its style, that served as a curtain raiser to modern Kannada poetry. The class of writers that produced poetry at and for the Mysore court, by contrast, was not only conventional in its literary tastes but also socially conservative. The Mysore court poets were secure in their lifestyles, clear about their conception of literature, and confident about the circulation of their texts. The new authors were not fortunate enough to enjoy that, but as they wandered they initiated an unprecedented kind of Kannada writing. The privileged class that kept on producing old texts with more archaic themes and ancient tales was left behind in history; to the contemporary reader, at least, they look boring and dull. The centers of textual production in both the court and monasteries had lost their social energy. New players—the colonial institutions—had entered history, and consequently, new paradigms of cre-

ativity and centers of literary culture had come into being. But that is a separate story altogether.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anantaraṅgācār, N., ed. 1972. *Sūktisudhārṇavam.* Mysore: Mysore University.

———. 1973a. *Karnātaka Pañcatantram.* Mysore: Sharada Mandira.

———. 1973b. *Mallakavi Saṃyojita Kāvyasāram.* Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishad.

Basavaraju, L., ed. 1960. *Allamana Vacanacandrike.* Mysore: Nalini Prakashana.

———, ed. 1963. *Śivadāsa Gītāñjali.* Mysore: Jagadguru Sri Sivaratrisvara Granthamala.

———, ed. 1976. *Pampa Ādipurāṇa.* Mysore: Geeta Book House.

Bendre, D. R. 1974. *Sāhityada Virāṭ Svarūpa.* Dharwar: Samaja Pustakalaya.

Brahmappa, G., et al., eds. 1967. *Viśvakavi Ratnākaraṇa Bharatēśavaibhava.* Bangalore: Attimabbe Prakashana.

Carlos. 1993. *Tamilu Kāvyamīmāṃsē.* Translated into Kannada by Suchitra Lata and L. G. Mira. Heggodu: Akshara Prakashana.

Cidānandamūrti, M. 1966a. *Kannaḍa Śāsanagaḷa Saṃskṛtika Adhyayana.* Mysore: Mysore University.

———. 1966b. *Saṃśodhanataraṅga.* Vol. 1. Mysore: Sarasa Sahitya Prakasana.

———. 1970. *Saṃśodhanataraṅga.* Vol. 2. Bangalore: Bangalore University.

Dikshit, G. S. 1981. *Keladi.* Bangalore: Mythic Society.

Dirks, Nicholas. 1987. *The Hollow Crown.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dundas, Paul. 1992. *The Jains.* London, New York: Routledge.

Dvivedī, Hazārī Prasād. 1970. *Madhyakālīna Bodh kā Svarūp.* [Lahore]: Panjab University Department of Hindi.

Eagleton, Terry. 1990. *Ideology of the Aesthetic.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Epigraphia Carnatika (= Epigraphiya Karnatika). 1886–1919. Edited by Lewis Rice et al. Rev. ed., 1972–. Mysore: Institute for Kannada Studies, Mysore University.

Geertz, Clifford. 1980. *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth-Century Bali.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hiremath, R. C., ed. 1968. *Bhaktibhaṇḍāri Basavaṇṇanavara Vacanagaḷu.* Dharwar: Karnataka University.

Jagannāthan, Pervaram, et al., eds. 1993–1994. *Nannaya Bhārati: Vyāsa saṅkalanam.* 2 vols. Hyderabad: Telugu Visvavidyalaya.

Jawaregauḍa, D., ed. 1964. *Āṇḍayya Kavi viracita Kabbigara Kāvam.* Mysore: Sarada Mandira.

Kalaburgi, M. M. 1970. *Śāsanagaḷalli Śivaśaraṇaru.* Dharwar: Sirigannada Prakasana, Karnataka University.

———. 1973. *Kavirājamārga Pariṣarada Kannaḍa Sāhitya.* Dharwar: Karnataka University.

———. 1988. *Mārga.* Bangalore: Naresh and Company.

———, and B. R. Hiremath, eds. 1977. *Mahānādaprabhū Immadi Cikkabhūpālana Sāṅgatya, Mallikārjuna Kṛta.* Dharwad: Sri Murughamatha.

Karashima, Noboru. 1984. *South Indian History and Society.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Karki, D. S. 1992. *Kannaḍa Chandōvikāsa.* Dharwar: Bharata Book Depot and Publishers.

Karnad, Girish. 1980. *Taledaṇḍa.* Dharwar: Manohara Granthamale.

Kavirāj, Gopināth. 1964. *Bhāratīya Saṃskṛti aur Sādhanā.* Patna: Bihar Rastrabhasa Parishad.

Keith, A. B. 1928. *A History of Sanskrit Literature.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kittel, F., ed. 1875. *Nāgavarma's Canarese Prosody.* Reprint, New Delhi: AES, 1988.

Kulkarṇi, B. S., ed. 1958. *Brahmaśiva Samayaparīkṣe.* Dharwar: Karnataka University.

Kurtakōṭi, Kīrtīnātha. 1994. *Kannaḍa Sāhitya Saṅgāti.* Hampi: Kannada University.

Kuvempu, and Masti Veṅkatēśa Iyeṅgār, eds. 1974. *Kumāravyāsa Karnāṭa Bhārata Kathā Mañjarī.* Mysore: Mysore University.

Lankeś, P. 1979. *Saṅkrānti.* Mysore: Nelamane Prakashana.

Ludden, David. 1985. *Peasant History in South India.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mallapura, B. V., ed. 1993. *Allamaprabhūdevevara Vacanasaṃpuṭa.* Bangalore: Karnataka Government.

Mugali, R. S. 1953. *Kannada Sāhitya Caritre.* Mysore: Usha Press.

Nagaraj, D. R., 1999. *Allamaprabhu mattu Śaiva Pratibhe.* Heggodu: Akshara Prakashana.

———. n.d. "The Threefold Tension: Notes on the Making of Dalit Identity." Unpublished manuscript.

Nāgarājarao, C. K. 1978. *Paṭṭamahādēvi Śāntala.* Bangalore: Srikanta Prakashan.

Nandimath, S. C., et al. 1965–1972. *Śūnyasaṃpādane.* 5 vols. Dharwar: Karnatak University.

Narasiṃhācārya, R. 1961. *Karnāṭaka Kavicarite.* Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishad.

———, ed. 1967. *Nāgavarma Kāvyāvalōkanam.* 3d ed. Mysore: Mysore University.

———, ed. 1975. *Śāsana Padya Mañjarī.* Bangalore: Bangalore University, Centre of Kannada Studies.

Nilakanta Sastri, K. A. 1955. *History of South India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Pandurangi, K. T., ed. and trans. 1993. *Madhvācārya Mahābhāratātparyanirṇaya.* Chirantur: Sriman Madhva Siddhantannahini Sabha.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1998. "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular." *Journal of Asian Studies* 57 (1): 6–37.

Rāghavācār, K. V., ed. 1978. *Janna Yaśodhara Carite.* Mysore: Usha Sahitya Male.

Rāghavēndrarao, K., ed. 1982. *Vṛttavilāsa Dharmaparīkṣe.* Mysore: Mysore University.

Rajura, Vīranna. 1985. *Kannaḍa Sāṅgatya Sāhitya.* Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishad.

Ramanujan, A. K., trans. 1973. *Speaking of Shiva.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Said, Edward. 1983. *The World, the Text, and the Critic.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sānkṛtyayāna, Rāhula, ed. 1957. *Dohakośa.* Patna: Bihara Rashtrabhasha Parishad.

Sannaiah, B. S., and Rāmēgauḍa, eds. 1985. *Ranna Sāhasabhīmavijaya.* Mysore: Mysore University.

Sen, Nilratan, ed. 1977. *Cāryagītikośa.* Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.

Shamasastri, R., ed. 1972. *Gōvindav Vaidya Kaṇṭhīravanarasarājavijayam.* Mysore: Mysore University.

Shetty, Mañjappa. 1989. *Kannaḍadalli Muktaka Sāhitya.* Mysore: Masagali Prakashan.

Sītārāmayya, M. V., ed. 1968. *Kavirājamārgam.* Bangalore: Karnataka Sangha.

———. 1975. *Kavirājamārgam.* Mysore: D. V. K. Murthy.

Śivaprakāś, H. S. 1986. *Mahāchaitra.* Bangalore: Rangasampada Prakashan.

Śivarudrappa, G. S., et al. 1974–. *Samagra Kannaḍa Sāhitya Caritre.* 5 vols. to date. Bangalore: Bangalore University.

Stein, Burton. 1980. *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1989. *Vijayanagara.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Suṅkāpura, M. S., ed. 1976. *Cāmarasa Prabhuliṅgalīle.* Dharwar: Karnataka University.

Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī, T. V. 1978. *Kannaḍa Chandaïsvarūpa.* Mysore: D. V. K. Murthy.

———, ed. 1987. *Jinasēnācārya Harivaṃśapurāṇasāra.* Hombuja: Sri Hombuja Jainamatha. Sri Siddhantakirti Granthamale.

Veṅkaṭanaranappa, ed. 1926. *Pampa Bhāratam emba Vikramārjunavijayam.* Mysore: Mysore University.

Veṅkatarāmappa, K., ed. 1977. *Dharmāmṛtam of Nayasēna.* Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishad.

Venkata Ramanayya, N. 1935. *Studies in the History of the Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara.* Madras: University of Madras.

Veṅkaṭēśa Iyeṅgār, Masti. 1956. *Channabasavanāyaka.* Bangalore: Jivana Karyalaya.

———. 1967. *Chikkavīrarājēndra.* Bangalore: Jivana Karyalaya.

Viraktamatha, Śivānanda. 1986. *Prauḍha Dēvarāyana Kālada Kannaḍa Sāhitya.* Dharwar: Karnataka Univiversity.

Vīranna, C. 1983. *Sāhitya mattu Samudāya.* Bangalore: Navakarnataka.

———. 1986. *Prācīna Sāhitya: Rājasatteya Vaibhavada Kāla.* Bangalore: Navakarnataka.

Winternitz, Moriz. 1981–1985. *A History of Indian Literature.* Trans. by V. Srinivasa Sarma. 3 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Multiple Literary Cultures in Telugu

Court, Temple, and Public

Velcheru Narayana Rao

History presupposes a narrative, a story of a process motivated by a causality. And as we have come to realize, such a story sometimes creates the object it purports to merely describe. There was no such a thing as "Telugu literature" as we now understand it before literary historians produced its history in the early decades of the twentieth century for the purpose of teaching it in colleges or to fill a perceived gap in knowledge. A history of Telugu literature required a beginning, dates for poets and their patrons, a geography of literary production, and a connected narrative, which scholars have worked hard to construct. In this essay I try to avoid such construction. I do not tell a story of events by narrating them chronologically, but instead I give a somewhat loosely connected but interrelated configuration of what this volume calls literary culture as it manifested itself in the geographical area of south India. The gaps that I leave are deliberate.

<div style="text-align:center">

LINGUISTIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL
BOUNDARIES OF TELUGU LITERARY CULTURES

</div>

Modern political and linguistic boundaries can create confusion when we talk of literary cultures that predate them. It is therefore necessary to remind ourselves that during the premodern period, which is my primary focus in this essay, in many of the geographical locations discussed here Telugu was one of several languages in which literature was being produced. Poets who wrote in Telugu read and interacted with other languages widely used among scholars of their time. Among these languages, three had a direct impact on the making of literary texts in Telugu: Sanskrit, Tamil, and Kannada. Knowledge of Sanskrit was required for a person to be literary in Telugu—the Sanskrit of *purāṇa* and *kāvya,* if not the Sanskrit of *śāstra* and Veda. Tamil

was a canonical language for Vaiṣṇava Telugu poets, just as Kannada was for those who were Vīraśaivas. Although its influence is not clearly visible on the surface, Persian did have an impact on Telugu literary culture, especially during the late sixteenth century.[1] However, with the significant exception of Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu, who wrote in both Telugu and Kannada, every one of the poets I discuss here wrote only in Telugu.

Also, all poets seem to have been aware that they were participating in an enterprise of writing in Telugu. One of the earliest of these poets, Nannaya (eleventh century), expressly stated that he was writing "in Tenugu" for the welfare of the world (apparently meaning the Telugu world). Nannecoḍuḍu (twelfth century) spoke of the Cāḷukya kings who established "literature in Telugu." In the following generation, Tikkana (thirteenth century) had in view a people he called *āndhrāvaḷi* (Andhra people).[2] The poets who established literary traditions different from Nannaya's also expressed a clear awareness of belonging to the Telugu language, even as they were conscious of their own traditions with their own intertextual underpinnings and shared cultural discourse. Such an awareness made them participants in a common activity of writing in Telugu, even though their literary traditions varied. These disparate traditions were later reformulated as if they belonged to a linear and continuous story, and acquired the name Telugu literature.

The geography of these literary traditions is not as unified as the conceptual area of Telugu literature. Present-day Andhra gives the secure impression that the literary geography of Telugu is easily definable as the area we call Andhra Pradesh. The history of Telugu literary production gives the lie to this assumption, showing both that Andhra did not always correspond to Andhra Pradesh and that Telugu literature was produced in many areas that are not included in the Andhra Pradesh of today. Tikkana, writing from Nellore in the thirteenth century, had a concept of Andhra that included coastal Andhra and Rajahmundry, from where Nannaya had written a couple of centuries earlier. But Śrīnāthuḍu, writing in the late fourteenth century from the same Rajahmundry, had a much narrower concept of Andhra. For him, the center of the Andhra country was the Godāvarī delta.[3] During

---

1. After Ponnikaṇṭi Telaganārya wrote *Yayāti Caritramu* (c. 1574–1585) in an artificial Telugu known as *accatelugu* (pure Telugu, devoid of all words derived from Sanskrit), a number of poets followed him and wrote *accatelugu* poems. Telaganārya and his followers were influenced by contemporary Persian poets who tried to eliminate all Arabic words from their works. But see also Nagaraj, chapter 5 this volume, on the early-thirteenth-century Kannada poet, Āṇḍaiah, and his *Kabbigarakāva*.

2. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* 4.1.30 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989).

3. *Bhīmēśvarapurāṇamu* 3.50 (Śrīnāthuḍu 1958). Interpreting literary statements such as this in a strictly geographical way is problematic. The idea is presented here only to show variations in geographical conceptualizations of Andhra in premodern times.

the reign of Kṛṣṇadēvarāya, who called himself a Kannada king *(kannaḍarāya),* sixteenth-century Hampi, now located in the state of Karnataka, was the center of Telugu literary activity. Later, when the Telugu Nāyaka kings ruled the southern kingdoms of Madurai and Tañjāvūr, the center of Telugu literary production was located in the far south, where the predominant spoken language was Tamil. Telugu continued to be a language of literature in the Tamil-speaking south long after the decline of the Nāyakas. Even when Telugu literature was produced in areas that are now in Andhra Pradesh, Telugu was not always the only language of importance. For instance, during the reign of the sultans of Golconda, the language of administration was Persian, but Telugu poets flourished in the court and Telugu was accepted as a language of culture as well. The northwestern temple town of Śrīśailam, where Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu wrote in the thirteenth century, was a multilingual center where Śaiva devotees spoke Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, and Marathi; and southeastern Tirupati, where Annamayya and his family members wrote in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was a center for at least two major languages, Telugu and Tamil.

In contrast, the kings of the Kākatīya dynasty ruling from Warangal and the Reḍḍi kings ruling from Koṇḍaviḍu, Rajahmundry, and Addanki—all of which were right in the thick of the Telugu speaking area—did not evince much interest in encouraging Telugu poetry. They favored Sanskrit poetry instead. The Kākatīyas honored the Sanskrit poet Vidyānātha as their court poet, and the Reḍḍis celebrated Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa as theirs. Meanwhile, the greatest Telugu poet of the time, Śrīnāthuḍu, was traveling from king to king and patron to patron all over the region including Kannada- and Tamil-speaking areas, receiving honors as well as audience for his poetry before finally being invited by Vīrabhadrā Reḍḍi, the ruler of Rajahmundry, to dedicate his *Kāśīkhaṇḍamu* to him.

Clearly, language boundaries were much more porous in premodern south India than they are now, and literary production was not always associated with the majority language spoken in the area. Nor can we arrive at a neat, chronologically connected narrative of Telugu literary developments. We might love to imagine a definite, Aristotelian beginning, middle, and end for a narrative of literary history, such that this mass of events from Andhra would not frustrate us and appear wholly uncharted. But the search for chronology, the bulwark of positivist literary historians, frustrates even the most dedicated scholars as book after book turns up without a definite date of its composition or precise biographical details of its author.

Indeed, in this foggy chronological domain, finding a single author who gives a precise date for the composition of his book is cause for celebration. Appakavi, who we know decided to write one of his books on an evening in the year 1656 (Śaka 1578) in the village of Kāmepaḷḷi (probably in Guntur

District), is just such an author.[4] I begin my essay with him—and not just because he gives us this precious bit of chronological information (which, as we will see, is immediately followed by a story of an altogether different historical order). Appakavi gives us a rich literary-cultural discourse and provides a vantage point from which to look back in time as well as forward.[5]

First, the story: One night the god Viṣṇu appeared to Appakavi in a dream, along with his insignia (the conch and the wheel) and his two wives, Lakṣmī and Bhūdēvi. The god formally introduced himself and his wives, and he told Appakavi that he should write, in the Telugu language, the great grammar that Nannaya, the first poet, had composed in Sanskrit *sūtra*s. These *sūtra*s had been lost for centuries because Bhīmakavi, Nannaya's rival, threw the only copy into the Godāvarī river in retaliation for Nannaya's suppression of Bhīmakavi's own book on meter.

Fortunately, however, Nannaya's student, Śāraṅgadhara, had memorized every verse of the book before Bhīmakavi threw it away and thus had preserved it. This Śāraṅgadhara was none other than the son of Rājarājanarēndra, the patron king of Nannaya. According to a story well known in Appakavi's time, to which the poet refers, this king had married a young wife in his old age. The young wife fell in love with her stepson, Śāraṅgadhara, and enticed him to her palace. When Śāraṅgadhara refused to reciprocate her affection, the queen spoke false charges against him to the king, who hastily ordered his son's arms and legs to be cut off and the young man cast into the wilderness. But Śāraṅgadhara miraculously survived with the aid of a *siddha* (perfected being), Matsyēndranātha, and he became a *siddha* himself, hence immortal. Having saved Nannaya's book from extinction, Śāraṅgadhara even gave a written copy of it to Bālasarasvati—a contemporary of Appakavi, who recorded this chain of transmission. Bālasarasvati had also written a gloss on the lost text.

Now the god was asking Appakavi to write an elaborate commentary on this first Telugu grammar of Nannaya's. But how would Appakavi get a copy of this book? This problem of the missing text was neatly solved by the god's promise that the next day a certain Brahman from Mātaṅga Hill (near Hampi) would personally deliver a copy to Appakavi.

There is more to the story. But let us pause to ask why anybody would even need this grammar, since for centuries poets had managed quite well with-

---

4. This book, *Appakaviyamu*, popularly called after the author's name, does not have a title of its own. Appakavi intended this as a commentary to Nannaya's *Āndhraśabdacintāmaṇi*. The extant text covers only the first two chapters of Nannaya's work.

5. Though not as precise as Appakavi regarding dates, the poets who wrote prefaces to their works provide us with substantial descriptions of the cultures in which they and their patrons lived, the symbolic statuses they and their predecessors attained in the society of their time, and interesting data about their own families, their patrons, and their families as well.

out it. In the absence of the rules of an authoritative grammar, says the god, a certain *kavirākṣasuḍu*—a fierce and powerful poet—had made a rule that no poet could ever use a Telugu word unattested in Nannaya's Telugu retelling of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*. Because of the lack of a grammar, the earliest poet's text itself had come to serve as an empirical source for ordering the language. Now, however, Appakavi's new Telugu version of the absent grammar would open up the generative resources of the language and also confer authority.

An earlier grammar, *Āndhrabhāṣabhūṣaṇamu* by Kētana (thirteenth century), had no prescriptive authority. Kētana even modestly requests poets to bless his efforts and, if they find errors in his work, to kindly correct them.[6] He is far from assuming the authority of legislator of language, the title by which Appakavi recognizes Nannaya. Clearly, Appakavi found himself in a new situation, marked by an urgent need to establish the authority of grammar over poetry. And indeed, Appakavi exhibits a profound sense of confidence. He states that his book is as basic to Telugu as Pāṇini's *Śabdānuśāsana* is to Sanskrit. This is not just poetic license; he is relying on a tradition of several hundred years of linguistic creativity, during which Telugu literary culture had established for itself a certain social presence. Now Appakavi proceeds to give voice to an anthropology of poetry, to its power of producing political and social reality, and its role in ordering its own universe.

In Appakavi's words, a poem received by a patron brings him good luck or bad luck depending on its "marks," in the same way that a horse, a gem, or a woman acquired by him would. These things, if properly chosen for their lucky marks, could turn him into a rich man or, alternately, leave him a beggar. In the case of poems, lucky marks are features of the correctness of the language and meter used by the poet. The power of the language used in a poem has a long prehistory, which has been ingrained in the minds of literate people. Building on this belief, Appakavi relates another belief, at least as old as the twelfth century, that a poem is one of the seven "children" a person could have.[7] A son, a water tank, a poem, an endowment, a temple, a grove, and a Brahman settlement—these seven insure life after death for the patron. Six of the seven fall into ruin in the course of time; poetry is the sole exception. So Appakavi recommends poetry as the most praiseworthy item for all patrons to acquire. But there is something even more valuable

6. *Āndhrabhāṣabhūṣaṇamu* 9–11 (Kētana 1953).

7. Nannecōḍuḍu (twelfth century) was the first poet to relate the indigenous belief of acquiring *saptasantāna,* seven kinds of "children," to insure a secure place in heaven. In addition to a son, they are: *agrahāramu* (Brahman colony), *devatālayamu* (temple), *udyānamu* (garden), *taṭākamu* (tank), *satkr̥timu* (poem), *nidhānamu* (source of money). This belief was restated in a number of poems over many centuries. *Kumārasambhavamu* 1.46 (Nannecōḍuḍu 1968).

in poetry: However bad a patron's life might be, the poet can make him good. Just as drainage water from the city flows into the Godāvarī river and becomes pure, even a person who has lived a bad life can be rendered pure in the poet's depiction. The illustrations Appakavi presents as evidence for this image-building transform the Sanskrit poets Vālmīki and Vyāsa into court poets who served their patrons: Vālmīki made Rāma known, and Vyāsa made the Pāṇḍavas known, by writing their lives into poetry.

Underlying Appakavi's entire presentation, though left unmentioned, are the grammarian and the scholar-interpreter of grammar. The poet creates his poem within the rules set by the major grammar texts, which were written by ancient givers of laws of grammar. In this case, Nannaya is such a lawgiver and Appakavi is the commentator who interprets this old text. The commentator and the lawgiver form the world in which the poet works, so that it functions according to rules. The patron flourishes only if the poet executes the poem strictly within this rule-bound world.

The world of poetry that Appakavi imagines is remarkably analogous to the Brahmanical social world. In the human world, the Veda and *śāstra* dictate the law; the Brahman *purohita,* or ritual specialist, interprets the law; and the king administers it for the benefit of his subjects. In the literary world, similarly, the ancient texts on grammar and poetics give the law of language and poetic rules, the grammarian interprets the rules, and the poet executes the poem according to the rules for the enjoyment of cultivated readers. The following diagram represents the homology:

	World of People *(laukikajagat)*	World of Poetry *(kāvyajagat)*
Law	Vedic texts (Veda and *śāstra*)	grammar *(lakṣaṇa)*
Interpreter	Brahman *(purohita)*	grammarian *(lākṣaṇika)*
Executor	king *(rāja)*	poet *(kavi)*
Recipient	subjects *(prajā)*	readers *(sahṛdayas)*

However, the literary world did not behave according to Appakavi's imagination. That Appakavi had to visit the remote past of Nannaya's time and invent a whole grammar that had been lost until now, and that he needed the immortal Śāraṅgadhara and the god Viṣṇu to arrange for the delivery of that grammar, clearly suggest that he needed a power structure to confer the authority necessary to create a new literary world. To understand this more clearly, let us briefly take a look at the world of Telugu literary culture during Appakavi's time and in the centuries immediately preceding it.

In the century before Appakavi, a profound shift in the world of poetry had made the patron of poetry, the king, completely independent of the poet. He no longer needed the Brahman as poet to elevate his status, to make him king. The king now assumed the position of the god himself. The

most that a poet could do was to serve the king by celebrating his glory. I elaborate on this situation later, in the section on the Nāyaka courts; stated briefly, in preference to Brahman men, courtesans and non-Brahman men were now chosen as court poets. These poets did not feel superior to the king and therefore did not have any problem serving him. Not too long before Appakavi we find an unusual complaint in the words of Dhūrjaṭi, who lamented:

> Town after town
> every street singer becomes a poet.
> They go to these two-bit kings who cannot tell good from bad
> and praise them as the best connoisseurs of arts.
> Poetry is cheap.
> God of Kāḷahasti,
> where do good poets go?[8]

Clearly, Appakavi wished to restore a world he thought was lost or had degenerated, but he unwittingly presented a world of mean competition, personal jealousies, and unethical acts, like destroying a rival poet's work (almost as if it was a routine occurrence since the beginnings of Telugu literature). Nannaya himself, who was held in high reverence by Appakavi and was respected by the god, participated in such acts. However, this detail was lost on Appakavi, as well as on his readers, who were taken by the glory in which Appakavi presents Nannaya and his grammar. In a way, Appakavi was not inventing this glory. Nannaya was already recognized as the first poet, the inaugurator of Telugu poetry, by a number of poets previous to Appakavi. We find a Telugu literary world articulated as early as the sixteenth century. The following poem by Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu, author of *Vasucaritramu,* addresses the Goddess of Speech, mentioning a "universe of Telugu words" *(āndhroktimayaprapañcamu)*—in other words, Telugu literature.

> You are created by the Maker of Speech
> and nurtured by the Master of Worlds;
> The Moon and the Sun brighten you
> and the Lord of Wealth protects you;
> I celebrate your glory
> in the universe of Telugu words.[9]

Through a series of somewhat constrained puns, the verse invokes both a genealogy of poets and the major Hindu deities. References are to the Maker of Speech (Brahmā as well as Nannaya, who is credited with creating

---

8. *Kāḷahastīśvaraśatakamu* 117 (Dhūrjaṭi 1925); translation, Heifitz and Narayana Rao 1987: 119.

9. *Vasucaritramu* 1.10 (Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu [1967] 1995).

a literary language in Telugu), the Lord of the World (Śiva and also Errāpra-
gaḍa, who is called the supreme master of poetic compositions, or *prabandha-
paramēśvaruḍu*), the Moon (Sōma and also Nacana Sōmuḍu, who wrote a
Harivaṃśamu), the Sun (Bhāskara along with Huḷakki Bhāskaruḍu, who com-
posed a Rāma story, popularly known as *Bhāskararāmāyaṇamu,* in Telugu),
and the Lord of Wealth (Viṣṇu as well as Śrīnāthuḍu, the great poet of the
fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). This is indeed an interesting list of po-
ets, and the tone of the poem suggests an authoritative structure of the lit-
erary past, indeed, a canon of great poets.

However, what Appakavi seeks to express is not just the greatness of the
poet as a creator of literary texts; he wants the poet to be subjected to the
superior authority of the grammarian and the maker of the rules of meter—
the poet should be only the executor of literary texts within the rules of gram-
mar and metrical texts. To see Appakavi's worldview in perspective, we should
pursue the main strands of competing literary cultures that preceded Ap-
pakavi and were in some ways still active during Appakavi's time.

<div style="text-align:center">

THE FIRST POET AND THE PRODUCTION OF
A BRAHMANICAL/PURANIC LITERARY CULTURE

</div>

Contrary to the conventional picture of the reader and the poet detailed
earlier, and the ideological support articulated by Appakavi, Telugu did have
multiple literary traditions and cultures, sometimes competing with each
other but most of the time continuing in relative independence, each with
its own poetics and aesthetics, and often with its own audience. I focus here
on four of these, which I will call the Brahmanical/puranic, anti-Brahman-
ical, courtly, and temple traditions. I discuss as the major poets of these lit-
erary cultures Nannaya (eleventh century) for the Brahmanical tradition;
Sōmanāthuḍu (thirteenth century) for the anti-Brahmanical tradition; Nan-
necōḍuḍu (twelfth century), Śrīnāthuḍu (fourteenth century), Peddanna,
and Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu (both sixteenth century) for the courtly tradition;
and Pōtana (fourteenth century) and Annamayya (fifteenth century) for
the temple tradition. Throughout my discussion, using both written texts and
*cāṭu*s (oral verses circulated among literate people), I outline some of the
main features of these traditions, which lead up to the popular perception
of Telugu poetry and poets as reflected in seventeenth-century legends about
them. Then I consider issues relevant to each of these literary cultures, such
as choice of literary language, questions of translation and authenticity, and
styles of orality and literacy. At the end of my account, I return to Appakavi.

I begin with Nannaya, since from at least the sixteenth century he has been
repeatedly identified as the first poet in Telugu. The very idea that there
should be one first poet in a language that has had more than one literary
culture from early on is problematic and obviously stems from a homoge-

nization of Telugu literature in the early-twentieth-century literary histories. In fact, only the poets of the Brahmanical courtly tradition recognized Nannaya as the first poet; others, especially those who were aware of their literary culture as distinct and even opposed to the dominant traditions, did not mention his name.

The credit for creating a courtly literary culture, in fact, does clearly belong to Nannaya. Writing a *purāṇa* narrative in *campū* (a Sanskrit-based genre of metrical stanzas interspersed by prose), and the convention of addressing the poem to the patron by making him the listener to the entire narrative, are Nannaya's inventions. The patron's name is evoked at the beginning and the end of each of the chapters, and the context in which the patron commissioned the poem and the family history of the patron are described in some detail. The poet also takes the occasion to describe his own qualifications for composing such a poem. This style of contextualizing the narrative with the speaker and the listener embedded in the text found great favor with the courtly poets of the sixteenth century, who embellished and improved on Nannaya's invention. In the practice of the later courtly poets the patron is called the *kṛtipati,* the husband of the poem, and the poem itself is called the virgin poem, *kāvyakanyā,* who is married to the patron. Even the temple poet Pōtanna adopts this style and addresses his *Bhāgavatamu* to his god, Rāma, calling him Rāmanṛpāla, King Rāma. The courtly poets used this style to accommodate the social and political aspirations not only of ruling kings but of a range of personalities including heads of the army and treasury, rich merchants, and landowners**.** The poets described the patron's extended family, including his grandfather, father, uncles, brothers, and their wives, in terms appropriate to the status to which the patron aspired.

Let us see in some detail how Nannaya, at the beginning of his *Mahābhāratamu,* gives a glorious description of the context leading to the composition of the work. The poet describes King Rājarājanarēndruḍu, the Veṅgi Cāḷukya king of the eleventh century:

> Ravishing as the moon, he alone adorns the class of kings,
> outshines the splendor of other rulers; a true warrior,
> he illumines all worlds like pure moonlight on an autumn night.
> He, Rājanarēndra, has put his enemies to rest
> with his indomitable arm—a honed sword—
> as a shower of rain settles dust.[10]

Nannaya also produces a complementary image of himself as a Brahman family priest, devoted to the king and given to sacrifice and prayer. He is an ex-

---

10. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* Ādiparvamu 1.3 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989); translation, Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 57.

pert on language *(vipulaśabdaśāsanuḍu),* he is learned in the *purāṇa*s, and most significantly of all, he never tells a lie.

Towards the end comes a description of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata,* which the king loves dearly. It is one of the five things he never gets tired of (the other four are pleasing the Brahmans, worshipping Śiva, keeping the company of good people, and giving gifts). The king wants the *Mahābhārata* to be written in Telugu because, he says:

> My lineage begins with the moon, and then proceeds
> through Puru, Bharata, Kuru, and King Pāṇḍu.
> The stories of Pāṇḍu's famous sons, virtuous and beyond blame
> are ever close to my heart.[11]

We can see that the preamble by Nannaya has all the ingredients of a courtly poem: a noble king, a learned poet, and a great text. While it served as a major model in the formation of courtly patronage for literary compositions, Nannaya's text also responds to the way he saw the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* of Vyāsa. Introducing Vyāsa's work to his Telugu listeners, Nannaya demonstrates a highly individual understanding of the Sanskrit text. Perceiving it as a work that falls under many descriptions, he writes in the preface to his own *Mahābhārata:*

> Those who understand the order of things
> think it is a book about order.
> Metaphysicians call it the Vedic system.
> Counselors read it as a book about conduct.
> Good poets treat it as a great poem.
> Grammarians find here usage for every rule.
> Narrators of the past see it as ancient record.
> Storytellers know it to be a rich collection of stories.
> Vyāsa, the first sage, who knew the meaning of all the Vedas,
> Parāśara's son, equal to Lord Viṣṇu, made the *Mahābhārata*
> a universal text.[12]

Obviously, Nannaya likewise designed his poem to be all things to his listeners. And the later tradition shows that Nannaya's Telugu text did answer most of the demands made on it. We know that Nannaya was seen as a great poet and that he was regarded a sage—a combination of Vālmīki and Vyāsa for the Telugu literary tradition. His poem also served as an illustration for all the rules of a grammar, which he was supposed to have composed, but

11. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* Ādiparvamu 1.14 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989); translation, Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 59.

12. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* Ādiparvamu 1.31 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989); translation, Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 61.

which was lost, as noted earlier. In addition, Nannaya was appropriated by later *kāvya* poets as a *kāvya* writer, hence the tribute paid by Rāmarājabhū-ṣaṇa (a *kāvya* poet himself) in the poem already quoted. All this was possible because there was an organized literary cultural patronage, which continued over centuries though with significant breaks, and which Appakavi sought to reinvent in his century.

Beginnings of traditions are always authorized as such after the event. That Telugu literature began with Nannaya's *Mahābhāratamu* in the eleventh century has been part of a well-established tradition for several centuries now. But to all available evidence, Nannaya's own intention was only to compose a Telugu work—not to begin anything, let alone a tradition. Even in the thirteenth century Nannaya was not called the first poet. Tikkana, who picked up the Telugu *Mahābhāratamu* almost where Nannaya had left it a century earlier, pays a handsome tribute to his predecessor. He calls Nannaya the master of Telugu poetry *(āndhrakavitvaviśāraduṇḍu),* but he stops short of calling him the first poet in Telugu.[13] Apparently, Tikkana knew other Telugu poets who wrote before Nannaya, and if he did not give us their names, it could be because he was only interested in the man who had written the first part of the text he was to continue.

To Tikkana goes the credit of imagining a Telugu community *(āndhrāvaḷi)* and a strong Brahmanical orientation for Telugu elite culture. Tikkana lived an active life. He wrote fifteen volumes to complete the Telugu version of the voluminous Sanskrit *Mahābhārata;* he was adviser and minister to the ruler of a small Telugu kingdom, Manumasiddhi of Nellore; and he was mentor to other Telugu poets, who looked up to him for advice and inspiration. Kētana, a student of Tikkana, wrote a grammar of Telugu *(Āndhra-bhāṣābhūṣaṇamu),* a *dharmaśāstra* work in Telugu *(Vijñānēśvarīyamu),* and a book from the tale *(kathā)* tradition *(Daśakumāracaritra).* The great kingdom of the Kākatīyas was not too far from where Tikkana worked. However, the Kākatīya kings were busy seeking elevation to the status of Kshatriyas, a service only Sanskrit poets could perform for them. It is not surprising, then, that the beginning of the Telugu canon of Brahmanical poetry and the self-conscious orientation of an Andhra literary tradition should start in less powerful Nellore, rather than in the Sanskritized Kākatīya capital of Warangal.

Nannaya produced his *Mahābhāratamu* in the mixed prose-verse *campū* form—a narrative composition with poems in Sanskritic and indigenous meters interspersed with heightened prose *(gadya).* The meters themselves were already in use, as evidenced by the extant fragments in inscriptional and San-

---

13. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* Virāṭaparvamu 1.6 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989).

skrit literary sources. What is striking, however, is the extraordinary brilliance shown in his use of the meters and the magical, almost *mantra*-like power achieved in his composition. One is compelled to say that it is Nannaya's talent as a great poet that alone accounts for the recognition he received from the later generations; no political, social, or linguistic context could explain this achievement, which established for Telugu a level of poetic excellence it had never had before. The literary for Telugu was determined in favor of the *campū* primarily because Nannaya created a grand narrative in that genre. The varieties of meters Nannaya chose—some from Sanskritic sources and others from regional sources—gave his text a dynamism no other texts in either Telugu or Sanskrit offered.

Furthermore, the *campū* was excellently suited for public exposition. In a typical *purāṇa* performance, a trained performer of the text selects an episode or a section of the narrative, makes an opening statement in his own words, prepares the audience by relating the narrative context, reads one verse or a cluster of verses from the text, and comments on them in his discourse. The *campū* genre, with its mixture of verse and prose, allows the performer to read the verses, then take a break and add his own prose exposition on the narrative, incorporating as he finds appropriate such topical references that would make the discourse interesting to his audience. The structure of the text, in fact, has a built-in role for the performer, without whose improvisation it sounds somewhat incomplete.[14]

In writing *campū,* Nannaya created a genre that presupposes a community of listeners who sit at a distance from the performer and who receive the text as it is delivered to them as part of a public discourse. The text is not immediately intelligible to all listeners. Even to those few people well educated in Sanskritized Telugu it fails to appeal if they try to read it for themselves. It needs an interpreting performer for its very literary existence. This was new in Telugu experience. Until then, there had been only two types of texts—those sung in a group and those read privately by an individual. (Apparently all reading was reading aloud.)

Furthermore, Nannaya's style of adapting from Sanskrit established the practice of not only rendering Sanskrit texts into Telugu but making them aesthetically and even ideologically independent of the Sanskrit originals. In this last aspect lies the success of those literary cultures that are generally Sanskritic, that is, the Brahmanical, puranic, and courtly cultures. In particular, Nannaya's way of handling meters became a model for all later poets who adopted Sanskritic meters and the *campū* genre. Unlike in a Sanskrit stanza, where words have to end at the end of the line and at the caesura within the line, in Telugu a word may extend beyond the line and across

14. For a comprehensive treatment of this point, see chapter 2, "Purāṇa Viplavam," in my *Telugulō Kavitāviplavāla Svarūpam* (Narayana Rao 1978).

the caesura. This convention, which Nannaya established, made it possible for Telugu poets to borrow a four-line Sanskrit meter, such as *śārdūla* or *mattebha,* and play with it in a variety of intricate syntactic twists not allowable in Sanskrit.

To illustrate this point, let us look at a couple of verses from Nannaya's *Mahābhāratamu,* from the episode of the *rājasūya* (royal sacrifice) by Dharmarāja in the Book of the Assembly Hall. Śiśupāla, an enemy of Kṛṣṇa, was upset that Dharmarāja should honor this cowherd at such a glorious event in the presence of all the nobles and kings. Dharmarāja, the eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers, tries to pacify Śiśupāla with gentle words:

> Kṛṣṇa was the very source of the first born, Brahmā;
> all the ancient texts sing of him
> and people in all three worlds worship him.
> Bhīṣma knows this and that's why he advised
> that Kṛṣṇa be honored here.
> Listen to me—he is right.[15]

Dharmarāja's sentences, which contain a series of words with long vowels, are slow-moving and drawn out. Even the name he uses for Kṛṣṇa—Dāmōdara—has two long vowels in it. The total effect of the verse is one of thoughtful and nonconfrontational explanation. But when all the gentle arguments offered by the senior Dharmarāja in favor of honoring Kṛṣṇa at the sacrifice fail to persuade Śiśupāla to allow the matter to be settled in peace, Sahadēva, the fourth of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, aggressively lifts his foot to crush his opponent and says:

> "Yes, we honored Kṛṣṇa,
> and we did so without
> a trace of doubt in our minds.
> You say you don't agree.
> So be it. But if any one of you has a problem with it,
> here is what you get."
> And he furiously lifted his foot in the assembly.
> Everyone fell silent in total fear.[16]

The original verse, in *campakamāla,* a four-line Sanskritic meter with twenty-one syllables on each line, fixed in a sequence of ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ‒ ˘ ‒ ˘ ˘ ˘ ‒ ˘ ˘ ‒ ˘ ˘ ‒ ˘ ‒ ˘ ‒, goes like this in Nannaya's Telugu:

15. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* Sabhāparvamu 2.18 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989).

16. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* Sabhāparvamu 2.30 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989).

> e*ḍapakan arghyam' acyutunak'*i*ccitim' iccina dīnik' ēm' odam-*
> ba*ḍam'ani durjanatvamuna* pa*lkeḍi vīrula mastakambupain*
> i*ḍiyedan' añcu tā caraṇam'*e*tte sabhan sahadēvuḍ' atticon*
> u*ḍigi sabhāsadul palukak'*u*ṇḍiri taddayu bhītacittulai.*

Unlike in Sanskrit, the Telugu use of this meter includes the regulation that the consonant of the second syllable on each line—in this case the consonant *ḍ,* which is underscored—should be the same in all four lines. The caesura occurs at the thirteenth syllable on each line (represented here with syllables in roman font), which should agree with the first syllable on the line (also in roman font). Also unlike in Sanskrit, the caesura is not a place for a new word to begin.

This four-line verse includes two full sentences spoken by Sahadēva and a sentence in the voice of the narrator. The first sentence ends in the middle of the first line of the stanza and the second sentence continues into the second line. The long narrative sentence that comes after runs through the last two lines. The metrical structure of the verse does little more than hold the composition in a general pattern, allowing for a rich syntactic and phonotactic drama to play itself out in the verse. In oral rendition the verse has breaks at the end of its semantic units, rather than at the end of its metrical units as its Sanskrit cousin would. The following arrangement of lines graphically represents the way in which the verse is read:

> *eḍapaka*
> *narghya*
> *m' acyutuna*
> *k' icciti*
> *m' iccina*
> *dīnik' ēmodambaḍamani*
> *durjanatvamuna-palkeḍi-vīrula-mastakambupain' iḍiyedan-añcu*
> *tā*
> *caraṇa*
> *m' ette-sabhan-sahadēvu-*
> *ḍatticon-uḍigi-sabhāsadul-paluka k' uṇḍiri-taddayu-bhītacittulai.*

The line breaks here indicate several short and snappy units. The dominant sound in the first unit is the retroflex *ḍ,* uttered with a plosive force. The next two units have the consonantal clusters *ghya* and *cya* uttered one after the other, followed in the third and fourth units by identical clusters of *cci.* The short lines express an aggressive, attacking voice, while the long line that follows demonstrates with its breathless frenzy of words the threat that is delivered. The last line collapses into itself with a series of short vowels, almost as if it is afraid of expanding fully—suggesting the fear generated in the assembly by Sahadēva's show of aggression. This is a poem that is difficult to read slowly—every word chases the preceding word at a breath-

less speed until the last line, which is too quiet to be fast. The meaning of the poem is captured in the contours of its sounds.[17]

By using Sanskrit meters in ways that Sanskrit does not use them, and so allowing a large variety of syntactic structures to be contained within the verse, Nannaya gave the Telugu poem a performative richness unparalleled in Sanskrit texts. Nearly every poet after Nannaya followed his style of crafting verses, making Telugu versification an independent craft in itself. Furthermore, Nannaya, and more particularly Tikkana, brought to the Telugu *Mahābhāratamu* an atmosphere closer to Telugu social life. The people in Andhra had long believed that the original Sanskrit text should not be read inside the home or from beginning to end in linear fashion, and that anyone who did so would die. The text was felt to generate a disturbing power *(ōjas)* that needed to be brought under control through appropriate rituals of pacification.[18] In Nannaya's measured voice and disciplined diction, and later in Tikkana's representation of the epic events in Telugu native idiom, the Telugu *Mahābhāratamu* found a wholesome reception as a text that communicated peace and wisdom at home or in assembly or wherever people read it.

This vast transformation did not happen in a day, however. It wasn't until a hundred years after Nannaya that Tikkana addressed the fact that Nannaya left the Telugu *Mahābhāratamu* incomplete. Moreover, evidence suggests that not all Telugu poets were ready to accept Nannaya's experiment in *campū*. With intense vigor, Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu, writing from Śrīśailam in northwestern Andhra in the thirteenth century, set about producing a text that presented an anti-Brahmanical, anti-caste, militant Śaiva ideology.

THE LITERARY CULTURE OF ŚAIVABHAKTI

Śaivabhakti (devotion to Śiva), popularly known as Virashaivism or militant Shaivism, was a combative, egalitarian religious movement along the lines of Basavēśvara's twelfth-century teachings in Kannada.[19] Following Basavēśvara's philosophy, Paṇḍitārādhyuḍu and Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu converted people to a religion devoted to Śiva in his form as the mobile *liṅga* (the phallic form of Śiva). The adherents to this religion believed that they were reborn when they were initiated to Shaivism. Once reborn, they denied their

17. I am indebted to the great Telugu poet Viswanatha Satyanarayana for his insight in reading this verse. My recollection is from a talk he gave in Eluru on Nannaya around 1960.

18. Modern literary scholars speculate that Nannaya might have died before he completed his Telugu rendering of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* because he broke the taboo: he began his translation from the beginning and wanted to reach the end. They also suggest that Tikkana, who wrote fifteen *parva*s (books), did not touch the small section of one half of the second book left incomplete by Nannaya because he feared the same fate. Finally, Errāpragaḍa (fourteenth century) completed the half of the second book left by Nannaya.

19. See Nagaraj, chapter 5, this volume.

caste and their birth parents, and they believed that every initiate belonged to the same high social status, irrespective of their previous identity. The Vīraśaiva initiates rejected the god in the temple, the king who supported the temples, and the Brahman priests who served the temples. They carried their own god, the personal Śiva in the *liṅga* form, around their neck.

Sōmanāthuḍu, who preached an uncompromising and militant form of Virashaivism, preferred to use the *dvipada* (lit. two lines) genre, which is composed in two-line metrical units that can continue without any change in meter for as long as the poet chooses. A competent poet using this meter can create a variety of moods with a choice of diction and a change of tone. A *dvipada* text also allows a single reader to perform it for a group of listeners, or a group of readers to read it together for themselves; it does not require an interpreting performer. The experience that a *dvipada* reading gives its listeners is immediate, direct, and collective. The text does not create two distinct identities, a reader and a listener; it forces a merger of such identities and creates a community of singer-listeners. Obviously, Nannaya's *campū* form, which presupposes a hierarchy of performer and audience, was structurally unsuitable to the egalitarian interests of the Vīraśaiva religion.

Sōmanāthuḍu knew full well that he was creating a counter literary culture, one that was opposed to the *campū* both as an aesthetic and as an ideological form. He did not mention Nannaya by name, and therefore we cannot be certain whether he was responding to Nannaya per se or contesting a *campū* literary practice that might have been fairly well established by his time. In any case, Sōmanāthuḍu was determined to strike out on a different path.

In the two major works Sōmanāthuḍu composed in *dvipada,* the *Basava-purāṇamu* (The story of Basava) and *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritramu* (Life history of Paṇḍitārādhyuḍu), he offers explanation for his choice of this genre and rejection of *campū.* In the *Basavapurāṇamu* he writes:

> Common Telugu is sweet
> and easier
> than those high-sounding compositions
> in prose and verse.
> I will compose *dvipada*s—please do not
> complain they are but
> Telugu. Treat them as the Veda.[20]

Again, in his *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritramu,* Sōmanāthuḍu expresses his opposition to *campū* texts:

> Texts written in prose and verse
> dense with Sanskrit

---

20. *Basavapurāṇamu* 1.83–85 (Sōmanāthuḍu [1926] 1952).

> are not suited for the people.
> Common Telugu is lucid.

But then he realizes that *campū* has already established its superiority in literature. He wants to compete with it and write *dvipada* that can stand comparison with it:

> I will compose *dvipada* equal in power
> to those texts in prose and verse.
> It is no less competent poetry.[21]

Sōmanāthuḍu not only aims at making a popular Vīraśaiva narrative in *dvipada;* a close look at the metapoetic statements in his *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritramu* gives us a picture of a poet who aims for an alternative poetics, one based on a combination of Daṇḍin's poetics and his own indigenous forms.[22] He intends his composition to function as a *kāvya* according to Daṇḍin's prescription for *mahākāvya:* with all eighteen descriptive sections, all thirty-six figures of speech, all seventy-two emotional states.

There is not enough historical data for us to ascertain whether Sōmanāthuḍu succeeded during his time in his attempt to give Telugu literature a new definition. All we know is that *dvipada* remained a parallel tradition to *campū,* and that rarely did the same poet write a *campū* as well as *dvipada* poem. We also know that no other poet controlled *dvipada* meter with the dynamism and vigor, variety and strength, that Sōmanāthuḍu demonstrated in his *Basavapurāṇamu.* In the hands of lesser poets it tended to be monotonous and repetitive.

As I discuss later, *dvipada* became a kind of second-class literature, practiced mostly by women and less learned, non-Brahman authors. It gained some recognition at the time of the Nāyaka courts of the seventeenth century, possibly because non-Brahmanical poetry reemerged during this period. But the Brahmanical tradition had rejected *dvipada* over the four-century period preceding the Nāyakas. An oft-quoted legend illustrates the Brahmanical resistance to *dvipada.* As told by Piḍuparti Sōmanāthuḍu (a close follower of Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu who preferred to rewrite the *Basavapurāṇamu* in *campū*), King Pratāparudra, who ruled over Orugallu (present-day Warangal), noticed a group of Śaiva devotees reading the *Basavapurāṇamu* in a Śiva temple. When he wanted to know more about it, they told him that the sinner Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu had written at length in *dvipada* with poor caesura. This was not standard and indeed had never been done before. Listening to their advice, the king left without paying attention to the reading. Other in-

21. *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritramu* 5 (Sōmanāthuḍu 1990).

22. See *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritramu* 5–6 (Sōmanāthuḍu 1990). Also see Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

stances of Brahmanical disrespect toward *dvipada* include a statement by an eighteenth-century poet who likened *dvipada* to an old whore *(mudi lañja).*[23] Sōmanāthuḍu's elegant pun on *dvi-pada* (two feet; also, two locations)—it keeps one foot on the earth and the other in heaven, and therefore assures a good position for its readers in both places—was soon forgotten.

Why did *dvipada* lose its status? We might speculate on some of the reasons. Apart from the reported Brahmanical opposition, which may indicate loss of royal patronage for *dvipada* but does not fully explain its loss of status, the Vīraśaivas failed to sustain themselves as a community in Andhra, and their message of a casteless, egalitarian society did not long endure. The structure of caste order was more resilient than they imagined, and their revolution was too romantic to understand the social imperatives of endogamy and hierarchy that caste society comprised. Viewed from this perspective, the failure of Sōmanāthuḍu's literary invention was a failure of the community for which it was intended. His text needed an egalitarian, congregational community to use it, and when such a community disintegrated, the text fell into disuse too. The work served as an effective rhetorical device to keep a community together, but such a text does not communicate effectively to an individual listener or reader.

Earlier in this chapter we acquainted ourselves with the qualities and qualifications of a Brahmanical *purāṇa* poet. The *purāṇa* poet borrowed his theme from a Sanskrit source, and he legitimized himself by the authority of Sanskrit texts. Sōmanāthuḍu did not indulge in any of these activities. His text was derived from the oral sources of his (Śaiva) community, the authority to compose the text was bestowed on him by his teachers, and his listeners were his friends—all of them were from his particular religious tradition, and not one of them participated in courtly culture. Under favorable conditions, the text would gain the acceptance of the community of devotees, who would elevate the poet to the status of a guru. It is clear that Sōmanāthuḍu had conceived of an entirely different literary culture in which he as a poet, and his text as literature, would survive.

POETRY FOR PLEASURE: KĀVYA CULTURE

Nannecōḍuḍu, who was perhaps a later contemporary of Nannaya, though we do not have hard evidence to determine his dates, represents the third strand, the *kāvya,* of early literary culture in Telugu. His *Kumārasambhavamu* is the earliest extant Telugu *kāvya.* But before examining *kāvya* as a genre in Telugu, let us follow what Nannecōḍuḍu has to say about Telugu literature itself.

To Nannecōḍuḍu we owe the clearest statement concerning the origin of

---

23. *Vēnugōpālaśatakamu* 55 (Śāraṅgapāṇi n.d.).

Telugu literature, which also introduces the major classificatory distinction of literary cultures into *mārga* (Sanskrit) and *dēśi* (Telugu). To quote from his introduction to *Kumārasambhavamu:*

> Earlier, while there was the *mārga* poetry,
> the Cāḷukya king and many others caused *dēśi* poetry to be born
> and fixed it in place in the Andhra land.[24]

A direct statement like this strongly suggests that the beginning of Telugu poetry can be marked with a specific date. Even though Nannecōḍuḍu does not identify Nannaya or any other Telugu poet who preceded him, it is entirely possible that the Cāḷukya king he mentions is none other than Rājarājanarēndra, Nannaya's patron. However, what is more important in this statement is that for Nannecōḍuḍu, all Sanskrit poetry is *mārga* and all Telugu poetry is *dēśi*. In contrast, for Sōmanāthuḍu, Telugu poetry that follows the Sanskritized forms of *campū* is *mārga* and his *dvipada* is *dēśi*. The two different ways of perceiving *dēśi*, which I discuss later in this essay, are significant. Nannecōḍuḍu sees a distinct Telugu literary tradition, with its own *purāṇa*s and other genres—as opposed to the Sanskrit *purāṇa*s of Vyāsa and the *kāvya*s of Kālīdāsa, Bhavabhūti, Bhāravi, and others of that class.

Nannecōḍuḍu sees himself as continuing that *dēśi* literary culture by producing a *dēśi kāvya*. He discusses his *kāvya* poetics in the *Kumārasambhavamu;* it is worth presenting them here in some detail:

> But when ideas come together smoothly in good Tenugu
> without any slack, and description achieves a style,
> and there are layers of meaning, and the syllables
> are soft and alive with sweetness, and the words
> sing to the ear and gently delight the mind,
> and what is finest brings joy, and certain flashes
> dazzle the eye, while the poem glows like moonlight,
> and the images are the very image of perfection,
> and there is a brilliant flow of flavor,
> and both *mārga* and *dēśi* become the native idiom,
> and figures truly transfigure, so that people of taste
> love to listen and are enriched
> by the fullness of meaning—
> that is how poetry works, when crafted
> by all real poets.
>
> Skilled words, charming movements,
> ornaments, luminous feelings, elevated thoughts,
> the taste of life—connoisseurs find all these
> in poetry, as in women.

---

24. *Kumārasambhavamu* 1.23 (Nannecōḍuḍu 1968).

> An arrow shot by an archer
> or a poem made by a poet
> should cut through your heart,
> jolting the head.
> If it doesn't, it's no arrow,
> it's no poem.[25]

This is indeed the most complete treatise on Telugu *kāvya* poetics one can find for the period.[26] Nannecōḍuḍu is clearly presenting a poetics different from the literary interests of Nannaya or Sōmanāthuḍu—both of whom had religious agendas. In contrast, Nannecōḍuḍu's poetics are aimed at the aesthetic success of the poem. His theme in *Kumārasambhavamu* derives from religious sources, but the text is primarily aimed at working as a poem, free from religious preaching. For Nannecōḍuḍu, poetry is an end in itself.

Again, for reasons that have still to be identified,[27] no full-fledged *kāvya* such as Nannecoduḍu wrote appeared again in Telugu until Peddanna in the sixteenth century. Śrīnāthuḍu made an attempt, two centuries after Nannecōḍuḍu, with his Telugu rendering of Śrīharṣa's Sanskrit *Naiṣadhīyacarita* (The life of Nala, Prince of Niṣadha). But as I discuss later in relation to problems of translation, he did not receive any recognition for this work. Or to put it more bluntly, his attempt was not acceptable to the literary community or to the community of patrons on whom he depended for support. The group of upwardly mobile village heads and lesser chiefs in his vicinity were bent upon sponsoring religious *purāṇa* texts, which would elevate their status. Śrīnāthuḍu kept advertising himself as the maker of *Naiṣadhamu* in Telugu, but to no avail. The work was apparently too secular to be of interest to his patrons. He resorted to writing *purāṇa*s, the original versions of which could be traced to Vyāsa.

COURT POETRY

Once *kāvya* found its mature expression in Telugu with Peddanna's *Manu-caritramu* (The story of Manu), the literary culture reorganized itself to accommodate the aesthetics of pleasure rather than of religious merit.[28] *Manu-*

25. *Kumārasambhavamu* 1.35, 36, 41 (Nannecōḍuḍu 1968); Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 69–70.

26. Unfortunately, Nannecōḍuḍu was lost to Telugu scholars for a long period, until Manavalli Ramakr̥ṣṇa Kavi discovered him and brought the text to light in 1910. Discontinuity in scholarly tradition has resulted in loss of memory—many of the words Nannecōḍuḍu used fell into disuse, and their meanings are yet to be fully reconstructed.

27. One plausible reason is that during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries an elite leisure class had not yet taken shape.

28. Modern Telugu critics call this courtly *kāvya* genre *prabandhamu*.

caritramu opened the way for an entirely new kind of poetry in Telugu. This is the poetry of refined composition, of a carefully worked texture of words chosen for their musical effect. Borrowed from the *Mārkaṇḍēyapurāṇa,* the story of the *Manucaritramu* is a long and somewhat complicated affair, taking many twists and turns. However, Peddanna's interest was not in telling a story. The story exists for the sake of his style, which is a matter of language and the various ways of enhancing the pleasure a reader may find in language. Peddanna in his exquisite composition creates a world of human pleasure so superior that the gods' women themselves desire it: for *Manucaritramu* includes the story of Varūthinī, a female *gandhārva* (a class of divine dancing girls) who fell in love with a human, a Brahman man named Pravaruḍu.

In this story, Pravaruḍu, who suffers from wanderlust, is given a magic ointment for his feet that allows him to fly to the Himālayas. When the ointment is washed off in the snow, Pravaruḍu finds himself stranded. In this unhappy predicament, Pravaruḍu encounters Varūthinī, who falls in love with him. Her attempt to attract Pravaruḍu's attention ends in frustration: Pravaruḍu is clearly aware of Varūthinī's charms, but being committed to his life of rites and prayers, he rejects her advances and eventually makes his way home with the help of the god of fire, Agni.

The following verses describe Pravaruḍu's meeting with Varūthinī. Throughout this section Peddanna makes the erotic feelings of Varūthinī explicit but deftly leaves Pravaruḍu's feelings to the reader's imagination, and even deliberately masks them. Pravaruḍu is first made aware that he is not alone in the remote mountain landscape by a characteristic fragrance:

> One part musk enhanced by two parts camphor:
> densely packed betel sent its fragrance,
> masking all others, to announce
> the presence of a woman.[29]

The fragrance is clearly indicative of a woman's presence, but, in the next verse, Pravaruḍu apparently interprets it only as sign of the presence of people. The neutral surface meaning of *janānvitamu* ("there are people here") allows Pravaruḍu the required cover not to exhibit his interest in women. But Peddanna follows this with a relentlessly provocative description of Varūthinī.

> He followed the fragrance
> carried by the breeze, wave after wave,
> thinking, "There are people here."
> Then he saw her,
>
> a body gleaming like lightning,
> eyes unfolding like a flower,

---

29. Women chewed betel nut compounded with musk and camphor in these proportions.

> long hair black as bees,
> a face lit up with beauty,
> proudly curved breasts,
> a deep navel—
>
> a woman, but from another world.

By now it is clear that Peddanna's description of Varūthinī is what Pravaruḍu actually saw; the verse's enchanting words indicate that Pravaruḍu, after all, notices every detail to the last curve of Varūthinī's body. Peddanna follows this beautifully refined verse—which moves with long lines, one metrical foot seamlessly flowing into the next—with a verse of short and quick lines creating a dramatic staccato effect.

> She saw him. Stood up
> and walked towards him, the music
> of her anklets marking the rhythm,
> her breasts, her hair, her delicate waist
> trembling. Stood by a smooth areca tree
> as waves of light from her eyes
> flooded the path that he was walking.

Rarely do we find in *purāṇa* poetry such a sensuous delineation of the internal feelings of a woman in love as in the following verses, which gently but surely follow the mental movements of Varūthinī:

> First there was doubt,
> a certain hesitation,
> then a widening joy
> as desires raced within her:
> her mind was crying "Yes!"
> her eyelids blinking,
> for she was close to him now
> and nearly paralyzed,
> as her eyes, wide as the open lotus,
> enfolded him in burning moonbeams.
>
> Fluttering glances healed
> her inability to blink,
> and for the first time
> she was sweating;
> even her surpassing understanding
> was healed by the new
> confusion of desire.[30]
> Like the beetle that, from concentrating

30. Being a goddess, Varūthinī cannot blink, nor is she capable of sweating. Here she is transformed, in a movement seen as positive, from this divine state to a human mode of being.

> on the bee, *becomes* a bee,[31]
> by taking in that human being
> she achieved humanity
> with her own body.

This remarkable passage suggests that being human is superior to the dull and unchanging state of the gods, who are forever young, do not blink or perspire, and of course do not die. In a later passage, Varūthinī even regrets her inability to die and considers her immortality a punishment, and she envies human women who can kill themselves when they fail in love.[32] But to continue with the present narrative: Varūthinī gives a playful description of her life by way of introducing herself, but Pravaruḍu is not impressed. His mind still set on his wife and children, he only asks her for directions to go home; he must return to see to his fire rites and sun worship. Varūthinī is desperate: she wants him in her embrace rather than in his village. Finally, Varūthinī unfolds her philosophy of life, love, and ultimate bliss. In one of Peddanna's memorable verses, she states:

> When the heart unfolds
> in love, when it finds release from within
> in undivided oneness, like a steady flame
> glowing in a pot, when the senses attain
> unwavering delight—
>
> only that joy
> is ultimately real.
> Think about the ancient words:
> *ānandō brahma,* God
> is joyfulness.[33]

Peddanna's delightful treatment of this love story eclipses the rest of the long narrative, which tells of the birth of Manu, ostensibly the focus of the book; and ever since its composition, *Manucaritramu* has been read mainly for the story of Pravaruḍu and Varūthinī. Peddanna's text was emulated as the greatest example of *kāvya* and served as a model for poets such as his near contemporary Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu. Critics claim, however, that Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu exceeded Peddanna in the refinement and musical quality of his language.

After Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu's *Vasucaritramu, kāvya* entered the realm of pure language, a world made of sounds and their meanings, independent of material reality. Creating a language that splits its meaning and envelops

---

31. A proverbial statement of transformation through mental obsession *(bhramarakīṭanyāya).*

32. On this theme and for a richer study of Peddanna's text, see Shulman 1995a.

33. *Manucaritramu* 2.24, 25, 29, 30, 33, 62 (Peddanna 1984); translation, Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 158–160, 164.

multiple meanings in one set of words in an elaborate, sustained pun is a special feature of a new kind of *kāvya*, called *śleṣa,* that developed during the late sixteenth century. Such a text can be read as two or even three different narratives. Piṅgaḷi Sūranna's *Rāghavapāṇḍavīyamu,* a *kāvya* that tells the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* simultaneously in one text, is the most famous of this genre.

We know that Nannaya and Tikkana professed religious purity: Nannaya described himself as one who never told a lie, and Tikkana is said to have performed a Vedic sacrifice to attain a level of personal perfection. But the *kāvya* poet is free from the burden of morality. All the legends of the *kāvya* poets show them as enjoying the pleasures of wealth, food, and women—especially women. These legends extol the poets' sexual joy and even suggest that they were good poets because they were good lovers. For instance, the patron-king Kṛṣṇadēvarāya of Vijayanagara (r. 1509–1529) reputedly once asked in his court:

> Why do Dhūrjaṭi's Telugu poems
> overflow with sweetness incomparable?—

The court jester, Tenāli Rāśmaliṅgaḍu replied:

> I know why. It comes from constant drinking
> to quench his pain
> at the honeyed lips of wild young courtesans
> who drive the world insane.[34]

Respect for the poet in society was high, and he earned the right to enjoy a leisurely and comfortable life. In fact, he needed one. The following poem, attributed to Peddanna, lists the comforts a poet needs to write a poem:

> Without a quiet place, without a betel nut flavored
> with camphor sent by my lover through her
> dear friend as messenger, without a good meal
> that I find delicious, and a swinging cot,
> and men of sensibility who can tell what
> is good from what is bad, and the best of
> scribes and performers who will understand the intent
> of my work—unless I have all of these—
> can anyone possibly ask me to compose poetry?[35]

Such images created a glorious impression of the court poet as a creator of pleasure and beauty, which also freed him from the normal rules of mun-

---

34. Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998: 22.
35. Heifetz and Narayana Rao 1987: 153.

dane life. His control of language gave him a power over the world equal only to the power of the creator god—if anything, the poet's creation was better than the god's because it was entirely pleasurable. The *kāvya* poet inherited from the *purāṇa* poet the power of the word to alter reality, which he used to protect and elevate the status of his patron. Yet he was not just a storyteller like the *purāṇa* poets who came before him; he was a story maker. He created with his words an edifice of extravagant grandeur that excited his listeners, who spent hours reflecting on each exquisitely crafted verse the poet produced. The *kāvya* poet was also realistic in his descriptions. Under the pretext of the eighteen different descriptions prescribed for a *kāvya,* the Telugu poet explored the life around him like an anthropologist giving a thick description of an event. By way of illustration, I quote a few verses from Śrīnāthuḍu's *Śivarātrimāhātmyamu.* Here the poet describes the state of pregnancy:

> Day by day, her pregnancy advanced,
> to everyone's delight—though she was
> getting tired. Yawn followed yawn,
> her eyes grew languid and unsteady.
> From time to time she was reminded
> of the fatigue she used to get
> from making love on top.
>
> She moved slowly, heavy
> with the child, like a raincloud
> that has drunk the waters of the sea
> just before the monsoon.

The description of the pregnancy is followed by the celebration of a rite to protect the pregnancy, a description of the childbirth, and then, a description of the delivery room in the household:

> In the birth chamber, still impure from the birth,
> the women were busy: putting a pot with white marks
> at the head of the bed, drawing designs from white ashes,
> sprinkling white mustard, preparing offerings,
> mixing salt with neem leaves, setting up a fresh bed
> out of rattan, burning buffalo horn,
> blessing, applying sandal and oil,
> cooking the *kāyamu* balls[36] for the new mother,
> singing and making jokes.
>
> One woman slapped on the wall a mixture of camphor and sandal.
> Another held a frog upside down outside the birth chamber.

---

36. A concoction of pepper and other ingredients that mothers who had recently delivered ate for several days after the birth.

> Wearing a yellow sari, a woman worshiped the goddess of poverty.[37]
> With fresh paint of lime and turmeric, a lovely girl drew the sun and the
>   moon on cloth.
> Another draped an aging ram with a snakelike garland, a head on either end.
> One sprinkled ghee. One set fire to a snake's discarded skin.[38]

Similarly, Peddanna's description of the royal hunt in his *Manucaritramu* elaborately portrays the kinds, pedigrees, and names of dogs used in hunting; the hunting methods; and the style of cooking meat in the middle of the forest. With extraordinary realism in content and a meticulous formalism in style, *kāvya* produced a literary world simultaneously close to life and distanced from it. This *kāvya* world was suitable to create, authenticate, and sustain a glorified image of a real person. While *purāṇa* was essential to elevate the status of emerging chiefs, *kāvya* delighted the more established courts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Kāvya,* however, continued the *purāṇa* style of addressing the patron and describing the patron's family in terms appropriate to their status. In fact, *kāvya* glorified the patron to such a degree that he became more than a sponsor or a supporter of the poet; he became an integral part of the poem.

Their sustained scholarly competence, grammatical and metrical skills, and especially their erudition in the Sanskrit texts gave the *kāvya* poets both a stature and a symbolic power that enabled them to attain the high status Sanskrit poets had enjoyed all along. Gradually, Telugu *kāvya* poetry replaced its Sanskrit equivalent and acquired a legitimizing power of its own. *Kāvya* became synonymous with poetry, and unless one composed a *kāvya,* one was not a poet. Purāṇa poetry continued to be composed, but *kāvya* ruled the world of poetry to the extent that it became inseparable from the court. Even when there was no real court, *kāvya* created it in poetry. In fact, *kāvya* poetry elevated the small patron to the imagined status of a king. Perhaps this is a special feature of Telugu literary culture, not achieved to quite the same degree in other South Asian literatures, where *bhakti,* or devotional, poetry more often took and held center stage.

POETRY IN THE TEMPLE

An entirely different literary culture began with Annamayya (1424–1503), a poet associated with the Veṅkaṭēśvara temple at Tirupati. Apparently patronized by a rich, stable god—perhaps richer and definitely more stable than

---

37. The inauspicious and threatening Jyeṣṭhādēvī, the goddess of poverty and the elder sister of Lakṣmī, was worshiped to avert her influence over the baby.

38. All of these acts were intended to protect the mother and child from evil. *Śivarātrimāhātmyamu* 2.50–51, 70–71 (Śrīnāthuḍu 1995); translation, Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 129, 132.

any king of the period—Annamayya enjoyed a quiet, long life. According to the copperplates on which his songs were inscribed and preserved in the temple, Annamayya sang one song a day to his deity. The entire corpus of his *padam*s (songs) was grouped into two sections, *śṛṅgāra* (erotic) and *adhyātma* (spiritual). While it is very possible that the grouping reflects an editorial decision made by his son—who apparently paid for the expensive inscriptions of his father's songs—it still has an internal logic.

The literary culture surrounding the Annamayya tradition of songwriting bears an entirely different ethos from the courtly poetry, which created a patron in the process of its production. Located in the insulated atmosphere of the temple, Annamayya was unaffected by, if not uninterested in, the political atmosphere around him. He was not dependent on ascendant rulers and military leaders to support his literary work. He was also shielded from the courtly intrigues and personal politics of competing poets. His situation allowed him freedom in literary composition. For one thing, he sang in a meter of his own creation. His language was also free from the strict grammatical regulations of *kāvya* poetry (which were later made even stricter by Appakavi). Without a patron who sought social and political status from the act of sponsoring poetry, Annamayya was his own grammarian, his own literary theorist, and his own master. His legitimacy as a poet did not depend upon the mention of a great poet, grammarian, or guru of the past. In fact, a *śāstra* (a book of rules for later poets to follow while making *padam*s) was later produced in Annamayya's name by his grandson, who along with other members of the Annamayya family helped institutionalize Annamayya as the master of the *padam* tradition in Telugu.[39]

Annamayya's family members—his son, his grandson, and others—continued the *padam* genre, but due to its performative nature, *padam* gradually came to be absorbed in the musical tradition of south India, rendering it unavailable for literature and literary theory. Not until recently, when modern scholars began to discuss Annamayya as a poet, has the literary world incorporated his work into its vision of Telugu poetry. Premodern literary culture considered Annamayya a singer-composer rather than a poet. However, the texts of Annamayya's large number of songs and his grandson's biography of him written in *dvipada* meter, as well as Annamayya's own songs, strongly suggest that Annamayya and his followers were actually attempting to create a parallel literary culture based on the temple and not the court.

A story told about Annamayya clearly classifies him as poet of a new tradition, which in retrospect we call the temple tradition. Sāḷuva Narasiṃharāya, a king of Vijayanagar (r. 1487–1490), commanded Annamayya to

---

39. In his *Saṅkīrtanalakṣaṇamu,* Tāḷḷapāka Cinatirumalācāryulu, the grandson of Annamayya, claims that his work is a translation of a Sanskrit original that Annamayya wrote. See *Saṅkīrtanalakṣaṇamu* 13–17 (Cinatirumalācāryulu 1935).

compose a song for him similar to the ones he had sung for the god Veṅka-
ṭēśvara. When the poet refused, the king had him chained and thrown into
prison. Annamayya, the legend says, appealed to the god in song, and the
chains miraculously fell away.[40]

An opposition between courtly poets and temple poets finds a striking ar-
ticulation by about the sixteenth century and continues unabated into the
nineteenth century. Probably the best illustration of this opposition comes
down to us in the legends about Pōtana. Legends are created about this poet
who belonged to the fourteenth century to fit him into the discourse of tem-
ple versus court. Pōtana wrote in the *campū* genre, a style in which the court
poets specialized. There is no hard evidence that he had antagonistic rela-
tions of any kind or that he was pressured by any king to dedicate his book
to him. Nonetheless, legends about this poet represent him as one who stead-
fastly resisted a local king's request for the dedication of his *Bhāgavatamu.*
When Pōtana refused the demand, legend has it, the king had the poet's
manuscript buried in the ground. Later the manuscript was excavated; partly
worm-eaten, it was completed by two of Pōtana's disciples. A verse in oral
circulation states the popular esteem in which Pōtana was held for his moral
strength in standing up to a king's power and insisting on dedicating his po-
etry to Hari, the god Viṣṇu:

> Rather than giving his poems to lowly kings
> and receiving money and mounts and dwellings,
> then aging and dying and suffering
> the hammer blows of the God of Death
> this man, Bammera Pōtarāju, has, of his own will,
> uttered his poem to be given to Śrī Hari
> for the sake of the welfare of the world.[41]

Yet another legend about Pōtana tells that while he composed his *Bhāgava-
tamu,* Sarasvatī, the goddess of poetry, appeared before him with tears in her
eyes, fearing that he might, like all other poets, sell her to kings. An oral
verse describes how Pōtana reassured her:

> Beloved daughter-in-law of Viṣṇu! Wife of Brahmā!
> O my mother! Why do you weep so that the tears
> fall to your breasts from your eyes dark with collyrium?
> I will not, out of hunger, sell you, neither in thought
> nor word nor action, to these meager kings of Karnataka
> who are nothing but merchants. Trust me, Sarasvati![42]

40. See the afterword by Narayana Rao in Heifetz and Narayana Rao 1987.
41. Heifetz and Narayana Rao 1987: 146.
42. Heifetz and Narayana Rao 1987: 146.

These stories also portray Śrīnāthuḍu, the prototypical court poet living in luxury, attempting to persuade Pōtana, who lives in poverty and tills the earth, to dedicate his poem to the king and get good rewards in return. To enhance the melodrama in these legends, Pōtana is represented as the husband of Śrīnāthuḍu's sister. Pōtana is said to have responded to Śrīnāthuḍu in perfect verse:

> Instead of giving the virgin poem, tender as the fresh buds
> of a young mango tree, to evil men, rather than eat
> food earned through trade in women, what does it matter
> if good poets become peasants, what does it matter if they
> dig up roots in the depths of the forest so that they may
> feed themselves and their wives and their children?[43]

In the tradition of temple poetry, the poet was not only pious and poor, but also modest. Unlike the court poet, who proudly announced his greatness in literary arts, the temple poet humbly presented himself as a servant of the god, not very learned, who prayed to the god to speak through him. A temple poet's poem was the god's work; it was blessed by the god. A legend about Pōtana says that when he was stuck in the middle of writing a poem, he took a break and went out for a walk. When he returned, he found that the god himself had come, disguised as Pōtana, and completed the poem. A similar legend is told about Yathāvākkula Annamayya, the author of a Śaiva devotional text, *Sarvēśvaraśatakamu* (Hundred verses for the god of all). Yathāvākkula Annamayya wrote each verse on a palm leaf and threw it into the river; when a poem came back against the current, he understood it had been accepted by Śiva. Yathāvākkula Annamayya made a vow to himself that if any poem did not return from the current, he would kill himself. Inevitably, a palm leaf he threw into the water did not return. As he got ready to commit suicide, a shepherd boy came bearing a palm leaf and announced that it had just come floating in. The leaf did have a poem on it, but not the one Yathāvākkula Annamayya had written. The poet realized that the god was blessing his work by contributing a verse of his own to the collection.

Legends such as these elevate the temple poets to a level of religious piety that is beyond human fault. The poets are revered as the chosen voices of the deity and their works are read for a devotional experience and not aesthetic pleasure alone. Temple poets typically even denied that they were making poetry; simile, metaphor, or other figure of speech, and aesthetic mood *(rasa)*—man-made as they are—are incapable of capturing the essence of the ultimate. For instance, Dhūrjaṭi says:

43. Heifetz and Narayana Rao 1987: 151.

> How can you be praised in elaborate language,
> similes, conceits, overtones, secondary meanings,
> or textures of sound? They can not contain
> your form. Enough of them!
> More than enough. Can poetry hold out
> before the face of truth?
> Ah, but we poets,
> O God of Kāḷahasti,
> why don't we feel any shame?[44]

Pōtana even denied any respectability to poems unless they include praise of the deity:

> A poem that praises god
> is pleasant like the lake in heaven
> with golden lotuses and geese.
> A poem that does not praise god
> is like a gutter in hell filled with dirty water—
> never mind if it is written well.[45]

As we have observed in the case of Annamayya himself, in the culture of temple poetry, the distinctions of patron, grammarian, and reader do not exist. The poem is the poet's direct communication to the deity; the poet sings to his god and to no one else. In this highly simplified mode, everything collapses into a devotional utterance. The narrative in such texts as Pōtana's *Bhāgavatamu* loses its story value; it is utilized as one more occasion to remember the name of the god and his deeds. All the characters of the story get reduced to two: the god and his devotee, the poet. The reader/listener enjoys the text only to the extent that he or she can identify with the poet's voice. In the *purāṇa* and *kāvya* cultures, by comparison, the reader/listener is associated with the patron, to whom the poem is addressed.

When the poet has the almighty god himself as his patron, he finds protection beyond what any earthly power can provide. This situation also allows the poet an opportunity for reflection and nourishes a subjectivity not available in a courtly narrative. The poet is now an individual looking deeply into himself and exploring himself, often in a confessional mode, with the god as listener. A genre that allows for such an expression of the self is the *śataka* (lit. one hundred), a loose collection of approximately one hundred verses in a single meter, tied together with a vocative, usually the name of the deity to whom the verses are addressed. *Śataka*s became popular after the sixteenth century, and we find countless poets composing them. In addition to providing a subjective space for introspection and self-criticism, this

44. Heifetz and Narayana Rao 1987: 63.
45. Pōtana 1964: 1.96.

genre also gave poets a certain freedom to voice criticism of society, kings, and other politically powerful people. With his *Kāḷahastīśvaraśatakamu* (Hundred verses for the god of Kāḷahasti), Dhūrjaṭi led the way with respect to both. The result is amazing: The poet emerges as a free individual, confessing his sins and censuring the sins of the society, playing alternately the sinner and the sage.

Temple poetry as a literary culture that gave rise to opposition to kings and other worldly patrons, to grammarians and court poets, each of which developed into a regular trope, has yet to be seriously studied. I briefly situate the broad features of these tropes in the larger context of a political culture in which the king who ruled the land was perceived as inseparable from the deity in the Viṣṇu temple of the area. Viṣṇu was viewed as the sovereign of the land, the ultimate *sārvabhauma,* or universal emperor. In opposition to this conceptualization stands the Brahmanical king**,** the king according to the discourses in the Brahmanical texts on moral order *(dharmaśāstra).* These texts say that the king only shares an aspect of Viṣṇu, that he belongs to the class of the Kshatriyas, who are a notch below the Brahmans in ritual status. The two modes of power, one stating that the king is the deity Viṣṇu and the other saying that the king embodies only an aspect of Viṣṇu, have important ramifications for the status of Brahmans. In a world where the king is Viṣṇu himself, the Brahman becomes the servant of the king; whereas the Brahman is ritually superior to the king if the latter is a human being viewed as an aspect of Viṣṇu. The differences between these two views of kingship, fundamentally unresolvable, occasionally surfaced in the court *kāvya*s during the reign of Kṛṣṇadēvarāya but came into sharp focus in the seventeenth century, when warriors/traders from the Balija caste acquired kingship of the southern kingdoms of Madurai and Tañjāvūr.

LITERATURE FOR THE GOD-KING IN HIS COURT-TEMPLE

During the height of the Nāyaka empire in Madurai and Tañjāvūr in the early seventeenth century, it was a common practice for the king's son to compose a *dvipada* poem equating his father with Viṣṇu.[46] Among these works were *Acyutābhyudayamu* (The victory of Acyuta), written by Raghunātha Nāyaka about the life of Acyuta Nāyaka; *Raghunāthanāyakābhyudayamu,* by Vijayarāghava Nāyaka, Raghunātha's son; and *Vijayarāghavābhyudayamu,* by Vijayarāghava's son.[47] In describing the father/king as the god himself, the son was able to depict the king's love life, a topic that a son would never otherwise discuss. Once the king was equated with Viṣṇu, courtesans who

46. For a more detailed study, see "Rhetoric of Kingship," in Narayana Rao et al. 1992: 169–219.

47. Of these three, only the *Raghunāthanāyakābhyudayamu* is available now.

served the king followed with their own compositions praising him. In a universe where king and god were assimilated into one person, the poet's one role was to devotedly serve him. This development opened up new possibilities for literary patronage. For one thing, a king could be both a ruler and a poet, writing about his own father who was also king; that is to say, the king could be both the patron and the hero of the poem. The hierarchy within the literary world was now:

> god-king
> poet as servant-devotee
> readers who are also servant-devotees

Such a dramatic redefinition of the status of the king led to sweeping changes in the ideological order of social classes. To begin with, the poet as servant-devotee of the god-king no longer needed to be a Brahman, or a man, either. The Brahman male scholar-poet, who took pride in his learning in Sanskrit and who had earlier elevated the low-caste status of the king to the *varṇa* status of Kshatriya or its equivalent, that of a clean Shudra, by dedicating his *kāvya* text to the king, was now marginalized. In his place, accordingly, we find non-Brahman male poets and courtesans elevated to the status of court poets. The dividing line between temple and court was erased, and so also the opposition between the temple poet and the court poet. The subject of the court poem was now the king himself, whose love-life was described in courtly *kāvya* style, except that it was now *kāvya* composed in the non-Brahman *dvipada* meter rather than the grand, protean structures of the *campū* favored by the Brahman poets of earlier courts.

The revolutionary reconceptualization of king as the god Viṣṇu gained even more significance because the Nāyaka king also happened to be a Balija, a left-hand caste of traders/warriors, according to the local south-Indian social order. This caste, according to the Brahmanical conceptualization of social order, is Shudra, the lowest of the four *varṇa* orders. This fusion of the god-king-warrior-merchant thus brought chaotic disturbance to the idealized Brahmanical world of the four *varṇa*s—Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra.

LITERATURE IN PUBLIC SPACE: THE *CĀṬU* WORLD

So far we have examined the roles of the poet, the patron, and the different genres of texts in different literary cultures in Telugu. But what can we say about the role of the listeners and readers, those who enjoyed the texts? What was their image of the poet? What do we know about their understanding of poetry, their evaluation of various poets, and their criticism? A rare and valuable source for reader response to Telugu literature is offered by the *cāṭu,* the occasional verse independently circulated in oral tradition and quoted in conversations among literary communities. This new development began

to crystallize around the seventeenth century. By this time, Sanskrit was accessible to literary communities not as a language of gods, *dēvabhāṣa,* but as one more language of poetry, in addition to Telugu. The *cāṭu* poems related to imagined stories around great kings and poets who adorned their courts in remembered history: Kṛṣṇadēvarāya and Peddanna for Telugu; King Bhoja and Kālidāsa for Sanskrit. Other Telugu and Sanskrit poets, such as Dhūrjaṭi and Bhavabhūti, parade across these poems along with other kings, courtesans, and ministers. The people who quoted these verses did not belong to the courts, nor were they superior scholars; they were ordinary educated people in cities, towns, and villages. They were intelligent, sensitive, and well-informed readers who reflected upon a rich literary body of texts. Verses in this tradition are available in the hundreds, many of them thematizing the popular understanding of a given poet's work. These verses best illustrate the role of poetry in what might be called a public space.

We considered earlier the scholar-poet as defined by Appakavi and described in the *kāvya* tradition. We are familiar now, too, with the *bhakti* poet as defined in the temple tradition. The *cāṭu* tradition built on both of these concepts of poets and created a distinctly different kind of poet who had the power to make and unmake reality, who was superior to both the king and the grammarian, and most of all, could see things no one else has seen. The following story about Bhīmakavi, popular in the *cāṭu* tradition, describes the *cāṭu* poet richly.[48]

Bhīmakavi's mother was a childless widow living at her parents' home. One day she went with a group of pilgrims to the Śivarātri festival at Dakṣārāma, the temple to Bhīmēśvara Śiva. She saw her fellow pilgrims praying to the god for boons. Skeptical, she said to the god, "If you give me a son like you, I will give you a tank of water as oil for your lamps and four tons of sand for your food." The god was pleased at this challenge and visited the widow that night; he slept with her and promised her a son, whom she was instructed to name after him.

She had a son and called the boy Bhīma. One day his playmates mocked him for being a bastard. He ran to his mother and threatened to hit her with a rock if she did not reveal the name of his father. She said, "That rock in the temple [the *liṅga*] is your father; go ask him." So the boy went into the temple and threatened to hit the god with a rock. Bhīmēśvara Śiva, afraid, appeared before him in his true form and announced that he was, indeed, the boy's father. "In that case," said the boy, "from now on, whatever I say must come true." The god granted him that boon.

One day there was a Brahman feast in the village, held behind locked doors. Bhīmakavi was not invited. He cursed the Brahmans in the following verse:

48. See Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998.

> Full of their own greatness, these lousy Brahmins
> insulted me and threw me out of their feast.
> I'll turn their fried cakes into frogs,
> their rice into lice, and all the side dishes
> into fishes.

When the Brahmans, witnessing these transformations, begged his forgiveness, Bhīmakavi sang a second verse:

> I'm Bhīmanna, son of Lord Bhīma himself,
> born into the great Vemulavāda clan.
> Now these Brahmans know me, and look at me with respect.
> I take back my curse: let their food
> become food.[49]

Famed in the *cāṭu* tradition as "capable of cursing and blessing" *(śapānugraha-samarthuḍu),* Bhimakavi is said to have cursed kings and destroyed and restored thrones. He also made trees dry up and dry wood sprout. The word of the *cāṭu* poet is never empty of effect; it changes, or indeed creates, a reality in conformity with the vision implicit in the poet's speech.

The *cāṭu* world is also playful and funny, as is evident from the many stories told about Kṛṣṇadēvarāya and his court poets. According to one story, Kṛṣṇadēvarāya caught sight of his beloved queen Cinnādevi as she was drying her hair after a bath. Her beauty was irresistible to the king, who sneaked up from behind to kiss her. As he moved her hair to bring her face close to him her sari fell off and she shyly tried to cover herself with her hand, which was adorned with gem-studded bracelets and rings. Arriving late to the court, the king presented to his poets the following *samasya* (puzzle) in the form of one line in a possible four-line verse:

> *visphurita-phaṇā-maṇi-dyutula polpagu nāga-kumāruḍōy anan*

> as a Cobra-Prince might spread his great gem-encrusted hood to guard a
>   hidden trove

Mukku Timmana, the poet famed as having been sent as a wedding-gift to the king by Cinnādevi's family, completed the verse and resolved the puzzle.

> *varuḍu ceraṅgu paṭṭinanu valv' aṭu vīḍina kānta siggucēn*
> *urutara-ratna-didhitulan'oppeḍu dāpali kēla mūyagā*
> *karam' amaren karamb' apuḍu kāmanidhānamu gāciyunna vi-*
> *sphurita-phaṇā-maṇi-dyutula polp'agu nāga-kumāruḍōy yanan.*

> When the lover pulled her sari
> and it came loose,

---

49. Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998: 11–13.

in sudden shyness she moved to hide
her treasure-house of love
with her left hand, luminous with vivid stones—
as a Cobra-Prince might spread
his great gem-encrusted hood
to guard a hidden trove.[50]

True to the *cāṭu* aphorism that a poet sees things that even the sun's rays can not penetrate *(ravi gāñcanicō kavi gāñcunē kadā),* the poet saw the events in the royal bedroom without being there and skillfully converted them into a universal love poem without mentioning names.

Another feature of the *cāṭu* world is that the poet defies authority and ridicules pomp and pride—especially if it is overbearing. According to one story, Peddanna, who was Kr̥ṣṇadēvarāya's court poet and proudly wore the victory anklet *(gandapendēramu)* given by the king himself in recognition of the poet's unparalleled excellence, asked Tenāli Rāmaliṅgaḍu:

> *vadalaka mrōyun āndharakavi vāmapadambuna hēmanūpuramb'*
> *uditamayūrakaṇṭhaninadōktulan ēmani palku palkurā.*

> What does the golden anklet say that never stops jingling
> on the left foot of the poet of Andhra and its voice is like
> a lofty peacock? You! Tell me what does it say?

The king had a concubine, Gudiyala Sāni, to whom he gave lavish gifts for her skills—more lavish than he gave to any of his poets. Tenāli Rāmaliṅgaḍu answered Peddanna in a verse that precisely captures the tone of the question:

> *gudiyalasāni nunnani trikōṇamun'andali bhāgyarēkha nī-*
> *nuduṭanu lēdu lēd'anucu nūru vidhambula nokki palkurā.*

> It says in a hundred ways, that the line of fortune
> which crosses the soft moans of Gudiyala the whore
> isn't there for you on your forehead, it's not there![51]

The *cāṭu* culture paid close attention to the quality of language and the nuances of its uses and misuses even by the great poets of the time. Peddanna, it is said, used a rather inelegant phrase, *amavasaniśi* (dark moonless night), instead of the usual *amāvasyaniśi,* apparently because the meter required a phrase with all short syllables. Tenāli Rāmaliṅgaḍu parodied the poet with the following verse:

> *emi tini sepitivi kapitamu*
> *bama paḍi veri puccakāya vaḍi tini sepitō*

---

50. Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998: 20–21.
51. Heifetz and Narayana Rao 1987: 154–55.

umetah kaya tini sepitō
amavasa niśi yanina māṭa alasani pedanā.

What did you have for breakfast,
Alasani Pedana,
before you made this verse?
Probably the squash
that makes poetry into mush.[52]

This verse comically removes long syllables and consonant clusters right through—including the poet's name at the end, which it changes from Alasani Peddanna to Alasani Pedana—to ridicule the poet for his use of one compound without its usual long vowels and consonant cluster.

Tenāli Rāmaliṅgaḍu is an imagined poet created by the *cāṭu* world. Modern literary scholars, unmindful of the nature of *cāṭu* tradition, mistakenly thought this poet really existed and began to identify him with the late-sixteenth-century poet Tenāli Rāmakṛṣṇuḍu. The stories told about Rāmaliṅgaḍu's outrageous literary pranks in Kṛṣṇadēvarāya's court show that the *cāṭu* tradition was acutely aware of the vanity, verbosity and greed of the court poets.

In the imagination of the *cāṭu* world, King Kṛṣṇadēvarāya emerges as a full-time literary patron with eight poets, the *aṣṭadiggaja*s (Guardian-elephants of the eight directions), seated around him in his court. The *aṣṭadiggaja* legend has grown so strong that it even survived the critical eyes of modern historians, who began listing the possible members of this group. Although the *aṣṭadiggaja*s did not exist in history, they are nonetheless real and enduring products of this literary culture.

In the *cāṭu* world, to sum up, the poet has a superhuman access to knowledge and the creative control to alter reality at will. The king in this world is a creation of the poet and remains in power only so long as he continues to respect, appreciate, and patronize the poets. The hierarchy of the literary universe is redrawn as follows:

poet
king
admiring readers

Because the poet rules this world as a *niraṅkuśa*—an elephant that no goad can restrain—the grand, controlling role of the grammarian, as Appakavi envisaged it, is thrown out. The poet sees everything, knows everything, and can envision past, present, and future. The poet does not suffer any opposition from the scholar, or even from the king.

52. Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998: 123–24.

<center>THE QUESTION OF LITERARY LANGUAGE</center>

Śaivabhakti poet Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu had raised the question of the opposition of Telugu and Sanskrit—an issue in Telugu literary culture that continued for a long time. In the skillful hands of a court poet like Śrīnāthuḍu, Telugu comfortably accommodated a heavy input of Sanskrit words, even large Sanskrit compounds—larger than any commonly used by Sanskrit poets themselves. The sudden appearance of Sanskrit and Sanskritic *purāṇa*s in Telugu during Śrīnāthuḍu's period (mid-fourteenth to mid-fifteenth century)—after a serious Teluguizing attempt by a major poet like Tikkana—is a phenomenon that is still to be explained. Part of the story may lie in the contemporary impact of the wars with the armies of the Delhi sultanate and the fall of the Kākatīya empire in the mid-fourteenth century. The Brahmanical reaction to this historical dislocation was to return to the religious past and revive Sanskrit, in response to the Persian that was used by Śrīnāthuḍu's time as the court language of the Bahmanī sultans in the Deccan, as well as the sultans of Delhi. This was perhaps less a confrontational stance than it was a sympathetic reaction to the emergence of Persian as the new elite's language of culture, irrespective of their religious affiliation. We know that at least one of the Brahman patrons of Śrīnāthuḍu, Beṇḍapūḍi Annayamantri, was a competent scribe in Persian.[53]

The *kāvya* poets, especially Śrīnāthuḍu and Peddanna, made the use of Sanskrit the hallmark of a learned poet. In this they were following a path laid down by Nannaya himself, but they extended the expressive range of Sanskrit beyond the limits of a narrative text. Given to the joy of composing and relishing each verse individually, extracted from narrative sequence, the *kāvya* poets constructed monumental compositions of skill and scholarship. Here, for example, is Peddanna describing the Himālaya mountains in his *Manucaritramu*. The text in italics is Sanskrit; the Telugu is limited to the few words and suffixes in roman font.

> aṭa jani kāñcē *bhūmisur*uḍ *ambara-cumbi-śiras-sarjjhari-*
> *paṭala-muhurmuhur-luṭhad abhaṅga-taraṅga-mṛdaṅga-nisvana-*
> *sphuṭa-naṭanānurūpa-pariphulla-kalāpa-kalāpi-jalam*un
> *kaṭaka-carat-kareṇu-kara-kampita-sālam*u *śita-śailam*un.[54]

The prose passages of *campū* compositions, among which the verses are interspersed, the poets packed densely with breathtaking, jaw-breaking San-

---

53. See Narayana Rao 1995: 35, 40, n.19. and Śrīnāthuḍu 1958: 1.74.
54. *Manucaritramu* 2.3 (Peddanna 1984).

skrit words, unlimited as to length. Apparently the *kāvya* intended for scholars requires a demanding style.[55]

The old opposition to the Sanskritic *mārga,* inaugurated by Pālkuriki Sōmanātha, had lost its edge: now the question of Sanskrit versus Telugu was to be settled on the basis of style rather than the opposition between *dēśi* and *mārga.* Poets who used *dēśi* genres, like *dvipada* and *padam,* also used Sanskrit words extensively; and poets who adopted *mārga* genres, like the *campū,* began to reflect on the problems of using heavy Sanskrit words in their works. However, the perception remained that *dēśi* is all Telugu and *mārga* is Sanskritic; and the styles are sometimes so different that one wonders if both were truly written in the same language. This example from Annamayya, written in the *dēśi* genre of *padam,* is worth contrasting with the *campū* verse by his contemporary Peddanna, just quoted:

> *kaḍal 'uḍipi* nir*'āḍagā talacu vāralaku*
> *kaḍalēni* manasu*ku kaḍama ekkaḍidi.*
> dāham *'aṇagina venuka*
> *tattvam'erigedan anna*
> dāham*'ēl'aṇagu tā*
> tattvam*'ēm'erugu.*
>
> You say you want to bathe
> when the waves subside.
> Where is there an end
> to the endless mind?
>
> You say, "Let me quench my thirst,
> and then I'll find the truth."
> You cannot quench your thirst.
> How can you know truth?
> Is there an end?[56]

In this *padam* only seven words have Sanskrit origin—four of which, *niru, manasu, dehamu,* and *tattvamu,* are in the first stanza, which is quoted here—yet all five of them are so well known in Telugu that the average speaker thinks of them as Telugu words. The *padam* is accessible without commentary and without gloss, which makes its reception immediate. Annamayya wrote just a few *padam*s in Sanskrit, but even these are not beyond the capacity of an educated Telugu audience. The opposition is not between Sanskrit and Telugu, as it is often perceived to be, but between arcane and ac-

55. The *kāvya* poets in Telugu clearly followed Śrīharṣa, who states towards the end of the proverbially difficult *Naiṣadhīyacarita:* "Deliberately I placed / tight knots in places / so no fool enters here with a false pride / to deny the worth of my work. / May it be a joy to float on the waves of comfort / this poem provides / for the good student for whom / a well-served teacher unties the knots."

56. Annamayya 1998: 1: 226; translation, Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 148.

cessible diction. Poets who enjoyed making their works available only to the very learned chose arcane diction, be it Sanskrit or Telugu, while other poets made their writings available to the average educated person by choosing well-known words of both Sanskrit and Telugu origin. The court poets, for instance, always tried to present themselves as scholars and wrote learned *(prauḍha)* poems, while the temple poets wrote unpretentious and accessible compositions.

THE POLITICS OF TRANSLATION

It is curious that in a language used to "translate" a large number of Sanskrit texts, there is no word equivalent to "translation." The Sanskrit-derived *anuvādamu,* now popular in modern Telugu, is itself a loan translation and was never used in this sense before the twentieth century. Nannaya, in rendering Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* into Telugu, did not claim to be "translating" the Sanskrit text. The poet reports that his patron, the eastern Cāḷukya king Rājarājanarēndruḍu, said to him:

> With all your learning, compose in Telugu
> a book that makes clear
> what Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana spoke—
> the proven meaning bound to the *Mahābhārata* text.[57]

Even a cursory comparison of the Sanskrit and Telugu texts will show that Nannaya did not follow the original in detail: he left out large sections and condensed others, and it is a matter of opinion whether or not he always captured the meaning of the original. From the internal perspective of the tradition, the question of translation, in the modern sense, never arises. Tikkana, who completed Nannaya's *Mahābhāratamu,* calls his predecessor the *creator* of Telugu poetry, not a translator of a Sanskrit text into Telugu:

> The one who produced, so skillfully,
> the first three books, starting at the beginning,
> was Nannaya Bhaṭṭu—the master of Telugu poetry,
> the Creator himself, great in spirit.[58]

As the tradition developed, poet after poet retold Sanskrit texts in Telugu. Styles changed, meters changed, genres changed, and narrative gave way to descriptive texts, but the presence of a Sanskrit source remained nearly constant, providing a legitimacy that a wholly new work might lack. (Perhaps here we have one definition of a tradition.) Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu uses a fas-

57. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* Ādiparvamu 1.16 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989).
58. *Āndhramahābhāratamu,* Virāṭaparvamu 1.6 (Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa [1901] 1989).

cinating analogy to reflect on the borrowing, reworking, embellishing, and reworking of Sanskrit:

> Invented stories are artificial diamonds.
> The old stories are precious stones
> straight from the mine.
> But ancient stories reworked by good poets
> with their irresistible imagination
> are precious gems perfectly cut.
> Make a poem like *that*
> for me.[59]

The idea that a theme of the poet's own making is not as valuable as one borrowed from an ancient source has an aesthetic justification. Old themes acquire a depth and fullness from their sustained life in the collective awareness of the community**.** Mythological and historical themes *(itihāsa* and *purāṇa),* and also tales and legends, have the advantage of having grown in the culture where the audience has invested its imagination for generations. While this advantage is common to any story of the past, the *mārga* literary culture in Telugu further stipulated that the source should be Sanskrit.

By the eleventh century, when literature in Telugu began to take shape, Sanskrit already had three well-established textual categories: Veda, *purāṇa* (which included *itihāsa* and *śāstra*), and *kāvya.* Based on the binary division of sound, *śabda,* and meaning, *artha,* of the word, literary convention assigned these three categories to three different classes: Veda is classified as *śabda-pradhāna,* a sound-primary text, that is, it is valued primarily for its phonic value. *Purāṇa* and *śāstra* are classified as *arthapradhāna,* meaning-primary texts, valued for their meaning alone. In contrast, *kāvya* is classified as *śabdār-thapradhāna,* a text that shows an inseparable union of sound and meaning, each critical in its own right.[60] The implications for translation are clear: Veda by definition cannot be translated or even retold, while *kāvya,* too, is completely resistant to translation. Only *śāstra, itihāsa,* and *purāṇa* are available for translation; indeed, since their meaning can be constituted in different ways, they may be thought of as requiring repeated telling and reinterpretation. By the eleventh century, such an understanding of the textual world in Sanskrit was generally accepted and shared by elite scholars in Telugu.

It is in this context that we should understand the fact that a large number of *itihāsa* and *purāṇa* retellings in Telugu have appeared since the eleventh century, while, with one major exception, no Sanskrit *kāvya* has been translated. The exception is Śrīnāthuḍu's *Śṛṅgāranaiṣadhamu* (The prince of Niṣadha in love). A translation of Śrīharṣa's Sanskrit *Naiṣadhīyacarita,* Śrī-

---

59. *Vasucaritramu* 1.19 (Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu [1967] 1995).
60. See Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

nāthuḍu's work is a magnificent accomplishment, in that it translates a poem considered in theory to be untranslatable. Śrīnāthuḍu appears to be aware of the difficulty. In a rare statement of his method of translation, unfortunately misread by recent literary scholars, Śrīnāthuḍu eloquently states the problem of translating poetry. It is worth quoting in full:

> The erotic poem made by the great poet Bhaṭṭa Harṣa, the poet who traveled through paths unseen by other poets, is here rendered into Telugu in a way that makes use of the special features of the language to touch the hearts of great minds: following the sound *(śabda)* of the text, aiming at the poet's intention *(abhiprāya),* keeping the poetic feeling *(bhāva)* in view, supporting the mood *(rasa),* embellishing the figures of speech *(alaṅkāra),* taking care of propriety *(aucitya)* and eliminating impropriety *(anaucitya),* closely obeying the original.[61]

The most crucial words in the statement are "following the sound of the text." When the original words in the text are kept—that is, if the texture of the original is retained—problems crop up in translation. Sanskrit words, and even compounds, can be imported into Telugu with little change except for the final case endings, as we can see in Śrīnāthuḍu's large-scale incorporation of Śrīharṣa's phrases. For example:

Sanskrit: *vicitra-vākcitra-śikhaṇḍi-nandana*
Telugu: *vicitra-vākcitra-śikhaṇḍi-nandanuṇḍu*
Sanskrit: *suvarṇa-daṇḍaika-sitātapatrita-jvalat-pratāpāvali-kīrti-maṇḍitaḥ*
Telugu: *tapanīya-daṇḍaika-dhavaḷātapatritōddaṇḍa-tejaḥ-kīrti-maṇḍaluṇḍu*

The first phrase is incorporated verbatim into Telugu with only a change in the final case suffix—*u* plus *ṇḍu*—to grammatically assimilate it. In the second example, the substitutions of the words *tapanīya* for *suvarṇa* and *dhavaḷa* for *sita,* as well as the rewriting of *jvalat-pratāpāvali* as *uddaṇḍa-tējaḥ,* are apparently intended to serve the metrical requirements of Telugu verse. Note, however, that the substituted words are close Sanskrit equivalents to the words in the original Sanskrit compound. It is this re-Sanskritization of the original Sanskrit text that makes Śrīnāthuḍu's translation subtle and deftly original. The replacement of one Sanskrit phrase for another makes the Telugu text different from the original and also close to it.

The sound sequences of one language may (and often do) produce unacceptable meanings when reused in another language. The alternative, restating the meaning of one language in the words of another language, has its problems too: whether the meaning "restated" was really the same as the one in the original language, or whether a different language "creates" a different meaning. Even in the case of such closely interacting languages as San-

---

61. *Śṛṅgāranaiṣadhamu* 8.202 (Śrīnāthuḍu 1967).

skrit and Telugu, where a large body of Sanskrit vocabulary has been directly brought into Telugu, there are inevitable problems in reproducing words as they are. For a somewhat simple example, let us take a line from the Sanskrit poem *Gītagovinda* (1.38), rich in verbal density.

> *candana-carcita-nīla-kalebara-pīta-vasana-vana-mālī.*

> Sandal paste adorns his dark-blue body, yellow clothes, and forest flowers.[62]

The line may be directly imported into Telugu by shortening the final vowel of the compound that forms the entire line. But there is a problem of taste: the Sanskrit word *kalebara* means body, but in Telugu it means the body of a dead animal, a carcass. It is difficult to prevent the well-established Telugu connotation from seeping into this compound in a Telugu context. A good poet would want to change the word for an equivalent.

Śrīnāthuḍu refers to his *Śṛṅgāranaiṣadhamu* as an original poem, not a translation. He calls himself the creator of the poem in Telugu and lists this work as the foremost of his achievements in literature. The modern literary critical establishment treats his work as a masterly creation of great scholarship and incomparable creative skill. However, legends in oral literary tradition tell us a different story. Although rejected by recent literary historians as historically unreliable, these legends, honored by tradition, have a value similar to literary criticism, and they are worth considering as serious representations of the collective wisdom of the literary community. One of these legends tells us that when Śrīnāthuḍu showed his translation to Sanskrit pandits, they laughed at him and said, "Take your *ḍu, mu, vu,* and *lu* [Telugu nominative case endings] and give our Sanskrit text back to us."

Why would the literary-critical tradition reject and ridicule such a brilliant text, written by one of the established masters of Telugu literature? Before we answer this question we should note that the oral legend about Śrīnāthuḍu was not, as is naively held in popular belief, contemporaneous with Śrīnāthuḍu but belongs to a seventeenth-century *cāṭu* tradition. We should also refer to the discussion earlier in this chapter of the two conventional divisions of literature in Sanskrit and Telugu into *mārga* and *dēśi* as presented by Nannecōḍuḍu and Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu. Sanskrit pandits wanted to retain the special status of Sanskrit by maintaining, as Nannecōḍuḍu did some five hundred years earlier, that all Sanskrit literature is *mārga* and all Telugu literature is *dēśi.* They would have had no problem if Telugu poets had followed Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu and developed an internal hierarchy among themselves, elevating the Telugu poets who followed Sanskritic meters to *mārga* status. However, times had changed and the boundaries of *mārga* and

---

62. Note that the lexical question at issue here arises only because of the eastern Indian spelling *(kalebara)* of the Sanskrit word *kalevara* (which does not appear in Telugu).

dēśi are not defined by language anymore. Up until this time Telugu poets had stayed within the Telugu tradition, borrowing from Sanskrit texts that were classified as meaning-primary, their claims to *mārga* status within the Telugu tradition had not been objectionable to Sanskrit pandits. But now Śrīnāthuḍu was presented as not only having violated a taboo and entered a realm of Sanskrit kept beyond the limits of regional language traditions, but also having sought the approval of Sanskrit pandits for his audacity. This legend symbolizes a new conflict between Sanskrit and Telugu that emerged around the seventeenth century and an effort on the part of Telugu poets to break the language-based boundaries of *mārga* and *dēśi*. It is this new claim to status—the claim that a Telugu text can be *mārga* in its own right, not just within a Telugu literary context—that is objected to in the oral legends about Śrīnāthuḍu's Telugu rendering of Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīyacarita.*

However, texts that were translated were not limited to Sanskrit sources alone. In premodern South Asia, with its multiplicity of literary traditions and languages, multilingual scholarship, and contacts between poets of different regions and languages, texts moved across languages and poets borrowed from other poets in countless instances. Elsewhere I have suggested that the concept of a mother tongue is a foreign, post-nineteenth-century idea in India, and that the opposition between languages in premodern India was hierarchical rather than regional. All other languages were *deśabhāṣā*s (languages of regions), and Sanskrit was *devabhāṣā* (language of the gods).[63] The nationalist identification of languages with regional populations, and the positing of language boundaries for regions, have produced the category of Telugu people, a category that ignores the fact that people living in the area now known as Andhra spoke and/or read other languages, such as Kannada, Tamil, Oriya, Persian, and Urdu, as well. An extreme form of this language nationalism is reflected in the disappearance of multilingual literati. Very few scholars, if any, are literate in other regional languages, and it has become a common practice among regional scholars to take a nationalistic pride in the superiority and originality of the poets of their own literary tradition, even though a closer examination would reveal a lively mutual borrowing and translation from one regional language to the other.

Nowhere is the politics of language so clearly visible as in the area of translation. While a large number of premodern Telugu poets cited their source as one or another Sanskrit text, almost none acknowledged a non-Sanskrit source. We know, however, that many Telugu poets borrowed from Tamil, Kannada, and perhaps other regional language sources, as well as from other traditions within Telugu. Having a Sanskrit source elevated a regional-language text and the borrowing poet to a higher status and therefore was

---

63. Narayana Rao 1995: 25.

invariably mentioned, while a regional language source never was. Illustrious examples are from Dhūrjaṭi, who used Tamil Śaiva narratives from *caṅkam* sources in his *Kāḷahastīśvaramāhātmyamu* (The greatness of the god of Kāḷahasti), and Kṛṣṇadēvarāya, who borrowed from Tamil Vaiṣṇava narratives for his *Āmuktamālyada* (The girl who gave her garland to God). Neither of them ever mentioned their sources. It is the absence of identification of non-Sanskrit sources that led to the mistaken impression that Telugu literature was an independent island, uninfluenced by other regional languages, with only Sanskrit as its originating source.

The practice of not mentioning a non-Sanskritic source extends also to Telugu poets who borrowed from other Telugu sources. When Telugu poets who wrote in the *mārga* tradition translated from *dēśi* Telugu poets, they did not mention their sources. For example, for his *mārga* text *Haravilāsamu* Śrīnāthuḍu translated Siriyaḷa's story from Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu's *dēśi* text *Basavapurāṇamu* but did not mention his source. However, when Piḍuparti Sōmanāthuḍu translated Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu's *Basavapurāṇamu* into a *mārga* text with the same title, because, for him, it was a sacred text, he meticulously mentioned the name of the original author and paid respect to him, confirming the general practice that a poet mentions his source when the text he borrows from comes from a higher tradition. There are a few minor instances of a verse or two that Śrīnāthuḍu translated from famous Sanskrit authors without mentioning their names, but the question here is not about such minor instances.

There is another interesting instance that we might call masked translation. This is best illustrated by Śrīnāthuḍu's *Bhīmēśvarapurāṇamu,* which the poet claims to have retold from the "Godāvarīkhaṇḍa" of the Sanskrit *Skāndapurāṇa.* Recent scholarship has argued that the extant Sanskrit "Godāvarīkhaṇḍa" is in fact a translation of Śrīnāthuḍu's Telugu text, whether by Śrīnāthuḍu himself or by some other poet of his time. It is not possible to determine the truth of Śrīnāthuḍu's claim that this text is the original from which he had produced his own version. It is equally plausible that the Sanskrit text used by Śrīnāthuḍu was lost, and that some time later a new "original" was created that was based on Śrīnāthuḍu's Telugu text. Certainly such masked translations of other Telugu works into Sanskrit do exist, and they have invariably been claimed as the sources for the Telugu works. One can understand the motivation for such claims in the context of the legitimizing power of Sanskrit and the lack of status for regional language works. Notably, this practice prevails only with texts that are held in reverence by one religious community or the other. The Śrīnāthuḍu text, for instance, is revered as the foundation story of the great Śiva temple known as Dakṣārāma, in the present-day East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. Apparently Śrīnāthuḍu's Telugu version of the story would not have attained the same status as a Sanskrit version attributed to Vyāsa.

The need to find a Sanskrit original for every Telugu literary work in the *mārga* tradition reached absurd proportions in premodern Andhra. We find in Vallabharāyadu's *Krīḍābhirāmamu* (The joy of sex), a satirical play from the fifteenth century, that the author invents a Sanskrit play called *Premābhirāma* (The joy of love), attributes it to a second-rate poet (Rāvipaṭi Tripurāntaka), and claims that his *Krīḍābhirāmamu* is a Telugu rendering of that Sanskrit original. The intention, obviously, is to ridicule the convention of finding a Sanskrit original for every Telugu literary creation.

Once a translation was made, however, the originals themselves ceased to be read as much as the Telugu renderings. Before the twentieth century, no literary critic compared the translation with the original in order to comment on the quality of the translation. Faithfulness to the original was never an issue. Sanskrit originals apparently provided legitimacy, while Telugu renderings were actually read. As Appakavi quotes from a Sanskrit text he attributes to Nannaya:

> Learned people love the language and dress of the region where they live; given to the pleasure of poetry, they enjoy poetry in their own language and do not care much for other languages.[64]

It seems an appropriate acknowledgment of the complex language situation that when Appakavi makes this statement, he needs the authority of the Sanskrit language and of Nannaya's name.

Two points emerge from this discussion: First, faithful rendering of a text is not a requirement for a good translation. It is the meaning of the text that is reconstructed, and no attempt is made to follow the original slavishly. A good poem, translation or not, is original by definition. The author *(kavi)* of the poem is the maker *(kartā)*. Second, and closely related to the question of translation, is the accusation of plagiarism that has infested modern conceptions of premodern literary traditions in Telugu. In fact, in premodern traditions originality was never deemed to reside in the theme or the narrative outline of a text. Instead, it consisted in the skill exhibited in making a new variation on available material.

THE CULTURE OF WRITING AND THE PROPAGATION OF BOOKS

In a remarkable historical statement, Nannecōḍuḍu asserted that the Cāḷukya kings "caused [Telugu poetry] to be born [*puṭṭiñci*]" at a time when there was only Sanskrit poetry in the world. We know now that there was enough Telugu poetry around in the form of oral songs and metrical poems (recorded in inscriptions), but we have to conclude that Nannecōḍuḍu did not recognize any of this as literature. For him, only a composition by a poet made

---

64. *Appakavīyamu* (Appakavi [1962] 1966: 1.6).

available in writing was literature, and he marked the beginning of Telugu literature with the Cāḷukya king (probably Rājarājanarēndruḍu) because the court poet (probably Nannaya) wrote poems. In keeping with his values, he exhorts at the end of his *kāvya:*

> Read my poem, listen to it, copy it;
> god Śiva, goddess Pārvati and their son Kumāra
> will grant your wishes.[65]

Pālkuriki Sōmanāthuḍu adds a similar request at the end of his *dvipada* poem *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritramu* (Biography of Paṇḍitārādhyuḍu), clearly suggesting that even a poem in *dvipada,* which was primarily meant to be sung, was written, preserved, and propagated as a book. So also, epic narratives like *Bhāskararāmāyaṇamu,* which were meant to be read out before an audience, include, as acts meriting the god's grace *(phalaśruti)* the copying and saving of the work in book form, along with its reading. The reception of poetry still took place in the oral-aural mode, and a poet most often read out his poem in performance; but literary status was reserved only for a poet who was literate, and written compositions alone attained the status of literature.

A general diction of orality continued in literary discourse for a long time, until almost the twentieth century. The verb "to write" *(vrāyu)* meant to copy a text, and a scribe was called *vrāyasakāḍu,* writer. Poets made *(cēyu/onarcu),* spoke *(ceppu),* constructed *(nirmiñcu),* built *(kaṭṭu),* and even wove *(allu)* texts, but only copyists "wrote" them. Chapters of books were called *uchhvāsa* or *āśvāsa,* after the word for breath, *śvāsa.* A well-read person was called a *bahuśruta,* one who listened (that is, learned) a lot. An illiterate person was derogatorily called a *nirakṣarakukṣi,* one who doesn't have syllables in his belly. Poets asked the goddess of speech, Sarasvatī, to stay on their tongue. Even the literary-critical terms belonged to an oral tradition, for example the emphasis on *dhārā,* a free-flowing style, which was in the first instance a value in oral composition.

Nannaya's written style was already one that required a reflective reading to appreciate the inner meaning of a tightly structured narrative, and not one that appealed to an immediate understanding, helped by repetitive lines, as oral-based styles did. But the surface texture of his verse appealed to the ear that was used to a flowing, harmonious style. His statement about his own poetry insightfully distinguishes and names these two levels: *prasannakathākalitārthayukti,* an expressive narrative embedded with meaning, and *akṣara-ramyatā,* harmony of syllables. The first of these, he said, appealed to learned people *(kavīndrulu)* of good mind *(sāramati),* and the second to the others *(itarulu).*

65. *Kumārasambhavamu* 12.225 (Nannecōḍuḍu 1968).

After Nannaya, the contest was not between orality and literacy, but between two kinds of orality—the orality of the literate, scholarly poet *(paṇḍita),* and the orality of the nonliterate or barely literate poet *(pāmara).* We can see the contrast keenly in Tikkana, whose verses do not usually sing. In a way, he was a very different poet, with a strictly written style in which only an occasional verse really flows. Indeed, the tradition itself recognized and commented upon this feature. According to legend, Tikkana made a pact with his scribe, Gurunātha: the scribe would write without stopping or asking the poet to repeat what he had said, and the poet would dictate without pausing to think. If the scribe should fail, his hand would be cut off, and if the poet were to fail, his tongue would be cut off. The arrangement worked smoothly until a point in the text where the internal narrator, Sañjaya, was describing the epic battle of the Bhāratas to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Here Tikkana became stuck in the middle of a verse, unable to complete it. In despair, he cried out to his scribe, "What can I say, Gurunātha?" *(ēmi seppudun gurunātha).* The scribe kept writing without pause, as usual, and the poem worked: the poet's cry completed the verse precisely according to the meter and meaning. The nasal ending of the verb, *seppudun,* requires that *kurunātha* (lord of the Kurus; i.e., Dhṛtarāṣṭra) become *gurunātha*—but only in *written* Telugu. Tikkana reached for his sword to cut off his tongue when the scribe explained to him that all was well with the verse.

This story, disarmingly simple in appearance, offers powerful commentary on the further transition from oral to written that Tikkana represents. The narrative seeks, on the one hand, to rehabilitate him, making him look like an oral poet—since at this time poetry was still required to have a flowing quality *(dhārā)* to it. Tikkana's verses actually do not have this quality; on the contrary, he was extending the literariness (the stylistic feature of a written poem) beyond Nannaya. On the one hand, this story attempts to make Tikkana one of the oral poets, dictating his verses to a scribe without taking a break. Gurunātha's origins in the potters' caste reinforce this claim, since the potters are closely linked to the singing of texts. On the other hand, it also implies a recognition of the innovation that Tikkana had introduced into the tradition. The verse in question works only when sung; in writing, *kurunāthā* becomes *gurunāthā,* the cry of despair to the scribe; in recitation, it remains *kurunāthā,* an address to the Kuru lord. One can see, in this vignette, the whole burden of the transition that Tikkana articulates for this tradition.[66]

But the transition did not stop with Tikkana. Poets through the centuries appear to have negotiated between oral performance and literate composition. The totally oral style of versification—in which the texture is loose and

<hr>

66. Adapted from the preface to Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 17–18.

replete with filler words to accommodate metrical necessities—began to be rejected as bad composition. A legend from the *cāṭu* tradition tells how Brahman scholar-poet Tenāli Rāmaliṅgaḍu dismissed Mollā, a potter woman, when she presented her poetry to him.

> You make poems as if weaving a basket to hold fish
> out of any old bamboo strips.
> Could any Brahmin put up with
> your howlers?[67]

Śrīnāthuḍu denounced oral poets by including them in the category of bad poets who are conventionally censured in the preface of *kāvya*s:

> Some poets become addicted: they write poems
> as if their tongue is a stylus,
> their mouth a blank palm leaf,
> and whatever they know
> is black ink stirred in the inkpot of their minds.[68]

Oral poetry still had its appeal, especially for its performance value in public. In a world of intense competition for the attention of the patron, oral versification was a powerful skill that gained fast recognition. Poets prided themselves on spontaneously composing for the occasion perfectly acceptable metrical verses, and a poet who could not come up with a verse in the moment often did not win the day. A long extemporaneous poem by Peddanna in the court of Kṛṣṇadēvarāya, which demonstrates how poetry should be composed in Telugu as well as in Sanskrit, is said to have earned for the poet a golden anklet from the king, symbolizing the poet's victory over all the rival poets. The entire *cāṭu* culture of poetry celebrated oral versification and even ridiculed scribes who claimed perfect writing skills. However, Appakavi strongly favored the written poem when he declared that a good poem requires well-thought-out words and meaning, which an oral composition does not have. His dictum "a poem cannot be rushed" *(nilukaḍa valayu kṛtiki)*[69] drove the last nail into the coffin of orality.

An entirely non-oral poetry, which we might call concrete poetry, became popular as the literary culture swung toward graphic literacy, adoring the power of the inscribed syllable. Poems worked into interesting visual shapes, known as *citrakavitramu,* acquired the favor of poets. Illustrations of verses shaped as a conch, a sword, a cow's tail, and other forms were elaborately

---

67. Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998: 181–82.
68. *Bhīmēśvarapurāṇamu* 1.12 (Śrīnāthuḍu 1958); Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002: 120.
69. *Appakavīyamu* (Appakavi [1962] 1966: 1.60).

described in texts on meter. This is the culmination of a scholarly trend that began as early as Nannecōḍuḍu, who wrote the first concrete poems in his *Kumārasambhavamu.* This trend encouraged poets to make verses with more than one meaning; verses that could be read as Telugu from beginning to end but would be Sanskrit if they were read backwards; verses that contained other verses in a different meter; and verses that were shaped like a coiled snake *(kuṇḍalināga),* sword *(khaḍga),* bracelet *(kaṅkana),* a pair of drums *(mardala),* the marks made on the earth by a urinating cow *(gōmutrikā),* and so on. Such skills were regarded as the hallmark of a competent poet. Appakavi included in his work a large number of examples of concrete poems. Figure 6.1 is of a *kuṇḍalināgabandhamu,* a poem written in the form of a coiled snake. A prayer to Kṛṣṇa, the poem reads from the head of the snake to the tail, with the syllables separated by spaces. When written out, the poem contains eighty-four syllables, but in the figure we see only sixty-four, since twenty of them are where the snake crosses itself, and therefore are to be read twice.

> *dyu ti dha ra dē va kī ta na ya tō ya bha va stu ta bhū ra mē śa sam*
> *mi ta gu ṇa sā ra bhū ti da ya mē ya br̥ ha jja na pū ru ṣā va nā*
> *ji ta na ra kā pu rā ta na ya jē ya su vi ṣki ra bhā ra vā hā śa*
> *śva ta pu ru hū ta pī ta da va pā va ka śa sta pu rā ṇa ko vi dā*[70]

We have come full circle. Appakavi made a valiant effort to establish a literary culture that he imagined was sanctioned by the first poet, Nannaya. Competing literary cultures of *śaivabhakti,* temple, *cāṭu,* and oral varieties were rejected in favor of constructing a canon of courtly poetry subjected to the strict standards of the texts on metrics and grammar. To be more exact, Appakavi did not reject those varieties of poetry totally—he accepted them if they conformed to the exacting standards of the grammar and meter.

Appakavi held sway for about two hundred years. His influence grew stronger as more and more prescriptive texts on metrics and grammar were written. The label "poet" now invariably implied the scholar and was rarely applied to a nonscholarly poet, as may be seen in the title *kavi* (poet) at the end of Appakavi's name. Grammars and books on meter were written with a view to establishing standards in the literary use, but not other uses, of language. How such a uniform, authoritarian literary standard sustained itself through the works of scholars emerging from small villages and towns, during a period when no major political formation exerted its influence and there were no royal patrons of literature, is one of the puzzles that remains to be solved. The fact remains, however, that modern Telugu literature, which

70. *Appakavīyamu* 4.576 (Appakavi [1962] 1966).
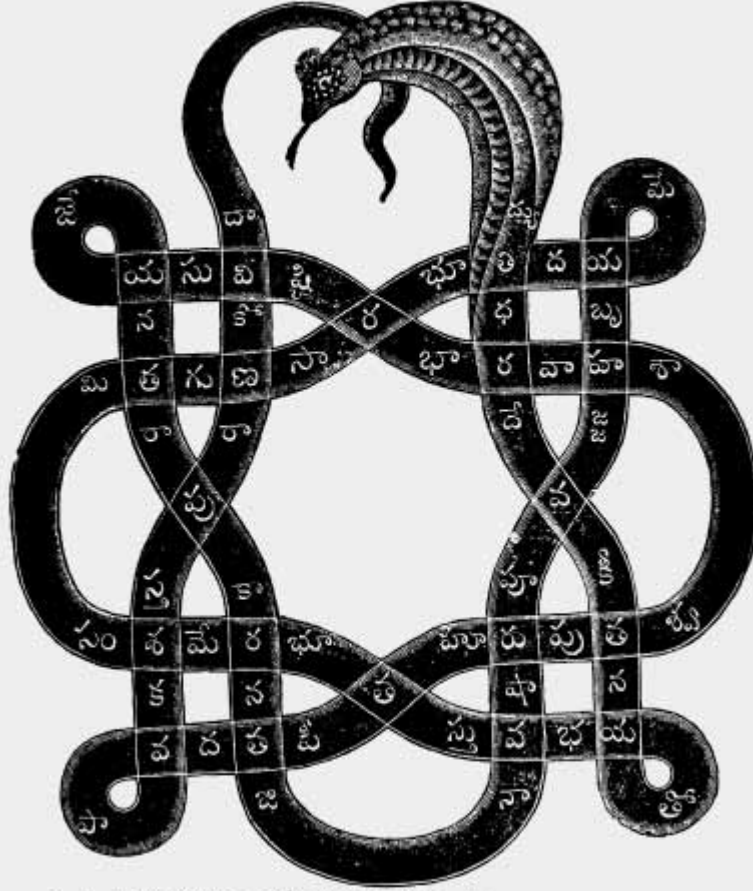
Figure 6.1: Poem-picture of a coiled snake *(kuṇḍalināgabandhamu)* by Appakavi. Reproduced from Appakavi [1962] 1966: 576.

began during the early decades of the nineteenth century, was able to establish itself only after successfully critiquing and denouncing Appakavi.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Histories of Literature and Biographies of Poets

Ārudra. 1990. *Samagra Āndhra Sāhityam.* 2d ed. 13 vols. Vijayavada: Prajasakti Book House.

Chenchayya, Pandipeddi, and M. Bhujanga Rao Bahadur. 1928. *A History of Telugu Literature.* London: Oxford University Press.

Krishnamurthi, Salva. 1994. *History of Telugu Literature from Early Times to 1100 A.D.* Madras: Institute of Asian Studies.

Kulasekhara Rao, M. 1988. *A History of Telugu Literature.* Hyderabad: published by author.

Lakṣmīkāntam, Piṅgaḷi. 1974. *Āndhra Sāhitya Caritra.* Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi.

Lakṣmīkāntaśāstri, Siṣṭa. N.d. *Vijayanagarāndhra Kavulu.* Vijayavada: Nirmala Publishers.

Lakṣmīkāntamma, Ūṭukuri. N.d. *Āndhra Kavayitrulu.* Secundarabad: n.p.

Lakṣmīrañjanam, Khaṇḍavalli. 1958. *Āndhra Sāhitya Caritra Saṅgrahamu.* Hyderabad: Venkataramana Publications.

Nāgayya, G. 1983. *Telugu Sāhitya Samīkṣa.* 2 vols. Tirupati: Navyaparisodhaka Pracuranalu.

Rajanīkānta Rāvu, Bālāntrapu. 1975. *Āndhra Vāggēyakāra Caritramu.* 2d ed. Vijayavada: Visalandhra Publishing House.

Śēṣayya, Cāgaṇṭi. N.d. *Āndhrakavitaraṅgiṇi.* 14 vols. Kapilesvarapuramu: Hindu Dharmasastra Grantha Nilayamu.

Sitapati, Gidugu Venkata. 1968. *History of Telugu Literature.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Srīnivāsācāryulu, Bommakaṇṭi, and Bālāntrapu Naḷinīkānta Rao. 1983. *Telugu Cāṭuvu, Puṭṭu Pūrvōttarālu.* Madras: Kalyani Pracuranalu.

Śrīrāmamūrti, Gurujāḍa. 1913. *Kavi Jīvitamulu.* 3d ed. Madras: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.

Śrīrāmamūrti, Korlapāṭi. 1991. *Telugu Sāhityacaritra.* 4 vols. Visakhapatnam: published by author.

Telugu Akāḍemi. 1989. *Telugu Sāhitya Kōśamu: Prācīna Sāhityamu.* Hyderabad: Telugu Akademi.

Vēṅkaṭa Rāvu, Niḍudavolu. 1978. *Dakṣinadēśiyāndhravāṅmayamu.* Madras: Madras University Press.

Vēṅkaṭanārāyaṇa Rāvu, K. 1928. *Āndhravāṅmayacaritrasaṅgrahamu.* Madras: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.

Vīreśaliṅgam, Kandukūri. 1917. *Āndhra Kavula Caritramu.* Vol. 1. Rajahmundry: published by author.

Primary Sources

[Names of Telugu authors appear with the Telugu nominative case endings.]

Annamayya [Annamācārya], Tāḷḷapāka. 1998. *Tāḷḷapāka Padasāhityamu.* 29 vols. Tirupati: Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam.

Annamayya, Yathāvākkula. 1925. *Sarvēśvaraśatakamu.* Edited by Kāśīnāthuni Nāgeśvara Rāvu. Madras: Andhrapatrika Mudranalayamu.

Appakavi, Kakunūri. [1962] 1966. *Appakavīyamu.* Edited with a preface by Rāvuri Dorasāmi Śarma. Includes a critical introduction by Giḍugu Rāmamūrti Pantulu and Giḍugu Vēṅkaṭa Sītāpati from a 1922 edition (edited by Giḍugu Rāmamūrti Pantulu and Utpala Vēṅkaṭanarasiáhācārya). Madras: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.

Cinatirumalācāryulu, Tāḷḷapāka. 1935. *Saṅkīrtanalakṣaṇamu.* In *The Minor Works of Annamacharya and his Sons,* edited by V. Vijayaraghavacharya and G. Adinarayana Naidu. Vol. 1. Madras: Tirumalai Tirupati Devasthanams Press.

Dhūrjaṭi. 1925. *Kāḷahastīśvaraśatakamu.* Edited by Kāśīnāthuni Nāgeśvara Rāvu. Madras: Andhra Patrika Mudranalayamu.

———. 1966. *Śrī Kāḷahastīsvaramāhātymamu.* Edited with a commentary by Bulusu Vēṅkaṭaramaṇayya. Madras: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.

Errāpragaḍa. See Nannaya.

Huḷakki Bhāskaruḍu. 1953. *Bhāskararāmāyaṇamu.* Edited by Mēḍēpalli Vēṅkaṭaramaṇācāryulu. Madras: Vavilla Ramaswami Sastrulu and Sons.

Kētana, Mūlaghaṭika. 1953. *Āndhrabhāṣabhūṣaṇamu.* Edited with a commentary by Dēvinēni Sūrayya and introduction by Vaḍlamūḍi Gōpāla Kṛṣṇayya. Tenali: Ajanta Art Press.

Kṛṣṇadēvarāyalu. 1964. *Āmuktamālyada.* Edited by Vēdam Vēṅkaṭarāya Śāstri. Madras: Vedam Venkataraya Sastri and Brothers.

Mārana. 1984. *Mārkaṇḍēyapurāṇamu.* Edited by G. V. Subrahmaṇyam. Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akadami.

Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errāpragaḍa. [1901] 1989. *Āndhramahābhāratamu.* 4 vols. Hyderabad: Telugu Visvavidyalayamu.

Nannecōḍuḍu. 1968. *Kumārasambhavamu.* Edited by Kōrāḍa Mahādēva Śāstri. Hyderabad: Telugu Visvavidyalayam.

Peddanna, Allasāni. 1984. *Manucaritramu.* Edited by Timmāvajjhala Kodaṇḍarāmayya. Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akadami.

Pōtana, Bammera. 1964. *Śrīmadāndhramahābhāgavatamu* (known as *Bhāgavatamu*). 2 vols. Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akadami.

Ramakṛṣṇuḍu, Tenāli. 1968. *Pāṇḍuraṅgamāhātmyamu.* Edited by Bulusu Vēṅkaṭaramaṇayya. Madras: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.

Rāmarājabhūṣaṇuḍu. [1967] 1995. *Vasucaritramu.* Edited by K. Suprasannācārya. Hyderabad: Telugu University.

Śāraṅgapāṇi. N.d. *Vēnugōpālaśatakamu.* N.p.

Somana, Nācana. 1994–1997. *Uttaraharivamśamu.* Edited with a commentary by Cadalavada Jayarama Sastri. Hyderabad: Telugu Goshti.

Sōmanāthuḍu, Pālkuriki. [1926] 1952. *Basavapurāṇamu.* Edited by Vēṭūri Prabhākara Śāstri; reprint with a preface by Niḍudavōlu Vēṅkaṭa Rāvu. Madras: Andhra Granthamala.

———. 1990. *Mallikārjunapaṇḍitārādhya Caritramu* (known as *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritramu*). Edited by Cilukūri Nārāyaṇa Rāvu. Hyderabad: Telugu University.

Śrīnāthuḍu. N.d. *Haravilāsamu.* Edited by Vēṭūri Prabhākara Śāstri. Madras: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.

———. 1958. *Bhīmēśvarapurāṇamu.* Edited by Kambhampāṭi Rāmagōpālakṛṣṇamūrti. Vijayawada: Kalyani Grantha Mandali.

———. 1967. *Śṛṅgāranaiṣadhamu.* Edited by Vēdamu Vēṅkaṭarāya Śāstri Jr. Hyderabad: Telugu Vijnana Pitham.

———. 1992. *Kāśīkhaṇḍamu.* Edited by Mallampalli Śarabhēśvara Śarma. 2 vols. Hyderabad: Telugu University.

———. 1995. *Śivarātrimāhātmyamu.* Edited by Jonnalagaḍḍa Mṛtyuñjaya Rāvu. Hyderabad: Telugu University.

Tikkana. See Nannaya.

Timmana, Mukku. 1968. *Parijātāpaharaṇamu.* Edited by Dūsi Rāmamūrti. Madras: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.

Vallabharāyaḍu, Vinukoṇḍa. 1972. *Krīḍābhirāmamu.* Edited by Bommakaṇṭi Vēṅkaṭa Singarācārya and Bālāntrapu Naḷinīkāntarāvu. Machilipatnam: M. Seshachelam & Co.

Vēṅkaṭakavi, Cēmakūra. N.d. *Śāraṅgadhara Caritramu.* Madras: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.

———. [1968] 1987. *Vijayavilāsamu.* Edited by Tāpī Dharmā Rāvu. Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House.

Vijayarāghava Nāyakuḍu. 1951. *Raghunāthanāyakābhyudayamu.* Edited by N. Vēṅkaṭaramaṇayya and M. Sōmaśēkhara Śarma. Madras Government Oriental Series. Tanjore: TMSSM Library.

Secondary Sources

Heifetz, Hank, and Velcheru Narayana Rao. 1987. *For the Lord of the Animals: Poems from the Telugu, the Kāḷahastīśvara Śatakamu of Dhurjati.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Narayana Rao, Velcheru. 1978. *Telugulō Kavitāviplavāla Svarūpam.* Vijayawada: Visalandhra Pracuranalayam.

———. 1990. *Siva's Warriors: The Basava Purāṇa of Pālkurki Somanātha.* Translation assisted by Gene Roghar. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1992. "Kings, Gods, and Poets: Ideologies of Patronage in Medieval Andhra." In *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture,* edited by Barbara Stoler Miller. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1995. "Coconut and Honey: Sanskrit and Telugu in Medieval Andhra." *Social Scientist* 23: 24–40.

———. 2003. *Hibiscus on the Lake: Twentieth Century Telugu Poetry from India.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Narayana Rao, Velcheru, and David Shulman. 1998. *A Poem at the Right Moment: Remembered Verses from Premodern South India.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 2002. *Classical Telugu Poetry: An Anthology.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Narayana Rao, Velcheru, et al. 1992. *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka-Period Tamil Nadu.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Ramanujan A. K., et al. 1994. *When God Is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Kshetrayya and Others.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Shulman, David. 1995a. "First Man, Forest Mother: Telugu Humanism in the Age of Kṛṣṇadevarāya." In Shulman, 1995b.

———, ed. 1995b. *Syllables of Sky: Studies in South Indian Civilization in Honour of Velcheru Narayana Rao.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

7

Genre and Society

The Literary Culture of Premodern Kerala

Rich Freeman

This essay rethinks aspects of the literary culture of premodern Kerala through anthropological reflection on the social and pragmatic contexts in which those genres of textual practices we today call Malayalam literature were apparently produced. I characterize my project in this way because the Kerala materials I survey have led me to reconsider some of the basic assumptions of existing literary histories. Therefore, by way of introduction, I sketch a quick inventory of some problems that Kerala literature raises and the theoretical concerns that inform my reasoning.

The writings that concern me here were produced in what is now the modern linguistic state of Kerala from roughly the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries C.E. While this body of work is treated in the literary histories as "Malayalam literature," it is in fact not at all clear that composers of these works saw themselves as contributing to a primarily written corpus of canonical works, nor that they regarded the language varieties and hybrids in which they composed as aspiring toward a regionally standardized and uniform language medium. Until the gradually stabilizing emergence of the term "Mala-

yalam" over the last few centuries, there was in fact no distinctive name for the local language; it was just *bhāṣā,* "speech," in its many varieties.

While models for high literature *(kāvya)* were certainly available from Sanskrit, and some genres of vernacular textual production apparently aspired to these, others clearly did not. Yet many of these latter genres, more reliant on local Dravidian language and meter, seem just as evidently literary in their crafting of artfully formalized language registers as their Sanskritic counterparts. What they apparently lacked were the metatreatises of grammars and poetics that made some Sanskritized genres the special objects of secondary, learned discourse. The rootedness of these Dravidian works in the wider and more popular institutions of Kerala society, however, gave them perhaps as much force in advancing their own aesthetic and social values as the more self-consciously Sanskritic productions had in advancing theirs. We thus encounter, on the one hand, marked disjunctions in the aesthetics, form, language, and cultural outlook that defined certain extremes of literary activity in this society; on the other hand, we find that these very differences triggered experiments in mediation and synthesis that generated, through time, an array of intervening linguistic and poetic forms. This seems to me to require an analytic perspective in which the assumed unity of an established literary corpus, "Malayalam literature," is rendered problematic, along with the essentialized model of language that underwrites it. Rather than assuming the unity of this literature at the outset, I therefore propose instead to proceed through differently constituted and socially positioned genres of textual practice, charting their trajectories and interactions through the different contexts and evaluative forums that I hold to comprise literary culture.

The forums of literary culture (or cultures) in Kerala were mainly performative, and while my preference for talking of textual practices (rather than just *texts*) is theoretically motivated,[1] there are also substantive grounds for enjoining this approach in the Kerala setting. It would, in fact, misrepresent the historical facts of the production and self-representation of Kerala's textual cultures to confine them to the modern West's ideology of the text as an inscriptional object designed for silently individual consumption. Most of the "texts" (the actual artifacts) that constitute the region's "literature" (the artifactual assemblage) seem not to have been primarily intended as objects for contemplation through private reading, but rather as scripts designed to guide and motivate cultural performances. While this thorough entanglement of Kerala's literary history with its performance arts has been generally acknowledged, I believe there is more of theoretical importance here than is usually realized. Of crucial methodological significance is the way this reconfigures our grasp of the literary and what constitutes it.

1. Bauman and Briggs 1990; Urban and Silverstein 1997.

Most immediately, modern default assumptions concerning the relation and boundaries between written and oral literatures need to be seriously reconsidered. But I regard this as just one, surface aspect of the need for profounder reflection on the relation of text (as textual practice) to context. I cannot elaborate on this issue here.[2] A fundamental implication of my approach, however, is that texts do not just reflect or represent the extratextual activities of their surrounding culture; rather, texts are immanent activities and practices of that culture, and work to constitute it as well.[3] Textual practices, and the genres that order them, may thus alternately maintain, refigure, or actively change their social contexts.[4]

One of the dominant forms of social context in which the literary cultures of Kerala functioned was, of course, the institution of caste. Caste was articulated through the intersection of religious institutions with performative ones at both the elite and popular levels. Given this articulation, and the creative potential that textual performances had, genres in this literary culture could alternately support and contest the social order of caste, both subtly and overtly, and might do so in partly religious terms. This social hierarchy and its contests were further mapped across the earlier-noted disjuncture in literary aesthetics, where the values of a Sanskritically scholasticized Brahmanism both confronted and accommodated the more Dravidian complex of popular forms. The shifting and hybrid formations of language and genre that emerged through time could thus mark the oscillations of cultural contest and synthesis in local social relations.

Similarly, at the level of the political relations between Kerala's constituent realms, genres of literary practice helped define and articulate a wider cultural sphere. The same creative powers of texts to shape literary context in local domains of performance might, through successfully replicated enactments across a region, establish a network of forums and institutions for successive performances. Where texts implicated or gave expression to political power, as they often did, they would tend to enhance their own value in widening regimes of territorial circulation. In this way, genres that figured their own circuits of performance—the messenger poems are a prime example—might actively project a literary culture of considerable political extent. At a more general level, this suggests viewing the territorial extent of Kerala's literary culture, and the language varieties it bore, as the aggregate outcome of all the layered literary circuits comprising it. What is needed is to probe these layerings of literary culture in historical perspec-

2. The literature on linguistic ideologies, reflexivity, and context has been crucial to my thinking, but the issues are too technical to elucidate here (cf. Enkvist 1994; Goodwin and Duranti 1992; Lucy 1993; Silverstein 1979; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).

3. Goodwin and Duranti 1992; Urban and Silverstein 1997.

4. Hanks 1987.

tive, reading the textual remnants as indicators of the contextual social relations that informed them.[5]

My main tasks in this chapter are thus to indicate where features of literary culture seem to tie crucially into notions of people, territory, and the politics of social identity, and to suggest how we might rethink existing depictions of these relationships and the literary facts that illumine them. This effort involves considerable triangulating among my own anthropological reading of Kerala's cultural history, the indigenous categorizations evidenced in the textual record itself, and the constructions of contemporary local scholarship. I proceed by sketching out, over the next six sections, the broad historical and literary terrain in an overview and accompanying critique of the way certain linguistic, territorial, sociopolitical, and literary findings have been configured into the standing narratives of Kerala's literary history. The remainder of the essay then charts a roughly chronological course through significant literary texts and genres, highlighting the complexities of sociocultural and historical forces that shaped this literary culture but whose detailed exposition awaits a more thoroughgoing analysis in a future study. The temporal confines of this chapter run from the documented emergence of Kerala-based speech forms to the brink of modernity, when the modern form of the Malayalam language was established but the genres and contexts of literary production were still rooted in traditional institutions.

LITERARY CULTURE IN THE LANGUAGE REGION OF KERALA

In contrast to the transregional languages like Sanskrit and the Prakrits, which formed such important standards for modeling literariness in South Asia, the literature surviving in the language we today call Malayalam seems to have always been tied to speech communities defined by the geographical boundaries of Kerala. As a narrow strip of territory hemmed between the high ranges of the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, Kerala is both naturally bounded from neighboring realms along most of its length and characterized throughout by an environmentally distinctive subsistence and settlement pattern. This has led directly and indirectly to rather unique patterns of political economy and social organization throughout its known history. To the extent that these features have conditioned the linguistic and

---

5. The recent articles of historian M. R. Raghava Variyar (1990, and the final two articles in 1997) make significant strides in attempting to correlate stages of literary production in Kerala with historical context. I have benefited greatly from the schematic overview these essays provide. Where my approach differs from his is in my insistence on working out what I see as the mediating forces of cultural forms and practices, whereas he seems more wedded to an ultimately "materialist" explanation.

literary culture, they have been largely shared within the region and have formed patterns recognizably distinct from those across Kerala's borders.

The notion of a literature, of course, presupposes the determinate identity of the language in which it is composed. It also presupposes some organizational coherence, if not in comprising a formal canon, then at least in having a named categorical taxon (usually bearing the name of that language) in which its constituent works are grouped. A real conundrum in treating the literary culture of Malayalam is just this problem of identifying the literature in terms of what the language is—what its diagnostic features are, when their presence is authentically attested in history, and the temporal and geographic boundaries of its prevalence and works. This is not merely an academic question, but one that has been vital to the people of Kerala themselves in terms of the modernist imperative that they should demonstrate the singular coherency of a linguistic, literary, and cultural-regional identity in the matrix of the nation-state.[6] They are flanked both by peoples who have preeminently excelled at this modernist project, the Tamils, and by those who have conspicuously failed, the Tulus and the Coorgis. To succeed in this project is to gain your own literature that goes with your own territorial state; to fail is to have neither. Kerala has succeeded, in spite of conditions that—but for the grace of the muse, grammarian, and scribe— might have sent them the way of the Tulus and Coorgis.

The first and biggest problem in finessing the antiquity of "Malayalam" literature is that despite the existence of works in the regional language reaching back to perhaps the twelfth century, this named identity of the language seems to have come into use only around the sixteenth century, under variant forms like "Malayāyma" or "Malayāṇma."[7] Even at this later date, however, these terms seem to refer indifferently to both the land and a script used for writing the local language in the southern part of Kerala.[8] The fact

6. For example, three major histories of Malayalam literature in English are concerned with setting out the identification of the language with the land and people in this way (Krishna Chaitanya 1971; George 1968; Parameswaran Nair 1967), as are those in Malayalam, from the earliest (Govindappiḷḷa [1889] 1965) down to the most famous (Paramēśvarayyar 1953).

7. The Portuguese referred to the local language by this name in the seventeenth century (I. Kuññanpiḷḷa [1953] 1984a: 21, 23), and although some scholars write as though this usage were common much earlier, the earliest instance I have found is from a manuscript dated 1595 (Ramaswami Aiyar 1938: 131). While the term "Malayāḷi" does occur at least once for inhabitants of the Kerala land several centuries earlier (in the *Uṇṇiyāṭicaritam, gadyam* 19), we cannot infer that this term similarly designated a unified speech-community, nor that the proper noun, "Malayāḷam," was used at this time with its later linguistic attribution (*pace* Raghava Variyar 1997: 119).

8. For the land called by these names, see Padmanabha Menon [1924] 1982: 6, and Paramēśvarayyar 1953: 38–39. The script by this name is not, however, the one that is ancestral to the modern Malayalam script, which evolved out of the Tamil form of Grantha script used for Sanskrit widely across south India (Mangalam 1988).

that the inhabitants of this territory lacked a distinctive name for their language until the brink of the colonial period should give pause to anyone seeking protonational roots in the linguistic or literary articulation of a Kerala ethnic or regional identity. Prior to this relatively modern coining of "Malayalam" (Malayāḷam), the identity issue is even more fraught, for Kerala folk more usually referred to their language as "Tamil" (Tamiḷ), just as those in the dominant kingdoms of Tamilnadu, east of the Western Ghats, had from the early centuries C.E. Use of the label "Tamil" continued to overlap with that of "Malayalam" into the colonial period. It was paralleled in Sanskritic registers by the generic, *bhāṣā,* meaning any local spoken language, which continues as a commonplace proper noun for the language even today.

The use of "Tamil" as a designation for the language of Kerala for most of the premodern period has been ideologically troubling for many early scholars of the language and literature. In terms of the identity politics that rides on nationalist concepts of the natural unity of a people, their language, and their literature, this clearly suggests a pervasive and longstanding subsumption of Kerala's regional identity under Tamilian hegemony. In terms of the more foundational assumption of linguistic nationalism, it also underscores how identity itself may be a discursive mantle and not the index of an underlying essence. In any case, historically, there was a gradual linguistic and literary drift out of dialect status into eventual language autonomy, even while the common name for the Kerala language remained "Tamil." It was not until the above-mentioned full shift to the usage "Malayalam" that the name caught up with the facts of linguistic change, which points up the problematic relation between the actual discursive content of a literature and the ideological features of its metadiscursive shaping and perception.

Simultaneously with this mutating Kerala Tamil, however, there were other registers of language in use in Kerala, heavily and explicitly indebted to Sanskrit, that coined for themselves the designation "Manipravalam." Interestingly, the use of this name did not distinguish between the language forms and the literature written in it; both literature and literary media were called Manipravalam. The only surviving descriptive metatext on this linguistic mode, a fourteenth-century grammar-cum-poetic text called the *Līlātilakam* (Diadem of poetry),[9] has become the matrix in which the very terms of debate for modern discussions of Malayalam are cast. As I discuss later, the metalanguage of the *Līlātilakam* has been rather uncritically adopted by many

---

9. Gōpikuṭṭan 1986; I. Kuññanpiḷḷa [1955] 1985a. The translation of the work's title I have given here follows the construal of the final verse which equates the *tilakam* with the *phālābhūṣanam* (forehead ornament) that shines on the brow of Bhāratī (= Līlā), the goddess who personifies speech or poetic composition.

modern Kerala scholars to read certain ideologically driven dichotomies into the history of their language. The *Līlātilakam*'s representational relation to the past is all the more troubling when we realize that only two (or possibly, three) original manuscripts seem to be attested and that this work is never referred to in any other premodern source.

The legitimacy of its descriptive claims notwithstanding, the *Līlātilakam* does clearly chart the close relation of literary ideologies to the formation of language as a creative project of social identity. As I have argued at length elsewhere, this text reveals elaborate strategies on the part of its author to position his brand of Manipravalam as the medium especially fit for the high style of Sanskritic poetry *(kāvya),* at the top of a variety of competing language forms then current in Kerala.[10] These competing forms ranged from those that were highly dependent on classically Tamil models of grammar and poetry to those that were unacceptably rustic in language content or unliterary in their formal organization as texts from a Sanskritic perspective. A most important historical fact that the *Līlātilakam* thus provides is that there was a spectrum of language styles (and languages) available for different genres that mixed local Kerala-speech (Kēraḷa-bhāṣā) both with Sanskrit and with literary Tamil in various ways. (I return later to how modern scholarship has used this text to read vectors of an ethnic or communal order out of its typologies of language and literature.) Equally important, the *Līlātilakam* argues the existence of a spoken variety of Kerala-speech underlying these literary forms (even if it was called "Tamil") that could be contrasted with the Tamil of the other regions over the mountains to the east. How unifying this language might actually have been in sociolinguistic terms, though, is thrown into some doubt by this very text's own recognition that low castes *(hīna-jāti)* had a phonologically divergent speech form.

THE TERRITORY AND POLITY OF THE KĒRAḶAS

If the identity of Kerala's literary language shows a certain heterogeneity and instability at the very moment of trying to define itself, what about those to whom it might pertain—the people of this land—and what about the land itself as a territorial concept? Here the historical record is again rather uncertain. In my reading of the sources, the notion of a single, bounded territory belonging to a politically united people bonded by language and a consequent shared sense of identity does not seem clearly articulated before modernity. This notion, however, has been consistently projected back onto the historical record from the vantage point of its modern achievement.

There are early myths from Kerala (perhaps from the thirteenth century)

---

10. Freeman 1998.

showing an awareness of the geophysical features of India's southwest coast under the common premodern name of Malanāṭu (the mountain country).[11] But this does not seem to yield decisively to the routine use of the proper place-name "Kerala" (Kēraḷam) for this notional territory until the appearance of the *Kēraḷōtpatti* (Origins of Kerala) texts of a number of centuries later, and even then the usage might recall the earlier inclusion of the Tuḷu country to Kerala's north.[12] In the *Līlātilakam* and many other such texts, the lexical element "Kēraḷa-" occurs as an isolated, proper noun only with plural personal terminations—"the Kēraḷas"—consistent with its primary derivation from various legendary kings with the personal name Kēraḷan.[13] The use of "Kēraḷa-" as an attributive in such compounds as the *Līlātilakam*'s "Kēraḷa-bhāṣā" may thus serve primarily to designate a people eponymously related to a line of kings (as with the corresponding use of "Cōḻas" and "Pāṇḍyas"), rather than to denote a clearly circumscribed territory.

The lineage of the Kēraḷas itself seems to be the projection of an ideology dependent on the recollection of the Cēras as a line of kings who were in a cultural-literary partnership with the other Tamils. This construction goes back to the early centuries C.E., in the period of the *caṅkam* literature of classical Tamil (see Cutler, chapter 4, this volume). This is a literary tradition in which bards within Kerala clearly participated on behalf of their local chieftains. It seems relatively clear, however, that the actual political conditions then were more a pastiche of chiefly territories, with the Three Kings (Muvēntar)—the Cēras, Cōḻas, and Pāṇḍyas—functioning as paramount chiefs rather than as heads of integrated state formations. The corpus of this literature and its projected polities seem a bardic creation, largely composed in hyperbolic celebration of these kings and allied chiefs.[14]

What is intriguing, given the practical loss of this literary corpus until its modern rediscovery, is the long folk memory in Kerala of the Cēra kingship as a notional model of polity. This persists down to the present, when historians of Kerala have reconstructed (invented, some would argue) a second Cēra empire (from the ninth to the twelfth centuries) to rival the glories of the imperial Cōḻas in Tamilnadu.[15] This has become textbook history in Kerala[16] and is widely accepted in the literary histories of Malayalam, despite a disturbing absence of physical or historical remains to support the claims

11. Puruṣōttamannāyar 1981: 35.
12. Raghava Variyar 1984: 2.
13. This occurs, for instance, in what is possibly the earliest poem (maybe thirteenth century) in the language of Kerala, the *Tiruniḻalmāla* (Puruṣōttamannāyar 1981: 35–36 and note), and still occurs as late as the sixteenth century in the *Teṅkailanāthodayam* (Nīlakaṇṭhakavi 1990: 42).
14. Marr 1985.
15. Bālakṛṣṇan 1987; Rajan Gurukkal 1992; Narayanan 1996.
16. Sreedhara Menon [1967] 1980.

for Cēra imperium.[17] These historical issues are too complex (and murky) to recount in detail here, but the debate itself is critical to how we construe the developmental intersection of language, literature, and regional identity in Kerala.[18] The interpretation of the ambiguous inscriptional record from the early ninth through the twelfth centuries runs the gamut from claims for a centrally integrated, dynastic Cēra kingdom to a fragmented array of local chiefdoms, either anarchically jostling with each other or held in check by a loose Tamil hegemony.

Whatever the historical realities behind the variously conceived Cēra era, the language at an official level was certainly a variety of Tamil, and there is no literature preserved from this period that significantly marks out a linguistically or literarily independent Kerala-based identity. So if this era was indeed "the key period in Kerala history since it was the formative period of all that is distinctive in Kerala society and culture,"[19] one might expect to find preserved from these three centuries of glory some literary expression from the local language. Instead, all we find are a scattering of Sanskrit works affiliated with Kerala courts, a handful of devotional works in the contemporary literary Tamil attributed to Kerala kings (but surviving only in Tamilnadu), and the language of the local inscriptions, which looks a lot like a diverging dialect of Tamil.[20]

17. The best and only case for such an integrated and relatively continuous political formation can be worked out with difficulty and creative imagination from the inscriptions. Narayanan is the most optimistic in this regard (1996), but see the more guarded assessment of the same materials by Rajan Gurukkal (1992), as well as Narayanan's recasting of his own work's significance in a recent retrospective account (2001).

18 The historical question really becomes that of what the major dynamics of literary-cultural transformation were in Kerala and when their effects were manifest. Narayanan's recent synoptic article (1999) seems to still emphasize as most culturally significant an early Brahman hegemony established during the second Cēra dynasty, followed by a late (sixteenth century) *bhakti* "liberation" of the Shudras. Raghava Variyar (1990, 1997), however, would seem to focus more on the post-dynastic period of breakdown into "feudal" polities as that during which Kerala's linguistic and literary patterns gradually took shape. See the discussion over the following paragraphs.

19. Narayanan 1996: vi.

20. Treatments of the inscriptional language with variable comparison with the literary sources can be found in Ramaswami Aiyar [1936] 1983; Sekhar 1953; and Ratnamma 1994a and 1994b. While I have attempted in the present essay to cleave as closely as possible to the "literary cultures" theme of our volume, a more complete anthropological assessment of the larger culture of language and literacy behind the literary practices remains a desideratum. The existing treatments of the inscriptions are narrowly linguistic and generally lack a critical sociocultural perspective. The treatments of prose tend to focus on the literary varieties, rather than the mundane, and tend to *assume* the unity of their object of study (e.g., Gōpālakṛṣṇan 1999); an intriguing exception to this remains the controversial theory of socially stratified literary registers (to put it in modern parlance) by C. L. Āṇṭaṇi [1958] 1984.

Whether we accept a period of centralization as characterizing the existence of a great Cēra imperium or not, there is no dispute that the actual later medieval Kerala that gave rise to Manipravalam and Keralabhasha literary works was one of fractionated territories, ruled over by kings or chiefs whose powers extended only over their local holdings.[21] As suggested earlier, what I find especially interesting is that in the absence of any unified polity, a cultural formation could and did emerge over most of what we today consider Kerala, expressed in an amalgam of literary and cultural institutions whose larger structures encompassed the rise, fall, fission, and fusion of political constituents. Much of this had to do with the role of Brahmanical culture in this milieu and the peculiar and special role that temples and their culture came to play in the creation and circulation of the literature we have come to call Malayalam.[22]

Politically, courtly centers seem for the most part to have been weak and unstable. Ruling families were weakened from their outset by a series of constituent lineages that held territories in their own names. Furthermore, the so-called palaces tended to shift locale across the generations as age-rules of succession threw first one, then another, junior lineage into office. It was the patchwork of socially and ritually linked temples that seem to have provided the more stable grid around which cultural life, including courtly life itself, was arrayed.[23] This is not to suggest that religious values rather than political power held sway, but rather that both were intertwined in ways that challenge our usual secular, material thinking about power. The result of this tangled formation—where kings might regularly be patrons of temples in each others' territories, and where some Brahmans ruled temple amalgams as virtually sovereign kingdoms—was the emergence of a larger sphere of suprapolitical interaction, a kind of federation between temple institutions and their courtly supporters at the level of literary and religious culture.

IDIOMS OF SCHOLARLY CONSTRUCTION: THE FAMILIAL AND THE FLUVIAL

The imperative to construe the history of language and literature in Kerala as the story of the indigenous medium and genius of Malayalam, despite recognition of its thorough imbrication with Tamil, has led modern local scholars to search for tropes around which to organize their master narratives. The missionary grammarians had suggested that Tamil was the parent language of the Dravidian family and that Malayalam was one of its offspring. Given the tendency to feminize the languages of South Asia, Malayalam was

21. Bālakr̥ṣṇan 1987; Raghava Variyar and Rajan Gurukkal 1992.
22. Rajan Gurukkal 1992.
23. Rajan Gurukkal 1992.

referred to as the daughter of Tamil, and the latter was viewed as Malayalam's mother.[24]

This familial model brings me back to the *Līlātilakam,* for this text provides the only premodern metadiscourse on these linguistic relations. Following its modern rediscovery and publishing, it has thus been used to frame the terms of debate in which all subsequent discussion of Malayalam has grown. In this text the recognition of the discreteness of Keralabhasha, developed through a sophisticated grammatical demonstration, is posed in explicit contrast with the Tamil of the Pāṇḍya and Cōḻa kingdoms. This demonstration was seized upon by modern Kerala scholars to counter both the conclusions of missionary-linguists that Malayalam was merely a late offshoot and little more than a degraded dialect of Tamil, and those of Tamil revivalists who caricatured Malayalam as an absurdly nasalized dialect that had sold out its Tamil heritage to the forces of Brahmanical Sanskrit. The project thus became one of both shoring up and proving the discreteness of Malayalam announced in the *Līlātilakam,* and tracing these patterns as far back in time as possible through the literature to lend as great an antiquity as possible to the project of a Kerala identity.

With the positioning of Malayalam in a triangular relation with Tamil and Sanskrit—to one of which it was genetically related and to one of which it was not—a more fluid image of the relationship seemed desirable. In answer to this need, the fluvial metaphor of the "three streams" emerged as a narrative trope that has come to dominate modern Malayalam literary histories. This narrative seeks to substantiate how, despite its initial literary invisibility, Malayalam had an ancient, popular existence among the people of Kerala. Though historically it flowed between or within the other, more literarily visible streams of Tamil and Sanskrit, Malayalam eventually emerged in its own shimmering genius as the others ebbed away in the Kerala land. The Tamil and Sanskrit streams are sometimes used to refer to these languages themselves, but more often they refer to Tamil-like or Sanskrit-influenced Kerala language forms.

The three streams model directs us to view everything that is positively evaluated as the index of those authentically Malayalam features submerged within the Tamil and Sanskrit streams of Kerala literature, waiting to surface in their own right. In addition to this back-reading of prefigured traits out of the texts themselves, the principal corroborating evidence for this third stream is contemporary folklore. Since this folklore is undatable, it is taken as historically ancient and thus representative *in the past* of the same distinctly and essentially Kerala identity it signifies *in the present*. This particular use of

24. Caldwell [1875] 1976: 19–21; George 1968: 3–4. Morphological evidence on historical linguistic grounds for the theory of Malayalam as a comparatively late (perhaps tenth century) offshoot of Tamil was marshaled by Ramaswami Aiyar [1936] 1983.

folklore and the whole notion of the folk are both clearly traceable to Western discourses that center on a similar configuration of nationalist and modernist concerns with establishing authenticity. Such quests for authenticity have also been tied to the generally populist intellectual movements that see themselves as the vanguard of Kerala's radical politics, championing the masses. It is through this amalgam of issues and their construal that the literary history of Kerala has most often been narratively fashioned.

<center>A PROJECTED DICHOTOMY: MANIPRAVALAM AND PATTU</center>

Less imagistically evocative and more seriously analytical investigations of Kerala literature than those touched on so far have certainly been carried out as well (mostly by linguists), although often still cast within the earlier frameworks. However, these too have resorted necessarily to the *Līlātilakam* as the only premodern discourse on the nature of Kerala language and the literary uses to which it was put. The result is frequently a dichotomous analysis of linguistic and literary form, sometimes in caste or even ethnic terms, that too often just remaps the division into "streams" through the mechanics of language.

Structurally, the *Līlātilakam* is a series of aphoristic *sūtra*s in Sanskrit with an autocommentary, also in Sanskrit, exemplified by verses in the language it sets out to establish: Manipravalam. The text takes great pains to define this language and its literature as consisting of the proper union *(yoga)* of Sanskrit and Keralabhasha, where under the term "union" it applies all of the technical apparatus of Sanskrit literary treatises that processes mundane language into poetry *(kāvya).*

From the large body of poetry that the *Līlātilakam* draws upon in its citations, it is clear that it was inventing neither a new mode of literary expression nor the language in which it was composed. The text was, however, trying to intervene legislatively in the creative process; and it in fact announces itself as the first and only disciplinary treatise *(śāstra)* on this language form. Given that there were a number of other language mixtures, having different proportions and blends of Tamil, Sanskrit, Keralabhasha, and the Prakrits, put together on different principles, one can sense the anxiety with which the *Līlātilakam* sought to exclude all of these from Manipravalam and celebrate itself as a vitally required regulatory text.

The special place that Tamil occupied, with regard to both Kerala's political history and the uniqueness of Tamil's classical, scholarly, and grammatical production, earned it a special construct in the *Līlātilakam.* At the end of the work's first chapter there is a brief characterization of a form called "Pattu" (Pāṭṭu), which the text also admits to being a union of Sanskrit and Keralabhasha, but which it contrasts with its own Manipravalam by a few stipulations. These seem to broadly typify Tamil literature, including the phono-

logical transformations of Sanskrit words into their Dravidian equivalents[25] and the invoking of some markers of Tamil prosody and metrics. The scant features listed, however, hardly serve as an adequate indicator, let alone a definition, of Tamil poetic form. What Kerala scholars have done is to create of this genre designation (if that is what it is) a school or a movement, the "Pattu school," pit it against the "Manipravalam school," and attempt to read these two forward as a great dualism between which all works of Malayalam sought to define themselves.[26] From a historical perspective, however, *pāṭṭu* means simply "song," and many of the subsequent works and forms of Kerala literature bear this name in their titles. These many later texts clearly had no aspirations to Tamil classicality at all, but rather followed local trends in metrical composition, style, and content. Moreover, all of them made full use of Sanskrit phonology, freely borrowing lexical and occasionally even grammatical elements from that language as well. In addition, the *Rāmacaritam*, until recently the only work that even roughly fit the *Līlātilakam*'s Pattu taxon, does not designate itself as such, and neither does the other, recently discovered work, the *Tiruniḷalmāla*.

There is, then, a basic asymmetry between the designations "Manipravalam" and "Pattu." Most of the works (excepting some technical treatises) that describe themselves as Manipravalam conform to the metrics and poetics of Sanskrit. "Pattu," however, seems not to have been analogously used, and those works classed as such by contemporary scholarship have in common only their composition in non-Sanskritic, though also non-Tamil, meters. Furthermore, Manipravalam works also made extensive use of these same non-Sanskrit local meters, under the guise of prose *(gadyam).* I thus would contend that there is little historical basis for positing Pattu as a self-designated and conscious movement of literary production, that its descriptive basis is largely in negative contrast with Manipravalam, and that its real function is only to reify contemporary narratives of indigenism by providing them with a categorical taxon. This is not to deny the whole field of extra- or even counter-Sanskritic literary production; rather, it is to suggest that a far stronger descriptive basis needs to be established in demonstrating how these works either cohere or diverge from each other and from those works comprising the supposedly disjunctive category of Manipravalam.

25. The use of "Dravidian" *(dramiḍa)* here is not anachronistic; the text itself uses the term in a number of cross-cutting references, including relating the phonology of Tamil to Pattu (Freeman 1998).

26. In keeping with the "three streams" idiom, the scholar C. A. Menon suggested positing a third school, the Pacca Malayalam school, or "Pure Malayalam school," which he saw represented by the folk literature (George 1968: 16). Most scholars have not followed him in reading this into the earlier literature as an analytic tool, though there have been recurrent attempts in modern poetry and prose to create a *pacca* (lit. green, or fresh) or *tani* (pure) Malayalam, shorn of Sanskrit metrics and vocabulary (Paramēśvarayyar 1955b: 458–461, 546–548).

While the instance of Pattu forms the main contrastive type for modern scholarship, in the *Līlātilakam* itself more energy is expended over other types of mixed language *(bhāṣāmiśra)* in use that do not conform to the text's stipulations. On the one hand, there is clear reference to all those performative forms of hybrid language that were popularized through the temple arts—forms that, as I argue later, were far more central to the actual propagation and spread of innovations in the language (including a massive Sanskritization) than were the more pedantically literary concerns with scholarly standards evidenced in the *Līlātilakam.* In fact, these performative genres are undoubtedly central to and constitutive of most of what we would chart today as Malayalam literature, though the *Līlātilakam* would exclude these on taxonomic grounds. On the other hand—and quite against the usual divide in the Sanskritic world between literary and nonliterary language forms—the *Līlātilakam* must defend the inclusion of purely mundane and technical treatises (i.e., works in both verse and prose on astrology, medicine, etc.) on the grounds that they bear the name Manipravalam in their title.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF CASTE

The peculiarities of Kerala's medieval sociopolitical system produced an equally unique inflection of the pan-Indian caste system, whose importance for the literary culture of this region was underscored in the introduction to this chapter. The major structural oddity, largely shared across south India, was that the four-fold *varṇa* system that ranked the nonpolluting castes elsewhere in India was here collapsed into the two categories at each end: the Brahmans and the rest of the "clean" castes, who were in some notional sense Shudras. Nambūtiri Brahmans, the only indigenous Brahmans of Kerala, had a peculiar system of primogeniture to prevent partition of their holdings through natural increase: only the eldest male could legitimately marry a Nambūtiri woman and produce Nambūtiri heirs. The younger males all had casual sexual liaisons with a variety of Shudra women. The offspring belonged legitimately to the women's families, most of whom reckoned descent matrilineally but were excluded from any claims on their genitors or their estates.

Intervening between the Nambūtiris and Shudras, however, and marking the social prominence of the temple in Kerala, was a small but culturally important caste category special to Kerala, the Ambalavāsis. As their name (lit. temple-dwellers) suggests, these were special temple-servant castes, whose livelihoods derived from a variety of services to these institutions. Their women had the same sort of sexual arrangements with Nambūtiris as did the regular Shudras, but their attachment to temples meant that the children had much more regular and sustained contact with Brahmanical culture.

Among these castes were the Cākyārs, who performed Sanskrit plays and other artistic genres in the temple theaters, and the Nambyārs, musician accompanists to the Cākyārs, whose women were actresses with whom the Cākyār males also had liaisons. Other Ambalavāsis were castes such as Vāriyars and Piṣārōṭis, among whom were reckoned numbers of accomplished Sanskritists as well.

The dominant Shudra caste—and the politically and economically dominant caste-grouping in Kerala—was the soldiery, called Nāyars. They were permitted entry to temples but were not as intimately involved in the Nambūtiri cultural formation as were the temple servants. Below the Shudras were the *avarṇar,* those polluting castes without *varṇa* status who formed close to half the Hindu population, were banned from proximity to the temple, and whose touch and even approach within fixed scales of distance polluted the clean castes. Their parallel system of shrines and festivals was the vibrant arena for indigenous, Dravidian cultural forms. The Nāyars dominated and managed these polluting castes, who were the productive agricultural labor force, and often their religious and cultural activities as well. On the one hand, the Nāyars gave their women to Brahmans, were often sired by them, and participated significantly in the high cultural functions of the temple; on the other hand, their practical involvement with the lower castes led them to adopt or retain many of the cultural customs of these latter groups. In many ways they thus mediated between the Sanskrit institutions of Brahmanism and the Dravidian institutions in which their linguistic and cultural identities were firmly rooted.

THE CLAIMS FOR AN ANTIQUE FOLKLORE

We have seen that one of the genre constructs used in charting and differentiating the historically constituent strata of Malayalam is folk literature and its claims to an unsullied antiquity at some essential level, despite its imbrication with Sanskrit and Tamil. There can of course be no direct linguistic or historical attestation of this, given that the very category depends on its content being unrecorded. Instead, there can only be indirect suppositions construed in light of the patterns of current oral literature and read from the kinds and trajectories of changes in the recorded literature, suggesting such influences at work outside the inscriptional culture. At its extreme, this entails reading contemporary folklore as harboring the earliest Malayalam.[27] Aside from the obvious problems of a timeless essentialism rooted in a regional-nationalist folklore, a methodological problem arises concerning which features of language—ranging from phonemes to literary themes—

---

27. George 1968: 16–28.

one chooses as essentially indicative of language identity, persisting through the variability of other features. And this again clearly impinges on the problems of genre.

Once we reject the notion of a single language in favor of an array of language varieties anchored to different social communities and working in different contexts, whose production and relations to each other shift through time, we are able to recuperate aspects of the folkloric model for our reconstructive project under a more sociohistorically informed semiotic. The following are, in brief, instances of literate and nonliterate interactions, one around a specific text and another around a whole cultural complex I have researched in ethnohistorical terms.

Herman Gundert, the great nineteenth-century lexicographer and grammarian of Malayalam, considered the *Payyannūr Pāṭṭu* one of the earliest specimens of the language. This partially recovered text, dated now to perhaps the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, is a devotional ballad to a local goddess.[28] A unique feature of the text's social identity is its setting in a merchant community. Equally unique at the linguistic level is its composition in highly nonstandard conventions of inscription, wherein the vowels seem promiscuously lengthened and shortened, and many features look like the transcription of an oral recitation. Metrically, this vowel deviance seems to mark a beat *(tāḷam),* suggesting that this was a performance text, probably used for a festival celebrating as a goddess the narrative's apparently apotheosized heroine. Even more intriguing, scholars have long lamented that the text is incomplete, since it breaks off well before the story of the goddess's human origins from a girl of the merchant caste concludes; it has recently been discovered, however, that the remainder of the story is taken up and completed in a version preserved as oral literature in an exorcism rite among a washerman caste of the region. Members of this same caste are performers of the possessed dance rituals of *teyyāṭṭam,* the most popular mode of worshipping local deities in this region of northern Kerala,[29] which clearly suggests that the washermen's preservation of this goddess and her story dates back to a time when they performed her rituals for this merchant community. This case exemplifies not only the feedback between oral and written textuality—the *Payyannūr Pāṭṭu* standing formally as a historical hybrid between the two—but the kind of community-based and relational authorship that can persist in the construction of such literature across centuries.

28. This text was reported and excerpted by Gundert in publications of the last part of the nineteenth century, but Kerala scholars subsequently lost track of it. Though it was clearly described and catalogued as part of the Gundert archive at Tübingen, it was only recently rediscovered there by Scaria Zacharia and published (Āṇṭaṇi 1994).

29. Āṇṭaṇi 1994: 51–56.

I would further assert, however, that even in the absence of such written documentation it is methodologically possible to correlate characteristic patterns of language use with different social constituencies, and that an ethnohistorical reconstruction of the social relations mapped into folklore can be highly pertinent to our understanding of textualized production. I have worked for many years with this lower-caste possession cult of *teyyāṭṭam,* which preserves in the liturgies of the local gods it celebrates a remarkably rich corpus of earlier forms of folk literature. In a number of these corpora, higher-caste and Sanskrit-learned patrons apparently composed original works for these deities that were incorporated into the liturgies.[30] Often these are amalgamated with other strata of texts that are clearly earlier, in terms of logical narrative and contextual relations, and are linguistically marked as being in lower-caste dialects. Thus we have good evidence for how some of the productions from elite circles could find their way across the caste barrier and into a wider sphere of circulation. Moreover, low-caste performers apparently learned in this way to imitate higher compositional styles in the production of their own texts, though often the mimetic aspects remain linguistically or thematically apparent.

Movement also went the other way, however, as the very existence of Manipravalam and its use for literature by the higher castes shows. There can be little doubt that a persisting interaction between literate and nonliterate textual practices characterized the entire development of Malayalam literature, but it is only through recognizing this influence as mutual and by historicizing specific interactions that folklore can provide any significant data. Aside from these specific concerns with the use of folklore, however, such cases are useful in alerting us to the complexity of differently positioned interests, voices, and access to cultural resources at play through the shifting genres of Kerala's literary history.

In the remainder of this chapter I attempt to chart these genres in a roughly chronological framework, keeping in mind that the multiple and sometimes discrete lines of development across social strata and region may not always conform to a neatly stadial temporal progression.

VAIŚIKATANTRAM AND COURTESAN CULTURE

The *Līlātilakam*'s attempts at the close of the fourteenth century to lay out a comprehensive grammatical and poetic apparatus for defining and stipulating the structure of Manipravalam seem to have been mounted only after a couple of centuries of literary production in this medium. It is difficult to tell how much normative regulation was exercised over this literature be-

---

30. Bālakr̥ṣṇan Nāyar 1981: 100–101.

fore the *Līlātilakam,* or how the standards therein were established, but I am certain there was more variability and experimentation both before and after the *Līlātilakam* than the typological imperatives of modernist scholarship recognize. Since my approach to reconstructing a literary culture is modeled on ethnography, one of my principal interests is to get at the socially situated intentions of authors and audiences. In thus attempting to read what I can of the historical circumstances that find their way into historical inscription, I hope to illuminate the cultural motivations that made certain narrative and literary themes part of the life-world of these works.

The embarrassment that the life-world of Manipravalam texts occasions today has been one of the major stumbling blocks for the contemporary constructions of Kerala's literary history. From the earliest works through the height of its finest productions, much of Manipravalam literature was devoted to the culture of courtesans. Indeed, the first work we have is the most direct in this regard, being instructions from a courtesan to her daughter. It is not clear how coherent a single work this collection of stanzas, titled *Vaiśikatantram* (The courtesan's treatise), actually was, for it has been assembled as such by modern editors from several scattered sources and transcriptions of fragmentary manuscripts.[31] While there is no narrative structure per se, most of these verses were probably ordered more or less as reconstructed, since the work is in the voice of a single named narrator to her daughter. It has been dated anywhere from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, the latter being more likely. The *Līlātilakam* cites the *Vaiśikatantram* several times, and its verses were apparently in wide circulation, cropping up in several different works.

Aside from the problems it raises for modern Indian sexual sensibilities, the text's context brings up a number of interesting historical issues. The existence of this courtesan milieu itself should give us some insights into the culture in which this text circulated, not just regionally but perhaps in the wider Sanskrit cosmopolis, for the text reportedly draws upon traditions that preceded it in Karnāṭaka in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These traditions were represented by such works as Nēmicandran's *Līlāvati,* Kavikaman's *Stanaśatakam,* Jannan's *Samaratantram,* and Aṇḍayya's *Madanavijayam.* These, in turn, recall Dāmodaragupta's *Kuṭṭanīmata* of early ninth-century Kashmir, which perhaps goes back to developments out of the *Kāmasūtra* and *Nāṭyaśāstra.*[32] To contextualize Kerala's regional realization of these urbane models, we will have to await what promises to be a fine-grained study of this Manipravalam literature by historian M. R. Raghava Variyar and one of his students, who are currently at work on this project.

As an anthropologist, however, I do wish to remark on some rather evi-

---

31. Rāmacandran Nāyar 1969.

32. I. Kuññanpiḷḷa [1958] 1984b: 228; Vēlāyudhan Piḷḷa 1966: 96. On the *Kuṭṭanīmata,* see Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

dent continua in social relations that seemed to characterize many medieval south Indian societies, including that of Kerala. As Dumont noted long ago, there do seem to be continuities between patterns of hypergamous marriage in Dravidian kinship and the ritual marriages to gods that religiously sanctify the amalgam of *devadāsi* traditions.[33] The most famous of these routinized systems of ritual marriage was in fact the *sambandham* relations between Nāyar women and Brahman men in Kerala. These were characterized by a woman first undergoing a ritual marriage, after which she was free to exercise her sexual prerogatives among any number of Brahmans and other high-caste men as she wished. This clearly maps the similar ritual-connubial trajectory we find under *devadāsi* systems. Considering, moreover, that the women celebrated in Manipravalam were accomplished artists in association with temples, and that they were termed *acci,* the same word used for Nāyar women, we can reasonably posit that the *sambandham* relations known to ethnography are domesticated transforms of the *devadāsi* system.

In terms of the literary culture and its creative role in shaping these socioritual relations, an evident function of this literature was to praise the institutions of courtesanship and the women who comprised it, and to celebrate as well their lineage in royal families and their connections with famous temples, Brahmans, and other wealthy notables. The *Vaiśikatantram* in fact opens with the young girl's mother expressing her pride in their fine lineage and tradition.[34]

If there is indeed an integral connection between Manipravalam as a form of language and the themes of courtesan relations, as a later anthology (the *Padyaratnam*) claims, then the *Vaiśikatantram* does exemplify this correlation fairly well. For the most part, the language is grammatically good Manipravalam as described by the *Līlātilakam,* though there are a number of interesting divergences on stylistic grounds. For instance, while a number of Sanskrit grammatical forms are employed, the proportion of Sanskrit lexical items used in comparison with later Manipravalam works is fairly meager. In fact, one verse contains no proper Sanskrit word at all, a case that the *Līlātilakam* specially addresses in terms of the requisite mixture of Sanskrit and Keralabhasha that defines Manipravalam. There are also cases where phonological deviations from Sanskrit of the Tamil type *(āriyaccitavu)* that are forbidden by the *Līlātilakam* occur. Lexically, there are many common Malayalam words that seem neither Tamilized nor archaic but, rather, seem to be indigenous forms in daily use.[35] Correspondingly, almost all the imagery and scenarios are taken from the Kerala landscape and social setting, without puranic allusions or Sanskrit figures of speech or sense:

33. Dumont 1961.
34. Vēlāyudhan Piḷḷa 1966: 76.
35. Vēlāyudhan Piḷḷa 1966: 79–80, 83–86.

> One can't draw a livelihood from those who are poor;
> A tank is not filled by the falling of dew.[36]

These features lead a prominent scholar on this text to conclude that the author may have been not a Brahman but a member of another of the upper three castes.[37] There is a central focus on wealth running through the *Vaiśikatantram,* in keeping, of course, with the professional bias of the text, yet this also suggests that perhaps the clientele were primarily not agriculturalists but a mercantile segment of society. As also in the works considered in the next section, recurrent scenarios of bustling markets and all their commodities and persons, unwholesome from the Brahmanical point of view, are wrought in loving detail through the courtesan pieces. I find attractive the suggestion that there was perhaps a mercantile hand in this literature, in addition to the elements contributed by the other elite sectors of society.

THE EARLY COURTESAN *CAMPU*S

Three works of Manipravalam spanning the late thirteenth to late fourteenth centuries are usually grouped together because of their common theme and style. They are included in the more extensive genre known in Malayalam as *campu* and, as in the Sanskrit *campū* (from which the genre derives), are formally constructed of mixed poetry and prose passages. Contemporary scholarship knows these three works collectively as the *accicaritam*s, the "stories of *acci*s," for they are dedicated to the courtesans after which they are named, and one of them, the *Uṇṇiyaccicaritam* (Story of Uṇṇiyacci), contains the social designation *acci* in the woman's name. As mentioned earlier, *acci* means, or has come to mean, a woman of the Nāyar caste, a point to which I return shortly.

Professionally, the women to whom these works are dedicated were dancers and courtesans, apparently connected to temples as *devadāsi*s, "servants of the deity." Prominent in these compositions are poetic descriptions of the heroines' beauty and attributes, though these descriptive celebrations are embedded in narratives that weave divine beings into the plot as interlocutors and participants. The plots, thin and contrived as they seem, are nevertheless original to these works and do not seem to draw upon epic, puranic, or existing dramatic models from the Sanskrit tradition. In fact, they seem to be modeled closely on each other, which indicates that there were shared narrative and thematic standards as part of the literary culture in and through which these works circulated.

---

36. Vēlāyudhan Piḷḷa 1966: 85. All translations from the Malayalam or Sanskrit, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

37. Vēlāyudhan Piḷḷa 1966: 86.

The plots usually prompt complaint from scholars. They seem merely the pretext for travel in and around the courtesans' locales, yielding elaborate descriptions of routes, local communities, and so on. Assuming that the eulogy of the damsel is the principal objective of these pieces, critics note that "while attempting to analyze the structural pattern of these works one is baffled by the profusion of extraneous elements the authors bring in."[38] If we compare these elements across the texts, however, the continuities among these "extraneous elements" and their thematization become clear. It indeed appears that one of the very points of this literature is to *figure territory,* to lay out a series of places in relation to each other. The places featured most prominently, besides the homestead of the heroine, are temples, palaces, and markets. While the settlement pattern of Kerala disfavors the dense centralizations we would usually call urban, the areas that come closest in cultural capital feature prominently in these works. The various communities and groups associated with these settings are conspicuously presented as well: local chiefs, religious leaders attached to temples and Brahman settlements, the soldiery, and the merchants who throng the marketplaces, in addition to the courtesans and their families. It seems reasonable that the sets of elements shared across these works served to represent the patronage base of this literature itself and the spatial locales marking the terrain over which this base was distributed.

While the institutional relations between Brahmanical temples, royal palaces, and the sexual politics of courtesans define a general problematic in Kerala's cultural history to which I later return, these three early courtesan poems serve to additionally highlight the importance of mercantile life in the region. Whereas the major anthropological debates on the nature and constitution of caste society have concerned the relative importance of priestly religion versus courtly power, these works lend an additional emphasis to the marketplace. The *accicaritam*s thus support the observation made around the *Vaiśikatantram* to suggest that against the usually exclusive attribution of this literature and its milieu to Brahmanical licentiousness, there may have been considerable mercantile influence present in the courtesan culture as well. This prominence is in keeping with what we have always known of Kerala as a trading society with longstanding links both to other regions of India and, through maritime trade, to the rest of the world.

THE EARLIEST PATTUS: *TIRUNIḺALMĀLA* AND *RĀMACARITAM*

At this point we need to backtrack a century or so to pick up works that have fallen in the other "stream" of Malayalam, if we choose to accept the desig-

---

38. Rāmacandran Nāyar 1971: 112.

nation of Pattu as subsuming what is assigned to it. In certain respects it seems fairly easy to dismiss this taxon, since until very recently there was only one known work to justify its existence: the famous *Rāmacaritam* (Story of Rāma). This text has been a central battleground on which the issues of language membership and affiliation have been contested. It has been variously declared the oldest poem in Malayalam, dismissed as a work of Tamil, and analyzed as an artificial Tamil-Malayalam hybrid peculiar to the southern region of Kerala and so not really representative of Malayalam.[39] The eventual consensus, however, is that this thirteenth-to-fourteenth-century work is the paragon of the *Līlātilakam*'s description of Pattu. Most prominently, it uses only Dravidian graphology (of the Vaṭṭeḻuttu script), thereby turning its Sanskrit lexical borrowings into phonologically Dravidian forms. Despite the fact that in certain other respects the text does not conform very well to the *Līlātilakam*'s description, its paradigmatic status allows other features of this single text to be extrapolated into speculations about what the nature of the whole genre of Pattu must have been.

The exclusive membership of the *Rāmacaritam* in the category of Pattu allowed it to define the content of Pattu works thematically: they all must have been renditions of the Sanskrit epics and *purāṇa*s. This is indeed the thematic criterion by which all subsequent works in local meters came to be called Pattu in the histories of the literature, though they conformed in few if any other respects to the *Līlātilakam*'s criteria. This thematic pertinence to puranic religion, especially against the morally scandalous courtesan culture of most early Manipravalam works, has further been embraced as the true indigenous Kerala or Dravidian literary aspiration, in contrast to the lascivious imperatives of Brahmanical debauchery.

The long and solitary reign of the *Rāmacaritam* should have been broken in 1980, when Puruṣōttaman Nāyar discovered and published a work solidly in the Pattu style, complete with local meters and an exclusively Dravidian orthography, that probably predates the *Rāmacaritam* by a century or so.[40] Oddly, however, this work, called the *Tiruniḷalmāla* (Garland of the sacred shade)— of enormous significance for the rethinking of Malayalam literature—has gone relatively uncelebrated, and it may take some years for its true import to be registered.[41] Most significant thematically, perhaps, is that its central topic is not Sanskritic at all, but is descriptive of the ritual life of a local temple. What is ethnohistorically so remarkable is that it focuses on the rituals of what are later a polluting caste, the Malayar. For an anthropologist this

---

39. George 1956.

40. Puruṣōttamannāyar 1981.

41. It is gratifying to find that M. Līlāvati's new edition of her history devotes some space to this work and its importance (1996: 26–30) and that at least one scholar other than the editor of this work has undertaken a serious analysis of its language (Vijayappan 1995).

makes the *Tiruniḻalmāla* one of the most significant works in the history of Kerala literature, since with the recently rediscovered *Payyannūr Pāṭṭu* we now have two major works whose social settings provide textually grounded vantage points into the subaltern communities of premodernity.

But if the *Tiruniḻalmāla* is in some sense about subalterns, it is almost certainly not by them. While it seems lexically even less Sanskritic than the *Rāmacaritam,* there are a number of motifs and invocations that suggest a high-caste if not Brahmanical authorship.[42] Of course, even where present, the Sanskrit lexicon is masked by its remapping into Dravidian phonology implemented through the script. On the other hand, many Sanskrit letters crop up intermittently in the manuscripts, suggesting that a process of substitution may have been under way in transcription, and showing that copyists knew the "correct" Sanskrit forms and had begun replacing what the Sanskrit calls *tadbhava*s and the Tamil tradition (and *Līlātilakam,* once) calls *āriyaccitavu* (deviations from the Āryan).

While at the narrative level this text is largely independent of any puranic models of imitation, the religious attribution of Pattu is perhaps thematically more powerful, given its construction around temple rituals and regional relations of worship. Indeed, with its pronounced Vaiṣṇava focus on temples, it appears rather as we would expect a Kerala version of a Tamil-inspired *bhakti* text of that period to look. This indeed gains some support by the work's mention of the famous Tamil poet, Kamban (Kampanāṭen), as one of its exemplars.[43] At the microlevel of its thematics, however, the *Tiruniḻalmāla* does show a high degree of puranic embeddedness in its worldview, for it contains the earliest instance in Kerala language of the myth of Paraśurāma founding Malanāṭu, linked with the associated puranic geography of India and the sixty-four communities of Kerala Brahmans. The claim for divine settlement of Brahmans in Kerala thus has a deeper antiquity than was formerly thought to obtain on the basis of the later *Kēraḷōtpatti* tradition. The view of missionary scholars, followed ever since by anti-Brahmanical commentators, is that these charter myths were the eighteenth-century invention of wily priests writing in decadent medieval courts to secure their hold over Kerala's lands.[44]

The focus of the *Tiruniḻalmāla* itself is on the Āṟanmuḷa temple, which, with its nearby, affiliated temples, includes five of the thirteen sacred places

42. I base my surmise on the developed presence of puranic and Sanskritic allusions; the editor of the work similarly concludes that the poet traces his lineage through Brahmans (Puruṣōttamannāyar 1981: 33). Another scholar of this text, however, opines that the text's celebration of sacrificial rites by the Malayan caste precludes the author from high-caste status (Vijayappan 1995: 63–64).

43. Puruṣōttamannāyar 1981: 32; and see Cutler, chapter 4, this volume.

44. Sreedhara Menon [1967] 1980: 13, though cf. Raghava Variyar 1984 and Narayanan 1996.

(divyadēśa) of Kerala as celebrated in the Tamil Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* canon. The main rites described, though, are neither Sanskritic nor those of the Tamil *āgama*s, but rather are folk rites to remove the various impurities *(dōṣa)* of the deities performed by a caste that is now prominently found only in the northern end of Kerala. Interestingly, this is also where the manuscripts came from, despite Āṟanmuḷa's location in south-central Kerala.

In the text there are not only extended descriptions of the temple and its environs, but also elaborations on the families of the temple-villages' owners *(ūrāḷar)* and the protecting soldiery. Though in a highly literary idiom, these aggregate themes seem very much like ritual texts I know from the folk literature, and my overall impression of this text is that it marks the defining instance of a typically Kerala-Tamil religiosity rooted in the rites of localized temples mutating under the influence of a Sanskritically Brahmanical paradigm.

Indeed, in the text's own reflections on the genesis of its literary culture, we find a conscious awareness of the fusing of Sanskrit and Tamil traditions in the image of a poetic harvest:

> In the land of Jambu, which is surrounded and washed by the four
>> oceans,
> There in the fields rich with beauty [or "speech"] came the plowman,
>> Vālmīki.
> And in his beneficence he sowed the seed of poetry in plenty.
> And when these had variously sprouted and grown up, flourishing in
>> their spread,
> Vyāsa saw to it that they were severally divided into the *purāṇa*s.
> Then the earth's surface was suitably cordoned off with fencing,
> And when the grain came to fruition, Kālidāsa arrived,
> And there arose great kings of poetry on the scene, one after another.
> Here and there from among these rice plants, plucking and gathering
>> these together,
> The well-equipped Agastya declared the tradition for his Tamil poetry.
> That very Tamil poetry was used by the beautiful Kamban,
> Who composed that which is the most valuable in this whole wide world.
> And then that Tamil poetry, which had risen to its highest level,
> Was established in Malanāṭu, among those of Kuṟumūr Paḷḷi.
> Those great ones, when they composed in it, found its fulfillment.[45]

In this evident charter for the poet-author's school, the Sanskrit tradition has fused with the Tamil tradition and found manifestation in a line of Kuṟumūr Paḷḷi gurus (of whom we know nothing) in the land of Malanāṭu, which we now call Kerala. I have written at greater length about the regional and class politics of negotiating this fusion within the elite space of grammatical

---

45. Puruṣōttamannāyar 1981: 31–32.

poetics laid out in the later *Līlātilakam.*[46] As the earliest explicit instance of blurring language and poetic boundaries in Kerala, however, worked out in a substantively creative work of great social significance, the *Tiruniḻalmāla* deserves a whole monograph in itself, a project that I hope to take up in the future.

Since the *Rāmacaritam* and *Tiruniḻalmāla* are the earliest, purest exemplars of the so-called Pattu works, and both are dedicated to the celebration of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti,* we might expect them to show close generic affinities to each other; instead, there are significant thematic divergences between them. First, while the *Rāmacaritam* is an evident adaptation of the Vālmīki's pan-Indic epic, the *Tiruniḻalmāla,* like the *acci* poems, takes up imaginatively descriptive scenes and activities that are locally rooted in Kerala. The sentimental structure of *bhakti* in the *Rāmacaritam* is rather different from that of the *Tiruniḻalmāla* as well. Though the entirety of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative is related through the course of the *Rāmacaritam,* this is accomplished through flashbacks and fill-ins that are woven through a recasting of the whole epic in the framework of the single chapter of war (the Yuddhakāṇḍa) of the original. Thus the ethos of militant combat tends to be heightened as a central expression of devotion in an aesthetic that is obvious from the following verses, describing the effects of Rāma's arrows on his demonic enemies:

> Many shining arrows went swiftly and continuously
> To plunge into the bodies of those foes who surrounded him to fight.
> They were terrorized, as on every side of the battlefield
> The gore and corpses mounted through their great destruction.
> The earth was thickly adorned with corpses and gore,
> And as the great warriors advanced, striving to search him out and do
>   battle with him,
> They could not even glimpse him without being struck by this King of
>   king's arrows. . . .
> Numbers of corpses, severed of their heads, entwined with each other in
>   a fine, frenzied dance. . . .
> As their lives were spent on the field of battle,
> And the bodies of those forces were rent in destruction, one on top of
>   another,
> Wherever one turned the river of blood sent its courses in numbers
>   beyond reckoning.
> The bow's sound reverberated ceaselessly, and like the fire of lightning
>   that spreads through a forest, grief made its way everywhere through
>   their ranks.
> With anguish in their hearts, the demons were in every direction
>   overwhelmed.[47]

46. Freeman 1998.
47. Kṛṣṇan Nāyar 1979: 521–23.

A common surmise has been that the *Rāmacaritam* was written to inspire a Kerala soldiery to battle. While we are not sure how popular the work was, there is evidence that it was ritually recited in northern Kerala.[48] In thematic terms, the text serves to expound that militant spirit of *bhakti* that could be wedded to a glorification of war, in partial contrast to the ritualistic, temple pursuits of the *Tiruniḻalmāla.* Both sets of concerns, however, though differently positioned in society, seem expressions of a fundamentally Dravidian religious culture of *bhakti,* and neither seems expressive of Sanskritically Brahmanic pursuits. While a similar poetics of war is certainly present in classical Sanskrit (consider passages from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa,* for instance), the sheer revelry in gore, and many of the particular images, are more reminiscent of the Tamil *caṅkam* tradition or later Tamil *paraṇi* literature than of Sanskrit *kāvya.* This fact seems to be reflected in the linguistic constitution as well. If we take the last of the verses just cited as an example, we can see how few Sanskritically derived words (in roman font in what follows) there are in this piece:[49]

> a-ppōr-kkaḷa-tt-il uyir-a<u>r</u>-uṭan piḷant-ē
> y-appō<u>ḻ</u> paṭe-kk-a<u>ḻ</u>ivu vant-aḷavu mēn-mēl
> e<u>p</u>-pāka-*v-um tirintu cen-kuruti-y-ā<u>r</u>-āyi*
> y-eṇṇa-<u>p</u>peṭā-va<u>ḻi naṭantana-y-*anēkam*
> e<u>pp</u>ōt-um vill-oli mu<u>ḻ</u>akkavum iṭi-tī
> y-eṅk-um paṭarnt-*aṭavi-nēr paṭai-y-uṭē pāṭ
> e-<u>pp</u>āṭ-um vanta va<u>ḻi</u> kaṇḍ-u<u>ḷḷ</u>-il a<u>ḻ</u>al koṇḍ-
> e<u>ṇ</u>-ḍik-*kil-um kulāint-it-an-*nici-caran-*mār.

ANANTAPURAVARṆṆANAM AND THE
PROBLEM OF RELIGION VERSUS EROTICS

If religiosity is supposed to be the exclusive hallmark of Pattu, against the erotics of early Manipravalam, then the next most ancient work of Manipravalam after the *Vaiśikatantram* presents a clear countercase. This is the *Anantapuravarṇṇanam* (Portrayal of Anantapuram), a descriptive poem centered around the great Viṣṇu temple at what is today Thiruvanathapuram.[50] This work, dating from the first part of fourteenth century, has no direct relation to the courtesan culture and seems in its religious thematics to be of a piece with the earlier *Tiruniḻalmāla,* with which, however, it shares little either lin-

---

48. On the *Rāmacaritam* as inspiration to do battle, see George 1956; on ritual recitation in northern Kerala, see Kṛṣṇan Nāyar 1979: ix–xii.

49. Since not just lexicon but also morphology is critical, I have parsed the verse for both bound and unbound morphological elements.

50. Ś. Kuññanpiḷḷa [1953] 1971; Ratnamma 1986. This work is not alone in showing that poems focused on religion were regularly composed in high Manipravalam. Another poem,

guistically or poetically. It is a classic piece of lexically and metrically Sanskritic Manipravalam, yet, devoid of any erotic engagements, it is ostensibly a devotional piece to the god of this temple, being mostly given over to descriptions of the temple's sacred structures, festivals, and surrounding shrines. In fact it contains what is probably the earliest description of Manipravalam itself in the clear idiom of a religious offering:

> Picking from those blossoms called Tamil and Sanskrit,
> I weave this *iṇḍa*-garland for the worship of the Lotus-Eyed [Viṣṇu].[51]

The garland called *iṇḍa* is made of variegated red and white blossoms (like the interspersed pearls *[maṇi]* and coral *[pravāḷam]* in the image of Manipravalam as a necklace) and is especially favored by the god Viṣṇu. The *Līlātilakam* cites this verse, in fact, as an example of mistaken interpretation of the image entailed in the term "Manipravalam," favoring its own reading of *maṇi* as red rubies, so that the colors, that is, the blending of the languages, will seem of one hue.[52] The *Līlātilakam* almost certainly comes from the same political region of Thiruvanathapuram and falls in the same century as the *Anantapuravarṇṇanam,* so its citation of this text as holding a mistaken view of the very image underlying the name of its literary medium is intriguing.

While the *Līlātilakam* attacks the formal definition of Manipravalam, at the thematic level there is a more direct assault on the religious interpretation of what "Manipravalam" implies in the fourteenth-to-fifteenth-century anthology of short erotic sketches of courtesans now styled the *Padyaratnam* (Gem of verse). In contrast to the imagery of the devotional offering in the *Anantapuravarṇṇanam,* the *Padyaratnam* states point-blank that "This knowledge of Manipravalam . . . has its main concern with bevies of women."[53] My point in citing these divergences in theme and characterization of the language is to demonstrate the significant disagreements even among the small samples of early Manipravalam that are preserved. Very likely, there were significantly different registers and styles of language and aesthetic intent, and the diversity of these forms was much greater than back-reading through the singular extant descriptive work of the *Līlātilakam* has suggested. Indeed, the only other surviving treatise on poetic figures, the *Alaṅkāra-*

---

which I have not managed to inspect, is the roughly contemporaneous *Vāsudēvastavam,* a work of praise on the god Kṛṣṇa (Vāsudeva); there are numerous other such works as well (Līlāvati 1996: 54).

51.

　　tamiḻsaṃskṛtam enṟuḷḷa sumanassukaḷ koṇḍoru
　　iṇḍamāla toṭukkinṟēn puṇḍarīkākṣapūjayā.

52. I have discussed the significance of this imagery at length in Freeman 1998.

53. *maṇipravāḷavidyeyam . . . mahiḷāḷimahāspadā.* See Nārāyaṇappiḷḷa [1949] 1971.

saṃkṣepa, gives a different list and description of these figures than the *Līlāti-lakam,* despite the likelihood that it was composed in the same realm only a few decades later.[54]

In terms of the Pattu-Manipravalam relation, I have noted the considerable overlap in religious themes between the *Tiruniḷalmāla* and the *Ananta-puravarṇṇanam.* On the other hand, erotic themes also find their way into the piety of religious works: the *Tiruniḷalmāla* opens, just as the *accicaritam*s do, with a sensually lush panegyric to the bisexual deity Ardhanarēśvarī. A more general thematic interchange subsequently appears among genres, in that the so-called later Pattu literature loses any anchorage to specific religious locales in Kerala as it shifts over to epic or puranic narrations from Sanskrit, while the later *campu* literature of Manipravalam takes up the eulogizing of local temples in a big way. To a considerable extent, then, reflection on these trends makes the coherence of the bifurcation into the macrogenres of Pattu and Manipravalam through time seem highly doubtful when this is based on the thematic contrasts between religious versus erotic intent. While we do find certain distinctive cohesions of descriptive and thematic elements across poems (as among the *accicaritam*s, etc.), my most general conclusion is that the various levels of language and poetic constituency—from phonology through grammar to lexicon, themes, and metric structure—could and did vary independently of each other across what local scholarship terms the various "movements" *(prasthānam)* of Kerala literature, which I read as experiments tied to diverse or historically shifting social identities.[55]

On the other hand, some microthemes of the *Anantapuravarṇṇanam* point up certain pragmatic linkages of literary works to their social contexts that do seem fairly consistent across texts. In the descriptions and praises of the local rulers and their festival processions, and in the elaborate and thematically tangential description of the marketplace, its diverse communities, and the range of commodities they offer (highly reminiscent of the markets described in the *accicaritam*s), I think we find a common denominator of indexical ties to the patronage base in the political economy. Even the later works in the epic and puranic mode, which engage with pan-Indic characters, inevitably create the occasion to reference a lineage of gurus or suggestively invoke the audience or praise the local and regional kings and chieftains, as we shall see. These references are often oblique because they are effected through subtle poetic allusions that were internal to the milieu of

54. Rāmacandran Nāyar 1971: 177.
55. Modern Malayalam literary histories use the term *prasthānam,* which they translate as "movement" in English, as the nearest analogue to what I think of as genre, as a form of social practice, rather than mere literary form (cf. Hanks 1987). The diagnostic features of such movements in Malayalam literary studies, however, may range from the use of a particular meter to a whole thematic social-literary complex, like the "Romantic movement."

production. While some of these allusions have been preserved for posterity through parallel evidence as to their specific historical referents, we can see that without preservation of this contextual information, we would innocently read over the allusions as natural or incidental aspects of the work.

<div align="center">THE NIRAṆAM POETS</div>

The work of the Niraṇam, or Kaṇṇaśśan, poets, a family of authors working across three generations in middle Travancore from the late fourteenth century and into the fifteenth century, is another example of how the various strata of language and narrative can work independently of each other into a new "movement." At the level of content, these works are rather straightforward adaptations of Sanskrit epic and puranic works. While a certain restructuring of the narrative occurs in parts of several of these, these poets were unquestionably following the Sanskrit originals rather closely . The novel plots and local descriptions characteristic of the *accicaritam*s, the *Anantapuravarṇṇanam,* and the *sandēśakāvya*s of earlier and later Manipravalam are absent.

On grounds of both theme and meter, modern scholars unanimously assign these works to the Pattu taxon. On the other hand, because the restrictions to Dravidian phonology enjoined by the *Līlātilakam* for Pattu are dropped and the entire Sanskrit lexicon is thus opened up in its original, or *tatsama,* forms, certain scholars treat these works by comparing them with Manipravalam works.[56] The major divergence, aside from meter, is that despite the heavy use of Sanskrit *vocabulary,* the Niraṇam works generally eschew the use of Sanskrit *grammatical forms,* which on the other hand thoroughly permeated other, contemporary Manipravalam texts. This is evident in the examples that follow. The first selection is from the late-fourteenth-century *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam,* in high Manipravalam style; the second is from the Niraṇam poet Mādhavappaṇikkar's *Bhagavadgītā* of roughly the same period. (Sanskrit lexical items are in roman font; those with Sanskrit grammatical forms are additionally underlined):

> *taṇḍār-māt-āṇḍ-aḻaku-poḻiyum mikka muṇḍekkal mēvum*
> *vaṇḍār-kōlak-kuḻalikaḷ* <u>śikhām</u> *Uṇṇu-*<u>nīlīm</u> <u>udārām</u>
> *koṇḍ-āṭip-puṇḍ-*aruṇa-maṇi-*vā koṇḍu-koṇḍ-*<u>ātta-rāgam</u>
> *paṇḍē pōlē* <u>param anubhavam ko'pi kāmī jagāma.</u>[57]
>
> atbhūtam-*āyi* amr̥tam-*āyi maṟa nālinu*
> *maṟi-v-āy* akhila-jagat-pūrṇṇa-*v-um-āyi*
> udbhava-maraṇādi-*kaḷ* karaṇādi-*kaḷ*

56. Ś. Kuññanpiḷḷa 1979: 10–12. For an example of the assignment of these works to the Pattu taxon, see Puruṣōttamannāyar 1980: 23–34.

57. I. Kuññanpiḷḷa [1954] 1985b: 39.

> *onninoṭum kūṭāt-oḷi-v-āyē*
> puṣpa-*maṇam pōl* sthāvara-caram-*oṭu*
> *puṇarātē puṇarum poruḷ-āy ni-*
> *nn-eppōḻutum* sac-cit-sukham-*āy ni-*
> *nn-īṭiya* paramātmānam *toḻunnen*.[58]

In contemporary Kerala scholarship this move away from Sanskrit grammatical incorporations is seen as an attempt to save the integrity and naturalness of Malayalam while simultaneously enriching it through Sanskrit lexical contributions. Of course, whether this was indeed a winning back of Dravidian grammar from the Sanskrit colonization represented in Manipravalam, or it represented yet a further stage in selling out Dravidian through embracing Sanskrit orthography and lexicon, depends on which variety of language is the point of comparison for viewing these poets.

Interestingly, the Niraṇam poets themselves simply called the language in which they wrote *bhāṣāmiśram,* "mixed language," which is exactly how the writers of technical, prose treatises referred to their own linguistic medium. It seems quite likely that this language represents just another linguistic register that appeared to be the natural idiom for combining Sanskrit with the "Tamil" of this social stratum. On the other hand, the language form is described as highly disciplined, in keeping with the celebrated accomplishment of the great guru of the Niraṇam lineage as a "lordly poet of both [Sanskrit and Tamil]."[59]

What does seem certain from these authors' own declarations is that these works were intended primarily for the devotional inspiration of their audiences, legitimizing the relatively greater degree of vernacularization. Regarding this devotional purpose as uppermost, "anyone with *bhakti* for Śiva" would "not be contemptuous of this as mixed language."[60] This *bhakti* notion of the salvational properties of even unmixed "Tamil" goes back to the *Rāmacaritam* and clearly reflects the *bhakti* ideology of eastern Tamil poets from the earlier medieval period. Regarding the salvific properties of the vernacular, the last verse of the *Rāmacaritam* declares that "Those who study the Tamil poetry recited in devotion by [the poet] Śrī Rāman in whose inner heart the primal Lord resides . . . attain the lotus feet of Viṣṇu."[61]

---

58. Ś. Kuññanpiḷḷa 1979: 75.

59. *mahāguruvaranāyubhayakavīśvaran.* From the Uttarakāṇḍam of the *Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam,* cited in Warrior 1977: 106 n. 5.

60. *bhāṣāmiśram itenṛikaḷātē paramēśvara-bhaktyā vallavarum.* Cited from the *Śivamāhātmyam,* v. 149, in the *Malayalam Lexicon* (Ś. Kuññanpiḷḷa 1970: 256).

61.

> *ātitēvanil amiḻnta manakāmpuṭaiya cīrāman ampi-*
> *noṭiyampina tamiḻ-kavi valvōr . . .*
> *pōkipōkacayanan caraṇa tāraṇaivarē.* (Kṛṣṇan Nāyar 1979: 1076)

While I know of no self-references to the meters in which the Niraṇam works are composed, these poets are popularly said to have invented the prominent meter in which the bulk of their corpus is composed, the *taraṅgiṇi*. In fact the meter was employed earlier in couplets in the "prose" sections of the *accicaritam*s, and even earlier in the *Rāmacaritam* and *Tiruni-ḷalmāla*. But in the present context we cannot rule out that the commonly accessible nature of the meter, the "mixed" quality of the language, and the *bhakti* uses for which these works were intended form a complex. This is almost certainly why most contemporary scholarship in Kerala places these works within the Pattu "movement."

The caste title of the Kaṇṇaśśan group of poets was Paṇikkar, which places them almost certainly in the Nāyar caste grade. This is significant in terms of these poets' claim to mastery of Sanskrit, since as Nāyars they would have been reckoned as Shudras in the Brahmanical order. When the *Līlātilakam* was written, at the end of the fourteenth century, the local language was said to be bifurcated into distinctively refined *(utkṛṣṭa)* and crude *(apakṛṣṭa)* varieties, the former belonging to the upper three *varṇa*s, thus excluding Shudras, and the latter belonging to the ignorant *(pāmara),* who were low-caste *(hīna-jāti).* So about the same time this typification was held by certain, presumably Brahmanical, sectors of society, the Kaṇṇaśśans were claiming mastery of Sanskrit and producing their own "mixed language" versions of great Sanskrit religious texts.

This clearly shows that there were martial-grade castes who were not just Sanskrit literate by this time, but were confident enough to improvise in their own language styles and genres under the ideology of *bhakti*. In such a context, an interesting question thus arises: If the Niraṇam poets were so learned in Sanskrit, why were they not producing Manipravalam? In the general absence of information on authorship for the earlier Manipravalam texts, the authors are usually assumed to have been Brahmans. For the last of the *accicaritam*s, the *Uṇṇiyāṭicaritam,* however, we know that the author was a Cāk-yār, one of the temple-servant castes responsible for the vast majority of performative arts composed for the temple theaters and other sacred forums. Women of these castes might legitimately form sexual liaisons with Brahman men, and their offspring were likely to receive some education in Sanskrit through their genitors.

Connubium with Brahmans was widely practiced with Nāyar women as well, systematized in the (in)famous institution of *sambandham* discussed earlier. We know that in recent history many a "Shudra" youth (as they were reckoned by Brahmans) was exposed to Sanskrit learning through their Brahman fathers. So if the Paṇikkars were genuinely learned in Sanskrit and hence potentially able to compose in Manipravalam, perhaps they did not do so because their audience and purposes were differently constituted. Linking these speculations with the structure of religious communities in Kerala on

which we have information preserved from the medieval period, it seems most likely that these different textual registers were differently placed in the partly disjunctive interactional strata of the palaces, temples, and shrines for which these divergent works were produced and circulated. I consider later the forums in which literary works were performed. For now, I will close these observations on the ideological relation to Brahmans in these works with a verse from the very beginning of Rāmappaṇikkar's *Rāmāyaṇam:*

> Discarding egotism and such through ascetic meditation, and compassionately given over to peacefulness, restraint, and joy in their dedication to the Veda, considering such incomparable lords on earth [i.e., Brahmans] to be my very divinity, by the grace of these Vedic Brahmans will all that I contemplate here be accomplished.[62]

CEṚUŚŚĒRI: THE KĀVYA POETICS OF A BHĀṢĀ BRAHMAN

If the poetry of the Niraṇam school represents the vocabulary of Sanskrit mapped into Dravidian grammatical and poetic structures, and seems socially tied to a group of Shudra poets who resorted explicitly to a Brahmanical normative order, then the next major "movement" to consider presents some interesting contrasts. It was inaugurated by one man—Ceṛuśśēri, who seems to have composed in the fifteenth century—through one work, his *Kṛṣṇa-gātha.* All the ambient legends and apparent secondary references confirm that he was a Brahman of northern Kerala. Politically, he was the dependent of a Kōlattiri *rāja* of the same region, and the Sanskrit verses that close each chapter of his work declare that it was composed at the order of this king.[63] Poetically, the *Kṛṣṇagātha* represents a breakthrough experiment, in that it uses a simple Dravidian meter (the *mañjari,* or *gātha,* after this work) with a preponderance of Dravidian vocabulary, and although it completely eschews Sanskrit grammatical forms, it maps into these an ingenuity of Sanskrit poetic figures of sound and sense that transforms this humble matrix into virtual *kāvya.*

The social provenance of this experiment may be preserved in the legend that recounts its invention, for the king apparently commanded that it be based not on a high poetic model but on the rustic rhythm of one of his queen's lullabies.[64] What is done with this poetically, however, is quite re-

---

62. Maṇṇummūṭu 1993: 18.

63.

    ājñayā kōlabhūpasya
    prājñasyodayavarmmaṇaḥ
    kṛtyāyām kṛṣṇagāthāyām.

64. George 1968: 58–59.

markable. Not only are the Sanskrit figures of sense like *upamā, rūpaka,* and *utprēkṣa* worked out beautifully in the simplest of vocabulary, but figures of form or sound or their interaction, like *yamaka,* various kinds of *prāsa,* and *śleṣa,* grace the work as well.[65] This is perhaps the most extreme example of the medium of Malayalam and the poetics of Sanskrit cohabiting the same genre. The result is that a verse can be grasped, discursively and audibly, as readily intelligible and pleasing, yet the trained aesthete can also savor it on reflection.

On the surface, the *Kr̥ṣṇagātha* is a relatively straightforward adaptation of the *Bhāgavātapurāṇa,* relating the life of Kr̥ṣṇa. Yet thematically it contains a degree of complexity. A good deal of humor is woven through the work, and, more troubling for many modern readers, a liberal dose of erotics as well. Indeed, in places one finds a thematic continuity with the descriptions of courtesans from the *accicaritam*s—in the chapters on the *gopi*s' pining for union with Kr̥ṣṇa, for instance, or in the lush and fancifully sweeping absorption in describing Rukmiṇi's body.[66] This interweaving of *bhakti* with erotics, encountered readily in the early Manipravalam works but notionally not in Pattu or in mainstream late Manipravalam, continues to invite apologies or condemnation from contemporary critics. When condemned, the erotics are linked up with the Brahmanical decadence of medieval Kerala as a blight in an otherwise fine work. But since the erotic in this case has invaded the heart of Pattu in an overtly devotional work of high stature, other attempts to reconcile the dilemma emerge. A recent analysis, for instance, attempts to posit that the erotics are allegorical and bent to the higher and more encompassing purposes of *bhakti.*[67]

Perhaps the most interesting element of this "genre" (which includes only a couple of other works written in apparent imitation) is, once again, its hybridity, both at the formal levels of meshing language and poetics, and in the thematics, in which a lower, folk form is raised to the aesthetic sensibilities of the elite sphere of Manipravalam. Socially, it seems to be the production of a Brahman at play among the Shudras, dallying with the forms of their poetry as he might with those of their women.

MESSENGER POEMS: FROM SANSKRIT TO MANIPRAVALAM

The genre of the *sandēśakāvya,* the "messenger poem," is a firmly localized form in Kerala but is far better represented in Sanskrit production than in Manipravalam. While others certainly must have been composed and circu-

---

65. Padmanābhanuṇṇi [1958] 1984: 316–322.
66. Kumārannāyar 1984, 1990.
67. Bhāskaran 1995.

lated in Manipravalam,[68] only one complete poem (from the fourteenth century) and the first half of another (from the fifteenth) still survive—compared with the dozens of Kerala's messenger poems in Sanskrit. The Sanskrit poems evidently enjoyed popularity primarily among pandit and royal circles, starting with the *Śukasandeśa* of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries and continuing into the modern period.[69]

While the Kerala *sandeśakāvya*s in Sanskrit overtly conform in their plot structures and poetics to the model of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (Cloud messenger),[70] the general motif of sending animate and inanimate messengers between lovers is of long standing in south India and seems relatively independent of Sanskrit influence. Tamil literature includes a well-documented continuity of messenger motifs from the earliest *caṅkam* literature of the first few centuries C.E. through the medieval *bhakti* hymnists and into the fourteenth-century beginnings of full-blown *tūtu* (Skt. *dūta*) works, of which some fifty-eight are attested.[71] Despite clear inspiration from the Sanskritic model in the later *tūtu* literature, marked differences of convention and treatment in these poems distinguish them from their Sanskrit counterparts.[72] Correspondingly, there is at least one folk composition from the lower caste of Washerman (Vaṇṇān) in Kerala that relies on the messenger motif and likely reaches back to an indigenous rather than a Sanskritic model.[73]

In certain formal properties, the two surviving Manipravalam messenger poems seem clearly to aspire to the established Sanskrit prototype. The two display the same overall organization, and both are long poems composed exclusively in Sanskrit meters, relying heavily on Sanskrit lexicon, and even occasionally resorting to its grammatical terminations. In much of their thematic matter and its treatment, however, they might just as readily appear as a further development of the *accicaritam*s. These, it will be recalled, are the earliest metrically mixed works *(campu)* in Manipravalam and, like the Kerala *sandēśakāvya*s, are ostensibly in praise of courtesan-dancers. The *acci-*

68. The *Līlātilakam,* the fourteenth-century poetic-grammatical treatise of Manipravalam noted earlier, gives a number of citations from works that were apparently *sandēśakāvya*s but are no longer extant. The citations are listed in Gōpikkuṭṭan 1996: 15–16. The *Uṇṇiyaccicaritam,* from the latter half of the thirteenth century, contains a passage that refers to the singing of apparently vernacular "*sandēśa* songs" (Appukkuṭṭannāyar 1979: 76–77, 123 n. 3).

69. The most exhaustive work in Malayalam on the Sanskrit and Malayalam (or Manipravalam) *sandeśakāvya*s is Appukuṭṭannāyar 1979. Summaries of thirty-one of these works in Sanskrit from Kerala can be found in English in Unni 1985: 7–32.

70. Twelve or thirteen genre features at the level of plot or thematics for the *sandēśakāvya* were formally stipulated in the *Varavarṇinī,* a widely cited Kerala commentary on the *Śukasandeśa,* which was itself a Kerala work (Unni 1985: 52–55; Gōpikkuṭṭan 1996: 14–15; Appukkuṭṭannāyar, 1979: 8–10).

71. Appukkuṭṭannāyar 1979: 58–73; Hart 1975: 244–246.

72. Appukkuṭṭannāyar 1979: 59–61.

73. Viṣṇunampūtiri 1982: 39–42.

*caritam*s' mode of setting out a kind of amorous traveler's descriptive account anticipates in many particulars the principal thematics of the Manipravalam messenger-poem: roving over the landscape and social locales of markets, palaces, and temples to eventually arrive at the heroine's house; the subsequent description of the heroine, her attributes, and abode; as well as the erotic sentiments that saturate these descriptions.[74] The *acci* poems do not, however, exhibit the corresponding imperative to adopt either the formal features or the plotting of the Sanskritic genre, and they lack its most characteristic feature—namely, the messenger. In certain respects both kinds of works also recall the genre of the guide poem *(āṟṟupaṭai)* in *caṅkam* Tamil— the travel description of the bard's route over the landscape to visit a generous and beneficent royal patron.[75] This motif continues clearly from the *accicaritam*s into the messenger poems of Manipravalam, which praise the realms, palaces, and personages of various named kings as part of the patronage circuit over which the poet's description moves. There are also clear resonances in all these works of the descriptive aspects of social and natural geography found in temple-focused praise poems, like the *Tiruniḻalmāla* or *Anantapuravarṇṇanam.*

In summary, while at the formal level the two *sandēśakāvya*s in Manipravalam are unquestionably modeled on the Sanskrit messenger genre after which they are named, they, as well as their Sanskrit counterparts within Kerala, also seem to carry forward the themes and concerns of earlier Dravidian genres that have no obvious equivalents in Sanskrit but have likely antecedents in Tamil literary conventions, rooted to concerns of local culture.

Scanning from Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta,* as a pan-Indic Sanskrit ideal, to the Sanskrit messenger poems of Kerala and finally to those composed in Manipravalam, modern critics usually comment on a certain aesthetic decline: the loss of that generality in Kālidāsa wherein universalized sentiments of longing-in-separation *(viraha)* are mapped into features of nature, and every descriptive move across the landscape is reportedly bent to this larger artistic purpose. In the Kerala productions, as the complaint goes, we are instead given pointless praises of the skills and erotic attributes of specific dancing girls, embedded in descriptions of persons and places devoid of any Sanskritically aesthetic savor *(rasa)*. Turning this critique around to a positive engagement, I prefer to read in these texts a shift away from an aesthetic of pan-Indic pretensions toward one that is progressively tied into local interests. The thematic concerns with travel and description, which I suggest

74. These genre convergences were confirmed for me in discussions with Professor M. R. Raghava Variyar in Kottayam in the summer of 1997. See the discussion of the convergences between the *campu* and *sandēśakāvya* genres in Raghava Variyar and Rajan Gurukkal 1992: 262–63.

75. Zvelebil 1974: 196.

have roots in earlier Kerala forms, find their substantive content in persons and locales that become not just the objects but the very motives of literary depiction.

This geosocial specificity is clear from the earliest attested Sanskrit *sandeśakāvya* from the Kerala country, the highly influential *Śukasandeśa* (Parrot messenger) of Lakṣmīdāsa, on which numerous commentaries were written, and on which the first Manipravalam messenger poem, the fourteenth-century *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam* (Message to Uṇṇunīli) clearly modeled itself.[76] While the *Śukasandeśa*'s descriptive journey begins in the Tamil country, its focus moves progressively and dominantly to locales and persons in Kerala. What clearly places it in the Manipravalam milieu is the target of its message: a dancing girl of great fame who attracts all the luminaries of Kerala to her mansion. This is, as we have seen, the theme of both the earliest Manipravalam verses preserved in the *Vaiśikatantram* and the last great erotic piece of courtly Manipravalam, the fifteenth-century *Candrōtsavam.* Also shared across the *Śukasandeśa* and other travelogue works that preceded or followed it, whether in Manipravalam or Sanskrit, is a twin focus on the kingly and Brahmanical orders. Capital cities, palaces, and their chiefs come in for praise, but so do the temple centers and estate-manors *(illam)* of great Brahman dignitaries, whether of ritual, scholarly, or poetic stature. As noted of the courtesan milieu earlier, the social landscape is centered literarily on the erotic-artistic consumption of an entertainer class of women by a consortium of the military, intellectual, and religious elite. Add to this assemblage the markets so regularly depicted, and the portrayal seems to amount to a celebration by this elite of itself and its own bases of socioeconomic power.

While the Kerala messenger poems in Sanskrit and Manipravalam share a general milieu, there are also several features of note that seem typical of the shift out of Sanskrit and into Manipravalam. First, in keeping with the critics' complaints noted earlier, the naming of individual places and persons becomes more specific. In the Sanskrit works there is a tendency to refer indirectly, to use family or locale to allude to persons, and to construct Sanskrit calques or phonetic mutations when adverting to local or individual names. Not only do such usages lift particular places partway toward generalization of their descriptive or allusional attributes (referring to a city, for instance, as "the Kailāsa of the south"), but they also loosen the temporal placement of particular individuals by invoking them through their family lines (e.g., "lord of the kings of Māṭam"). By comparison, the Manipravalam pieces are more clearly anchored to historical times and places. For instance, the *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam* is titled after the recipient of the love message—the spec-

76. Pattabiraman 1984: 92–94; Unni 1985: 48–64. There are ten or more passages in which the ideas and wording of the *Śukasandeśa* are so closely paralleled by the *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam* as to leave little doubt that the latter was indebted to the Sanskrit poem (Appukkuṭṭannāyar 1979: 97).

ifically named dancing girl, Uṇṇunīli, of a specifically named manor—against the Sanskrit convention of titling such poems by the messenger-vehicle (Kālidāsa's *Cloud Messenger,* Lakṣmīdāsa's *Parrot Messenger,* etc.). Moreover, the messenger in *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam* is not some inanimate or supernatural entity but a named prince of Vēṇāṭu, who is dispatched on the errand as the poet's friend and patron. That this trend toward specification was recognized as problematic is clear from the *Līlātilakam,* which debates the issue of whether courtesan-heroines should be named by family, locale, or personal name, as against giving them contrived and generic pseudonyms (e.g., "Jasmine Moonlight") that evoke a supposedly higher aesthetic.[77]

In keeping with the rise of locally prominent persons and places in these works, I have also noticed a significant pattern in the restriction of territorial scope. Many of the circuits covered in the Sanskrit *sandeśakāvya*s of Kerala begin in or entail travel outside of Kerala, particularly in the Tamil country (though also in Āndhra, Karnāṭaka, and elsewhere). The routes of messenger poems in Manipravalam, however, begin and pass only through kingdoms that were part of today's Kerala, in a language sphere presumably confined to early Malayalam. For instance, the *Śukasandeśa* (fourteenth century) and *Kōkilasandeśa* (fifteenth century)—respectively the earliest and the most famous of these Kerala works in Sanskrit—both begin in the Tamil country; while the former enters Kerala by the traditional southern route into Travancore, the latter enters Kerala from the northern route, via Mysore and into Calicut. This doubtless reflects the Tamil origins of a number of prominent Kerala court poets, who lost their patronage bases in the former kingdoms, commencing with the northern Muslim invasions of the early fourteenth century, and culminating in conquests by Vijayanagara and the formation of successor Nāyaka kingdoms.[78] By contrast, the Manipravalam pieces are confined to Kerala: the fourteenth-century Manipravalam *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam* moves across four discrete kingdoms in southern Kerala, while the movement of the *Kōkasandēśam* (or *Cakravākasandēśam*) of the following century is from the territory of Calicut through central Kerala (Cochin) and into northern Travancore.

In terms of these respective literary languages and their cultures, it is thus clear that the medium of Sanskrit was commensurate with the depiction of

77. Numbers of Kerala scholars attempt to chart the recurrence of named courtesans across the works of Manipravalam literature, but it is not clear that these names specify the same individuals historically, and in many cases the chronology would be impossible. It seems likely that names of originally famous women may have become legendary and thus popular in subsequent generations, where their popularity was propagated through the literature itself. The same applies to famous poets, who are made characters in later works and legends.

78. Kunjunni Raja [1958] 1980 gives a historical survey of Sanskrit literati in Kerala, detailing how a number of them originally came from outside of the region and how they found patronage in various Kerala courts.

a cultural sphere (and actual movement of its literati) across political and linguistic borders. The same genre, when adapted into the medium of Manipravalam, underwent a corresponding restriction of scope. But just as the Sanskrit pieces evidence pretensions to a literary culture that is transpolitical between Kerala and Tamil kingdoms, so the two Manipravalam pieces reach across local polities within Kerala. If these two works were commissioned, as it would seem, by kings of Vēṇāṭu and of the Calicut region, respectively, then either these patrons or their poets had pretensions to an expanded cultural sphere beyond their immediate polities in explicitly marked and incorporative territorial terms. The adaptation of Sanskrit and its genres to the Manipravalam milieu of Kerala thus seems to mirror the same intensified regionalization and parallels quite well Pollock's charting of a similar process in the Kannada country whereby the Sanskrit cosmopolis is writ small within the regional compass.[79]

There is one major thematic difference between the earlier Manipravalam poem, the *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam,* and the somewhat later (perhaps by half a century) *Kōkasandēśam.* While the first is given over to erotic praise not just of the heroine but of numerous other courtesans and dancing girls along the route, this celebration of physical charms is virtually absent in the second work, which indeed fails, in the extant first half, even to mention the name of the heroine in whose quest the messenger is dispatched. The descriptions of women and their sexual charms gives way to greater space for praise of temples and their resident deities. The prominence accorded to kings, however, does seem to remain consistent across these works; many of the verses lauding kings and princes again hearken back to the *accicaritam*s and earlier works.

The erotic aesthetics of courtesan culture has vexed modern scholars and critics of these high Manipravalam works, leading to several exegetical tactics. These have ranged from ingenious attempts to claim that the courtesans were actually chaste wives, when the literature is taken as composed in artistic earnest, to claims that the literary representations were not serious but were comedic or farcical in intent. Part of the vexation seems fueled by communal sentiments in light of Kerala's social history. The openly acknowledged and routinized sexual liaisons of Brahman men with women of the upper castes, and the celebration of this fact in much of the medieval literature, have carried an imputation of moral laxity that the caste communities of these women have worked hard to overcome through modern reform movements and organizations. Accompanying this is a politics of literary interpretation that has led to both cruder and subtler back-readings of Kerala literature in communal-ethnicist terms. At root, there is a claim

79. Pollock 1998.

that works expressive of an eroticized elite culture are the products of Aryan, Brahmanical decadence, mapped into a Sanskritized Manipravalam, while those that take up the themes of puranic and epic religious literature, in the Pattu genres of native language forms, represent the genuine aesthetic of Kerala's pious and heroic Dravidian indigenes. Subtler variants and modifications of this stark formulation are still commonplace, and it remains a task of interdisciplinary literary and social historical scholarship to work out the tangled relations between religious institutions, sexual and caste politics, regional powers, and literary mediums and themes in Kerala's shifting historical matrix. Here I can only reiterate the changing historical contingency of these relationships that the heterogeneous nature of the literary record itself makes apparent through time.

Interestingly, the *Līlātilakam* itself has something to say on the artistic legitimacy and genuineness of romantic relations with courtesans *(gaṇikā),*[80] at least registering indirectly their potential conflict with normative, wedded connubium. When an objection is raised to the effect that romantic involvement with courtesans cannot be an aesthetically valid case of love, since it entails a mere monetary relationship, a long (and otherwise unknown) Sanskrit passage is cited in rebuttal. The defense is that the issue of livelihood is discrete from otherwise genuinely romantic possibilities, so that the two can coexist; the further riposte is that even wedlock and family relations are subject to cynical assessments of financial and other considerations, which render them hardly fit as an arena for true romantic love.

THE LATER *CAMPU* AS TEMPLE PERFORMANCE

Tracking the course of both formal and thematic genre features within Manipravalam, and between it and Sanskrit, we have seen that from the perspective of form the *sandēśakāvya*s in Manipravalam appear as fairly direct adaptations from the Sanskrit. In subject and treatment, however, they seem a continuation of the indigenous *campu*s, the *accicaritam*s (recalling that even the ostensibly Sanskrit form of the *campu* in Kerala incorporates Dravidian meters). And finally, even between the two Manipravalam messenger poems there is a decided shift from an aesthetics of erotics to one of temples and praise of their gods. The next major generic movement to consider represents yet another variation on these possibilities by carrying forward the thematic shift to religious themes from Sanskrit *purāṇa*s and local temple cele-

80. Tellingly, I think, many modern Malayalam translators tend to gloss the Sanskrit word for an accomplished courtesan, *gaṇikā,* with the Malayalam *vēśya,* which means a common prostitute. The two categories are distinguished in Sanskrit erotic treatises, however; I think this verbal transition recapitulates the colonial demotion of courtesan culture into a progressively delegitimated and finally criminalized prostitution.

brations, but now in the form of the *campu,* which had earlier been used only for the courtesan genre.

The most famous of these later *campu*s, the great *Rāmāyaṇa Campu* of Punam Nambūtiri, dates from the early fifteenth century. Like others of this genre, it not only seems modeled in many respects on the Sanskrit *campū*s of authors like Bhoja, but it actually incorporates many verses in pure Sanskrit right out of these sources.[81] This in no way detracts, however, from the bulk of original verses in heavily Sanskritic Manipravalam, interspersed with lively prose passages in Sanskrit and Manipravalam, which all fit together in a highly effective and original narrative architecture. Works like the *Rāmāyaṇa Campu* reveal a major shift toward the prose patterns found in Sanskrit *campū*s, which are characterized by lengthy compounding and complex play of alliterative sound patterning. The earlier Dravidian meters, under the guise of prose, correspondingly diminish in those works that seem more extensively modeled on Sanskrit forms. There are, however, many *campu* works that also freely incorporate large stretches of Dravidian "prose" meters, like the old *taraṅgiṇi* that resurfaces in the genre of *tuḷḷal.* Even the Sanskritically formal *campu*s make use of later *daṇḍaka* stanzas, a kind of hybrid form of Dravidian meter that later becomes a staple of *kathakaḷi.* In some cases even prose passages that are entirely of lexically and grammatically correct Sanskrit are cast in the indigenous *taraṅgiṇi* meter.[82]

Though the later *campu* genre enjoyed enormous popularity, as reflected in the number of surviving works, there is debate as to which groups in society used these compositions and for what purposes. Whether they were performed by the Cākyārs, who had earlier, and traditionally, staged Kerala's Sanskrit dramas; the Nambyārs, the slightly lower caste of temple musicians; or Brahmans, in recitation for temple festivals, remains unclear.[83] Structurally, there is no doubt as to their primarily performative nature. Intertextually, many verses are liberally borrowed and transposed across pieces attributed to different authors, giving the sense of a floating pool of compositional stretches tailored to individual needs and performances yet often adapted and woven together with great artistry. Each section of a text has opening and closing verses that either introduce the plot or encapsulate it up to that point and that contain other clues as to the context of use. The pretext for these verses is to address a friend, possibly copresent on the stage (or else in the reciter-poet's mind?). These lines provide an indexical self-reference into a context that makes clear the performative nature of these works:

81. Vēṅkiṭṭarāma Śarma [1967] 1982: 1031–53.
82. Līlāvati 1996: 85–86.
83. Malayalam Improvement Committee 1968: 1–2; Līlāvati 1996: 80–81; Rāmacandra Piḷḷa 1987: 1–2.

O Friend! Here on the stage of this resplendent assembly the time has come quickly upon us. The great joy that shimmers in my stage-frightened mind is like that in the assembly of gods long ago when, overwhelmed with their troubles from Rāvaṇa, they heard the direct word of Nārāyaṇa as they approached him on the Milk-Sea.[84]

Similar references to the audience in the *Rāmāyaṇa Campu* make clear that it was comprised of nobles *(mālōkar)*, including kings and Brahmans, and that the occasion was a festival of the incarnation of Rāma *(rāmāvatārōt-savam)*.[85] Putting these clues together in the Kerala context almost certainly implies that this work, and others like it, were composed for performance at festivals in temples of the higher castes.

The majority of other Manipravalam *campu*s are similarly implicated with religious culture as performance texts, since nearly all are adaptations of stories from Sanskrit religious narratives of the epic and puranic literatures, and since they all employ the same convention of address to a copresent listener, often indexed to an implicitly attending audience. Even more instructive in terms of reflexive indexing of the patronage base is a set of three *campu*s whose story lines rather exceptionally depart from the pattern of Sanskrit derivation. All three of these poems—all by the same author, Nīlakaṇṭhakavi—are explicitly composed to celebrate the mythical origins and festivals of three specifically named historical temples. Moreover, these temples were in different political realms in Kerala, reflecting the migration of the author as he worked under different patrons through the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. From the occasion of composing the last of these poems, the *Teṅkailanāthōdayam* (Arisal of the lord of southern Kailāsa), we get some sense for how the entextualization of performance context could work historically and reflexively to garner cultural capital for both poet and patron. This work, composed for the famous Vaṭakkunāthan temple at Trichur, then newly under the patronage of the Cochin king, explicitly invokes the force of Nīlakaṇṭha's earlier compositions, the *Cellūrnāthōdayam* and *Nārāyaṇīyam*. This reflects not only on the accumulated glories of the poet, but also on the potential for this king, Vīra Kēraḷa, to cumulatively build on these earlier acts of religious-cum-literary patronage by going his rivals one better. The poem reports that when the king arrived at the Trichur temple during its sacred festival, he called upon the poet before the entire assembly:

Bull of Knowledge! Good poet Nīlakaṇṭha! Long ago you wrought the wonderful *Cellūrnāthōdayam;* and again, the *Nārāyaṇīyam* was composed by you. Now,

84. Vēṅkiṭṭarāma Śarma [1967] 1982: 60.
85. Vēṅkiṭṭarāma Śarma [1967] 1982: 104–5.

by my word, please begin immediately to compose the ultimate work *[pra-bandham]*, charming, and with the new name of *Teṅkailanāthōdayam!*[86]

Earlier works from other regions are thus indexed to the present context to extol the greater glory of the poet as wedded now to the competitive aspirations of his new royal patron under the mantle of praise for the temple deity. In this way a chain of transregional temples, chiefly patrons, and poets were linked into competitively comparative networks, paralleling in literary media the similarly configured spheres of periodic warfare, tribute, marital alliances, and trading networks that made up the social fabric of medieval Kerala. Moreover, paralleling the reflexivity of the genre in hailing the friend before the assembly in performance, here the poet reports the king's own report of the poet along with the sovereign's instructions to compose the very composition that is being performed—all as part of the text of performance!

The sentiments of various classes and factions of Brahmans in competition with each other comes through as well in both Nīlakaṇṭha's poems and earlier *campu*s like Punam's *Rāmāyaṇam* from which he draws. It has been argued, with some evidence, that Nīlakaṇṭha was himself from a non-Nambūtiri caste of Śākta quasi Brahmans (generally called Mūssatu) who lost their entitlement in the Cellūr temple of northern Kerala, on which Nīlakaṇṭha composed his first *campu*.[87] This may account for the rollicking prose sections of his later two works, ridiculing the gluttony and unseemliness of various professional classes and divisions of Kerala Brahmans as they descend on the temple festivals, which are again reflexively depicted in his work. In content, and in the very *taraṅgiṇi* meter, such passages anticipate the later genre of *tuḷḷal* and the biting satire of eighteenth-century poet Kuñcan Nambyār. Whatever the specific history of Nīlakaṇṭha's community affiliation, however, the verbatim repetition of such passages in earlier *campu*s of varied authorship suggests that the competitively satirical spirit was widespread among poets, various other groups of Brahmans, and their high-caste rivals in Kerala.

The recurrence and liberal borrowing of passages across the entire *campu* corpus raises again the topic of the nature of Kerala's "literature" and our understanding of "the text" as an inscriptional artifact. The *campu*s seem to have been composed for performance, and the manuscript remains that we have seem to be scripts that served as memory aids and props for partly improvisational public readings. I think the textuality of these works hovers between what we tend to think of—in an unnecessary dichotomy—as oral and written literature. One vignette from the latest of the *accicaritam*s, the *Uṇṇiyā-*

86. Nīlakaṇṭhakavi 1990: vs. 17.
87. Rāmacandra Piḷḷa 1987: 8–9.

ṭicaritam, is particularly valuable in this regard for its depiction of a manuscript in use as a performance text.

In the poem two strangers (supernatural *gandharva*s in disguise) arrive in a town seeking the courtesan Uṇṇiyāṭi, and they enter the local temple to pray for guidance. They find the temple thronging with an assembly of high-born folk *(janāḍhye)* and, seated before them all, a handsome man, spotlessly attired, with a tuft and an auspicious unguent-mark *(tilakam)* on his brow. He is

> an eminent person, reciting *[nigadan]* with a distinguished, sonorous voice, sweetly melodious, his own work *[nijakṛti],* set down in letters on the lengths of shining palm leaves, which he turns through the lovely rippling of the bejeweled fingers of his two blossomlike hands.[88]

The work that the *gandharva*s describe him as singing—three verses of which are immediately cited in the poem itself—turns out to be in praise of the very heroine the strangers seek, and their author-performer turns out to be none other than Dāmōdaran Cākyār, the author of our poem itself. Through the rather immodest double-voicing of the appreciative audience, we learn his identity: a "preceptor of the arts, named Dāmōdaran, who has attained the ultimate insight into all the disciplines of knowledge." Thus in a case that once again demonstrates these texts' reflexive potential, we are afforded a rare instance of an author depicting himself at work, using a manuscript of his own composition in performance.

DOMESTICIZED RELIGIOUS TEXTUALITY: THE EḶUTTACCHAN MOVEMENT

The shift of Kerala literary production in the sixteenth century to a largely Sanskritic, puranic religiosity is variously attributed to one or more *bhakti* movements in the region. While an earlier scholarship attributed this to a reaction to the European presence on the coasts and elsewhere in south India, this interpretation is now out of favor, and writers currently see in the Kerala *bhakti* literature an endogenous collective revulsion to Brahmanical excesses and a general revolt against the moral and political decadence of later medieval society.[89] Often such narratives link into the earlier-mentioned ethnicized notions of an indigenous "Dravidian" spirituality finally breaking through Aryan or Brahman impositions. I have seen nothing to convince me that there are historical grounds to substantiate this speculation. There is no doubt, however, that the movement around the *bhakti* literature later attributed to one Eḷuttacchan did represent a new kind of literary expression spreading through different sectors of society in a new context of its own creation.

88. Maṇṇummūṭu 1995: 85.
89. Puruṣōttaman 1992: 19–24.

Though there is no firm historical evidence for Eḻuttacchan the author, or even for which works were really his—aside from his *Bhāratam* and his most famous work, the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam*—he does seem to have been associated with an institutional line of gurus whose locale and lineage are historically verified. The name "Eḻuttacchan" is a generic title for any village schoolteacher, generally of Shudra caste, who in documented times imparted a basic literacy in Malayalam to children of other Shudra-grade castes, like the dominant martial caste of the Nāyars. It is true that the *Adhyātma Rāmāya-ṇam* spread with a phenomenal popularity in manuscript form from one end of Kerala to the other in Nāyar and other middle-caste homes, where it seems to have served as the principal text for domestic devotional recitation down to the present. Eḻuttacchan's principal work is a translation into nearly modern Malayalam of the Sanskrit *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa,* a fourteenth-century north Indian devotional text often connected with the Rāmanandī sect.[90] Lexically, the text is heavily Sanskritic with many Sanskrit nominal terminations but virtually no Sanskrit verbal forms or long compounds. Metrically, however, there is real innovation in putting together a particular set of Dravidian meters (though eschewing the earlier *taraṅgiṇi* of the Kaṇṇaśśans), all of which are in couplet form, clearly intended for recitation or singing. This genre is called *kiḷi-pāṭṭu,* or "parrot's song," in keeping with the thematic frame story of the text: that it was recited to the poet by a parrot. The content of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam* acknowledgedly lacks much by way of artistic or intellectual challenge and at many junctures veers into sections of liturgy-like praise. It seems designed for recitational use, as the text itself virtually announces. The *kiḷippāṭṭu* genre, apparently originally charted out by this text in the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries, sparked the production of many similar translations and adaptations of the Sanskrit *purāṇa*s and epic sources over the following centuries and into modernity.

The genre of *kiḷippāṭṭu* exhibits yet another hybridization between Sanskrit and Kerala-Tamil prototypes. While, on the one hand, these works' thematic focus on the epic and puranic tradition of Sanskrit is reflected in the extensively Sanskritized lexicon, on the other hand, the bulk of the grammatical structures are Malayalam, and both the frame of the parrot-narrator and the constituent meters can be readily traced to earlier Tamil literature. The latter are of special interest, since different sections and chapters are cast in discretely segregated Dravidian meters. Though none of these meters was ever explicitly referred to, named, or described before modern scholars turned to them,[91] they had evidently risen to a level of discriminating and conscious deployment by the time of Eḻuttacchan. This is further proven by the appearance of compositions explicitly named for their pastiche of me-

90. Brockington 1984: 252 n. 51, 327.
91. Nārāyaṇakkuṟuppu 1992: 52–54.

ters, such as the *Twenty-Four Meters (Irupattinālu-vṛttam),* an abbreviated *Rā-māyaṇam* spuriously attributed to Eḻuttacchan, followed by others with names such as *Fourteen Meters, Sixteen Meters,* and so on. This development suggests that without apparent metatreatises legislating such metrical arrays, these performative traditions had generated their own learned forums or schools for the conscious formalization of such compositional styles, largely outside the province of Sanskrit norms.

One of the many legends clustering around Eḻuttacchan is that he was responsible for the introduction of the modern Malayalam script, the Āryan script (Aryalipi), into Kerala. Though the claim is manifestly false, in that the script preceded him by many centuries, the legend is telling in other respects. This modern script is, first of all, not a direct development out of Vatteluttu, the phonetic Dravidian script that had been used for centuries in local inscriptions and manuscripts, but rather a development of Grantha, which was phonetically developed for writing Sanskrit in south India. Indeed the ethnonymic attribute "Āryan" in Malayalam is used almost exclusively to refer to the Brahman community in Kerala. Putting Eḻuttacchan's claim on the script, together with his occupational title—meaning a kind of rustic Shudra literate—the nature and recitational use of his adaptations from Sanskrit into popular form, and the fact that the number and circulation of his manuscripts far exceeds that of any other author in premodern Kerala, provides pretty good evidence for a major shift toward popular non-Brahman literary consumption attributable to the school or movement Eḻuttacchan was later said to have founded. At the close of Eḻuttacchan's *Adhyātma Rā-māyaṇam,* in the *phalaśruti* section which celebrates the text's beneficent effects, we are told that the work is to be "read and recited," and that "with the agreement of the accomplished Āryan people [i.e., Brahmans], those desiring knowledge may become greatly learned."[92]

While it is no longer fashionable to give credence to the legend of Eḻuttacchan's mixed parentage from a lower-caste mother and a Nambūtiri father, the historical and internal evidence of his works does suggest a powerful Shudra-Brahman alliance in literary, ritual, and institutional terms. The historical facts are vague, but it does seem fairly certain that from his lineage home of Tuñcattu, on the Kerala coast near Ponnani south of Calicut, Eḻuttacchan or his followers moved inland to the forested hills of Palghat at Cir̠rūr, where a Brahmanical residence *(agrahāram)* and a religious hermitage *(maṭham)* were established under his patronage at a site bearing the name Rāmānanda. The only quasi-historical verses referring to Eḻuttacchan that we have apparently come from this institutional setting. One oral verse preserves a line of gurus, beginning with one Tuñcattu Guru, and an inscrip-

92. Hariśarmma [1969] 1980.

tion gives details of the founding of the residence, hermitage, and temples under the direction of one of the later gurus in the oral list, Sūryanārāyaṇan, with the support of the territory's chiefs. Verses from the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam* itself (1.71–75) place Eḻuttacchan under an elder brother who was one of a number of the author's gurus and among other co-disciples of this and possibly other lineages.[93] Whatever the particular lines of origin or succession, however, it does seem certain that Eḻuttacchan's sectarian life was intertwined with the lives of Brahmans. Despite strained attempts to link the succession to Śrī Vaiṣṇavas in the line of the twelfth-century Brahman Viśiṣṭādvaita philosopher Rāmānuja,[94] I would take the evident name chosen for their religious settlement, "Rāmānanda," along with the signature work, the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam,* and suspect Rāmānandī affiliation. In any case, various Eḻuttacchan families of uncertain historical relation to our author do come up in legend as gurus of the Calicut kings and as Śākta priests and teachers, attesting to the supporting successes in political and ritual spheres of this formation of Shudra literati.[95] Furthermore, the Palghat settlement was clearly established with royal patronage, and also as part of a scheme for entitling a Brahmanical lineage, showing that the ritual-literary alliance had official political backing.[96]

The interpretation of Eḻuttacchan's project as fundamentally anti-Brahmanical—a welling up of the popular Dravidian spirituality of *bhakti* in resistance to the social order—is clearly a strained back-reading. Note how Eḻuttacchan situates himself and his work in relation to Brahmanical authority:

The very basis for the Lord, Bhagavān, who constitutes all the worlds, is the Veda, as my Lord Guru himself has graciously declared.

And the very basis of the Veda is the eminent Gods on Earth [i.e., the Brahmans] we see here, whose boons, curses, and such are binding even for the principal gods: Brahma, Śiva, and Viṣṇu.

Who can declare the majesty of these supernal knowers of the Veda? As the devoted slave who serves at their feet, one born from the feet of Brahma [i.e., a Shudra], and first among the ignorant,

I will recite the *Rāmāyaṇam,* which is equal to the Veda, in a way that can be known by the dull-witted.[97]

I would not at all rule out a level of critique of the prevailing religious order of society, though only implicit and certainly not overtly pitched in caste or class terms, in Eḻuttacchan's sectarian teachings. It is quite possible, for

93. Nārāyaṇappiḷḷa 1990: 179–80, 171–73.
94. Līlāvati 1996: 91–92.
95. Achyuta Menon 1940: 46, 48; Līlāvati 1996: 192.
96. Nārāyaṇappiḷḷa 1990: 179–80.
97. Hariśarmma [1969] 1980, ll. 55–68.

instance, for Eḻuttacchan to have been defending the religious potency of his literary form against those who might be deaf to its message, without thereby singling out Brahmanical Sanskritic and priestly religious forms for attack. We have seen that divisions within Brahmanism in Kerala were evident in the predominantly Brahmanical later *campu* literature, and these divisions could certainly be exploited by those outside this social order with an eye to advancing their own socioreligious status. This potential, however, is not developed until after Eḻuttacchan, when works of a synthetically religious nature (some spuriously attributed back to him) in simple Dravidian meters made their appearance. Numbers of these works were by upper-caste authors, and some even by Nambūtiri Brahmans.

The most famous of these post-Eḻuttacchan *bhakti* works are in simple song-form—like the *pāna*,[98] which was used in popular lower-caste temple festivals for hymns to the deities—or in one or more of the other folk meters such as Eḻuttacchan used. From the sixteenth century onwards these forms were picked up and often infused with esoteric religious content in an explicit attempt to popularize such doctrines among lower castes and women. The *Cintāratnam* (Jewel of reflection), for instance, a work in the single *kiḷip-pāṭṭu* meter later called *kēka,* casts itself as a guru's teaching to his *female* disciple in order to impart the truths of Vedānta to her in a form she can grasp.[99] Similarly, the *Harināmakīrtanam* (Praise of Hari's name), as the title suggests, imparts its religious content of Vedānta fused with *bhakti* in the form of praise verses *(kīrtanam)* to deities in a temple, each verse ending with the stock invocation of the name of Hari-Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu).[100]

That a social split between Sanskrit and local language texts might be articulated even in the devotional mode itself is suggested from the most famous contemporaneous work of Sanskrit *bhakti* in Kerala, Mēlputtūr Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭatiri's *Nārāyaṇīyam,* composed in praise of the god Kṛṣṇa as worshipped in the Guruvāyūr temple. In that work the Nambūtiri Brahman author states (canto 92, verse 3) that women and Shudras are worthy of sympathy, since they cannot hear the recitations of Kṛṣṇa's life story and similar religious performances, (presumably because of their ignorance of Sanskrit, their exclusion from certain temple institutions, or both). He does not suggest that this should be otherwise, and thus seems at least tacitly to accept this state of affairs as appropriate to these classes.[101] In contrast to this sequestering of *bhakti* writings within the exclusive world of Sanskrit and the temple arts, another Brahman writing at the same time, Pūntānam Nampūtiri, rendered

    98. Gōpikkuṭṭan 1989: 24–25.
    99. Nārāyaṇappiḷḷa 1967: 7–10, 45; Paramēśvarayyar 1954: 597–99.
   100. Nārāyaṇappiḷḷa 1984.
   101. Gōpikkuṭṭan 1989: 79–80.

the Sanskrit *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛtam* into Malayalam *(bhāṣā)* explicitly at the prompt-ing of his friend of the non-Brahman Vāriyar caste.[102]

Pūntānam's most famous work, the *Jñānappāna,* is an independent trea-tise that casts an *advaita* and *bhakti* fusion into the simple song-form of the *pāna* chant.[103] Legend has it that Pūntānam himself was not learned in San-skrit and that he came from a lower division of Brahmans not entitled to Vedic learning.[104] In keeping with this social placement and the deliberately broad scope of his religious message, there are pointed verses on the social degradation of Brahmans in their competition for courtly honors, their way-ward life in the temple, their hunger for women, and the greed that drives their Vedic cult (lines 203–30).[105] That this message had broad appeal is clear from the manuscript's widespread circulation and the great variance that the text itself underwent in a semi-oral form. The large chunks interpolated into it and the various readings of coherent alternate forms attest to its active life as a recitational piece.[106] Some verses are reportedly chanted even today in Kerala temples.

From the variety of this *bhakti* literature we must conclude that it was highly varied in scope and social provenience. There were purely Sanskritic regis-ters, exclusionary of non-Brahmans; texts written by upwardly mobile non-Brahmans as part of Brahmanically dominated formations; other texts seem-ingly produced by déclassé Brahmans who may have felt greater solidarity with Shudra religious society; and finally, an entire raft of folk literature crafted by and for the lower castes, only fragments of which found their way into inscription. The hybrid nature of this varied literature attests to the com-plex stratification of Kerala society and its intimately entangled hierarchies.

THE THEATER COMPLEX

At the same period that the *bhakti* literature was developing in domestic con-texts, the temple theater was undergoing its final transformations into the form known as *kathakaḷi* (lit. story play), after passing through some earlier, intermediate stages. The plays, as they are called, on analogy to their West-ern counterparts, are actually song-texts performed by ensembles of vocal and percussion musicians to the rear of the stage, while elaborately costumed and made-up actors mime parts of the discursive content through an elab-orate vocabulary of gestural language.[107] The scripts of these plays are gen-

102. Paramēśvarayyar 1954: 509–10.
103. Gōpikkuṭṭan 1989; Kaṟūr 1996.
104. Gōpikkuṭṭan 1989: 21; Paramēśvarayyar 1954: 506.
105. Gōpikkuṭṭan 1989: 77–78.
106. Kaṟūr 1996: 58.
107. Zarrilli 1984: 2000.

erally regarded as some of the finest works of Malayalam literature, though linguistically they are a pastiche of naturalized Malayalam, Manipravalam, and Sanskrit.

While Western notions of literature might question whether lifting such song-scripts out of their performative context as free-standing literary works is warranted, I suggest that this very uncertainty follows many other genres of Malayalam literature. (It has even been argued recently that the very early and most non-Sanskritic *Rāmacaritam* was composed for staging.)[108] Though in this essay I cannot go into the complexities of this theatrical literature itself, I wish to trace some of its developmental parallels and overlaps with other genres to suggest something of the social transformations and complexities of performative context that underlay the theater as a communicative forum.

The Sanskrit theater in Kerala is one of only a few surviving traditions of staging Sanskrit dramas in South Asia, reaching back to at least the tenth century C.E. At that time Sanskrit drama was already a multilingual sphere, wherein characters were socially differentiated by whether they spoke Sanskrit or the various artificial Prakrits that had developed from Indo-Aryan vernacular languages, and recitational verses in metric form were interspersed with dialogue in prose.[109] As a literary form the Sanskrit play itself was a kind of polyglot *campu,* and I would hazard that this pan-Indic configuration was a structural adaptation to the very kinds of performative multiplexity that continued in Kerala.

In the earliest staging tradition preserved in Kerala, that of the Cākyār caste, this multilingualism was expanded to include slots for the insertion of Malayalam prose as improvisational commentary. Initially introduced through the character of the comedic Brahman-minister, the *vidūṣaka,* this commentarial form eventually lifted the actor's role in the "group-play," or *kūṭiyāṭṭam,* of Sanskrit theater to the solo genre of *cākyārkūttu* (Cākyār's dance), where earlier explanatory interpolations became free-standing dramatic and declamatory performances in their own right. The earlier comedic content was partly registered through the Cākyār's parody of the main character's verses *(ślōka)* in Sanskrit or vernacular counterverses *(pratiślōka),* and this carried over into improvisational satire and lampooning of the audience in the vernacular portions of the *cākyārkūttu.*[110]

While the ostensible narrative frames were always from the staged Sanskrit play, I have shown elsewhere how in fact early Dravidian legends, known from other literary sources in Tamil, came to surface as ancillary compositions inserted within these performances. A most notable local development

---

108. Gōpālakṛṣṇan 1995.
109. Kunjunni Raja 1964.
110. Kṛṣṇakkaimaḷ 1989: 45; Līlāvati 1996: 44–45.

is the *pēkkatha,* or "demon's stories," told in the drama's interludes.[111] The other, and most striking, feature for comparison with Western theater is the costuming and make-up. These do not aim for realism in representation but use vivid paints and appendages, which transform the actors' faces into veritable masks, and elaborately bizarre and outlandish costumes that had no counterpart in daily life. Kerala scholars have routinely noted the evident models for these forms in the possession dances of local deities in folk shrines, such as in *teyyāṭṭam* or *mūṭiyērru,* for example.[112] In high theater, by contrast, the elements of make-up and costume were codified into a formal semiotic in keeping with the natures of the different characters, a convention that carried over into the later *kathakaḷi.*[113]

Between the Cākyārs, the high temple-servant caste of non-Brahmans who wore the sacred thread, and their lower-status musical accompanists, the Nambyārs, we find differently marked varieties of literary genre. Around the epic and puranic stories that framed Sanskrit plays, numbers of literary works called *prabandham*s (compositions), such as the *Tripuradahanam,* survive.[114] These are in high Manipravalam and take generally the same form as the *campu*s treated earlier, with which there is much overlap, if not identity. These *prabandham*s, however, seem to be more compact than the *campu*s and lack the *campu*s' long sections in Sanskrit prose and verse borrowed from other sources. General consensus is that they were developed for the theatrical genre of *cākyārkūttu* for performance on temple stages, rather than for *pāṭhakam* (recitation) at festivals—as the *Rāmāyaṇa Campu,* for instance, seems to have been used. Another temple theater genre, however, seems keyed to the Nambyār accompanists, who developed a simpler linguistic mode for telling audiences the stories in a non-Manipravalam prose form at interludes in the Cākyār performances. This form, known as drummer's Tamil *(mārḍaṅgika-tamil)* in the *Līlātilakam,* lacks any Sanskrit terminations and falls into syntactically natural prose. The surviving compositions in this genre are usually known simply as *gadyam*s (lit. prose; e.g., *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa-gadyam).*[115]

While the emergence and development of *kathakaḷi* as a purely Kerala and largely vernacular dramatic tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can undoubtedly be traced back into the Sanskrit theater, scholars usually chart the impetus for this process through allied performative genres as well. Given that the principal dramatic forms in Kerala were sacred arts, per-

111. Nārāyaṇan Nampyār 1980: 209 ff. For some reflections on the incorporation of other Dravidian legends in the Kerala theater tradition, see Freeman 2000.

112. Kṛṣṇakkaimaḷ 1989: 25–38.

113. Vēṇu 1994.

114. Malayalam Improvement Committee [1936] 1990.

115. Vēḷāyudhan Piḷḷa 1977.

formed in the consecrated space of the temple, these other genres similarly emerged in the ritual life of the temple. A major stream of influence seems to have come out of the Sanskrit Kṛṣṇa worship of the poet Jayadeva, with the importation of his highly influential *Gītāgovinda* into Kerala. While the form of this original Sanskrit work itself has suggested that it was a performance piece, it was certainly put to this function in Kerala, where the work was known as the *Aṣṭapadi.* It was apparently adopted in this form by the kings of Calicut for performance in Guruvāyūr and other Kṛṣṇa temples, where it developed from songs sung by temple servants before the stairs leading to the sanctum (hence, stair-song, *sōpāna-gīti*) into a performance genre called *aṣṭapadiyāṭṭam* (dancing of the *Aṣṭapadi*) presented by Cākyārs using the gestural language *(mudra)* adapted from the theater. The best guess is that this genre was developed in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, when the Caitanya movement in Bengal (which had direct ties to south India) may have given an impetus to the Kṛṣṇa cult in Kerala. In any case, in the middle of the seventeenth century the Calicut king instituted an enduring staged version of the Kṛṣṇa saga, called *kṛṣṇanāṭṭam,* using the Sanskrit work he commissioned for the purpose, the *Kṛṣṇagīti,* as its script.[116]

The fame of this permanent ritual form apparently set off rivalries in other kingdoms, for within a few years, the *rāja* of Koṭṭārakkara, in southern Kerala, instituted a similar dramatic form called *rāmanāṭṭam,* which comprised a repertoire of plays devoted to the god Rāma. Legend has it that this was the direct outcome of his being disparaged by the Calicut king for lacking a form like *kṛṣṇanāṭṭam.* The big difference, however, was that these plays were not in Sanskrit but in Keralabhasha, and in an innovation taken from another Malabar king, the discursive content was taken up by a background chorus of musicians, freeing up the actor for more vigorous dance and gestural displays. Both *kṛṣṇanāṭṭam* and *rāmanāṭṭam* were performed in the same venue, probably competitively, at the great interregional festival of the Māmāṅkam, in the later years of the seventeenth century.[117]

By the turn of that century, *kathakaḷi* proper had emerged under another Malabar chieftain, Kōṭṭayattu Tampurān, and by the first decades of the eighteenth century his plays were being staged far south of his realm, in Trivandrum. The variant contributions of different regions in Kerala, fusing and stabilizing in this way into the regionally shared form of *kathakaḷi* (with subregional variants remaining), attests to the kind of interactive aesthetic politics that prevailed from north to south. In terms of caste, *kathakaḷi* marks the full "Nāyarization" of the temple theater form. Linguistically, while the introductory stanzas of sections remained in Sanskrit, the language of the main "dialogues" (sung by the accompanists) could veer into quite colloquial

116. Kṛṣṇakkaimaḷ 1989: 47 ff.; Rājā 1986.
117. Kṛṣṇakkaimaḷ 1989: 57–61.

Malayalam. The actors themselves were regularly drafted from the martial castes, and the recruitment base of *kathakaḷi* were the military gymnasia known as *kaḷari*s.[118] This enhanced the overlapping role *kaḷari*s had always held between the ritual arts and martial arts among the warrior castes, and gurus of these institutions circulated among the palaces of Kerala as their royal patrons intermarried and took them along into new alliances.[119] The social provenance of *kathakaḷi* is finally seen in the themes of the plays themselves, for the authors and audiences of plays are drawn from martial and other Shudra-grade castes, as well as from Brahmans. Not only do stories of warfare and murder, including the staging of battle and even simulated disembowelments, rise to prominence, but the role and even heroism of demonic characters expands, bringing a clearly antinomian tension from the lifeworld of Shudra society into the temple precincts.

In summary, the development of dramatic traditions reveals a dynamic that tended both to disseminate Sanskrit language culture into the wider vernacular society and to bring forms and themes from that society into new hybrid genres of performance and literary inscription. From the outset, the Sanskrit theater of *kūṭiyāṭṭam* entailed a multilingual mediation, but that mediation was eventually transformed into the free-standing vernacular drama of *kathakaḷi*. For lack of space, I cannot discuss here how the textuality of *kathakaḷi* works was constituted through the interweaving of those works with other performative-textual genres.[120] The gestural language of the *mudra*s (a true discursive form with its own supporting texts), the embedded commentary that shifted into written forms for enactment, the theatrical manuals that could devolve into their own literature—all of these were an inseparable part of the performative life of the principal text, the "dance-story" *(āṭṭa-katha),* which moderns equate with the literary text of the play, the "script" of Western theater.[121] To fix on this inscribed form alone, however, would be to impose a narrowly reified notion of text on a much wider circuit of semiotic practices. For *kathakaḷi,* as for its temple-art precursors, performative intertextuality, gestural "speech," and other such semiotic modes mediated across the strata of language and register that partly mapped the social gradients of upper-caste society that came together in the temple theater. These literary formations, however, were inherently unstable, being driven by the dynamic of the socially disjoined hierarchies they worked to sub-

118. For the most recent and comprehensive study of the Kerala martial art *kaḷarippayaṟṟu,* practiced in these gymnasia, see Zarrilli 1998.

119. Kṛṣṇakkaimaḷ 1989: 89.

120. Cf. Zarrilli's treatment of *kathakaḷi*'s "play-text" in contrast to the more encompassing "performance score" (2000: 39 ff.).

121. See Appukuṭṭanpiḷḷa (1996) for the mimed "texts" that guide actors' emotional interpretation and elaboration of particular scenes; and Vēṇu (1994) for a sense of the semiotic language of the gestures *(mudra*s) in *kathakaḷi.* Cf. Zarrilli (2000: 42–44; 73–80).

sume. This resulted in successively more inclusive moves from *kūṭiyāṭṭam,* with its *vidūṣaka,* to the *campu* forms of *cākyarkūttu* and *prabandham* to the prose recitations of the Nambyārs to the shift into *kṛṣṇanāṭṭam, rāmanāṭṭam,* and *kathakaḷi,* culminating in a historical trajectory that finally reached outside the temple in Kuñcan Namyār's *tuḷḷal.*

NAMBYĀR AND THE *TUḶḶAL*

In considering Kuñcan Nambyār—the final poet discussed here—and his genre of *tuḷḷal,* we are brought right to the brink of modernity. This genre represents in many ways the culmination of the hybridizing movements between performance and text that are, as we have seen, indicative of the caste and class tensions historically built into Kerala's literary practices. Nambyār and *tuḷḷal* brought together the content of Sanskrit literary and religious works with the performance meters, modes, and songs of purely local festival forms in what remain highly regarded works of Malayalam literature today. The status of this corpus as literature, however, is probably a back-reading from a perspective that was itself shaped by Nambyār's own efforts. His *tuḷḷal*s were all performance texts written for a narrational mode that was sung and danced, and that perhaps brought the content of literary form as close to a context of mass consumption as it could come before the advent of printing. He explicitly appealed to his audience by addressing them as "the people" *(janaṅṅaḷ),* and particularly anchored their identity as such to the accessibility of his linguistic form. For instance, he invoked the common soldiery as those who would take to their heels when confronted with "tortuously harsh and knotty Sanskrit" as opposed to their "lovely Kerala speech."[122] In the crafting of his texts we find the skill of the litterateur who has mastered Sanskrit and Manipravalam but deliberately exploits them for their effect within a vernacular frame.

Nambyār lived through the heart of the eighteenth century (perhaps 1705–1770) and navigated the transition in his patronage base from a shifting pastiche of local chieftains to the early modern state of Travancore which crushed and absorbed those chiefs under the reign of Martāṇḍa Varma and his successors. What is known of his life suggests that he was tutored in Sanskrit under a Brahman guru and trained as well under Shudra-grade teachers in the popular and martial arts of the military gymnasium.[123] He seems to have traveled widely in Kerala and to have sought patronage in a variety of courts, from Kōlam in the far north to Travancore near Kerala's south-

---

122. Famous lines from the *Sabhāpravēśam Tuḷḷal,* cited in Līlāvati (1996: 120).

123. Gaṇēś 1996: 167; Līlāvati 1996: 121. It has even been suggested—and defended by no less than Uḷḷūr Paramēśvarayyar—that Kuñcan Nambyār was the same person as the famous Sanskrit scholar Rāmapāṇivādar (Paramēśvarayyar 1955a: 509 ff.).

ern limit.[124] Aside from the *tuḷḷal* corpus of his later years, he is attributed
with a number of other works, some in the *kiḷippāṭṭu* genre of Eḻuttacchan
and one explicitly in high Manipravalam style, perhaps the first and only
extant premodern attempt at the long poem form *(mahākāvya)* in the Ker-
ala language.[125] Whether or not this poem, the *Kṛṣṇacaritam Maṇipravāḷam,*
was really the poor specimen it has been judged by modern Sanskrit pan-
dits (it was in any case chanted by elders at dawn and learned in village
schools), it does attest to Nambyār's mastery of Sanskrit vocabulary and
grammatical forms, which is borne out in his other works as well. This is of
great importance when we consider his move to the *tuḷḷal,* the genre which
he is traditionally thought to have created and on which his fame most se-
curely rests.

As with most legends of origins in Kerala, that of *tuḷḷal* need not be his-
torically accurate to have nevertheless captured the social dynamic behind
this art form. The legend of Kuñcan Nambyār's invention of *tuḷḷal* ties it to
his original employment as a temple drummer, an accompanist for Cākyār
Sanskrit theater. As described earlier, the Cākyārs were the higher-caste ac-
tors on the temple stage. The lower-caste Nambyārs did the drumming (a
somewhat polluting profession because of its association with hides) and sup-
plied the actresses (Naṅṅiyārs, who might also be consorts of the Cākyārs)
and also recited their own de-Sanskritized prose genres during the interludes
to get the story across to the audience. While working as a drummer, we are
told, Nambyār once dozed off during an all-night performance. He awoke
to find he was being made the butt of jokes in the satirical mode of the Cāk-
yār's *kūttu* before the mirthful audience. Humiliated, he resolved to avenge
his slighted honor. During the next evening's performance he vacated the
temple theater, moved into the outer compound, and enacted his own new
mode of singing recitation and costumed dance to a simple drummed ac-
companiment. He stole the show—and the Cākyār's audience. Thus *tuḷḷal*
was supposedly invented by Kuñcan Nambyār in the course of a day.[126]

The word *tuḷḷal* refers to any of a variety of folk dances practiced in Ker-
ala, most notably the spirit possession dances performed by ritualists at lower-
caste shrine festivals. Kerala scholarship agrees that these *tuḷḷal*s were already
ancient and widespread when Nambyār adapted some of them for his new
performance genres. Nambyār himself refers to his audience as gathered for
paṭayaṇi (lit. battle-array), one of the dominant folk genres that included var-
ious *tuḷḷal*s. Nambyār cast each of his *tuḷḷal* works into one of three distinc-
tive rhythmic schemes that corresponded to three subgenres of costumed
dance: these were the *paṟayan-, śītaṅkan-,* and *ōṭṭan-tuḷḷal*s. The first two were

124. Nārāyaṇappiḷḷa 1990: 35–41.
125. Nārāyaṇappiṣārōṭi [1977] 1990; Nārāyaṇappiḷḷa 1990: 45–46.
126. Paramēśvarayyar 1955a: 426–27.

also named genres of the *paṭayaṇi*—the *paṟayan* called after the polluting caste who performed it, and the *śītaṅkan* associated with another polluting caste, the Pulayans. The third type is also said to be a folk form of the Vēlan and Kaṇiyān castes.[127]

Without a doubt, Nambyār was deliberately reaching into the forms of lower-caste arts that were excluded from the precincts of the high temple and elevating them through adaptation to a performance mode that captured part of the ethos of temple theater but brought it to a widened public. This was still not a universal public, as it is almost certain that those very lower castes whose forms he appropriated were probably not among his usual audience. His forum would most likely have been the semipublic compound outside of the temples, where on festival occasions all those middle-range castes who did not pollute by their mere approach could gather, along with those who might normally enter the temple but mingled with their inferiors at festival time.[128]

Had Nambyār's *tuḷḷal*s simply given written form to the usual content of festival folk songs, with their themes of purely local gods, heroes, and demons, he might be interpreted as just a failed member of the temple artist establishment who found his natural level among the masses. But as historian K. N. Gaṇēś has argued persuasively, there was an implicit politics in the very bringing together of discrepant form and content in this festival forum.[129] For the materials Nambyār brought into his hybrid festival folk frame were precisely all the high literature of the Sanskrit epic and puranic traditions from the temple theater and *campu* literature, which was normally inaccessible to the middle and lower castes. I think we can make the case that Nambyār was thus practicing a kind of deliberate folklorization of high Sanskritic culture, parading it around in folk forms for public scrutiny. And when this is linked to the well-recognized satiric content of his work—a clear extension of the Cākyār commentarial mode—one cannot but recognize a pervasively implicit, and sometimes pointedly explicit, critique of the reigning cultural authorities in late medieval Kerala.

To harness the low is not to embrace it in its own life-world but to appropriate it for use against the higher-ups that Nambyār lampooned. In his pre-*tuḷḷal* days Nambyār embraced the devotional mode and *kiḷippāṭṭu* genre of Eḻuttacchan, and in the *Śivapurāṇam,* one of his last works before he began composing *tuḷḷal,* he explicitly enjoined the way of Śiva worship as open to

127. Gaṇēś 1996: 9–10; George 1968: 110.
128. There is good internal textual and contextually indexed evidence to support the nature of the audience and forum, since Nambyār often refers to his surroundings and assembled audience as a prelude to his main story text. On the exclusion of the lower castes, see Gaṇēś (1996: 168).
129. Gaṇēś 1996: 11–13.

even the Shudras and polluting castes (Cāṇḍālas).[130] The modern editor of this work notes that it is this *bhakti* mood that yielded to the more vigorous engagement of themes in the *tuḷḷal* and that this shift was prefigured in parts of the *Śivapurāṇam*.[131] My larger point is that the veiled critique of caste, temple, and courtly life implicit in the works of certain *bhakti* poets became more pointedly this-worldly and socially focused in Nambyār, and that this transition seems evident in the corpus of his own literary development, which remained within an overtly Sanskritic discourse.

Where Sanskrit itself was used in *tuḷḷal* (and it was used interestingly and effectively) the derivations and usages were lexically and grammatically correct and could be understood by those with the requisite knowledge. But I think Gaṇēś is again correct in asserting that one of Nambyār's principal intentions in deploying Sanskritic language was for its sound qualities and performative effect.[132] Strings of attributive terms could pile one on another to give a running description of, say, a royal procession, where the very form of the quasi-intelligible verbiage would serve as a metacommentary not only on the pomp of the event but on the use and pretensions of Sanskrit itself. Here again, we can see in Nambyār's new forum a continuation of the running Sanskritic prose of the earlier *campu*s, which were often similarly employed for satiric effect.

Kuñcan Nambyār's nearly exclusive use of Sanskrit plots and themes from the epics and *purāṇa*s worked not just to bring these materials down to earth but also to reshape them as vehicles for active reflection on his contemporary society. This recalibration of the puranic materials worked through at least two levels of correlation. In the first level of semiotic shifts, the courts, soldiers, castes, institutions, clothing, food, and implements of Sanskrit mythic realms are all described and arrayed exactly as they appeared in Nambyār's contemporary Kerala. The Brahmans attending a festival in the puranic narrative are the Nambūtiri or Paṭṭar Brahmans that Nambyār's audience could see among them as he narrated their traits; the mythic king was a Kerala chieftain, and his retainers were the Nāyar soldiery. This set of indexical links keyed the frame of the narrative to the contemporary context of the telling, where it served at a second and higher level for comparing the depicted world with the actual one, or its projected transformation. The basis of comparison could work in different logical relations: the ills of this world might be transparently present in the mythical one or made prominent by their pointed absence in a better, mythic setting; alternately, they might be highlighted through their exaggerated presence in a demonic realm, or implicitly registered through the positive presence of their logical

130. From line 11 of the chapter "Śanipradōṣamāhātmyam" (Paramēśvaran 1986: 19).
131. Paramēśvaran 1986: 12.
132. Gaṇēś 1996: 16–17.

opposite (e.g., generosity or equitability) in a utopian age and place. In this way Nambyār tacitly signaled to his audience his evaluation of subjects ranging from the abstractions of religious virtue *(dharma)* to the sexual mores of temple priests to the rates and terms of land tenures to the behavior and character of agents of the state.

Where this framing might be missed in its application to Kerala, Nambyār sometimes invented and nested mediating narrative frames and characters. A number of *tuḷḷal*s, for instance, give the context of performance as addressing the needs of a certain non-puranic king, Ulakuṭe Perumāḷ (World chieftain). In the *tuḷḷal* treating the story of the epic prince Naḷa, for example, the whole recitation is framed around removing a supernatural affliction *(kalidōṣam)* from this Perumāḷ's realm.[133] This king is clearly fictively modeled on an exemplary Kerala chieftain, and the frame provides a prototypical context in which a *tuḷḷal* would be performed, along with the warrant for its ritual efficaciousness as part of the epic story of Naḷa. In this way the distance between the Sanskritic world of myth and the ritual context of performance is further bridged by deploying a local mini-puranic character who is close to the needs and activities of Nambyār's actual forum and audience.

This local framing also affirms that these works were religious and ritually performative pieces that retained the older festival context of the *tuḷḷal*s as possession dances in fulfillment of vows and offerings. Numerous references in Nambyār's *tuḷḷal*s should caution us against setting aside the seriousness of the religious theme and content just because we might think of religion as piously disjunctive of political critique and even satire. This warning should apply with equal force to the earlier, more Sanskritic genres as well, where temple theater, whether Sanskrit or vernacular, as well as the enactment of *campu*s, were all apparently religiously dedicated, and where the very construction of their textuality, in the expanded sense I lend to that term, was by design for performance in temple precincts.

THE POLITICS IN PERFORMING LITERATURE

The peregrinations of Nambyār's professional life across Kerala's shifting political landscape confirms both the interlinkage, if not identity, between much of what we might term literary and religious culture, and the transpolitical reach of this cultural sphere—taking "political" here in the sense of territorial polity. It has long been noted that south Indian kings, rather peculiarly, might patronize the deities of temples in the realms of other kings, even their rivals. The consensus is that this was certainly the case in Kerala, where the community of worship for any major temple might be larger than

---

133. Gaṇēś 1996: 18.

or cut across the boundaries of any given polity. Moreover, in Kerala the temples were also the cultural institutional forums for learning, composing, maintaining, and propagating the literary arts.[134] It was accordingly at this suprapolitical level that the spheres of literary practice that made up the literary culture of Kerala emerged.

Kuñcan Nambyār's work provides an excellent vantage point for considering the segmental nature of territorial affiliation and identity, as well as the notion that these segments are encompassed by a supervening identity now explicitly labeled as Malayali. This primarily linguistic designation is only vaguely territorial, for it contrasts with growing numbers of "foreigners" (both from elsewhere in India and from Europe) whom the growing mercantile world of the early modern state attracted. It was likely an impending sense of crisis, of looking back on the medieval order (epitomized in Ulakuṭe Perumāḷ) from the changing perspective of an early modern state, that heightened the social tensions built into Kerala's literary culture of performance.

If this religiously articulated literary culture was not markedly political in the territorial sense, it was certainly political in the sense of power relations and the hierarchies these mapped. And here again, the organization of the temple was central. In Kerala, high temples were constructed according to internal and external zones of pollution keyed to caste. The placement of the temple theater *(kūttampalam)* within the temple walls disallowed even the approach to its domain by a near majority of those we would today call Hindus. Within these walls, the social structuring of the upper-caste hierarchy around Nambūtiri ritual and material privileges, their dominance in Sanskrit education and scholarship, and the consort status of temple-servants (e.g., Cākyār and Nambyār) and Nāyar women in their service, made for a literary, religious, and sexual politics of knowledge in the temple arts. Outside of the Brahmanical temple, some of these same castes had their own shrines where their own festival compounds harbored different vernacular arts, overlapping in part with all of those excluded castes who necessarily had their caste-based shrines and local genres of largely oral liturgies of artful worship. The overlap and interpenetration of these various genres in certain coordinated and simultaneous festivals was variable by region and through time, but the result was a kind of partly mimetic, partly reactive articulation of knowledge forms in literature that was discretely marked along caste-bloc boundaries and was power-laden across them. This structuring of Malayalam's heteroglossic relations along the gradient of Kerala's social hierarchy has become apparent through my researches at both ends of the caste spectrum. While literary languages, registers, and themes were contrastively articulated at either end of this spectrum, they were interactively reshaped

---

134. Gaṇēś 1996: 127–28; cf. Rajan Gurukkal 1992.

through mediating castes and cultural institutions. This is how and why the language of literature was itself broken down into constituent levels (phonological, lexical, metrical, grammatical, and literary-pragmatic) and reconstituted in shifting contests through time. These reconstitutions, sometimes uneven and irresolute in their features, I have treated under the rubric of genre—what the secondary literature in Kerala calls "movements" *(prasthā-nam)*. But as our repeated encounter with Kerala's literary works as ritually enacted events should convince us, the artifacts from which Kerala's regional-nationalist scholarship has constructed its literature are remnants of more encompassing (and perhaps more critical) performative practices. The polyphonic potentials are perhaps most apparent in their contestatory display in Nambyār. He was aware that his new forms of language use might make him enemies, for he refers to opponents who will defame him and warns them that the audience may set on them and break their legs![135] The carnival that Bakhtin used as a trope to capture the volatile potential of heteroglossic forms is still apparent in Nambyār's textual remains. But in stressing the performative life of his textuality I mean to stress as well that this potential was only rendered actual in enactment of the artistic event, where contextual factors put into play certain energies of the text while it suppressed others.

We return, then, to where we started, with the realization that if all language is demonstrably and pragmatically multifunctional, then that crafting of language we call literary is multiply so. I have argued at the opening of this essay that the modern West's textual culture of privately consumed text-artifacts under the regimes of print capitalism is mistaken in its pretensions to universality. It is a folk model whose ideology may be writ increasingly large under colonialism, nationalism, and global capitalism, but its ideological status has been increasingly revealed through attention to the facts of actual language use in other, dynamically open textualizing processes. These facts are especially evident in the case of premodern Kerala, where texts were performances at their very inception and throughout their social lives, and where these social contexts of their production and circulation were not masked under the form of artifactual commodities. That the Western transformation of texts into commodities was mimicked in the twentieth century through the construction of a regional-nationalist literature and language called Malayalam remains, I believe, a secondary rather than a primary affair, for literature and poetry still have a life in Kerala that defies Western impositions. In any case, the approach developed through the analysis of works represented in this essay has convinced me of this—that the alterity of this literature's creative matrix can continue to yield new insights into lit-

135. From the *Kr̥ṣṇalīla,* cited in Gaṇeś (1996: 14).

erary cultures, especially when read as the registry of socially interested and positioned performances in historical process. And my sense is that this would be equally true for surrounding Indian languages and perhaps even for that great and seemingly monolithic edifice called Sanskrit, which Nambyār, like his kindred vernacular spirits elsewhere in southern India, playfully fractured for the fashioning of his novel social project.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Achyuta Menon, C. 1940. *Eḻuttaccan and His Age.* Madras: University of Madras.

Āṇṭaṇi, C. L. [1958] 1984. "Gadyam." In *Sāhityacaritram Prasthānaṅṅaḷilūṭe,* edited by K. M. George. Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative.

Āṇṭaṇi, P., ed. 1994. *Payyannūr Pāṭṭu: Pāṭhavum Paṭhanavum.* Edited by S. Zacharia. Tübingen Malayalam Series, vol. 1. Kottayam: D. C. Books.

Appukkuṭṭannāyar, C. 1979. *Malayāḷasandēśakāvyaṅṅaḷ: Oru Paṭhanam.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

Appukuṭṭanpiḷḷa, Cavaṟa. 1996. *Kathakaḷiyile Manōdharmaṅṅaḷ.* Trivandrum: State Institute of Languages.

Bālakr̥ṣṇan, P. K. 1987. *Jātivyavasthitiyum Kēraḷacaritravum (Paṭhanam).* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

Bālakr̥ṣṇan Nāyar, C. T. 1981. *Teraññeṭutta Prabandhaṅṅaḷ.* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Bauman, Richard, and Charles Briggs. 1990 . "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life." *Annual Reviews in Anthropology* 19: 59–88.

Bhāskaran, T. 1995. "Kr̥ṣṇagāthayile Śr̥ṅgāram." In *Prācīna Malayāḷa Sāhityam,* edited by Gōpināthan Nāyar. Calicut: University of Calicut.

Brockington, J. L. 1984. *Righteous Rāma: The Evolution of an Epic.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Caldwell, Robert. [1875] 1976. *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages.* Madras: University of Madras.

Dumont, Louis. 1961. "Les marriages nayar commes faits indiens." *l'Homme* 1 (1): 11–36.

Enkvist, Nils. 1994. "Context." In *Literature and the New Interdisciplinarity: Poetics, Linguistics, History,* edited by R. Sell and P. Verdonk. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Freeman, Rich. 1998. "Rubies and Coral: The Lapidary Crafting of Language in Kerala." *Journal of Asian Studies* 57: 38–65.

———. 2000. "Thereupon Hangs a Tail: The Deification of Vāli in the *Teyyam* Worship of Malabar." In *Questioning Rāmāyaṇas: A South Asian Tradition,* edited by P. Richman. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gaṇēś, K. N. 1996. *Kuñcan Nambyār: Vākkum Samūhavum.* Sukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeetham.

George, K. M. 1956. *Rāmacaritam and the Study of Early Malayalam.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

———. 1968. *A History of Malayalam Literature.* New York: Asia Publishing House.

Goodwin, Charles, and Alessandro Duranti. 1992. "Rethinking Context: An Intro-

duction." In *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon,* edited by Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gōpālakṛṣṇan, Naṭuvaṭṭam. 1995. "Kūttaraṅṅinṟe Svādhīnam Rāmacaritattil." In *Prācīna Malayāḷa Sāhityam,* edited by N. Gōpināthan Nāyar. Calicut: University of Calicut.

———. 1999. "Śāsanaṅṅaḷum Bhāṣākauṭalīyavum." In *Malayāḷasāhityacaritram 14–ām Nūṟṟāṇḍuvare.* Thiruvananthapuram: P. K. Parameswaran Nair Memorial Trust.

Gōpikkuṭṭan. 1989. *Pūntānam Jñānappāna.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

———, ed. and trans. 1986. *Līlātilakam (1 Mutal 3 Vareyuḷḷa Śilpaṅṅaḷ).* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

———, ed. 1996. *Kōkasandēśam: Paṭhanavum Vyākhyānavum.* Kottayam: Current Books.

Govindappiḷḷa, P. [1889] 1965. *Malayāḷabhāṣācaritram.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative.

Hanks, W. 1987. "Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice." *American Ethnologist* 14: 688–92.

Hariśarmma, A. D., ed. [1969] 1980. *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative.

Hart, George. 1975. *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kaṟūr, Manōj. 1996. *Añcaṭi, Jñānappāna, Ōṇappāṭṭu.* Edited by Scaria Zacharia. Tübingen University Library Malayalam Manuscript Series, vol. 4. Kottayam: D. C. Books.

Krishna Chaitanya. 1971. *A History of Malayalam Literature.* New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Kṛṣṇakkaimaḷ, Aymanam. 1989. *Āṭṭakathāsāhityam.* Trivandrum: State Institute of Languages.

Kṛṣṇan Nāyar, P. V., ed. 1979. *Rāmacaritam.* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Kumārannāyar, K., ed. 1984. *Kṛṣṇagātha: Gōpikāduḥkam.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

———. 1990. *Kṛṣṇagātha: Rukmiṇīsvayamvaram.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

Kunjunni Raja, K. 1964. *Kutiyattam.* New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi.

———. [1958] 1980. *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature.* Madras: University of Madras.

Kuññanpiḷḷa, Iḷaṅkuḷam. [1953] 1984a. *Kēraḷabhāṣayuṭe Vikāsapariṇāmaṅṅaḷ (Onnām Bhāgam).* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative.

———. [1958] 1984b. "Saṃskṛtamiśra Śākha." In *Sāhityacaritram Prasthānaṅṅaḷilūṭe,* edited by K. M. George. Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative.

———. [1955] 1985a. *Līlātilakam: Maṇipravālalakṣaṇam.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

———, ed. [1954] 1985b. *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative.

Kuññanpiḷḷa, Śūranāṭṭu. [1953] 1971. *Anantapuravarṇṇanam.* Trivandrum: University of Kerala.

———. 1979. *Kairaḷisamakṣam athavā Agrapūja.* Trivandrum: K. Bhaskaran Nair.

———, ed. 1970. *Malayalam Lexicon.* Vol. 2. Trivandrum: Government Press.

Līlāvati, M. 1996. *Malyāḷakavitāsāhitya Caritram.* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Lucy, John. 1993. "Reflexive Language and the Human Disciplines." In *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics,* edited by John A. Lucy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Malayalam Improvement Committee. 1968. *Gaurīcaritam (Prabandham).* Śrī Rāmavarma Granthāvali. Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

———. [1936] 1990. *Tripuradahanam (Prabandham).* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Mangalam, S. J. 1988. *Paleography of Malayalam Script.* Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers.

Maṇṇummūṭu, C. J., ed. 1993. *Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam: Bālakāṇḍam.* Manarkatu, Kottayam: C. J. M. Publications.

———. 1995. *Uṇṇiyāṭicaritam.* Manarkatu, Kottayam: C. J. M. Publications.

Marr, J. R. 1985. *The Eight Anthologies: A Study in Early Tamil Literature.* Tiruvanmiyur, Madras: Institute of Asian Studies.

Nārāyaṇakkuṟuppu, P. 1992. *Malayāḷam Vṛttapaṭhanam.* Trivandrum: State Institute of Languages.

Narayanan, M. G. S. 1996. *Perumals of Kerala: Political and Social Conditions of Kerala Under the Cēra Perumals of Makotai (c. 800–1124 A.D.).* Calicut: published by author.

———. 1999. "Sāṃskārikapaścāttalam." In *Malayāḷasāhityacaritram 14–ām Nūṟṟāṇḍuvare.* Thiruvananthapuram: P. K. Parameswaran Nair Memorial Trust.

———. 2001. "Enṟe Caritrānvēṣaṇaśramaṅṅaḷ." *Bhāṣāpōṣiṇi* 25 (1): 42–45.

Nārāyaṇan Nampyār, P. K. 1980. *Mantrāṅkam.* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Nārāyāṇappiḷḷa, P. K. [1949] 1971. *Padyaratnam.* Trivandrum: University of Kerala.

———. 1984. *Harināmakīrttanam, Tattvadīpika (Saṃśōdhitasaṃskaraṇam).* Calicut: Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Co.

———. 1990. *Pañcānanṟe Vimarśatrayam.* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

———, ed. 1967. *Cintāratnam: Vēdāntadarśanam.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

Nārāyaṇappiṣārōṭi, K. P. [1977] 1990. *Śrī Kṛṣṇacaritam Maṇipravāḷam.* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Nīlakaṇṭhakavi, Śrī. 1990. *Teṅkailanāthōdayam [Prabandham].* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Padmanabha Menon, K. P. [1924] 1982. *History of Kerala Written in the Form of Notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar.* Vol. 1. Edited by T. K. Krishna Menon. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.

Padmanābhanuṇṇi, D. [1958] 1984. "Gātha." In *Sāhityacaritram Prasthānaṅṅaḷilūṭe,* edited by K. M. George. Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative.

Paramēśvaran, E. 1986. *Kuñcannambyāruṭe Śivapurāṇam.* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Paramēśvarayyar, Uḷḷūr S. 1953. *Keralasāhityacaritram.* Vol. 1. Travancore University Series, no. 30. Trivandrum: University of Travancore.

———. 1954. *Keralasāhityacaritram.* Vol. 2. Travancore University Series, no. 30. Trivandrum: University of Travancore.

———. 1955a. *Keralasāhityacaritram.* Vol. 3. Travancore University Series, no. 30. Trivandrum: University of Travancore.

———. 1955b. *Keralasāhityacaritram.* Vol. 4. Travancore University Series, no. 30. Trivandrum: University of Travancore.

Parameswaran Nair, P. K. 1967. *History of Malayalam Literature.* Translated by E. M. J. Venniyoor. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Pattabiraman, G., ed. 1984. *Śukasandeśa of Lakṣmīdāsa.* Madras: Higginbothams Limited.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1998. "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular." *Journal of Asian Studies* 57 (1): 6–37.

Puruṣōttaman, Ceṟukunnam. 1992. *Pūntānavum Bhaktiprasthānavum (Paṭhanam).* Trivandrum: State Institute of Languages.

Puruṣōttamannāyar, M. M. 1980. *Rāmacaritattil ninnu Mahābhāratattilēkku (Gavēṣaṇaprabandhaṅṅaḷ).* Kottayam: Current Books.

———, ed. 1981. *Tiruniḻal Māla (Prācīna Bhāṣākāvyam).* Kottayam: Current Books.

Raghava Variyar, M. R., ed. 1984. *Keralolpatti Granthavari: The Kolattunad Traditions.* Edited by M. G. S. Narayanan. Calicut University Historical Series. Calicut: Department of History, Calicut University.

———. 1990. "Kēraḷīyata." In *Kēraḷīyata: Caritramānaṅṅaḷ,* ed. by M. R. Raghava Variyar. Sukhapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeetham.

———. 1997. *Madhyakāla Kēraḷam: Sampattu, Samūham, Saṃskāram.* Trivandrum: Cinta Publishers.

Raghava Variyar, M. R., and P. M. Rajan Gurukkal. 1992. *Kēraḷacaritram.* Sukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeetham.

Rājā, Mānavēdan. 1986. *Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam.* Translated by P. V. C. Rājā. Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

Rajan Gurukkal, P. M. 1992. *The Kerala Temple and the Early Medieval Agrarian System.* Sukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeetham.

Rāmacandra Piḷḷa, T. G., ed. 1987. *Nārāyaṇīyam Bhāṣācampu.* Trivandrum: State Institute of Languages.

Rāmacandran Nāyar, K., ed. 1969. *Vaiśikatantram.* Trivandrum: published by author.

———. 1971. *Early Manipravalam: A Study.* Trivandrum: Anjali.

Ramaswami Aiyar, L. V. 1938. "Tirukkuṟaḷ in Malayāḷam: Editor's Introduction." *Bulletin of the Rama Varma Research Institute* 6 (2): 130–37.

———. [1936] 1983. *The Evolution of Malayalam Morphology.* Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Ratnamma, K. 1986. *Anantapuravarṇṇanam (Prācīna Kāvyam).* Kottayam: Current Books.

———. 1994a. *Malayāḷabhāṣācaritram: Eḻuttacchan Vare.* Kottayam: Current Books.

———. 1994b. *Early Inscriptional Malayalam.* Thiruvananthapuram: DLA Publications.

———, ed. 1986. *Anantapuravarṇṇanam (Prācīna Kāvyam).* Kottayam: Current Books.

Sekhar, A. C. 1953. *Evolution of Malayalam.* Deccan College Dissertation Series, no. 10. Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute.

Silverstein, Michael. 1979. "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology." In *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels,* edited by R. Clyne, W. Hanks, and C. Hofbauer. Chicago: Chicago Linguistics Society.

Sreedhara Menon, A. [1967] 1980. *A Survey of Kerala History.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative; distributed by National Book Stall.

Unni, N. P., ed. 1985. *Śukasandeśa of Lakṣmīdāsa.* Delhi: Nag Publishers.

Urban, Greg, and Michael Silverstein, eds. 1997. *Natural Histories of Discourse.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vēlāyudhan Piḷḷa, P. V. 1966. *Madhyakāla Malayāḷam (Gavēṣaṇopnyāsaṅṅaḷ).* Trivandrum: University of Kerala.

———. 1977. *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa Gadyam.* Trivandrum: University of Kerala.

Vēṅkiṭṭarāma Śarma, V., ed. [1967] 1982. *Bhāṣārāmāyaṇa Campu.* Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Vēṇu, G. 1994. *Kathakaḷi Mudra Nighaṇṭu.* Tiruvanantapuram: Department of Cultural Publications, Government of Kerala.

Vijayappan, P. M. 1995. "Tiruniḻalmālayile Bhāṣā." In *Prācīna Malayāḷa Sāhityam,* edited by N. Gōpināthan Nāyar. Calicut: University of Calicut.

Viṣṇunampūtiri, M. V. 1982. *Vaṇṇānum Kentrōnpāṭṭum (Paṭhanavum Pāṭṭukaḷum).* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravartaka Co-operative Society.

Warrior, N. V. Krishna. 1977. *A History of Malayalam Metre.* Trivandrum: Dravidian Linguistics Association.

Woolard, Kathryn, and Bambi Schieffelin. 1994. "Language Ideology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23: 55–82.

Zarrilli, Phillip. 1984. *The Kathakali Complex: Actor, Performance and Structure.* New Delhi: Abhinav.

———. 1998. *When the Body Becomes All Eyes: Paradigms, Discourses, and Practices of Power in Kalarippayattu, a South Indian Martial Art.* New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2000. *Kathakali Dance Drama: Where Gods and Demons Come to Play.* London and New York: Routledge.

Zvelebil, Kamil. 1974. *Tamil Literature.* Vol. 10, fasc. 1 of *A History of Indian Literature.* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

The Centrality of Borderlands

8

The Two Histories of Literary Culture in Bengal

Sudipta Kaviraj

INTRODUCTION

A general reading of the history of a particular literature requires, first of all, a principle of organization. Histories of Bangla literature usually offer a narrative of continuity: they seek to show, quite legitimately, how the literary culture develops through successive stages—how literary works of one period become the stock on which later stages carry out their productive operations. These studies are less interested in asking how literary mentalities come to be transformed or how a continuing tradition can be interrupted, or in speculating on possible reasons behind these significant literary turns. In an attempt to move away from these conventional histories, which record unproblematically the sequential narrative of the production of texts and their authors, this essay gives attention primarily to two questions. The first is: What were the major historical "literary cultures," that is, the sensibilities or mentalities constructed around a common core of tastes, methods of textual production, paratextual activities (like performance, recitation, or other use in religious, nonliterary contexts), reception, and the social composition of audiences? The second question, closely related to the first, is: How do literary cultures, especially deeply entrenched literary cultures, change?

The treatment of Bangla literary history in this essay, therefore, focuses more on textualities or text types than on individual texts, and it offers hardly any literary-critical analysis of major canonical works. A figure like Rabindranath Tagore is treated with relative neglect, since he does not represent a phase of serious interpretative contention or rupture in literary production

or taste, although his work dominates modern Bangla literary sensibility. The struggles of the generation immediately following Tagore to challenge and replace his aesthetics with a more modern one that tried to come to grips with the problem of evil, are given greater attention.

This essay looks at two types of questions about literary transformation: the first concerns chronological changes in sensibilities or styles of literary production; the second, which cannot be ignored in any history of Bangla literature, is the problem of inclusion and exclusion of different social groups within this literary culture. The literature each group produces, receives, and enjoys contains internal structures of language, mythical content, imagery, or iconic systems that tend to include some Bangla readers and exclude others. It is important to note at the outset that even the question "What is Bangla literature?" is not an innocent or noncontentious one. Writing the history of Bangla literature was part of the project of literary modernity, and since this was entirely dominated by a Hindu upper stratum of society, the initial historical accounts tended to ignore Islamic elements by suggesting either that they belonged to a separate cultural strand (called Musalmāni Bāṃlā) or that these texts were not of sufficient literary quality to find a place in an exalted history of literary art. This is the central question of the complex "place" of Islamic culture in Bangla literature.[1] Comparisons with literary cultures from neighboring regions of northern India, especially the Hindi, Urdu, and Gujarati regions, might yield interesting themes for further understanding of the relation between the Islamic and the Sanskritic in Indian literary tradition as a whole.

Two Approaches to the Past: Tradition and History

The history of Bangla literature has two beginnings, and some of the most significant problems of its historiography stem from the problematic relations between these two separate historical stages. For the history of Bangla literature can have two equally plausible narratives, each with its own internal coherence and problems. In conventional critical discussions on the history of Bangla literature, its origin is placed in the tenth century, when Buddhist religious compositions known as *caryāpada*s were being written in a language recognizable as the first ancestor of modern Bangla.[2] This narra-

1. There has been a good deal of writing and analysis on the exclusion of Muslims from modern Bangla literature. We must, however, maintain a distinction between a large "political" point that asserts the fact of this exclusion and deplores it for moral and political reasons, and a more textual and literary question about exactly how this exclusion works in the body of the literary texts. See for example, Shibaji Bandyopadhyay's recent lectures (Bandyopadhyay 1986).

2. The word "ancestor" here does not connote unproblematic descent. Because the *caryā-pada*s are also claimed as the point of origin by other eastern Indian languages, several lan-

tive of Bangla literature is parallel and comparable to those of other north Indian languages, many of which emerged in a typical evolutionary pattern from Sanskrit. Classical Sanskrit developed several distinctive literary styles of composition.[3] The Apabhramsha form diversified into various styles and eventually created the distinctive individual vernaculars. Gradually, the Bangla vernacular crystallized into its particular linguistic shape and came to have an identifiably distinct literature.[4] Even after its linguistic differentiation, Bangla continued to bear an interesting, fluctuating relationship with the canons of Sanskrit high literature, as Bangla writers sometimes tried to emulate the forms and delicacies of Sanskrit, and sometimes tried to consciously move away from the values of the Sanskrit universe and create independent literary criteria of their own. Historically, this literature gave rise to several corpora with peculiar cultural, religious, and literary sensibilities. It is impossible to analyze all of them in detail in this interpretative essay, but as the chapter proceeds I shall flag the major phases and forms.

The literary historian Sukumar Sen considers the advent of the great religious personality Caitanya (1486–1534) a significant watershed in Bangla literary history, and he divides the tradition preceding Caitanya plausibly into three major sections, each with its own internally coherent literary concerns, forms, and styles.[5] The first segment consists primarily of renditions and transfers from the high Sanskrit canon. Its major texts are the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttibās and the *Mahābhārata* by Kāśīrāmdās (both of uncertain date, perhaps fifteenth century), though these two texts are surrounded by a large literature seeking to translate Sanskrit texts into Bangla. The second segment consists of the large corpus of the *maṅgalkāvya*s inspired by popular religious sects. Each strand of worship developed its own series of these texts, which had wholly original narrative lines celebrating the powers of popular deities in the context of a specific, local literary geography. Third, a considerable body of distinctive literature, often of great poetic sophistication, emerged in the pre-Caitanya era through the Vaiṣṇava sensibility (of devotion to the god Viṣṇu), associated with the works of Vidyāpati and Caṇḍīdās, the two

---

guages may have differentiated from this linguistic form. The Bengalis, accordingly, do not have an exclusive linguistic or historical claim to this ancestry. See the discussion of Tibetan literature by Matthew Kapstein, chapter 13 in this volume.

3. For the diversification of different styles of Sanskrit, of which Magadhi and Gaudi were the generally acknowledged east Indian forms, see Pollock, chapter 1 in this volume.

4. One of the most influential views about the linguistic differentiation of Bangla from Sanskrit and Prakrit can be found in Dinesh Chandra Sen 1950: 10–20. He notes the particular features of the Gauḍīya *rīti* in Sanskrit as being full of *samāsa* (compounds) and *sandhi* (euphonic combination), and marked by *śabdāḍambara* (erudite ornamentation, devoid of fluidity and grace).

5. Sen 1965.

great early composers of *padāvalī* (sequences of devotional lyrics). These poems worked primarily within the general narrative structure of the popular story of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, the divine couple in Vaiṣṇava culture.

After Caitanya, these primary currents of Bangla literary culture continued. But there was an enormous influx of strength and sophistication into the Vaiṣṇava tradition, which produced a new literary genre that Sen felicitously calls *caritaśākhā,* the "biographic branch," specializing in presenting Caitanya's life as a divine narrative through a skilled combination of the mythical and the historical. The literary impulse associated with Caitanya's religion dominated Bangla literary production for nearly two centuries.

In the eighteenth century, as modern historians have pointed out, it is possible to detect the emergence of a new cultural sensibility that moved away from typical themes of mystical eroticism found in the literary culture of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas (Bengali devotees of Viṣṇu) and gives rise to a new, more diverse and catholic, literary taste. This is reflected in the works of the major eighteenth-century poet, Bhāratcandra, whose large corpus of texts includes narrative *kāvya*s like *Annadāmaṅgal* (a devotional poem on the goddess Annadā, bestower of food) and the enormously popular *Vidyāsundar* (Vidyā and Sundar), but also many freestanding poetic works of a less traditional variety. The first history of Bangla literature must end in the eighteenth century with this literary culture.

The second history of Bangla literature begins in the nineteenth century with the coming of colonial modernity and the introduction of modern forms and themes, making Bangla the first distinctively modern literature in India. For the study of Bangla literary cultures, the early modern period is one of the most interesting, since there is a fundamental transformation of the literary world—from the definition of literary writing itself to the struggles to incorporate modern forms of narration and performance borrowed from the West, such as the novel or the sonnet, to the overarching problem of how to produce a literature that accepts the "disenchanted" scientific view of the world. Yet this modern Bengali culture of the nineteenth century also made use of the basic repertoire of earlier literary traditions, and it eventually produced a literature that is distinctly modern yet has not lost its strong aesthetic connections with traditional techniques and forms. One of the challenges in the literary history of Bangla is to make sense of the relation between these two histories—the one that ends with the eighteenth century and the one that begins with the nineteenth—and the partial continuities and ruptures that comprise their complex relations.

With the rise of modern consciousness, of which the historical sense is an integral part, there was among nineteenth-century Bengalis an understandable historiographical concern with the origins of their language. The "first beginning," marked by the *caryāpada*s, like all such beginnings, was naive, not tortured by the specifically modern anxieties of reflexivity or ac-

companied by historical curiosity. After the "second beginning" in the nineteenth century, the entire disparate, as well as temporally and spatially dispersed, corpus of texts and literary practices spanning the period from the tenth century to the eighteenth century was perceived as a *single* historical narrative, with a beginning and a characteristically provisional end in modernity. Naturally, this nineteenth-century exercise used implicit definitional criteria based on perceptions of identity. And curiously, in the early histories of Bangla literature, while Vidyāpati (who wrote in Sanskrit, Maithili, and Avahattha) and Jayadeva (who wrote in Sanskrit) were seen to be firmly part of the basic definition of Bangla literary history, Islamic texts were often silently excluded.

The Conception of Literary Tradition

In any literary tradition there is always at least a minimal sense of the past. But the past is not a pretheoretical thing that exists independently of literary conceptualization; the past is formed by concepts, and concepts of the past can differ from one culture to another, as also between different periods of the same literary culture. Evidently, modernity introduces a sharp break with previous concepts of the past; but it is important to understand exactly the nature of this break and not passively follow the trend that absolutizes this rupture. To absolutize is to argue that something that earlier did not exist at all came into existence—in this case, that "something" is a new consciousness of history.[6] If we take this to refer to a historical consciousness in the narrow sense, this is true; but if we mean by this a certain *theoretical* attitude about how to use the past, this is false. It is true that before the nineteenth century a strict *historical* consciousness involving linear and calibrated notions of time—with calendrical indexing, which involved techniques of exact dating of events and texts that together constituted the essential ingredients of a modern historical sensibility—did not exist in literary-critical discussions in Bangla. But there was a strong sense of the presence of the past conceived as tradition. Since with modernity the concept of "the past as history" gradually replaced the concept of "the past as tradition," it is useful to analyze the differences between them.[7]

There is a radical difference in the significance of the temporal order of texts and literary sensibilities between these two senses of the past. Tradition uses the facts of the past as evidence for the continuance of practices, sug-

6. For a strong argument about the newness of modern time consciousness, see Koselleck 1981, especially chapter 3.

7. There are some powerful arguments suggesting that all societies, including the modern, require a tradition that is independent of "scientific" history, and that history in this narrower sense cannot perform the functions of tradition. See, for instance, Gadamer 1981.

gesting that a particular way of doing things is still relevant precisely because it has existed for a long time. By contrast, the modern sensibility infuses its concept of the past with a strong sense of the discontinuity of practices, indicating that a certain way of doing things is no longer possible or appropriate. Significantly, the concept of the past as tradition was quite adequate for the purposes of the practical literary moves for which it was commonly invoked. A "literature" *(sāhitya)* was seen as a unitary field of texts that existed in a differentiated time, with those composed in the past living in a certain relation with those composed in the present.

For literary practice, living in a tradition meant two different things. At one level, there was a sense of a large and loose tradition that was given to "everybody" in the literary world by virtue of their literacy: they had to be educated technically in the sciences of figures, metrics *(alaṅkāraśāstra, chandaḥśāstra),* and the like to be able to appreciate the major texts of Sanskrit literature. Literary cultivation of this *general* kind would consist in a set of technical competencies—knowing, for instance, the difference between simile and poetic fantasy *(upamā* and *utprekṣā),* the rules of alliteration *(anuprāsa),* and the various kinds of *chandaḥ*—that gave the cultivated a capacity to recognize, discern, and enjoy these elements in the texts. Usually, there was a simultaneous initiation into a narrower, more *specific* tradition, in most cases related to a sect—Shaktism, Vaishnavism, Shaivism—which constrained the tastes of writers and their audiences into a more limited horizon.

At the second level, authors had to know and relate their work to a recognized body of symbolic or iconic combinatory, narrative structures or conventionalized narrative lines. Medieval Bangla literature, for example, includes a celebrated tradition of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* poetry, generally known now by the name literary historians gave it in the nineteenth century: the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī,* or devotional verses relating to the god Viṣṇu. These used a familiar narrative combinatory: compositions elaborated on the story structure around Kṛṣṇa—not just any story, but ones drawn from the *Bhāgavata* complex of texts, which emphasize the erotic interpretation of his life. Compositions, moreover, had to invoke certain continuities in literary themes *(viṣaya),* moods *(rasa),* and theologies in order to be recognized as parts of that tradition. Yet because of the gradual shift in Vaiṣṇava theology toward the use of sexual union as a metaphor, and the slow legitimation of this metaphor as a vehicle for allegedly deep doctrinal meanings, these compositions could borrow from the luxuriant erotic tradition of classical Sanskrit, which was entirely secular and doctrinally indifferent—for instance, the wittily erotic ambience in Kālidāsa, or the deeply sensuous play of language and sexuality in Bhartṛhari or Amaru.[8]

8. Vaiṣṇava commentaries on sacred texts would often explicitly acknowledge such influence, especially the inexhaustible conceit of the commentators at being able to bring out liter-

This kind of deployment of past texts and literary resources evidently involved both knowledge of those texts and an implicit theory about how to relate to them for practical use. Obviously, this argument can be given a strongly structuralist form by suggesting that the structures of performed narratives or texts could be broken down into literary lexemes, which formed an underlying combinatory from which poets drew elements they required. The stretch of past time from Kālidāsa to Bhāratcandra, or from the ancient Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* to the recent *Annadāmaṅgal* and *Vidyāsundar,* is vast, and we can see at work the logic of what Pollock has called "vedicization" in the case of literary texts as well.[9]

There are two interesting features in this traditional conception of a literary tradition. There is a certain element of gratuitous reverence for simple antiquity, and more recent compositions claim this value by a suppression of chronological indexing and a pretense of antiquity. Clearly, this constitutes a deft operation on temporality, primarily to stifle it or to erase its sense of linearity. This trick with time is in some ways exactly contrary to the modern orientation to time and its effects. To treat traditional literary doctrines as lacking a sense of the past, or a sense of what to do with the past, is thus false and unnecessarily patronizing. It is more worthwhile to bring out what they could and could not do with the past, given the way they conceptualized its existence.

The traditional literary sense of time was fuzzy and approximate, which made certain types of composing and reception practices possible. Authors or critics would not have been able to tell exactly when the *Meghadūta* was composed, and would not have been excessively bothered if they failed. Even more intriguing, a text like the *Meghadūta* would have come down to them from a generalized past as part of an *āgama,* a practice that tended to break down or efface the layers of time and in a sense placed literary texts in a common horizon of literary contemporaneity, or better, atemporality. It is important to distinguish between historicist contemporaneity (according to which a text is continuously refracted through a long succession of literary cultures, as, for instance, in the case of Greek tragedies in the contemporary West), and atemporality (which creates a kind of calendrically unstratified time in which all classical texts coexist in a temporally undifferentiated "past").[10] Texts lack an ordinal sense of pastness. The meaning of something becoming a classic is precisely its rising above the indexing specificity of local culture and taste, thereby conquering the localizing and

---

ally everything implicit in a text. Against the assumption of authorial spontaneity, commentaries set up a literature of meticulous erudition about internal references and allusions.

9. Pollock 1989.

10. See Gadamer's interesting discussion of textual temporality in Gadamer 1981: 356 ff.

decaying effects of time—a meaning that still subsists in the English use of the term "classic." The concept of tradition, *paraṃparā* (one after another)—a sense of things, texts, tastes being handed down in an unbroken chain of reception (not necessarily repetition)—therefore, contains an implicit theoretical understanding of the pastness of literary texts. In this way of thinking linear succession is not progress, which makes it impossible to change order, but is turned into formal difference, which can be endlessly emulated and played upon as a repertoire. The most significant difference with the modern sense of time is that pastness does not lead to obsolescence; if anything, the hierarchy goes in the opposite direction, and a text tends to acquire greater value simply because of its alleged antiquity.[11] Kālidāsa's excellence might be recognized as something impossible to repeat, but not because it is obsolete.

Literary Territoriality

In studying literary traditions in South Asia, the problem of historical anachronism assumes a form quite different from the problems concerning historical anachronism analyzed in recent discussions on social theory centered elsewhere.[12] This is illustrated by difficulties that arise regarding the notion of space—an obvious and unavoidable concern in this discussion—when we look for relations that tie bounded forms of territoriality to cultural and literary processes. Where does Bangla literary history take place? If we accept the anachronistic teleology normally implicit in the writing of modern Bangla literary history, that the main purpose of all previous history was to produce the present, then the answer becomes simple. Viewing the entire past of Bangla literature from the vantage point of the modern literature that arose in the nineteenth century, historians of Bangla literature often assume that the purpose of the whole of earlier cultural evolution was to "produce" that literature. Given that teleological vision, the intriguing question of space or territoriality of literary culture—"How is the medieval structure or geographic spread of literature different from the modern?"—dissolves. It is replaced by a story of undeveloped, inadequate forms in a literary space that is left indeterminate, encouraging the casual assumption that it was the same as modern Bengal and that a long time is required for a literature to mature and take the modern form of a territorial linguistic identity. Teleological historical reasoning, especially popular with national-

---

11. This is reflected, for instance, in the traditional dichotomy of *prācīna/arvācīna* rather than the modern *prācīna/navīna*.

12. The most relevant in this context are the critical discussions about anachronistic reading in the works of Quentin Skinner, John Dunn, and J. G. A. Pocock, and the resulting controversy around the work of the Cambridge school. See in particular Skinner [1969] 1988.

ist writers, thus obstructs the asking of some interesting structural questions.[13] Absolutizing a single territorial configuration—the one that the modern period demonstrates—turns all other previous evidence into a "tendency toward" or a "waiting for" that configuration. This often makes us forget that there was a different configuration of the territorial in earlier times that needs to be spelled out.[14]

Still, identifying the exact territorial boundaries of Bangla literary reception is a *question* for which it might be difficult to find a satisfying answer, given the state of knowledge about readerships or audiences of listeners in premodern Bengal. I have wondered about the lack of territoriality in premodern cultural structures, which appears so strange to modern observers because we consider such territorial grounding so utterly natural and necessary— almost an ontological condition for the existence of all cultural objects. Evidently, in precolonial times there were people who understood a clearly differentiated, identifiable Bangla language and had the necessary skills to recognize, read, write, and carry on literary practices in it. But the "unity" of this language is itself an interesting concept. Unity of a language, Bhūdev Mukhopadhyay observed perceptively, can mean two different things: a single language that a group of people *speak,* or one that they *understand.*[15] The structure of the linguistic world is often marked by the interplay between these two. In contemporary India, for example, there is a functional Bombay-based Hindi that is easily *understandable* to people in most parts of the country where these vernaculars are spoken (demonstrated with incontrovertible certainty by the vast popularity of Hindi films). However, more stylized and purified forms of Hindi or Hindustani used by native speakers of the language, which have greater overlap with Sanskrit or Persianized Urdu, are not as easily intelligible to others.[16]

In considering premodern Bengal, similarly, there are clearly discernible variations between the languages used by the *maṅgalkāvya*s and by the Vaiṣ-

13. I have tried to analyze the most common forms of this kind of argument in Kaviraj 1991.

14. Recently, some of these issues have been discussed with great perceptiveness and scholarship in the special millennium issue *(sahasrāyan sankhyā)* of *Deś* (2000).

15. Mukhopādhyāy [1892] 1981. I have discussed his views in Kaviraj 1995a. Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy is of course concerned with a different question: What can be a common language for India? His argument is that Hindustani is already a common language because it is the language the largest number of people in all parts of India would find intelligible, though this does not mean that they would be able to speak it. He distinguishes between a commonly spoken language and a commonly intelligible language.

16. I have heard complaints that the Hindi used in All India Radio broadcasts is too artificially Sanskritized and therefore often inaccessible to Muslims and common people. Critics say that this Hindi is intended to create a speech community from which Muslims and subalterns are excluded. By contrast, the Hindi used in Bombay popular films has to find a level understandable to both Hindi- and non-Hindi-speakers. For an excellent analysis of the recent history of Hindi, see Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2000).

ṇava *padāvalī*. Yet at another level, the two show a commonness not just in the words and their meanings but in the more complex registers of *alaṅkārik* forms, iconic images, and the structure of *rasa*s evoked. Another feature of the traditional culture helps literary intelligibility, based on these common attributes. In the premodern linguistic structure, Sanskrit was the universal high language, and understanding Sanskrit requires training in its grammatical rules. Sentences formed in proper Sanskrit are not immediately accessible to ordinary vernacular speakers. But Sanskrit has a more complex and subtler cultural function. The vocabulary of the literary vernaculars are based on Sanskrit, composed of words either identical to *(tatsama)* or derived from *(tadbhava)* words in Sanskrit. Sentences formed primarily with *tatsama* words, minimizing the use of verbs and drawing the poetic play as much as possible from the use of nouns and adjectives, makes the vernacular closer to Sanskrit and widely understandable. I suspect that one of the most interesting features of Vaiṣṇava poetry was its use of that kind of "dual" language, a kind of inexplicit Sanskrit standing behind the Bangla or Maithili, precisely because the region through which it circulated was much larger than present Bengal. It could be received as a Sanskrit-Bangla transverse composition, just as it could be received as Sanskrit-Oriya. It would ideally have had to be intelligible to the entire space of eastern Vaishnavism, which included Mithila and Orissa (and possibly also Manipur, through the extended influence of Gauḍiya Vaishnavism). Take as an example Jayadeva's famous lines:

> *lalita-lavaṅga-latā-pariśīlana-komala-malaya-samīre*
> *madhukara-nikara-karambita-kokila-kūjita-kuñja-kuṭīre.*

This is evidently Sanskrit, but each word here can also be read as a Bangla *tatsama* of the same meaning. The undecidability of this ambilinguistic writing is enhanced for Bangla-speakers by the final words of the lines, *samīre* (where the wind) and *kuṭīre* (in the hut), which can also be Bangla words with roughly identical meanings as locative singular. That is how a modern Bangla literary audience would hear these lines. This is an example of a Sanskrit composition that, paradoxically, can be *read* in Bangla. Compare, as an obverse example—that is, a Bangla verse that is almost entirely composed of Sanskrit words—a poem from the Vaiṣṇava poet Jagadānanda:

> *mañju-vikaca-kusuma-puñja madhupa-śabda gañji guñja*
> *kuñjara-gati gañji gamana mañjula-kula-nārī*
> *ghana-gañjana cikura-puñja mālatī-phula-māla-rañja*
> *añjana-juta kañja-nayanī khañjana-gati-harī.*

In this stanza the Bangla language has already settled considerably, if we look closely at the rhetorical devices. For instance, in a later line *(lalitādhāre milita hāsa deha dipati timiranāśa)* the two words *hāsa* and *nāśa* would not rhyme in Sanskrit, but would in Bangla (where *s* and *ś* are pronounced more or less

the same), and that is clearly intended. Similarly, there are alliterative passages that would work only with a Bangla pronunciation.

> *daśana kundakusumanindu badana jitala śarada indu*
> *bindu bindu śarame gharame premasindhu-pyāri.*

A recognizable literary culture exists here, but it stretches out on several planes. It is not merely a Bangla culture but is also inextricably associated with the universalizing presence of Sanskrit. First of all, there is a unity imparted by the appreciation of the high Sanskrit canon, ranging from religious texts like the *Bhagavadgītā* to literary classics such as those by Kālidāsa and Jayadeva. All those educated in Sanskrit would be able to relate to this canonical tradition. Below that overarching cosmopolitan culture, and with a more restricted spatial spread, is another literary culture based on eastern Vaishnavism. Within this culture, historically, the literary center shifted geographically with the power of exemplary performances. Jayadeva had the apparent advantage of writing in Sanskrit; but Vidyāpati wrote his *padāvalī* compositions in Maithili. Interestingly, however, this did not restrict Vidyāpati's audience to the Mithila region. He had a vast and respectful audience in Bangla-speaking areas, where his verses were perfectly understandable, down to the modern period. In fact, his poetry was also actively imitated, which could not have happened without some element of overlap or indeterminacy. A whole group of accomplished Bangla poets composed *padāvalī* under the explicit influence of Vidyāpati's compositions. This canon was so strong that the young Tagore in the late nineteenth century composed a whole book of poetic songs in Brajabuli (supposedly the mellifluous language of mythical Braja; actually, a passable imitation of Vidyāpati), which are still sung with undiminished ardor in commercial musical performances in Kolkata. At school, historical collections of Bangla poetry for children, clearly intended to provide them with a poetic genealogy, standardly begin with famous verses by Vidyāpati.[17]

This medieval Vaiṣṇava literary culture was evidently held together by a combined configuration of religious devotion and literary forms. Court patronage must have been an additional source of sustenance. Royal patronage, however, was a fickle and unreliable support, undependable if the religious persuasion of the ruler or his successors changed. The tastes of ordi-

---

17. For instance: *mādhava bahuta minati kari toyā / deyi tulasī tile e deha samāpalu dayā janu choḍabi moyā* (Mādhava, I implore you, I have offered this body to you with basil leaf and sesame seed; please rescue me, in your mercy). This came in the school collection *Kavitāñjali,* edited by a well-known modern poet, Kalidas Ray. This collection was widely used as a "rapid reader" in lower secondary schools (in class 7 or 8) in the early 1960s. Standard collections of Bangla poetry might formally begin with a perfunctory reference to *caryāpada* verses, but the real business of appreciable literature starts with Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī.*

nary householders were more reliable and more widespread. Stories told about lives of poets, even if exaggerated or wholly apocryphal, illustrate that the frontiers of principalities and religious cultures did not in fact coincide, and this helped literary figures or styles to escape excessively obtrusive supervision by political power. Poets often escaped the disfavor of their notoriously fickle patrons by moving to a competing court or another part of the same religious region. Competition between courts or dynasties also restrained capricious royal treatment of celebrated artists.

Schematically, there are two salient features of the structure of premodern literary space. One is that the "sense of space" of each vernacular is quite distinct from those of others, yet it is also organized in a different way from bounded modern spatiality. A territorial configuration contains certain points, such as holy cities, birthplaces of saints, locations of important events, and sites of pilgrimage and festivals. From either single or multiple centers it radiates outward, and as one goes toward the outside, the sense of this particular space grows fainter and then changes into a strange space, no longer familiar. Distinctions come on slowly, not dramatically. The significant mark of this conception of spatiality is probably the use of broad distinctions between near and far, familiar and strange—different from the sense of a bounded, meticulously calibrated space to which we are accustomed. The latter, it must be noted, requires both a contiguity of space and a corresponding homogeneity of the cultural community—the "we" who would call this space their own. The other feature of premodern literary space is that it is not a single plane on which all types of cultural practices take place. It has several layers, and the configuration of the space on one layer, say, Sanskrit, does not coincide perfectly with the others. The mappings are quite different on different planes, the ends and beginnings are divergent; yet it is a single lived world of literary cultivation. Modern thinking tends to split this into a Sanskrit literary map and a Bangla literary map, but people would have experienced it as a single literary culture.

PREMODERN LITERARY CULTURES IN BENGAL

It appears that in many parts of India the rise of the vernacular literatures had a great deal to do with two primary factors: deep changes in religious sensibility and alterations in political authority, both of which sought a new language of cultural expression. The earliest form of the Bangla language separated off from the general north Indian linguistic form of late Middle Indo-Aryan known as Avahattha.[18] The first extant specimens of Bangla texts,

18. The standard work on the linguistic origins of the Bangla language and the technicalities of its slow process of separation from the Avahattha is by the late Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1970–1972).

discovered in the late nineteenth century by Haraprasād Śāstrī in Nepal and the lower Tarai areas, are primarily Buddhist poetical compositions, *caryāpada*s. Buddhist religion had long showed an acute consciousness of the question of popular language, starting from the use of Pali and Prakrit, and it was entirely consistent with that tradition of religious sensibility for *caryā-pada* poets to compose their doctrinal songs in the emerging vernaculars. Written primarily by religious mystics, these expressed popular Buddhist ideas about conduct, occasionally in a symbolic and esoteric language.[19] The Buddhist *tantras* made abundant use of such special linguistic codes, referred to as *sandhyā bhāṣā,* enigmatic or elusive speech. Like other forms of technical jargon, the mastery of this symbolic language served to distinguish insiders from the uninitiated. Among Buddhist tantric adepts, *sandhyā bhāṣā* provided a means to articulate esoteric knowledge that was thought to be inexpressible in ordinary terms.

This religious context for the early use of Bangla points to a peculiar feature of the cultural development of Bengal. From the time of the *caryāpadas* themselves, the religious sensibility that has carried Bangla literature forward through successive stages has very often been associated with a non-Brahmanic strand, possibly because of the strong connection between Brahmanism and the ritual use of Sanskrit. It is not surprising, then, that all the major strands of early and medieval Bangla literature are associated with dissident traditions: Buddhism (*caryāpada*s); cults of the lesser goddesses (the *maṅgalkāvya*s, dedicated to goddesses like Mānasa or Caṇḍī); and the reformist Vaiṣṇava religious sects, which remained within the general limits of Hinduism, but occupied heterodox positions *(padāvalī).*[20] This trend was to continue throughout the history of the literature, with the emergence of practically every new literary sensibility being tied to some form of anti-Brahmanical religious experiment. A transformation of religious sentiment through doctrines of *bhakti* produced a split in linguistic and literary expressions of devotion as well. The theology of Hindu sects changed, creating a different aesthetic conception of divinity, one that emphasized kindness, compassion, and accessibility that required expression in a different linguistic register. *Bhakti* images necessitated a shift from a language of distance, which could give appropriate expression to the *aiśvarya,* the inconceivable and ineffable splendor, of the divine, to a language of *mādhurya,* or emotional gentleness and sweetness, which could express intimacy with the deity.

19. *Caryāpada* refers to *caryā,* meaning conduct. There is considerable scholarly debate about the *caryāpada*s: whether the language they are written in should be called primitive Bangla (see Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Sukumar Sen) or something else. For the state of this debate, see Kvaerne 1977.

20. For a detailed and scholarly discussion, see Dasgupta 1966.

The World of the Maṅgalkāvya*s*

One of the primary strands of medieval Bangla literary culture is the genre known as *maṅgalkāvya:* legends composed in celebration of deities that were meant to bring religious merit to the lives of their devotees. The *maṅgalkāvya* is clearly demarcated from other genres by its narrative form, literary stylistics, and peculiar brand of religiosity and representation of the social world. *Maṅgalkāvya*s were intimately connected with large-scale religious changes, most probably a slow incorporation of lower-caste cults of non-Brahmanical deities into the orthodox tradition. The narratives normally suggest some kinship between the new deities (which were most often female) and well-known figures in the Hindu pantheon. The goddesses Manasā and Caṇḍī were the most popular subjects of *maṅgalkāvya* composition, though there were instances of *kāvya*s of the same genre to the glory of Dharma and other gods. The genre enjoyed a surprisingly long life, continuing down to the eighteenth century: Mukundarām Cakravartī's *Caṇḍīmaṅgal,* the masterpiece of the form, was composed in the mid-sixteenth century, and Bhāratcandra composed the *Annadāmaṅgal* in the eighteenth century.

Though the narrative structure of the *maṅgalkāvya* is known for its social role in championing relatively unknown, subaltern deities, it is also significant for its internal literary features. In *Manasāmaṅgal,* for instance, the merchant Cāndsadāgar, a devotee of Śiva, is unwilling to offer worship to Manasā, the goddess of snakes. He goes through a string of misfortunes due to Manasā's curse: fourteen of his trading ships laden with wealth capsize in storms; six of his sons die prematurely; and his last son, Lakhindar, dies of snakebite on his wedding night. His new daughter-in-law, Behulā, a rural and subaltern Sāvitrī, eventually brings the son back from the dead, forcing the reluctant merchant to accept Manasā's divinity. In Weberian terms, the religious spirit animating the *maṅgalkāvya* stories leans toward the magical, in contrast to the more intellectual and rationalized preoccupations of orthodox or developed *bhakti* doctrines. The narrative crises are mostly resolved by explicitly supernatural means, and there is little effort at elaboration of philosophical doctrine: the stories' authors appear content to win a place for their divine protagonists in the Hindu divine order.

*Maṅgalkāvya*s are primarily written in a rustic vernacular style, with a predominance of *deśi* vocabulary over *tatsama* words, matched by relatively unambitious, uncomplicated metric composition. Dialogues often approximate the grammatical laxity of ordinary conversation. In the internal narrative economy of the genre, female characters acquire an entirely unaccustomed prominence, and often their behavior is much less constrained than the social restrictiveness of the feminine roles of high Brahmanical tales: Behulā and Sanakā in the *Manasāmaṅgal* stories, and Phullarā in *Caṇḍīmaṅgal,* of-

fer a far more pronounced subaltern feminine than the classical images of Rādhā or Sītā in the Bangla versions of the epics.

It is generally acknowledged that the *maṅgalkāvya* tradition offers a detailed and reliable picture of a lower-class social world, reflected in the activities performed by the main characters, and so brings startlingly realistic depictions of everyday life into the highly stylized world of conventional literatures. It is entirely possible for *maṅgalkāvya* characters to have uproarious domestic quarrels, and their colorful language makes use of forceful expletives—a linguistic order unimaginable in exchanges between characters of the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the Kṛṣṇa stories of the Vaiṣṇavas. From the aesthetic point of view, too, the *maṅgalkāvya*s, though often emotionally rich, present a world far apart from the more formal *rasa* conventions of classical literature. The *maṅgalkāvya*s, therefore, represented a highly significant complex of literary sensibility—combining a distinctly subaltern religious spirit with the depiction of a peasant world of want and domestic troubles. Some sections of this tradition show a great awareness and representation of an Islamic social world, or at least a clear recognition of the mixed religious character of Bengali society.

The *maṅgalkāvya* tradition might not be more impressive than others in purely aesthetic terms, but from the point of view of a social history of literature, its significance is incalculable. The *maṅgalkāvya*s contain in an understated way a complete reconstruction of the conventional aesthetic world and its narrative economy. In nearly all significant respects, the classical order based on a Brahmanical view of the world—both social and narrative—is left behind, replaced by an order that rejects some of its most sacred conventions. The deities worshipped, the human characters portrayed, the story lines, the forms of fabulation, the nature and implements of literary and aesthetic enchantment, the implied audience—everything is different.

In conventional narratives, the central characters are individuals empowered by either ritual status or political authority: narrative exchanges are normally between Kshatriyas and Brahmans, and there are a number of side characters. In the *maṅgalkāvya*s, by contrast, the central characters often belong to lower castes or inferior professions: Dhanapati and Cāndsadāgar are wealthy, but they are *sadāgar*s, traders, who are not conventional objects of poetic celebration. Kālketu is a *vyādha,* a hunter who kills animals for profit—a low, polluting profession. But by a combination of Caṇḍī's blessings and his own premiraculous qualities of strength and honesty, he earns the right to be ruler of a kingdom. In traditional narratives, adventure is the exclusive preserve of the Kshatriya warriors: as they travel to unknown lands on military expeditions or personal journeys they meet and win beautiful women and fame. In the *maṅgalkāvya*s, somewhat like the Sinbad stories, however, some of these same elements are centered on the *vaṇik,* the seafaring

merchant. As the merchant-heroes take over the Kshatriya qualities of bravery, however, they add to it a new element of seafaring adventure, a kind of subtle intelligence, the curiosity of the explorer. They, not the Kshatriyas, are the masters of space.

In these narrative moves, the *maṅgalkāvya* tradition seems to disregard the Brahmanical hierarchy of virtues. The stable, unworried system of equation between castes and individual qualities and their professions is set aside, and boundaries are breached by a more radical imagination of possibilities. It takes the narratively significant qualities of bravery, steadfastness, resourcefulness, and subtlety and redistributes them among members of different castes and genders. The feminine characters of the *maṅgalkāvya*s are often subtle, intelligent, and masterful in the management of their households and their world, as they are often gifted with a more penetrating awareness of the world's complexities than their husbands. Characters like Phullarā and Khullanā exude a much greater assertive femininity than the inhabitants of the upper-caste *antaḥpur,* or women's quarters. They often assist their husbands outside the home (for example, the hunter's wife sells the hide in the market); they loudly assert their disagreements on important domestic decisions; they fend off rivals in love—even Caṇḍī herself—by the simple force of their chastity mixed with some slyness; and at times of crisis they give excellent counsel to their headstrong or unsubtle husbands. The *maṅgalkāvya* tradition therefore shifts the narrative world to a different social universe; the life of lower-caste society is brought into the sacred sphere of literature.

The Caitanyacaritāmṛta

A parallel process of growth of a new vernacular literary form can be found in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, in a text poised between two moments of its historical development. All the three great religious biographies of Caitanya—those by Vṛndāvandās, Locandās, and Jayacandra—underscore Caitanya's divinity by telling with a sense of incredulous wonder how he made the miraculous happen. However, Kṛṣṇadās's *Caitanyacaritāmṛta,* the great philosophical text of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, is filled with a different sense of Caitanya's divinity. At the time of this text, Caitanya was already in the process of being canonized. The Brahmanical tradition, which he defied so wonderfully, already recognized the need for reconciliation with his canonization; and reciprocally, his disciples acknowledged the advantages of accepting the high Sanskritic language and iconicity, and of transferring those techniques to a celebration of Caitanya's personality.[21] Thus, the evident hu-

21. By the time Kṛṣṇadās was composing the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta,* Caitanya's religion had already been reabsorbed into mainstream Brahmanical Hinduism. The story of the evolution

manity of the biographies—the narrative tension of which lies, for instance, in waiting to see what would happen in his contest with the *qāzi* (civil judge), the symbol of political authority—is replaced by a text of a very different type. The narration of the same episode in the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* is calm, not tense. Unlike Vṛndāvandās, its narrator is not conveying an unbearable anxiety through this unprecedented contest, but is entirely assured of the eventual victory of his lord. The episode becomes his play, literally, his *līlā*.

The *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* is an astonishing document, situated between several literary models and written in a mixture of languages. It is still a biographic narrative of Caitanya's life, written with the evident claim of testimonial authenticity. Like Caitanya's other biographers, Kṛṣṇadās recounts what the master said after invoking the exact situational context. However, compared to the others, Kṛṣṇadās is far more interested in Caitanya's religious philosophy. Consequently, a great deal of attention is paid to Caitanya's sermons, to the intricate disputations with religious scholars who preferred other modes of *bhakti* worship or other strands of Vaishnavism, and occasionally to Caitanya's glosses of literary texts from the wider tradition of classical poetry. The historical-biographic narration throughout the text, including the master's dialogues, is in Bangla. Kṛṣṇadās rarely portrays him breaking into Sanskrit in ordinary situations, though it is generally acknowledged that Caitanya was one of the great scholars of the language in his time. So Kṛṣṇadās's decision to dilute his language into Bangla rather than retain a pristine Sanskrit medium is a denial of Brahmanical orthodoxy; it is a way of *doing* religion, a way of inviting people who are usually excluded from a high religious experience into its center.

In Kṛṣṇadās's work we can see the workings of a philosophical reinterpretation of Caitanya's life. He recounts the tales of Caitanya's life in Bangla but is always careful to frame them in theological terms, providing first a preparation for the great event to be narrated and following up with a commentary that separates out the divine from the mundane, so that no unwary reader misses the cosmic significance in the apparently human drama. The

---

of Caitanya's religion is complex. Several distinct types of associates and devotees were drawn to Caitanya. Nityānanda was drawn from an *avadhūta* background, contemptuous of normal Hindu observances; on the other hand, there were sedate householders like Śrīnivāsa Ācārya who sought to bring Caitanya's doctrines back into the solid bases of respectability. Consequently, after Caitanya's death his religion gave rise to several sometimes mutually incompatible strands, all of which, however, treated the vernacular *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* as their main religious text rather than the more esoteric and Sanskrit texts of the *gosvāmi*s from Vṛndāvan. By reabsorption into Brahmanism I refer primarily to such cultural practices as the use of Sanskrit; the condensing of ideas into relatively esoteric *sūtra*s, which require learned commentaries; and the general use of an exclusivist literate apparatus. It is a cultural rather than a strictly religious Brahmanism that is at issue here.

commentary is in a heavy, because more technical, Bangla style, but the doctrinal framing is always in Sanskrit, using the entire apparatus of classical Sanskrit, from the learned exoticism of its vocabulary to the lofty skill of fashioning verses in complex meters like *mandākrāntā*.[22]

The mixed composition of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*—it is at once a biography and a doctrinal treatise, an account and a commentary, incorporating Sanskrit and Bangla, high and low—helps us understand what medieval authors were attempting to achieve by writing in Bangla. Every time a religious movement had to widen its circle of followers, it had recourse to this linguistic technique. Thus, the historical process by which Bengalis became a people in a linguistic sense must be related to these periodic extensions, these successive "democratizing" movements of religious ideas. At the same time, the linguistic texture of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* shows that the traditional structure of linguistic practice, in which individuals knew and used several languages, especially Sanskrit and Bangla, continued. Associated with these movements was the creation of a kind of bridge language, a form of Sanskrit that could be read from both sides. Accessibility from the Sanskrit side ensured that these compositions would have a wide circulation and make sense to those who understood Sanskrit or neighboring vernacular languages; accessibility to Bangla meant that the works could also circulate among Bengalis who knew little or no Sanskrit.[23] This kind of mixed competence continued, certainly down to the work of poets like Bhāratcandra in the eighteenth century.

The topic of mixed literary modes becomes more interesting and complex when the focus turns to literary practice: when we move from the question of what language the poets wrote in to what aesthetic structures were typically associated with each literary field. Was the act of writing in Bangla merely the translation of Sanskritic aesthetic processes, structures, feelings (*rasa*s) into a lower, more accessible language? Or was the language shift the condition for writing an aesthetics that began to be different? Obviously, this question is closely related to a fascinating and awkward larger question: If the shift to writing in Bangla marks a rupture with the literary sensibility of early medieval times, should we treat it as the beginning of a certain kind of modernity?

There is a particularly intriguing aspect of Caitanya's religious teaching that might connect significantly with this question. Caitanya constantly em-

22. As for example *Caitanyacaritāmṛta,* Ādikhaṇḍa 1, *śloka* 5.

23. Many popular *stotra*s (hymns) would seem to have this status: like the Rāma *stotra*s by Tulasīdās, or the Vallabhācārya *stotra* to Kṛṣṇa.

Many versions of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* were found outside Bengal, in north India, and Tarapada Mukherjee argues that the text itself shows the use of Hindi terms. See his editorial introduction to the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* in Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj 1986.

phasized the metaphorical quality of the transgressive principle at the heart of his new doctrine: *parakīyatattva,* love for God with the intensity of a lover's desire for a loved one to whom he or she is denied social access—for instance, because the loved one is married to another, as in the case of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The emphasis on metaphoricity was taken up with great seriousness by Caitanya's later interpreters, such as the Vṛndāvan *gosvāmi*s. (The classical text that expounds the theory of *parakīya* love is Rūpa Gosvāmi's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* [The blazing sapphire], c. 1550.) This interpretive strategy ensured that the doctrinal innovation could be immense without being socially disruptive. And turning supernatural or otherwise rationally inadmissible ideas into metaphorical keys is often a mark of a modern religious sensibility.

The World of the Vaiṣṇava Padāvalī

Medieval Bangla literary cultures reveal two rather different, in some ways contradictory, aspects. Socially, the Hindu religious system was pervasively and punctiliously hierarchical. Yet culturally there was considerable scope for improvisation and innovation—a feature of much of Indian high culture, which allowed new religious figures and their followers to claim that they were trying to extend or explore ideas that were already part of the received tradition *(āgama).* Loosely terming these as vertical and lateral relations, respectively, we can say that there was practically no tolerance for revisions of vertical relationships but considerable tolerance for lateral experimentation. For this reason many reformist trends started off with a disingenuous or at least misleading claim that they were engaging in a lateral extension of doctrine and religious experiment. A remarkable example from medieval north India is Tulsidās and his remaking of Rāma in an image that is significantly different from Vālmīki's.

There are partial parallels to this kind of reformism in the Bangla texts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* by Kṛttibās and Kāśīrāmdās, respectively. Though these texts are conventionally called translations *(anuvād),* what they do to the originals is actually more complex. They retell the story freely in Bangla verse—quite a different literary enterprise from what translation means in modern contexts. (In fact, a translation of this literal sort had to wait until Kālīprasanna Sinha produced his famous version of the *Mahābhārata* in the mid-nineteenth century.) Because they are free translations, they provide their authors with ample opportunity for recreating, often quite dramatically, the narrative, literary, and *rasa* structures of the text. The tight structure of the narrative becomes loose and unfocused, and at times narrative complexity is sacrificed for a clearly linear popular story. The verse forms, though usually unadorned yet graceful in the Sanskrit original (as for instance the *anuṣṭubh* meter), are sometimes excessively simplified and one-dimensional, as in the simplest Bangla metric form of *payār* (a fourteen-

syllable rhymed couplet). Culturally, this accomplishes something quite significant: it brings the high epic text closer to people precisely by destroying its distancing grandeur. But it is doubtful that these adapted texts bring into being anything of great consequence aesthetically.

More interpretively intriguing from the point of view of aesthetic history, as well as more historically noteworthy, was the *padāvalī* poetry of the Vaiṣṇava tradition. Medieval Vaiṣṇavas in Bengal had a stock of resources to draw upon—a large, disparate earlier tradition of Hindu religious literature whose elements were dispersed across the texts and religious thought of the *Mahābhārata,* the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (which it relied upon more than either of the great epics), and the more popular fabulist traditions around Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. They also had available to them the riches of the Maithili Vaiṣṇava poetry of Vidyāpati. But the specific configuration of images and narratives, along with the registers of aesthetic emotions, that the *padāvalī* gradually produced, is quite unique. Elsewhere, I have explored the nature of this transformation of the *rasa* register of Vaiṣṇava poetry, since it is so crucial to understanding modern Bangla.[24] It provided, in a sense, the template from which modern Bangla writers of the nineteenth century were to break away. Yet even while rupturing the *padāvalī*'s aesthetic template, the modern writers continued to value and deploy its elements so as not to let them disappear and become unobtainable. They used them constantly in their own literature as "material"—as, for instance, in Tagore's famous interpretative poem, "Vaiṣṇavkavitā."

The most striking transformation affected the literary character of Rādhā, the central erotic figure of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava cult. In the works of earlier Vaiṣṇava traditions, she seems to be very close to some of the images from earlier literary traditions, such as *prakṛti,* or primal nature—utterly indomitable, impossible to deflect from her decided "natural" course of love. In earlier Vaiṣṇava texts, Rādhā has the irrepressible quality of nature's great generative power, not merely in the crude sense of an endless willingness in love play, but also in the unconquerable lust for life that she represents in her resplendent sexuality. Ordinarily, conventional religious sensibility is coy and prudish, unwilling to speak openly about erotic enjoyment, but the early figure of Rādhā turns this upside down in the most remarkable fashion. Her existence is focused on sexuality; she seems to exist for nothing else. And her sexuality is so utterly open and uninhibited that it becomes, in an ironic but undeniable sublimation, strangely pure (the *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* makes this point doctrinally). In her disloyalty to her husband and family, and to her social entanglements, there is a finality and power that can only be regarded as destiny. Ordinary mortals can only see her great spectacle

---

24. See Kaviraj 1995b, chapter 3.

and rejoice and hope that their own lives may be touched by a waft of this divine breeze.

The Rādhā of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition—not necessarily in religious doctrine but definitely in literature—still shows a struggle between two very powerful tendencies. One reflects and carries forward the *Bhāgavata* icon of joyous abandon, and interestingly, whenever this aesthetic configuration is invoked there is a propensity toward rhetorical embellishment. When this Rādhā is going into the dark forest on a full-moon night, we must hear the jingle of her restrained anklets; the entire descriptive tradition of the *abhisārikā* (the woman who braves the night to meet her lover), expressed in a grammar well understood from Kālidāsa onward, is condensed in the depiction of Rādhā's bodily movements and gestures.[25] The mandatory *anuprāsa* (alliteration) and *utprekṣā* (poetic fantasy)—the connection between literary ornamentation and this description of beauty, symmetry, fullness—is retained in the poetry of Vaiṣṇava authors like Govindadās. But there is an unmistakable new contrasting tendency in the representation of femininity in the Rādhā of the *padāvalī*. This femininity is much less assertive; she is weak, constrained, caged, simply bewailing her fate and enlarging on her own vulnerability and misfortunes in love. At the same time, there is a distinctive new development of character, an unconventional attention to the poetic exploration of inner mental states. Intricate, conventionalized mental states did form part of the traditional representational repertoire,[26] but the stirrings of individual subjective states in the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* literature is of an entirely different kind: it avoids conventional typologies and begins to explore individual consciousness and its infinite, unpredictable variability. Accordingly, the tone of speech in the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* texts changes significantly. They become primarily Rādhā's speech, but her speech has a strange character. It tries, in a sense, to take revenge on a new kind of incarceration through an interminability of speech. A second strand of Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* poetry, inaugurated by Caṇḍīdās and continued by Jñānadās, which differentiates itself from the Vidyāpati strand, developed an entire metaphysic of loss and suffering that was represented primarily through feminine perception and metaphor. The representational, iconic figure of Rādhā signals a real transformation of the *rasa* aesthetics of this strand of *padāvalī* literature.

This new Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* poetry gave rise to a new canon of poetic performances, and some "great poets" were selected among others less worthy

25. Detailed discussion can be found in Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi,* chapters 9, 10, 11, and 15.

26. The *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi,* for instance, follows up its ninth chapter on *harivallabhā-prakaraṇam* with three immensely elaborate sections on the components of *rasa* analysis: *anubhāva, vyabhicāribhāva,* and *sthāyibhāva.*

of eminence. Its iconic material affiliates it to the story of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa derived from the *Bhāgavata* and, in part, ultimately from the *Mahābhārata;* its more directly literary ancestry is drawn from Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* and Vidyāpati's verses. But the aesthetics of this literature are completely distinctive. The structure of *rasa* it developed was unique—close to the range of emotions ordinary people experienced in their ordinary lives, and thus transforming the everyday with a touch of the divine.

From a literary-historical perspective, therefore, the Vaiṣṇava corpus carried much greater significance than the adaptations of the epics. The Bangla versions of the epics, in my view, made an important sociological contribution by making the stories accessible in a written vernacular form to common people, but they gave up the heroic aesthetics of the original Sanskrit texts without discovering an aesthetic structure of their own. The *padāvalī* poetry, on the other hand, continued to work with elements of the Kṛṣṇa narratives from past Vaiṣṇava traditions, but it focused on the unheroic narratives of the episode in Mathurā as a new axis around which all elements of the narrative economy could be rearranged, and a unique structure of *rasa* sensibility developed. Sociologically, this aesthetic structure enjoyed wide popularity and was continually performed in *pālākirtan*s in local temples in Bengal and major theaters of eastern Vaishnavism down to the 1950s.[27]

Through this particular instance, we might be able to grasp what the literary meant in this culture. Clearly, the literary was a sphere split into multiple layers, each requiring distinctive types of skills of composition and appreciation. The high Sanskrit level did not remain constant and unchanged. Precisely because it continued for such a long time, there was an incessant accretion of texts and textual materials. Because of its continuity and the constant need to cater to different tastes and skills, the Sanskrit layer was in some ways the most extensive and also the most internally differentiated. It vascillated through time between a tight, high Sanskrit corpus and a more accessible popular corpus meant for enunciative uses (e.g., chanting, which does not require pedantic grammatical mastery over the passages or stanzas). The lower levels of this Sanskrit stratum touched the boundaries of the Bangla stratum, which performed a different function. Bangla was used to produce a new form of literariness, closer and more accessible to popular sensibility, and exemplifying something of the doctrine of universality implicit in Caitanya's religious thinking. It at once brought the sense of the high religious

27. The *pālākīrtan,* recitation of the story of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā through a series of evenings to a group of devotees gathered in a specific temple, is an innovative form of religious practice that diverges from more traditional kinds of Hindu worship. It is interesting to note that the inventiveness of Caitanya's religion spread to all spheres. It developed not merely a new literary sensibility centered on a new story but also a far more communal form of the use of these literary forms in religious rituals than ordinary Hinduism.

within the reach of ordinary people and lifted everyday, ordinary life into contact with the divine—a distinctive feature of all *bhakti* movements.

This literary culture implies the existence of a circle of oral competencies, but we should guard against the usual, imitative superstition that the oral is always "lower" than the written. At least one kind of literary orality is based on the idea that all texts necessarily have a representative function. Texts contain a possibility of meaning, but this meaning often waits on something that exists even before meaning begins—the sensuous, presemantic attractiveness of the aural or the musical. This stratum of the text must be brought into presentation (i.e., into aural presence) by means of oral mediation. In functions like the chanting of mantras in household worship or the enunciation of the *padāvalī* in a hymn *(kīrtan)* performance, oral skills are crucial and aesthetically vital for bringing the right sound to a *śloka* or a song.

Vaiṣṇava literature eventually broke down and reformed boundaries between literary languages in a radical fashion. Sanskrit was no longer the only prestige language, and the newly developed poetic Bangla tried imperceptibly to slide into a high status alongside it. In Vaiṣṇava religious practices the use of Sanskrit for ceremonial purposes remained, but the new compositions in Bangla came to occupy a place of aesthetic prestige. A portion of Caitanya's enormous importance in history is that he taught the Bangla language to speak the divine.

The late-medieval Vaiṣṇava rupture with traditional high culture was in one respect more radical than modernity's break with tradition in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century literary language enlisted Sanskrit on its side; it is very Sanskrit-near. The poetic language of the strand of medieval Vaiṣṇava literature of Caṇḍīdās and Jñānadās, however, is often consciously Sanskrit-distant. From the standpoint of a comparative sociology of literature, the Vaiṣṇava break with tradition contained elements similar to the ruptures with traditional forms and literary practices that led to the early-modern turn in Western literature: it was based on a crucial intervention in the religious sensibility of the society and was associated with fundamental religious and social reform. The congregation of the new religion provided its particular audience. A religion with a deep democratic impulse temporarily undermined the established authorities of orthodoxy and forced orthodoxy on the defensive. Acutely conscious of its newness, this religion sought a different aesthetic as well as a language appropriate for its anti-Brahmanical message. It used traditional aesthetic and literary constructs, like Sanskrit texts and anthologies (for example, Mammaṭa's eleventh-century *Kāvya-prakāśa* was a favorite of Caitanya's and he returned to favorite verses for constant reinterpretation), but the cultural process at work was strikingly similar to what Pollock describes in his accounts of early Kannada. Use of Sanskrit cosmopolitanism is not surprising, because the new vernacular was created by a bicultural intelligentsia, and the Sanskrit world was a constant

reference—either positive or negative—as a cultural structure to be emulated or abjured. Significantly, the vernacular culture that the new religion sought to establish, partly in competition with the Sanskrit, was meant to be cosmopolitan, not parochial.[28] It boldly innovated popular and collective aesthetic forms like the *saṅkīrtan* (congregational singing, usually in a procession), where the musical performance did not happen in a specified, restricted space—in a temple, or a house—but moved through the streets of Navadvip in a new, open-ended "public" spectacle. It also produced a literature that shifted the emphasis in the narrative discourse to the feminine subject in an astonishing inversion of conventions. Most significantly, it started to speak about the individual's state of mind in a new language of self-exploration. Yet there is no doubt that this stage in the history of literature passed without establishing durable institutions or leading to permanent modifications of the social world. The reforming energies of the social movement and the innovativeness of the literary forms were contained, eventually lost their way, and ultimately succumbed to orthodox restoration.

There is an apparent pattern in the history of relatively defined literary cultures like the Vaiṣṇava structure. They periodically shake up the traditions of social and cultural orthodoxy without decisively destroying them. As a literary culture gradually becomes cut off from the social process that generated it in the first place and gave it vitality, its active cultivation and continuation as a "serious" literature suffer and degenerate, often falling into endless uncreative repetitiveness and pointless exhibition of skills. Jagadānanda's stanza quoted earlier is a good example of this kind of literary mannerism. As a composition, it demonstrates undoubted rhetorical skill, but its concern with formal features such as alliteration is obsessive, and its poetic imagination is feeble.[29] Its most significant feature historically is its slippage from the distinctive aesthetic structure of the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* toward reabsorption into the sterile prosodic technicality of the standard Brahmanical erudition.

28. See Pollock 1998. Although I do not find an exact parallel in Bengal to the role of patronage of political power in literary developments Pollock demonstrates in the case of south India, there are strong parallels in other regards. Caitanya is clearly a cosmopolitan figure, having exemplary control of the Sanskrit corpus; and his travels in south and north India, particularly his disputations with other Vaiṣṇava schools, is crucially facilitated by this. The religious sensibility he intends to set up is also clearly cosmopolitan in character—intelligible to southern Vaishnavism as well as to northern devotees based at Vṛndāvan. Clearly, the redactions of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* that its editors, Sen and Mukherjee, analyze show a vernacular cosmopolitanism—with versions collected from areas as distant as Rajasthan, the Braj region, and Orissa. See Mukherjee's introduction to *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* in Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj 1986.

29. As in this *vyatireka* from the same Jagadānanda poem, which is utterly standardized and unsurprising: *daśana kundakusumanindu / vadana jitala śarada indu* (Her teeth put the *kunda* flower to shame, and her face is superior in beauty to the autumn moon).

It would be entirely wrong, however, to conclude from the social decline of Vaishnavism that the *padāvalī* literary culture was erased without a trace. The peculiar intelligence of a tradition often prevents that eventuality, and its important creations are stored away in a kind of inactive inventory in the literary-cultural memory. They survive not as living literature but within the living anthology of the tradition, available to be played upon by a new literary sensibility or a historically recreated consciousness. A tradition perhaps always exists as an archive for effective literary history, though the exact manner in which it produces these effects needs to be elucidated.[30]

There is evidence of a widespread anthological practice associated with the *padāvalī,* though materials were probably not collected in standardized, written anthologies. Thus a canon was formed that, though weak, still exhibited an internal coherence. Certainly, high points of performance were recognized, implying that some standards of judgment were applied by the collective spirit, which used these cultural items iconically. Compositions of Jayadeva and Vidyāpati were treated as models by aspiring composers, though not by the more Sanskrit-distant writers, like Caṇḍīdās and Jñānadās. The new poetry of emotion appeared to appeal increasingly to a more diffuse, undefined, and unorganized popular taste with a new criterion of accessibility. Beautiful poetry, it was realized, could be created by a string of mundane words, consciously abjuring the pedantic, rhetorical conceits of the erudite. Yet when the creative and social vitality of the Vaiṣṇava culture waned, the strand that retained greater literary coherence was the one closer to the standard Brahmanical practices and pedagogies—which emphasized the sound *(śabda)* or the technical element, rather than the distinctiveness of meaning *(artha)* that characterized the less academic style. The Sanskrit or Sanskrit-derived segment could securely defend its literary place precisely because it could go back to the strongly rehearsed pedagogy of the Sanskrit schools *(ṭol)* and their teaching of poetics.

To state a large and risky hypothesis: The movement of literary language in Bengal seems to have paralleled the movement of social, particularly religious, reform.[31] As long as the impulse for religious reform remained active,

---

30. If we look at nineteenth- and twentieth-century Bangla appropriations of the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* texts, it is clear that interpreters could invest them with a modern romantic sensibility and read them through a strikingly fruitful "fusion of horizons." This is quite self-conscious in Tagore's famous poem on the *padāvalī,* "Vaiṣṇavkavitā."

31. This is not meant to be a general statement about Indian vernaculars. I am sure Sheldon Pollock is right that this line of argument has been used uncritically and often erroneously. In certain vernacular regions there is an obvious connection between the rise of new political power and the appreciation of the power of the vernacular, though in Bengal it is difficult to find such a direct connection. But two other lines of thought need to be explored more fully. First, the political ascendancy of Islamic rulers may have been associated with the writing of texts that used an Islamic cosmopolitanism. Secondly, religious reform is itself, in important

experimentation in literary technique and aesthetic structure continued. When that impulse died down, literary forms—like the religion itself—tended to be reabsorbed into orthodoxy. It appears unfair to characterize the forms of Vaiṣṇava poetry like the *padāvalī* as medieval except in a purely chronological sense, since they display some elements of early modern literature; yet their eventual demise indicates that modernity is a matter not simply of sensibility but much more emphatically of institutions. If these sensibilities do not enable the crystallization of institutions that can provide them with practical, material form, they tend to decay, disperse, and eventually succumb to the silent but immensely powerful undertow of orthodoxy.

The Eighteenth Century: The Last of the Premodern

An analysis of the literary culture of the eighteenth century is important not because that culture produced a distinctive new literature but for understanding the nature of colonialism's impact. The works of Bhāratcandra Rāygunākar, one of that century's foremost writers, display the cultural forms that marked that period and show what it lacked in comparison with the forms of literary modernity introduced through Western contact. Bhāratcandra's corpus is amazingly varied and full of technical virtuosity, starting from his early *Rasamañjarī* to his three best-known works, *Annadāmaṅgal, Mānsinha,* and *Vidyāsundar,* which form parts of a single poetic structure. These three texts together illustrate the strange geometry of literary culture in precolonial Bengal.

The *Annadāmaṅgal* continues the tradition of medieval *maṅgalkāvya,* but its focus on Annadā, or Annapūrṇā, divine figure from the central Śākta canon, rather than on a relatively marginal goddess, reflects its adaptation to the high Brahmanical religion. The *Mānsinha* recognizes the mixed social world of Muslims and Hindus, and, more crucially, the political supremacy of the Muslim elite. It portrays a world of Muslim political power in which Hindus like Majumdār, Annadā's exemplary devotee, live by a combination of loyalty, cunning, and when all else fails, miraculous assistance from Annapūrṇā herself. In the *Vidyāsundar* a romance takes place in the city of Barddhamān, which represents an urban context with a strong commercial element. The work's celebration of the power of money *(kaḍi)* confirms suggestions from recent historical research that the eighteenth century was a period of

---

ways, related to shifts in social power; so it might be prudent to avoid saying that religious reform involves religious but not political changes. Instead, we could perhaps argue that these changes are political through being religious. In that case, the boundary between a religious and a political explanation would have to be modified.

intense commercial expansion.[32] An old woman with privileged access to the princess in the forbidden space of the royal *antaḥpur* (harem) consoles Sundar, the hero, by singing the praises of money as the main implement in the pursuit of happiness:

> Money buys what we eat; there is no friend except money. Money can buy tiger's milk, and get an old man married. People die for the love of it; it helps seduce respectable married women.[33]

Bhāratcandra was highly skilled in the use of meter and rhetoric, and he experimented with producing in Bangla, with miraculous virtuosity, the most difficult forms of classical Sanskrit prosody.[34] Yet these experiments remain within the formal conventions and *rasa* structure of a decidedly traditional literary sensibility; they are a world apart from the struggles that were to convulse Bangla literary culture in the next century.

Islamic Aspects of Bangla Literary Culture

A complex and contentious problem in the historical evolution of Bangla literary culture is the place of Islam. Bengal as a region had a long and continuous history of religious heterodoxy in which one anti-Brahmanical movement followed another. After the decline of Buddhism in Bengal, other strands of religious practice hostile to orthodox Brahmanism found considerable support. Some commentators suggest that Caitanya's followers were clearly divided into several groups, and one of these, centered on the figure of Nityānanda, tried to carry on practices of heterodoxy abhorrent to the ideologically timid mainstream, which wished to maintain the respectability of the normal householder. Eventually, Brahmanical Hinduism had major contenders in Islam on one side and in reform or heterodox sects like the Vaiṣṇavas on the other. The historical relation between Bangla literary culture and Islam is a question of immense complexity.[35]

---

32. The extent of the exploration of new routes to social power in eighteenth-century India, after the collapse of the Mughal empire, is described in Bayly 1988, and Subrahmanyam 1990 and 1994. For a general discussion, though now somewhat dated, of this revisionist literature see Washbrook 1988. A readable translation of *Vidyāsundar* is available in Dimock 1963.

33. Bhāratcandra 1950c: 202. The original reads: *kaḍi phatkā chiḍā dai bandhu nāi kaḍi bai / kaḍite bāgher dugdha mile/ kaḍite buḍar biyā kaḍi lobhe mare giyā / kulabadhu bhule kaḍi dile.*

34. Writing Bangla verse to the exacting specifications of some Sanskrit *chanda*s was considered technically difficult. Bhāratcandra showed off his skills by composing verses in meters like *bhujaṅgaprayāta*. In modern Bangla, similar skills were displayed by Satyendranath Datta, who composed in *mandākrānta*, albeit with some awkwardness.

35. For reasons of space, it is impossible to analyze the scholarly literature on Bangla literary history in terms of their relative emphasis on Hindu and Muslim authors here. A com-

Islamic courts often patronized composers of Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī,* and there is considerable evidence of a slow extension of Islamic influence into various branches of Bangla literary culture. The Islamic strand of literary composition that developed, in turn, elaborated a cosmopolitanism parallel to the Sanskritic literary universe. Critical analyses of Islamic composition in Bangla point out that the language was full of loan words not only from Arabic and Persian but also from the north Indian vernaculars with which Islamic high culture bore a particularly close connection. Just as for Hindu literature Sanskrit was a vehicle for a high cosmopolitan culture from which vernaculars drew many of their literary principles, this Islamic literature shows a similarly transregional culture that gave its intellectuals access to an equally varied Islamic cosmopolis. They were the bearers of a second and parallel vernacular cosmopolitanism.

Other branches of late medieval literature carried obvious marks of a lively transaction between the Hindu and Islamic parts of late medieval Bengali civilization. Some observers consider it possible that Caitanya (who died in 1534) came into contact with Sufi ideas through some of his early associates, though the literary culture associated with him, at least in the form in which it was eventually canonized by the *gosvāmī*s of Vṛndāvan, shows little direct influence of Islamic language or forms. By contrast, both the language and the narrative content of Mukundarām Cakravartī's *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* (its first recitation, according to internal textual evidence, took place in 1555–1556) shows an intimate knowledge of Islamic locutions and social practices.[36] Bhāratcandra's *Mānsinha* presented an Islamic side of the social and political universe with fluent familiarity. Mukundarām and Bhāratcandra are eloquent examples of Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy's judgment at the end of the nineteenth century that orthodox Hindus should consider Muslims their *svajāti* (own race or people) because the two, if divided by religion, were joined together by participation in a single material and social world.[37] In texts written by Hindu authors Muslim individuals and groups were seen, with increasing frequency and decisiveness, as part of a mixed social world—in Caitanya's biographies, the hostile *qāzi* who was won over by his new religious dispensation; the mixed language of the *Caṇḍīmaṅgal,* which tells the story of the establishment of a Muslim area in the capital of Kālketu's kingdom; and the frequent appearance of Muslim characters in Bhāratcandra's writings.[38]

---

parison of standard history texts from West Bengal and from East Pakistan or Bangladesh would show the obvious difference in emphasis between the Hindu and Islamic sides of Bangla literary culture. It is interesting, however, to compare differences between the histories published in East Bengal before and after Bangladeshi independence in 1971.

36. Sen 1965: 132.
37. Mukhopādhyāy [1892] 1981: 13–16.
38. Cakravartī 1977: 68.

It is by its contrast to this history of continuous and expanding transaction with Islam that the turn of events in the later part of the nineteenth century appears astonishing. The great Sanskrit and Bangla scholar of the second half of the nineteenth century Haraprasād Śāstrī, with his keen sociolinguistic sensitivity, put the situation of Bangla linguistic culture before the coming of colonialism quite accurately:

> In our country in those times three types of language were current in cultivated circles. Those *bhadralok* who had to deal with Muslim Nawabs and Omarahs used a Bangla with a great many Urdu words mixed in it. The language of those who studied the *śāstra*s contained a large number of Sanskrit words. There were many other people of substance apart from these two small groups. Both Urdu and Sanskrit words were mixed in their language. Poets and composers of *pāñcāli*s composed their songs in this language. Broadly, there were three types of language for three groups: the Brahman pandits, people who dealt with courts, and ordinary men of property.[39]

More important than this linguistic taxonomy was the structure of linguistic and literary culture as a whole. It appears that through their respective forms of hyperglossia—Sanskrit and Arabic-Persian—the two sides of the Bangla vernacular had access to vast cosmopolitan literary spheres. These two cosmopolitanisms were not entirely exclusive; rather, people of high education acquired an asymmetric proficiency in both. Thus cosmopolitanism was not newly discovered by the modern intelligentsia; they were merely rearranging and redirecting a much older tradition of linguistic and cultural versatility.

In the age of Rammohan Roy (1774–1833), cultivation of an upper-class Bengali included a mandatory initiation into Islamic culture and a fluent grasp of Persian. By the time of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), roughly a century later, literary high culture had gone through a striking conversion to become a more solidly Hindu sphere. The cultural processes that brought on this transformation were driven by Western influences of all kinds, ranging from political liberalism, rationalist epistemology, and positivist sociology to modernist conceptions of culture.

Although a small Muslim political aristocracy had established itself in Bengali society through the distant and ever-weakening support of the Mughal empire, the Muslims constituted the bulk of the peasantry. Literacy skills were largely confined to the Hindu upper castes, who were the first to respond to opportunities offered by colonial rule. Certainly, this group of willing and

---

39. Śāstrī 1956, 1: 199. For a serious exploration of the class and cultural definitions of the Bengali *bhadralok*, or "gentle persons," see Bhattacharyya 2000. *Pāñcāli*s were popular poetic compositions celebrating the glory of deities. They were used mnemonically by common people but were also read more formally in religious ceremonies, particularly in women's rituals.

enthusiastic collaborators did not represent the whole of Hindu society; their collaborative and reformist efforts faced stiff opposition from more traditional opinion. But it is significant that the conflict between the Brahmo Samaj (the "society of Brahma," a religious reform group founded by Rammohan Roy in 1828) and Hindu conservatism was in some ways an internal affair of an elite that had learned to use the modern cultural apparatus— including schooling in the colonial education system, developing the skill of articulate debate in a literary public sphere, and highly intelligent use of the colonial legal system. The Muslim participation in the early stages of this new modern culture was accordingly disproportionately small. It is to this new culture that we must now turn, for it constitutes one of the most fateful, complex, and contradictory transformations in the history of Bengal: the arrival of a colonial modernity in which formal principles were often universalistic but social practices involved enormous exclusions.

LITERARY CULTURES OF MODERN BENGAL

Colonialism and Linguistic Change

Undoubtedly, the greatest change in the history of Bengali literary culture happened after the firm establishment of colonial authority from the late eighteenth century. The entry of colonialism into Bengali society had a peculiar character that determined the manner in which Western intellectual influence spread in Bengali culture. It is wrong to portray the cultural impact of colonialism as exclusively coercive. The society into which competing European merchants and military adventurers entered was complex, and the defeat of the *nawab* of Bengal, Mir Kasim, in 1764 was not seen as a collective indignity. Some revisionist histories claim, not implausibly, that the eighteenth century saw the rise of powerful indigenous mercantile interests, who might not have been displeased at the defeat of greedy and capricious local rulers.[40] The British entered Bengali society slowly, as one set of players among many others in an arena of political turmoil. Their eventual victory over other contenders and establishment of their authority led to the imposition of several new institutions. A significant feature of the Bengali response to colonialism was the remarkable enthusiasm shown by a section of the elite for the new institutions and knowledges coming from the West. Although the relations between a colonial authority and a subject people could never be free of tensions, the modernist elite, produced by early colonial processes in Bengal, developed surprisingly congenial relations with British authority.

In a development with important consequences for Bangla literary cul-

---

40. See especially Bayly 1988.

ture, Europeans early on started the process of framing grammatical rules for the Bangla language, copying and editing culturally significant texts and introducing a culture of print.[41] More detailed attention than is possible here should be given to the production of standard grammars by the British missionaries at Serampore (Carey and Halhead), and the creation of the Bangla print script. Print culture immediately created pressures toward standardization in two fields.[42] Print culture tends to privilege a particular dialect among the variety of regional forms that have traditionally flourished side by side. In this case, high Bangla was based partly on Calcutta speech but relied heavily on the style of the Nadīyā-Śāntipur region, which was regarded as "pleasant" but not necessarily cultivated, language. The transformation of this dialect into "standard" Bangla met surprisingly little opposition—despite the fact that within a short time other speech forms were ascribed a subordinate status, and in literary texts, dialogue in these dialects was soon marked as a "low" form. A parallel pressure toward script standardization transformed the new print faces into models for writing, displacing the traditional diversity of calligraphic styles.

Out of this combination of intellectual influences, an entirely new kind of high Bangla was created, transforming the earlier, far less structured linguistic economy. And one of its most significant features was the deliberate adoption of the modified Sanskritic version of precolonial Bangla, out of the three forms delineated by Haraprasād Śāstrī and mentioned earlier.[43] As Bangla tried to negotiate the intellectual demands of modern culture, the two modular languages with which it initially developed a strangely mixed relation of contention and emulation were Sanskrit and English. Sanskrit, after all, was the high language of the Hindu society's "internal" practices, such as worship, marriage, and literary cultivation. English, by contrast, was the language of a new kind of external practice, immediately associated with modern forms of power: law, administration, and new opportunities for external trade.

41. For searching analyses of these transformations by a near contemporary, see Śāstrī, "Bāṅgālār Sāhitya," and his three presidential addresses, all of which deal in detail with institutional changes in Bangla literary culture (Śāstrī 1956, 1: 171–96, 211–83.)

42. I am opposed to the casual, undiscriminating acceptance of Benedict Anderson's idea of "print capitalism." While this idea applies to European historical examples, it is doubtful that the connection between print and capitalism is equally strong or invariable in Asia. In the Bengali case, it appears that print increased the accessibility of both traditional and newly composed texts, in principle. In practice, however, it did not increase accessibility immediately. Initially, printed texts were not very cheap. The establishment of printing presses produced a flourishing business in chapbooks and cheap pamphlets on diverse subjects, and these were consumed primarily by the newly emerging urban lower-middle class.

43. Ghulām Murśed has provided a detailed historical analysis of how this "Sanskritization" of Bangla prose took place. See Murśed 1992.

The Search for a Modern Aesthetic

Changes in literary practice, as distinct from language, were also fast and radical. The entire sphere of culture was powerfully affected by a new emulative imagination prompted by English education. This is clearly discernible in techniques of poetic composition. Traditional poetry had followed widely acknowledged and fairly stringent criteria concerning meter and style. These explicitly rhetorical elements gradually begin to fade from the serious attention of poets. Īśvarcandra Gupta (1812–1849), whose compositions exemplify the transition in poetic aesthetics, still worked with traditional norms of rhetorical virtuosity, remarkably similar to those of Bhāratcandra, but an astonishing change is revealed in his choice of literary subjects, which were mostly drawn from the urban life of colonial Calcutta. Gupta had found the secret of writing poetry about the ordinary, though doing so brought charges of frivolity, occasional obscenity, and lack of dignified themes (he wrote verses on entirely untraditional topics, like the gastronomic celebration of pineapples and *tapse* fish). But it is clear that his application of traditional forms to an urban, colonial, modern subject was already transient and unstable. The forms were inadequate for the subjects and were rapidly left behind in the search for more complex solutions.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–1873), by contrast, emulated the aesthetic forms of the sonnet and the Miltonian epic in an attempt to create a high "classical" atmosphere.[44] In Madhusudan, as in many of his contemporaries, we find the potent and unprecedented combination of elements from Sanskrit and English that marks the serious advent of modern literature: his narratives and characters are primarily drawn from the Sanskrit high classical tradition—Indrajit, Lakṣmaṇa, Pramilā, Rāvaṇa, and so on from the *Rāmāyaṇa;* Tilottamā and Śarmiṣṭhā from the *Mahābhārata.* But his great dramatic poem, *Meghnādbadh,* is a defiant declaration of independence from the traditional Sanskrit poetry.

Madhusudan's language is highly Sanskritic with several innovative elements, particularly in the use of verbs, that led to bitter debates in the Bangla critical world—his supporters considering them enhancements of the language, his opponents viewing them as travesties. Above all, *Meghnādbadh* is an excellent document of the paradoxical conjuncture in Bangla intellectual culture in early modernity. In one sense, *Meghnādbadh* was a radically new creation that turned all the values of the traditional epic upside down. It inverts the relation between Indrajit and Lakṣmaṇa—and more indirectly, between Rāvaṇa and Rāma—by treating the *rākṣasa* (demonic) figures as heroes and Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa as morally and practically devious. Yet seen

---

44. On Dutt see also Dharwadker, chapter 3 in this volume.

from an alternative and equally plausible angle, it is a cultural artifact of the most dedicated imitation—an adaptation of Milton's *Paradise Lost* into Bangla culture, copying not only the narrative theme but also the metric form of blank verse (called in Bangla *amitrākṣar chanda,* verse of "unfriendly" or nonharmonizing syllables).

Poetic excellence was now measured by the poet's skill in producing sonnets *(caturdaśpadī)* rather than stately quatrains in quantitative-syllabic verse forms such as the *mandākrānta.* In a remarkably short time, elite pastimes such as *kavigān*—occasions, usually spectacular in nature, in which poets gathered to compose impromptu poems and passages, sometimes in competition with each other—were fatally undermined by a more introspective literary culture, marking a fundamental shift in the nature of the literary itself.

Kavigān was a poetic exercise that showed the conventional associations of poetry. It was performative, instant, part of a public spectacle, and it required a ready intelligence and quick-wittedness from its composers. Its performance was exactly like that of music: the creator did not get a chance to revise, reflect, redraft, and present to the audience the product of an introspective and reflective private craft. Normally not written down, the compositions had no ambitions of permanence, though the most popular ones gained a form of oral immortality. Compositions by Madhusudan or Rabindranath, on the other hand, stood at the opposite end of the continuum of poetic forms. These were attentively crafted products, meant to be enjoyed primarily by a private reader. Above all, the culture of reading was fundamentally transformed. The presupposition of the silent reader introduced a series of interesting changes in poetry's technical structure, the most significant of which was the slow decline of the aural in favor of semantic delectation. This is reflected in the restrained, often almost embarrassed, alliterations in Tagore's poetry.[45] The overt representationality of performative poetry—its theatrical aspect—was entirely lost. Poetry now came to be enshrouded in a great silence of refinement.

Shifts of the kind evidenced in poetry formed part of a larger cultural change that instituted a new kind of boundary between everyday practices and crafts and the exalted sphere of the high arts. Recitation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the singing of *padāvalī* as part of the seasonal and daily *kīrtan*s had intertwined that poetry with the unremarkable rounds of everyday activities, a re-

45. Tagore is again an interesting example here; he has undoubted mastery of metrics and figures of speech, and sometimes his use of this technical repertoire is strikingly original. But there is no demonstrativeness about it. Unlike traditional poetry, his works invite literary assessment not primarily on this terrain, but on others. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that standard Bangla discussions of *chanda*s use Tagore's poetic corpus almost as much as canonical Sanskrit examples. For a highly complex and deeply sympathetic appreciation of Tagore's metric originality, see Sen 1974.

lationship reflected quite often in the declamatory manner of reciting (often such recitation would be carried on alongside a mundane activity, such as doing everyday chores). The new poetry could not be used in this way—as part of religious ritual or community gatherings, or for inattentive mnemonic incantation in the household. Moreover, inasmuch as high literacy was a prerequisite, the new poetry was not equally available across gender.[46] Unlike some high poetry in north India that customarily functioned as part of sophisticated conversation, this poetry was unsuited for use in even the most elevated normal dialogue. It could not be approached without the inescapable sense that it was high art and thus separated from all other mundane pursuits.

Further transformations in literary culture came about as authorial practices changed in relation to reception practices. What had been a local, participatory, communal collectivity, often gathered at a public spectacle, became for the first time an impersonal "audience" of readers sitting and perusing texts in private, where the simultaneous enjoyment of others did not interfere with or determine their assessment of the text. As literature was turned into a primarily lonely pleasure a series of institutional changes followed. Appreciation of literary objects (poetry in particular) changed form from the instant applause or coolness of the face-to-face audience to the scrutiny of modern criticism, which elaborately dissects the text at leisure and enhances both the prestige and the enjoyment of the text by a commentary that is itself literary, a literature supplementing literature.[47] A literary public sphere formed in the early nineteenth century around a group of journals, some of which were short-lived but immensely influential (like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Baṅgadarśan,* established in 1872), and the disputations in their pages determined the formation of canonical criteria for literary production. Literature now worked through a dialogue between the literary activity of poets and writers and the critical activity that offered aesthetic commentary and encouraged or inhibited various performative trends.

The creation of this literary modernity in Bengal, through the dissemi-

46. I do not mean there was something intrinsically gender-biased in these writings, but rather that modern education was initially almost entirely a male preserve. Subsequently, reading novels was often seen as a specially female literate activity, with many popular magazines directing their wares to a female audience.

47. Significantly, this also affects the appreciation of traditional Sanskrit texts. Formerly, the only aids to the study of texts like those by Kālidāsa were well-known commentaries; in the modern era, important literary figures wrote highly individual assessments of current works. This type of literary criticism produced a literary sense of taste that was far more individualistic, exploratory, and subject to periodic change than the heavy conventionality of the commentary tradition.

nation processes of printing and the creation of an impersonal literary public, was related to movements of political power in a fundamental way. In premodern India, political authority had a relatively marginal role to play in such important parts of life as economic activity, which was governed primarily by the rules of the caste order. It is not surprising that fundamental structures and institutions that helped cultural reproduction or commanded constitutive power over cultural form were also by and large outside the direct influence of rulers.[48] Those who ruled were routinely praised, and they reciprocated primarily by providing patronage; this culture continued down to Bhāratcandra's stay at the court of King Kr̥ṣṇacandra of Kr̥ṣṇanagar in the Nadīyā region. By contrast, the colonial state, using the modern conception of politics brought from the rationalistic phase of European culture, lay claim to its territory and space in a radically new way, represented in its theory of state sovereignty.[49]

The British administration was naturally negligent about cultural life in its empire. The British did introduce cultural forms, which they saw as part of the civilizing processes of modernity, but they were hardly interested in producing in their imperial dominions something similar to the cultural homogeneity of nationalist Europe. From the late eighteenth century British power expanded with astonishing rapidity, and this prompted the question of clearly defined territorial structures to demarcate the jurisdictions of the British and the native princes' political authority. This habituated Indians to living in a stable, politically bounded space; but the connection between this space and its cultural content was still entirely accidental. As British rule extended westward, extensive Hindustani-speaking territories were added to the Bengal presidency. Bengalis duly developed subimperialistic delusions about themselves and considered other groups within the larger territory of the presidency their natural inferiors (these attitudes are reflected with particular clarity in the extensive travel literature produced by the Bengali elite). Except in a few extreme cases, they did not propose inclusion of these groups in the exalted realm of Bengali culture. Other linguistic groups could regard the lighted circle of Bangla literary culture with admiration or resent-

48. However, in the light of the evidence Pollock (1998) puts forward, it appears that the relation between political power and cultural forms can be varied and complex: in contrast to the Bengali case, royal patronage obviously affected the direction of literary production in the case of south Indian empires. Wherever literature bore a strong connection with a polity through a common language, such pressures must have existed. Persian and Urdu writing had strong connections with north Indian courts. See the contributions by Alam and Faruqi, chapters 2 and 14, respectively, in this volume.

49. Modern historians who have analyzed the nature of premodern political authority have suggested the term "segmentary state" to mark this difference, though not without controversy. See Kulke 1995.

ment, but they were not serious interlocutors. The delineation of the *cultural* boundaries of Bengal was the work, therefore, not of the colonial state but of the new Bengali intelligentsia.[50]

Separating Bangla from Other Languages

By the early nineteenth century, a separate modern linguistic identity was clearly discernible in Bengal. Naturally, what this language was and how its purely linguistic frontiers were drawn were major questions of internal contention in this early modern period. If we take early-nineteenth-century Bangla writing as an example of the state of thinking about the Bangla language, we find a remarkably complex ordering in the structure of linguistic practice. Speaking and doing things in Bangla had to make a place for itself in a world of many languages. An ordinary Bengali householder would speak to his family and friends and in the bazaar in one of the local Bangla dialects (these dialects are usually specific to relatively small regions, but they are framed in a more general division between western and eastern speech, referred to in Bangla colloquial usage as *ghaṭī* and *bāṅāl*). But dealings with political authority, for instance regarding landholding or revenue, called for the consistent and skillful use of Persian.[51] Religious ceremonies—a constant part the household routine—involved the mandatory use of Sanskrit, though the average householder might have an insecure grasp over its grammatical intricacies. Any transaction with colonial power required knowledge of English. It was thus not uncommon for an educated Bengali to know all these languages with reasonable degrees of fluency. Each language performed clearly designated functions. If we classify these functions as high and low, then, interestingly, in the early nineteenth century Bangla was used for distinctly low functions. Serious business—concerning gods or kings or property—was dealt with in other languages.

The entrenchment of British power and spread of Western education had the effect of simplifying this complicated triple hyperglossia with astonishing rapidity. English took over Persian's administrative function as records

---

50. But one should not put too benevolent a construction on this process of delineation of the boundaries of the Bangla cultural space. Some sections of the early Bengali intelligentsia claimed, for instance, that Oriya was not a separate language but a degenerate version of Bangla, and it would be better for the "civilization" of Oriyas to learn and write standardized Bangla. There were serious suggestions that Oriya teaching should be abolished in schools in Orissa and replaced by Bangla. For details, see Mohanty 1986. Not merely cultural chauvinism but also hard calculation of material advantage were involved in making such aggressive subimperialist claims.

51. For a fascinating collection of old Bangla letters, see Sen 1961. Not surprisingly, a large number of these letters discuss land transactions, and consequently, their Bangla language is heavily laden with Arabic-Persian terms.

were converted into English, though record-keeping practices passed through a long period of administrative diglossia, and an otherwise English administrative discourse bristled with terms like *tālukā, moujā,* and *pattā.* The term *zamindārī* remained in good semantic health until Independence, after which the institution was ceremonially abolished by legislation. Terms like *rāja* and *mahārāja* were severed from the original practice of rulership, which had been fatally undermined by the expansion of British rule, and became free-floating and available for adoption under British permanent settlement by middling *zamindār*s without the faintest aspiration toward independent political authority. Earlier this would have been preposterously illegitimate as a social practice. A title like "the Mahārāja of Cossimbāzār"—worn by a considerable player in factional politics in colonial Bengal—would have appeared completely ungrammatical in the context of the earlier map of social practice. (Appropriately, the ultimate resting place for the term *mahārāja* is as a sign for a particular lifestyle, vaguely suggesting opulence, indolence, and geniality, in the famous advertisement for the national airline, Air India.)

It is a significant, if neglected, fact that the historical contact with colonialism was very uneven across the whole of South Asia. The Bengali contact with colonialism was peculiar for at least three reasons. First, Bengalis simply had the longest-running contact with modern British culture, and probably also had the longest time to devise a complex range of differential responses to British culture. Second, the nature of that contact differed in the case of Bengal. Since the British did not initially establish themselves with an unambiguous claim to state power, it was possible to see them as simply one force in a society in which several powers were jostling for position. The party of reform, led by people like Rammohan Roy, therefore could enlist British support without moral scruples about surrendering to an alien civilization. Third, the entrenchment of British colonial power in India afforded upper-class Bengalis a great opportunity for subimperialist expansion and made them even more eager and inclined to ingest the Western cultural model. Consequently, the emulative enthusiasm of Bengali culture became particularly intense. From the start of the nineteenth century Bangla intellectuals were under enormous pressure to reinvent their intellectualism in a modern form, which altered the entire definition of what it meant to be an intellectual. Literariness played a specially significant role in this process. Not merely were creation and knowledge of literary texts in both English and Bangla essential skills for the cultivated; a certain clarity of syntax, chasteness of vocabulary, refinement of pronunciation—all operations influenced by literary texts—became mandatory constituents of the modern Bengali sense of cultivation.

One of the most striking features of literary modernity in Bengal was the rapidity with which the culture changed. There was an urgency to differen-

tiate the modern period from the past, which was now seen as "traditional" (that is, in the sense in which I used the term earlier: not as *āgama,* or what is received from the past, but as part of *atīta,* or the past itself). But although through its various stages of change—represented by Īśvarcandra Vidyāsāgar (1820–1891), Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894), and Rabindranath Tagore, respectively—Bangla literature quickly became modern, it did not establish a stable, unworried pattern of either verse or prose writing, or of aesthetic structure.

Rammohan Roy is significant for two reasons. First, he exhibited in his own life a model of what Bangla education or cultivation meant during his time, particularly the almost mandatory inclusion of Persian skills and Islamic culture. The entire project of the putative upgrading of Bangla and the creation of a "high" language was to erase this Islamic element in a surprisingly brief span of time. Within two generations, Bangla literary culture would become far more solidly Hindu—though in a rather complex way. Second, Roy is immensely important for the nature of his cultural project. He established the relatively liberal, strongly reformist Brahmo Samaj. Its principles, seen as a set of basic ideas or religious resources that would include metaphysical, philosophical, doctrinal beliefs, stocks of images, and iconography, stood in a very interesting relation to Hinduism. The Samaj played a foundational role in the creation of modern Bengali culture—from the devising of rules of ordinary *bhadralok* etiquette and the refashioning of the whole world of literary language through the works of Rabindranath to a revolution in women's dress.[52] If Hinduism is viewed in the structuralist fashion as a combinatory of elements, Brahmo improvisation responded to the challenges of the West, Christianity, and modernity by using with wonderful deftness some specific elements of this repertoire.

Hindu caste customs, rooted in texts like the *Manusmṛti,* were utterly repugnant to progressive Brahmos, but they replaced those canonical texts with the equally canonical Upaniṣads. The Brahmos disliked the mutilation of classical Sanskrit by half-educated officiating priests and the utter aural disorder of worship in Hindu temples, but they replaced it all with the singing of appropriately solemn songs called *brahmasaṅgīt* (congregational singing of Brahma), and the adaptation of Vedic hymns. Doctrinally, it would be wholly unfair to accuse Brahmos of being more averse to Muslims than traditional Hindus. They were certainly seeking a more liberal religion, free

---

52. The introduction of the blouse to go with a new style of wearing the sari made it easier for women to come out of the *antaḥpur.* The traditional attire, though inviting romantic descriptions like Duṣyanta's wonder at Śakuntalā's appearance—*iyam adhikamanojñā valkalenāpi tanvī* (this slender girl looks even more beautiful dressed in bark cloth)—would not have promoted women's activity in the public sphere. On the historical transformation of dress, see Tarlo 1994.

from fanaticism. Yet their project for the creation of a high Bengali culture and literature looked entirely toward the repertoire of classical Hinduism for its resources.

The high culture of modern Bengal, created through the stunning originality of the nineteenth century, thus became a generally Hindu affair.[53] And this slow but decisive equation of the modern Bengali self with a cultural gestalt associated with Hinduism was a fundamental reason for the gradual alienation of Muslims. One strand of nineteenth-century literary culture even showed explicit hostility to Muslims and, with the growing interest in history, began to represent Islamic rule as "foreign" domination. References to Islamic rule as foreign are quite widespread and can be found in many Brahmo writings, apart from the unsurprising presence of this idea among more conservative Hindu texts. And hostility to Muslims in the works of highly influential writers like Bankimchandra played a significant role in this story. But to illustrate the crucial underlying problem I quote an extended passage from the famous essay, "Indian History," by Rabindranath Tagore, who would not be suspected of communalism:

> Countries that are fortunate find the essence of their land in the history of their country; the reading of history introduces their people to their country from infancy. With us the opposite is the case. It is the history of our country that hides the essence of this land from us. Whatever historical records exist from Mahmud's invasion to the arrogant imperial pronouncements of Lord Curzon, these constitute a strange mirage for India; this does not help our sight into our country, but covers it with a screen. It casts a strong artificial light on one part in such a way that the other side, in which our country lies, becomes covered in darkness to our eyes. In that darkness the diamonds on the tiaras of the dancers flash in the light of the dancing halls of the nawabs; the red foam in the tumblers in the Badshahs' hands appears like red, sleepless, maddened eyes; ancient holy temples cover their heads in that darkness, and the high spires of the bejeweled marble mausoleums of the emperors' lovers try to kiss the stars. In that darkness the sound of horses' hooves, the trumpeting of elephants, the jangle of weapons, the paleness of tents stretching into the distance, the golden glow of silk curtains, the stone bubbles of mosques, the mysterious silence of the palaces guarded by eunuchs—all these produce a huge magical illusion with their amazing sounds and colors. But why should

53. The Muslim responses to this new form of cultivation constitute a complex and large question. One kind of response was to acknowledge this culture as a historical given and acquire it: the language of many Muslim writers who adopted this solution is hardly different from that of their Hindu peers. But others felt the exclusion more sharply and suggested developing a "Musalmāni Bāṃlā" whose predominant feature would be the frequent use of Arabic and Persian words to mark it off from the Hindu high Bangla. After Partition, the efforts of the Pakistani authority to impose Urdu brought on a strong reaction and a tendency to use a more Sanskrit-based high Bangla.

we call this India's history? It has covered the *punthi* of India's holy mantras by
a fascinating Arabian Nights tale. No one opens that *punthi*. [But] children
learn every line of that Arabian Nights tale by heart.[54]

This striking passage presents a field of signs in which all the symbolic mark-
ers of the self are securely tied to Hindu culture and what is not of "the
essence of this land" is associated with Islamic and British history. The en-
tire problem with modern Indian nationalism was that this way of repre-
senting history was not the preserve of Hindu communalists but was part of
a far more common and casually commonsensical language.

The Making of Modern Prose

If Bangla was to be the basis for a restructured linguistic economy, it had to
show itself capable of performing the high cultural functions, which at this
historical juncture were divisible into two mutually opposed types. Some were
connected to religious practice and were normally performed in Sanskrit.
Others were associated with modern culture: the practices of science, law,
and administration that had come to be associated with English by the late
eighteenth century. The challenge facing Bangla was further complicated
by the philosophical contradiction between these two spheres of high func-
tions: acceptance of a "scientific" view of the world was widely held as un-
dermining orthodox Hindu religious life. To acquire a place of value, how-
ever, Bangla, incongruous as it seemed, had to be able to do both: It had to
become a language capable of the high recitative solemnity of Sanskrit con-
ventionally used at worship *(pūjā)* or ceremonials (replacing Sanskrit), and
it had to acquire sufficient complexity and subtlety to become a language
of law and science (replacing English). Finally, as a decisive mark of moder-
nity, it had to acquire the capacity to produce a high literature (like both
Sanskrit and English). Interestingly, the question of turning Bangla into a
language of property-related jurisprudence was given less attention, illustrat-
ing that modern Bengalis, though poetically inclined, are characteristically
negligent about pecuniary matters. Instead, a certain amount of Persianized
language persisted in the practices of the revenue administration.

  To perform all these functions successfully, Bangla had to enter into a pe-
culiar relation of transaction with both Sanskrit and English. With the rise
of early modern literature, two contradictory trends became immediately

---

54. Tagore 1968: 3–4. *Punthi* refers to a genre of Bangla literature centered on themes of
ritual and myth. My intention in adducing this passage is not to revise the general opinion about
Tagore but to illustrate a widely used rhetoric. Tagore went on to write some of the most radi-
cally anticommunal and anti-Brahmanical poems in nationalist literature, generating a rare form
of self-critical nationalism. In some of his late correspondence he recognized that his own ear-
lier patriotic poems often shared a nationalist imagery that was revisionist by implication.

apparent. One sought the fluidity, lilt, suppleness, and liveliness of colloquial speech; the other resolutely faced the other way, toward borrowing maximally from Sanskrit vocabulary. Consider the opening sentences from Īśvaracandra Vidyāsāgar's *Sītār Vanabās,* a major text in the founding of modern Bangla literature:

> ei sei *janasthānamadhyavartī prasravaṇagiri.* ihār *śikharadeś satatasañcaramān jaladharapatalasaṃyoge nirantar nibiḍ nīlimāy alaṅkṛta.*[55]

Grammatically, this is Bangla,[56] but the words are almost entirely Sanskrit— a string of *tatsama*s, or words borrowed directly out of Sanskrit. In the quotation, Sanskrit-equivalent words are italicized; if the *sandhi*s and *samāsa*s were uncoupled, the number would be higher. The sentence structure is such that the main verb is hidden, which accentuates its similarity with Sanskrit.

Vidyāsāgar was engaged in a process of "classicization" of Bangla. Indeed, in his writings the politics of the grammatical past is particularly intense and clear. He wished to create a Bangla that denied the language's somewhat mean and mixed medieval ancestry by making Sanskrit more *internal* to the Bangla linguistic structure. He supplemented this effort with his choice of the narratives that this newly formed "high" Bangla was to present to its modern audience through institutionalized educational curricula. Vidyāsāgar's selection follows an impeccable syllabus of early proto-nationalist culture— a combination of high Sanskrit tales like the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, *Raghuvaṃśa* and *Śākuntala* of Kālidāsa, *Uttararāmacarita* of the seventh-century playwright Bhavabhūti (all of which leave their traces on Vidyāsāgar's own storytelling), and Shakespeare (*Comedy of Errors* retold under the title *Bhrāntivilās*). Given this reading list, the new Bangla civilizing process simply could not fail.

Vidyāsāgar's cultural strategy contained an important element of politics. Against the colonial argument that Indian traditional literature was vulgar and degenerate it asserted the exemplary character of the Sanskrit classical canon, which, however, was subtly reconstructed in a discernibly Western style through the surreptitious filter of "modern" taste. There was clearly an en-

---

55. Śāstrī 1956, 1: 197–202.

56. Haraprasād Śāstrī wrote a perspicuous essay on the strange hybridity of what passed for Bangla grammar, showing that what *vyākaraṇa* meant in Sanskrit was different from the meaning of "grammar" in English. Recent writers, he argued, made elementary mistakes by, for example, confusing "parts of speech" with *vibhakti* (Śāstrī 1956, 1: 203–10). Although it is not central to my analysis here, I cannot resist noting that the casual celebration of "hybridity" today sometimes tries to appropriate the creativity of the culture in nineteenth-century Bengal. I consider this totally illegitimate and thoughtless, perhaps prompted by a lack of familiarity with that culture in detail. People of Śāstrī's culture would have made a sharp and indignant distinction between cultural self-making and hybridity, and would have regarded the latter with some contempt.

terprise to construct a past for Bangla that replicated the high classical past of the Italian Renaissance and ancient Greece that the British appropriated to their own literary culture. Vidyāsāgar's suggestion about what modern Bangla should be proceeded in the right modern direction: reinvented through the deliberate Sanskritization of its vocabulary, this new Bangla was capable of performing all the specialized functions expected of a modern high culture. It could easily perform the function of religious solemnity and worship precisely because these practices had traditionally been done in Sanskrit.[57] And by borrowing from the enormous wealth of Sanskrit's vocabulary and grammatical operations, it could also perform efficiently as a language of science, legality, and serious reflection.

In the period between Bankimchandra and Rabindranath Tagore there was intense and sophisticated discussion about what a "genuine" high Bangla should be. The literary result of this discussion is seen in the grace, limpidity, and spontaneity of Tagore's mature language. But a purely literary reading of this process hides the highly interesting theoretical reflection on the nature of a modern language that continued for nearly half a century. A key figure in this discussion was the linguist and scholar Haraprasād Śāstrī, who was given the affectionate title Mahāmahopādhyāy for his seminal contribution to a scientific study of the Bangla language. Śāstrī's linguistics were not merely technically excellent; they were also astonishingly alert to sociological contexts. In one of his influential essays, "Bāṃlā Bhāṣā" (The Bangla language), Śāstrī sharply criticized the high Sanskritic style of two venerated figures of the earlier generation, Vidyāsāgar and Akṣayakumār Datta, the editor of the prestigious journal *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā:* "The fact is, those who have taken up the pen in the Bangla language have never learned the Bangla language properly."[58] Excessive Sanskritization affected what was perceived to be the natural, spontaneous rhythm of the language, and soon faced serious criticism. Śāstrī scorned the "Vidyāsāgarī" style as "translation," not "creative writing": "His Bangla is understood only by himself and his followers, no one else. How could they? After all, it was not a regional *[deśīya]* language. It was a linguistic leftover *[ucchiṣṭamātra]* imagined by some translators."[59]

Subsequently, the excessive Sanskritization of the Vidyāsāgar style was abandoned in favor of a more complex and versatile form developed by Bankimchandra, who wrote a spirited defense of the use of a mixed language

57. Brahmos were the only group that carried this logic through to its end. Others normally performed their *pūjā*s and marriage ceremonies in Sanskrit, but the Brahmos used Bangla translations of conventional *śloka*s even for marriage ceremonies. They were also often the most particular about the purity of their language, taking enormous care not to slip English words into common speech—something that requires excruciating alertness.

58. Śāstrī 1956, 1: 197–202.

59. Śāstrī 1956, 1: 198.

for literature. Bankimchandra's Bangla was still full of Sanskrit words, but it was not defensive or ashamed of showing, through the verbs, that it was Bangla. This innovation freed written Bangla from the woodenness *(jaḍatā)* of Vidyāsāgar's style; made it supple and sprightly; and allowed it to draw on the very different resources of colloquial, slang, and typically feminine speech. By the time of Tagore we find a fully developed and highly complex language, though in my view it was still weak as a vehicle of serious reflective prose compared to the strength of its ability to express sentiment.[60] But precisely by going through this short period of experimentation Bangla had, as it were, created for itself a history in capsule form: a high, sonorous, unpractical classicism that through modern influences was gradually unfrozen into the recognizable cadences of an ironic modern prose (to echo Bakhtin's idea that irony is a mark of all modern literature).

A second process in the creation of modern high Bangla had to do with English. Since Bangla is largely a Sanskrit-derived language, vocabulary could be taken unproblematically from that source. But a modern language expresses a world—material, social, intellectual, and aesthetic—that is structured by a different kind of complexity from that of premodernity. A significant element in this new sensibility is the determining, yet often subterranean, presence of science. This new rationalistic sensibility is often called in Bangla *pāscātya bhāv* (Western sensibility).[61] Bangla intellectuals understood quite early science's ability to produce a dramatic disenchantment with the world. In the Bangla context, the process of disenchantment was particularly brutal and dramatic; for unlike in Europe, it did not occur over a long period through an internal dialogue within European culture, often within Christianity, through which religion slowly ceded intellectual problems and fields to scientific reasoning. The total effect of intellectual changes in Europe over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was utterly revolutionary, but the actual experience was often incremental. In India, by contrast, this disjuncture occurred as a political clash between two civilizations, and any acceptance of modern science could immediately be denounced by conservatives as capitulation to alien ideas. Although Bangla modern culture was guided for about a century by religious and literary performances

60. There is considerable debate and reflection among writers of prose who, given the poetic obsession of the Bengalis, are often poets attempting a different mode of writing in their spare time. But the charge that the language Tagore used with incomparable grace was adept at sentiment yet weak on expressing serious, complex ideas is fairly common. In their various ways, writers like Pramatha Chaudhuri (primarily a prose writer), and Sudhin Dutta and Bishnu De (both poets and creators of deliberately "complex" styles) experimented with prose forms that were self-consciously distinct from Tagore's often mellifluous but weak later prose. Tagore's own prose went through what appears to me a regressive transformation.

61. Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy wrote a deeply perceptive and highly critical analysis of *pāścātya bhāv* in his *Sāmājik Prabandha* ([1892] 1981).

rather than scientific ones, science was clearly a subtle and ubiquitous presence.[62] Acceptance of the scientific, disenchanted view of the world, even if implicit, made the practice of traditional literature impossible. Those who accepted this sensibility had to accept by implication a new map of the frontier between literature and scientific discourse.[63]

Science and Syntax

In modern cultures, science comes to have a paradoxical relation with literature. While it is differentiated from literature as a field of intellectual activity, it supplies in a sense the boundaries of literature, forcing literature to become more self-consciously aesthetic. The distinction between modern science, with its high and querulously sharp self-definition, and literature/aesthetics was thus another determining influence on the making of modern Bangla literary culture, especially prose.

Prose has become, in modern times, the privileged vehicle of science; and although literature can exclude itself from the strict regimes of expression required by science, by invoking that dichotomy it declares itself, after all, a literature in an irreversibly (if not entirely) disenchanted world. Prose, and generally all modern literature, carries this mark of disenchantment, which makes statements fallible and exudes a general sense of cognitive skepticism.[64] To effect this, in the case of Bangla, required new kinds of sentences expressing a provisionality entirely untypical in traditional syntax. For example, sentences beginning with *yehetu* (since/because), indicating a strong relation of causality, were required for expressing inductive generalizations

62. For a recent discussion of the contradictions of colonial science, see Prakash 1999.

63. Originally, the Brahmo critique of orthodox Brahmanical Hinduism was developed on the basis of rationalist arguments: modern Hindus should only entertain ideas compatible with modern rationalism, it was argued, and therefore it was essential to reject traditional superstitious beliefs. A striking example of this belief in scientific reason was Tagore's famous rebuke of Gandhi for his claim that a devastating earthquake in Bihar was God's punishment for the practice of untouchability. See Tagore 1996.

While most writers and opinion-makers agreed about the crucial importance of science, views differed about the best means of acquiring it. In addition to reading the latest scientific material, extensive translation and writing of general science texts were greatly encouraged. Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy, who as an inspector of schools had special title to speak on these matters, pointed out with characteristic perceptiveness that the spread of science required a true laicization of knowledge, as in modern Europe. It was unlikely, in his view, that this could happen without imparting science education in the vernacular. To him, it appeared that Bengalis were learning not science itself but "stories of science"—a much inferior substitute. See Mukhopādhyāy [1892] 1981.

64. It would be wrong to say that earlier secular literature did not, at times, show a highly refined sense similar to rationalist skepticism. One of the best examples would be Ghalib's famous couplet: *ham ko mālūm hai jinnat ke haqiqat llekin dil ke bahlāne-ke liye yah khyāl acchā hai* (I know the real truth about paradise, but for beguiling the human mind it is an excellent idea).

or subsuming particulars under general laws; *yadio,* or in earlier versions the more Sanskritic *yady api* (while/although), indicated an open-endedness of judgment, registered a contradiction, or indicated a measured sense of qualification.[65] Though initially authors felt a certain awkwardness with these syntactic forms and sometimes used them as flags of stylistic rebellion, within a short time, as the nature of discursive practices changed, they became commonplace. By Tagore's time, at the turn of the century, they were being used with great ease and style, as in Tagore's famous poem "Duḥsamay."[66]

Probably the most striking use of the kind of syntactic structure at issue, applied with a deliberateness impossible to ignore, was in the conscious urbanity of Sudhindranath Dutta (1901–1961), who was famous precisely for the excess (to some) or the fluency (to others) of his mixture of obscure Sanskritic terms with obtrusively English syntactic form (a style that is also seen in striking forms in the poetry of Bishnu De). This combination, and especially the internalization of these syntactic structures, became the mark of both the maturity and the modernity in all types of writers, irrespective of political or artistic positions. Other, subtler uses of the element of surprise in language occurred in poetry. To take a random example, in two apparently simple lines of Jībanānanda Dās's (1899–1954) famous poem "Cil" (The kite), there is a startling use of a possessive case, creating a delectable effect of inversion:

> *hāy cil, sonālī dānār cil, ei bhije megher dupure*
> *tumi ār kendo nāko uḍe uḍe dhānsiḍi nadīṭir pāśe.*

The second phrase in the first line, *sonāli dānār cil,* inverts the normal relation of possession: instead of *ciler dānā*—the kite's unproblematic possession of its wings—the poem chooses to speak of *dānār cil,* the golden wing's relation (possession/metonymy) with the kite. The phrase *bhije megher dupure* (the afternoon of wet clouds) in the next phrase has a similar, though weaker, effect.[67]

---

65. The obvious exception to this was the esoteric language of technical philosophy.

66.

yadio sandhyā āsiche manda manthare

sab saṅgīt geche iṅgite thāmiyā

yadio saṅgī nāhi ananta ambare

yadio klānti āsiche aṅge nāmiyā.

Though the dusk is approaching in slow steps,

All singing has stopped at some strange signal,

Though there is no companion in the unending sky,

Though weariness is slowly numbing your limbs.

67. Because English admits phrases of this kind, their effect when rendered in English is considerably diluted. Fortunately, there is an excellent study of Dās's poetic art available in English: Seely 1990.

Disenchantment and the Prose of the World

Self-consciously artistic prose writing led to the slow discovery of the poetics of prose. Traditionally, most compositions aspiring to attention and claiming intellectual seriousness were composed in verse, no doubt partly because the mnemonic element supported the pedagogy. As the conception of knowledge became more secular such mnemonic devices were less required, though the importance of memory in Indian learning continues even today. With the breakdown of the caste-based order with regard to occupation, arrangements for storing and imparting knowledge needed to be more impersonal. There was a shift from the tightly controlled system of Brahmanic pedagogy to a written, impersonal, accessible knowledge.

For analyzing the world in a disenchanted manner, whether in everyday or scientific discourse, prose was increasingly seen to be the "natural" form. Prose assisted a calm, unexcited, and exact recording of things. Prose was also the language of sober and recursive reflection. As the general picture of the world became more scientific and was rendered increasingly prosaic, the character of the literary was affected in a process similar to transformations occurring in the world of useful objects. It is often suggested that in the traditional world, art and craft were not separated by a definitional distinction but existed at two points of a continuum. A certain kind of artistic craft could be encountered everywhere: from the appliqué work on *kānthā*s made from old rags to carvings on ordinary household utensils. Modernity, however, tends to divest useful things of this additional gratuitous artistic dimension and subject them to a minimalist, utilitarian design. Crafts become increasingly functional, while high art is given a more formalized presence. The general map of cultural practices is fundamentally altered.

So also, as the literary world was given over to prose, and an underlying, commonsense scientific criterion came to govern prose writing, literature gained at once a more restricted and a more exalted place. Literature could no longer happen unexpectedly and anywhere: it became highly formalized, prized, precious precisely because it was made the subject of an increasingly specialized profession. Though authors in the nineteenth century could not survive by taking literature as an exclusive profession, as Michael Madhusudan Dutt's tragic fate demonstrated (he lived out his days in abject poverty, depending entirely on support from his friends), literary writing was clearly seen as a extraordinary activity. Its task was to recreate enchantment in a world that had finally been desacralized and disenchanted. In social terms, this development paralleled the rise of a new concept of entertainment—in a lifestyle increasingly dominated by temporal regimes driven by work.[68]

68. There is unfortunately not much systematic study of the distinction between work time and leisure time under conditions of modernity, but some provocative thoughts on the signifi-

Disenchantment and the Transformation of the Fantastic

Nothing reveals the enormous and ineradicable impact of science on literature—how science imperceptibly determines the conditions of possibility for literary forms—better than the fate of the fantastic. A major constituent of literary enchantment is the work of the fantastic, in the form of the wondrous affairs of the supernatural. In classical literature, interventions by the supernatural are common and often occur in ways that appear gratuitous to modern literary taste. At times, the intervention of the supernatural plays an astonishingly complex role, as, I think, in the climactic point of the *Mahābhārata,* the disrobing of Draupadī.[69] In common traditional stories, especially in the *maṅgalkāvya* tradition, supernatural intervention is often the most necessary point of the plot, as the relevant deity magically dispels an inevitable disaster. With the goddesses Manasā and Caṇḍī, accomplishing supernatural miracles was almost routine. And Annadā unleashed her goblin army to terrorize Delhi's inhabitants and force Jahāngīr to recognize the merits of her devotee, Majumdār.

A modern sensibility immediately brings embarrassment, if not straightforward disrepute, to such literary conventions. Within the short span of a century, Hindu deities completely lost their abundant capacity of interfering with natural causality—particularly their proneness to appear theatrically in order to invert the narrative scene. Now they could only come to Calcutta within the clearly protected formal space of humor, as in the famous popular story *Devganer Martye Āgaman* by Durga Charan Ray (1886), in which the gods plead their inability to help the goddess Gaṅgā against British technology, which has humiliatingly spanned her with the steel arches of the Howrah Bridge.[70]

The civilizing process of modern culture included the formation of a specialized literature for children, and the fantastic, driven from adult stories, found refuge in that literary space. However, even the children required scientific, rationalistic education, and the traditional stories of goblins were increasingly replaced by a different kind of fantasy, one associated with the mythical and historical past. Tagore arranged for publication of a collection of "grandmothers' tales" (Dakṣiṇārañjan Mitra Majumdār's *Thākurmār Jhuli*)

---

cance of *cākrī* (salaried employment) are found in the work of historians like Sumit Sarkar and Dipesh Chakrabarty. See, in particular, Chakrabarty 2000.

69. This is one of the most difficult and complex episodes of the epic to interpret. Is Kṛṣṇa's intervention—rescuing Draupadī and scorning the efforts of Duḥśāsana—to be taken literally, or does it show that because of the magnitude of its immorality, the episode is impossible to bring to words and literary representation?

70. Ray [1886] 1984.

to prevent the disappearance of that tradition. And children's literature came to be dominated by the writing of Sukumar Ray—most notably his nonsense verse in *Ābaltābal*—and the wonderfully colorful recreations of the past by Abanīndranāth Ṭhākur, the celebrated painter, in Ṭhākur's *Rājkāhinī.* The only place where the fantastic could find a secure sanctuary, entirely protected from the charge of being antiscientific, was in a hugely popular and expanding literature of science fiction, because here fantasy could in fact ride on science itself.[71]

Technologies and Transactions

Not surprisingly, the coming of the new high literature altered the nature of the audience for literary productions. Some traditional texts, like any written narrative, were meant for huge, partially anonymous audiences—like the two adaptations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* mentioned earlier, or the *maṅgalkāvya*s—but their sense of audience was clearly quite different from that of modern literature. Indeed, extending and modifying Gadamer's theory of textual representation in *Truth and Method,* it could be argued that a text like the *Rāmāyaṇa,* even when translated and written down, could not find its appropriate audience without going through various procedures of representative mediation.[72] The *Rāmāyaṇa* would not be read at one sitting or in a series of sequential occasions, the way a modern story is read. Parts of it would be either collectively read by communal audiences or enacted by mediating poets or performers, who would draw on their own narrative imagination in the theatrical depiction, the selection of words, and the composition of dialogues. The story could not "come to life" without their representation on each narrative occasion.

At a level lower than the "universal" literature of the epics were entirely episodic creative forms. One example would be the *kavigān*s mentioned earlier—contests of extempore verse composition, which people enjoyed immensely, but which were also entirely ephemeral. The compositions were not meant to survive the day and therefore did not face the kind of scrutiny of form, substance, and style that a written text-object would face in a primarily written culture. There was no way of retrieving them except in unreliable reports from memory, and the performance was appreciated for the aston-

71. Arguably, the act of putting Dakṣiṇārañjān Mitra Majumdār's tales into the textually inflexible format of a modern book was itself a fundamental change. It dispensed with the esoteric knowledge of the grandmother—and in most cases, with the grandmother herself—since literate children could now read the stories straight from the book.

Children's science fiction made a triumphant start with *Ghanādār Galpa,* by the well-known writer Premendra Mitra, and was pursued by a distinguished string of front-ranking writers, down to the stories by Satyajit Ray.

72. See Gadamer 1981: 91–127.

ishingly spontaneous creativity of the versifiers. Obviously, the *kavigān* was a total experience for the audience, who could appreciate it only firsthand; and they had to be familiar with the utter contingency of occasions to which much of the humor would refer.

Some premodern texts were of course canonized, but with such strong associations between the authors and the gods they praised that the authors were turned into mythical figures. Somewhat like Vyāsa or Vālmīki, they were not individualized precisely because their achievements were so immense. Although we can certainly detect personal styles among the Vaiṣṇava poets— for instance, the very different styles of Caṇḍīdās (who emphasized the semantic and the emotional) and Govindadās (who stressed the aural and technical craft)—the authors were not individuated in the modern sense. This was partly because the finished literary product did not reach directly from the author to the reader (another reason, of course, is the paucity of information we have about these authors). These songs, poems, and stories formed parts of *padāvalī kīrtan* recitals, where the narrative could be inflected by the improvisations of the narrator *(kathak),* who would exploit the immediate surroundings to enhance his presentation. The text in the strict, written sense was thus a core structure on which the narrator would build his personal rendition of the tale.

This improvisational performativity was entirely removed from the modern text, which was fixed, nonperformative, and supposed to reflect, in the European style, the author's individual sense of life. In other words, the earlier texts allowed—and in some cases required—the representation of the textual content by a mediating performer, exactly like the mediation of a dramatic text by actors. Modern texts, on the other hand (like lyric poems or novels, the two literary forms considered paradigmatic of a modern cultural sensibility, centered around a cult of "authenticity," such as the one that quickly dominated Bangla),[73] created a unified, singular authorship in place of such secondary authorly functions; by their very form, these did not allow any other subjectivity to interpose itself in the private exchange between the author and his reader. The best and most perverse example is perhaps the imposition of an utterly fixed performative structure on Tagore's songs, on the grounds of a largely spurious sovereignty of supposed authorial intention. It would create utter consternation among the Bangla *bhadralok* audience if the rendering of Tagore songs deviated from the musical notation *(svaralipi),* while in the case of many other songs of comparably recent origin, singers were allowed a great deal of performative liberty.

Thus the meaning of the literary, as also of the community of readers, was significantly transformed: it shifted from an event performed face-to-face

---

73. For an illuminating discussion of the Western context, see Taylor 1989.

before a relatively intimate community, to an abstract, objective textual object, emphasizing the individuality of both author and reader and the impersonal nature of that relation.

In modern Bangla culture, for reasons that ought to be explored sociologically, literary work—often generically referred to as "writing" *(lekhā)*—soon came to be especially valued among modern intellectual practices. Haraprasād Śāstrī, observant as ever, noted that to place Bangla literature on a firm foundation writers had to become professionals (in other words, work as full-time writers), though paradoxically, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this was possible only for aristocrats. Successful early writers of those days belonged to the colonial elite. Bankimchandra was a deputy magistrate, and Tagore came from a *zamindar* family and was happily exempted from the need to earn a common living. But even Tagore, one of the most celebrated writers worldwide in the early twentieth century, found difficulty financing his university at Shantiniketan through royalties.

Only in the 1940s did serious literary writing descend socially to become primarily the work of petty bourgeois individuals living on small office jobs. Saratchandra Chattopādhyāy's unprecedented popular success as a novelist allowed him to become a professional author, but in his time this was still an exception. Jībanānanda Dās, perhaps the most remarkable and distinctive poetic voice after Tagore, was shadowed by lack of professional success his whole life, and he worked as a college lecturer in obscure institutions in Calcutta and rural Bengal.[74] He died in a tram accident that was as heartbreakingly urban as some of his poetry. After his time, the modern associations of Bangla high literature, in which the subject and object are both petty bourgeois and its predominant theme is an oppressive, unfulfilling urban modernity, were firmly established.

Cultural traditions are hard to obliterate, however. Although they were dislodged from the high grounds of literature, some of the older, oral processes of literary delectation were preserved in the great Bangla institution of the *āḍḍā,* an informal gathering typically devoted to conversation on matters of literature and culture that became the source and seat of judgment of much literary production. The *āḍḍā* was not an impersonal public sphere; rather, it was an unstructured and private literary association, access to which was controlled by common taste, technical style, or political ideology. The *āḍḍā* itself was predictably degraded after the 1940s, turning into a mandatory activity for aspiring young writers, often focused on radical departures in little magazines.

74. See Seely 1990, which contains—besides critical appreciation and biography—admirably translated passages from Dās's most important poems.

Amazingly, Dās was dismissed from his position as college lecturer in Calcutta because of uncomprehending and unfair reviews of his poetic work (Sen 1965: 330).

Reminiscences of literary personalities show a clear change of location, style, and context of the literary *āḍḍā*. Initially, important writers attracted groups of admirers and collaborators around them. Haraprasād Śāstrī reminisced about conversations with Bankimchandra in his house at Kānthāl-pāṛā during which drafts of Bankim's novels in progress were read out and discussed. Similarly, a large and varied circle of literary and artistic personalities gathered around Tagore, the institutional setting of Shantiniketan giving the group a particular stability. Subsequently, important trends in poetic writing, like the post-Tagore iconoclasm of the group associated with the journal *Kallol* or the attempt to fashion a radical left-wing literature around the journal *Paricay,* came out of literary *āḍḍā*s. These groups were complex and heterogeneous, consisting of creative writers, literary critics, and ordinary men of literary taste—a kind of inner and privileged audience. The writers themselves were often quite a mixed group, including poets, novelists, and short story writers. Later, when some groups became affiliated with political ideologies, they expanded to include writers of political commentary. The first *āḍḍā*s were held in the opulent and quiet interiors of upper-class homes.[75] Access to and membership in these gatherings were therefore rigorously restricted. Literary friends gathered in the houses of eminent poets or writers and discussed literary works by way of unstructured conversation. By the forties, non-elite versions of such things were already in place—for instance, in the offices of the Communist Party or the Progressive Writers' Association, or in editorial offices of journals like *Paricay,* where access was not socially restricted yet was largely ideologically determined.[76]

By the 1960s, literary *āḍḍā*s also spilled over into more public places, like roadside cafes or the famous Calcutta Coffee House in the College Street area, which single-handedly housed the editorial boards of hundreds of highly interesting though ephemeral journals. By that time, literary careers went hand in hand with the unemployment of the educated lower-middle-class youth, or in cases of the more talented or fortunate, with a turn to professionalism usually supported by publishing groups that marketed popular magazines of huge circulation.

As Bangla literature established itself, it became part of a wide world of cultural transactions. Surrounding the "death of Sanskrit," of which Pollock has written, there were other subtle deaths, one of them being the death of medieval Bangla.[77] Most significantly, the medieval tradition of literary cosmopolitanism, in which Bangla had ingeniously selected elements out of Sanskrit culture and recombined them into something of its own, was replaced

75. Datta [1985].

76. *Paricay* was started around 1931 by a group of literary aesthetes, but was taken over later by Communist and left-wing writers.

77. Pollock 2001.

by a modern version, in which Bangla began to imitate Western bourgeois forms. It also imitated Western forms of canonicity. As modern Bangla literature established itself, it became part of a wide world of cultural transactions within the cultural space of South Asia. Bangla began to have immense influence over literatures of adjacent regional languages, though not surprisingly this was a rather fraught and ambiguous relationship of emulation and resentment. The works of Bankimchandra, Rabindranath, and Saratchandra were translated in huge waves all across India. In this brief early phase, Bangla contentedly accepted its position as a "hegemonic" literature in India, casually presuming its preeminence among other vernacular literatures. But even in this context Bangla placed itself in a clearly recognizable cosmopolitan hierarchy ranging from the local to the global.

Bangla was seen as positioned in the middle of a literary "world" in which European literatures—English and French especially—stood at the top, *above* Bangla in some sense, and the other Indian literatures stretched away below. This helps us understand the flow of traffic in translations. Very little from other Indian literatures was translated into Bangla, and little of what was translated became popular. In this condition of relative isolation Bangla resembles English, with its sense of being privileged and having little to learn from others. For instance, a Bengali child given a fairly careful literary education could grow up in the 1950s without hearing a reference to *Godān,* the great Hindi novel by Premchand; however, Bangla versions of even minor European novels of adventure or romance were quite plentiful. A children's writer, Nripendra Krishna Chattopadhyay, almost single-handedly presented the entire canon of European classics to the young Bengali reader. An average middle-class child in a small town could easily grow up with his imaginative world populated on the one side by characters from Sanskrit story collections *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Ocean of stories) and *Vetālapañcaviṃśati* (Twenty-five tales of the undead), and on the other, *Ivanhoe* and *The Three Musketeers.* Children's editions of both kinds of texts were equally popular as gifts in school prize distribution ceremonies.

Until the 1950s, cultivation did not sever connection with the high classical past. Kālidāsa at least, and some common classical literary texts, were mandatory parts of a fastidious literary education. From the 1940s, due to radical influences, there were attempts to accord *literary* recognition to folk traditions, which had been treated with indifference if not contempt by the early creators of a high Bangla. This is reflected in an interest in the recovery and inventorization of Bāul songs and tales told by grandmothers.

It is interesting to consider what the divergent values embedded in this literary cosmopolitanism produced in terms of the Bengali "habits of the heart." In the 1950s, there was a wave of translations from Western literatures other than English. But these translations had a metaliterary purpose. They were meant not only for simple delectation but also to assist in reflec-

tion on the nature of literary modernity in the context of a debate about what was modern poetry and whether Tagore's poetry qualified. One of the most striking documents of this discussion was Buddhadev Basu's essay justifying his translation of Baudelaire as an example of what *modern* poetry, with its vision of a city of "steeples and chimneys," should be. Radical left-wing political influence regarded this strand as degenerate and balanced it with equally energetic translations of poetry from an astonishingly cosmopolitan spread of sources from Pablo Neruda to Nazim Hikmet (the latter was translated by Subhās Mukhopādhyāy, at the time a young and promising poet with the Communist Party). In the 1960s came a second wave of translations, which focused on European drama—Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard,* Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*— intended not for a reading public but for a very appreciative theater-going audience with highly eclectic taste. All these translations have since played to consistently full houses in Calcutta's theater district. What the Bengali inhabitant of a declining modern Calcutta has found so absorbing in these plays is an interesting question for the understanding of cultural translation.

Tagore and the Problem of the Modernity of Literature

Early-modern Bangla literary practice—the second "origin" of Bangla literary culture—raised a set of questions: What was the meaning of modernity in the literary field? Was it simply a temporal marker, indicating merely that this literature existed effortlessly in the "present"? Or did modernity have some substantive content: acceptance of a general cultural sensibility, a background understanding of the world taken from modern science, or some literary principle like individuality and rejection of convention? Since the work of the early-modern writers developed in the context of an implicit contest with colonialism and the prestige of English, they had to claim that Bangla possessed the dual distinctions of having a classical past and being able to produce a high literature in the present. In Vidyāsāgar's time it was easy to claim the first by reinventing a Bangla artificially proximate to Sanskrit; but the second task was obviously more difficult. There was a growing sense of a strange historical chasm between the pasts of Bangla literature and its present, an uncomfortable but inescapable feeling that those pasts were enabling factors for the growth of modern literature yet were aesthetically discontinuous from the modern literary enterprise. Quite often the solution was daring and ingenious: instead of finding modern subjects for aesthetic presentation, authors chose ancient narratives, but handled them in distinctly modern ways.[78] By the time Bankimchandra wrote his prose works to com-

78. This important question calls for careful and separate analysis. But the main point can be illustrated by Madhusudan's choice of themes: the stories about Meghnād, Tilottamā, and

plement the considerable riches of Madhusudan's poetry (mid-nineteenth century), modern Bangla could claim a distinctive and distinguished body of new literature.[79] It was the works of these two writers in particular that became the "classical" texts of modern literature, occupying the strangely dual status of "modern classics." The more modern literature evolved, reaching a mature stage in the later works of Rabindranath Tagore (in the first part of the twentieth century), the more its difference from traditional literature became transparent.

The entire line of Bangla literature from Bankim to Tagore was modern in some ways, but its central aesthetic ideals and principles remained "classical." The ideas and techniques that animated that literature were similar to the principles underlying Shakespearean drama, nineteenth-century English romantic poetry, or the Victorian novel. From the 1940s onward, however, a new intellectual anxiety forced more reflection on what constituted modernity in literature. Exposure to contemporary European art led to the birth of a new, more complex form of modernism. It became evident by this time that the principle of "modernity" was curious; it represented not a single set of literary criteria but rather the principles of motion, displacement, and openness toward transformation and experimentation in literary values. However modern a form of literature was, it was not immune from challenge by forms that spoke in the name of modernity against any existing body of texts. Many "modern" writers and critics found this aspect of literary modernity deeply unsettling. Modernity turned into a problem because of the rapidity with which both poetic and prose conventions were threatened with what some considered undeserved obsolescence.

By this time, one peculiarity of the literary modern must have been clear to its more perceptive practitioners. In traditional literature, temporality had a clearly different form. In ancient and medieval literature in Sanskrit the making of new classics at a later period did not cancel out, transcend, or more significantly, "make impossible" writing in an earlier style. Jayadeva in the twelfth century and Vidyāpati in the fifteenth did not make their predecessor Kālidāsa obsolete; in fact, Kālidāsa's style was a canonical option for later poets. Classic texts, once they were admitted to this exalted status, shared a common immortality. Clearly, this kind of temporalization was not

---

Śarmiṣṭhā; and Tagore's reworkings of classical moral dilemmas in his long narrative poems in *Kathā O Kāhinī* (1900), discussed later in this chapter.

79. Interestingly, Haraprasād Śāstrī made the astonishingly chauvinistic claim that the historical situation of modern Bangla was unparalleled in the world. He believed that modern Bangla writers' access to the traditions of both Western and Indian antiquity as well as the great variety of modern European literature would spawn a literature of unequaled glory. In other words, literary writers for the first time had before them the dual ideals of Kālidāsa and Shakespeare.

happening to modern Bangla. The classicism of Bankim and Madhusudan was highly individual, in that other authors could not follow them without appearing unoriginal, and their works became stylistically or aesthetically obsolete relatively quickly. Although Madhusudan's poetry and Bankim's fiction and satires had already achieved the status of "classics," they lacked some of the attributes possessed by acknowledged classics in traditional literature.

True, modern Bangla literature slowly developed a canon of "great texts," but these texts and their concerns and styles soon became unrepeatable. Classics failed to become conventionalized as literary practice—as parts of a repertoire of acknowledged styles in which literary writing could be carried on for the indefinite future. Even Bankimchandra's admiring contemporaries apparently found it impossible to write like him; so it is not surprising that his concerns with Indian, Hindu, and Bengali history, his powerful Sanskritic language with its great internal differentiation, the manner in which his characters conducted themselves, the dramatic structure of his novels, the sketchiness of the world depicted inside his stories were all inimitable to Tagore's generation. This was so not merely because of the power of his imagination and its peculiar individuality, but also because of the subtle sliding away of his aesthetic world—a double obsolescence of both that world and its aesthetic forms.

Tagore's pervasive influence on modern Bangla literature was subtly present even in work that strove to break away from him. His younger contemporaries, including rebellious poets associated with the iconoclastic urges of the *Kallol* group (formed in 1924), could not deny that the language they used had been fashioned by him. Yet even Tagore was not immune to the accelerated obsolescence that haunted modern "classicism." Critical discussions about Bangla poetry gave compelling reasons why it was impossible to "write like Tagore" any longer, and by the 1940s, even Tagore was firmly, irrevocably in the past. In fact, the novel *Śeṣer Kavitā*—his brilliant attempt to find an answer to the insidious challenge of literary modernity, his refusal to belong to a literary past during his own lifetime—in a paradoxical fashion, tragically illustrated his failure. The craft of the novel shows his unparalleled skill with words, proving that he could write colloquial prose if he chose with a poetic fluidity far surpassing the young writers. He could portray youthful, "modern" characters whose romantic sensibility was quite different from the usual figures in his own mature writing. Yet *Śeṣer Kavitā* was the best refutation of his own claim that he was, by the standards of the gritty and melancholy forties, a literary contemporary. It represented a magnificent failure to be modern by the current criteria. By contrast, a single line of Jībanānanda Dās's gloomy poem in which he quickly sketches the habituation of despair in the posture of an Anglo-Indian prostitute puffing smoke under a dim street light while waiting for some indefinite American soldier in Calcutta's twilight contains a deeper expression of the moods of postwar

urban despair and its awkward demand for an aesthetic that could make poetry out of degradation. This was beyond the moral possibilities of Tagore's aesthetic, despite his extraordinary technical virtuosity. What had been demanded was a change not in style but in the fundamental aesthetic itself.

After Tagore, this kind of historical obsolescence, as if by definition now part of the modern literary condition, was routinely acknowledged. Accomplishment in poetic or novelistic writing was noted for the individuality of style but was never expected to be conventionalized in the manner of traditional literature. There was an underlying critical sense that the movement of literature consisted in bringing each new literary aesthetic to its limits and then crossing them by making literature take account of subjects that had been impossible to talk about in a literary way before. The claim of novelty among the post-Tagore poetic generation was focused entirely on this problem.

Modernity presented writers with two different literary worlds, one drawn from Indian traditions, the other from the West. Authors improvised by using elements from both aesthetic alphabets and produced new forms that were irreducible to either. Numerous examples can be drawn from Tagore's poetic work to illustrate this and to show that what he eventually produced was not an imitation of Western forms, but a distinctively Indian/Bangla species of the literary modern. However, it would be wrongheaded to celebrate this as a case of aesthetic "hybridity," in line with current postmodern appropriations. In fact, poets like Tagore had a well-articulated conception of what hybridity was and believed that aesthetically hybrid forms were produced by a fundamental failure to reconcile contradictory traditions. This can be shown by reference to several aspects of Tagore's work. Under the pressure of modern intellectual influences, Tagore fashioned a language that could express the complex urges of modern subjectivity. In several poems, he reflects on the nature of the unity of his self—a question forced on him clearly by the pressure of a modern conception of the subject coming from Western literature—but he answers through a complex combination of themes and elements drawn from Indian literary-philosophical sources.[80]

80. Several of Tagore's poems are titled "Āmi" (I). One of these, in his *Pariśeṣ,* asks with exemplary precision:

I wonder today if I know this person
whose speaking makes me speak,
whose movement makes me move,
whose art is in my painting,
whose tunes ring out in my songs,
in this my heart of strange happiness and sorrows.
I thought he was tied to me.
I thought all my laughter and tears

The same virtuosity is shown in Tagore's handling of the past. In a group of poems written in his middle period and gathered into a book called *Kathā o Kāhinī* he takes up poignant occasions or scenes from ancient Indian literature, like the conversation between Karṇa and Kuntī, the mother Karṇa never knew, on the night before the battle of Kurukṣetra; the appeal by Gāndhārī to her husband Dhṛtarāṣṭra against her son Duryodhana; and an astonishingly intense inquiry into the nature of moral responsibility for one's acts through an encounter in hell between King Somaka and the priest who had advised him to sacrifice his small child in a *putreṣṭiyajña* (sacrifice for obtaining a son).[81] A third example is Tagore's artistic reflection on suffering and evil in the world, which required both Western ideas of the tragic and Hindu/Buddhist conceptions of *duḥkha* as theoretical preconditions, though they were not direct sources of his thinking.

A mark of modernity is the increasing reflexivity of its literature. Artists and writers think more self-consciously about what they are doing; interpretation of form enters into writing itself. It became clear as time passed that Tagore represented a form of the modern in sharp contrast to everything that had gone before. Yet there was simultaneously a gathering sense of dissatisfaction precisely with Tagore's literary immensity, and an attempt, faltering at first but increasingly more assertive, to find ways of going beyond him.

Two tendencies, discernible from the 1940s, attempted to escape Tagore's limits—which were also the limits of Bangla literature—and to start questioning the nature of modern aesthetics.[82] The first was reflected in the style of poetry associated with the journal *Kallol,* which began to carry the works of some of the best post-Tagore writers; the second was linked to the political radicalism of the Communist cultural movement. At the time, these two strands treated each other with the ruthlessness reserved for the ideological enemy, in a grotesque local reenactment of the Cold War. Yet, in historical retrospect, there was a strange complementarity in their distinct efforts to take literature beyond Tagore's overwhelming but limiting presence. Aesthetic critics of Tagore experimented with formal properties of poetry that went beyond his art, absorbing the most diverse cosmopolitan influences—

---

had drawn a circle around him and bound him to all my work and play.

I though that he was my own:

it would flow down my life to end at the point of my death. (1964: 172–73)

There can hardly be a more precise elaboration of the nature of individual subjectivity than this.

81. The relevant poems are "Karṇakuntīsaṃvād," "Gāndhārīr Ābedan," and "Narakbās"; all figure in *Sañcayitā* (Tagore 1972)

82. Some of the most intellectually searching discussions on why Tagore was indispensable and at the same time had to be gone beyond can be found in Buddhadev Basu's essays (Basu 1966).

Buddhadev Basu looking at Baudelaire, for instance, or Jībanānanda Dās using surrealist imagery. An example of the latter is Das's famous line, *harinerā khelā kare tārā ār hīrār āloke*—"Deer play in the light of stars and diamonds"; even a prosaic translation shows how utterly different this is from any contemporary poetic idiom in Bangla writing. Radical writers sought a literature that transcended Tagore by crossing social boundaries, by making the poor, the marginal, and the disheartened legitimate objects of literary enunciation.[83] But both trends critiqued Tagore on the same significant point: his art looked away from the everyday slovenliness, degradation, and the problem of evil in modern life, an evil that was mundane, banal, inescapable.

A major task emerging from this aesthetic and sociological criticism of the limitations of Tagore's immensity was the search for an aesthetic in the increasingly grimy city life of Calcutta. Tagore wrote two famous poems on Calcutta as a sign of modernity: "Nagarsaṅgīt" (Song of the city) in his relatively early phase, and "Bānśi" (The flute), his late attempt at capturing poetically the everyday bleakness in the life of the average clerk. But in both his face is averted; he despairs of Calcutta being in any possible sense an aesthetic object. Therefore, among post-Tagore writers, finding an aesthetic of the indigent, restricted life of the urban lower-middle class became the center of artistic contention.

Some of the most interesting arguments about modernity and its aesthetic expression turned on the reading of Baudelaire's poetry, which had been translated into Bangla, with a defiant and insightful introduction, by Buddhadev Basu.[84] This brought into Bangla literary debates one of the central

83. In "Aikatān" (Orchestra), one of his most historically perceptive late poems, Tagore sought to give a preemptive answer to these arguments. He listed what his poetry had failed to cover and, with great regretful honesty, said that he had at times stood outside the courtyard of the next neighborhood but had entirely *(ekebāre)* lacked the strength to step inside *(mājhe mājhe gechi āmi o-pāḍār prāṅganer dhāre / bhitare prabeś kari se śakti chila nā ekebāre)*. But he warned against what he saw as "a fashionable working-class-ness": "to steal literary fame without paying the price of real experience" *(satya mūlya nā diyei sāhityer khyāti karā curi / bhālo nay, bhālo nay, nakal se śaukhin majduri)*. He also presciently invoked the poet of a lower order of human experience, which had escaped him:

> *eso kabi akhyāta janer nirbāk maner*
> *marmer bedanā yata kariyo uddhār*
> *gānhīn e-deśete prāṇhīn yethā cāridhār*
> *abajmār tāpe śuṣka nirānanda ei marubhūmi*
> *rase purṇa kari dāo tumi.*

> Come, O poet who would recover the deep pain in the speechless minds of unfamed men, this songless land where it is lifeless all around, this joyless desert dried by the heat of neglect/ignominy, fill it with enjoyment. ("Aikatān, Janmadine," Tagore 1972, 823–24)

84. Basu 1961.

questions of literary modernity: Can evil be at the center of an entire aesthetic? A seriously reflective rejoinder to this argument—which preferred Baudelaire's engagement with evil over Tagore's detachment—was offered in Ābu Sayid Āyub's essay *Ādhunikatā o Rabīndranāth* (Modernity and Rabindranath). Āyub deplored the tendency of modern literature to center its artistic reflection on the problem of evil. Āyub translated the concept "evil," with an instructive awkwardness, as *amaṅgalbodh,*[85] but this was entirely appropriate: Tagore in his "Song of the City" called the earth outside of the city *sundar* (beautiful) and *śubha* (auspicious), indicating the fundamental internal relation between these two concepts in his aesthetic. The poem almost implies that the city is external to what the earth normally is. Āyub restated this philosophy of art, claiming that two features of modern literature are especially significant: first, "the intense attention to the literary form" (*kāvyadeha;* lit. the external or formal "body" of literary art) and second, "the excessive consciousness about the presence of evil in the world."[86] Āyub conceded that Baudelaire was a poet not in a mere formalistic sense but in a "vedic" (i.e., philosophic) sense: he was *satyadraṣṭā,* a seer of truth. "Particularly, when those gifted with subtle and sympathetic understanding observe the helplessness of the human condition, their imaginative minds come under the shadow of limitless despair and sadness. Baudelaire has given form to this shadow in his poetry. . . . All this is acceptable. Still I would like to state that Baudelaire is an incomparable poet of a certain mood, a certain *rasa,* not more." "My greatest complaint against Baudelaire is that he is a talented poet, but he has used his amazing genius to bring himself and all of us to perdition."[87] Āyub then went on to prove that Tagore's poetic world does not show a naive denial of evil, but places its unquestionable presence in the more complex pattern of an ultimately metaphysical optimism.

Despite the intricacy and subtlety of this debate between critics and defenders of Tagore, and Āyub's attempt to argue the continued relevance of Tagore's aesthetic, the subsequent evolution of Bangla poetry shows that historically the verdict went against Āyub. Bangla literature eventually found an answer to the problem of evil in another way. In certain respects this solution is reminiscent of Baudelaire himself, because it too is a poetry of a soiled, degraded world, a poetry in which chimneys and drains outnumber steeples, or temple spires. But it is also quite different. The Calcutta of post-

85. If rendered with pedantic accuracy, *amaṅgalbodh* could mean a sense *(bodh)* of the inauspicious, which raises an interesting problem of *Begriffsgeschichte* in literature. The duality of good and evil could be rendered in more colloquial Bangla as *bhālo* and *manda;* but when authors sought a more philosophical term, they tended to opt for the more religiously laden distinction of *maṅgal* and *amaṅgal.*

86. Āyub 1968: 9–10.

87. Āyub 1968: 8, 12.

Tagore poetry is not just a faint copy of Baudelaire's Paris; its evils and provocations are not derived but authentic—like the poets' voices that eventually speak about it. In Baudelaire there is still a vestigial classicism in the heroism of the poet's loneliness. He faces an evil that is grand and metaphysical without assistance from anyone, least of all from the women who poison him and help him forget. Baudelaire's poetry offers a subtle monumentalization of evil, which Jībanānanda's poetry utterly lacks. Even this consolation—the grandeur of the evil that is the poet's eternal enemy—is denied to the tired, lower-middle-class worker of Calcutta, who, unlike the upper-middle class professional, does not come home at "the violet hour." His life has no violet hour. His life faces an evil that comes in small, unavoidable pieces—indefinable insults and disappointments that become routine, the attrition of everyday life. To paraphrase a famous line, life ebbs like water dripping from a dirty, leaking tap. It is the repetitiveness and unremarkableness of this destiny that makes it so difficult to turn into poetry: but this precisely constituted the aesthetic challenge that Bangla literature after Tagore tried to address. A wonderful poetic statement of this melancholy is the title of Sunil Gangopadhyay's recent title poem: "The Beautiful Is Depressed, and the Sweet Is Feeling Feverish" *(sundarer mankhārāp mādhuryer jvar).*

Practical Contexts of Literary Practice

My discussion of literary traditions would not be complete without some analysis of the social contexts of literary practice: journals, societies, coffeehouses and tea shops, and the ubiquitous *āḍḍā*s—places characterized by an inextricable mix of unemployment, literary ambition, subtle taste, and loafing.[88] Though this topic warrants a whole discussion by itself, some points can be made briefly.

At its earliest stage, the new literature relied on two types of support. First, many writers came from the upper crust of the colonial elite and had the means to publish their own work. Their efforts were assisted by a kind of social collegiality of class, and since the elite collectively longed for a high Bangla literature, they felt it was their social responsibility to support this literature by becoming its audience. Financial support for commercially unviable literary enterprises came through donations, subscriptions, and at later periods, through influential supporters securing highly profitable advertisements. Eventually, as Bangla literature developed in variety and confidence, a market for it grew. But it is significant that as late as Tagore's mature period

---

88. On the significance of *āḍḍā* for Bangla literature, with some persuasive and a few startlingly excessive claims, see Datta [1985]. A more general, and perceptive, analysis is offered by Chakrabarty 1999.

literature was not profitable. Even Tagore's literary earnings—phenomenal compared to other contemporaries—were too meager to support a substantial institution.

It appeared for some time that the imitativeness of modern Bangla literature would lead to the emergence of literary institutions along British or European lines, in the form of *sāhitya sabhā*s (literary societies) and the formalization of university and school syllabi. But the law of early and rapid decay in Bengal's travestic modernity ensured that such institutions rapidly declined. Even august bodies meant to represent the interests of Bangla literature or native learning, like the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad (Bengal Literary Society) or the Asiatic Society, appear to have gone into terminal decline from the 1960s. Only the *āḍḍā*s and the inclination of young intellectuals to publish small magazines have survived; individual projects have tended to sink quickly, but the authors have consistently regrouped into new journals and genres.

Two other developments that have affected the literary scene since the 1950s are the coming of the modern newspaper market and, subsequently, of the film narrative. With the rise of popular journals with large circulation, like the legendary weekly literary magazine *Deś*, popular novelists started writing serialized novels and stories especially for the annual *pūjā saṃkhyā* (the autumn festival number). This affected the structure of the stories: formless length was more readily tolerated, and the stories could be cut up into small episodes like television serials. The criteria for judging these stories, which were often bestsellers, were also utterly different from those applied to the self-consciously artistic prose compositions of earlier times. The effect of film aesthetics on literature is an important potential area for analysis, since the transaction of influences is reciprocal. Just as films depend heavily on the narrative resources of literature, so literature is affected by the presence of film. As literary culture turns into an interactive element in a very different cultural economy it enters into yet a new phase. It appears that since the 1960s, Bangla literary culture has been in a serious process of restructuring, of which only the broad terms can be specified. First, the linguistic economy that emerged through the nationalist movement with its political diglossia has been seriously modified by the structural developments after Independence. People at high levels under both national capitalism and state socialism prefer to speak in English, and through the increasing power of the state and the market, English has found a much wider domain of use compared to the linguistic economy of the 1960s. A new middle-class elite has developed that uses English as its only serious language, and the literary production of this social group has tended to be in English. The relation between vernacular literatures and this new domain of literary English is being gradually negotiated, displacing in some significant ways the earlier

relation between nationalism and vernacular writing. It affects the claims of vernacular cosmopolitanism particularly seriously. Cultural changes have also restructured the audiences for the various vernacular literatures.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anisuzzaman. 1971. *Muslim Mānas o Bāṃlā Sāhitya*. Calcutta: Muktadhara.

Ayub, Abu Sayid. 1968. *Ādhunikatā o Rabīndranāth*. Calcutta: Dey's Publishing.

Bandyopadhyay, Shibaji. 1986. *Bāṃlā Sāhitye Orā*. Calcutta: Papyrus.

Basu, Buddhadev. 1961. *Baudelaire o Tānr Kabitā*. Calcutta: Navana.

———. 1966. *Kabi Rabīndranāth*. Calcutta: Bharavi.

Bayly, C. A. 1988. *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bhāratcandra. 1950a. "Annadāmaṅgal." In *Bhāratcandra Granthāvalī,* edited by Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das. Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad.

———. 1950b. "Mānsiṃha-Bhabānanda Upākhyān." In *Bhāratcandra Granthāvalī,* edited by Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das. Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad.

———. 1950c. "Vidyāsundar." In *Bhāratcandra Granthāvali,* edited by Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das. Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad.

Bhattacharyya, Tithi. 2000. *Rethinking the Political Economy of the Intelligentsia, Bengal 1848–1885*. Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 1999. "*Āddā,* Calcutta: Dwelling in Modernity." In *Alternative Modernities,* edited by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, special issue of *Public Culture* 11 (1): 109–45.

———. 2000. *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chakravartī, Mukundarām [Kavikaṅkan]. 1977. *Caṇḍīmaṅgal*. Edited by Ksudirām Dās. Calcutta: B. Chanda.

Chatterji, Suniti Kumar. 1970–1972. *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*. 3 vols. London: Allen & Unwin.

Das, Sisir Kumar. 1984. *Gadya o Padyer Dvandva*. Calcutta: Dey's Publishing House, Calcutta.

Dasgupta, Sasibhusan. 1966. *Bhārater Śakti-Sādhanā o Śākta-Sāhitya*. Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad.

Datta, Hirendranath. [1985]. *Sāhityer Āḍḍā*. Calcutta: Sahityam.

Deś. 2000. *Sahasrāyaṇ saṃkhyā* (special millennium issue).

Dimock, Edward C., ed. and trans. 1963. *The Thief of Love: Bengali Tales from Court and Village*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gadamer, Hans Georg. 1981. *Truth and Method*. London: Sheed and Ward.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. 1991. "The Imaginary Institution of India." In *Subaltern Studies 7: Writings on South Asian History and Society,* edited by Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1995a. "A Reversal of Orientalism." In *Representing Hinduism,* edited by H. von Stietencron and V. Dalmia. New Delhi: Sage.

———. 1995b. *The Unhappy Consciousness*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Koselleck, Reinhart. 1981. *Futures Past.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. 1986. *Caitanyacaritāmṛta.* Edited by Sukumar Sen and Tarapada Mukherjee. Calcutta: Ananda Publishers.

Kulke, Hermann, ed. 1995. *The State in India 1000–1700.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kvaerne, Per. 1977. *An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs: A Study of the Caryāgīti.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Majumdar, Dakṣiṇārañjan Mitra. [1908] 1981. *Thākurmār Jhuli.* Calcutta: Mitra o Ghosh.

Mammaṭa. 1980. *Kāvyaprakāśa.* Edited by Sivarāja Kauṇḍinnyayanah. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Miller, Barbara Stoler, ed. and trans. 1977. *Love Songs of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gītagovinda.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Mitra, Premendra. 2000. *Ghanadār Galpa.* In *Ghanādāsamagra.* Calcutta: Ananda Publishers.

Mohanty, Nivedita. 1986. *Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Orissa 1866–1936.* Delhi: Manohar.

Mukhopādhyāy, Bhūdev. 1957. *Bhūdev Racanāsambhār.* Edited by Pramathanath Bisi. Calcutta: Amar Sahitya Prakasan.

———. [1892] 1981. *Sāmājik Prabandha.* Calcutta: Paschim Banga Pustak Parshad.

Murśed, Ghulām. 1992. *Kālāntare Bāṃla Gadya.* Calcutta: Ananda Publishers.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1989. "Mīmāṃsā and the Problem of History in Traditional India." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109 (4): 603–10.

———. 1998. "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular." *Journal of Asian Studies* 57 (1): 6–37.

———. 2001. "The Death of Sanskrit." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43 (2): 392–426.

Prakash, Gyan. 1999. *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ray, Durga Charan. [1886] 1984. *Devganer Martye Āgaman.* Calcutta: Desh.

Rūpa Gosvāmī. 1965. *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi.* Edited and translated by Haridas Das. Navadvip: Haribol Kutir.

Śāstri, Haraprasād. 1956. *Haraprasād Racanāvali.* 2 vols. Edited by Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay. Calcutta: Eastern Trading Company.

Seely, Clinton. 1990. *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das (1899–1954).* Newark: University of Delaware Press.

Sen, Dineś Candra. 1950. *Baṅgabhāṣā o Sāhitya.* Calcutta: Dasgupta and Co.

Sen, Prabodh Candra. 1974. *Chanda-Jijñāsā.* Calcutta: Jijnasa.

Sen, Sukumār. 1965. *Bāṃlār Sāhitya Itihās.* Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

———. ed. 1971. *Vaiṣṇava Padāvalī.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademy.

Sen, Surendra Nāth. 1961. *Prācīn Bāṃlā Patra.* Calcutta: Calcutta University.

Skinner, Quentin. [1969] 1988. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." In *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics,* edited by James Tully. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, ed. 1990. *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———, ed. 1994. *Money and the Market in India, 1100–1700.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Tagore, Rabindranath. [1900] 1938/39. *Kathā o Kāhinī.* Calcutta: Visvabharati-Granthalaya.

———. 1964. "Pariśeṣ." In *Rabīndra Racanāvalī,* vol. 15. Calcutta: Visvabharati.

———. 1968. *Bhāratvarṣer Itihās.* Calcutta: Visvabharati.

———. 1972. *Sañcayitā.* Calcutta: Visvabharati.

———. 1996. *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore.* Edited and translated by Andrew Robinson and Krishna Dutta. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tarlo, Emma. 1994. *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India.* London: C. Hurst.

Taylor, Charles. 1989. *The Sources of the Self.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Vṛndāvandās. 1932. *Caitanyabhāgavata.* Calcutta: Sri Gaudiya Math.

Washbrook, David. 1988. "Progress and Problems: South Asian Economic and Social History c. 1720–1860." *Modern Asian Studies* 22: 57–96.

From Hemacandra to *Hind Svarāj*

Region and Power in Gujarati Literary Culture

Sitamshu Yashaschandra

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

In the twelfth century in Gurjaradeśa, "the place of the Gurjars," as the area was increasingly called, Ācārya Hemacandra (1106–1173), a Jain monk endowed with great erudition and held in high esteem in the court of the Chaulukya (or Solaṅki) dynasty, wrote a treatise on poetics, the *Kāvyānuśāsana* (The doctrine of literature), in which he observed that literature is written in Sanskrit, Prakrit, or Apabhramsha. Hemacandra was following a convention as old as the beginnings of Indian literary culture, which held that literature should only be composed in these transregional languages.[1] Eight centuries later, in 1960, the State of Gujarat was founded by an act of the Parliament of India. Although this act of law was instrumental, the real power base of this new formation was linguistic, not political: the provinces of India had been demarcated on a linguistic basis between 1956 and 1960. In 1942 Mahatma Gandhi had written in his weekly newspaper, *Harijan:* "I believe that the linguistic basis is the correct basis for demarcating provinces." He added: "I do believe that there should be such [provincial] universities if . . . rich provincial languages and the people who speak them are to attain their full height. . . . The first step should be linguistic political redistribution of provinces."[2] He had himself founded such a university, Gujarat Vidyā-pīṭh, in Ahmedabad in November of 1920.

In the span of eight centuries—from *Kāvyānuśāsana* to Gujarat Vidyāpīṭh,

---

1. On the three literary languages, see Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

2. *Harijan,* April 19, 1947; cf. November 2, 1947. (The English-and-Hindi periodical *Harijan* was published weekly by Harijan Sevak Sangh, Pune, from 1933 to 1940. From 1942 it was published by Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad. From 1946 it was edited by Kishorlal Masharuvala. It ran until 1956.) See also Prabhu and Rao 1967: 385.

from Gurjaradeśa to the State of Gujarat, from the state-supported Hema-candra to the state-punished Gandhi—the position of the regional language, Gujarati, within the region's culture had undergone a radical transformation. From the margins of significance (or perhaps even beyond those margins) it had moved to the center of that culture and was thought capable of establishing a political boundary to the State of Gujarat and imparting a basic identity to the people who live there. This essay aims to study this shift in the position of Gujarati between the twelfth and the twentieth centuries and to throw some light on the complex sociocultural network woven by Gujarati and that network's capacity to produce a new meaning for India as a trans-regional entity.

The shift of the regional language to the center of the power-generating and meaning-producing network of a regional culture is related to two ways of conceiving of the boundaries of a region. One way is in terms of a dominant political power—whether an old, internal power, like that of the Chaulukya dynasty of Gujarat, or a new, external power, like that of the Khaljī dynasty of Delhi, which conquered Gujarat in the early fourteenth century and redrew its map. Alternatively, the boundaries of the region could be drawn on entirely different principles, not political but derived from some other source of social or cultural power, that would also ground the region's self-identity and language, but according to other, less familiar, principles. We understand reasonably well the first—the political—type of boundary; but we need to take special care to document and grasp the forces that might have helped in drawing the second type of boundary in the region called Gujarat and the possible forms of self-identity that would come to be associated with it.

The names of the regional languages of India are apparently linked closely to their respective regions: Kashmiri and Kashmir, Bangla and Bengal, Sindhi and Sindh, and so on. This schema looks attractively clear at first sight, especially today, when each Indian state neatly possesses its own language and also its own literary academy. But it begins to show more and more cultural, geographical, and historical cracks the closer we look. The relationship among native forms of speech, premodern regional languages, and post-Independence regional languages is a complex one, and it raises a number of interesting questions. When we consider the more familiar case of India's new national language, Hindi, in relation to its so-called dialects such as Avadhi, Brajbhasha, and Maithili, we are confronted with the curious image of a thirty-year-old mother combing the hair of her sixty-year-old daughters; so, too, in the case of Rajasthani—a language codified and named by the British linguist George Grierson in the early part of the twentieth century—in relation to Mevadi, Mevati, Marvadi, and Jaypuri.

We may figure the principal questions according to four different relationships: (1) between the regional language and the forms of speech of the different communities within the regional society; (2) between the re-

gional language and the politically sponsored state language, if and when in the region's cultural history the two were not the same; (3) between the regionality of the region and its statehood; and, finally, (4) between the self-identity of a region and the region's understanding of what counts as literature and in which language it should be produced.

These questions apply to most of the regions and states of India, with some modification. In the case of Gujarat, they invite us to examine (1) how what we now think of as the Gujarati language has related to its so-called subregional dialects—ranging from Surati in the south to Kacchi (Cutchy) in the west—as well as to the speech forms of nomadic pastoral peoples such as the Bhīl or other kinds of communities (defined by religious, artisanal, or other criteria) such as the Pārsi, Bohra, Khoja, Kāthi, Cāraṇ, and Dūbaḷa; (2) how Gujarati as a literary language related to Sanskrit during the period of the region's political independence, to Persian and Urdu during the period of Mughal rule, and to English during the colonial period; (3) how, during the different phases of the region's political history—as Gurjaradeśa (ninth to thirteenth centuries), as the *suba* and sultanate of Gujarat (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries), and as the British province of Gujarat (eighteenth to early twentieth centuries)—the regionality of Gurjaradeśa manifested itself; and (4) how far and in what ways literary production in the Gujarati language contributed to such self-identity as a cultural-political entity.

This approach to literary culture clearly risks unsettling such basic notions and terms as the region of Gujarat, the Gujarati language, Gujarati literature, and literature as such—terms employed as entirely stable signifiers in every existing historical account of Gujarat and its literature. The risk, however, is just as clearly worth taking because it promises to help us investigate, for this region and perhaps elsewhere, the complex processes through which language becomes what is taken as literature and in the process produces different social identities.

An eager search to discover a primeval Gujarati identity has led to uncritical assumptions on the part of even some of the most distinguished cultural historians. Thus, for example, K. M. Munshi, a distinguished novelist, keen student of Indian cultural history, and important nationalist, believed that the basis of demarcation of the boundaries of Gurjaradeśa during the Chaulukya period was "one people speaking one language, as distinguished from the people of Mahārāṣṭra on the one hand and Madhyadeśa on the other."[3] It is difficult to find any historical evidence in support of this view, however useful it might have seemed to the author in the service of the sociopolitical needs of his day. Other scholars, reflecting on the major politicocultural upheavals of the late first millennium in both north and south In-

3. Munshi 1944: 2.

dia, point the way toward a more sober assessment of the origins of the regional identity of Gujarat. Hansmukhlal Sankalia recounts the history of these upheavals:

> The Gurjara-Pratihāra empire was destroyed in the north, as well as the Rāṣṭrakūṭa in the south, and several new powers sprang up. In Karnataka the Cālukyas came back, whereas in Northern Gujarat, Mūlarāja, a general probably of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, but one of the Cālukya [i.e., Solaṅki] family, uprooted the small Cāpa family which was ruling at Anhilwad, and started an independent career. . . . His descendants gradually extended the sway of the dynasty over Lāṭa, then over Kathiawad and Cutch, and finally over Malwa and further northwards in Rajputana.[4]

These few centuries around the turn of the millennium were, like the years from 1947 to 1960, a time of historic geopolitical reorganization in southern Asia. But there is a significant difference between these two forms of geopolitical change. The latter, the transformation of the British-Indian provinces in the years after Indian Independence, was made on the basis of the regional languages. The former, the reorganization of both the regionalities that succeeded the Gurjara-Pratīhāra empire in northern India and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in southern India, was based on political power derived mainly from military strength. The spoken language was still largely irrelevant, and the dominant literary language remained Sanskrit, which had long been written and read throughout the subcontinent.

Historical works such as those by Sankalia and others record the changes in the region's political boundaries brought about by the shifting fortunes of successive dynasties.[5] From this point of view the regionality of Gujarat is often seen in terms of dynasty. This approach to cultural geography and cultural history defines regionality in a way that renders the culture of the people, their forms of speech, and their oral texts virtually silent. Further, the details and the meaning of the rise of the regional language and its written texts escape such a narrative. To tell the story of a region by the history of its successive dynasties is typically to ignore the people of the region themselves, who survive the dynasties and who generate within themselves the power to fashion various sorts of geocultural identities. Against this kind of account, which dominates the scholarly literature, I offer here a counternarrative, one attuned to the nuances of societies and texts, and capable of capturing the interactive relations between a society and the oral and written texts produced in the speech forms and the language of its people.

---

4. Sankalia 1949: 13.

5. Most of the works on the cultural history of Gujarat, like those of K. M. Munshi (1935), H. Sankalia (1949), M. Majumdar (1965), and M. M. Jhaveri (1978), perceive regionality in geographical-chronological terms.

In sixteenth-century Gujarat such a narrative, oriented toward social formations and texts, was constructed, albeit indirectly, by a Jain monk. Though his real name has not been recorded, he was given the sobriquet Samayasundar (the name likely refers to his brilliance in doctrinal knowledge) when he was ordained as a renunciate. In a poem, "Sītārāmcopāi" (Quatrains on Sītā and Rām), which he composed between 1621 and 1624, he records the name of his native town as Sācor.[6] He was born in a family of simple shopkeepers of the Porvad Bania caste; his parents, Līlādevī and Rūpasiṃh, are mentioned in one of his poems. But beyond this we know nothing of his family. For these simple people we have no monument, inscription, or panegyric in their honor. In his early youth, the boy was ordained into a well-known order of the Jain tradition, the Kharatara *gaccha* (monastic lineage), by Jinacandrasūri, himself a well-known monk, and was assigned to Jinacandra's disciple Sakalacandra to be trained according to the traditions of that order. He studied Jain scriptures under Sakalacandra's guidance, but he also studied poetics and literature in the pan-Indian literary languages—Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha—under two scholarly monks, Mahimarāja and Samayarāja. In 1585, Samayasundar was thought to have received sufficient training in Jain religious studies as well as in Sanskrit literature and poetics to be permitted to write his first book, the *Bhāvaśataka* (One hundred intended meanings), in Sanskrit. *Bhāvaśataka* was a commentary on certain aspects of the *Kāvyaprakāśa* (Light on literature), the well-known treatise on Sanskrit poetics and prosody by Mammaṭa, a Kashmirian of the mid-eleventh century.[7] Samayasundar went on to win renown as a scholar and to compose about fifty books in Sanskrit. When Jinacandrasūri was invited to the Mughal court by Emperor Akbar in 1592, Samayasundar was asked to accompany him to Lahore, where he ably defended the philosophical relativism *(anekāntavāda)* of Jainism and was honored by the emperor.[8]

But there was more to Samayasundar than this. He composed in the regional language of Gujarati also, writing over thirty such works. These were poems in the different genres and meters prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mostly *rāso* and *copāi* (or *caupai,* a quatrain), employing meters never used in Sanskrit poetry nor even listed in Sanskrit prosodical compendia.[9] The themes of his Gujarati poems are noteworthy. In 1631, there was a severe famine in Gujarat, and people suffered terribly. Samaya-

6. Shah 1979a: 6.

7. The commentary is unpublished but is cited in Shah 1979b: 169. The name is odd for a commentary; an alternative was apparently *Bhāvaprakāśa.*

8. Kothārī and Gadit 1989–, 1: 448–49.

9. The *rāso* is a long narrative poem, historical or devotional. The term was often used interchangeably with *prabandha* by medieval Gujarati poets. *Rāso* is to be distinguished from *rās,* which is a short lyrical poem set to song and dance.

sundar wrote a *chatrīsī,* a poem of thirty-six stanzas, on their hardships. In a memorable verse, he addresses Famine Time, personified as the victimizer, saying:

> Samayasundar dares tell you to your face, O [Year of] Eighty-Seven!
> You have denounced and destroyed me—but the sin is yours.[10]

As a Jain monk, Samayasundar traveled on foot from place to place to preach to and guide people who belonged to his religious tradition. Like all Jain monks he never halted at a place for more than a day, except during the four months of rains, when traveling at such a pace was not possible. This practice, which Jain monks follow to this day, is called *vihāra,* literally "a stroll" but in practice an arduous journey that begins at dawn or even earlier and is entirely on foot—no vehicle is ever used. Samayasundar walked—often alone—for hours on end every day, for years that turned into decades. He would compose a long narrative poem or a short lyrical one, a philosophical treatise or a commentary on poetics, when he stopped at a town for his four-month sojourn *(caturmāsa)* every year.

When Samayasundar composed a piece, he would mention at its end the year and the place where the work was completed. Such colophons yield the following itinerary of the poet's *vihāra* in the region: Khambhāṭ (in today's Gujarat, 1587 [v.s. 1644]); Śatruñjaya-Pālitāṇā (Gujarat, 1588); Lahore (Panjab, in today's Pakistan, 1590 and 1592–1593); Khambhāṭ (Cambay, Gujarat, 1595–1596); Ilādurg (Gujarat, 1597); Jaisalmer (in today's Rajasthan, 1600); Ābu (Rajasthan, 1601); Śatruñjaya-Ahmadābād (Gujarat, 1602); Bīkāner (Rajasthan,1603); Nāgor (Rajasthan,1608); Agra (in today's U.P., 1609); Marot (Sindh, 1611); Multān (in today's Sindh, Pakistan, 1612); Siddhapur (Gujarat, 1613); Bīkāner (Rajasthan, 1615); Meḍatā (Rajasthan, 1616–1617); Jālor (Rajasthan, 1619); Rāṇakpur (Rajasthan, 1620); Sācor (Rajasthan, 1621); Lodrāvpur (Rajasthan, 1625); Nāgor (Rajasthan, 1626); Jaisalmer (Rajasthan, 1627); Lūṇkaraṇasar (Rajasthan, 1628); Ahmadābād (Gujarat, 1631–1633); Khambhāṭ (Gujarat, 1634); Ahmadābād (Gujarat, 1637); Jālor (Rajasthan, 1638); Candreḍ-Pālaṇpur (Gujarat, 1639); and finally Ahmadābād (Gujarat, 1640–1648).[11]

The *vihāra* of Samayasundar marks a cultural boundary, different from that charted by the power boundaries of kingdoms, sultanates, and the Mughal empire. The region so mapped has a cohesion of its own—resulting from the spread of Jainism, to be sure, but also from a shared cultural sensibility. The works Samayasundar composed were not all sectarian; a good number were poems, which he must have performed before his followers and oth-

---

10. Shah 1979a: 83–86. Samayasundar named the famine after the year of the local Vikrama era, 1687.

11. Shah 1979a: 5–6.

ers in the different towns just listed and also at other, smaller places on his route. The shared sensibility, then, is a literary one—that of a literature in Gujarati. This was a literature for listeners as well as for readers. The poems use meters like *copāi* and *duhā* (or *dohā,* a couplet), which are usually recited or sung out. But as the manuscripts of Samayasundar's works preserved in different Jain library collections even today indicate, his poems must have also been read by those who cared to do so and who could pay for a manuscript copy. What emerges from this evidence is the presence of regional literary community, one located in a space not of power but of culture, marked by Samayasundar's own *vihāra* boundaries.

Samayasundar's texts and their manuscript histories tell us something important about language and readership, too. In his travels he covered a very wide area, even within Gujarat. Stretching from Pālaṇpur to Pāṭaṇ, Ahmadā-bād, and Khambhāṭ, this domain ranges from the extreme north of present-day Gujarat to the tip of central Gujarat, and from very close to Mount Ābu and the Rajasthan desert to the shore of the Arabian Sea. Even today, after the intense linguistic standardization of the twentieth century, the forms of local speech in north Gujarat remain strikingly different from those in central Gujarat. In Samayasundar's time the differences must have been even greater. Yet the language in all his Gujarati poems is uniform. His readers and listeners, judging from the distribution of his manuscripts, must have understood that language all along the route of the *vihāra.* In places like La-hore and Agra, where the Mughal emperor invited Samayasundar's teachers for a philosophic exchange, the poet must have presented his views in Sanskrit. But at other places, from Pāṭaṇ to Khambhāṭ, he used as the language of his poems a single form of Old Gujarati.

What does the composition of Samayasundar's readership tell us? By the early seventeenth century, literary Gujarati had been sufficiently distinguished from local speech forms, standardized and disseminated so as to be intelligible to a readership spread over a wide cultural region. It also suggests that it is incorrect to present Gujarati and other regional languages—the so-called *desī bhākhā*s—as local speeches in the narrow sense in contrast to the more global literary languages, especially Sanskrit. Even in a poem like the *chatrīsī* on the famine of *saṃvat* 1687, which may especially attract theorists of nativism *(desīvād)* today, the language, though not Sanskrit, is not a *bhākhā* specific to a single local place. The language of that *chatrīsī* poem is a standardized, literary Gujarati, clearly intelligible to readers across the monk-poet's vast *vihāra* region.

It was this regional language, which was nonlocal—even transregional in its own way—to which Mohandas Gandhi would turn in the colonial period for a counterpower to challenge the boundaries of the British-Indian provinces that had been artificially imposed upon the cultural geography of India. He was able to perceive the vital difference between the regional lan-

guages of India like Gujarati, which were languages of both literature and translocal nonliterary exchanges, and the subregional, localized, and immobile forms of speech—however much capacity the latter had for the expression of literature, both lyrical as well as longer narrative genres. In a statement that resonates with long-term precolonial realities, Gandhi asserted that "The bane of our life is our exclusive provincialism, whereas my province must be co-extensive with the Indian boundary so that ultimately it extends to the boundary of the earth. Else it perishes."[12] Samayasundar did not invent a new literature in Gujarati; this was something that had come into being some three centuries earlier. But it had done so through a careful negotiation between the provincial language, in Gandhi's sense, and the boundary of some larger space—if not Gandhi's India, perhaps something equally large.

FROM TRANSREGIONAL TO REGIONAL LITERARY CULTURE

The earliest available literary text in the Gujarati language dates to the twelfth century. It is a *rāso,* a long narrative poem, on the battle between Bharateśvara and Bāhubali, sons of King Ṛṣabhadeva, who upon renouncing his kingdom attained omniscience *(kevalajñāna)* and became a *tīrthaṅkara,* a founder of the Jain religion. The poem is called *Bharateśvarabāhubalighor,* the last word suggesting a fierce *(ghora)* battle. It was composed by Vajrasensūri, a Jain monk, not later than 1170, according to internal textual evidence. Vajrasen probably belonged to the order of Jain monks called Tapa *gaccha.*[13] The second earliest available text is also a *rāso* on the same theme and also by a Jain monk, Śālibhadrasūri, a disciple of a Vajrasensūri (probably not the same as the author of the *Ghor).* It is called *Bharateśvarabāhubalirāso,* which, as the poet has noted in the text, was composed in 1185. Śālibhadra belonged to the Rāja *gaccha.*

Because these two texts are on the same theme, belong to the same genre, and have as their author contemporary Jain monks living in the same region, and since both seem to pioneer a new practice of writing literature in a hitherto unused, nonglobal, nonliterary regional speech, it is very likely that the author of the later text had known the earlier text and had decided to elaborate on it. It is interesting, in any case, to see how the two texts compare. The comparison may enable us to discern some elements of the freshly emerging literary culture of the Gujarati language of the time (termed Old

12. *Young India,* September 21, 1947, p. 333. (From May 7, 1919, this English language periodical was published under Mahatma Gandhi's supervision twice a week from Bombay; from October 18, 1919, Gandhi edited it as a weekly from Ahmedabad. It ran until 1932.) See also Prabhu and Rao 1967: 386.

13. Kothāri and Gadit 1989–, 1: 391.

Gujarati, Maru-Gurjar, or Old Western Rajasthani, according to the different fashions of modern scholarship).

Vajrasen's text is a narrative in forty-eight stanzas. In the first segment each of the ten stanzas is composed of three lines, the first two in *copāi* meter and the third in *duhā* meter. Its style is uniform, simple, and easy to set to song. Śālibhadra's version is a longer narrative of 203 stanzas in which each stanza has two lines. *Copāi* and *duhā* meters are used, but also *vastu, caraṇakul,* and *roḷa* meters. Its style, through a weave of these various metrical forms, is varied, less simple than the *Ghor,* and, especially in its narration of the battle between the two princes, suitable not only for singing but also for recitation in what is called the *ḍiṅgaḷ* style.

Ḍiṅgaḷ, a term of central importance to Rajasthani literature of a later period and to the bardic tradition of the Saurashtra region (the *cāraṇisāhitya*), is sometimes called a language. It is, more precisely, a style or a "special manner of recitation" used in historical, martial narratives and aimed at producing valorous sentiment in the listener.[14] It uses meters—*vastu* being one of them—distinct from the meters specific to the other great tradition of prosody, *piṅgaḷ,* which includes verse-forms like the *copāi* and the *duhā.*[15] *Ḍiṅgaḷ* links Rajasthan with Gujarat, whereas *piṅgaḷ* emphasizes Gujarat's links with the Vraja (or Brija) tradition, located in regions to the east of both Rajasthan and Gujarat.

What do the constitutive features of these two texts tell us about the larger context and details of the newly emerging regional literature? *Rāso,* the genre of both poems, was a popular form with the poets of Apabhramsha literature and was not unknown to poets of Prakrit. In the *Kuvalayamālā,* composed in Prakrit by Uddyotanasūri in 779 C.E. at Jālor in the old Gurjaradeśa, the author uses the terms *rāsa* and *rāsaya* to signify a type of dance accompanied by song. In the *Saṃdeśarāsaka,* composed in Apabhramsha by Abdala Rahamāna in the late thirteenth century, the author self-consciously uses the term *rāsaka* as a generic term in the very title of his poem. It is a messenger poem *(dūtakāvya),* like Kālidāsa's Sanskrit *Meghadūta,* yet the author says of the genre:

> The *rāso,* woven by [performing artists capable of assuming] multiple forms, is spoken out or performed.[16]

Apabhramsha works on prosody give systematic and extensive descriptions of meters used in the *rāsaka* genre. These include *duhā, roḷā, ulāl, rāsā, vastu, madanāvatār,* and *dumilā,* which are arranged in *tripadī* (a three-line unit), *pañcapadī* (a five-line unit), or *ṣatpadī* (a six-line unit) form. Thus, in terms

14. Bhati 1989: i, 1–18.
15. Bhati 1989: 24–26.
16. *bahurūvi nivaddhau rāsau bhāsiyaṅ* (cited in Jośi et al. 1973, 1: 245).

of prosody, too, both *Bharateśvarabāhubalighor* and *Bharateśvarabāhubalirās* have borrowed significantly from Apabhramsha. K. K. Śāstri has rightly identified the *rāsā* meter of *Bharateśvarabāhubalirās* with the *ābhaṇaka* meter depicted in *Svayaṃbhūchandaḥ* and other Apabhramsha works on prosody.[17]

The theme of the two poems is a traditional one for Jain literature in the Prakrit and Apabhramsha traditions. Moreover, the *rasa*s (the sentiments, mainly *vīra, bhayānaka,* and *śānta*—or heroic, terrifying, and tranquil, respectively); figures of sense such as simile, poetic fantasy, and metaphor; as well as various figures of sound that Vajrasen and Śālibhadra use clearly derive from Sanskrit poetics. Indeed, Jain monks were trained in Sanskrit poetics, as we have seen in the case of the later poet Samayasundar. In Vajrasen's time, Hemacandra's patron, the Chaulukya king Siddharāja Jayasiṃha, provided the renowned scholar with works on Sanskrit rhetoric from across India (most crucially, Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*) for the composition of his *Kāvyānuśāsana.*

The change in the medium of literary expression from the transregional languages (Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha) to the regional, Gujarati, though a momentous rupture in the very long tradition of Indian poetics, seems not to have altered the notion of literature—that is, the definition of the literary text—at all. The prosody, the thematics, the poetics, and the genres of the texts in the new literary language were the same as those of the texts in the old literary languages, as we have seen with *Bharateśvarabāhubalighor* and *Bharateśvarabāhubalrās.* Early Jain scholar-poets introduced a new, regional literary language, but not a new literature of the region. It is as if the body that danced was new, but the mimetic gestures and stylized movements that it displayed were carefully and skillfully the same. A new dancer, but dancing an old dance. It was left to the *bhakti* poets, beginning with Narasiṃha Mahetā in the fifteenth century, to produce the new regional literature— new in its very mode of being—in the new regional language.

Evidence thus suggests that between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries literature emerged in the space of the speech varieties, so to put it, of the Māru-Gurjara region. It would be less true to say that a regional literature emerged in the literary-cultural space of an older tradition, for what the regional literature of Gurjaradeśa principally did was to change the speeches of the region, consolidating them into a more or less unified literary language (thereby uniting it, in one important sense, as a region). This emergence had little effect on the notion of literature itself or the nature of literary texts; it is the linguistic field of the region that changed. From out of the numerous native dialects of the large area of the Chaulukya kingdom and beyond, a single literary regional language, intelligible to readers and

17. Jośi et al. 1973, 1: 83, 127.

listeners all over the region, was fashioned (in part through the mediation of Apabhramsha) into a vehicle for new literary activity.

Thus the emergence of the literary culture of Gujarat can be seen as having two distinct, though interrelated, aspects. One is the rise of a regional literary language, alongside the three traditional transregional languages and distinct from the various microlocalized speech varieties confined to the numerous subregions of the place. The other is the rise of a new understanding among the region's authors and readers—the producers and consumers of literature—as to what might function as a vehicle for literature. This new posture for literature's very being altered for the poets and the public the answers to the basic questions: What counts as poetry? Who is a poet? How does one recognize and read or listen to a poem?

Prior to the fifteenth century, the poet in Gujarat used the regional language to write in a manner specified by older works on prosody and poetics; he was trained to do so. From Hemacandra and Vādī Devasūri in the twelfth century to Vastupāl, Harihara, and Someśvara in the thirteenth and beyond, a large number of authors in Gurjaradeśa with handsome royal patronage composed works in Sanskrit on prosody, poetics, and grammar, as well as literary texts in all the genres known to Sanskrit literary culture, including courtly epic and lyric *(mahākāvya* and *muktaka)* and the different dramatic genres (from the one-act *vyāyoga* to the full-scale *prakaraṇa*). Sanskrit texts on poetics and every other area that were required for *kaviśikṣā* (the training of poets, especially in metrics and the art of literary ornamentation) were brought into the royal and religious libraries *(bhaṇḍāra)* of the kings, ministers, and monks from all over India, from places as close as neighboring Mālva and as distant as Kashmir.

This Sanskrit literary culture provided the basis for the religious and literary-cultural training that young, freshly ordained Jain monks received in their different *gaccha*s. Each *gaccha* tried to outshine the other, as, after due training, young monks wrote Sanskrit commentaries on traditional texts on poetics, grammar, prosody, logic, metaphysics, and medicine.[18] Hence during and after this period, when some of the authors began to write literature in the regional language, they tended to be bilingual authors whose early works were in Sanskrit and later works were in Gujarati. Their training was

---

18. Hemacandra's three well-known *anuśāsana* texts, *Śabdānuśāsana, Kāvyānuśāsana,* and *Chandonuśāsana,* are milestones in the same process. Many other scholarly Jain monks produced handbooks for students, presenting theories of Sanskrit poetics in a simple, systematic way known as *bālāvabodh* (lit. child instruction, meaning a handbook for beginners). Merusundar of the Kharatara *gaccha* wrote *Vāgbhaṭālāṅkārabālāvabodha,* a handbook on a famous work on Sanskrit poetics by Vāgbhaṭa, in 1479. In the first half of the same century, Jinarājasūri (1591–1643) wrote a long commentary in Sanskrit on the Sanskrit epic *Naiṣadhamahākāvya.*

in the older literary culture; their work, partly, in a new sociolinguistic milieu. Thus, for example, Jayaśekharasūri (fourteenth century) translated his own Sanskrit poem, *Prabodhacintāmaṇi* (Philosopher's stone of awakening), as the Gujarati *Tribhuvanadīpakaprabandha* (The light of the triple world; c. 1406). Jinavardhanasūri (early fifteenth century), of the Kharatara *gaccha,* wrote Sanskrit commentaries on a rhetorical treatise *(Vāgbhaṭālaṅkāra)* and on a work on metaphysics (the *Saptapadārthī* of Śivāditya). He also wrote a poem of thirty-two stanzas in Gujarati entitled *Pūrvadeśatīrthamālā* (The garland of holy places of the east).

Such literary biculturalism marks an important inaugural stage in Gujarati literary history, when Sanskrit conventions conditioned the production of a bilingual Gujarati author. This was to be replaced later by the strong monolinguality of *bhakti* poets like Narasiṃha Mahetā and, even later, Mitho (d. 1872), who was from the lowest caste of *dhadhi* Dalits (formerly "untouchables"), and Dhiro (d. 1825), to mention only a few. Poets like Narasiṃha and Akho (seventeenth century) were anxious to mention in their poems that they were not a product of the tradition of *kaviśikṣā.* As Narasiṃha puts it:

> Everyone is pleased by the taste of the tongue; they knit together [verbal patterns about] the Divine without true knowledge given by a preceptor. In this verbal sport *[vāṇīvilās]* the heart is not colored [by devotion to God]. Such people forsake the cloth and hasten after the rags. They collect many words, learn all the arts, [and believe that] they alone seek the metaphysical experience. . . . They have mastered all the disciplines [yet] they are lost in the night.

Or Akho:

> There are many scholars, wise and pious, good in logic and knowledgeable in music, capable of remembering eight things at a time and [known as] poets skilled in metrics *[piṅgaḷkavi],* knowledgeable in mantra-chants and experienced in medical herbs. [But] Akha, if they have not obtained God, then they have progressed in vain. One boulder may be finely sculptured and another, rough and dirty, but if you throw both in deep waters, they prove similar when it comes to floating. . . . The scholar-poets *[paṇḍitkavi]* babble in their sleep . . . but, Akha, they don't understand their own Self. [19]

---

19. Mahetā 1981: 387 (see also p. 4 on inspiration from Śiva), and Akho 1962: 74. Akho also ridicules the trope of intellectual self-deprecation as a form of arrogance.

> Such poets . . . tell us at the beginning of their works, "We are ignorant of the units of prosody and we don't bring in your figures of speech not having mastered them." Through such sniveling disclaimers, they merely establish their self-importance and beg for our pity. I, too, if I consider myself to be a poet, would like to say [just] this much: "I am only like that doll made of wood, which makes so many gestures. But there is nothing in that piece of wood. It is the entertainer holding the strings who presses the levers [to make the dolls dance]." (1967: 3)

The tradition of bilinguality, which mediated all the conventions and skills of Sanskrit poetics in poetry composed in the Gujarati language, was retained by many learned Jain monks and by some scholarly Brahman poets. This bilinguality is best exemplified by two poets, Māṇikyacandrasūri (known also as Māṇikyasundarasūri), a Jain poet of the first half of the fifteenth century, and Bhālaṇ, a Modha Brahman from Pāṭaṇ, who lived in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Māṇikyacandra was a Jain monk of the Añcala *gaccha* and a second-generation pupil of Merutuṅgasūri, the learned author of two books of Sanskrit grammar.[20] The training that Māṇikyacandra must have received early on in the *gaccha* is readily perceived in the scholarship embedded in his remarkable Sanskrit *Śrīdharacaritra* (1407), a courtly epic in nine chapters (totaling 1685 stanzas), and in *Yaśodharacarita,* another *mahākāvya* in fourteen chapters. Around 1428 he wrote *Catuḥparvicampūḥ,* a Sanskrit narrative that uses both verse and prose, as well as Sanskrit commentaries on the *Jaina Kumārasaṃbhava* and *Jaina Meghadūta.*[21]

The scope of Māṇikyacandrasūri's work suggests the extent to which Sanskrit literature and literary criticism must have shaped his literary sensibility. In 1422, in the midst of his work in Sanskrit (he was writing a minor Sanskrit narrative, *Candradhavaladharmadattakathā*), he produced a remarkable narrative in Gujarati, the *Pṛthvīcandracaritra,* subtitled *Vāgvilāsa* (The sport of language). The book is based on a section of the Sanskrit story collection *Kathāsaritsāgara.* It also makes use of several other Sanskrit-Prakrit tales, based on *Kathāsaritsāgara,* about King Pṛthvīcandra, or Pṛthvīrāj of Paithāṇpur "in Marahathpradeś in the south," as the author puts it. The work is unique in the early history of Gujarati literature in part because of its masterly prose style in an era when literary prose was altogether uncommon in the language. In its theme, as well as in the narrative techniques it employs, it bears little relation to Gujarati literary texts before or after.[22] *Pṛthvīcandracaritra* reads like the personal *vāgvilāsa* of a mind trained extensively in the Sanskrit prose style of Bāṇa, rather than like a cultural product of the region in whose language it was composed. Indeed, though his theme derives from the Sanskrit *kathā* tradition, the narrative style of this all-too-erudite, almost overskilled author moves away from that of the original and into proximity with Bāṇa's

20. Namely, *Vyākaraṇacatuśkabālāvabodha* and *Taddhitabālāvabodha.*

21. *Jaina Kumārasaṃbhava* is a *mahākāvya* (courtly epic) written in Sanskrit by Jayaśekharasūri, Māṇikyacandra's guru. *Jaina Meghadūta* is a *khaṇḍakāvya* (smaller narrative poem) by Merutuṅgasūri, Jayaśekhara's guru (Māṇikyacandrasūri 1951: 4–5).

22. Not that there is no further treatment of the theme so popularized by the learned Māṇikyacandra. In fact, there are two similarly titled Sanskrit works by Jain monk-authors inspired by Māṇikyacandra's Gujarati text: one, a prose work composed by Rūpavijayagaṇi in 1826; the other, a poem composed in 1856 by Labdhisāgarsūri. Manikyacandra's work in Gujarati inspired others to compose on the same theme in Sanskrit.

Kādambarī. Māṇikyacandra's language here is Gujarati, but his literary culture is that of the later period of Sanskrit literature.

Bhālaṇ, who adapted Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* into Gujarati, was both closer to and farther from Bāṇa than was Māṇikyacandra: closer because he translated Bāṇa's text, farther because of the manner in which he did so. Bhālaṇ's works exhibit an interesting and significant variation in the relationship between regional and transregional languages. Bhālaṇ was not a bilingual author in a strict sense; he was a scholar of Sanskrit and translated from Sanskrit into Gujarati. Being a Brahman, not a Jain renunciate, he was not a member of a *gaccha* tradition. And since many rulers during the Gujarat sultanate were more hostile to Brahmanical institutions of religion and culture than to those of the Jains, Bhālaṇ must have been on his own, in a sense, in accessing Sanskrit literary texts and the normative tradition.

Bhālaṇ adapted *Kādambarī* from Sanskrit to Gujarati by changing not only the language but also the genre and the tale itself. He took his story and the characters from Bāṇa, but the narrative he developed was distinctly his own and was specifically Gujarati in tone. As for genre, Bhālaṇ transformed the *kathā* of Sanskrit into the *kaḍavābaddha ākhyān*. The *ākhyān* is a long devotional narrative poem, displaying in its mature phase a narrative structure comprised of interlinked and specifically structured units called *kadavu* (lit. a link in a chain). It is sung out by the poet himself or by a professional religious singer, accompanied by a musical instrument called the *mana,* a copper pitcher with a narrow neck that is struck by metal rings worn on the fingers of the narrator's hands. This emergent genre of *ākhyān* was to develop both historically and organically in Gujarati literary culture, with its own manner of composition, presentation, and reception, evolving into a form unlike anything available in Sanskrit literary culture. It grew out of *pada* (stanzaic) lyrics, in which a series of *pada*s tell a single story. But Bhālaṇ modified each *pada* into a unit of not only lyricality but also narrativity called *kaḍavā*. What he produced was culture-specific as a genre as well as with respect to the modes of composition and consumption that go with it. Bhālaṇ everywhere exhibits a certain self-awareness about being a poet of the new literary culture through his efforts to fashion a genre with a new narrative structure. He also indicates that he knew his readers/hearers to be of a new and different sort. He calls them *mugdha rasik* (untutored connoisseurs), in noteworthy contrast to the highly trained (and hence highly conditioned) *sahṛdayaśiromaṇi,* the "crest-jewel of the sensitive," referring to the poet-patron Vastupāl, minister at the Vāghela court in the monolingual literary culture of twelfth-century Chaulukya Gurjaradeśa. It makes sense, accordingly, that it was Bhālaṇ who, in his *Naḷākhyān* (Tale of Nala), was the first to use the word *gujarabhāṣā* (Gujarati language) to describe, self-consciously, the language of his poetry. In these elements of his literary practice Bhālaṇ points away from the past—even away from recent predecessors like Māṇikyacandra—

and toward the future to writers yet to come, such as Premānand (seventeenth century), who took up the genre and developed it further by adding more narrative-lyrical features to the *kaḍavā̃* unit.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE REGIONAL IN A REGIONAL LITERARY CULTURE

This early phase of Gujarati literary culture, where a certain kind of trans-regionality would continue to be claimed, was to be prolonged even as new developments in regionality were arising. The tension between these two tendencies came to be coded in various new understandings of the relationship between Sanskrit and Gujarati, on the one hand, and between Gujarati and other regional languages, on the other. Akho, a Vedantic poet of the seventeenth century, metaphorically addressed the first issue. He observes in one of his poems that "Sanskrit is studied with the help of Prakrit [i.e., Gujarati]. Just as pieces of wood, tied together in a large bunch, cannot be used in a stove without untying them, so Sanskrit is of no use without Prakrit." He adds another simile: "A merchant can use round-figure currency for writing down some accounts; but in actual commercial transactions he cannot do without small change." No writer, so Akho implies, can do without the spoken language.[23]

The metaphors here are instructive. Neither the wood stove nor the commercial transaction can handle large amounts. Hence the need for small pieces of wood and small change. But what precisely is the poet driving at? For what purposes is Sanskrit is too large? Clearly it is too large—that is, too difficult—for the uncultivated *(mugdha)* minds of the emergent regional readers. If those minds are not trained, that is, not cultivated *(vidagdha)* enough, to understand what Sanskrit literary culture has to offer, what should be offered to them? If the stove cannot take big bundles of wood, do not put something else in it instead. Rather, untie the bundle and put the same wood into the stove, but in smaller, digestible amounts. Similarly, if the marketplace is capable of small business only, large-denomination gold coins cannot be used; but neither can one invent some altogether new monetary system. Instead, use small change within the same system. For Akho, who worked for some time as the superintendent of the Ahmadābād mint, this was an apt image.

With these metaphors Akho seems to suggest that regionality should contain a sense of the larger world, and vice versa. Gujarati and Sanskrit are related to each other not as two sets of currency from two different systems—unlike, say, Gujarati and English, or the rupee and the dollar—but as two denominations of the same system of currency: as an *ānā* ($\frac{1}{16}$ of a rupee in the old currency system) to a rupee.

---

23. Akho 1962: 47.

A similar monetary metaphor comes to be used to articulate the emergent relationship between Gujarati and other regional languages. A *duhā* widely known in Gujarat and elsewhere in western India, proposed an evaluation of Hindi, Marvadi, Marathi, and Gujarati in terms of currency relations between rupee, anna, and paisa (which is $\frac{1}{4}$ of an anna):

> *idharudhar kā solahi ānā atheikathei kā bār*
> *ikdamtikadam āṭhahi ānā sũ-sã̄ paisā cār.*

> [In exchange] *idharudhar* [Hindi for "here and there"] gets sixteen annas
>   [an entire rupee],
> *atheikathei* [Marvadi for "here and somewhere"] gets twelve [annas],
> *ikadamtikadam* [Marathi for "here and there"] gets eight [annas],
> [but] *sũ-sã̄* [Gujarati for "something-and-nothing"] [gets merely] four paise.

In nineteenth-century this *duhā* was incorporated in a story that sheds light on how the Gujarati readers of the time had come to view the regional alliance of a premodern poet whom they could adore. The story tells how Premānand (second half of the seventeenth century), who wrote the finest *ākhyān* narratives in Gujarati and presented them as far as Nandurbar and other places in Khandeś in Mahārāṣṭra, was stung when he heard this *duhā* from a Hindi-speaking or Marvadi-speaking person. As a sign of protest, he vowed that he would not tie up his Brahmanical topknot until he was able to prove through his *ākhyān* poems that Gujarati, too, was worth a full sixteen annas.

This *duhā* contains much else that is pertinent to a study of literary culture. For one thing, it reveals a sense of complementarity among literatures in Indian languages in the premodern period. This is something that, sadly and ironically, has diminished in the modern period, when exchange among readers and writers of the different Indian literatures seems increasingly merely ceremonial and formally correct. The warm, if sometimes hurtful, intimacy among four regional literatures within a single panregionality that the *duhā* reflects has been replaced in the contemporary period by increasingly isolationist trends.

Moreover, the verse brings out something of the premodern sense of literary judgment and implied standards of literary criticism, which were transregional in scope. This presupposes a community of multilingual consumers of literary products. As the tone of the *duhā* suggests, the speaker of Hindi who also knows Marvadi, Marathi, and Gujarati and who has privileged his own language is not a serious, objective scholar. He is, rather, boisterous and assertive and does not mind caricaturing Marathi and Gujarati word-sounds like *ikadamtikadam* and *sũ-sã̄;* still, he does include them in his overall picture of the literary scene. We may contrast this with most post-1850 histories of Hindi, Rajasthani, Marathi, and Gujarati literature, especially since Independence, where the historical narrative of each has no space at all for the others.

A new conception of Gujarati literary culture, very much at odds with Akho's concerns, was inaugurated by the *bhakti* poet Narasiṃha Mahetā, an entirely monolingual Gujarati poet. Although he lived in the fifteenth century, with more than two hundred years of literary production in the regional language before him, Narasiṃha is regarded by literary historians as Gujarat's *ādikavi,* "first poet." Persistent use of this epithet for Narasiṃha—by such eminent researchers and critics as K. K. Śāstri, Umāśaṅkar Jośi, and Jayant Gadit—long after the works of twelfth-, thirteenth-, and fourteenth-century Gujarati poets had become known, edited, and published, raises a number of questions.[24] Since the term *ādi* (first) is obviously not used here in its strictly chronological sense, does it mean that a later moment is considered more decisive than the beginning? And, if so, in which way? Is the term *kavi* (poet) employed here in some sense different from its earlier, traditional use? In short, how exactly has the moment of Narasiṃha's poetic work become the originary moment in the history of Gujarati literary culture?

No scholar of Gujarati literature has ever considered it correct to use the term *ādikavi* for any of the numerous poets who preceded Narasiṃha. At the same time, none has ever tried to pinpoint when the term was first applied to Narasiṃha or by whom. K. K. Śāstri has pointed out in his *Kavicaritra* (1952) that in 1565, Isardas Barot, who wrote in the oral-narrative tradition of *cāraṇi* literature, and in 1593, Kalyānraijī, the grandson of Śrī Vallabhā-cārya (founder of the important Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* sect Puṣṭimārg), refer to Narasiṃha as a great *bhaktakavi* (devotional poet). Viṣṇudās, a poet from central Gujarat, composed two poems on Narasiṃha's life *(Māmerū* and *Huṇḍī)* between about 1568 and 1600. Vasto Dodia, a Dharala tribal poet of the seventeenth century, wrote on Narasiṃha's life in his *Sādhucarita.*

Narasiṃha is the only poet whose life has been used as a subject for poems by later Gujarati poets. There was clearly a premodern sentiment that Narasiṃha had done something primal in his work. Yet it is significant, too, that the earliest recorded use of the term "first poet" to mark this primacy in reference to Narasiṃha is found no earlier than the first modern literary historiography of Gujarati—also one of the earliest literary histories in India—Narmadāśaṅkar Dave's *Kavicarita* (Poets' lives; 1865).[25] Narmad begins his celebrated work with these words: "Like Vālmīki in Sanskrit or Chaucer in English, Narasiṃha Mahetā is called the *ādikavi* of Gujarati."[26] The phrase "Chaucer in English" is a fruit of Narmad's English education at the Elphinstone Institute in the 1850s. More significant, however, is the phrase "like Vālmīki in Sanskrit." Narasiṃha is considered Gujarati's first poet in

<hr/>

24. Śāstri 1952, 1: 180; Jośi et al. 1973, 1: 75; Kothāri and Gadit 1989, 1: 210. See also Jinavijaya 1926; Dalāl 1920.

25. See Dave 1975.

26. Dave 1975: 451.

the same sense in which Vālmīki was Sanskrit's first poet: he defines "poetry" in some decisive manner, he demonstrates the mode *(mudrā)* of a poet's being. His definition and his demonstration become the cultural norm for his own time and for times to come. As *ādikavi*s, both Vālmīki and Narasiṃha mark originary moments, informing the unique sense of what it means to be "literary" or "poetic" in their respective languages.[27] The methodology and the criteria that Hemacandra adopted in the twelfth century to understand the primacy of Vālmīki are the same ones that Narmad used with respect to Narasiṃha in the nineteenth. Both imply that the term is not used simplistically to indicate who is chronologically the earliest poet of a language. The term has much more depth and complexity to it; it signifies major cultural-literary shifts in the traditionally settled literary culture.

If the term *ādikavi* is so understood, then it becomes clear that Narasiṃha came to be regarded as the first poet because, unlike the poets who wrote "Sanskrit poems" in Gujarati, he began the practice of writing "Gujarati poems" in Gujarati. Implicitly recognizing the effects of this move, the great literary historian Umāśaṅkar Jośi may have come the closest to the truth of the matter. Putting a greater emphasis on the word *kavi* than on the word *ādi,* he argues that unlike the works of the earlier poets, which were stored in the archival vaults of Jain religious places, Narasiṃha's poems achieved truly wide dissemination: "How distant are the hills of Aravalli on the northern boundaries of Gujarat from the land at the foot of Mount Girnār, the native land of Narasiṃha. Yet, even in those hills words from Narasiṃha's poems can still be found on the lips of the common and illiterate men and women of the lowest social strata."[28] The lyrics of Narasiṃha, which have been recited by innumerable Gujarati people in towns and villages for centuries, are called *prabhātiyā̃,* literally "songs of the dawn," a genre unknown to the Sanskrit/Prakrit/Apabhramsha literary culture. Narasiṃha's audience— those who came to listen to him sing through the night "till it was dawn," as he says in a poem narrating one such occasion—included the Dalits, the *ḍheḍa varaṇ* as they were called, who, in Narasiṃha's eyes had "unshakable *bhakti* [devotion] for Hari [God]." Narasiṃha was a Nagar Brahman, the highest subgroup of the caste. Yet he went to the locality in which the untouchable, casteless men and women lived and sang his devotional *pada* poems "till it was dawn."[29]

In the literary circle of the twelfth-century patron Vastupāl, the readers belonged to the upper strata of society, with access to state-patronized literary events. The readers/listeners in the literary gatherings of the Jain scholar-poet monks were drawn from not only the court circle but also the middle-

27. On Vālmīki as the first poet, see Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.
28. Jośi et al. 1976, 2: 75–76; endorsed by Kothāri and Gadit 1989, 1: 210.
29. Mahetā 1981: 64.

class mercantile communities among whom *yati*s such as Samayasundar performed their ceaseless *vihāra*. By contrast, Narasiṃha, at considerable personal risk, made a conscious decision to include the lowest strata of society among his audience. In fact, he included the casteless people of Junāgaḍh near Mount Girnār, the very town where he lived. They not only listened to but also participated in the singing of his *bhajan*-poems. And he took care to record their participation in a poem every Gujarati man and woman is able to recite even today.[30]

Narasiṃha achieved and registered another equally important relocation of the reader. In the age of royal patronage during the Chaulukya period (and later, in the Muslim epoch, when support was extended to Gujarat's music and painting as well as to Urdu and Persian poetry), patronage was based on a standardized judgment of literature (and other arts) presented before the court. Hence, the reader—at least the official judge-reader (and, in general, the court collectively)—assumed a decisive critical position vis-à-vis the text, the performance, and the poet (or artist). It is small wonder that Vastupāl was known as *sahṛdayacūḍāmaṇi* (crest-jewel of connoisseurs), alluding to his supreme position among all the literary men in the court. As patron-consumer, Vastupāl occupied a superior status vis-à-vis not only other consumers but also the texts and the poets before him.

The new reader of a poet like Narasiṃha, however, was no longer the patron-judge, a crest-jewel located above other readers, the text, and the poet himself. He occupied a place of equality with all others, as Narasiṃha's verse on the *kīrtana* (congregational singing) with the Dalits reveals. Or perhaps he was positioned as an adoring admirer, as when the poet elsewhere has the god Kṛṣṇa himself proclaim:

> If the poet sings his poem sitting down,
> I listen to him standing up.
> If he sings standing up,
> I listen to him dancing on my feet.
> Not for one moment am I apart
> from such a devotee, says Narasiṃha truly.[31]

Narasiṃha decisively changed the location of his audience by assuming a different orientation toward the political power of the region. His relationship with the state was not one of client and patron, but rather one of victim and victimizer, as he explains in his *Hārsamenā Pado* (Poems narrating the event concerning the necklace). This work tells of a test to which

---

30. For the text, see Mahetā 1981: 64. One is reminded of Gandhi's account of the inclusion of the first Harijan family to his newly established Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati in Ahmedabad. See Gandhi 1947: 424–27.

31. Mahetā 1981: 157.

Narasiṃha was put by the king Rā Maṇḍalik at Junāgaḍh. Encouraged by conservative Brahmans, the king asked the devotee-poet to demonstrate the intimate relation with Kṛṣṇa that he claimed to enjoy in his poems. The only proof that would count, the king insisted, was if the necklace on the neck of the idol of Kṛṣṇa in a temple in the town was transferred to the neck of Narasiṃha by the deity himself, without any external help. If this did not happen before the next dawn, the poet would be beheaded. *Hārsamenā Pado* narrates the poet's anxious night of supplications, expressing the entire range of human emotions, from doubt and anger to trust and joy. Kṛṣṇa in the end protects the poet against the victimizer. Through this narrative Narasiṃha expresses the newfound independence of the poet and the realignment of his position with the state.

In the same way that Narasiṃha resituated the poet in relation to the state and the readers in relation to the poem, he also relocated the poet-devotee in relation to social and economic authority. Among the six poems that tell of events that tested his faith as a devotee, two are especially revealing. One of these concerns his social obligations on the occasion of his daughter's first pregnancy; the other, his economic obligations as he entered into a monetary transaction.

In the first, called *Māmerū* (The gift from the new mother's side of the family), Narasiṃha narrates with both sympathy and humor his plight in the presence of his daughter Kuvarbai. During her first pregnancy, he went with her to the town of her in-laws—along with fellow chanters of hymns. Because of his poverty he carried, in place of the prescribed precious gifts for his in-laws, an open basket filled with sacred basil leaves *(tulasī)*. Kṛṣṇa then appeared, in the guise of a wealthy Gujarati merchant, to save the poet—and how splendidly![32]

The second, *Huṇḍī* (Letter of credit), imparts a new significance to the financial network of Gujarati culture through a seriocomic narrative. It tells how Narasiṃha accepted cash from some travelers, giving them a letter against which they would be paid money at the town of their destination. Not surprisingly, the town happened to be Dvārakā, the hometown of Kṛṣṇa, in which a famous Kṛṣṇa temple was situated then as now. According to the rule governing letters of credit, only a rich merchant who has an arrangement with other such merchants in other towns is allowed to accept deposits in his own town for payment to the depositor in another. The travelers were sent to Narasiṃha by some mischievous men, who advised them that the best person to accept their deposit would be "the great merchant" Narasiṃha. It was not as an irresponsible gesture of mindless defiance that the poet accepted the deposit; the issue for him was the challenge from the governing

32. Text in Mahetā 1981.

rules of the financial world to the authority of Kṛṣṇa, or more specifically, to the inclusiveness of the relationship of mortal man and divinity. The world of finance demanded an exclusive space for itself, where the rules would be laid down by its own master voice. But it was not for this voice, represented in the narrative by the mocking townsmen, to declare that Narasiṃha was or was not "a great merchant." Narasiṃha did accept the deposit of cash and, as the narrative tells, the banker's check given by him to the trusting travelers was indeed honored in Dvārakā by another "great merchant"—none other than the Lord of Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa. This is not so much a poem of the god's miracles but a poem of inclusiveness—one that, as is so often the case in Narasiṃha's poetry, defies the master voices of exclusion. Moreover, the poem also serves to relocate the figure of the poet within a transfigured economic matrix. No longer economically dependent on the patronage of the state, the poet depends only on Kṛṣṇa. The financial independence of the poet is a recurring theme of Gujarat's *bhakti*-poetry and is especially foregrounded in the work of Narmad, the pioneering modern poet of mid-nineteenth-century Gujarat.

By relocating the poet and the reader in the overall design of the culture, and by reorganizing the relationship between the poet and the centers of authority in society, economy, and the state through his seemingly lyrical narratives, Narasiṃha destablized the entire power structure of the culture into which he was born—just as Gandhi was to do in turn. What is fundamental here, as in all the related tales, is Narasiṃha's narrative of the genesis of the new poet. With characteristic humility he presents this grand theme most powerfully in two groups of simple, humorous, autobiographical poems. One is called *Putravivāhanā̃ Pado* (Poems narrating his son's marriage), and the other *Rāsasahasrapādī* (A thousand *pāda*-poems narrating the event of the divine *rāsa* dance).

In *Putravivahāhanā̃ Pado* Narasiṃha begins with an account of the early days of his marriage, telling how in the extended family in which he lived under his elder brother's protection he was constantly scolded by his elder sister-in-law. She called him a good-for-nothing loafer, unable to win bread for himself. The young man—stung, as he tells us—left home and "went to Śiva," journeying to the Gopanāth Mahādev temple (near the sea coast in Saurāṣṭra), which is still standing today, "and meditated for seven days, with a single-minded devotion." Śiva, who was pleased, appeared before the young devotee and offered to grant him a boon—but "with a lump in my throat I could not speak," the poet declares. In Narasiṃha's new literary culture, a poet's genesis is located not in acquired prosody or poetics but in this manner of confrontation with his own inability to speak. The poet is no longer the *vidagdha,* the well-trained learned scholar of the earlier literary culture, but rather a *mugdha,* an innocent—interestingly, a term that Bhālaṇ also uses, as we have seen, for the new reader/listener of poetry (where he means pre-

cisely "untrained"). Narasiṃha writes: "Knowing that I was all innocent, Śiva put his hand over my head." This had its intended effect:

> From insensate *[a-ceta],* I became sensate *[cetana].*
> And primeval speech *[ādya vāṇī]* woke in me from its sleep.[33]

Whereas, as we saw earlier, Bhālaṇ calls the language of his narrative poetry *gujarabhāṣā,*[34] and Premānand in the seventeenth century would call his Prakrit (that is, simply, non-Sanskrit), Narasiṃha describes things differently. He names his language simply *ādya vāṇī.* He does not contrast it with Sanskrit, as Akho and Premānand do later, but describes it as merely waking up from sleep. It is clear that Narasiṃha sees the language of his poetry as a personal speech; significantly, he avoids all reference to *parā vāk* (ultimate language)—a favorite of all Indian metaphysical writings on language.

The culmination of Narasiṃha's account of the genesis of the poet comes in *Rāsasahasrapadī.* Śiva, pleased, granted the young man a boon, and after initial hedging, Narasiṃha was taken to *divya vraja,* the divine land of Vraja, as distinct from the earthly *vrajabhūmi* so popular in Narasiṃha's time with all *bhakta*-poets. There, Narasiṃha found Kṛṣṇa dancing with his divine consort, Rādhā, who upon seeing a mere mortal in their midst, was offended. Kṛṣṇa placated her, saying that the *bhakta* meant no disrespect but would gladly hold a lighted torch to facilitate their dancing. Kṛṣṇa lit a torch and asked Narasiṃha to hold it aloft in his hand. He did as he was told and was completely lost in watching the divine dance. The torch burnt down to its handle and Narasiṃha's hand caught fire. The poet did not even notice, but kept watching the dance as the light still came forth from the torch. Now, indeed, the light was coming forth from the poet's own hand. Rādhā was astonished to witness this and asked Kṛṣṇa to save his *bhakta.* Kṛṣṇa, smiling, replied that if it did not matter to the young man, why should it matter to her? Rādhā then understood the *bhakta*'s deep devotion.

In these narratives Narasiṃha describes realistically what seems to be a personal experience, while also bringing forth a new poetics and a new perception of reality. In the narrative of the burning hand, if the hand-as-torch is a signifier, then the signified is what Kṛṣṇa shows to Rādhā, who seems to have missed it. And if the reader, like Rādhā, has missed it, then Narasiṃha shows it to the reader also. The image suggests that the *bhakta*-poet sees the narrated reality of his poem through a light that originates within himself.

Narasiṃha's intrusion into *divya vraja,* and his ability to generate his own light, out of himself, to see that place, provide a perfect image of a second moment of emergence in Gujarati literary culture, when a regional culture,

---

33. My translation. For the original text, see Mahetā 1981: 3.

34. *guru pad paṅkajane praṇamū, brahma sūtane dhyaū / gujara bhāṣae nala rajana guṇa manohara gaū* (Bhālaṇ 1924: 1).

more strictly construed, arose in the sociocultural space of the transregional one. In the first moment of emergence, a quasi-transregional literary culture was produced in a regional linguistic space, in large part by the Sanskritizing practices employed by the first poets to write in Gujarati. At that point it was the larger culture that shaped the smaller, as regional literary languages were fashioned out of that encounter. In the second emergence, by contrast, it was the regional literature that was the intruder and transformed the transregional. This process, which occurred in many other places in late-medieval South Asia, should perhaps be thought of not as a fragmentation of Indian culture but rather as a reorganization, one that greatly expanded the culture's scope and depth.

These two processes of emergence, which took place from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries (and later in some cases), suggest how precolonial South Asians learned how to be regional and transregional simultaneously— place-specific and place-transcending at the same time and through the same texts. The new poets were, in this sense, both propagators and modifiers of the domain of the old literary culture. The frontier that the *bhakta*-poets expanded was a pilgrimage frontier, a monastic circuit, one that empowered those whom it included rather than subjugating them, as had the power boundaries of the political orders.

RELOCATING A REGIONAL LITERATURE

The early bilingual poets, from Vajrasen to Māṇikyacandra, found a place for the regional language in the basically transregional literary culture of Gurjaradeśa. But the terms and conditions for the existence of literature in the regional language were dictated, as we have seen, by the literary culture of the transregional languages. The language of poetry was allowed to be regional, but the prosody, poetics, and thematics of poetry remained largely identical to what they were in the older literary culture. In this sense the regional literature was assigned, ironically, a somewhat subordinate place within the region's literary culture.

The first decisive move to relocate Gujarati literature was made, as we have seen, by Narasiṃha Mahetā in the fifteenth century. How Narasiṃha initiated this relocation, and how he as a poet negotiated with the dominant traditional forces and factors, are illustrated in a *pada*-poem of his that was made widely known through Gandhi's inclusion of it in his daily prayers. The *pada* begins with the lines:

> *vaiṣṇava jana to tene kahie*
> *e pīḍ paraī jaṇe re.*[35]

35. Mahetā 1981: 289.

If the monosyllabic word *to* is bracketed, the lines may be translated as: "Call him a man of God who knows another's pain." But the indeclinable *to*—a particle at once restrictive and emphatic, meaning something like "only"—modifies the meaning of the sentence subtly: "[Do not call him who pretends to be a man of God, as you have mistakenly been doing for so long], but call him *alone* a man of God who knows another's pain."

Narasiṃha is not repeating here in Gujarati what had been said in the transregional literary languages before him, either by himself or by others. If he is joining an ongoing conversation, he is doing so with a note of dissent. And that single note, which is heard in the monosyllabic *to,* has multiple significance. It tells us, for one thing, that the regional poet has put forward a new meaning of the phrase *vaiṣṇava jana*—different from its traditional, sectarian meaning (person [who is a devotee] of Viṣṇu [Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva]). But it also tells us that the poet feels he can—perhaps must—express his dissent through a sentence structure that is unique to the regional language in which he writes.

To pay close attention to the word *to* in Narasiṃha's poem is not to suggest that there were no earlier works attempting to characterize a devotee of Viṣṇu. Attributes similar to those found in Narasiṃha's poem were expressed by earlier Sanskrit writers.[36] Māvo's poem of 1531, *Viṣṇubhagat* (Devotee of Viṣṇu), comprises fifty-one stanzas of three lines in which terms like *anāhat śabda* and *rundhī pavan* refer to "the external sound" and "the breath control" that are typical concepts of the Nāth, or Siddha, sect. Poets of this sect, like Sarahapāda, who composed *duhā* poems in Apabhramsha protesting ritualistic religious practices, have greatly influenced writers across the regional languages. These include, in Gujarati, Akho in the seventeenth century, and before him the lesser-known Māvo, in whose works the description of a *vaiṣṇava* comes as a neutral listing of virtues. Narasiṃha, however, presents the *vaiṣṇava*'s qualities as an alternative, emphasizing that he is rejecting one assessment in favor of another. And the *pada* that Gandhi popularized is not an isolated instance among Narasiṃha's works. He wrote several similar poems, some even more explicit in their self-conscious protest. In one he asks:

36. A useful study of such works in Sanskrit and Gujarati is available in Bhayani 1986. As Bhayani and others have shown, the Sanskrit *Viṣṇupurāṇa* lists attributes (to quote from a verse) such as *samamatir ātmasuhṛdvipakṣapakṣe* (having the same attitude towards one's friends and opponents), *tṛṇam iva yaḥ samavaiti vai parasvam* (who considers others' possessions [as insignificant as] grass), and *śucicarito'khilasattvamitrabhūtaḥ* (having purity of character and being a friend to all creatures) that are pertinent to Narasiṃha; the refrain in the *purāṇa, tam avehi viṣṇubhaktam* (know him to be a devotee of Viṣṇu), corresponds to Narasiṃha's *vaiṣṇava jana to.* See *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 3.7. 20–29.

> What is gained by observing the ritualistic bath *[snāna],* obeisance *[sevā],*
>   and worship *[pūjā]?*
> These are nothing but strategies for filling up one's belly.[37]

Here, too, Narasiṃha makes use of the indeclinable *to: e to parpañc sahu pet bharavā taṇā* (These *though* [you may present them as qualities of a *vaiṣṇava*] are mere strategies for filling the belly).

Thus there is a double deviation in the opening line of Narasiṃha's verse that Gandhi, with his ear for both sense and sound, is likely to have noticed: Narasiṃha deviates from both the perception and the narration *(darśana* and *varṇana)* of the older, transregional literary culture. Through such a complete note of dissent he negotiates his way through the dictates of the powerful traditional culture to find a new location for Gujarati poetry. From this place poets could no longer simply produce Sanskrit-imitative verbal structures in Gujarati (Gujarati *vāṅmaya*), but would write new and authentic literature in that language (Gujarati *sāhitya*). Especially in the five poems examined already—*Hār, Huṇḍī, Rās, Vivāh,* and *Māmerũ* (poems on the events related to the necklace, the letter of credit, the divine dance, the son's marriage, and the gift from the new mother's family)—Narasiṃha takes on, with the typical nonchalance of a *bhakta,* the many types of hegemonies that impinged upon him, and he asserts his own vision of reality through the power of his poetic language.

Another author who negotiated his way to independence and a new location for his verbal art was a man of the theater, Asāit Thākur (second half of the fourteen century). In his case, both the interactions with a new and unfamiliar political power and the relocation of Gujarati theater were concrete and actual. Asāit, like Narasiṃha, was an accomplished musician, a singer of classical *rāga*s. One day, the legend goes, he came to know that a local farmer's daughter had been abducted by the army chieftain of the sultan, who was camping near Asāit's hometown of Uñjā in north Gujarat (the ancient Ānartta). Asāit was a Brahman (in fact, of the high subcaste known as Audicya Śrīmaḷi Brahmans), and the girl, Gaṅgā, was of the third caste, a Patel. But, again like Narasiṃha, Asāit's sympathy was not limited by such received categories, and he decided to rescue Gaṅgā from the army camp. He went to the camp and by his singing won the goodwill of the chieftain, who apparently had an ear for music. Asāit was granted a favor, and he asked for the release of his "daughter" Gaṅgā. Made suspicious by his counselors, the chief asked Asāit to eat food from the same dish as Gaṅgā in order to prove that they belonged to the same caste and were indeed father and daughter. Asāit did this without hesitation. On returning to Uñjā with

---

37. Mahetā 1981: 386.

Gaṅgā, however, Asāit was expelled from his caste for breaking the prohibition against eating with lower-caste people. He now found it difficult to sustain himself as an outcaste Brahman, because he could find no sustenance either as a Brahman (who traditionally lived on pious donations) or as the traditional religious singer-storyteller that he most likely was.[38]

Asāit at this point turned to composing plays in Gujarati and performing them in the open on makeshift stages, with men, women, and children of all castes and all social standing for his audience.[39] He also put his musical skills to this new use. His plays, called *veśa*s (he wrote 365 in all, it is said), and his theater, known as *bhavāi,* were immensely successful. The *bhavāi* became Gujarat's own theater, its own dramatic genre, the likes of which had never before been seen in Chaulukya Gurjaradeśa.[40]

Theater in Gurjaradeśa had long been housed inside its impressive temples. The temples and other temple-related structures had spacious auditoriums decorated with sculpture, known as *raṅgamaṇḍapa*s. The famous Śiva temple of Rudramahālaya at Aṇhilapur Pāṭaṇ boasted a large *raṅgamaṇḍapa* with tall pillars; the Navalakhā temple at Sejakpur had one forty-five feet long; one with twenty-two pillars and a split-level stage graced the famous Ghumlī temple (dating from the Chaulukya period); and the Jain structure Lūṇavasahi, built by the minister-poet Tejpāl at Mount Ābu in 1231, had a *raṅgamaṇḍapa* extensively decorated with sculptures of dancing women and men.[41] The period from 1150 to 1250 has rightly been described as a "century of drama" in Gurjaradeśa. Yet almost all the plays were written in Sanskrit, and the rules for their performance were in accordance with the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata.

With the arrival of the Khaljī rule from Delhi in 1304 after the defeat of the last Chaulukya-Vāghela king, Karṇadeva, all this changed. The new power destroyed a large number of temples, including the Rudramahālaya. The destruction continued under the governors appointed by the Khaljīs to control Gujarat, and later under some of the rulers of the Gujarat sultanate (1409–1573) as well. The new court at Ahmadābād, which had become the seat of the Sultanate of Gujarat, developed into a center of literary activity for authors from across India and as far away as Iran and Iraq. Writers who found patronage at the court, numerous as they were, composed exclusively

38. See S. Desai 1972 and Kadakia 1994.

39. These stages were called *cacār cok* (lit. "a square" where "four roads meet") derived from the Sanskrit words *catvāra* and *catuṣka,* which, however, are never used together in Sanskrit, to suggest the Sanskrit *raṅgamaṇḍapa* theater.

40. See Nilkaṇṭh 1911 for *bhavāi* texts. The *veśa* (lit. costume, and hence, imitation) was a short drama. The *bhavāi* is the generic name of the traditional Gujarati theater. Popular etymology for the term, given by traditional actors, derives the word from *bhavavahi,* the book of life.

41. See Majumdar 1965: 279.

in Persian and Arabic. Not a single author writing in Gujarati was a participant in the literary culture of the Gujarat sultanate, though some Muslim authors had already begun to write in their regional language. I mentioned earlier Abdala Rahamāna, author of the late-thirteenth-century *Sandeśarāsaka,* who was the earliest, and today is the most well-known, among them.

While the temples, along with the *raṅgamaṇḍapa*s they housed, were sporadically destroyed in the fifteenth century and even later at the dictate of the political rulers, the theater initiated by Asāit continued to thrive in the streets and other open public places in the villages and towns of Gujarat, influencing the sociocultural life of all segments of the Gujarati population—men, women, and children of all religious beliefs and from different socioeconomic strata. The *veśa* plays staged by the *bhavāi* theater were not religious in their theme or orientation. Unlike other regional dramatic forms such as the *jātrā* of Bengal, the *āṅkiānāt* of Assam, the *yakṣagāna* of Karnataka, and the *kathakaḷi* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* of Kerala, the Gujarati plays were satirical works on social and political themes. Characters depicted in the *veśa* plays included Brahmans and Muslims, men and women, merchants and farmers, all scrutinized in the cold gaze of the ironic humorist. The *raṅgalo,* a uniquely Gujarati version of the Sanskrit fool *(vidūṣaka),* shared the latter's qualities as a fearless, ironic, and sympathetic witness to the happenings on the stage and in the society.

Thus, Gujarati authors like Narasiṃha and Asāit found ways to negotiate a modus vivendi with the dominant authorities: both the literary-cultural authorities of the earlier transregional literary culture and the political-economic authorities of their contemporary Gujarat. They, and others like Premānand (seventeenth century), Śāmal (eighteenth century), and Dayārām (nineteenth century), helped Gujarati literature to assert its own identity at the level of language—as Gujarati *vāṅmaya*—and also as a literature, *sāhitya.* But a new challenge from a power that was much more subtle and intrusive than the brutalizing though limited power of the Khaljīs and the sultans was round the corner.

HIND SVARĀJ: THE ULTIMATE NEGOTIATION AND ASSERTION OF REGIONAL LITERARY CULTURE

In his memoirs, *Smaraṇamukura* (Mirror of memory), Narsiṃhrāo Dīvatiā (1859–1937), a polyglot and a pioneer in Gujarati linguistics and one of the early masters of Gujarati prose, narrates an anecdote about two clerks and a newspaper, which he had heard from his father.[42] The father, Bholānāth Sarabhai, a native officer in the British administration in the Kheḍa district of central Gujarat and himself a writer and social reformer, had two junior

---

42. An earlier version of this section appeared in Pollock 1995.

clerks working in his office. Publication of Gujarati newspapers had just begun in the region, and, working as they were in a government office where such things were subtly encouraged, the clerks had their own subscriptions to the newspaper. The author tells us how upon receiving the weekly newspaper on a Wednesday afternoon, the two clerks retired to the potable-water room of the office, each with his copy of the newspaper in hand. One read aloud from his own newspaper, while the other compared it with the printed words in his copy. When they discovered that the two copies tallied, paragraph by paragraph, word by word, their amazement was boundless. "'Wonderful! Word for word they tally! Not even the slightest error! Your copy is exactly the same as my copy!' Thus expressing their feeling of amazement and respect, they go back to their tables," the author concludes.[43]

Today, more than a hundred years after the event and seven decades after the publication of the account, we may not be sure whether to smile with the native officer or to share the amazement of the incredulous clerks. If we restore the clerks from the position of caricature in the anecdote to the status of characters in a social history, we may also ask ourselves whether the open admiration of the clerks was not linked with a concealed skepticism, simultaneously felt.

We need to see the *Smaraṇamukura* anecdote in the context of several other events in the cultural life of Gujarat in the nineteenth century, including the rise of several new prose genres in the Gujarati language (newspaper accounts of sociopolitical reality being among them) and the simultaneous decline of many long-standing genres of narrative and lyrical verse. We may be prompted to observe how "amazement and respect" for duplicating technology concealed (and expressed) a caution and a doubt about the duplicity of the producer of that technology and of its products. The root problems of the cultural history of nineteenth-century Gujarat can be seen clearly only when we realize that the enthusiasm and the skepticism were simultaneously real.

Prose was never the dominant medium of expression in Gujarati literature before the nineteenth century. Many works were nonetheless composed in narrative-prose genres like *caritra* (*Pṛthvīcandracaritra,* 1422) and *kathā* (*Samyaktvakathā,* 1355; or, more famously, *Kālakācaryakathā,* 1494), and in the descriptive prose genre *varṇaka*. Prose in the genre of *bālāvabodha* (lit. instruction for children; a simple commentary on a text) was attractive even to beginning readers. The graphic prose of the eighteenth-century *Vacanā-mṛta* (Nectar of language), which emerged from a new Vaiṣṇava religious movement, the Svāminārāyaṇ sect, included graceful descriptive, narrative, and dramatic elements, and was quite popular in many sections of nineteenth-

---

43. Dīvatiā 1926: 18–19.

century Gujarati society. Legal and administrative prose had also begun to develop.[44]

The dominant mode of literary composition, however, had long been verse. Extensive and excellent work was available in a wide range of genres that developed over the centuries. These included many encountered already in this chapter and some that have had to be passed over: lyrical genres like *pada, garbī, duhā, chhapā, bāramāsa, dhoḷ, thāḷ, ārādh, āratī,* and narrative genres like *prabandha, kathā, rāso, caritra, ākhyān vāratā, saloko, pavado,* and *copāi.*[45] Poets who composed in these forms—from Narasiṃha Mahetā in the fifteenth century to Dayārām in the early nineteenth century—were read, sung, and revered.

There was considerable literary production more broadly conceived in philosophical verse compositions. Technically sophisticated accounts of ontological and epistemological systems of Advaitavedānta (both the *kevalādvaita* of Śaṅkara and the *śuddhādvaita* of Vallabha) were provided in several verse compositions. The better-known among these are works by Akho in the seventeenth century and by Dayārām in the early nineteenth century. In addition, a critique of the stagnant elements of the native cultural tradition was presented by all these poets under direct or indirect influence of the ascetic movements loosely grouped under the rubric Nāthsaṃpradāya, the tradition of the spiritual master Gorakhnāth (twelfth century?).

There was no aesthetic inadequacy in the tradition of Gujarati literature as it coursed its way down to the early part of the nineteenth century through seven centuries of memorable and sometimes profound expression in narrative verse and prose and lyrical poetry. It was a varied and strong literary tradition. Yet over a span of a mere two decades, from 1851 to 1870, a new epoch began and a new canon was constructed. And this phenomenon was greeted with unmistakable enthusiasm and respect by Gujarati authors, critics, and readers of the period.

The major literary and cultural innovations and events of the two decades from 1851 include the first Gujarati essay, "Maṇḍalī Malvāthī thatā Lābh" (The advantages of forming forums [for social reforms]) in 1851 by the pioneer of Gujarati prose, Narmadāśaṅkar Lālśaṅkar Dave; the first Gujarati novel, *Karaṇaghelo* (The mad Karaṇ), by Nandaśaṅkar Mehta in 1868; publication (in a restricted edition of about five copies) of Narmadāśaṅkar's autobiography, *Mārī Hakīkat* (My history) in 1866; composition of the personal

44. Jinavijaya 1931, gives an extensive but by no means an exhaustive collection of premodern Gujarati prose.

45. The *garbī,* for example, is a devotional lyric sung usually by men, often in praise of the Mother Goddess; the *bāramāsa* (lit. twelve months) is a lyric depicting the pain and longing of the beloved's separation from her lover; *thāl* (lit. a plate of food) is a devotional lyric depicting offerings of choice food to a deity, often metaphorically referring to the devotee's self.

diary *Nityanondh* (Daily notes) in the 1840s by Durgarām Mahetāji, a pioneering reformer and teacher, and of *Rojnīśī* (Diary), from 1861 to 1882, by Bholānāth Sarabhai (published, but only partially, in 1888); and the publication of essays of literary criticism and other prose writings by the pioneering critic Navalrām Pāṇḍya in *Śālāpatra* (School-leaf, i.e., school journal), the journal of the regional board of education, from 1850 on.[46] This was followed in 1862 by the publication of the first comprehensive work on Gujarati prosody, *Dalpat Piṅgaḷ,* by the pioneering and widely popular poet Dalpatrām.

In addition, several travelogues, in which a variety of prose styles and attitudes are discernible, were first published in Gujarati in this period. A sense of freedom, both of expression and of experience, was offered by the travel genre, which, along with journalism, long remained on the fringes of literature. In 1861, Dosabhai Karaka, a Parsi, wrote his *Garet Baritannī Musāpharī* (Travel to Great Britain).[47] In 1864, another Parsi anonymously wrote *Ek Pārsī Gharahasthanī Amerikānī Musāpharī* (A Parsi gentleman's travel to America). Apart from travel accounts of Great Britain and America, Gujarati men and at least one woman, a native princess, traveled through and wrote about parts of Europe and other regions, such south India, Iran, China, and Japan.[48] This genre seems, above all, to have opened up the pleasure of "writing our own prose" to many Gujaratis—Hindu, Parsi, and Muslim, men and women, alike.

Journalism and printing also participated in this process of dynamic transformation. Reviewing Gujarati literature of the six decades before 1911, a critic noted that in a relatively short period—from 1817 to 1867—as many as seventy-eight printing presses were started in Gujarat. He also lists ninety-four newspapers and socioliterary journals that began publication between 1831 and 1886.[49]

With their defeat of the Marathas in the Third Maratha War in 1818, the British effectively took control of western India. In 1820 the British government of the Bombay province established the Bombay Education Society. New "English" schools were started in Bombay, Surat, and Bharukaccha (Broach), with Gujarati as the medium of instruction but with texts and teachers prepared according to British specifications. In 1825 the Native Education Society, with Colonel Jarvis as its director, appointed a young Gujarati, twenty-two-year-old Rañchhodās Girdhardās Jhāveri, to undertake the production of Gujarati textbooks, produced according to the official guidelines. He was also to train native teachers to teach at the government schools. New

46. These essays were later collected in *Navalgranthāvalī* in 1891 (Pāṇḍya 1891).

47. In 1862, Mahīpatrām Rūprām Nīlkaṇṭh published his travelogue, *Englandni Musāpharīnā̃ Varṇan.*

48. The woman was a native princess, H. E. Nandakuvarbā of Gondal, whose *Gomaṇḍal Parikram* (1902) squarely criticizes Europe on many counts.

49. Derasari 1911: 18.

schools were started at Bombay, Surat, Broach, Nadiad, Kheḍa, Dholka, and Rajkot as British power moved beyond Bombay, the Indian city it created, and brought its constructs to remote parts of Gujarat. In 1840 a new board of education was established, following the decision in 1835 to change the medium of instruction from Gujarati to English. In 1842 four more schools were started at Bombay and one at Surat; one more was added at Ahmedabad in 1846. In 1857 universities were opened at Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras.

Gujarat had lost its political independence with the defeat and death of its last Rajput king, Karaṇ Vāghela, in the fourteenth century. After the decline of both the sultanate and the Mughul power in Gujarat, the region was mercilessly exploited by the Maratha rulers, the Peshwas, and the Sardars alike. Small local rulers, both Hindu and Muslim, had their bands of Arab, Afghan, Pathan, and Baloch mercenaries. When many parts of India rose against the British in the revolt of 1857, the political structures in Gujarat were too insignificant to contribute much to it. However, several Maratha leaders of the revolt sought and received shelter in Gujarat after the uprising was crushed. The seafaring Vaghers of Okhamaṇḍal in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, however, fought the British in their own independence struggle. When between 1862 and 1865 the Civil War in America prevented the export of cotton from America to England, a sharp rise in cotton exports from Gujarat followed, and both cotton growers and enterprising middlemen of Gujarat experienced vast short-term profits, followed suddenly by devastating losses in 1865–1866.

These events form the socioeconomic background against which Nandaśaṅkar Mehta wrote the first Gujarati novel, *Karaṇaghelo,* in 1866 (it was published in 1868). The making of the novel and the making of the man who wrote it are equally fascinating. *Nandaśaṅkar Jīvancaritra* (The life story of Nandaśaṅkar; 1916), a well-documented biography written by the novelist's son, Vinayak Nandaśaṅkar, gives an excellent picture of the novelist's life and times. It provides details of the warm, genuine relation young Nandaśaṅkar had with his patron, Mr. Russell, an enlightened British administrator.[50] Nandaśaṅkar, who in his later years worked as a senior district-level official in the British administration in Gujarat and was also briefly *dīvān* (chief minister) of the native state of Kutch, was known in intimate circles as "Mastersaheb." He had started his career as a teacher at an English school in Surat, his hometown. A product of the new educational system, he was "a bright pupil of Mr. Green, headmaster of the high school." In 1865–1866, Nandaśaṅkar was given preference over Navalrām Pāṇḍya in his appointment as the headmaster of the Teacher's Training College at Surat. He was a friend

---

50. A few details missing there are available in *Smaraṇamukur;* see Dīvatiā 1926.

of Bholānāth Sarabhai, father of the author of *Smaraṇamukura,* and "when the storybook *Karaṇaghelo* was published, all the friends of the Master, including my father, were surprised how this quiet, soft-spoken man had secretly written such in excellent book!"[51] *Karaṇaghelo* was the only book that Nandaśaṅkar produced.

Nandaśaṅkar wrote the novel with the encouragement of Mr. Russell. He determined the theme of his novel after some deliberation, though he seems not to have discussed this with his friends, Bholānāth Sarabhai and others.[52] He chose from among three possible options: the defeat and death of Karaṇ Vāghela, the last Hindu king of Gujarat; the defeat and downfall of Patāi Rāval, the Hindu king of Champaner, at the hands of Muhammad Begdo; and the destruction of the Somnath temple by Muhammad Ghazni. Karaṇ was destroyed, the novel tells us, because of his moral, and especially sexual, degradation. He lusted after the wife of his minister, Mādhav. Patāi was also morally degraded, especially sexually: he had lusted after the goddess Kālī of the Pavagaḍh Hills. A pre-nineteenth-century *garbo* (a lyrical narrative) on Patāi Rāval's destruction was quite well known in Nandaśaṅkar's time. That *garbo* gave a religious context to the Patāi Rāval theme. One wonders if Mastersaheb had had any discussion with Russell on the relative merits of the story of Patāi, with its religious (rather than political) context, though it, too, told of the moral and sexual corruption of a Hindu king.

In the third theme under consideration, that of the destruction of the Somnath temple, there is no spectacular moral and sexual debasement that might have justified the defeat of the Chaulukya king. No causal connection is made between defeat and destruction, on one hand, and moral collapse on the other. But if the story fails to justify political defeat, it also fails to justify political victory. The story of Karaṇ Vāghela, on the other hand, unfolds without any religious complications and shows neatly that the natives deserved to be defeated because they were morally corrupt.

If Nandaśaṅkar needed encouragement from Mr. Russell for the composition of *Karaṇaghelo,* his contemporary Narmadāśaṅkar Dave wrote the first essay of Gujarati literature in 1851 without encouragement from anyone. Narmadāśaṅkar, or simply Narmad (1833–1886), like Nandaśaṅkar, studied for a while at a premier English school, the Elphinstone Institute in Bombay, but he dropped out. He did not quit because he failed to make the grade; in fact he received scholarships through his scores on open tests. Rather, Narmad had gotten married long before he joined the school, and his young bride came of age while he was at the Elphinstone Institute. The girl was shifted from her father's home to her in-laws' home, and Narmad was asked to attend to his householder's duties. Narmad gives details of all

51. Dīvatiā 1926: 108.
52. Dīvatiā 1926: 10.

this in his autobiography, adding, "At that time I had developed a keen desire to meet the woman." He also informs us that he cited reasons of health for dropping out of school,[53] and reprints the certificates in which Mr. Green and others had praised his knowledge of English and Indian history—but these were nothing comparable to the warm words Mr. Green had had for Nandaśaṅkar.

Narmad's larger moral philosophy was as different from Nandaśaṅkar's—this is hinted at here and there in his autobiography—as was his writerly ethos. In fact the latter difference reveals the pathways that connect Narmad with Dayārām, the last of the premodern Gujarati poets.

In 1865, Narmad collected his prose writing in a book titled simply *Narmagadya* (Narmad's prose). Navalrām Pāṇḍya, the pioneering critic and Narmad's contemporary, made an interesting observation about this work, comparing *Narmagadya* with the prose of *Hope Vacanmālā* (Hope's readers), a set of well-known textbooks prepared for use in the new schools under the supervision of Theodore Hope, director of the board of education: "In the readers produced by Hopesaheb for Gujarati schools, the entire attention was fixed on simplicity of diction and hence in it the very native turn of the language was lost." In contrast, those writing in the traditional way of the *śāstri,* or religious scholar, "wrote pompous Sanskritized Gujarati." But "Narmad's prose," the critic observed, "is as native as it is simple, as mature as it is native." He added that the prose in *Narmagadya* "was equally dear to the educated and the uneducated." It "earned the affection equally of scholars of English and the scholars of Sanskrit."[54] Navalrām thus placed Narmad in a blissful and perfect region somewhere between the *śāstri,* the scholar of the traditional variety, and the *saheb,* the new scholar of the colonial variety. In one sense, as he pointed out, it is a position of honor. But in another, this location between *śāstri* and *saheb* could be a dangerous one of isolation.

Following the publication of *Narmagadya,* Narmad wrote *Suratnī Mukhtesār Hakīkat* (A brief history of Surat, 1866), a sociopolitical history of his hometown. It was published as *Narmagadya,* book 2, issue 1. In the same year he wrote his autobiography, *Marī Hakīkat* (My history), and published it as *Narmagadya,* book 2, issue 2, in an edition of about five copies. "I have written out these facts," he observed, "not for others but for myself, not for renown, but for the purpose of receiving encouragement from the past for the future." It was from his own relation—a critical relation—with a past both personal and cultural that he hoped to derive this encouragement.

In 1874 Narmad was introduced to Dr. Buller, director of the Department of Public Instruction of the Government of Bombay Province and a keen

53. Dave 1994: 38–39 ("I gave the excuse that I was down with cholera, though I had recovered fully from it").

54. Pāṇḍya 1891: 1150–51.

student of Indian languages. Narmad had by then become a renowned and beloved poet of Gujarat, and a bold social reformer. Dr. Buller suggested that a new edition of *Narmagadya* be prepared by the author, keeping in view the needs of the school system under Buller's department. Narmad accepted the offer and accordingly prepared the second edition of *Narmagadya* in 1874. "Dr. Bullersaheb has made some important suggestions while reading through the (printer's) proofs," noted Narmad in his usual candid way. Narmad was flexible, but on his own terms. "Changes have been made [by me] in the ideas and language of the writings composed [by me] many years ago. The spelling has been kept as per the standard fixed for the Gujarati Government Schools."[55]

Two thousand copies of the 1874 edition of *Narmagadya* were printed. Before the copies could be sent to the schools, however, Dr. Buller was replaced as director of the Department of Public Instruction by K. M. Chatfield. Chatfield found it necessary to make certain additional changes in the text of the book. The department wrote to Narmad informing him of the necessary changes and asking his opinion; he did not acknowledge the letter. Chatfield's action was recorded by Mahīpatrām Nīlkaṇṭh, Gujarati translator in the Department of Education, who was asked by the director to make the emendations. Mahīpatrām Nīlkaṇṭh noted: "Several essays [in *Narmagadya*] included writing that was not suitable for teaching at the school. When the Directorsaheb came to know of this, he had the printed pages of such parts destroyed."[56] A new edition was prepared in 1875, with the original text considerably altered by Mahīpatrām Nīlkaṇṭh at Chatfield's insistence. The edition of 1874, prepared entirely by Narmad, on the other hand, does not seem to have been destroyed only in part by Mr. Chatfield: Of the two thousand copies printed, only two complete and bound copies have survived.[57] This strongly suggests that Chatfield ordered the destruction of the entire print run of the 1874 edition, and not merely of selected chapters.

Mahīpatrām Nīlkaṇṭh stated in his preface to the 1875 edition, "So far as possible the author's writing has not been changed. And where it was necessary to make changes, the new writing has generally been added within brackets." A detailed study of the two editions, however, undertaken in 1935 by the Gandhian poet-critic Rāmanārāyaṇ Pāṭhak (1945), shows how extensive were the changes, made at the director's instruction, that were not enclosed in brackets.[58] Navalrām Pāṇḍya, who worked as a teacher and administrator in the Department of Education, noted unequivocally: "[The edi-

---

55. Dave 1975: 7.

56. Dave 1975: 8.

57. One is at Gujarat Vidyāpiṭh, Ahmedabad, and the other is in the personal collection of Gambhirsimh Gohel. No unbound or even partial copies are extant.

58. Pāṭhak 1945: 101–21.

tion of *Narmagadya*] that is old, has been listed [by me] as 'old' so that the original writing of Narmadāśaṅkar [without the changes made by Mahīpatrām] could be recognized. These changes had been introduced through consideration for what is proper and improper for the schools. But the educated reader expects the original writing."[59]

One of the changes made in the 1875 edition concerns Narmad's writing on Dayārām, the great *bhakti* poet who had died in 1852. In a sense, it concerns Narmad's views on Gujarat's entire cultural history, as well as on moral values and norms. Dayārām is said to have had a relationship with Ratanbai, a woman of the goldsmith caste, who lived with him as a disciple. The 1875 edition, prepared under Chatfield's instructions, condemns this relationship and suggests that, although the poet was greatly respected by his readers, his lifestyle had left room for ethical improvement. It also adds the comment that Dayārām's poems were mediocre. All this, of course, was without the square brackets of editorial intervention.

Narmad's own views on Dayārām and his relationship with Ratanbai were quite different, as can be seen in the original *Narmagadya*. In a matter-of-fact style Narmad observes: "There are three main points worth noting from the period between the twentieth year of Dayārām's life and his fortieth year. First, he undertook a long journey [across India]. Second, he became a follower of the Puṣṭi sect [of Vaishnavism]. And third, he became related to a beloved who never left his side." Narmad noted that Ratanbai had been widowed when she was only seven and when she was eighteen had met Dayārām, who was then thirty-two years old. "The poet sent two Vaiṣṇava [disciples] to the goldsmith woman and inquired whether she would come to his house to fetch water"—a phrase well understood for what it did not say. "She replied, 'How could I possibly fetch water?' Yet he somehow or other convinced her." Narmad concludes his narrative on Dayārām's relation with Ratanbai with these simple words, "Then she lived with him till his death."[60]

The Chatfield edition replaces this with the following denunciation: "[Dayārām] had a widow of the goldsmith caste, Ratan, for sexual abuse. She served the poet until his death. . . . Had Dayārām married her instead of having illicit sex with her all the time, he would have had a much better reputation amongst gentlemen." This substitution, too, appears without the square brackets of editorial intervention.[61]

The point here is not merely the unethical manipulations on the part of Chatfield and Nīlkaṇṭh in attributing to Narmad their own views on Dayārām. The larger issue is the way Indians were expected to relate to their past. *Karaṇaghelo* invited its readers to understand the fall of the last independent

59. Pāṇḍya 1891: 155.
60. Dave 1975: 94–95.
61. Dave 1975: *prākkathan,* p. 9.

king of Gujarat in a way that Mr. Green and Mr. Russell thought was right for newly educated Gujaratis. By contrast, the original *Narmagadya* invited its readers to understand the life of the last medieval poet of Gujarat in a way that was not acceptable to Mr. Chatfield. Narmad's way of deriving "encouragement from the past for the future" had no place in Chatfield's scheme of things. Dayārām had to be denounced, preferably in Narmad's own words. To this end, Chatfield put to good use his own native assistant and a well-oiled printing press. From 1875 on, the Chatfield edition of *Narmagadya* was taught and studied in the schools as if it had been Narmad's own writing.

There are real complexities in the interactions of Mahīpatrām, Narmad, Navalrām, Buller, and Chatfield, which no brief account is able to capture. It is certainly the case that some English teacher-administrators bore a deep and active love for Gujarat—men like Mr. Green or, more dramatically, Alexander Kinloch Forbes, author of the important chronicle of medieval Gujarat, the *Rās Mālā* (Garland of legends; 1856), and founder of a celebrated literary society.[62] But the thrust of the Narmad incident goes beyond questions of literary genre or the hermeneutics of a particular work to touch on the ways in which the past and the present, the subjugated and the master, the self and the other, interacted with each other and produced new social and aesthetic meaning.

In the course of the nineteenth century the nature, structure, and functioning of social, economic, and political power in Gujarat changed fundamentally. This power as it confronted poets from Narasiṃha to Dayārām was basically different from the comparable power that confronted the nineteenth-century Gujarati writers of the novel, the essay, the diary, the travelogue, and so on. The difference—the newness—of this power was produced by the way it related to culture. Narmad was expected to alter his understanding of the world, and his refusal to interpret Dayārām in the manner Chatfield asked indicates his will to freedom. That refusal, however, was only the tentative beginning of an actual movement toward freedom.

The period between 1870 and 1909 saw the emergence of an entirely new set of writers. The bright students of the new English school and the well-trained teachers of the pre-1870 period were now replaced by the first graduates of Bombay University, many of whom went on to become well-known professors. Among these were Mahīpatrām's son, Rāmanbhai Nīlkaṇṭh; Bholānāth's son, Narsiṃhrāo Dīvatiā; Dalpatrām's rebellious son, Nānālāl; Maṇiśaṅkar Bhaṭṭa (who had the sobriquet "Kant"), who converted to Christianity for a time; Ānandaśaṅkar Dhrūv, author of *Āpano Dharma* (Our dharma); Maṇilāl Dvivedī, who was invited to the International Congress of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 and made memorable by Swami

62. Forbes founded the Gujarati Vernacular Society (now known as the Forbes/Farbas Sabhā) in 1848. He also started a journal, *Buddhiprakāś* (Light of intelligence) in 1850.

Vivekananda; and above all, Govardhanrām Tripāthi, who also wrote in Sanskrit and in English, and who was the author of the epoch-making novel *Sarasvatīcandra.*

Govardhanrām Tripāṭhi's writings, which include a "scrapbook" diary in English, an elegiac poem in Sanskrit, and a biography of his widowed daughter in Gujarati, are marked by a bold yet balanced way of inquiring into basic questions of contemporary Gujarati, modern European, and ancient Indian cultures. His writing evinces all the requisite powers of intelligence and artistry for encompassing the different elements—seemingly unrelated, contradictory, or ambiguous—of contemporary reality, and formulating from them a cohesive and comprehensive image. He refused to be satisfied with what he called an "eclectic combination" of contemporary Gujarati or Indian culture with contemporary Western culture, at the cost of excluding ancient Indian culture from the interaction.

Before Gandhi, it was Govardhanrām Tripāṭhi who attempted to provide a comprehensive critique of colonial India, presenting in his novel *Sarasvatīcandra* (published in four volumes between 1888 and 1904) a picture of the social decay, political confusion, and psychological and religious strains and strivings of nineteenth-century India, both native and British. A tragic love story at the microlevel is interwoven with a macrolevel analysis of the emergent commercial power of Bombay and the triumphant political power of the British, the decaying social and political structures of inland Gujarat, and the social-spiritual experiments in the hills of Sundaragiri, where the author provided his blueprint for a resurgent India.

There have been two principal debates about the Gujarati novel of the nineteenth century. The first is limited in scope and concerned with origins, asking whether it is *Karaṇaghelo,* written in 1866 and published in 1868, that should be taken as the first novel or Mahīpatrām Rūprām's *Sāsu Vahunī Laḍāi,* published likewise in 1868. The meticulous critic Vijayray Vaidya prefers *Karaṇaghelo,* since he takes it as a "proper novel," and describes the other book as a "mere story."[63] The criteria he and several other critics adopt are formal ones modeled on the European novel. The second debate, though focused on *Sarasvatīcandra,* the most talked-about Gujarati novel of the century, is conceptually larger. Surprisingly, it reverses the criteria of preference, abandoning both the formal criterion and the European model. The critic Nānālāl, while praising the book, forgoes the term *navalkathā* (new tale, i.e., the novel), which had always been used in Gujarati criticism, as it is now, and instead discusses (as the title of his 1933 book announces) "the place of *Sarasvatīcandra* among *jagat-kādambario* [world novels]." Marathi criticism employs the word *kādambarī* for novel, and by using it Nānālāl intends to evoke the

---

63. Vaidya 1959: 78.

ancient context of Bāṇa's Sanskrit narrative form, thus deviating from the European novel as model.[64] Another critic, Ānandaśaṅkar Dhrūv, describes *Sarasvatīcandra* as a *purāṇa,* again putting forth a formal criterion very different from that of the European novel.[65]

Govardhanrām is neither a Māṇikyacandra nor a Bhālaṇ, and is thus attempting neither to bring a non-Bāṇa theme stylistically closer to Bāṇa, nor to take a Bāṇa-theme stylistically away from Bāṇa. In all Gujarati literary histories, *Sarasvatīcandra* is finally and rightly seen as a *navalkathā* and not, in any serious analytical way, as a narrative along the lines of either Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* or the *purāṇa*s. Each of these species has its own structure, which is quite unlike the narrative structure of Govardhanrām's composition. What then is the point of this second debate? Perhaps it is this: It draws our attention to the way that the deviation in *Sarasvatīcandra*—away from both the Indian *kathā* and the Western novel—was seen as an achievement, while the deviation in *Sāsu Vahunī Laḍāi,* in 1866, was seen as a shortcoming. Thus we return to Navalrām's observation about Narmad's prose: that it is different from the prose of both the *śāstri* and the *saheb,* and yet is pleasing to both scholars of Sanskrit and scholars of English.

Perhaps an even more important achievement of *Sarasvatīcandra* than its formal or genre innovation resides in its larger signification. This derives in the first instance from the author's ability to escape the confines of the "eclectic combination" demanded by the colonial power of the period. By crossing those limits the author achieves his freedom to relate, on his own terms, to both past and contemporary "images of Hindu society"—as Mahatma Gandhi put it in his literary reflections on the novel—and to the demands of political power. In this sense *Sarasvatīcandra* establishes an important historical link between the *Narmagadya,* on the one hand, and the Mahatma's own epoch-making work of 1909, *Hind Svarāj* (Indian self-rule), on the other.[66]

In an insightful book on colonial India the eminent Gujarati poet Nirañjan Bhagat has described *Hind Svarāj* as a "revolt against the self " *(paṇḍanī sāme band).* He explains: "Both the objective and the method invoked by Gandhiji in *Hind Svarāj* were completely different from the objective and the method of those who were educated [in the British system of education in India]."[67] In the early phase of his life, Gandhi himself was one of these educated Indians. But *Hind Svarāj,* which resulted from a period of intense read-

64. Kavi 1933: 1–6.

65. Kavi 1933.

66. The work was published in English translation in 1910, under the misleadingly narrow title *Indian Home Rule,* on which see later in the chapter. Gandhi's reflections on *Sarasvatīcandra* are found in Desai 1948, vol. 1.

67. Bhagat 1975: 137–38.

ing, discussion, and self-searching in South Africa, marks Gandhi's breaking away from his personal past and the past of his cultural milieu.

Hinda Svarājya (the more exact pronunciation of the title of the work in Gujarati, in which Gandhi originally wrote the book; *Hind Swaraj* is used in the English translation) is meant to lead India to *svarājya.* But, as Gandhi never tires of asking, what precisely is *svarājya?* For one thing, what kind of relationship with the West does it presuppose? The English translation of the original Gujarati uses the word "Western civilization" and condemns it in no uncertain terms. But is the author of *Hind Svarāj* an isolationist and indigenist? What do the terms "civilization" and *svarājya* mean within the text itself? How exactly does the book enable us to relate the Indian self to various others? Within the framework of colonialism, how does *svarājya* address the questions of subjugation and revolt? In the context of these questions, two Gujarati terms and their use in the Gujarati prose of the nineteenth century claim our attention. Each of these was a keyword in Gandhi's original Gujarati version of his masterpiece.

The first term is *sudhāro.* In the English translation, *sudhāro* is translated as "civilization." *Sudhāro,* however, literally means "improvement" or "reform" and was a central concept in a crucial debate that occupied nineteenth-century Gujarati literature from Narmad onward. The period from 1851 to 1875 is in fact known to historiographers of Gujarati literature as *sudhārak yug,* "the age of reform." The Gujarati text of *Hind Svarāj* uses the words *sudhāro* and *kudhāro*— "a change for the better" and "a change for the worse"—in opposition, especially in chapters 5 and 6. While the word *sudhāro* is consistently translated in the English version as "civilization," *kudhāro,* used effectively and dialectically in the original, is not translated at all. The last paragraph of chapter 5, for example, would translate literally from the Gujarati original as follows:

> It is not due to any peculiar fault of the English people, but is due to the fault of their—or rather Europe's—reforms *[sudhāro].* Those changes for the better are [in reality] changes for the worse *[kudhāro].* Under it the people of Europe are being ruined.[68]

Gandhi's own English translation reads:

> It is not due to any peculiar fault of the English people, but the condition is due to modern civilization. It is a civilization only in name. Under it the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day.[69]

68. Gandhi [1910] 1941: 22.
69. Gandhi 1939: 24. The complexity (if not confusion) is Gandhi's own. He mentions Edward Carpenter's *Civilization: Its Causes and Cure. And Other Essays* (1891), which he had read just prior to writing *Hind Svarāj.* In the original Gujarati text Gandhi translated the title of Carpenter's book as *Sudhāro, Tenā Kāraṇo ane Tenī Davā* (chapter 6). Notably, Gandhi does not

The word *svarājya* has been rendered as "home rule" in the subtitle of the English version, *Hind Swaraj, or, Indian Home Rule.* In 1921 Gandhi commented on this term: "But I would warn the reader against thinking that I am today aiming at swaraj" as described in *Hind Swaraj* itself, that is, as full political autonomy. He goes on to introduce two more terms that clarify this point: "I am individually working for the self-rule pictured in *Hind Swaraj.* But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of parliamentary swaraj."[70]

Similarly, when we look closely at the use of the terms "Indian civilization" and "Western civilization" in the translated version, as well as *sudhāro* and *kudhāro* in the original, we can see how Gandhi perceives the source of the strengths and weaknesses of both India and England. He is not referring to any static, eternal structure of social organization, whether Indian or European. He is analyzing two processes of change, *sudhāro* and *kudhāro.* He explains how a certain process of change is better and preferable to another. Then he shows how power, especially political power, is generated through a specific process of change, *sudhāro,* which links up to sources of strength. Conversely, he shows how all power, including political power, has to be given up when one accepts the other process of change, *kudhāro,* which severs the links with those sources of strength. Those who want to subjugate others prompt them to give up their own power.

In chapter 7, "Why Was India Lost?" Gandhi explains, "The English have not taken India, we have given it to them. They are not in India on their own strength, but because we keep them."[71] Gandhi arrives at this understanding through his fearless and penetrating analysis of the sources of the power the British had over India and the structure through which they cultivated these sources. *Hind Svarāj* calls upon Indians to reject these structures—the educational systems, the railways, hospitals, the judiciary, and other institutions cleverly used by the British. Gandhi ultimately calls upon Indians to cease to be the source of British power. Thus were the mighty, nonviolent weapons of *satyagraha* (holding to truth) and *asahakāra* (noncooperation) fashioned by Gandhi in *Hind Svarāj* and other writings of the period. They brought Gujarati prose of the preceding fifty years to an epoch-making culmination of worldwide significance.

---

employ the word *rūḍhi,* often found in nineteenth-century Gujarati prose along with *sudhāro* and *kudhāro.* While *rūḍhi* expresses the sense of stagnating tradition in that context, it originally meant only "tradition." Hence, one would imagine that Gandhi might have used *rūḍhi* rather than *sudhāro* to translate "civilization." But in the Gujarati text of *Hind Svarāj* the words *sudhāro* and *kudhāro* do all the work.

70. Prasad 1985: 5.
71. Gandhi 1939: 27.

As noted earlier, Nirañjan Bhagat describes *Hind Svarāj* as a revolt against one's own self. This is so in two ways. First, Gandhi radically changed his own views on the "reforms" introduced into India by Western education and technology. Before his period of intense reading and discussion, just prior to the writing of *Hind Svarāj* in 1909, Gandhi's views of the reforms were not different from those of the educated elite of India. But *Hind Svarāj* was equally a revolt against the self-identity that India had cultivated and that made its people "give India to the British"—in other words, against whatever it was that had made India welcome British rule as a liberation from the oppressive regimes of its own rulers.

From this perspective *Karaṇaghelo,* written two generations earlier, was an instrument in the hands of the hegemonic power, prompting Indians to assume a false, distorted self-image. The idea that the last Hindu king had deserved what he got runs through the discourse of the book, suggesting that British hegemony was a welcome correction for colonial India. *Hind Svarāj,* by contrast, focuses attention not on the British but on the Indians. Gandhi's work is ultimately not a condemnation of the other, but a critique of the self. It is so because it reveals to Indians the futility of the reformist initiatives they had undertaken under the guidance of the British. And it reveals at the same time the equal futility of the anarchist. According to *Hind Svarāj,* both kinds of political and social action had produced a self that led to subjugation by the other: "It is not that India was taken by the British, we have given it to them."

Hind Svarāj is a prose of the dialogical in several senses of the word. Many sorts of dialogic interaction had emerged as Gujarati prose unfolded during the nineteenth century, starting from the prose of journalism and travelogue, moving through the prose of diaries and memories, and arriving at the prose of fictional narrative. The public and the private, the realistic and the fictional, the inclusive and the exclusive—different types of prose evolved gradually, reflecting the simultaneity of India's needs to accept the West and to expel it. The emerging Indian reality is a *paṭa* (cloth) woven of both of these *tantu*s (threads) of conflicting hues, producing a fascinating Indian calico.

Gandhi's masterpiece brings together conflicting elements of a century-long narrative of Gujarati prose. Even at the level of the different techniques of expression from journalism to fiction, *Hind Svarāj* embodies the efforts of the preceding hundred years. It was written during a voyage and thus evokes the memory of the early travelogues in Gujarati. It is a dialogue between the reader of the newspaper and its editor—it was in fact first published in *Indian Opinion,* the journal that Gandhi edited—and it thus reminds us of the dissociation of readers from their newspaper so subtly (if perhaps unintentionally) depicted in *Smaraṇamukura.* It recalls, as well, the utopian picture of the ways to freedom presented in the dream sequences of *Saras-*

vatīcandra. Narmad's refusal to look at the past culture of Gujarat through the distorting eyes of colonial power finds its fully empowered analogue in Gandhi's refusal to look at India's past through those same eyes, now functioning in a much more subtle way. In *Hind Svarāj* Gujarati prose finally stepped out of the hesitant period of the nineteenth century and the limited geography of Gujarat to achieve—in the words Leo Tolstoy wrote upon his first encounter with this Gujarati book in English translation—the "highest significance for the entire human race."[72]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akho. 1962. *Akhānā Chappa.* Edited by Umāśaṅkar Jośi. Ahmedabad: Vora and Company.

———. 1967. *Akhegītā.* Edited by Umāśaṅkar Jośi et al. Ahmedabad: Gujarat University Press.

———. 1988. *Akhānī Kāvyakṛtio.* Edited by Śivlāl Jesalpūra. Ahmedabad: Sahitya Samsodhan Prakasan.

———. 1993. *Akhākṛt Kāvyo.* Edited by Narmadāśaṅkar Mehta. Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society.

Asāit. 1879. *Bhavāi Saṅgrah.* Edited by Mahīpatrām Rūprām Nīlkaṇṭh. Ahmedabad: Published by the editor.

———. 1945. *Haṃsauli.* Edited by K. K. Śāstri. Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society.

Bhagat, Nirañjan. 1975. *Yantravijñān ane Mantrakavitā.* Ahmedabad: Vora and Company.

Bhālaṇ. 1916. *Kādambarī.* Edited by K. H. Dhrūv. Ahmedabad: Published by the editor.

———. 1924. *Bhālaṇkṛt be Nalākhyān.* Edited by R. C. Modi. Ahmedabad: Diamond Jubilee Printing Press.

Bhati, Narayaṇsiṃh. 1989. *Prācīn Ḍiṅgaḷ Gīt Sāhitya.* Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagaṛ.

Bhayani, H. C. 1976. *Gujarātī Bhāṣānā Itihāsnī Keṭlīk Samasyāo.* Bombay: R. R. Shethni Company.

———. 1986. *Kṛṣṇakāvya.* Ahmedabad: Rangadvar Prakashan.

———. 1988. *Studies in Deśya Prākṛt.* Ahmedabad: Kalikala Sarvajna Sri Hemacandracarya Navam Janma Satabdi Smrti Siksan Samskar Nidhi.

———, ed. 1975. *Prācīn Gurjar Kāvyasañcay.* Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology.

Dalāl, C. D. 1920. *Prācīn Gurjar Kāvyasaṅgrah.* Baroda: Central Library.

Dalpatrām: see Travādi, Dalpatrām Dahyabhai.

Dave, Narmadāśaṅkar. 1865. *Narmagadya.* Bombay: Government Central Book Depot.

———. 1866a. *Narmagadya.* Book 2, issue 1. Bombay: Government Central Book Depot.

———. 1866b. *Narmagadya.* Book 2, issue 2. Bombay: Government Central Book Depot.

---

72. Gandhi 1958–1989, 10: 505, and see Parel 1997: 139.

———. 1912. *Jūnu Narmagadya.* Edited by I. S. Desai. Bombay: Gujarati Printing Press.

———. 1975. *Narmagadya.* Edited by Gambhirsiṃh Gohel. Vadodara: Premanand Sahitya Sabha.

———. 1994. *Mārī Hakīkat.* Edited by Rāmeś Śukla. Surat: Kavi Narmad Yugavarta Trust.

Dayārām. 1860. *Dayārāmkṛt Kāvyasaṅgrah.* Edited by Narmadāśaṅkar Dave. Bombay: Union Printing Press.

Derasari, Dahyabhai. 1911. *Sāṭhīnā Sāhityanuṃ Digdarśan.* Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vidyasabha.

Desai, Mahādevbhai. 1948–1980. *Mahādevbhāinī Dāyarī.* 18 vols. Edited by M. Parikh et al. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Prakashan.

Desai, Sudha R. 1972. *Bhavāi: A Medieval Form of Ancient Dramatic Art (nāṭya) as Preserved in Gujarat.* Ahmedabad: Gujarat University.

Dhrūv, Ānandśaṅkar. 1941. *Sāhityavicār.* Edited by R. V. Pāthak and Umāśaṅkar Jośi. Ahmedabad: Gurjar Grantharatna Karyalay.

Dīvatiā, Narsiṃhrāo. 1926. *Smaraṇamukur.* Bombay: Sahitya Prakashak and Company.

Gandhi, Mohandas K. 1939. *Hind Swaraj, or, Indian Home Rule.* Ahmedabad: Navjivan.

———. [1910] 1941. *Hind Svarāj.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Prakashan.

———. 1947. *Satyana Prayogo athavā Ātmakathā.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Prakashan Mandir.

———. 1958–1989. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.* 100 vols. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

George, K. M., ed. 1984. *Comparative Indian Literature I and II.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Hemacandra. 1934. *Śabdānuśāsana.* Edited by Hemānśuvijaya. Ahmedabad: Anandaji Kalyanajini Pedhi.

———. 1938. *Kāvyānuśāsana.* 2 vols. Edited by R. C. Parikh. Bombay: Mumbapuristha-Srimahavira-Jainavidyalayam.

———. 1961. *Chandonuśāsana.* Edited by H. D. Velankar. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Jhaveri, M. M. 1978. *History of Gujarati Literature.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Jinavijaya, ed. 1926. *Jain Aitihāsik Gurjara Kāvyasañcay.* Bhavanagar: Srijain Atmanand Sabha.

———. 1931. *Prācīn Gujarātī Gadyasandarbh.* Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vidyapith.

———. 1941. *Purātanaprabandhasaṅgraha.* Calcutta: Singhi Jaina Jnanapitha.

———. 1948. *Bharateśvarabāhubalirās tathā Buddhirās.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Jośi, Umāśaṅkar, et al. 1973–1981. *Gujarātī Sāhityano Itihās.* 4 vols. Ahmedabad: Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.

Kadakia, K. 1994. *Bhavāi: Naṭ, Nartan ane Saṅgīt.* Ahmedabad: University Granthnirman Board, Gujarat Rajya.

Karaka, Dosabhai Framjī. 1861. *Gareṭ Bariṭanni Musāpharī.* Bombay: Daftar Ashakara Printing Press.

Kavi, Nānālāl. 1933. *Jagatkādaṃbariomā Sarasvatīcandranū Sthān.* Nadiad: Chandrashankar Narmadashankar Pandya.

Kothāri, Jayant, and Jayant Gadit. 1989–. *Gujarātī Sāhityakoṣ.* 2 vols. Ahmedabad: Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.

Labdhisāgarsūri. 1856. *Śrīpṛthvīcandracaritram.* Jamnagar: Pandit Shravak Hiralal Hansaraj at Jain Bhaskaroday Press.

Maheshvari, Hiralal. 1980. *History of Rajasthani Literature.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Mahetā, Narasiṃha. 1981. *Narasiṃha Mahetānī Kāvyakṛtio.* Edited by S. Jesalpūra. Ahmedabad: Sahitya Sanshodhan Prakashan.

Majumdar, M. R. 1965. *Cultural History of Gujarat.* Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

Māṇikyacandrasūri. 1910. *Yaśodharacaritra.* [Edited and] published by Hiralāl Hansrāj (Jamnagarwala). Jamnagar: Jainbhaskaroday Chhapkhana.

———. 1951. *Śrīdharacarit Mahākāvya.* Edited by Jñānavijaya. Ahmedabad: Published by the editor.

———. 1966. *Pṛthvīcandracarit.* Edited by B. B. Trivedi. Bombay: Forbes Gujarati Sabha.

Māṇikyasundarsūri: see Māṇikyacandrasūri.

Mehta, Nandaśaṅkar. 1968. *Karaṇaghelo.* Bombay: N. M. Tripathi.

Mehta, Vināyak N. [1916] 1979. *Nandaśaṅkar Jīvancaritra.* Bombay: N. M. Tripathi.

Munshi, K. M. 1935. *Gujarat and its Literature.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

———. 1944. *The Glory that was Gurjaradesa.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Nahata, Agarchand. 1953. "Āth Prāntīya Bhāṣāoke Savaiye." *Rajasthan Bharati* 3 (3–4): 118–20.

Nandakuvarbā. 1902. *Gomaṇḍal Parikram.* Gondal: Gondal Town Press.

Nīlkaṇṭh, Mahīpātram Rūprām, ed. 1911. *Bhavāi Saṇgrah.* Ahmedabad: Published by the editor.

Padmanābh. 1959. *Kāhnaḍadeprabandh.* Edited by K. B. Vyas. Bombay: N. M. Tripathi.

Pāṇḍya, Navalrām. 1891. *Navalgranthāvalī.* Edited by Govardhanrām M. Tripāthi. Vadodara: Lakshmivilas Printing Press.

Parel, A. J., ed. 1997. *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pāthak, Rāmanārāyaṇ. 1945. *Narmad: Arvācin Gadyapadyano Ādya Praṇetā.* Ahmedabad: Bharati Sahitya Sangha.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1995. "Literary History, Region, and Nation in South Asia: Introductory Note." *Social Scientist* 23 (10–12): 1–7.

Prabhu, R. K., and U. R. Rao, eds. 1967. *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi.* Ahmedabad: Navjivan.

Prajapati, M. K., et al. 1998. *Contribution of Gujarat to Sanskrit Literature.* Patan: Dr. M. I. Prajapati Shashtipurti Sanan Samiti.

Prasad, Nageshwar, ed. 1985. *Hind Swaraj: A Fresh Look.* New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation.

Premānand. 1979. *Premānandanī Kāvyakṛtio.* 2 vols. Edited by K. K. Śāstri. Ahmedabad: Sahitya Samsodhan Prakasan.

Rūpavijayagaṇi. 1918. *Śrīpṛthvīcandracaritam.* Edited and published by Purushottamdas Gigabhai. Bhavnagar: Shrividyavijay Mudralay.

Sandesara, B. J. 1979. *Mahāmātya Vastupāḷanū Sāhityamaṇḍaḷ.* Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vidya Sabha.

Sankalia, Hasmukhlal. 1949. *Studies in the Historical and Cultural Geography and Ethnography of Gujarat.* Poona: Deccan College, Postgraduate and Research Institute.

Śāstri, K. K. 1952. *Kavicaritra.* 2 vols. Ahmedabad: Gurjarat Vidyasabha.

———, ed. 1957. *Bhālaṇ Kṛta Nalākhyā.* Vadodara: M. S. University.

Śekhavāt, K. 1990. *Rājasthān Bhāṣā Sāhitya Saṃskṛti.* Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar.

Shah, K. R. 1979. *Mahārāo Lakhpatsiṃha.* Vadodara: M. S. University of Baroda.

Shah, R. C. 1979a. *Samayasundar.* Ahmedabad: Kumkum Prakasan.

———. 1979b. *Paḍilehā.* Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granthratna Karyalay.

Topīvāla, Candrakānt, et al. 1990. *Gujarātī Sāhityakoś.* Vol. 2. Ahmedabad: Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.

Travādi, Dalpatrām Dahyabhai. 1862. *Dalpatpiṅgaḷ.* Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society.

———. 1979. *Dalpatkāvya.* Vol. 1. Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society.

———. 1986. *Dalpatkāvya.* Vol. 2. Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society.

Vaidya, Vijayrāy Kalyāṇrāy. 1959. *Gat Śataknū Sāhitya.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Vajrasensūri. 1975. "Bharateśvar Bāhubali Ghor." In Bhayani 1975.

At the Crossroads of Indic and Iranian Civilizations

Sindhi Literary Culture

Ali S. Asani

On account of its unique geographical position as a buffer zone between the Indic and the Iranian-Arab worlds, Sindh has been a place where different cultures have met and interacted with each other for many centuries. Consequently, its literary culture is characterized by convergences: between oral and written genres and forms, and between different languages, literatures, alphabets, scripts, systems of prosody, grammatical structures, and even literary symbols. Not surprisingly, Sindh has been a region where major religious traditions—Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam—have been in dialogue with one another, giving rise to rather unique forms of religious syncretism. Throughout its history Sindh has also been home to a variety of mystical movements, Indic and non-Indic. Many aspects of premodern Sindhi literary culture reflect this rapprochement between mystical traditions, resulting in the extraordinary situation in which literary works of Islamic mysticism have been understood and loved by Hindus as much as they have been by Muslims.

In its exploration of the literary culture of the Sindhi language, this chapter focuses mainly on the precolonial period, that is, before the imposition of British colonial rule over Sindh in the mid-nineteenth century. It discusses several related aspects of Sindhi literary culture: conceptions of literature and authorship; the significance of written traditions and scripts in defining literary as well as social identity; the role of oral literary traditions in the region's religious and cultural life, and their interface with traditions of musical performance; and the intricate relationship between Sindhi and Persian— for several centuries the language of political and religious hegemony in premodern Sindh. At appropriate points in the discussion, the chapter also examines the manner in which contemporary constructions of religious and national identities have influenced Sindhi scholars in their interpretations of medieval Sindhi literary culture.

<center>SINDH AND THE SINDHI LANGUAGE</center>

The Sindhi language is spoken today by some 15 million people, the overwhelming majority of whom live in the province of Sindh, in Pakistan. In the aftermath of the subcontinent's Partition in 1947, a small number of Sindhi speakers, Hindu by faith, moved to India, where they settled in the principal urban centers of north and northwestern India, including Bombay and New Delhi. Sindhis also live in diaspora in Southeast Asia, Africa, and, more recently, Britain and North America. Although the term "Sindh" is now used to refer to the southern province of Pakistan, historically it has been used more broadly to apply to the entire valley of the river Indus, extending northward into the foothills of the Himalayas. Geographically separated from neighboring areas by desert and hills in the east and west, the region of Sindh is so dependent on the river Indus, or Sindhu, as it is called indigenously, that it has been named after the river that sustains it. Indeed, the river Indus dominates all aspects of the region's life, ranging from the economic to the religious and folkloric. Not surprisingly, the intimate relationship between the river and its bordering land prompted early British travelers to the region to compare Sindh and the Indus with Egypt and the river Nile, a comparison reinforced by the fact that the southern Indus Valley, like the Nile Valley, had also been home to an ancient civilization, that of Mohenjo Daro.

Over the centuries Sindh has served as a western gateway to South Asia. It has been exposed to waves of military invasions and cultural influences from west and southwest Asia. Consequently, its culture is eclectic. For instance, the Sindhi language, although linguistically classified as a new Indo-Aryan language, differs in several respects from the subcontinent's other Indo-Aryan languages. It possesses four unique implosive sounds as well as a set of pronominal suffixes for verbs, certain nouns, and postpositions—a feature that it shares with neighboring Dardic (Kashmiri) and Iranian (Baluchi and Persian) languages.[1] Again, unlike most other north Indian languages, the word-final short vowel in Sindhi is not only pronounced but also inflected for case. Such features, while puzzling to philologists, have led to much speculation about the origins of Sindhi. Sindhi patriots, inspired by linguistic pride, have variously proclaimed the language to be the direct descendant of the ancient language of Mohenjo Daro and hence the source of all Indian languages, the ancestor of classical Sanskrit, and even a Semitic language with heavy Iranian and Dardic influences.[2]

---

1. For a description of these and other linguistic features of the Sindhi language, see Khubchandani 1969 and 1973b. The implosives to which I refer are *ḇ, ḏ, dy,* and *nḡ;* in sounding them the breath is inhaled instead of being expelled, as in the nonimplosives.

2. I refer, respectively, to al-Haq 1964: 27 (Sindhi as a descendant of the language of Mohenjo Daro); Sirāj al-Haq and S. Kandappan, as cited in Hiranandani 1980: 6 (Sindhi as an an-

In recent years, Sindhi ethnonationalists, in their struggle for increased political autonomy for the province of Sindh within the state of Pakistan, have agitated for the use of Sindhi in the political domain instead of Urdu, the language promoted by the federal government as the official national language. They have acclaimed the Sindhi language and its literature as symbols of an ancient Sindhi cultural heritage, which they claim has roots extending many centuries into the past. Their claims may be justifiable to a certain extent, for the existence of a literary tradition in Sindhi can be discerned in at least the ninth century, if not earlier. Yet it can also be argued that consciousness of a distinct Sindhi literary culture is a relatively recent phenomenon—dating only to the eighteenth century—when with the collapse of the authority of the Mughals and their Persianate court culture in Sindh, there was a remarkable growth of all types of Sindhi literature. The establishment of British colonial rule in Sindh in the mid-nineteenth century also played a significant role in the development of this consciousness. It was the recognition of Sindhi as an official vernacular by the colonial government in 1851 and its use in administration and record-keeping that led to the subsequent standardization of the language and its orthography; the compilations of dictionaries, grammars, and literary histories; and the introduction of printing and print media. All of these developments were crucial to the large-scale dissemination of Sindhi language and literature and, through them, to pride in Sindh and its culture among contemporary Sindhis. In short, colonialism and modernity were pivotal to creating an "imagined community" among Sindhi speakers.[3]

ON LITERATURE, ORIGINS, AND AUTHORSHIP:
WRITTEN LITERARY CULTURE VERSUS ORAL LITERARY CULTURE

Any discussion of the beginnings of the Sindhi literary culture has to take into account perceptions among Sindhi scholars concerning what constitutes

cestor of Sanskrit); and Baloch 1962: 12 (Sindhi as a Semitic language with Iranian and Dardic influences).

3. On the notion of a Sindhi cultural heritage with roots extending for centuries, see, for example, Daudpota 1958, in which the author claims that Sindhi is older than many European languages as well as older than Urdu. He dismisses claims by "lovers of Urdu" that Sindhi is an "empty and barren language with very little literature in it." On the contrary, he declares, by the eighteenth century no vernacular language in South Asia had as much literature as Sindhi. For the role of the British in constructing the modern Indian vernaculars, see Rahman 1996: 39–78. On "imagined communities," see Anderson 1991. Recently, advances in computer technology and the World Wide Web have become increasingly important to the emergence of a cyber-community among Sindhis living in different parts of the world through lists such as sindhi-international.

literature and its function and role in a community. The first literary histories of Sindhi were compiled in the twentieth century in a political and social milieu marked by a strong British colonial presence. Consequently, Sindhi scholars were influenced by concepts of literature prevalent among British colonial officers and Orientalists, which included the idea that literature was the "complete" (totalized, totalizable) expression of the "character," "spirit," or "racial and cultural identity of a nation." As Vinay Dharwadker has pointed out, this conception, which was common among late-eighteenth-century European literary thinkers, laid the foundations for the world-wide "tradition" of national literary histories, particularly in the postcolonial period of the twentieth century. Another important conception borrowed from the Europeans was that written texts, preferably composed in the ancient past, were the sources, standards, and markers of high culture and knowledge.[4]

It is therefore hardly surprising that the majority of Sindhi literary histories associate the beginning of Sindhi literature with the earliest available written texts reliably attributable to a scholarly personality. These are seven Sindhi verses recorded in the seventeenth-century Persian manuscript *Bayān ul-ʿārifīn* (The description of the gnostics) and attributed to the religious scholar and mystic Qāz̤ī Qādan (1463–1551). Literary critic and historian Lalsingh Ajwani, describing Qāz̤ī Qādan as the "first authentic Sindhi poet," laments that only seven gems should have been preserved from the treasury of verse written by him. Allama Daudpotā declares these seven verses, on account of their style and content, to be the "shining stars" of Sindhi literature; while Husām ad-Dīn Rāshdī asserts that the edifice of Sindhi literature rests on the foundations laid by Qāz̤ī Qādan. In 1975, when an additional 118 verses attributed to Qāz̤ī Qādan were found in a manuscript discovered in the state of Haryana, the Indian scholar Hīro Thakur, who later edited and published the newly found verses, announced ecstatically that "a chapter of Sindhi literary history, which was submerged in the ocean of the unseen, had suddenly come to light."[5]

The proclamation of Qāz̤ī Qādan as the first poet of Sindh is, however, not a simple matter. There is evidence that poetic traditions in Sindhi go back to at least the ninth century. An Arabic chronicle records a verse recited by a visitor to Baghdad in praise of the Barmakid *vazīr* (minister) Faḍl ibn Yāḥyā (d. 808). Although said to be in Sindhi, the verse is impossible to decipher because of distortions most likely resulting from it being recorded in Arabic script by a scribe who was not familiar with Sindhi. A Sindhi version of the *Mahābhārata* is believed to have existed in the eleventh century, but this, like

---

4. I refer, respectively, to Dharwadker 1993: 167 and Rocher 1993.

5. Ajwani 1970: 57; Daudpotā is quoted in Thakur 1978: 27; Rāshdī n.d., 23; Thakur 1978: 30.

much early Sindhi literature, has not survived.[6] What has survived from the period before the fifteenth century is a medley of texts, consisting mostly of ballads, epic romances, and religious poetry and songs believed to have been composed before Qāẓī Qādan's time—specifically during the reign of the Sumras, a dynasty that ruled Sindh between 1050 and 1350. Included in this motley corpus are fragmentary verses composed by various Sufi *shaykh*s (spiritual preceptors) to arouse spiritual ecstasy during the *samāʿ* (concert of mystical poetry and music popular among Sufi groups); religious poems, called *ginān*s, attributed to *pīr*s (missionary-preachers), believed to have been active in propagating Ismāʿīlī ideas in Sindh as well as Panjab and Gujarat from the twelfth century onwards; several folk romances, ballads, and panegyrics, notably the ballad of *Dodo Chanesar* narrating the conflict between two scions of the Sumra dynasty; the *Panjra*s, or five-lined songs in praise of Oderolal, the warrior-saint greatly venerated by Sindhi Hindus; and the *Mamui* riddles in versified form, which were supposedly recited by seven headless *faqīr*s (ascetics) after they had been beheaded in the reign of Jām Niẓām ud-Dīn, or Jām Tamāchi (d. 1509).[7] Although aware of the existence of works predating Qāẓī Qādan, most modern Sindhi literary historians nevertheless exclude them from the canon of classical literature on account of their folk or bardic character, their anonymous or questionable authorship, and their supposedly poor literary quality. For such scholars, influenced by the philological concern for original ur-texts and authentic manuscripts, the act of recording the written form plays a civilizational role by giving a literary work the stamp of authenticity. Qāẓī Qādan's seven verses play just such a role in Sindhi literary history. Thus, Memon ʿAbduʾl Majīd Sindhī declares that since the verses of Qāẓī Qādan are found in *written form,* they can be called "the foundation stone of the great building of Sindhi poetry." Ajwani dismisses works such as the *Dodo Chanesar* ballad and the *Mamui* riddles as mere folklore and suggests that since we cannot authenticate the work attributed to earlier poets, "we might pass over their names and come to that of Qāẓī Qadan, the first authentic Sindhi poet, and a bridge between the old folklore and the 'classical' Sindhi poetry which reached its highest point in the poetry of Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf (1689–1752)." Hīro Thakur suggests that the local folk ballads, pane-

---

6. On the verse recited in praise of Faḍl ibn Yāḥyā, see Baloch 1962: 45–47. On a Sindhi version of the *Mahābhārata,* see Chatterjee 1958, in which the author traces the origins of a Persian version of the *Mahābhārata* by an Abuʾl Ḥasan in 1026, via an Arabic version by Abī Ṣaliḥ, to a composition in Old Sindhi dating to approximately 1000 C.E.

7. The Sumra rulers are often hailed by modern Sindhi ethnonationalists because they were indigenous Sindhis who attained power after overthrowing foreign Arab rulers. See, for example, Allana 1960: 149, where the Sumra period is extolled for nationalism, patriotism, and self-sacrifice. On fragmentary verses by Sufi *shaykh*s, see Rāshdī n.d., 19–22; on *ginān*s, see Allana 1991: 8–14; on the ballad of *Dodo Chanesar,* see Schimmel 1974: 8; on the *Mamui* riddles, see Sindhi 1976: 35–38.

gyrics, and poetry used for religious propagation preceding Qāzī Qādan's poetic contributions did not possess sufficient literary quality to qualify as literature. He writes that Qāzī Qādan raised Sindhi to a new literary standard by rescuing it from the "marshy swamp" of hyperbole that characterized the poetry of the bards and minstrels and transforming it into a mature vehicle for expressing thought and philosophy. Claiming that the Qāzī provided Sindhi with the foundation necessary for its later development as a classical language, Thakur writes that the Qāzī "removed Sindhi poetry from the hollowness of religious propagation and filled it with the pearls of deep spiritual secrets and meanings of Sufism and gnosis."[8]

At issue in this dismissive attitude towards the bardic and minstrel tradition (or the old folklore, as Ajwani terms it) is the definition of what constitutes literature. Works predating Qāzī Qādan did not emanate from a scholarly milieu and were predominantly oral and performative in nature. As Albert Lord has shown, oral performative texts are synchronically and historically fluid, subject to being reformulated in performance and transmission. Since every performance results in a slightly different text, concepts from the written literary tradition, such as "author" or "original," have no meaning at all in the oral tradition, or have a meaning quite different from the one originally assigned to them.[9] Many of these performative texts remain solely in the realm of oral culture, being transmitted from one generation to the next. If they cease to be transmitted orally and are not recorded in writing, as seems to have occurred with many early Sindhi texts, they are rendered silent and are effectively lost for later generations.

When they were initially composed, Qāzī Qādan's poems were oral texts, meant to be sung or recited. What distinguished them from other Sindhi poetry of the period was their composition by an influential scholar and mystic—because of which they were recorded in a Persian manuscript. As his title indicates, Qāzī Qādan was a man learned in Islamic law and a master of Islamic religious sciences. He was also famous for the excellence of his style of composition in Persian, the language of belles lettres in Sindh at the time. In the *Tārīkh-i Maʿṣūmī* (Maʿṣūm's chronicle), written in 1600, he is described as a person of great religious and political standing, an important advisor to Shāh Beg Arghūn, the ruler of Sindh at the time. On Shāh Beg's

8. Thakur 1978: 71. In this paragraph I also refer to Sindhi 1972: 47–48 and Ajwani 1970: 43–44. Allana is perhaps the least dismissive of works predating Qāzī Qādan. He calls for a "great amount of rethinking, consideration and study" of the Sumra period, which he says many critics regard as "the darkest period of Sindhi literature" because they cannot obtain any specimen of any form of literature (Allana 1991: 6–8). See also Allana 1960, in which he argues for the importance of the Sumra period for Sindhi literature, drawing examples from the *ginān*s composed by early Ismāʿīlī *pīr*s. He does not, however, take into account that the texts of the poems he cites may have changed during their transmission.

9. Lord 1968: 9, 101.

death in 1522, his son, Shāh Ḥassan, appointed Qāẓī Qādan as chief Qāẓī of Bhakkar, a town strategically located on the Indus and famed for its sanctuary of the legendary Zinda Pīr. He held this position for twenty years.[10]

By ancestry and education Qāẓī Qādan belonged to the intellectual elite of Sindh. He was obviously well-versed in classical Arabic and Persian, the languages customarily employed in Sindh at that time for administration, literature, and scholarship. In contrast, the use of the Sindhi language in official public circles was confined primarily to bards and ministrels, who praised through song the bravery and generosity of local rulers and heroes, or recounted local folk romances. Historical sources do not clearly indicate what may have prompted a person of the Qāẓī's status to take the bold and innovative step of composing poetry in Sindhi, employing it to express mystical and gnostic ideas. We can only surmise that it may have marked a dramatic change in his life. According to the *Gulzār-i abrār* (The garden of the pious), the celebrated biographical compendium of Sufis (composed between 1605 and 1610), Qāẓī Qādan experienced a crisis of some sort after completing his formal education, and as a result he became more mystically inclined, capable of perceiving "the true realities underlying material objects." The *Bayān ul-ʿārifīn* mentions that for a brief time Qāẓī Qādan lived in Dar Bela, where he came in contact with an ascetic *(faqīr)* who initiated him into a new spiritual life. One of Qāẓī Qādan's Sindhi verses may in fact allude to this spiritual initiation:

> I was asleep in a slumber, the *jogi* woke me up;
> He cleansed my heart of dirt and showed me the essence.[11]

Although the identity of this ascetic, who became Qāẓī Qādan's spiritual mentor, is not given in the text, he was most likely Sayyid Muḥammad Jaunpūrī, the Mahdī of Jaunpur and leader of the popular chiliastic Mahdawī movement, whose reformist teachings had spread across Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Sindh to Qandahar and Herat, in what is now Afghanistan. The Mahdī's ideas had even reached the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar through the emperor's confidants Abū'l Faẓl and Fayẓī, whose father, Muḥammad Nagorī, was a prominent Mahdawī. According to the *Tarīkh-i Maʿṣūmī*, Qāẓī

---

10. Maʿsūm Bakkarī 1938: 200–201. A later chronicle, the *Tuḥfat al-kirām* (written in 1767–1768) throws further light on Qāẓī Qādan's family history: his great grandfather served as the Qāẓī of Uch, the most important center of Sufi learning in medieval Sindh; his son, ʿAbdul Ghafīr, was a renowned scholar who earned the title *asad ul-ʿulamā* (lion of the religious scholars); while a grandson, Muḥammad Ẓāhir, was the Qāẓī of Thatta and Lahore; his grandson through his daughter Bībī Fāṭima, was none other than Miān Mīr, the renowned Qadiri Sufi *shaykh* who was the spiritual preceptor of the Mughal prince Dārā Shikoh and his sister, Jahān Ārā. See Thathawī 1959: 669–70.

11. Thakur 1978: 18 (v. 35). The preceding details regarding *Gulzār-i abrār* and *Bayān ulʿārifīn* are from, respectively, Ahmad 1909: 275 and Jotwani 1981: 47.

Qādan's adherence to the Mahdī "brought on his head the criticism of the *ʿulamā* [religious scholars] of the time," who were bitterly opposed to this movement. However controversial it may have been, the Qāẓī's affiliation with the Mahdawī movement more than likely played a significant role in his decision to compose poetry in Sindhi; for the Mahdī and his followers frequently composed works in local dialects in order to popularize their religious revivalist message among the masses. The *Gulzār-i abrār* suggests that after his initiation Qāẓī Qādan took to composing mystical verses in his native Sindhi tongue. These verses were said to be so beautiful that they could not be adequately translated into other languages.[12]

Thus Qāẓī Qādan's composition of mystical poetry in Sindhi, most likely inspired by his affiliation with the transnational Mahdawī movement, marks a moment of innovation in Sindhi literary history. However, Qāẓī Qādan himself does not seem to have recorded his Sindhi poems in writing, very likely in keeping with the tendency among the Turko-Persian literati to consider the recording of compositions in Indic vernaculars unimportant, since these were not of the same status as Persian or Arabic works.[13] The Qāẓī's poems may well have been lost to posterity if they had not made a strong impression on Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm (1536–1624), a Sufi *shaykh* who, as I discuss later, was particularly fond of singing Sindhi poetry during the *samāʿ*. It was only because Qāẓī Qādan's poems were quoted and recited by Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm that they were recorded by the latter's disciple Muḥammad Raẓā in the *Bayān ul-ʿārifīn*. This text belongs to the genre called *malfūẓāt* (oral discourses). A category of South Asian Sufi literature, the *malfūẓāt* originated as records made by disciples of the actual words, sayings, and actions of their Sufi masters. As oral texts recorded in writing, they straddled "the boundary between text and speech."[14] Influenced in style by the Ḥadīth (tradition), a genre of Islamic religious literature that recorded the sayings and actions of the prophet Muḥammad, the purpose of the *malfūẓāt* was to evoke the personal presence of the Sufi master. As symbolic representations of the Sufi master's authority they eventually achieved canonical status among disciples. Thus it is only because of the fortuitous encounter of the oral Sindhi poetic tradition with the written Persian *malfūẓāt* tradition that seven of Qāẓī Qādan's poems came to be recorded in writing and achieved their preeminent status in Sindhi literary history. Indeed, the written records of poems attributed to several Sindhi poets following Qāẓī Qādan are directly or indirectly due to the *malfūẓāt* tradition.

12. Quotation from *Tarīkh-i Maʿṣūmī* is from Maʿṣūm Bakkarī 1938: 201. On the Mahdawī movement, see Qamaruddin 1985: 184–200. The passage in the *Gulzār-i abrār* to which I refer is in Ahmad 1909: 275.

13. See Asani 1988: 53–54.

14. Ernst 1992: 76.

The fame of Qāẓī Qādan's poetry was not limited to Sindh. In 1975, an additional 118 verses attributed to him were discovered in Haryana, India, in a two-hundred-year-old manuscript belonging to the Dādūpanthi sect. Soon, however, questions arose concerning the authenticity of the newly discovered verses, as not one of them indicated authorship by Qāẓī Qādan through the conventional means employed in most medieval north Indian poetry, that is, the use of the poet's pen name in the *bhaṇitā,* or signature line, of a poem. Further doubts about their authorship were raised by the heading under which the poems appear in the manuscript, "Some Sindhi verses by Kāzī Kādan [sic] together with the verses of other *sādhūs* [holy men]," clearly indicating that poems by other composers were included. Scholars of Sindhi literature held widely varying opinions concerning the authenticity of these verses, using different criteria to determine whether they were actually written by Qāẓī Qādan. Nabi Bakhsh Khan Baloch, in a two-part article published in the Sindhi journal *Mihrāṇ,* concluded, on the basis of detailed linguistic and stylistic analysis of the verses, that only seventy-eight verses are authentic, while the rest are attributable to the other poets. He used two criteria: the degree to which they conformed to standard forms of Sindhi as opposed to the colloquial dialects, and their conformity of the contents to the doctrines of Islam. These criteria envisage the existence of a "pure" Sindhi and a "pure" Islam as yardsticks of authenticity. Hiro Thakur, who published an edition of the verses under the title *Qāẓī Qādan jo kalām* (Qāẓī Qādan's poetry), determines as many as 112 of the verses to be authentic. He identifies six verses as the work of other poets: three because they use the pen name Qāẓī Maḥmūd whereas Qāẓī Qādan, according to him, never used a pen name in his Sindhi poems; two because they have been attributed in other works to the poets Dādū and Shaykh Farīd; and one because its pen name refers to an unidentified poet "Harūa." Motilal Jotwani was of the opinion that with the exception of two verses, it was difficult to ascertain which of the verses were genuine and which were fraudulent.[15] Girdhari Lal maintained that none of the verses were written by Qāẓī Qādan; rather, they were the work of his grandson Mīān Mīr.

The issue of the authorship of these verses is further complicated by the fact that several of the verses attributed to him are almost identical to verses found in *Shāh jo risālo* (Shāh's message). This famous poetic work is attributed to the later poet Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf, universally acclaimed by Sindhis as the greatest of all Sindhi poets. Indeed, the *Risālo* also contains several verses that elsewhere have been attributed to Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf's grandfather, Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm. Although the presence of these verses in the *Risālo* is frequently cited as evidence of the influence of these two poets on Shāh ʿAbduʾl

---

15. I refer, respectively, to Baloch 1978 and 1979; Thakur 1978: 47, 46; and Jotwani 1981: 70.

Laṯīf, the question does arise as to why these verses appear in Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf's work in the first place. The fact that medieval Sindhi verses may be attributed to two authors simultaneously, prompting disagreement among literary scholars over the number of verses a particular poet, such as Qāẓī Qādan, actually wrote, exemplifies the inadequacy of concepts such as authenticity and authorship in dealing with early Sindhi literature.

Indeed, John Hawley, in a ground-breaking study on north Indian *bhakti* (devotional) poetry, cautions against applying contemporary Western notions of authorship to certain types of medieval Indian devotional poetry. He convincingly demonstrates that when the pen names or proper names of poets appear in medieval Hindi poetry, they signify authorship in other ways than does "writer" as we commonly use the term. Citing definitions of the word "author" from the *Oxford English Dictionary*—"a person on whose authority a statement is made" and "a person who has authority over others"— Hawley argues that the occurrence of a poet's name in a poem's *bhaṇitā* points in the direction of authority rather than strict authorship. Analyzing the *bhaṇitā* in poems attributed to prominent north Indian *bhakti* poet-saints, he shows in every case that the authority of the poet in the signature verse is more significant than the actual fact of composition. For example, in the hymns of the *Guru Granth Ṣāḥib,* the sacred scripture of the Sikhs, one hears only the name of Guru Nanak, the first guru of the community, even in verses known to have been composed by later gurus. Guru Nanak's name clearly serves as a symbol of authority rather than personal identity. When the gurus after him composed poetry, they did so in his name, invoking his authority. The *bhaṇitā,* Hawley points out, is frequently called *chāp,* meaning "stamp" or "seal"—a term that indicates its function authoritatively: what has been said is true and bears listening to. The issues that Hawley raises concerning medieval devotional Hindi poetry are clearly relevant to early Sindhi literature. We find the use of a master's name in the *bhaṇitā* in the works of many poets, as evidenced by even a relatively recent Sindhi poet, Chainrāī Bachumal Dattaramanī "Sāmī" (d. 1850), who used his mentor, Swāmī Menghraj's, title as his nom de plume and as a way of identifying with him. Here we are dealing with traditions where not only is the distinction between writer and author, in the sense of authority, radically different from Western notions, but identification of the actual writer of a poem may be historically irretrievable. In this regard, Thomas de Bruijn makes the useful suggestion that we should consider medieval Sufi and *bhakti* poets not only as historical figures but also as "rhetorical personae" to whom poetry may be attributed with the growth of their "saintly image" in popular devotion.[16]

16. In this paragraph I draw on Hawley 1988 (quote is from 285–86); Ajwani 1970: 132 (on "Sāmī" and pen names); and Bruijn 1997: 1.

ON SCRIPTS, LITERARY CULTURE, AND IDENTITY

Although the earliest surviving Sindhi manuscripts date to only the seventeenth century, we have evidence that the language existed in a written form many centuries earlier. Various Arab geographers and travelers of the ninth and tenth centuries noted that the inhabitants of Sindh wrote their language in many different scripts. Unfortunately, they do not indicate what kind of texts were being recorded. Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995) reports that two hundred scripts were employed in the region. Al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048) provides information concerning three specific scripts: a script called Malwari predominated in southern Sindh, the Ardhanagari in some unspecified areas, and the Saindhava in the ancient city of Bahmanwā, or al-Manṣūra. We can be reasonably certain that after the Arab conquests of the eighth century, one or more forms of the Arabic script were also current among this multitude of scripts. Indeed, on the basis of indirect evidence, Baloch suggests that the Saindhava script mentioned by al-Bīrūnī may be a Sindhi-ized Arabic script, with graphemes for the peculiarly Sindhi sounds created by adding dots to the corresponding Arabic letters. He points out that al-Bīrūnī, who was very particular in recording local culture accurately, used these improvised dotted letters in his famous work the *Kitāb al-Hind* (The book of India) when writing indigenous Sindhi terminology.[17]

Until relatively recently, there was little incentive for the development of a single uniform script for Sindhi, principally because the language was not used for official administrative or bureaucratic purposes. As a consequence, the use of multiple scripts for Sindhi prevailed well into the nineteenth century. In a paper on Sindhi alphabets presented at the July 1857 meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society (Bombay branch), Ernst Trumpp, the German Orientalist and author of a distinguished Sindhi grammar, noted the use of various alphabets and remarked that many Muslims preferred Arabic characters loaded "with a confusing heap of dots" while the Hindus employed a medley of alphabets known by the name "Baniyaṅ." The English adventurer Richard Burton also remarked that the "characters in which the Sindhi tongue is written are very numerous."[18] George Stack, in his *Grammar of the Sindhi Language* (1849), tabulates thirteen script systems that were in use for transcribing Sindhi.

Stack's table of Sindhi writing systems reveals not only that scripts used in Sindh varied from one geographical region to another, but that different religious and caste groups favored distinctive script styles. For example, the Khuwajiko, or Khojki, script was used by the Khojah community, while Me-

17. Al-Nadīm 1929; al-Bīrūnī 1971: 173; Baloch 1992: vi–vii.
18. Royal Asiatic Society (Bombay Branch) 1857: 685; Burton 1851: 152–53.

maniko was the script of the Memans. The association of particular scripts with specific groups suggests that alphabets were important markers of identity in premodern Sindh. Most of the indigenous scripts for writing Sindhi, such as Khojki and Khudawadi, belong to a group of Indian scripts that have been classified by Grierson as Landa, or "clipped," alphabets that were employed particularly by various trading castes in Sindh and Panjab for commercial purposes.[19] In fact, in Sindhi, the Landa alphabets were called Baniyañ or Waniko, both names being derived from nouns referring to traders. The Landa group, in turn, is related to the larger family of alphabets commonly employed by the subcontinent's mercantile castes, showing particularly close affinity to two members of this family: Tankri (Takari), a crude system used in its many varieties by the uneducated in the lower ranges of the Himalayas and the Panjab hills, and Mahajani (Marwari), the script originating in Marwar and popularized among trading castes all over north India by the Marwari traders. Another noteworthy parallel to Landa exists also in Gujarat, where a type of script called Vaniai (from *vāṇīo,* "shopkeeper"), Sarrafi (from *ṣarrāf,* "banker"), or Bodia (from *bodī,* "clipped" or "shorn") is used exclusively by merchants and bankers.[20]

Since the Landa alphabets were originally intended for commercial purposes, they were essentially a kind of a shorthand, imperfectly supplied with vowel signs. Moreover, since they lacked a comprehensive set of characters for all the sounds of the alphabet, they were liable to be misread. Burton comments that these alphabets are so useless that "a trader is scarcely able to read his own accounts, unless assisted by a tenacious memory."[21] A Sindhi proverb— *wāṇikā akhara ḇuṭā, sukā paṛhaṇa-khān chuṭā* (The Waniko [i.e., Landa] letters are vowelless; [as soon as the ink is] dry, they are released from reading [i.e., illegible])—also recognizes the capriciousness of these scripts. A few of these alphabets, however, actually developed into full-fledged vehicles of literary expression through technical improvements in their vowel and consonant systems. The stimulus for this development was primarily the interest of particular groups in recording their religious literature in writing. The most prominent example of a Landa alphabet being transformed into the script of a religious community is Gurmukhi, the official script of the Sikhs. According to Sikh tradition, Guru Angad (1538–1552), the second Guru, made improvements in the Gurmukhi script when he found that the Sikh hymns written in the original Landa form were liable to be misread. This is why the alphabet is called Gurmukhi, for it came forth from the "mouth of the Guru." The Khojki script of the Ismāʿīlī Khojah community of Sindh

19. Stack 1849: 3–8; Grierson 1903–1928, vol. 8, part 1: 247.
20. Diringer 1968, 1: 290.
21. Burton 1851: 153.

also has its origin in the Landa family, its prototype being Lohanaki, or Lari, the alphabet of the Lohāṇā caste.[22] Khojah tradition claims that the Hindu Lohāṇas comprised one of the communities among whom the Ismāʿīlī preacher Pir Ṣadr ad-Dīn (c. 1350–1400) most actively proselytized. Upon their conversion to the Ismāʿīlī tradition, the converts were given the title *khojah* (a popularization of the Persian *khwajah,* meaning "lord" or "master") to replace the original Lohāṇā *ṭhākur,* or *ṭhākkar,* having the same meaning. The Lohanaki script used by the converts was eventually refined and polished, most likely by Pir Ṣadr ad-Dīn or one of his disciples, and given the name Khwajaki, or Khojki. It was extensively employed in the community to record a considerable corpus of religious literature, in particular the genre of the *ginān*s.[23]

Much more was involved in the emergence of scripts such as Gurmukhi and Khojki than recording religious literature. Since these scripts tended to be exclusive, their use contributed to the consolidation of communal or caste identity. S. S. Gandhi points out that the adoption of the Gurmukhi script was crucial for the Sikhs, as they could develop their distinctive religious culture only by adopting their own script, suited to their language. He asserts, further, that the popularization of Gurmukhi was a "well-calculated" move, designed to make its readers part from "Hindu compositions written in [Devanagari] Sanskrit."[24] Similarly, Khojki, by providing an exclusive means of written expression shared by followers of the Khojah *pīr*s, was instrumental to the development of cohesion and self-identity within a widely scattered and linguistically diverse religious community.

The scriptural pluralism of precolonial Sindh, which allowed different groups, defined along caste and religious lines, to write Sindhi in their own alphabets was, however, gradually dismantled during British colonial rule. As Lachman Khubchandani has remarked, the emphasis on selecting a single writing system for Sindhi in the name of bringing order to "chaotic" diversity had its roots in Western influences. By 1851, the British had resolved to conduct their administration of Sindh in the Sindhi language. This decision created the urgent need to choose a single, uniform writing system for the language. Landa was rejected because it had too many imperfections, although it continued to be used in private circles for commercial, religious, and personal purposes. The two principal contenders for the role of an official script were the Perso-Arabic and Devanagari scripts. British officials themselves were divided on the issue: Burton advocated the adoption of a modified version of the Arabic script, while Stack pushed for a form of the

---

22. On the Gurmukhi script, see Grierson 1903–1928: vol. 9, part 1: 624 (cf. Cole and Sambhi 1978: 19). On the Khojki script, see Allana 1969: 20.

23. Asani 1987: 439–49.

24. Gandhi 1978: 174–75, quoting Gokal Chand Narang.

Devanagari. In 1852, as a result of effective lobbying by Muslim groups as well as Hindu scholars who were well-versed in the Persian literary tradition, the Arabic script prevailed, and B. T. Ellis, the British chairman of the Committee on Script, with the assistance of a team of native scholars, devised an alphabet of fifty-two characters based on various modifications of Arabic letters. The newly approved alphabet remained controversial, however, and was subject to attack by various parties. The German scholar Trumpp, who wrote the first grammar of Sindhi in a European language in 1872, criticized the official Arabic script and remarked: "No alphabet suits Sindhi better than the Sanskrit alphabet, Sindhi being the genuine daughter of Sanskrit and Prakrit."[25] Professional scribes continued to follow the earlier script traditions. Finally, half a century later, as the modified Arabic script recommended by Ellis was uniformly adopted in the schools and in official correspondence, it found universal acceptance in Sindh.

With the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, the issue of the most appropriate script for Sindhi surfaced once again. A movement for reviving Devanagari arose in India among the Hindu Sindhis, some of whom felt that the Devanagari script was more in resonance with their religious and national identity. Over the next several decades, conferences and meetings were held to debate the matter. The first one was sponsored by the Sindhi Sahitya Sabha and Sindh Hindu Seva at Bombay University in 1948. As is evident from the substantial and highly emotional literature written on this subject, the Hindu Sindhi community has remained sharply divided. Arguments for and against a particular script are closely intertwined with the larger concern for the preservation of Sindhi linguistic and cultural identity in India, thus resurrecting the ancient historical connection between script and identity among Sindhis. The group favoring the revival of Devanagari, to which belong many politicians, conflates script with religious identity. Identifying the Arabic script with "Islamicness," they claim that Devanagari is the most perfect script in the world and the original script for the language "before it was buried underground by Muslim conquerors." The author of a short booklet favoring the revivalist stance asks: "Should our language be inclined towards other Indian languages or foreign Arabia and Palestine?" Members of this group claim, furthermore, that since Devanagari is almost universal in India, it would be in the interest of the long-term survival of Sindhi in the country to use Devanagari. On the other hand, the small group of intellectuals and literary critics who constitute the Arabic-script lobby, contend that adoption of the Devanagari would be suicidal for the Sindhi language in India, for it would reinforce the hegemony that Hindi has over the younger generation

25. Trumpp 1872: 1. Earlier in the paragraph I refer to Khubchandani 1981a: 16. On the prevailing of an Arabic script and the devising of a fifty-two-character alphabet, see Baloch 1992: viii.

and would complete the gradual absorption of young Sindhis into its literary culture. The Arabic script, they argue, would be a distinctive marker of Sindhi identity in India, serving as an important link between Indian and Pakistani Sindhis. It would also permit future generations of Hindu Sindhis to have access to the rich Sindhi literary heritage, most of which is available only in the Arabic script. A third, much smaller, group calls for the reestablishment of a modified form of the old Landa (Hatavanika) commercial alphabet, claiming that it is related to the writing system of the ancient civilization of Mohenjo Daro and thus, unlike Arabic or Devanagari scripts, is the unique and authentic heritage of Sindh. Its propagation, therefore, would be the most effective way of preserving "Sindhism" and Sindhi identity.[26]

THE VERNACULAR AND THE COSMOPOLITAN: SINDHI AND THE PERSIAN LITERARY TRADITION

The coming of the Arabs to Sindh in 711 C.E., followed in later centuries by the conquest of the region by Turko-Persian and Central Asian armies, had a profound and lasting impact on Sindhi civilization. With the establishment of a ruling and intellectual elite who participated in a transnational Turko-Persian literary and artistic culture, Sindh became part of a cosmopolitan world that encompassed not only other areas of north India but also Iran, Central Asia, and Ottoman Turkey. Within this cosmopolitan cultural nexus there was a steady exchange of poets, scholars, and artists, facilitated by a shared literary language—Persian. Under Mughal rule in Sindh, as elsewhere in India, the Persian language, as the official language of administration and record, was used to create, from heterogeneous religious and social groups, a class of allies who shared a common literary ethos.[27] Well represented in this class were many local Muslims as well as Hindus, particularly Kāyasthas and Khatris, who had acquired exceptional competence in Persian language and literature and served at the very highest levels of the imperial bureaucracy. The use of Persian became so widespread by the seventeenth century that even middle-level Hindu bureaucrats associated with the Mughal state appropriated and used Perso-Arabic expressions, such as *bismillāh* (with the name of Allah), just as their Muslim counterparts did. As the sole language of historiography in premodern Sindh, Persian was used by bureaucrats and

26. For a bibliography of major works on the Sindhi script controversy in India, see Khubchandani 1981b: 4–5. On the revivalist stance, I quote from Harisinghanī 1976: 138, 148. For the pro-Devanagari stance, see also Shivdasani 1963 and Jetley 1959. On the Arabic script lobby, I draw on Hiranandani 1980: 21 and Anand 1996: 128. For the reestablishment of a modified form of the Landā alphabet, see Jaitali 1985: 8–9.

27. For a detailed discussion of the significance of Turko-Persian culture, see Canfield 1991. For a discussion of the politics of Persian literary culture at the Mughal court and the participation of the Hindus, see Alam 1998.

scholars in writing a number of histories and biographies, which provide important information about the province, its rulers, and members of its elite classes. Among the most significant are the *Chachnāma* (The book of Chach), *Tārīkh-i Maʿṣūmī, Tārīkh-i Ṭāhirī* (Ṭāhir's chronicle), *Tuḥfat ul-Kirām* (The gift of the generous), and *Bayān ul-ʿārifīn.*

The ascendancy of Persian as the medium of intellectual and artistic expression as well as government administration had a profound impact on the Sindhi language. The hegemonic status of Persian impeded the development of Sindhi by limiting its function to a language of oral discourse and folk culture and discouraging its use among the elite for literary and scholarly purposes. Indeed in Sindh, as elsewhere in north India, the intelligentsia regarded only Persian and, to a lesser extent, Arabic as appropriate languages for literature. Consequently, they devoted much of their talent to composing *naẓīra*s (imitations), poems in Persian imitating the classical poems of renowned poets in the greater Persianate world and their peers, as a way of demonstrating their literary prowess. Their poetry was remarkable for drawing all of its symbols and metaphors from "the unseen and unexperienced sights, sounds and smells of Persia and Central Asia" while completely rejecting Indian life and landscape as poetic resources. Indeed, in their view, the indigenous north Indian vernaculars were not fit for the recording of literature. Thus, it was not at all unusual to find a semi-apologetic tone in the works of Sindhi poets, since they felt they were using an unworthy medium of speech.[28]

By the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, however, as a result of a complex combination of factors, including the collapse of the great patron of the Persian language—the Mughal state—and the emergence of independent dynasties in Sindh, the reluctance to use Sindhi as a literary vehicle was gradually overcome. In contrast to other regions of India, where the move toward the vernacular seems to have originated among individuals of lower socioeconomic status, the initiative in Sindh came from members of the elite classes. Qāẓī Qādan, Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm, Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf and Sachal Sarmast (d. 1829), commonly hailed in contemporary works of Sindhi literature as some of the greatest and most popular Sindhi poets, were members of the *ashrāf* (class of "honorable people," aristocracy) who claimed an Arab, Persian, Turkish, or Afghan ancestry and were well-versed in both Persian and Arabic. Although historical and literary sources are remarkably silent about the reasons these poets chose to write much of their work in Sindhi, their social status and their position within the Persianate literary

28. Quotation is from Ahmad 1964: 252–53. On the rejection of Indian life and landscape as poetic resources, see Robinson 1991: 100. For discussion of the attitudes of the Persian literati toward local Indian languages, see Asani 1988: 50–62. On the apologetic tone in the works of Sindhi poets, see Ajwani 1970: 110.

tradition played a role in the acceptance of their Sindhi compositions as works of literature.[29]

The fact that these preeminent Sindhi poets were integral to the Persianate culture has led Ajwani to comment that Persian language and literature was, in fact, a catalyst in the formation of Sindhi literature. Although there is some justification for this assessment, the influence of the Persian tradition on the early Sindhi poets is not always evident. Qāzī Qādan and Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm, in particular, employ in their verse a form of Sindhi that is virtually free from Persian or even Arabic influences—a remarkable fact given their extensive familiarity with both languages. Barely a handful of Arabic and Persian words occur in their verses, and they never incorporate Arabic verses from the Qurʾan or allude to verses from Persian poems, as many later Sindhi poets were inclined to do. In terms of verse forms, they employed only traditional Sindhi ones, including the *dūho (dohā), soraṭhā, baṛo dūho,* and *tūnveṛī dūho.*[30] These early poets appear to have consciously been keeping the local Sindhi tradition apart from the Persian tradition. This tendency became less pronounced in the work of later poets, particularly Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf and Sachal Sarmast, who tended to draw freely from both traditions in their compositions, thus synthesizing them.

In fact, as time passed the influence of Persian on Sindhi poetry became more pronounced. By the late eighteenth century there was a noticeable Persianization of vocabulary and poetic forms, and in the nineteenth century the "language was made more pliable according to the exigencies of difficult Persian prosody." The preference for Persian poetic forms such as the *qaṣīdah, maṣnavī,* and the *ghazal* became so widespread that compositions in traditional Sindhi poetic forms virtually ceased, causing critics to expound on the "tyranny of the Persian models that forces poets to imitate rather than initiate."[31]

29. Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm and Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf were *sayyid*s, descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, while Sachal's genealogy has been traced to ʿUmar Farūq (d. 644), the second Islamic caliph.

30. On Persian as catalyst for Sindhi, see Ajwani 1970: 43. On verse forms, see Thakur 1978: 79–80 and Jotwani 1979: 34. The *dūho (dohā)* is a couplet in which each line contains twenty-four *mātrā*s, or metrical instants. Each of the two lines is subdivided into *caran*s (hemistichs) of thirteen and eleven *mātrā*s. This results in a total of four *caran*s in a *dūho:* the first and third *caran*s consist of thirteen *mātrā*s while the second and fourth have eleven *mātrā*s. The rhyme occurs at the end of the hemistiches with eleven *mātrā*s.

The *soraṭhā* is simply an inverted *dūho.* Its first and third *caran*s contain eleven *mātrā*s, while the second and fourth *caran*s contain thirteen. The rhyme retains its place at the end of the eleven-*mātrā caran*s, so it occurs in the middle of the verse rather than at the end. In the *dūho* the first and fourth have thirteen *mātrā*s each, while the second and third have eleven *mātrā*s, both eleven-*mātrā* hemistiches rhyming at their close. The *baṛo dūho* is the inverse form of the *tūnveṛī dūho,* with the first and fourth hemistichs containing eleven *mātrā*s each and bearing the rhyme.

31. I quote, respectively, Schimmel 1974: 25 and Sorley 1966: 208.

Indeed Mirzā Qalīch Beg (d. 1929), the indefatigable late-nineteenth-century Sindhi writer, in his poetic collection *Amulha Māṇik* (Priceless gem) applied to Sindhi verse every single meter and rhetorical device of the Persian tradition. That the process of Persianization was accompanied by the phenomenal growth in the use of Sindhi among the literati indicates that widespread acceptance of Sindhi among the Turko-Persian *ashrāf* was only possible if the language were Persianized—a phenomenon that is noticeable in the development of other Indo-Muslim languages as literary vehicles, specifically Urdu and, to a limited extent, Bangla. The Persianization of Sindhi is significant, since it transformed the language into a carrier of the Persian literary tradition even after it replaced Persian as the official language of record and lower-level administration during the British colonial period. In an era when their status was being challenged by British rule and Westernization, the Muslim elite could, through the Persianization of the Sindhi language, continue to preserve their cultural identity, which was closely tied to the Turko-Persian tradition. It was only with the rise of nationalist and patriotic poets in the early decades of the twentieth century that some poets broke with the Persian models and returned to the traditional Sindhi forms and themes of the early virtuosos. This change, both in form and content, was initiated by Kishinchand Tirathdas Khatri (d. 1947), popularly known by his pen name "Bewas," who founded what has been called the modern school of poetry. Members of this school—which is comprised of several important poets of the contemporary period, including Shaykh Ayāz—focused their writings on Sindh, the Sindhi people, and their problems. In addition to reviving traditional Sindhi forms, they also created new ones, some of which were modeled after European forms, including free verse and the sonnet.[32]

THE ROLE OF SINDHI LITERARY TRADITIONS
IN RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL LIFE

Poetry composed by individuals associated with various religious movements forms the most significant component of Sindhi literature in the pre-British period. A variety of religious personalities, ranging from Sufi *shaykh*s and *sant* (saint) poets to Ismāʿīlī *pīr*s and Mahdawī preachers, adopted Sindhi as a vehicle for communicating their ideas. Much of this verse was intended to undermine the authority and worldview of dominant religious institutions and the established hierarchy of ritual specialists (priests) and religious scholars of the learned traditions enshrined in Arabic and Sanskrit. Instead, as in the case of much medieval north Indian vernacular poetry, there is stress on an interiorized form of religion involving the search for salvation under the guidance of a master. In this personal search, formal learning is not only un-

---

32. Allana 1991: 31–37.

necessary but may in fact be a hindrance. While many poets challenged established authorities and norms in varying degrees, perhaps the most startling example is Sachal Sarmast. Ajwani, in his book on Sindhi literature, subtitled the chapter on Sachal "Poet of Revolt." Renowned for his lyrical *kāfī*s, Sachal was an outspoken critic of formal religion who harshly attacked all upholders of orthodoxy, both Hindu Brahmans (priests) and Muslim *mullā*s (religious scholars). They, in turn, attempted on several occasions, though unsuccessfully, to have him condemned to the gallows for his heretical views. His criticisms of their ignorance, self-aggrandizement, and hypocrisy were particularly caustic. In the following verse he criticizes *mullā*s who, he claims, offer prayers for the dead because they want to enjoy the rich dishes served to them after the funeral:

> The *Mulla*s offer prayers for the dead ardently for the sake of dishes;
> With a staff in their hand, they are magnetized by cauldrons;
> They settle down to dinner and fill their bellies to the full;
> The *Mulla*s say that they eat not, but they consume large vessels;
> Sachu speaks the truth—they strut near the ovens![33]

As his pen name, "Sarmast"—"the Intoxicated One"—appropriately indicates, Sachal was a proponent of the ecstatic variety of Sufism, which stresses passionate love as a means of approaching the Divine.

> Divine knowledge is revealed to lovers,
> What do Mullas and Kazis know of it?
> .   .   .   .
> Hear, O Kazi! the refuting argument of love.
> We have love and you have knowledge,
> How can you be reconciled with us?
> .   .   .   .
> We are strongly afflicted by love,
> Strike hard the pate of the Mulla.[34]

Sindhi was used to express antiestablishment views and alternative conceptualizations of religiosity primarily because it promoted the wide spread of ideas, since the vernacular was understood by a broader segment of the population. The vernacular also provided a wealth of oral poetic forms, which were especially suitable for communicating with illiterate members of society. With the popularization of Sindhi as a literary medium in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the language was universally adopted by a wide spectrum of groups and writers, including those stressing the revival of religious orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In this regard, Miyan Abī'l Ḥassan's *Muqad-*

33. Advani 1971: 32.
34. Advani 1971: 30–31.

dimat aṣ-ṣalāt (An introduction to the Muslim ritual prayer), a long poem on Islamic ritual practice composed in 1700, ushered in a new style of didactic poetry that employed a very simple form of Sindhi. This style became especially popular among members of the conservative Naqshbandi Sufi order, who in response to the prevalence of what were perceived to be syncretistic and superstitious practices among Muslims, launched a campaign to reform the practice of Islam in Sindh. Concerned that most Muslims in Sindh were not familiar with the fundamentals of their faith, Naqshbandi authors produced over fifty instructional books on various Islamic matters in Sindhi.[35] Makhdūm Muḥammad Hāshim (d. 1761), who was among the most prolific of these writers, wrote many educational poems on the essentials of Islam in "unassuming verses with rhymes either in long a or in -n," including one that dealt with 1,292 problems of Islamic law and behavior. In 1749 he also composed the *Tafsīr Hāshimī* (Hāshim's exegesis), a rhymed commentary in Sindhi on the last part of the Qurʾān, which became immensely popular, for it made the Arabic scripture accessible in the vernacular.[36] It was one of the first books printed in Sindhi in the mid-nineteenth century. According to Husam ad-Din Rashdi, the literary activities of the Naqshbandi reformers inspired other literati to write in Sindhi. As a result, a phenomenal number of books in Sindhi were produced on a variety of other subjects. Especially noteworthy were the enormous number of full and partial translations of the Qurʾān by a spectrum of religious reformists. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a result of the impact of British colonial rule, various prose genres imitating Western ones were also cultivated. With the establishment of the printing press and the spread of literacy, Sindhi prose was used to promote social reform on a wide variety of issues. Noteworthy in this regard were Kauromal Chandanmal Khilnani (d. 1916), reverentially referred to as the father of Sindhi prose, whose essay urging the education of women, *Pako Pah,* has been compared to Mill's essay on liberty; and Mirzā Qalīch Beg, who wrote, among his many publications, *Zīnat,* the first original novel in Sindhi. Through the novel's idealized heroine Beg demonstrated that an improvement in general societal well-being cannot take place without the education of women.[37]

Although contemporary religious and social reformists have relied on the written or printed word to communicate their ideas, Sindhi literary culture has been overwhelmingly poetic in nature for most of its history, primarily functioning in aural and oral modes. Indeed, Sindhi poetry is so fused with musical traditions that to recite a verse inevitably means to sing and perform it, frequently with musical accompaniment. This is true even when a verse

35. Rāshdī n.d.: 55–56.
36. Schimmel 1974: 18–19.
37. Ajwani 1970: 181–85.

is available in written form, for it needs to be recited or sung aloud to inspire listeners. That singing and music enhance the impact of Sindhi poetry on listeners is evident even today, when thanks to the advent of cassette culture in Sindh, there is a much wider dissemination of Sindhi mystical verse in the aural/oral format than through the printed text. The close connection of poetry and musical performance made it essential for a poet to know prosodic meter as well as the relationship between meter and melody. Thus Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf is also renowned for his expert knowledge of Sindhi music and is said to have had professional singers accompanying him to help sing his poetry. His poetry, it is claimed, was not composed in the sense in which modern poetry is composed; rather "it was sung and the message emerged dressed in an oral word for those who heard it." Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf 's successor Sachal Sarmast set his verse to predetermined melodies. According to hagiographical accounts, music was his inspiration. When the *sāraṅgī* (a stringed instrument played with a bow, similar to the fiddle) and the *tabla* (drum) were played together, he would fall into a trance and poetry "flowed from his lips like limpid rain water and his amanuenses plied fast their pens to collect the pearls of his divine utterances." Furthermore, Sachal is said to have been initiated into the spiritual life by a *dervish* applying the bow of a *sāraṅgī* to his chest, a tradition that clearly conceives of the poet as a musical instrument. Music is said to have similarly affected the early poet Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm, who according the *Bayān ul-ʿārifīn,* used to frequently experience *wajd,* or spiritual ecstasy, when he heard music. He also composed some of his poetry while in ecstasy. As a young man he used to sing Sindhi verses while working in the fields, thus "intoxicating" the workers.[38]

The close association of devotional poetry with music is a prominent feature of the Indian religious landscape. This relationship encouraged Sufi *shaykh*s to compose in Sindhi and other vernaculars verses that could be used in the *samāʿ,* a ritual often involving ecstatic forms of singing and dancing. They recognized that vernacular languages were better suited for the purposes of the *samāʿ* than Persian; for unlike the Persian, north Indian poetic traditions fused poetry, melody, and worship. Sufis throughout north India recognized the powerful impact of poetry in the vernaculars on listeners, especially when it was sung to musical accompaniment.[39] Gesū Darāz, the famous fifteenth-century Chishtī *shaykh* who wrote several works on Sufism in Persian, commented that each language is endowed with a unique

38. On Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf, I refer to Ishqi 1975: 187 and Brohi 1965: 22 (the quotation is from the latter). On Sachal, I cite Advani 1971: 4. Jotwani 1980: 15–17 describes in detail Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm's fondness for music, particularly the Sufi *samāʿ,* based on hagiographic accounts of the mystic's life recorded in the *Bayān ul-ʿārifīn.* On Sachal, ecstasy, and intoxication, see Sindhi 1972: 123–24, 13.

39. Asani 1996: 14–15.

characteristic. For him, none was as effective as "Hindawi" (meaning the Indian vernacular) for mystical songs, since songs composed in it are "subtle and elegant, penetrating deeply into the heart and arousing humility and gentleness. When hearing them, people become more aware of their faults." In the sixteenth century, Sindhi's fame as a language for mystical poetry seems to have spread well beyond the borders of Sindh. Evidence from neighboring regions, such as Saurashtra and Gujarat, indicates that Sindhi performers were famed for the beauty and sweetness with which they sang mystical poetry. Badāūnī, the chronicler in the court of Akbar, writes that he experienced a spiritual state when he heard two Sindhi Sufis singing a melody in mournful tones. There are also records indicating that a group of Sindhi mystics had migrated in the mid-sixteenth century to Burhanpur, where they attained fame for their recitation of Sindhi verses during *samā* sessions.[40]

A distinctive feature of the relationship between poetry and music in the Sindhi tradition is the association of particular *sur*s, or melodies, with specific narrative themes, a development probably unique among north Indian languages.[41] By tradition, once a melody had been identified with a particular theme or story, it could not be used for any other type of verse. Frequently the identification of a *sur* with a particular theme was so close that the melody was named after the theme. Thus the *sur* employed when singing songs of Marui, the heroine of the folktale *'Umar-Marui,* came to be called "Marui" and was widely used for singing poems pertaining to sorrow and separation, since these were the central themes associated with Marui as she longed to return to her ancestral village, Malir. Incidentally, Sindhi musicians of the sixteenth century had become so famous for their rendition of the *'Umar-Marui* epic in *sur* Marui that Akbar commanded them to perform it in his presence.[42]

The thematic relationship between musical mode and Sindhi mystical poetry is demonstrated explicitly in early manuscripts in which poems were arranged in chapters according to the *sur* in which they were intended to be sung. The first collection to be so arranged was that of Miyān Shāh 'Ināt ('Ināyatullāh Riẓwī), whose poems were grouped under nineteen *sur*s. The great classical compendium of Sindhi mystical poetry, Shāh 'Abdu'l Laṭīf's *Risālo,* is arranged into thirty chapters, each devoted to a *sur,* and most of these are associated with either a specific folktale or a certain theme. According to traditional hagiographical accounts, Shāh 'Abdu'l Laṭīf, with the

40. Gesū Darāz is cited in Rizvi 1978, 1: 326–27. On the reputation of Sindhi performers in neighboring regions, see Sindhi 1976: 7–8. Badāūnī's account of his spiritual state is in Badāūnī 1973, 3: 39. On the fame of Sindhi mystics in Burhanpur, see Burhānpūrī 1957.

41. 'Ishqī 1982: 47.

42. Baloch 1982: 52–53.

help of Cancal and Aṭal, two brothers who were professional musicians, standardized the entire Sindhi system of *sur* music while he was arranging and editing the *Risālo.* In the process, he was instrumental in improving and preserving traditional Sindhi music. Tradition claims that he also revised the performance of vocal music by discarding the solo performance and establishing the chorus in its place. In addition, he is credited with inventing the five-string *tanbīrā,* a drone instrument different from the four-string *tanbūrā* used elsewhere on the subcontinent and also from the similar instrument used in the Middle East and Iran. He is also said to have established a music academy at Bhitshāh, where modes of executing *sur* music were perfected by a trained group of musicians who performed mystical songs every evening after the ritual prayers. The tradition of these concerts has continued into the present day, although now they are usually held only on a Thursday night—which is called the night of Shāh's *rāga.*[43]

Besides being performed during the *samāʿ,* mystical Sindhi verse was often sung at other gatherings involving worship. For example, Qāẓī Qādan's verses are found in an eighteenth-century manuscript containing a repertoire of devotional poetry attributed to various north Indian *bhakta*s (devotees) and *sant*s and sung by members of the Dādūpanthī sect during their assemblies. Over time, such liturgical use enhanced the status of the poetry and its authors. As the reciters came to understand the poetry as embodying spiritual truths, it began to play the role of a religious scripture. Such a transformation into scripture is particularly evident in the case of Shāh ʿAbdu'l Laṯīf's *Risālo,* which has been described as the "sacred book of the Sindhis, admired and memorized by Hindus and Muslims equally." Sindhis frequently quote the following verse by Shāh ʿAbdu'l Laṯīf supporting the claim that his poems are "messages from God, revealed to him, and so had to be proclaimed and communicated":

> Think not that these are mere couplets, they are signs.
> They bear you to your True Friend and inspire you with true love.[44]

Similar claims are made about Sachal Sarmast's poems, which have been described as "divine utterances." The scriptural status of these works is further enhanced by associating them with more conventional religious scriptures. Thus the *Risālo* has been regarded as a commentary on the Qurʾān in Sindhi and has been called the "Hindu's Gita," while Sāmī's *Slokā* have been described as "rendering the teaching of the Veda in the Sindhi language." Significantly, this transformation of poetic genres into scripture is also manifest among poetic texts in neighboring vernacular traditions as evidenced

---

43. Baloch 1982: 27–40.
44. I quote, respectively, from Schimmel 1974: 14, Jotwani 1979: 62, and Burton 1851: 83.

by the *Ādi Graṅth* (The preeminent scripture) among the Sikhs of Panjab and the *Dādū Bānī* (Dādū's voice) among the Dādūpanthī sect in Rajasthan.[45]

SINDHI LITERARY CULTURE AND THE FOLK/BARDIC TRADITION

Much premodern Sindhi literature drew heavily on the tradition of folktales and legends for its symbols and themes. Indeed, leading literary critic Ajwani comments that the bulk of Sindhi literature revolves around seven folk romances that provide the raw material for the lyrics, narrative poems, and philosophical dissertations of nearly every poet and some prose writers. He goes so far as to claim that "the student of Sindhi literature will have an imperfect understanding of even twentieth century Sindhi literature if he has no knowledge of these seven legends."[46]

The central role that the folk/bardic tradition plays in Sindhi literature may be explained by the manner in which the literary tradition developed in the period of the classical poets, from approximately the mid-sixteenth century to the late eighteenth century. During this period, as we have seen, poets from the elite *ashrāf* class (such as Qāẓī Qādan, Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm, Miyān Shāh ʿInāt, Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf, and Sachal Sarmast), who were intimately familiar with the Persianate tradition, began to compose poetry in Sindhi. They turned to the indigenous nonliterate folk/bardic tradition for poetic forms, symbols, and metaphors that would provide their compositions with a distinctly Sindhi ethos as opposed to a Persian one. The crossing over of the oral folk tradition into the literate elite tradition effected a synthesis that had a long-lasting impact on Sindhi literary culture.

The rich tradition of folk romances was one of the most significant elements to be incorporated in this fusion. Most likely guided by the well-established convention in Persian poetry of expressing mystical ideas through esoteric interpretations of romantic epics *(maṯnavī),* these poets attempted to do the same for Sindhi material. Particularly significant in this regard was Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf, who built on the pioneering efforts of his predecessors, especially Miyān Shāh ʿInāt, and developed a distinctively Sindhi style of assimilating folk romances into mystical poetry.[47] These romances formed the framework for his magnum opus, the *Risālo.*

Unlike poets who composed mystical romantic epics in Persian or other Indian vernaculars, such as Hindi or Bangla, Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf does not retell the Sindhi tales in their entirety. Rather, he assumes that his audience is fa-

45. On Sachal's poems as divine utterances, see Advani 1971: 4. On the *Risālo* as commentary on the Qurʾan, see Brohi 1992: 106. The description of Sāmī's *Slokā* is from Ajwani 1970: 132, 139.

46. Ajwani 1970: 40–41.

47. See Asani 1993.

miliar with their plots. He is interested not so much in narrating the stories as in focusing on those dramatic moments and events whereby he can best convey Quranic and Sufi ideas on the spiritual significance of the human situation. He has structured the *Risālo*'s individual chapters so that segments expressing the feelings and thoughts of the main characters of the folktales alternate with verses containing his own exegetical remarks. These, for the most part, elaborate upon the elements in the story that explain the nature of the soul's relationship to the Divine. His particular concern is the love and the suffering the soul must experience as it is transformed on the spiritual path and attains salvation through the vision of God.[48]

An important aspect of the technique adopted by Sindhi poets who impart mystical meaning to romances is their focus on the heroine. The heroine in these stories always searches for her lost beloved until she either finds him or dies of thirst and heat in the mountains or drowns in the Indus. The heroine represents the soul yearning for the Divine Beloved. In the skillful hands of these poets, especially Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf, the yearning heroines of the folk romances become symbols of the soul, who is separated from her Divine Beloved and has to undergo great tribulation and painful purification in her quest:

> My body burns. Though consumed
> by a roasting fire, I make my quest
> I am parched with the Beloved's thirst
> Yet in drinking I find no rest
> Even if I were to drain the ocean wide
> Not a single sip would grant me zest.[49]

The poets ingeniously endow these heroines with interpretations that illustrate important Quranic and mystical concepts. Fundamental Sufi ideas concerning the transformation of the *nafs* (the lower self) are presented most effectively: Marui—the village damsel who, pining for her parental home, spurns the wealth and status offered her by her suitor, ʿUmar—represents the soul ever yearning for the divine homeland in which it originated. The foolish queen Lila, who for the sake of a fabulous necklace "sold" her husband to her maid for the night, represents the "commanding lower self" *(nafs-i ammara)* (Qurʾān 12:53) attracted to the material world and needing to be purified and transformed into a "soul at peace" *(nafs-i mutmaʾinna)* (Qurʾān 89:27) before it can be accepted by God. The heroine Sassui, whose beloved,

---

48. Schimmel 1976: 182–84. H. T. Sorley feels that the constant interruptions in the narrative are unpleasant to European taste and make a truly effective translation unconvincing to European readers. The jerkiness and lack of continuity caused by breaks in narrative and thought are, according to him, defects that have to be tolerated. See Sorley 1966: 250.

49. Sorley 1966: 255. The rather archaic original translation by Sorley has been modernized.

Puṅhuṅ, was kidnapped while she slept peacefully, represents the soul in the "sleep of negligence" *(khwāb-i ghaflat),* ensnared in the material world and oblivious to God. she sings:

> As I turned inwards and conversed with my soul,
> There was no mountain to surpass and no Puṅhu[ṅ] to care for;
> I myself became Puṅhu[ṅ] . . .
> Only while Sassui did I experience grief.[50]

By interpreting the folk heroine as a symbol of the soul, Sindhi mystical poets incorporated into their poems the Indian literary convention of representing the soul as a *virahiṅī,* a loving and longing woman, usually a young bride or bride-to-be who awaits her beloved or is involved in a long and arduous quest for him. Most likely originating in the plaintive songs sung by village women in periods of separation from their husbands, this symbolism and the associated concept of *viraha,* "longing in separation," occur in almost all the vernacular literatures of north India. The *virahiṅī* has enjoyed a great deal of popularity in a wide variety of South Asian religious contexts, where she is often identified as the symbol for the human soul who, according to convention, is always to be represented in the feminine mode before a deity who is male.[51]

Not surprisingly, the concept of the *virahiṅī* and the representation of the soul as feminine led to the adoption of many elements from the women's folk song traditions into Sindhi mystical poetry, though the poets were male.[52] There is a significant quantity of Sindhi women's vocabulary and idiom, including linguistic forms such as the diminutive for tender and affectionate address, and women's spinning and weaving songs. Perhaps the most famous of these is in the chapter of the *Risālo* titled *Kapaʾiti* (Spinning wheel) after the tunes sung by women during the spinning process. Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf draws a parallel between the woman who is spinning and the soul occupied with the recollection of God. He cleverly extends the Quranic imagery of God as the purchaser of the soul (Qurʾān 9:111): Just as the thread has to be finely spun to fetch a good price from the buyer, so the human heart has to be refined and prepared with utmost care before the merchant-God can purchase it.[53]

50. Jotwani 1975: 136.

51. See Hawley 1986: 231–56. The most renowned use of the *virahiṅī* in Indian literature occurs in poetry dedicated to the deity Kṛṣṇa, in which the *gopī*s (cowmaids), in particular Rādhā, express their longings for their elusive beloved.

52. Cf. the parallel phenomenon in Sufi poetry of the Deccan as discussed by Eaton 1974–1975.

53. Schimmel 1976: 160. On the "merchant-God," cf. Narayana Rao's essay (chapter 6) in this volume, which discusses the occurrence of this image in Telugu courtesan songs of the seventeenth century.

MEDIEVAL SINDHI POETS AND THEIR RELIGIOUS IDENTITY:
CONTEMPORARY PERCEPTIONS

Modern literary historians of Sindhi have intensely debated the religious identity of the great poets of medieval Sindh: were they Hindu or Muslim? Their own contemporary conceptions of what constitutes Hinduism and Islam, as well as nationalist discourses, have profoundly affected the framework and the context in which those poets and their works are interpreted. Pakistani Muslim (and some Western) writers stress the Islamic heritage and educational background of the major poets, highlighting their use of quotes from Islamic scriptural texts such as the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth (traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad) and the influence on their work of great Sufi personalities, such as Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī or ʿAṭṭār. For example, H. T. Sorley writes in his book on Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf that "it would be a great mistake however to assume that the religion of the poet is anything but that of Islam." For scholars of this camp, even the Hindu poet Sāmī expresses virtually the same Sufi teachings as Muslim poets, notwithstanding his explicit statements that his verses are an interpretation of the Veda.[54]

Indian Hindu historians, on the other hand, insist that the major Sindhi poets were Muslims in name only and that the type of Sufism they practiced was influenced by the Advaita (nondualistic) school of Hindu philosophy, thus claiming them for the Hindu tradition. Motilal Jotwani questions whether Sufism, which clearly had a profound impact on these poets, is Islamic in the first place: "Sufism as Islamic mysticism is a contradiction in terms, for Sufism never had a comfortable place in Islam." According to him, the Indian type of Sufism that the Sindhi Muslim poets espoused was a "Sufism tempered with the thought of Vedanta and the emotion of Bhakti." For him, therefore, the verse of these poets falls into the *nirguṇa* (attributeless) category of *bhakti* poetry. Likewise, L. H. Ajwani maintains that the influential factor affecting these poets was not Sufism but a brand of *bhakti* that evolved out of the "mingling of Iranian type of Sufism with Indian Vedantism" and became the "bedrock of Sindhi literature." To really appreciate this poetry, he states, one must be equally conversant with the poetry of Indian *sant* poets and Persian Sufi poets, particularly Rūmī. Consequently, he takes issue with Sorley's study of Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf for emphasizing the poet's Islamic roots and refusing to recognize that he, as well as other poets after him, also inherited a legacy that included the Hindu Upaniṣads and the Vedas. Ajwani concludes his assessment of Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf's religious identity by stating: "Were Shah really an Islamic poet, pure

---

54. Sorley 1966: 287; Muhammad Sidik Memon as quoted in Ajwani 1970: 136.

and simple, he would not have made the appeal he has made to the Hindu mind and sentiment."[55]

Such conflicting interpretations are provoked not merely by the nationalist or religiously partisan agendas of contemporary writers. In fact, the difficulty of categorizing the religious identity of these mystic poets and the nature of their message can be traced to the premodern period, when their works also seem to have enjoyed an ecumenical appeal across sectarian boundaries. Notwithstanding the specific religious affiliations that the great mystic poets may or may not have claimed for themselves, their poetry was nevertheless commonly included in the corpus of devotional literature of several religious groups. Thus, for example, we find that the poetry of Qāẓī Qādan, who by sectarian affiliation belonged to the chiliastic Mahdawī movement, circulated among the Qādirī Sufis (as evidenced by its inclusion in the *Bayān ul-ʿārifīn*), the Dādūpanthīs (verses attributed to him are found in a manuscript discovered in a Dādūpanthī monastery in Haryana); and widely in non-Muslim circles in Rajasthan where a type of *nirguṇa* devotional poetry was recited.[56] We can observe the identical phenomenon in the Panjab, where the *Farīd Bānī* (Farīd's voice), a significant corpus of poetry traditionally attributed to the Muslim Sufi master Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar (d. 1265), was included in the Sikh scripture, the *Guru Granth Ṣāḥib,* notwithstanding several centuries of Sikh-Muslim political strife. Indeed, in a recent study of the multiple contexts in which the Panjabi poet Bullhe Shāh's verses are interpreted, Robin Rinehart calls this phenomenon "portability," since Bullhe Shāh's poems were "portable" into different frameworks—Sikh, Vedanta, and Sufi.[57]

Portability is a result of the mystic poets mainly using symbols and metaphors that are not anchored doctrinally to any specific religious tradition and so lend themselves to an open system of interpretation. So also, interpreters of this poetry draw elements from the same source and carry them into different discursive spaces; thus this poetry can easily be interpreted in multiple, and even contradictory, ways.[58] Since the poets often incorporated other elements intrinsic to Sindhi culture into their poetry, including folk romances and music, the literature they produced was able to appeal to lis-

55. Jotwani 1975: 144; Ajwani 1970: 53 (the mingling of Sufism and Vedantism); Ajwani 1970: 75 (taking issue with Sorley); Ajwani 1970: 65 (quotation on Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṭīf). For similar controversies on the identity of the Panjabi poet Bullhe Shāh, see Rinehart 1996.

56. See Callewaert and De Brabadere 1980: 28–48. Qāẓī Qādan's poetry appears in the following manuscripts: nos. 2 (dated 1672) and 12 (1636) at the Dadu Mahavidyalay, Jaipur; nos. 12 (1664) and 34 (1658) in the Vidya Bhusan Collection, Jaipur; and no. 875 (1675) in the film collection of the GND University in Amritsar.

57. Rinehart 1997.

58. Rinehart 1997: 34.

teners in a variety of religious contexts. Each listener could interpret a common core of thematic, symbolic, and cultural elements within his or her own religious framework. This explains why a compilation of Sindhi mystical poetry, such as the *Risālo,* has ecumenical appeal across religious boundaries today, being revered by both Muslim and Hindu Sindhis as a "sacred book"; or why the verse of the medieval Hindu poet Sāmī "delights all Sindhi hearts."[59]

EPILOGUE: SINDHI LANGUAGE, ETHNONATIONALISM, AND IDENTITY IN MODERN TIMES

This survey thus far has highlighted the various roles of Sindhi language and literature in the religious and cultural life of Sindh through the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century the consolidation of British colonial rule, and the accompanying spread of the English language and Western culture, had profound implications for Sindhi literary culture, revolutionizing patterns of thought and expression. The consequences of colonial rule and modernity, ranging from the spread of print media to the emergence of new literary forms, affected literary cultures across the subcontinent. Religiously and communally based nationalisms, which arose in reaction to colonial rule, also deeply impacted literary cultures in South Asia as languages were employed as symbols to mobilize group identity at a mass level. For Muslim nationalists Urdu, written in the Perso-Arabic script, became a symbol for Islam and Islamic identity, while Hindu groups advocated a Sanskritized form of Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, as representative of Hindu identity. Eventually, the encounter between competing nationalisms resulted in the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947. The Partition and its aftermath had an especially powerful impact on Sindh. Sindh became one of the constituent provinces of the predominantly Muslim state of Pakistan, and many Hindu Sindhis sought refuge in India. Linguistically, Sindhi has been developing in different directions in the two countries. Sindhi in Pakistan has been heavily Perso-Arabized to project an Islamic identity, while Sindhi in India has drifted towards increased Sanskritization in conformity with general pan-Indian trends.[60]

Since Partition, the fundamental issue for Sindhis in both Pakistan and India has been the preservation of Sindhi identity within the two newly established nation-states. In the interests of promoting a unified nationalism, these countries have sought to eliminate or at least not actively promote linguistic diversity among their populations. Consequently, for Sindhi ethnonationalists working to preserve Sindhi identity, promotion of the Sindhi language has become a major rallying point. In the pre-Partition period, the

59. Ajwani 1970: 137.
60. Khubchandani 1981a: 8–9.

Sindhi language had been used successfully to express a distinctive Sindhi identity: In the 1930s, Muḥammad ʿAlī Jinnāh, Ghulām Ḥussain Hidāyatul-lāh, Ghulām Murtaẓā Syed, and others had emphasized the social and linguistic distinctiveness of Sindhi culture from that of Bombay as a way of advocating the separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency. As a result, the colonial government recognized Sindh as a separate province in 1936, and Sindhi became the major language of schooling, official correspondence, and record-keeping at lower levels of administration in the province. An Office of Sindhi Translator was even established to translate all circulars, laws, and acts from English into Sindhi.

With Partition the position of Sindhi as the dominant language in the province of Sindh was threatened by the large influx of Urdu-speaking Muslim *muhājir*s (emigrants) from India.[61] Eventually constituting over fifty percent of the population in Karachi and Hyderabad—the major cities of Sindh—the *muhājir*s began, through their education and wealth, to displace Sindhis economically. To exacerbate matters, the *muhājir*s, as well as the Panjabi elite who ruled the state of Pakistan, began promoting Urdu as a marker of Pakistani identity. Matters came to a head in 1957–1958, when students at the University of Karachi were forbidden to write exams in Sindhi, which was relegated, along with other languages spoken in Pakistan, to the status of a regional language. Urdu was promoted as the language unifying all Pakistanis under the one nation, one language policy. The growing sense of deprivation—cultural, sociopolitical, and political—felt by Sindhis of all classes, particularly in urban areas, fueled a Sindhi language movement, which became the vehicle to express all kinds of other grievances against the Panjabi-dominated Pakistani state and military. Tensions between Sindhi and Urdu speakers sparked off language riots in 1971–1972, supported by a Sindhi ethnonationalist movement, Jeay Sindh (Long Live Sindh), which was headed by G. M. Sayed. He demanded autonomy for Sindh and freedom from "Urdu imperialists who have pillaged the land and people of Sindh." He also called for the restoration of the Sindhu Desh, which he claimed had existed as a separate entity on the subcontinent for thousands of years.[62] In 1972, after the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan, the chief minister of Sindh attempted to forestall such a movement in Sindh by introducing the Language Bill, which was specifically intended to promote the teaching and use of Sindhi by all residents of Sindh, including Urdu speakers. Knowledge of Sindhi became a prerequisite for a civil service job in Sindh. More riots followed, and even though a compromise was reached by granting Urdu-speaking *muhājir*s a twelve-year reprieve, a legacy of bitterness still survives.

61. Much of the following discussion on Sindhi in contemporary Pakistan is based on Rahman 1996.

62. Sayed 1995: 193; Sayed 1991.

Today, Sindh is a divided province with deep cleavages along linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. It constantly hovers on the brink of a civil war between the Urdu-speaking *muhājir*s, who have formed their own political parties, the MQM and its faction, and ethnonationalist Sindhis, who refuse to accept the hegemony of Urdu and Urdu culture in their homeland.

Sindhis in India have also found it difficult to maintain their links with their mother tongue and literary heritage, largely because they do not have a state of their own to promote Sindhi culture.[63] On arrival from Pakistan they were scattered in settlements in or near several large urban centers, where schools and colleges using Sindhi as a medium of instruction were established. Even though the government of India, after much political pressure from the Sindhi community, recognized Sindhi as one of the country's official languages, the language does not have a solid utility base in India, especially in terms of procuring employment. Consequently, younger generations of Sindhis have increasingly switched to English or Hindi, and occasionally Marathi or Gujarati, as their primary language, resulting in low enrollments and eventual closure for Sindhi-medium institutions. Indeed, the Sindhi population in India has the highest percentage of people who have learned both Hindi and English of any linguistic group.[64] Functionally, the use of Sindhi in India is restricted to domestic circles and cultural activities, especially among the older generations, who still feel nostalgic for Sindh.

The growth and intensity of Sindhi ethnonationalism in Pakistan, and to a limited extent in India, has greatly affected interpretations of Sindhi literary culture as writers search for essences of Sindhi identity in literature. Representations of and references to Sindh and Sindhi culture's medieval texts have been reformulated in a homogenizing manner. Typically, premodern Sindhi poets and their works are interpreted in a contemporary nationalist-patriotic framework. This is especially the case with the greatest of classical Sindhi poets, Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf, who is extolled as a nationalist and a democrat, since his poetry is considered to reveal sympathy for the common man far in advance of his time. He is revered as the great patriot: "One has only to read *Sur Marui* [a chapter from the *Risālo*] to know what love Shah bore to the land of his birth." Ajwani calls this love for Sindh and Sindhi culture Shāh's essential *sindhiyat,* or Sindhism, which, he declares, is especially apparent when Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf's lyrics are placed side by side with those of twentieth-century Sindhi poets, who have taken inspiration from foreign images and foreign scenes.[65] Frequently cited as evidence of

63. For Sindhis in India, see Anand 1996 and Hiranandani 1980. For Sindhi language in India, see Khubchandani 1963, 1973a, and Daswani and Parchani 1978.

64. Anand 1996: 201.

65. Ajwani 1970: 87, 107 (the quotation is from p. 87).

Shāh ʿAbduʾl Laṯīf's patriotism is his famous benediction on Sindh, which incidentally occurs in the *Risālo*'s chapter "Sur Sarang" in a poem praising the Prophet Muḥammad. The Prophet is described as a cloud of mercy raining over a parched land: "O Lord! May Sindh be ever prosperous and fertile! Sweet beloved! May all humanity be of cheer."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Advani, Kalyan. 1971. *Sachal.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Ahmad, Aziz. 1964. *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ahmad, Fazl. 1909. *Aźkār-i abrār.* Urdu translation of *Gulzār-i abrār,* by Muhammad Ghauthi. Ujjain: Alayar Khan.

Ajwani, Lalsingh. 1970. *History of Sindhi Literature.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Alam, Muzaffar. 1998. "The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics." *Modern Asian Studies* 32: 317–49.

Al-Bīrūnī, Abū Rayḥān. 1971. *Alberuni's India* (*Kitāb al-Hind*). Translated by E. C. Sachau. Edited by A. T. Embree. New York: Norton Library.

Al-Haq, Sirāj. 1964. *Sindhī ḇolī.* Hyderabad, n.p.

Allana, Ghulam Ali. 1960. "Sumarana je daura jī Sindhī shāʿīrī." *Mehrāṇ* 9 (1–2): 148–56.

———. 1969. *Sindhī Ṣuratkhatī.* 2d ed. Hyderabad, Sindh: Sindhi Zaban Publication.

———. 1991. *An Introduction to Sindhi Literature.* Jamshoro, Sindh: Sindhi Adabi Board.

Al-Nadīm, Ibn. 1929. *Al-fihrist.* Cairo, n.p.

Anand, Subhadra. 1996. *National Integration of Sindhis.* New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Asani, Ali S. 1987. "The Khojkī Script: A Legacy of Ismaili Islam in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107: 439–49.

———. 1988. "Amir Khusraw and Poetry in Indic Languages." *Islamic Culture* 62: 50–62.

———. 1993. "Folk Romance in Sufi Poetry from Sind." In *Islam and the Indian Regions,* edited by A. Dallapiccola and S. Lallemant. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

———. 1996. "Propagating the Message: Popular Sufi Songs and Spiritual Transformation in South Asia." *Bulletin of the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies* 15: 5–15.

Badāūnī, ʿAbduʾl Qādir. 1973. *Muntakhab at-tawārīkh.* 3 vols. Translated by Wolseley Haig. Reprint, Patna: Academia Asiatica.

Baloch, Aziz. 1982. "Music Traditions of Lower Indus Valley." In *Folk Music of Sind,* edited by G. A. Allana. Hyderabad: Institute of Sindhology, University of Sindh.

Baloch, Nabi Bakhsh Khan. 1962. *Sindhī ḇolīa jī mukhtaṣar tārīkh.* Hyderabad: Pioneer Press.

———. 1978. "Qāẓī Qādan jā baita naiṅ taḥqīq jī raushnī meṅ." *Mehrāṇ* 27 (4): 112–48.

———. 1979. "Qāẓī Qādan jā baita naiṅ taḥqīq jī raushnī meṅ." *Mehrāṇ* 28 (1): 116–49.

———. 1982. "Shah Abdul Latif: The Founder of a New Music Institution." In *Folk Music of Sind,* edited by G. A. Allana. Hyderabad, Sindh: Institute of Sindhology, University of Sindh.

———. 1992. *Sindhi Script and Orthography.* Karachi and Hyderabad: Sindhi Language Authority.

Brohi, A. K. 1965. Introduction to *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif (Selections).* Translated in verse by Elsa Kazi. Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board.

———. 1992. "The Philosophical Dimensions of Latif's Poetry." In *Shah Abdul Latif, His Mystical Poetry,* edited by Abdul Hamid Akhund. Bhit Shah: Shah Abdul Latif Bhit Shah Cultural Centre.

Bruijn, Thomas de. 1997. "Visions of the Unseen: Rhetorical Strategies in Bhakti and Sufi Poetry." Paper presented to the Seventh International Conference on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Venice, Italy.

Burhānpūrī, Rāshid. 1957. *Burhānpūr ke sindhī auliyāʾ.* Karachi: Sindhi Adabi Board.

Burton, Richard. 1851. *Sind and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus.* London: W. H. Allen & Co.

Callewaert, W. M., and L. De Brabadere. 1980. "Nirguṇ Literature on Microfilm in Leuven, Belgium." *IAVRI Bulletin* 9: 28–48.

Canfield, Robert. 1991. *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chatterjee, Suniti Kumar. 1958. "An Arabic Version of the Mahabharata Story from Sindhi." *Indo-Asian Culture* 7 (1): 50–71.

Cole, W. Owen, and P. S. Sambhi. 1978. *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Daswani, C. J., and S. Parchani. 1978. *Sociolinguistic Survey of Indian Sindhi.* CIIL Occasional Monograph Series 15. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages.

Daudpotā, U. M. 1958. "Asānjī Sindhī Zabān." *Mehrāṇ* 3 (3–4): 1–5.

Dharwadker, Vinay. 1993. "Orientalism and the Study of Indian Literatures." In *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament,* edited by Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Diringer, D. 1968. *The Alphabet: A Key to the History of Mankind.* 2 vols. 3d ed. New York: Funk and Wagnalls.

Eaton, Richard. 1974–1975. "Sufi Folk Literature and the Expansion of Islam." *History of Religions* 14 (2): 115–27.

Ernst, Carl. 1992. *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Gandhi, S. S. 1978. *History of the Sikh Gurus.* New Delhi: Gur Das Kapur and Sons.

Grierson, George. 1903–1928. *Linguistic Survey of India.* 11 vols. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing.

Harisinghānī, Qīmatrāī. 1976. *Sindhī sāhityah ain sāhityakāra.* Bhopal: Sindhi Hindi Prakashan Sadan.

Hawley, John. 1986. "Images of Gender in the Poetry of Krishna." In *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols,* edited by Caroline W. Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman. Boston: Beacon Press.

———. 1988. "Authorship and Authority in Bhakti Poetry of North India." *Journal of Asian Studies* 47: 269–90.

Hiranandani, Popati. 1980. *Sindhis: The Scattered Treasure.* New Delhi: Malaah Publications.

ʿIshqī, Ilyās. 1975. "Sindhī Mūsīqī." *Mehrāṇ* 4: 179–89.

———. 1982. "Music of Sind through the Centuries." In *Folk Music of Sind,* edited by G. A. Allana. Hyderabad, Sindh: Institute of Sindhology, University of Sindh.

Jaitali, Krishna Sharma. 1985. *The Date of Sindhi (Haṭa-Vāṇikā) Script and the Need to Propagate It!* Pune: A. B. Sindhi Sahitya Parishad.

Jetley, Loknath. 1959. *Sindhī ḇolīa jī lipī.* Bombay, n.p.

Jotwani, Motilal. 1975. *Shah Abdul Latif: His Life and Work.* Delhi: University of Delhi.

———. 1979. *Sindhi Literature and Society.* New Delhi: Rajesh Publications.

———. 1980. *Shah Abdul Karim: A Mystic Poet of Sindh.* Delhi: Kumar Brothers.

———. 1981. "Sindhi Sufi Poet Qazi Qadan: His Poetry in Transliteration and Translation." *Panjab University Journal of Medieval Indian Literature* 5 (1–2): 41–70.

Khubchandani, Lachman. 1963. "The Acculturation of Indian Sindhi to Hindi: A Study of Language in Contact." Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania.

———. 1969. "Sindhi." In *Linguistics in South Asia.* Vol. 5 of *Current Trends in Linguistics,* edited by T. A. Sebeok. The Hague: Mouton.

———. 1973a. "Bilingualism among Sindhi Immigrants." In *Language in Pluralistic India.* The Hague: Mouton.

———. 1973b. *Linguistic Studies on Sindhi.* Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.

———. 1981a. "Sindhi Language." In *Sindhi Studies.* Studies in Linguistics, no. 7. Pune: Centre for Communication Studies.

———. 1981b. *Current Trends in Sindhi.* Studies in Linguistics, no. 12. Pune: Centre for Communication Studies.

Lord, Albert. 1968. *The Singer of Tales.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Maʿṣūm Bakkarī, Sayyid Muhammad. 1938. *Tārīkh-i Maʿṣūmī.* Edited with introduction and notes by U. M. Daudpota. Poona: Bhandakar Oriental Research Institute.

Qamaruddin. 1985. *The Mahdawi Movement in India.* Delhi: Idarat-i Adabiyat-i Dilli.

Rahman, Tariq. 1996. *Language and Politics in Pakistan.* Karachi: Oxford University Press.

Rāshdī, Husām ad-Dīn. n.d. *Sindhī adab.* Karachi: Idarah-i Matbuat-i Pakistan.

Rinehart, Robin. 1996. "Interpretations of the Poetry of Bullhe Shah." *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 3 (1): 45–63.

———. 1997. "The Portable Bullhe Shah: Biography, Authorship, and Categorization in the Study of Punjabi Sufi Poetry." Paper presented to the Seventh International Conference on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Venice, Italy.

Rizvi, S. A. A. 1978. *A History of Sufism in India.* 2 vols. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

Robinson, Francis. 1991. "Perso-Islamic Culture in India." In *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective,* edited by Robert Canfield. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rocher, Rosane. 1993. "British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century." In *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament,* edited by Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Royal Asiatic Society (Bombay Branch). 1857. "Abstract of Society's Proceedings." *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 5.

Sayed, Ghulam Murtaza. 1991. *Sindhu Desh: A Study in Its Separate Identity through the Ages.* Karachi: G. M. Syed Academy.

———. 1995. *The Case of Sindh: G. M. Sayed's Deposition for the Court.* Karachi: Naeen Sindh Academy.

Schimmel, Annemarie. 1974. *Sindhi Literature.* Vol. 8 of *A History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

———. 1976. *Pain and Grace: A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth Century Muslim India.* Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Shivdasani, G. 1963. "Sindhī ḅoliā lāī devanagarī lipī." *Hindvāsī* (Bombay).

Sindhī, Memon ʿAbduʾl Majīd. 1972. *Karīm jo kalām, Shāh ʿAbduʾl Karīm Bulṛīa wāre jo risālo.* Larkana: Sindhi Adabi Akademi.

———. 1976. *Sindhī adab jo tārīkhī jāʾizo.* Sukkur, Sindh: Ajaib Stores.

Sorley, H. T. 1966. *Shāh Abdul Latīf of Bhit: His Poetry, Life and Times.* Lahore, Karachi, and Dacca: Oxford University Press.

Stack, George. 1849. *A Grammar of the Sindhi Language.* Bombay: American Mission Press.

Thakur, Hīro. 1978. *Qāẓī Qādan jo kalām.* Delhi: Puja Publications.

Thathawī, Mīr ʿAlī Sher Qānī. 1959. *Tuḥfat al-kirām* (Urdu translation). Hyderabad, Sindh: Sindhi Adabi Board.

Trumpp, Ernest. 1872. *Grammar of the Sindhi Language Compared with the Sanskrit-Prakrit and the Cognate Indian Vernaculars.* Leipzig and London: Trubner and Co.

Buddhist Cultures and South Asian Literatures

What Is Literature in Pali?

Steven Collins

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes Pali literature, some of which is not well-known, and asks a question which has not, to my knowledge, been asked before: Why is it that Pali texts from the last few centuries B.C.E. contain some of the earliest examples of literature in the *kāvya* sense in South Asia, yet there is nothing more in this genre in Pali, with one partial exception *(Mahāvaṃsa),* until the start of the second millennium? There are, of course, modes of literary expression in South Asia other than those codified and defined by the Brahmanical Sanskritic tradition as *kāvya.* An outstanding Pali example is the *Vessantarajātaka* (Birth story of Vessantara). I will argue that it arose from the same story-matrix as the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa,* which is widely regarded by Brahmans and (Sanskritic) Buddhists alike as the earliest work of *kāvya.* Many other Pali texts from all periods, including the earliest, contain various forms of expressive sophistication, although this aspect has received scarcely any attention in modern scholarship. But when monks in Sri Lanka began to compose *kāvya* in Pali again, more than a thousand years after Pali texts were first composed, they did so in a consciously high-literate, Sanskritized manner, deliberately adopting the specifically *kāvya* mode of literary expression. One might call this the *problem* of liter-

ature in Pali.[1] I will suggest avenues of thought which I hope are helpful, but nothing said here will resolve the issues definitively.

In describing Pali texts in the light of this history I begin with historical literature, in the *vaṃsa* genre, for two reasons: first, because many examples of later Pali *kāvya* are in this genre; second, because recent discussions of historiography, narrative, and literariness allow an approach to these texts hitherto obscured by exclusive concentration on them as sources for writing modern event-history. Then I consider the *Vessantarajātaka* and the *Rāmāyaṇa,* for the reason just given. The distribution of versions in Pali, Sanskrit, and vernaculars shows something specific about these texts and also exemplifies the value of seeing that Pali texts were composed and circulated in a linguistically pluralist milieu. Next I give examples of Pali *kāvya,* early and late; last, I offer some reflections on the historical and geographical specificity of its later production and distribution.

But first, some scene setting. Pali is a form of Middle Indo-Aryan, with features deriving from the Vedic language which preceded classical Sanskrit (Old Indo-Aryan), as classified by the grammarian Pāṇini in the fourth century B.C.E. It developed from a northwestern Indian dialect, but its extant form cannot have coincided with any spoken language, since there are elements of deliberate Sanskritization, including forms which could not have occurred historically in a speech community. For this reason it has been called an artificial language, or an ecclesiastical (written) *koiné.* Later literary Pali was also affected by the grammatical and lexicographical traditions, themselves very much under the influence of their Sanskrit counterparts.

Pali texts claim that their language preserves the original form and language of the Buddha's teaching, in the language of Magadha. Pali as we have it, however, is not identical to the Māgadhan dialect, either as it is inferred to have been at the time of the Buddha (now thought to be wholly within the fifth century B.C.E., as opposed to the traditional Western dating of 563–483 B.C.E.), or as it is known to have been from the time of Emperor Aśoka in the third century B.C.E. The texts in Pali which have survived until modern times—with one or two disputed exceptions—are exclusively derived from the Mahāvihāra monastery in Anurādhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka. Buddhism came to Sri Lanka in the third century B.C.E., and it is from there that all our evidence comes for Pali texts until the second millennium. There must have been a Pali or Pali-like tradition of texts in India. Chinese pilgrims in the first millennium often speak of the Theravāda school in India, which usually appears in translations in

---

1. Scholars who have previously provided overviews of texts in Pali see no problem: "for the Indologist Pali literature means everything that is written in Pali" (Norman 1983, IX; cf. von Hinüber 1996).

its Sanskrit form, Sthaviravāda, and extant Sri Lankan texts suggest that Theravāda Buddhism and Pali texts existed in south India (with an important center in Kāñcipuram) up to the thirteenth century, after Buddhism had almost wholly disappeared from the rest of India. Some Pali texts, such as *Milindapañha* (The questions of King Milinda), seem to have derived from originals composed on the Indian mainland. But there are no extant Indian Pali texts.

During the first millennium the Mahāvihāra was a minority tradition alongside the Abhayagiri and Jetavana monastic fraternities. We know nothing directly about the latter lineages and their texts, but it is inferred that, while they used Pali texts, they were more open than the Mahāvihāra to texts in Sanskrit and to texts of the Mahāyāna. There is abundant evidence for the existence of Mahāyāna in Sri Lanka during this period. Part of the divergence between the Mahāvihāra and its rivals concerns attitudes toward canonicity. The Abhayagiri and Jetavana fraternities seem—this is by no means certain—to have taken the typically Mahayanist view that the "Canon," the Word of the Buddha, was an open category. The Mahāvihāra, conversely, developed a closed Canon during the first centuries C.E.—a process completed before the fifth and sixth centuries, the time of the Pali commentators Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla. Buddhaghosa refers to various earlier commentaries and says he is translating them into Pali from Sinhala. After this time, textual production related to the Canon proceeded largely on the model of one commentary for one Canonical text, and one subcommentary on that commentary. There were also some short, summarizing texts, in the *Vinaya* (Monastic law) and the *Abhidhamma* (Higher teachings).

There are Pali inscriptions on mainland Southeast Asia dated to the first millennium, in what are now Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Some have been dated as early as the fourth century, and some indicate acquaintance with sophisticated Higher Teachings texts and commentaries. Our picture is still very sketchy, but it seems that the provenance of much if not all Pali at this time and place was south India rather than Sri Lanka. Pali texts were certainly part of what Skilling calls the "Theravādin renaissance" in this part of the world, which began with Pagan in Burma in the eleventh century and continued in subsequent centuries in all areas of mainland Southeast Asia (with the exception of Vietnam).[2] Royal sponsorship of monastic lineages deriving from the Mahāvihāra in Sri Lanka and of Pali texts, however, seems not to have resulted in any significant production of Pali *kāvya* in these areas of Southeast Asia. Literature's ancillary sciences—notably grammar and prosody—were certainly known, but little Pali literature seems to have been written in these areas and none has survived.

2. Skilling 1997.

VAṂSA TEXTS

Texts in the *vaṃsa* tradition of historiography vary widely in their sophistication and literariness.[3] The earliest, the *Dīpavaṃsa* (Chronicle of the island)—i.e., Sri Lanka—is a clumsy verse composition with grammatical and other errors, made probably in the third or fourth century C.E. Others, such as the *Mahābodhivaṃsa* (History of the great Bodhi Tree), written perhaps in the tenth century, show great linguistic skill. The thirteenth-century *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa* (Chronicle of the monastery at Attanagalla), is a *campū* (mixed prose and verse) with verses in various meters, drawing on Bāṇa and Āryaśūra.

Because the *Dīpavaṃsa* is an awkwardly organized work in bad Pali, scholars have thought that Mahānāma, the author of the earlier part of the *Mahāvaṃsa* (Great Chronicle), was referring to that text when he wrote:

> The [text] composed by the Ancients is too long in some places and too short in others, and repetitious.
>
> Listen [now] to this [version], which does not have those faults, and is easy to learn and remember; it has come down [to us] by tradition. Where [the text] is such as to inspire serene confidence *[pasāda],* give expression to serene confidence, and where it is animating, to animation *[saṃvega].* (Mhv I: 2–4)[4]

The commentary, however, states that "the Ancients" refers to a Sinhala version. The earlier *Mahāvaṃsa* is not high *kāvya,* but it is an elegant poem, in *śloka*s with penultimate verses in each chapter in more complex meters, which either summarize the narrative or offer reflections on it. Every chapter in both earlier and later *Mahāvaṃsa* states at the end that it has been composed to arouse serene confidence and animation in its audience. Mahānāma's date is uncertain; perhaps sixth century. The text was continued by later writers, whom Geiger assigned to the twelfth, thirteenth, and eighteenth centuries; the last of these is certain, but the earlier sections were probably the work of various hands.[5] They continue the *śloka*-plus-summary verse for-

3. I translate *vaṃsa* as "chronicle" or "history." Accounts of *vaṃsa* texts are found in Law 1947, Perera 1979. Geiger 1905 discusses the *Dīpavaṃsa, Mahāvaṃsa,* and some later texts. Geiger's translations of the *Mahāvaṃsa,* called *Mahāvaṃsa* (1912) and *Cūḷavaṃsa* (1929) deal with issues raised by the texts and their chronology; the latter has a very useful series of indices in what was originally vol. 2 (the work is now issued as one volume). A number of essays by G. C. Mendis have recently been reprinted as Mendis 1996.

4. For many later Sanskrit literary critics, following Ānandavardhana in the ninth century, a single flavor *(rasa)* should predominate in any work. It would be interesting to try to assess whether serene confidence or animation is in fact the predominant mood evoked by the text. Neither *pasāda* nor *saṃvega* are traditionally viewed as *rasa*s.

5. Geiger called this part of the text *Cūḷavaṃsa,* the Lesser Chronicle, and his English translation has popularized the term. Like the compilers of the *Critical Pali Dictionary,* I find his ar-

mat; the third includes complex meters within the chapters. A final chapter was added by the editors of a Sinhala script edition in 1877, at the request of the British colonial government (this edition brought the text up to the arrival of the English, the *ingirīsi*). Various individuals continued the text in the twentieth century; in the 1970s and 1980s a new addition was made on the initiative of J. R. Jayawardene's government. It abandons chronological ordering in favor of a topical approach, derived from the *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon,* itself derived from the *Cambridge History of India.*[6] It has Pali verses giving the main points of each chapter and the rest is in Sinhala.

One can infer the kinds of source material the authors of the *Mahāvaṃsa* used from their mention in the text and from the styles of different sections. These include: (1) earlier narrative histories, such as that commissioned by King Vijayabāhu I, who "had seventeen years written (about)" (*likhāpayi . . . sattarasavassāni*) before his coronation, and an eighteenth after it (Mhv LIX: 7, 9). Geiger may be right to infer a separate chronicle of the southeastern part of Sri Lanka, Rohaṇa, from the seemingly awkward insertion into the *Mahāvaṃsa* of passages dealing with that area (e.g., XLVI: 38 ff.; LV: 3 ff.); (2) motifs from canonical texts, such as the Ten Virtues of a King *(dasa rāja-dhammā);*[7] (3) Sanskrit sources such as the *Arthaśāstra* (Treatise on wealth and power), which clearly lies behind the account in chapter 66 of the measures Parakkamabāhu I adopted in seeking knowledge of his rival, King Gajabāhu;[8] (4) merit-books *(puññapotthaka)* kept by kings, such as the one that the *Mahāvaṃsa* appears to quote verbatim when King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi has his read aloud on his deathbed (XXXII 26 ff.) (such passages can consist of a mere list of good deeds, buildings erected, and so on, or they can be elaborated in more narrative form); (5) inscriptions, such as those mentioned at XXVII: 6; LIV: 28; and LX: 67;[9] (6) wisdom *(nīti)* verses, which are found in the main body of the text as well as in the summary/reflective final verses of chapters; (7) praise-poems of kings, either written by the authors of the *Mahāvaṃsa* or preexistent and quoted by them as texts or inscriptions, such as the opening verses of chapter 42 on King Aggabodhi I (sixth to seventh centuries), which use plays on words, puns, syntactic parallels, and rhyme in a Sanskritic vocabulary:

---

guments unpersuasive and prefer to continue the indigenous practice of referring to the whole work as the *Mahāvaṃsa* or Great Chronicle.

6. Kemper 1991.

7. See Collins 1998: 460 ff.

8. If Geiger's conjectural reading *kotallādisu* at LXIV 3 is correct, Kauṭalya's work is cited as part of the future king's education.

9. Modern historians often claim that inscriptions found in Sri Lanka "confirm" one or another account in the *Mahāvaṃsa,* but the text may have been copied from the inscription, and it is as easy to tell lies on stone or copper (or gold) plate as it is on palm leaf.

Aggabodhi then became king, a man of good fortune, and maternal nephew of King Mahānāga, who aspired to the attainment of the highest wisdom.[10] He was renowned among the people as being like the sun in radiance, the full moon in charm,[11] Mt. Meru in unshakeability, the ocean in depth, the earth in immovability, the wind in even-handedness,[12] the gods' adviser [Bṛhaspati] in wisdom, the autumn sky in purity, the king of the gods in the enjoyment of pleasures and the Lord of Riches [Kubera] in wealth, the pure [Vedic sage] Vāseṭṭha in rectitude, the King of the Animals [i.e. the lion] in strength, a Wheel-turning Emperor in the royal Virtues of a King, and Vessantara in generosity.[13]

The *Mahābodhivaṃsa,* which identifies itself in the proem as a translation from Sinhala, tells of Gotama's original aspiration to Buddhahood; his encounter with the former Buddha, Dīpaṅkara, as the ascetic Sumedha; his Enlightenment; the first three Councils; the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka with the coming of Aśoka's son Mahinda; and the arrival of the Bodhi Tree and the beginning of the worship of the Bodhi Tree *(bodhipūjā).* The work is mostly in prose with occasional verses, some borrowed from the chapter endings of the *Great Chronicle.* The prose has many very long compounds and sentences. For example, a single sentence covering two and a half pages in the Pali Text Society's edition (pages 2–4), tells the story of Sumedha's leaving home, going to the Himālayas to live in a leaf hut, and then abandoning the hut as a "second household life" for the foot of a tree, where he enjoys the happiness of meditation. It consists in a long series of clauses using participles and absolutives and ends with a single main verb.

He plunged into the Himālaya [region], which was made beautiful by *ketaka* [flowers], trees such as the *aśoka, tilaka, and campaka,* and many masses of blossoming flowers and groves of fragrant trees; it was crowded with *kadambaka* [plants] and innumerable four-footed [animals] such as deer, horses, elephants,

10. *Aggabodhigatāsayo*—i.e., he saw himself as a future Buddha.

11. *Somma,* Skt. *saumya,* from *soma,* itself closely tied to the moon in meaning.

12. There is a pun here on *sama-vutti,* "behaving the same way (to all)" and *sama-vuṭṭhi,* "raining equally (on all)."

13.

Mahānāganarindassa bhāgineyyo subhāgiyo
so Aggabodhi rājāsi aggabodhigatāsayo
tejena bhānuṃ sommena candaṃ saṃpuṇṇamaṇḍalaṃ
Sumerum acalattena gambhīrena mahodadhiṃ
vasuṃdharaṃ akampena mārutaṃ samavuttiyā
buddhiyā 'maramantāraṃ suddhiyā saradambaraṃ
kāmabhogena devindaṃ atthena ca dhanissaraṃ
dhammena suddhavāseṭṭhaṃ vikkamena migādhipaṃ
rājadhammehi rajjehi cakkavattinarissaraṃ
*Vessantaraṃ ca dānena anugantvā jane suto (*Mhv XLII 1–5).

and tigers; it resounded endlessly with [the songs of] birds such as osprey, partridges, peacocks and *bhiṅkaras;* it was always busy with [the comings and goings of] many kinds of beings, such as gods, demi-gods, magicians, and wizards; it shone with hundreds of various precious stones such as emeralds, silver, gold, and quartz; it glistened with thousands of forest lakes, [whose waters were] stirred up by the jug-breasts of numerous groups of women devoted to Indra; it was an ornament for the snowy mountains; hundreds of thousands of cascades of cool water in fine rain and heavy showers made it lovely; it was a mine of many kinds of jewels and a playground for gods, *kinnara*s, and *nāga*s.[14]

This technique for description is familiar in South Asia, from the time of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (e.g., the descriptions of Rāma's journey to the forest, or Hanumān's flight to Sri Lanka). It occurs in earlier Pali literature, as in the *Kuṇāla* and *Vessantara* Birth Stories, but nowhere in the earlier Pali texts can one find this kind of alliterative long compound, each of which contains, as it were, an episode of description. Many of the terms are Sanskrit, or else Pali versions of Sanskrit words previously unknown in Pali. If the suggested dating to the last quarter of the tenth century is correct, the *Mahābodhivaṃsa* would be the earliest extant example of later Pali *kāvya*.[15]

The main focus of the *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa* is the story of the future Buddha king Sirisaṅghabodhi, a historical person of the early fourth century, from his birth to the founding of the shrine to him and a monastery at Attanagalla. This occupies the first nine chapters. The work as it now exists continues for two more chapters, recounting the good deeds done by subsequent kings on behalf of the monastery. After the last chapter, but

14.

ketakāsokatilakacampakādinekavikacakusumanikaraparimalatarusaṇḍamaṇḍitaṃ
migaturaṅganāgavyagghādiaparimitacatuppadakadambakānucaritaṃ kuraracakoramayūra-
bhiṅkārādisakuntānantakūjitaṃ
devadānavasiddhavijjādharādinānābhūtasatatanisevitaṃ marakatarajatakanakaphalikādi-
vividhasikharisatasamujjalaṃ
nekanākanāyakanikāyakāminīkucakalasaluḷitavanasarasahassūpasobhitaṃ himadharaṇīdhar-
ābharaṇabhūtaṃ sisirasīkarāsāranijjharasatasahassasaramaṇīyaṃ anekavidharatanākaraṃ
surakinnaranāgaraṅgamaṇḍalaṃ Himavantam ajjhogahetvā (Mhbv 2)

15. Norman 1983: 141. The *Telakaṭāhagāthā* (Verses from a pot of [boiling] oil) is a poem in Vasantatilaka meter which shows some of this kind of literary skill, but the length of the lines in that meter prevents compounding as long as that quoted here from the *Mahābodhivaṃsa*. It is set in the narrative context of a monk's being boiled in oil by a Sri Lankan king of the fourth and third centuries B.C.E.; he gives an elegantly worded exposition of Buddhist systematic thought as he dies. This work is mentioned in a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century narrative work *Rasavāhinī* (Stream of sentiments), so it must be earlier than that, though the exact date is unknown. Three lines similar to lines in *Telakaṭāhagāthā* are found in an inscription in Thailand which has been dated to the eighth century. It is unlikely that the poem as a whole is that early, but this shows that the style must be earlier than the earliest extant examples of it.

before the anonymous author's epilogue, there is a verse expressing the hope that others will "write down here" *(ihālikhantu)* the names and deeds of future benefactors of the monastery. Had this happened, the History of Sirisaṅghabodhi would then have served as a prologue to the monastery's Chronicle. As mentioned, it is an erudite work, drawing on Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* (Story of a woman called Kādambarī) and Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* (Garland of birth stories) as well as making reference to many Pali *jātaka* stories. The author borrows from Bāṇa the speech by Śukanāsa to Candrapīḍa when the latter's education is complete. Part is put in the mouth of Siri Saṅgha Bodhi's teacher, the monk Nanda, who on the completion of his education (chapter 2) warns him of the dangers of sense pleasures; part is in the mouth of Siri Saṅgha Bodhi himself when he attempts to refuse the offer of kingship by citing the dangers and evils of that position. Whereas the prose material from Bāṇa is mostly, though not always used verbatim, prose and verse from Āryaśūra is usually changed. An example of the latter is found in chapter 2: In Āryaśūra's *Agastyajātaka* (Birth story of Agastya)*,* the future Buddha Gotama is the Brahman sage Agastya, who is given three wishes by Indra. He asks to be free from greed and the like, and in one verse asks:

> The fire of hatred—which overwhelms people like an enemy, so that they suffer loss of money, purity of caste, and the happiness of a good name—may it keep far away from me.[16]

The Pali replaces the spatial metaphor *(bhraṃśam . . . dūrataḥ)* with a play on *hā,* to forsake:

> May that fire of hatred forsake your heart, which overwhelms beings like an enemy [so that they] are forsaken by purity of caste and the happiness [which comes] from a good name, by wealth, and by servants.[17]

In the colophon the unnamed author aspires to become a Buddha and, in future lives, to be "skilled in all regional languages and in every single one of the arts, in the wisdom of the world and in subduing the passions," as also

> in the Baskets [of the Pali Canon], in the Vedas, in many systems of grammar, and in other forms of knowledge such as logic and the like. May I be a poet *[kavi],* one versed in scripture, one who when speaking his view crushes the

---

16. Translated in Khoroche 1989: 43. *arthād api bhraṃśam samāpnuvanti / varṇaprasādād yaśasaḥ sukhāc ca / yenābhibhūtā dviṣateva sattvāḥ / sa dveṣavahnir mama dūrataḥ syāt* (Jkm vii, 18).

17. *vaṇṇapasādā yasasā sukhā ca / dhanā ca hāyant' upajīvinā ca / yenābhibhūtā ripuneva sattā / dosaggi so te hadayaṃ jahatu* (Att 6)*. Hāyanti* is the passive of *hā* (active *jahati*), used in the sense of "excluded from," "bereft of" + ablative. My translation changes the syntax to preserve the word play.

views of others; may I be able to remember many thousands [of verses] as a text after just one hearing. (Att 33)

Not all *vaṃsa* texts from this period do the same thing. The thirteenth-century *Thūpavaṃsa* (History of the Stūpa) by Vācissara claims to improve on earlier versions in Sinhala and Pali and contains a mixture of mostly prose with some verse. For this reason one could place it in the *kāvya* category of *campū,* but it attempts little verbal sophistication of the kind found in the *Mahābodhivaṃsa* or the *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa,* although it does use a slightly Sanskritized vocabulary. It uses material, with little change, from earlier sources to tell the story of King Duṭṭhagāmaī's building of the Great Stūpa at Anurādhapura. Some texts, on the other hand, while recounting a chronological narrative seem mostly interested in the opportunity their topic affords for verbal creativity. The *Dāṭhavaṃsa* (History of the tooth-relic), also written in the thirteenth century and again a translation from a Sinhala original ascribed to poets (*kavi*s), is equally focused on linguistic skill and on its subject, or more precisely, it is as much concerned with elegance of representation as it is with strategies of referentiality to the world thus represented. It starts with Sumedha's aspiration, then tells of Gotama Buddha's Enlightenment, his visit to Sri Lanka, his death and cremation, and the distribution of the relics before turning to the story surrounding the tooth-relic and its arrival in Sri Lanka in the early fourth century. The work's five chapters are in five complex meters, with different meters again for the last one or two verses in each chapter.

Historiographical texts were thus capable of significant literary achievement, both in the general (English) sense and in the specific *kāvya* sense. In any place and time it is difficult to delineate clearly when a narrative text is a "history" or a "story." A common-sense distinction between what has actually happened and what is made up is clearly available to any thinking person, at any place and time, who attends to the issue. But just as modern discourse theorists problematize where and how the distinction can be made, so premodern Pali histories and stories, as well as all narratives, share many representational techniques, such as the use of branch stories, which break off from the main story to recount the past of some character(s). The Pali *vaṃsa* tradition is sorely in need of close and detailed textual study.

All traditions, of course, have category problems. As is well-known, in the Sanskrit tradition both the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are classified as *itihāsa,* "history," but also as *kāvya* (and even, later, as *śāstra*). As Sheldon Pollock shows in chapter 1 of this volume, later poets, such as the Buddhist *kavi* Aśvaghoṣa, as well as literary critics celebrate the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s composer, Vālmīki, as the first poet. In the Sanskrit chronicle *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (River of [Kashmiri] kings), Kalhaa refers to himself as a *kavi* and calls Kṣemendra's *Nṛpāvali* (King list) a work of literature *(kavi-karma).*

THE SHARED STORY-MATRIX OF THE
RĀMĀYAṆA AND THE *VESSANTARAJĀTAKA*

For modern readers the *Vessantarajātaka* is clearly just a story;[18] in the *Mahāvaṃsa* and elsewhere, however, Vessantara appears as a historical figure. The *Vessantarajātaka* has not, to my knowledge, been seen by anyone as a *kāvya,* but it is certainly a work of great skill and power.[19] The similarity between the stories of Vessantara and Rāma has long been recognized. In the past much effort was expended in attempting to judge the relative chronology of these two texts and the Pali *Dasarathajātaka* (Birth story of Dasaratha), which gives a brief and rather odd version of the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s Ayodhyā chapter (Ayodhyākāṇḍa).[20] Alsdorf devoted great learning and ingenuity, and not a little Orientalist *hauteur,* to an argument which tried to prove that the verses of the *Vessantarajātaka* (rearranged by him) are "pre-Buddhist." This kind of study seems to me to take what are virtues in some areas of historical philology and turn them into vices by applying them where they are not appropriate. What Pollock says of the relations between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* seems equally relevant to the relations between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vessantarajātaka:*

> [T]he question of priority with respect to preliterate epic or popular texts is in general misleading. The oral traditions of all the various genres and particular works must have been continuously interactive and cross-fertilizing. Even more clearly than [the *Rāmāyaṇa*], [the *Mahābhārata*] has roots that stretch back to the Vedic age. This fact, coupled with the structural similarity of the poems, forces us to think of the two epic traditions as coextensive processes that were underway throughout the second half of the first millennium B.C., until the monumental poet of [the *Rāmāyaṇa*] and the redactors of [the *Mahābhārata*] authoritatively synthesized their respective materials and thereby effectively terminated the creative oral process.[21]

Summaries of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vessantarajātaka* are easily available.[22] I give here very brief sketches. In the *Rāmāyaṇa,* Rāma is denied succession to the throne and, accompanied by his wife, Sītā, and brother, Lakṣmaṇa, is banished to the forest by his father, King Daśaratha. The demon Rāvaṇa uses subterfuge to capture Sītā and abduct her to Sri Lanka. With the help of a

18. The account of the *Vessantarajātaka* here follows that in Collins 1998.

19. One commentary (Sv 95) cites it as the work of a *kavi* who recites texts he has heard from others *(suta-kavi).*

20. The *Sāmajātaka* (Birth story of Sāma) also contains a famous episode from the *Rāmāyaṇa:* Dasaratha's accidental shooting of a young boy in the forest.

21. Alsdorf 1957, Pollock 1986: 42–43.

22. For the *Rāmāyaṇa* see Goldman 1984: 6–13, Richman 1991: 5–7. For the *Vessantarajātaka* see Cone and Gombrich 1977: xvi–xvii.

monkey army led by Hanumān, Rāma kills Rāvaṇa and returns with Sītā to Ayodhā for his coronation after Sītā has proved her faithfulness to him by an ordeal of fire. In the seventh and last book, often considered a later addition, Rāma banishes Sītā because of gossip questioning her faithfulness; the poem ends in unhappiness and tragedy. The *Vessantarajātaka* tells the story of the future Buddha Gotama's life as Vessantara, his last life as a human being. Vessantara is boundlessly generous. When he gives away the royal elephant who brings rain to the kingdom, he is banished by his father, Sañjaya, at the behest of the people. He goes to the forest with his wife, Maddī, and children, and they live as ascetics, as did Rāma and his wife and brother. An old Brahman, Jūjaka, asks Vessantara for his children, and Vessantara gives them to him in Maddī's absence. Sakka, the king of the gods, comes in disguise to ask for Maddī, and when Vessantara gives her to him, he gives her back. The children are ransomed by Sañjaya, and Vessantara returns to the city to be crowned king.

Gombrich has listed a number of specific similarities between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Vessantarajātaka,* both structural and general—the banishment of an heir apparent, his life in the forest as an ascetic in Brahmanical garb, the triumphal return, and so on—as well as specific verbal echoes between the *Vessantarajātaka* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s "Ayodhyākāṇḍa."[23] Maddī, Vessantara's wife, explicitly compares her devotion to her husband to Sītā's devotion to Rāma (Ja 6, p. 557, v. 541). The similarities between the two stories are, in my opinion, so deep that we would do better to think of them as a single story-matrix. From this matrix emerged Vālmīki's monumental version, culminating but not ending the Sanskrit tradition, and the Pali tradition, culminating but not ending with the prose-and-verse *Vessantarajātaka,* whose extant form is from the time of Buddhaghosa (5th–6th centuries C.E.) though the text is based on earlier materials. The three versions of the Vessantara story extant in Sanskrit—in Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā,* in a text from Gilgit, and in Kṣemendra's *Avadānakalpalatā* (Wishing creeper of legends)[24]—are, in their different ways, less like the *Rāmāyaṇa* than is the *Vessantarajātaka.* They are all much shorter and so lack the epic sweep and dramatic tension common to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vessantarajātaka.* There is a Chinese translation of a lost Sanskrit text made between 388–407 C.E., of which there is a French translation;[25] this is longer and preserves the sense of personal tragedy in the extreme generosity of Viśvantara (here called Sudāna), but it lacks the political focus, despite a few narrative details shared with the *Rāmāyaṇa* which are not in the *Vessantarajātaka.* There are, of course, many widely varying versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* available across South and

23. Gombrich 1985.

24. For the first of these, see Khoroche 1989: 58–73; for the last two see, most conveniently, Das Gupta 1978.

25. Chavannes 1910–1934 at 3: 362–95.

Southeast Asia; there are also many versions of Vessantara's story. My remarks here are restricted to Valmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Pali *Vessantarajātaka.*

The two texts deal with some of the most fundamental issues of human civilization: notably the conflict between the necessary violence of social order and the aspiration to nonviolent peace, and the demands that both kingship (public office) and a transcendentalist orientation to death, time, and eternity—the latter manifested in South Asia most clearly as asceticism—make on the values and emotions of ordinary social and family life, the sine qua non of kings, ascetics, and civilization itself. In doing so they are simultaneously tragic and utopian. Both Rāma and Vessantara are human in their weaknesses: Rāma's madness after Sītā is taken by Rāvaṇa, his taunting and mutilation of Śurpāakhā, his treacherous murder of Vālin; Vessantara's sufferings after he has given his children to the Brahman Jūjaka, his being tempted to break each one of the Buddhist Five Precepts in the course of the story. Both are also superhuman: Rāma is God incarnate, though this is a fact of which he must remain largely unaware; Vessantara is a future Buddha who aspires to Omniscience (i.e., Buddhahood) and does the necessary, though in this lifetime he is a devoted son, husband, and father whose strong emotions in these three roles the Pali text clearly emphasizes. Both, moreover, have something excessive, or at least extraordinary, in their obstinate attachment to their respective virtues—an aspect of their characters which qualifies the extent to which they can be taken simply and directly as role models.[26]

There are, of course, numerous differences between them as well. The most basic, in my view, is the difference in the ontology of the two heroes, which reflects a difference in the social perspectives of the two forms of discourse, Brahmanical and Buddhist, and also leads to a crucial narrative disanalogy. As Pollock has shown, although Rāma is necessarily unaware of his divinity and on occasion behaves otherwise than one would expect of God, his divine status is central to Valmīki's vision.[27] (It is odd that so many scholars have been unwilling to accept this view, preferring to see Rāma's divinity as a "later stratum" added on to an earlier epic about a human hero— very odd indeed in Western scholars, since in their cultural background the Christian imaginaire is constituted around the figure of a God-man.) Vessantara, on the other hand, is a human being in the narrated present, and a superhuman Buddha only in the narrated future. Thus Rāma can— indeed must—embody simultaneously two contradictory forms of *dharma.*

---

26. Collins (1998) applies to the *Vessantarajātaka* an insight of Gellner (1979), who uses the Kierkegaardian notion of the "offensiveness" of Christianity to develop an analysis of ideology: to be effective an ideology must be out of the ordinary; it must both take one aback and entice.

27. Pollock 1991: 55–67.

Vessantara, on the other hand, is wholly devoted to a future transcendentalist and nonviolent ideal, leaving the practical exigencies of kingship in the present to his father, Sañjaya. The *Rāmāyaṇa*'s kingship is embodied in one person, internally bifurcated; the *Vessantarajātaka*'s is distributed in two persons.

To explain what I mean here I will take a step back. Elsewhere I have attempted to make sense of Buddhist attitudes towards kingship and social order by positing two forms of *dhamma*—What Is Right, modes 1 and 2.[28] The distinction between them turns on the issues of reciprocity and violence. *Dhamma* in mode 1 is an ethics of reciprocity—return good for good and bad for bad—in which the assessment of violence is context-dependent and negotiable. Buddhist advice to kings in mode 1 tells them to pass judgment not in haste or anger but appropriately, making the punishment fit the crime. To follow such advice is to be a Good King, to fulfill what philosopher F. H. Bradley would have called the duties of the royal station. The punishment of criminals, and the fighting of just wars, are institutionalized forms of mode 1 reciprocity. *Dhamma* in mode 2 is an ethic of absolute values—do good under any circumstances, regardless of whether other people's actions are good or bad—in which the assessment of violence is context-independent and nonnegotiable , and where any form of it, whether judicial punishment or even defensive war, is itself a crime. Thus, with ruthless logic, there cannot be a Good King because of the necessity for violence in the kingly function. The best example of this in Pali literature is the *Mūgapakkhajātaka* (Birth story of the dumb cripple) (Ja 6: 1 ff.), whose protagonist, Prince Temīya, spends his first sixteen years feigning these incapacities and others in order to avoid succeeding to the throne because he remembers having been a king in a former life and having suffered for a long time in hell because of it. (This text was well-known: in the *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa,* for example, Siri Saṅghabodhi at first declines to become king, citing this story.)

Vessantara is allowed to act solely in terms of *dhamma* mode 2, since King Sañjaya operates in mode 1. Because the instantiation of *dhamma* mode 2 in Gotama's Buddhahood—when he will not be required to act as a king—is not yet present, the contradiction is not yet relevant, and the story can end in a fantasy utopia where Indra makes jewels rain from the sky, Vessantara can have "every creature set free, even the cats" (Ja 6: 592), and one can forget the unpleasant exigencies of life, where crimes are committed and military attacks are possible (indeed inevitable). In the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the two modes of *dharma* also appear clearly, but they must needs be simultaneous. Rāma never gives up the kingly prerogative of violence, carrying his bow despite wearing ascetic dress and, of course, killing many beings be-

---

28. See Collins 1998, chapter 6.

fore the final defeat of Rāvaṇa. (As Pollock argues, even his awesome and frightening madness contains within it a reflection of the vengeance of Rudra-Śiva, which is an aspect of a king's divinity.)[29] At the same time, he gives vent to biting criticism of the mores of kings (Kshatriyas) as for instance in *Rā-māyaṇa* 2.18.36, where he urges Lakṣmaṇa, who has suggested using force to take back the throne of which Rāma has been deprived:

> So give up this ignoble notion that is based on the code of the *kṣatriya*s; be of like mind with me and base your actions on righteousness, not on violence.[30]

Adopting for a moment the chronological-layering approach to the *Rā-māyaṇa,* one can see that if some "original" version had ended with book 6, it would have been entirely parallel to the *Vessantarajātaka,* ending with an inevitably brief description of the utopia of Rāmarājya, where everyone is happy and peaceful. Book 7, where Rāma's inhuman level of righteousness leads to his dismissal of Sītā and her final tragedy (and his), may be seen as a refraction on the private, familial level of the disjunction between transcendentalist and pragmatic *dharma,* as is Vessantara's giving away his children.

The difference of emphasis in social perspective—which can easily be overstated—is this: Brahmanical ideology must, in the very same act of thought, posit the kingly *sva-dharma* of violence, which protects the Brahmanical social vision, and preserve as its ethical pinnacle the transcendentalist nonviolence of Brahmans and ascetics. Thus Rāma is at once God and human king. Buddhism, on the other hand, however much it may likewise require the support of kings to be a viable civilizational institution, is not obliged to think the necessity of violence and the value of nonviolence in one and the same act of thought, although it certainly must acknowledge both. It can hierarchize the two modes of *dhamma* and leave greater space for the critical distance afforded by mode 2—a distance which emerges often in Buddhist texts as ironic, even deliberately comic, one-upmanship. No matter how mighty kings might be in the here and now—including those, like Dhammaceti in the fifteenth-century Mon state of Pegu, who were former monks—they are time-bound mortals karmically treading the wheel of *saṃsāra.* Monks, on the other hand, signify and—symbolically, theatrically—embody the timeless, ineffably transcendent supremacy of nirvana. Thus Vessantara's mode 2 *dhamma* leads, while he is a king, to his banishment by Sañjaya's mode 1; when he lives it in the real, historical world (as opposed to a fantasy utopia), he becomes a Buddha, who emphatically re-

---

29. Pollock 1991: 55–67.

30. Translated in Pollock 1986: 123 (cf. note on 363): *tad enāṃ visṛjānāryāṃ kṣatradharmā-śritāṃ matim / dharmam āśraya mā taikṣṇyaṃ madbuddhir anugamyatām.*

nounces kingship. In both cases, as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vessantarajātaka* show in their different ways, the collocation of the two can result in both utopia and tragedy.

At this point, I hope two things are clear. First, that both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vessantarajātaka* are indeed asking Pollock's question—what is it that makes life possible?[31]—and that this question contains another: what makes it possible to live with our impossible aspirations? Second, while the contradictions intrinsic to any transcendentalist, nonviolent grounding of social order may, when made explicit, paralyze systematic thought, they can be dealt with in narrative—dealt with not in the sense of quieted down or gotten rid of, but in the majestic, moving, and tension-preserving manner of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vessantarajātaka*.

The variegated distribution of the two stories in the areas where Pali literature has been of cultural significance has been noticed before, but not, I think, adequately described, still less explained.[32] No attempt has been made to connect the distribution of the two stories with the differences in their content—with the exception of a much-quoted article by Bechert, in which he makes the apparent absence of a *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition in Sri Lanka the starting point for a study of *vaṃsa*s as expressing an "ideology of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism": "The absence of [a *Rāmāyaṇa*] tradition was by no means a gap or deficiency: on the contrary, it was the consequence of a conscious decision of the Sinhalese authors to prevent the spread of contradictory ideas concerning the historical mission of Lanka." Aside from the anachronism in using the concept of nationalism for the premodern period, the argument can be countered on two grounds. First, there was no *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition in Burma, but neither was there an ideology of "historical mission" (this ideology is in fact a modern invention of tradition even in Sri Lanka). Second, the absence of a *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition in Sri Lanka is only apparent and is the result of not seeing that there was a division of labor between Sanskrit, Sinhala, and Pali literature. Gombrich sees the *Rāmāyaṇa* as "marginal" to Sinhalese culture and derives this idea from a difference between Hindu and Buddhist ethics. Aside from what I see as the mistaken essentialism of such an approach, this can be countered through the fact of the wide distribution of vernacular versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos

31. Pollock 1986: 4, 73.

32. Of the many works on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, those which have been of most use to me here are: the Princeton translation project (e.g., Goldman 1984, vol. 1), Raghavan 1975, Srinivasa Iyengar 1983, Richman 1991, and Thiel-Horstmann 1991 (accounts of other versions in South and Southeast Asia); (for Thailand) Reynolds in Richman 1991, Dhani 1946, Singaravelu 1982; (Middle Mekong) Lafont 1957, Sahai 1976, Sen 1996; (Cambodia) Pou 1977, 1979, 1982, Jacob 1986, 1996, and Bizot 1989; (Sri Lanka) Godakumbara 1955, Somadasa 1987–1993.

(though not, it seems, in Burma), where neither these versions nor Buddhist ethics were marginal.[33]

There seems to have been no further telling of Rāma's story in Pali after the *Dasarathajātaka*.[34] Later Pali texts do, however, make reference to it, and the story was certainly well-known. The clearest example in Sri Lanka is Kumāradāsa's Sanskrit *Jānakīharaṇa* (The abduction of Jānakī [= Sītā]), from the seventh or eighth century. Bechert says this text was "composed (but not handed down) in Ceylon." Godakumbara takes a different view: it was, he says, "extensively studied in Ceylon as is evident from the quotations from it in Sinhalese texts, and the wide influence the poem has had on Sinhala poets." He mentions an undated later Sinhala translation and gloss, which attests to the transmission of the work.[35] Pali texts from the commentarial period are aware of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Buddhaghosa for example says it is unsuitable for monks: when the *Dīgha Nikāya* says that the Buddha does not attend recitations, Buddhaghosa refers to the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa,* adding, "It is not fitting to go where [either] is being told." As examples of the concept "frivolous talk," he gives "esteeming useless stories like the war of the Bhāratas and the abduction of Sītā, and telling stories of that kind." The offense is small if one does these things a little, great if one does them a lot.[36] The commentary to the *Vibhaṅga* ([Book of] Analysis), the second in the canonical collection of *Abhidhamma,* cites the two stories as examples of wrongful learning. Monastic severity makes its own choices, but there would be no danger of offense, small or large, if there were no occasions to commit it. The *Mahāvaṃsa* often refers to the *Rāmāyaṇa* as an element of high culture.[37] So in Sri Lanka Sanskrit and Sinhala versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* were well-known and acknowledged—by Buddhaghosa critically and by the *Mahāvaṃsa* admiringly. That there was no Pali elaboration of the tale, in Sri

33. Gombrich 1985. Earlier in the paragraph I quote Bechert 1978: 10.

34. In that text one of a number of oddities is the fact that Rāma and Sītā are brother and sister; their marriage is thus incestuous. This is known to the commentator on the *Vessantarajātaka,* who remarks (Ja 6: 558) that she was first his younger sister then his chief queen (the motif of incest reappears in Laotian versions, as elsewhere).

35. Bechert 1978: 4; Godakumbara 1955: 141. There is archaeological, literary, folkloric, and ritual evidence for knowledge of Rāma's story and its characters; the nonarchaeological evidence is recent, it is true: in Sinhala texts only from the fifteenth century.

36. Sv 84 on D I 6; Sv 76, Ps I 201, As 100.

37. The prince who was to become Parakkamabāhu I in the twelfth century, reflecting on the shortness of life and the need to do deeds of lasting renown, declares himself inspired by the heroism of Rāma and the Pāṇḍavas "in worldly stories" (*lokiyāsu kathāsu,* Mhv LXIV 42). Referring to the causeway Rāma had the monkeys build across the ocean, he says "this story lives on in the world today" (Mhv LXVIII 20). The text compares a battle fought by him after he had become king to the great battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa (Mhv LXXV 59). Two further battles are compared to Rāma's (Mhv LXXXIII 46, LXXXVIII 69). In a Pali text from the late eighteenth century, the *Rāmasandesa* (Letter to Rāma), the killing of Rāvaṇa is mentioned, but only

Lanka or anywhere else, seems explicable partly by monastic disfavor, but more tellingly because the existence in Pali of the similar but Buddhicized *Vessantarajātaka* made this unnecessary.

In Burma there is less evidence to go on,[38] but it is well-known that the Rāma story—or rather, stories—were popular in other parts of mainland Southeast Asia. Many studies of these vernacular versions have been published, and I need not go over this in detail. That the Rāma story was important in Thailand can be seen in the facts that the name of the first royal patron of Pali Buddhism in the northern kingdom of Sukhotai is Ramkhamhaeng, "heroic Rāma" (Ramkhamhaeng mentions Rāma and Sītā in an inscription), and that the next great kingdom, Ayutthaya, is named after Ayodhyā. Versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in mainland Southeast Asia emphasize personal relations between the characters rather than the political dimensions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vessantarajātaka*.[39] In Thailand, Cambodia, and

---

in one verse out of a hundred. The text is a letter to the god Rāma at a temple in Sri Lanka from a monk, asking for the god's protection for the king.

38. Whether this is because the text was not known there or is due to our scant knowledge of literature in premodern times is an open question. There is evidence of Rāma in the archaeological remains of Pagan (Luce 1969, Strachan 1990). A thirteenth-century inscription records a gift to a Viṣṇu temple by a native of south India. It fits into the pattern identified by Pollock (1996) as that of the Sanskrit cosmopolis: there is a quotation in Sanskrit from Kulaśekhara's *Mukundamālā,* followed by a record of the gift in Tamil (EI 7: 197–98). King Kyanzittha was a patron of Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism and also declared himself an incarnation of Viṣṇu. In an inscription of 1098 he listed a number of his previous births, including that as "a victorious son of king *Rām* at *Ayudhyapūr*" (*sic;* Luce 1969: 56). However, evidence of texts, in Sanskrit or vernaculars, is in short supply. A monastic author of a Jātaka text from the early sixteenth century warns his fellow monks not to tell stories of Sītā or Hanumān in public; as in the case of Pali commentaries in fifth-century Sri Lanka, presumably this must have happened for a warning to be necessary. A short sixteenth-century Burmese prose version, called the *Rāmavatthu,* was later elaborated in both prose and verse texts. After the Burmese invasion and sacking of Ayutthaya in 1767 Thai versions brought back from there influenced versions in Burmese, which were produced in prose, in verse, and on the stage. Of a new form of play which arose in the first half of the nineteenth century, which mixes dialogue with songs and dancing, Hla Pe (1968: 126) says "the plays were adaptations of Jātaka, episodes from the Rāma epic, and other popular stories."

39. The fifteenth-century Ayutthaya king Rāmāthibodi names Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in an inscription, and there are cave murals depicting the story from the Ayutthaya period. The oldest poem in the *lilit* genre (which combines two verse forms), dating from the reign of king Trailok (1448–1488) refers to characters from the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Short verse texts on episodes of the Rāma story are extant from the reign of king Narai (1656–1688); a few other references, episodes used in drama, and text titles are extant from before the Burmese sack of Ayutthaya in 1767, but the earlier versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* which must have existed in Thailand, probably then called *Rāmakien,* were destroyed in that attack. In the subsequent Thonburi period, King Taksin collected episodes of the story in a text entitled *Lakhon Rāmakien;* and in 1798 the first king of the current Bangkok dynasty, Rāma I, produced the first version of the modern work known as *Rāmakien (= Rāmakīrti),* "the glory of Rāma." Later kings composed versions

Laos the figure of Rāma is usually said to be the Buddha in one of his former lives, and some versions take the explicit form of a Birth Story *(jātaka).*

The popularity of the *Vessantarajātaka* in recent times is universally attested by modern ethnography; that the same was true in the past can be seen

---

in verse or for the stage; Rāma VI, educated in England at the end of the nineteenth century, produced a version when king (after 1910) based on an English translation of the Sanskrit. In the post-1767 era there have been many versions for the stage and for puppet theater, and there are numerous traces of the story in Thai folklore.

From the Middle Mekong region three versions of the Rāma story are known, all of which are very different from the Sanskrit. The *Phra Lak Phra Lam* (Lao versions of Lakṣmaṇa and Rāma), also called the *Rāmajātaka,* sets the story in Laos and includes the theme of incest. This is present, as mentioned, in the Pali *Dasarathajātaka* and the Sri Lankan commentarial tradition, but here Rāma and Sītā are not siblings: Sītā is Rāvaṇa's daughter; Rāma and Rāvaṇa are first cousins (their fathers are brothers) and brothers-in-law, since Rāvaṇa marries Rāma's elder sister, his cousin Candā (Skt. Sāntā). Sītā is thus Rāma's sister's daughter. When Rāvaṇa abducts Sītā he is unaware that she is his daughter. In the *Gvāy Dvóraḥbī,* one of "several minor versions of the [*Rāmajātaka*] story prevalent in Laos" (Sahai 1976: xiii), Indra's wife, Sujāta, is reborn as Rāvaṇa's daughter, Sītā, to avenge her own seduction by Rāvaṇa, but this time without a human intermediary: she appears on his lap. In the *P'ommacak* (Skt. *Brahmacakra*) version in Tai Lu she is born in a tree in Rāma's garden.

In Cambodia an inscription dated variously to the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, but in any case pre-Angkor, refers to the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Mahābhārata,* and other Sanskrit texts. In the Angkor empire Vālmīki's and other Sanskrit versions were well known; iconographic evidence is also available from that period, and Rāma figures in many of the *praśasti* eulogies of Angkor kings in inscriptions. After the rise of Theravāda Buddhism among the Khmer people in the thirteenth century—a historical process still far from understood—Cambodian culture in the next few centuries is difficult to decipher. With the abandonment of Angkor as political center, which Chandler (1996: 78) dates to the 1440s, much of the memory of Sanskritic culture there was lost. The early history of vernacular versions of the story in Cambodia, therefore (specialist opinions differ as to whether there was one), is impossible to discern. Pou (1982: 254) states that "from the XVth century onwards, Rāma's story became an impetus for Khmer literature, mainly in the epic genre, whereby lengthy poems were composed as recitatives for the dance-drama called *Lkhon Khol*" (Masked Theater); versions of the story were used in Shadow Theater and Ballet, and temple paintings (Bizot 1989 has illustrations from one such temple). We have evidence of five vernacular versions in Cambodia. The first is the first part of the "classical" *Rāmakerti* (Skt. *Rāmakīrti*), also transliterated as *Rāmaker* or *Reamker,* dated by Pou to the sixteenth or seventeenth century; she dates the second half to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The work is in a variety of meters and differs markedly from Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa.* The second is a text Pou dates to 1620, called *Lpoek Aṅgar Vat* (the poem of Angkor Wat), which tells the Rāma story as a series of descriptions of sculpted panels at Angkor. Bizot (1989: 27) says that this was meant to be used by guides showing visitors around Angkor, and gives a modern example; the practice continued until 1970. The third is a remarkable text published by Bizot (1989), who recorded an old village performer, Mi Chak (also one of the Angkor guides just mentioned), reciting a version of the story. His narration was accompanied by mime, dance, and music. Bizot describes a philosophical-mystical meaning to the poem, which identifies the characters, inter alia, with elements from the psychology of the Pali *Abhidhamma,* analogously to the Sanskrit *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* (Internal Rāmāyaṇa). The fourth is a modern prose recitation described in a French thesis; the fifth is a prose text compiled and published in the 1960s. Clearly more work is necessary here.

through the number of versions, and manuscripts of them, which are extant or mentioned in surveys and catalogs.[40] For example, as Brereton reports:

> In a recent catalog of Lan Na [northern] Thai manuscripts, 396 out of 2,790 (14 percent) were devoted to the *Vessantara Jātaka.* By contrast, only 254 contained suttas. In numbers of volumes, *[Vessantarajātaka]* exceeds all other texts or categories of texts. The total number of palm-leaf manuscripts (Thai: *phuk*) devoted to the jātaka was 5,665 out of 12,570 or 49 percent.[41]

There is a short, perfunctory Pali verse version of Vessantara's story in the canonical *Cariyapiṭaka* (Basket of conduct).[42] Glosses and commentaries in Sinhala on the *Vessantarajātaka* seem to have begun early, although the earliest extant, by Sāriputta, is from the twelfth century.[43] In Burma there are Buddhist temples at Pagan with wall illustrations of the *Vessantarajātaka* from the mid-eleventh century.[44] All sources on Burma attest to the continuing popularity of the *Vessantarajātaka,* along with the other nine long stories from the *Mahānipāta* section of the Birth Story collection. These Birth Stories formed a group and were the most popular of all the Stories.[45] In Thailand,

40. The Sinhala *Butsaraṇa* version of the Vessantara story is translated in Reynolds (1970). The popularity of the story in Thailand is attested for in Schweisguth 1951, Brereton 1995, and McGill 1997; for the Middle Mekong in Finot 1917, Peltier 1988; and for Cambodia in Giteau 1966, 1975, Dupaigne and Khing 1981, Khing 1990, and Jacob 1996. These works, however, have little usable information about the content of different versions.

41. Brereton 1995: 62, 85 n.38.

42. *Cariyapiṭaka* 78–81. The commentary (Cp-a 74–102) preserves verses different from the canonical text, and its prose puts back much of the tension and emotion of the *Vessantarajātaka. Sāsanavaṃsa* (The History of the teachings) 105 records that in seventeenth-century Burma Tipiṭakālaṃkāra wrote a poetical version of the *Vessantarajātaka* (*kabyālaṃkāravasena bandhi*) as a fifteen-year-old novice. The context makes it likely that this was in Pali, although this is not specified.

43. In the twelfth century an unknown author wrote the *Vesaturu-dā-sanne.* Vidyācakravarti in the thirteenth century wrote an elegant Sinhala version, which appears in two works, the *Butsaraṇa* and the *Dahamsaraṇa.* Godakumbara (1955: 99) says this "differs from the version contained in the Jātakapoṭa" (the Sinhala birth stories), but the English translation seems to me very close to the *Vessantarajātaka,* both in plot and in the strength of emotion expressed (if anything it is intensified). Manuscripts of many other versions are extant, continuing until the nineteenth century, in the form of popular stories, ballads, and *kāvya.* In the twentieth century there has been at least one film version, as there has been also in Thailand.

44. These are the two Hpet-Leik pagodas built by Aniruddha in the mid-eleventh century; also at various temples built by Kyanzittha. The great Ānanda temple, built in 1090, illustrates the *Vessantarajātaka* in 1213 plaques, each with a short description in old Mon.

45. There exist two translations of Burmese versions of the *Vessantarajātaka,* though at present the originals cannot be dated (and they may be the same text). L. A. Goss (1895) partly summarized, partly translated the story of Wethadaya (his subtitle says it is "sketched from the Burmese version of the Pali text"); in 1896 O. White offered *A Literal Translation of the Text Book Committee's Edition of Wethandaya.* Text versions are at present little known, but there was an extensive practice of putting the story on the stage. Shway Zoe (George Scott) (1910: 18,

both the Pali *Vessantarajātaka* (known often simply as *Mahachat* = *Mahājātaka*) and vernacular versions, often in the form of mixed Pali verses and vernacular elaboration, have been common in Thai history, as have versions of the *Vessantarajātaka* in Cambodia and the Middle Mekong region.[46]

The shared story-matrix of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vessantarajātaka,* distributed

---

294) says that of all theatrical subjects "the Wethandaya is probably best known on account of the real pathos of the story and the beauty of the composition." Forbes (1878: 143) reports that "I have seen men moved to tears by a good representation of this play." It was also produced in puppet performances. Shway Zoe (322–23) translates a song called "Rangoon Maidens," in which appears the line "You are like Wethandaya's queen"; he comments "Madi, the spouse of Prince Wethandaya, is always regarded as the model wife." In this, again, she is a Buddhist counterpart to Sītā.

46. Stories in the later collections of *Paññāsajātaka* (Fifty birth stories), one of which was produced in Chieng Mai around the fifteenth century (two other recensions exist, which are not edited in a Western edition), were influenced by the *Vessantarajātaka,* although the borrowing tends to focus on, and often exaggerate, the Perfection of Generosity exemplified by Vessantara. From the time of the earliest versions there was a connection between this story and that of the monk Māleyya (Phra Malai), who visits heaven and meets the future Buddha Metteyya; Metteyya tells him that those who listen to the *Vessantarajātaka*'s recitation will be reborn when he comes to earth. An inscription from Burma in 1201 may refer to the two texts together. (The Pali version of Phra Malai is translated in Collins 1993, and Thai versions in Brereton 1995). Extensive evidence attests to the importance of the *Vessantarajātaka* in the modern period as a text and as a component of ritual. According to Keyes (1987: 179), "three texts—or, more properly, several versions of three texts—define for most Thai Buddhists today, as in traditional Siam, the basic parameters of a Theravadin view of the world." They are the *Three Worlds Treatise,* the story of Māleyya, and the *Vessantarajātaka* . For Schweisguth, writing of the pre-modern period, the *Vessantarajātaka* was "the entire Buddhist catechism for Thai Buddhists, and was their only religious matter for a long period; it was effectively the only properly Buddhist text [he means concerned with the Buddha] that was accessible to them in their own language, [since] all the others remained in Pali redaction" (1951: 52). Herbert and Milner (1989: 33) say that "many versions of [*Vessantarajātaka*] exist, including regional versions"; a survey and study of these is an urgent desideratum, as is a parallel study of the Rāma texts: Schweisguth reports (1951: 64, 112 n.1) that in some texts there is confusion between scenes in the two stories. The earliest surviving vernacular written *Vessantarajātaka* is the royal version commissioned by King Trailok around 1482, with verses in Pali followed by a Thai verse paraphrase. Such royal versions were a genre, known as *Kham Luang;* thus this one is *Mahachat Kham Luang.* Not surprisingly, it was especially concerned with the political aspects of the story. In 1458 he had five hundred or more terra-cotta plaques made to represent the canonical Birth Stories. A verse text called *Kap Mahachat* was written in the early seventeenth century in two parts, the first in Pali and the second in Thai. In the late eighteenth century a minister-poet called Phra Khlang wrote a poem on two of the most popular chapters of the *Vessantarajātaka,* those concerning the children and Maddī. Thereafter various members of the Bangkok dynasty composed versions of or sermons on the *Vessantarajātaka.* One interesting aspect in Thailand is the way the text was interpreted by some reciters in the direction of farce, notably the scenes involving the Brahmin Jūjaka. Laws from the late eighteenth century, for example, warn monks against comic and "theatrical" presentations of the story, preferring them to recite the *Abhidhamma.* Anuman Raja-dhon reports that in modern times "the reciter has to display his wit and additions of his own are

throughout Asia, is the most widespread textual artifact of civilization deriving from South Asia. In the countries of South and Southeast Asia there was a division of labor, or at least an interaction, between them. The *Vessantarajātaka* made a Pali version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* unnecessary; there is no evidence that one was made or contemplated anywhere. Both have the same tragic/utopian, familial/public concerns. Where Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* was known, as in Sri Lanka and pre-Theravāda Cambodia, there seem not to have been vernacular versions substantially different from it.[47] Where one does find extensive vernacular versions, as in Thailand, Laos, and Theravādin Cambodia, they differ from Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa,* especially in their deemphasis or alteration of the political aspects of that version. In Thailand, for example, it was the *Mahachat Kham Luang* version of the *Vessantarajātaka,* along with the *Three Worlds Treatise*—a Thai compendium of Buddhist cosmology compiled from Pali texts, usually assigned to the fourteenth century—which, rather than any version of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* were the "politico-religious literature *par excellence*" in premodernity.[48] These specific suggestions may, of course, have to be modified or abandoned; but what does seem proved is the need to think through these issues in terms of the coexistence and interaction of Pali, Sanskrit, and vernacular text production. And this, I think, is true not only of these particular texts but of many other areas of Pali literature.

KĀVYA IN PALI

The Pali Canon, probably created in the last centuries B.C.E. and arranged in its present form somewhat later, contains verse texts whose composers were aware of other poetry in India, and non-verse texts which range from lists

---

thrown into the recitation which sometimes border on drollery and vulgarity. The orthodox people frown." However in recent times "the merry side is on the wane" (1968: 170, 173).

In the Middle Mekong the Pali Jātaka collection existed, of course, so both the *Dasarathajātaka* and *Vessantarajātaka* were known, although the Lao recension of the *Paññāsajātaka* was equally widespread. There were Lao translations of Pali Birth Stories, particularly the last ten; the *Vessantarajātaka* was the most popular in sermons and iconography, both as a whole and in the form of selected and/or abridged sections. In Cambodia, representations of the *Vessantarajātaka* date from at least the twelfth century; little is known about literature before the fifteenth century, but thereafter many vernacular versions of the story were made, which existed alongside recitations of the Pali version with vernacular commentary.

47. In Sri Lanka, one difference between Kumāradāsa's *Jānakīharaṇa* and Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* is the personality of Daśaratha, whom Kumāradāsa makes a much stronger character; this might represent the influence of the *Vessantarajātaka* in Sri Lanka, for that text, however much it has Vessantara's father Sañjaya admit he was wrong at the end, nonetheless makes of him, explicitly and implicitly, a more equally balanced force with Vessantara than are Daśaratha and Rāma.

48. Charntornvong 1981: 188.

and matrices in the style of Higher Teachings, set in a minimal narrative frame or without any frame at all, to finely wrought prose compositions. The sterner side of the Teaching easily disapproves of literary frivolity.[49] The Buddha laments the future decline of his Teaching, contrasting sermons given by himself with those to be given in the future by his disciples, which will be merely "literature made by *kavi*s."[50] Twice poetry *(kāveyya)* is called a bestial form of knowledge and a wrong livelihood.[51] But this is not the whole story. In one canonical text and in a number of commentaries there occurs a list of four kinds of *kavi*.[52] This is not explained fully, and the classification does not seem to have played a great role in later thinking, but it is worth looking at. The four are (1) the *cintā-kavi,* who reflects on a subject for a long time before producing his own composition on it; (2) the *suta-kavi,* who recites texts he has heard from others;[53] (3) the *attha-kavi,* who is able to interpret a story at greater or lesser length, presumably as appropriate to different occasions;[54] and (4) the *paṭibhāna-kavi,* who can improvise on the spot, using his own inspiration and his previous experience of stories, *kāvya* or drama.[55]

Many techniques are found which are later explicitly acknowledged as those of *kāvya.* Similes, and imagery in general, are extremely common in early Pali texts, both prose and verse. Imagery can be both illustrative and constitutive. The most obvious example of the latter is the imagery of the fires of passion and suffering and their going out (quenching) in nirvana. Buddhism is quite literally unthinkable without this image.[56] The following are some examples of *kāvya* techniques in the Canon:

Double meaning *(śleṣa)* is exemplified in the following twin description of the best and worst of men:[57]

49. There have been very few studies apart from Warder 1974, and those that exist tend to concentrate on the earlier, canonical texts. In addition to Lienhard 1975, one might mention Dhadphale 1975; Gokhale 1994 contains a chapter on "Aesthetic Ideas in Early Buddhism." Information about postcanonical texts composed in Sri Lanka is in part from Malalasekera 1928. My contribution here should be regarded as very much a tentative, beginning effort.

50. *Suttantā kavikatā kāveyyā;* S 2: 267 with Spk 2: 229; A 1: I 72–73 with Mp 2: 146–47; A 3: 107 with Mp 3: 272, and cp. the story of Sutasoma at Ja 5: 483–84; Cp-a 253.

51. *Tiracchānavijjā, micchājivo;* D 1: 11, 69.

52. A 2: 230 with Mp III 211; Sv 95 with DAṬ 1: 168; Ud-a 205; Sāra-s 262.

53. The *Vessantarajātaka* is cited as an example at Sv 95. At DAṬ 1: 168, *sutena asutam anusandhetvā,* suggests that he adds his own contributions to what he has heard from others.

54. CPD s.v. *attha-kavi* suggests "didactic poet," but the phrase *imassa ayam attho, evaṃ taṃ yojessāmi* at Sv 95 and Ud 206 contradicts this. (Masefield 1994: 498 has "this is its import; so I will construe it.")

55. DAṬ 1: 168, reading *kathaṃ kabbaṃ nāṭakaṃ vā disvā.*

56. Collins 1982, 1998. Rhys Davids (1907, 1908) gives an index to similes in the Canon.

57. *Assaddho akataññu ca sandhicchedo ca yo naro / hatāvakāso vantāso sa ve uttamaporiso [adhamaporiso].* The argument and translations are from Norman [1979] 1991: 187–93 (paren-

He is indeed the best of men who is without desire, who knows the Unmade [nirvana], who has cut the connection with rebirth, who has got rid of occasions (for quarrels) [or: opportunities (for rebirth)], and who has abandoned desire.

He indeed is the worst of men who is without faith, ungrateful, a burglar, one who has missed his opportunity [for religious improvement], and who is an eater of vomit.

Regarding dialogue, another technique of *kāvya,* Warder is surely right to suggest that Pali dramatic episodes and dialogues in prose may be considered forerunners of "the forms of drama established in later *kāvya.*"[58] In the opening section of the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (Discourse on the benefits of asceticism) (D I: 47 ff.) King Ajātasattu, who murdered his father, the Buddha's friend King Bimbisāra, is sitting in the light of a full moon. Exclaiming at the beauty of the scene, he asks his ministers which holy man he might visit so that his mind may be gladdened and calmed. They suggest six names—six ascetics, the list of whose doctrines, given later, is the reason this text is usually discussed—but the king remains silent. His doctor, Jīvaka, suggests he see the Buddha, who is staying in a monastery Jīvaka built in a mango grove outside the city; he agrees and they set off, accompanied by many elephants and flaming torches. Nearing the monastery, where the Buddha is sitting with over a thousand monks, the king hears nothing and feels such fear that he goes stiff and his hair stands on end. He is frightened that Jīvaka might have tricked him so as to be handing him over to an enemy. Jīvaka reassures him and urges him to go on (into the dark forest and without the elephants), saying *ete maṇḍala-māle dīpā jhāyanti.* The literal meaning is "there are lights burning in the round pavilion"; but Buddhas and other enlightened people are often likened to lamps (which light the world), and *jhāyanti* can also mean "meditate" (this play on words is found elsewhere). So Jīvaka is also saying "the lights (of the world) are meditating," a gentle conceit in stark contrast to Ajātasattu's harassed distress. The king approaches the Buddha and stands respectfully at one side, where "seeing the order of monks sitting very quietly, like the clear waters of a [still] lake, he exclaims spiritedly: 'would that [his son] Prince Udayibhadda were endowed with a calm like this!'" The Buddha asks if his thoughts are following his affection. "Lord," is the reply, "Prince Udayibhadda is dear to me; would that he were endowed with a calm like this!" So the paranoid parricide, in search of peace of mind on a pretty night, fears betrayal by his doctor and murder

theses and brackets in original). He suggests that either there were originally two verses, one of which ended with *adhamaporiso,* "worst of men," or the verse is in the nature of an epigram, where the bad meanings of the words are reversed by the final *uttamaporiso* ("best of men"). The similarity in sound in the two ending words supports such an analysis.

58. Warder 1974: 24.

at the hands of his son. The commentary (Sv 153–54) spells this out, noting that Udayibhadda did end up killing his father, just as Udayibhadda's son, grandson, and great-grandson in turn were also parricides.

The second poem of the *Sutta Nipāta* (Group of discourses) (Sn 18–34) gives a verse example of dialogue, between the farmer Dhanīya and the Buddha. They swap verses using various meters (vv.18–19 and 22–23 are quoted here):

Dhanīya: I have boiled my rice and done my milking, I dwell with my family near the bank of the Mahī. My hut is thatched, my fire is heaped up. So rain, sky-god, if you wish.

The Buddha: I am free from anger, (my mind) has no waste-land, I am staying for one night near the bank of the Mahī. My hut is open, my fire is quenched. So rain, sky-god, if you wish.

Dhanīya: My wife is obedient, unwavering. She has lived with me pleasantly for a long time. I hear no evil of her at all. So rain, sky-god, if you wish.

The Buddha: My mind is obedient, released, it has been developed for a long time and is well controlled. No evil is found in me. So rain, sky-god, if you wish.[59]

The early Pali poems which have attracted the most attention are those anthologized in the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā* (Verses of monks and Verses of nuns). There are similarities between certain of these poems and later Prakrit

---

59.

> *pakkodano duddhakhīro 'ham asmi*
> *anutīre Mahiyā samānavāso*
> *channākūṭi ahito gini*
> *atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.*
> *akkhodano vigatakhīlo 'ham asmi*
> *anutīre mahiyā ekarattivāso*
> *vivaṭā kūṭi nibbuto gini*
> *atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.*

The Buddha's reply fits into a widespread pattern of imagery which likens a monk's mind to his meditation hut *(kūṭi).*

> *gopī mama assavā alolā*
> *dīgharattaṃ saṃvāsiyā manapā*
> *tassa na suṇāmi kiñci pāpaṃ*
> *atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.*
> *cittaṃ mama assavaṃ vimuttaṃ*
> *dīgharattaṃ paribhāvitaṃ sudantaṃ*
> *pāpaṃ pana na vijjati*
> *atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.*

verses, notably those by Hāla. Two techniques in particular may be mentioned: The first is the description of a woman's beauty, starting from the head and going downwards—a standard form in later poetry. The nun Ambapālī, a former prostitute, reflects in nineteen verses on the passing of both time and her beauty, with the same refrain at the end of each verse. Some examples:

> The curls of my hair were black like the color of bees; now through old age they are like bark-fibers of hemp. The words of him who speaks the truth are not false.
> Before, my eyebrows were beautiful, like crescent moons nicely drawn by a painter; now through old age they droop in wrinkles. The words of him who speaks the truth are not false.
>
> My two breasts used to be full, round, close together, and uplifted; [now] they hang down like empty water bags. The words of him who speaks the truth are not false.
> Such was this body. A crumbling home of many sufferings, it is a decayed mansion shedding the pride of its plaster. The words of him who speaks the truth are not false.[60]

The second technique is the use of natural scenes followed by some reflection on morality or the state of mind of a monk or nun, whereas in the later works the nature scene is followed by a reflection on love, the absence of a lover, or the like. Often the nature scene is set in the rainy season, in a manner reminiscent of the *Rāmāyaṇa*—especially *sarga*s 25–27 of the "Kiṣkindākāḍa"—and of many later works in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Pali. In the early Pali case the aloneness of monks and nuns—better, their "singleness" of social status and purpose—may be set against the motif of the rainy season as a time for love. And the violence of the rains, and of animals in the surrounding forest, are often contrasted with the peace of mind of the monk:

> My hut is pleasant, a delightful gift of faith. I have no need of girls: women, go where [there is need of you].

60.

> *kālakā bhamaravaṇṇasadisā velittaggā mama muddhajā ahuṃ*
> *te jarāya sāṇavākasadisā saccavādivacanaṃ anaññathā.* (Thī 252)
> *cittakārasukatā va lekhiyā sobhate su bhamukā pure mama*
> *tā jarāya valihi palambitā. . . .* (Thī 256)
> *pīnavaṭṭasahituggatā ubho sobhate su thanakā pure mama*
> *te rindī va lambante 'nodakā. . . .* (Thī 265)
> *ediso ahu ayam samussayo jajjaro bahudukhānaṃ ālayo*
> *so 'palepapatito jarāgharo.* (Thī 270)

For textual readings chosen here see Norman's translation and commentary (1971) 1991; for verse 270 see Gombrich 1990. Cf. also Lienhard 1975.

When at midnight in a desolate forest grove the sky-god rains and the fanged animals roar, the monk in [his] cave meditates—he finds no greater delight than this.

In two rainy seasons I uttered [but] one word. In the third rainy season the mass of darkness burst asunder.

The earth is sprinkled, the wind blows, lightning moves in the sky; [my] thoughts are calm, my mind well-concentrated.[61]

Of the later Pali texts written in *kāvya* style, a number are praise-poems or biographies of the Buddha.[62] *Jinālaṅkāra* (Ornaments of the conqueror) is a praise-poem in 241 verses of various complex meters. It begins and ends with praise-verses, while verses 15–171 tell the story from Sumedha to the Enlightenment. It has thirty short sections; the titles of sections 13 through

61.

> *ramaṇīyā me kūṭikā saddhādeyyā manoramā*
> *na me attho kumārīhi*
> *(yesaṃ attho) tahiṃ gacchatha nāriyo ti.* (Th 58)
> *yadā nisīthe rahitamhi kānane deve gaḷatamhi nadanti dāṭhino*
> *bhikkhu ca pabbhāragato va jhāyati, tato paramataraṃ ratiṃ na vindati.* (Th 524)

"Joy" is *rati,* which often refers specifically to sexual pleasure.

> *dvinnaṃ antaravassānaṃ ekā vācā me bhāsitā tatiye antaravassamhi tamokkhando*
> *padālito ti.* (Th 128)

The mass of darkness is both the mass of ignorance, which burst apart at his enlightenment, and the mass of dark clouds bursting in the monsoon.

> *dharaṇī ca siccati vāti māluto vijjutā carati nabhe*
> *upassamanti vitakkā cittaṃ susamāhitaṃ mamā ti.* (Th 50)

62. The *Jinacarita* (Career of the conqueror), written in the twelfth or thirteen century, is traditional in content. It tells the Buddha's life story from the time of Sumedha down to Gotama's final nirvana. It uses highly varied and complex meters, and its style varies from the elegantly terse and simple to the kinds of complexity evidenced earlier from the *Mahābodhivaṃsa.* The *Pajjamadhu* (Honey of poetry) has 102 verses in Vasantatilaka meter and so is one of a number of Pali works from the early second millennium which may be classed as *śataka*s, or hundred-verse poems. The first sixty-nine verses lavishly describe and praise the Buddha's physical and mental beauty; in this respect it recalls the canonical *Sermon on the Characteristics of a Great Man,* although the style here is much more densely packed with wordplays and *kāvya* effects—previous scholars have dismissed it as "labored and artificial." Saranaṃkara's eighteenth-century *Abhisambodhi-alaṅkāra* (Ornaments of Enlightenment), a *śataka* (hundred-verse poem) recounts the Buddha's biography from Dīpaṅkara to the Enlightenment (text and translation in Maung Tin 1912–1913). Not all narrative *kāvya* concerns the Buddha. A text not yet available in a Western edition, the *Sādhucaritodaya* (Stories on good conduct), deals with many other figures. Godakumbara (1950) assigns it to the eighteenth century; it consists of 1452 verses which tell various stories of good deeds and their results in the manner of (and borrowing from) the canonical *Apadāna* (Book of legends). It is especially concerned with shrines (*cetiya*s) and organizes its stories in four sections accordingly: stories to do with worshipping at shrines containing bodily relics of Buddhas (*sārīrika-*), those containing objects used by them (*paribhogika-*, notably *bodhi*

21 describe the linguistic effect they contain. There is much wordplay: verses which are palindromes (99–100); a verse with four identical *pada*s, each to be read a different way (97); verses of similar sounds, such as all guttural consonants (101) or all nasals (105). Its imagery can be royal and martial:

> He attained the excellent white umbrella of release and from the strength of his rapture he gave voice to a spirited utterance. He cut down the Māras and conquered the enemy army [to become] the Sun of the three Buddha-Fields.[63]

One way Buddhist monks could express visions of beauty in poetry opposed to the usual instincts of asceticism was to depict them as that which is to be renounced. The author of the *Jinālaṅkāra* does this. When Siddhattha leaves home, the poet dwells at length on the sensuality and luxury he abandons, his wife, Yasodharā; and, as here, the palace women:

> When these good women, excited with full breasts and lips, their girdles shining brightly, grant the touch of their bodies they are like goddesses; delightful, wearing bracelets, in full bloom, they give delight.
>
> Their hands bright red, delighting in the pleasure of love, all playing musical instruments, many thousands of women, great dancers, excite him saying "how can even Sakka [king of the gods] be equal to the Sakyan [Siddhattha]?"
>
> Wide-eyed, smiling, with slender waists and breasts like Nimba fruit, singing songs of astonishing [beauty], wearing jewelry and colored makeup, welldressed, they are called to dance by the musical instruments.
>
> There is nothing to compare them to [anywhere] in the world; at their caresses one loses the power to speak. Experiencing such desire and delight, how could he, desireless, abandon them and lift his foot [to depart]?[64]

---

trees, but also Buddhas' footprints), those which signify them (*uddesika-*, usually images, but this text refers to sand *cetiya*s, a practice known from modern Thailand and Laos), and a fourth, miscellaneous section mixing stories from all three categories plus other kinds. The majority of its verses are *śloka*s, but many other meters are used; Godakumbara describes it as somewhat Sanskritized—though not as much, he says, as the *History of the Tooth-Relic, In Praise of Mount Samanta,* or *Chronicle of the Attanagalla Monastery,* but similar to the *Gift-Offering of True Dhamma* (1950: 102).

63. *Patto vimuttim varasetachattaṃ / so pītivegena udānudārayi / chetvāna Māre vijitārisaṅgho / tibuddha-kkettadivākāro* (Jināl 170).

64. Jināl 72–76. The translation here should be taken as tentative. In verse 76 line 2 the sense seems to demand a negative.

> *sañcoditā pīṇapayodharādharā*
> *irājitānaṅgajamekhalākhalā*
> *suraṅgaṇā vaṅgajaphassadā sadā*
> *ramā ramāpenti varaṅgadāgadā.*
> *karātirattā ratirattarāmā*
> *tāḷāvacare samantā*
> *naccuggatānekasahassahatthā*
> *sakko pi kiṃ sakyasamoti codayuṃ.*

The *Mahānāgakulasandesa* (Letter from Mahānāgakula)[65] praises two places: a city in southeastern Sri Lanka called Mahānāgakula, and Pagan in Burma. The text—only the opening section is extant—is in the form of a letter of sixty-two verses from the monk Nāgasena to Mahākassapa in Pagan, a leader of the recently introduced Sinhala lineage; it seems to have been written not by Nāgasena but by a monk in his school, and dates from the thirteenth century, while Pagan was still in its prime. It uses many different meters. The following Double Meaning *(śleṣa)* in praise of Nāgasena in verse 12 shows great Sanskritization—so much so that it would be impossible to understand it without knowing both individual Sanskrit lexical items and the rules for transforming Sanskrit to Pali forms. My translations attempt to be as literal as possible, to suggest the wordplay:[66]

---

isālanettā hāsulā sumajjhā
nimbatthanī vimhayagītasaddā
alaṅkatā malladharā suvatthā
naccanti tāḷāvacarehi ghuṭṭhā.
yāsaṃ hi loke upamā natthi
tāsaṃ hi phassesu kathāvakāsa
taṃ tādisaṃ kāmaratimṇubhonto
hitvā katjaṃ nu padamuddhari so nirāso.

65. Other Pali texts in the form of a letter—examples in Sanskrit begin in the second to the fourth centuries—are works of *kāvya.* The *Saddhammopāyana* (Gift-offering of truth) treats aspects of Buddhist doctrine—hells experienced as the result of bad deeds, the various results of good deeds, the advantages of transferring merit and of listening to the *dhamma,* and so on—in 615 verses, mostly *śloka*s. The colophon says it was written for the monk Buddhasoma, and a commentary attributes it to Abhayagiri Kavicakravrtin (a common epithet for monk-literati in medieval Sri Lanka) Ānanda Mahāthera. It has thus been thought to be from the Abhayagiri fraternity, but its content contains no discrepancy from Mahāvihārin views. The *Rāmasandesa,* from the later eighteenth century, is a *śataka,* since it has one hundred verses. Nevill (cited in Somadasa 1993: 5.181–84) says it is written "in most elegant Pali stanzas, accompanied by a Sinhalese sanna or translation, apparently written to form one work, . . . [T]he work is little known, but deserves a place in every library of Pali or Sinhalese books." Unfortunately no Western edition has been made, but a fairly detailed description is available in Somadasa's catalogue. Given the extent of letter literature in Sanskrit and in Sinhala, it would seem likely that there were other examples in Pali, which have been lost. Little is known also about the genre of the Eights, *aṭṭhaka* (Skt. *aṣṭaka*), examples of which we have from Sri Lanka in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The genre includes poems in Sanskrit and Sinhala as well as Pali. They are praise-poems in eight stanzas celebrating the Buddha, relics, and historical individuals, including members of the British colonial administration.

66.

nissaṅgo dānadhārāsurabhi guṇagaṇādhoraṇārohaṇaḍḍho
sikkhākāruññapuññassavaṇavisaraṇāghūṇitāghāṇureṇu
yo hū vāṇikareṇū raṇaraṇakamahāvāraṇoddāraṇāya
paññātiṇṇorudanto samaṇamaṇi mahāgandha mātaṅganāgo.

Who is without a settled place, is fragrant with streams of rut-fluid, and is fortunate to be ridden by mahouts with many reins; who stirs up not even the tiniest amount of harmful dust thanks to the concentration, obedience, virtue, and gentleness [he has acquired] through training; whose cow elephants are sweet-sounding, who has great sharp tusks and the skill to split apart mighty war elephants in battle; who trumpets and is bejeweled—[this is] a mighty, perfumed bull elephant!

Who is without attachment, is celebrated for the practice of generosity, and is fortunate in having been guided by teachers with many virtues; who stirs up not even the tiniest particle of evil thanks to the concentration, learning, virtue, and compassion [he has acquired] through training; whose partner is the goddess of speech [Sarasvatī]; who has great sharp tusks of wisdom to pierce through the great obstacles that oppose [him] in the battle [against defilements]; who is a jewel among ascetics—[this is] a mighty [virtue-]perfumed bull elephant![67]

The *Jinabodhāvalī* (List of Buddhas and their Bodhi trees) from the fourteenth century blends systematic, narrative, and praise-poem modes of exposition.[68] In thirty-four verses it praises twenty-eight Buddhas and their trees in ten different meters, the most common being Vasantatilaka. Each Buddha is praised in one verse, such that the text is as much a list as a story, but another title, *Abhinīhāradīpanī* (Explanation of the resolve [to become a Buddha]), shows that a narrative—indeed a well-known one—holds the list together: that of the future Buddha Gotama's aspiration to Buddhahood in the presence of twenty-five previous Buddhas. Their verses are preceded by those for three earlier Buddhas, who predicted his meeting with Dīpaṅkara and his future Buddhahood. (In some other texts, the future Gotama in one of these three lives was a woman.) The previous Buddhas are very well-known, given for example in a list which begins a popular set of verses used for protection rituals (*paritta*).[69] A list of the twenty-five beginning with Dīpaṅkara, the first to whom future-Gotama made the aspiration, is found with no elaboration at the beginning of the *Mahāvaṃsa* (Mhv I 5–10). In the *Jinabodhāvalī* verses 1–3 are introductory, verses 4–31 praise the Buddhas, and verses

67. The compound in line 2 is to be analyzed *sikkhā-kāruñña-puñña-(s)savaṇa-avisaraṇā-aghūṇita-agha-aṇu-reṇu.* For *avisaraṇā* as nondistractedness, concentration, see BHSD; (*a)ghūṇita* must be equal to Skt. *(a)ghūrṇita,* from *ghūrṇ* (the correspondence would be *ghūrṇ ->ghuṇṇ -> ghūṇ*). The verb is not cited in either *Dhātupāṭha* or *Dhātumañjusā.* Only those who knew Sanskrit would have been able to make the necessary conversion. In line 3 *oddāraṇa* is from Skt. *ava-dṝ,* with *-dd-* by sandhi (cf. CPD s.v. *ava-dāraṇa*). In line 4 *tiṇṇa* is equivalent to (or a wrong reading for) *tiṇha;* and *maṇa* means noise (Dhātup 116, Dhātum 172).

68. A similar remark might be made about another text from the fourteenth century, the *Pārāmīmahāsataka* (Great century on the perfections), which celebrates the Ten Perfections. Nevill calls it "a rare and elegant Pali poem" (Somadasa 1987: 1.17), but it awaits a Western edition.

69. Liyanaratne 1983.

31–34, along with a brief colophon, reflect on the poem and express the author's wishes for the future, which include Buddhahood for himself. Further study might (or might not) reveal interrelationships between the meters chosen and the kind of praise given to each Buddha. By way of exemplification here I will choose two verses, giving the Pali in the text rather than in the notes, since so much depends on the sound of the words.[70] Verse 12 is in Rukmavatī, or Campakamālā, which has four lines of ten syllables each. The editor of the text says that the sound of this meter "gives the impression of a dance."[71]

> *sobhita-nāthaṃ nāg'agga-mūle*
> *patta-subhodiṃ pekkha dvijo so*
> *patthayi bodhiṃ katv' abhipūjaṃ*
> *sādhu name 'haṃ tañ ca munindaṃ*

That Brahman [the future Gotama] saw Lord Sobhita, who had attained Enlightenment at the foot of the excellent Nāga Tree. He aspired to Enlightenment after having reverenced [him]. Bravo! I too bow down to the King of Sages.

Verse 17 is in Śārdūlavikrīḍita, which has four lines of nineteen syllables:

> *bodhiṃ nīpa-dume sumedhasugato jetvā sa-sen'antakaṃ*
> *patto uttaramāṇavaṃ varataraṃ sabbaññutaṃ patthayaṃ*
> *disvā hessat' anāgate avaca yo buddho tu yaṃ sāradaṃ*[72]
> *vande 'haṃ sirasā sadā muni-varaṃ saddhiṃ dumindena taṃ.*

The Felicitous One, Sumedha, defeated the Ender [Death] and his army, and attained Enlightenment at the Nīpa Tree. He who was the Buddha [then] saw that the very excellent Brahman youth Uttara aspired[73] to Omniscience, and said, "He will be a Buddha in the future." With my head [bowed] I worship constantly this King of Sages, who gives the essential, along with his King among Trees.

We have very little evidence of literary composition in Pali on the Southeast Asian mainland.[74] We know of vernacular works of literature there, but what little is known about Pali text-production includes no *kāvya* works. Vernacular literary production in Thailand was influenced by both Pali and San-

---

70. Note that short *a* is pronounced as in *but;* long *ā* as in *father,* short *i* as in *bit,* long *ī* as in *jeep;* short *u* as in *mug,* long *ū* as in *boot* ; *e* as in *gate; o* as in *so.*

71. Liyanaratne 1983: 60.

72. The text of this half-line, and therefore the translation, seem to me debatable.

73. *Patthayaṃ* here must be wrong: it is the nominative of the present participle when the accusative is needed. The meter could be preserved by reading *varaṃ* for *varataraṃ,* and the correct *patthayantaṃ* for *patthayaṃ.*

74. An inscription of king Alaungsithu in 1141 C.E. records his aspiration to Buddhahood in elegant Pali verses of different meters (Luce and Maung Tin 1920). The nineteenth-century

skrit traditions, and the most influential work of Thai prosody, the *Chindāmaṇi,* was based on the Pali *Vuttodaya.*[75] The Burmese sack of Ayutthaya in 1767 destroyed many books—literary pieces in Pali perhaps among them. A century later the British in Burma wrought equally severe destruction. Everywhere, apart from Thailand, modernity arrived as French or British colonialism. Thailand's modernist reforms were initiated by the elite, much influenced by the West, especially empirical science.[76] Just before the final British victory in Burma, the monk Paññāsāmi, under the patronage of King Mindon, produced in 1861 the *Sāsanavaṃsa* (History of the teaching). Lieberman shows that this is a "heavily edited translation of a Burmese-language work" written in 1831 under the patronage of King Bagyidaw after the First Anglo-Burmese War.[77] Since then, commentarial and other works of grammar, poetics, and especially Higher Teachings have been produced in Burma—the last notably by Ledi Sayadaw—but, it seems, no literary works.[78] In Sri Lanka, after the eighteenth-century textual revival by Saranaṃkara, little of a *kāvya* nature has been produced. Malalasekera mentions two verse texts. One is the *Jinavaṃsadīpanī* (Exposition of the lineage of the conqueror), written in 1917 by Medhānanda, with two thousand verses in thirty chapters.[79] Its author claims in a Preface to have wanted to write a *mahākāvya* on the model of the Sanskrit *Raghuvaṃsa* and *Kumārasaṃbhava.* The other, the *Mahākassapacarita* (Career of Mahākassapa), was written in 1924 by Vidurupola Piyatissa; it has fifteen hundred verses in twenty chapters. These were the last flickerings of a transnational Buddhist literary culture in Pali. The

Lineage of the Teaching refers to a version of the Vessantara story in verse made in the seventeenth century. It mentions other texts: in the fifteenth century Sīlavaṃsa is said to have written three works of literature *(kabyālaṅkāra),* while Raṭṭhasāra wrote *kāvya* versions of three Jātaka stories and other literary works (Sās 98–99). There is a text, not available in a European edition, called the *Kāyaviratigāthā* (Verses on dispassion for the body) which circulated in Sri Lanka with Sinhala exegesis (Somadasa 1987: 367); Bode suggests that this may have originated at the time of Sīlavaṃsa and Raṭṭhasāra, but gives no reasons for the surmise (1908: 44). In the eighteenth century the monk Ñāṇavara wrote the *Rājādhirājanāmattapakāsinī* (Exposition of the names of the king of kings, about King Mahārājādhipati), which the *Lineage of the Teaching* (Sās 121) calls a work of literature. When King Bodawpaya was crowned in 1782, Ñāṇabhivaṃsa wrote the *Rājadhirājavilāsinī* (Splendor of the king of kings), a prose eulogy with a verse introduction and with very long compounds (Maung Tin 1914). And that is all. In Burma the traditions of grammar and Higher Teachings were both intense and long-lived, and we know that works of literature produced in Sri Lanka and India were in circulation in Burma (as in the inscription listing books in a library from 1442 [Luce and Maung Tin 1920]); but we know of little literary production, with just two pieces surviving into modern Western editions.

75. Terwiel 1996.
76. For a thumbnail sketch of this period of Thai history, see Collins 1998: 60–63.
77. Lieberman 1976: 139.
78. Bode 1908: 94 ff.
79. Malalasekera 1928.

modern world of colonialism has produced for the most part nationalist literary production in vernaculars or English.

CONCLUSION

The question I began with can be broken into three. First: Why does the Pali Canon, treated by modern Buddhists and scholars alike as a set of didactic religious texts, contain writing which aims at specifically literary elegance in ways taken later in India to be those of *kāvya?* Perhaps no answer to this question is needed. In any case neither I nor anyone else currently has one. Second: Why, after this early attention to literary value, was no Pali text produced which aimed at literary value produced for around a thousand years, with the partial exception of the *Mahāvaṃsa?* This question surely does need an answer, but again neither I nor anyone else has one. Third: Why did literary elegance begin again to be an aim of at least some Pali texts in the first half of the second millennium C.E.? I do not have anything like a full answer to this question, but the following reflections might suggest some avenues from which to start.

At the beginning of the second millennium C.E., Pali Buddhism began to move from Sri Lanka to become an international civilizational force in mainland Southeast Asia. It spread through these areas as "Sinhala" Buddhism, but the movement was in fact in both directions.[80] Pali Buddhism, present in these areas in the first millennium, was then for the most part un-

---

80. To revive the monastic order after what the Chronicles describe—perhaps misleadingly—as the devastation of the Cōḷa rule from c. 1017–1070, the Sri Lankan king Vijayabāhu in the eleventh century invited monks from Burma to preside over the new ordinations. It is more likely that, like rulers throughout the Theravāda world, he wished to impose a royally authorized lineage on existing orders of monks. The Cōḷa invasion from south India and subsequent rule in the tenth and eleventh centuries must have brought with it increased knowledge of and participation in a pan-Indian cultural world. There is evidence that, contrary to the Chronicles' partisan portrayal, the Cōḷas in fact supported Buddhism; it seems unlikely that they could have presided over a stable social order otherwise. If this was the case—and still more, if Vijayabāhu's reconstruction of a Pali Buddhist ideological polity had ambitions beyond the island, as it may have done—it seems possible that an attempt might have been made after that time to incorporate a wider range of cultural expression in Pali than had been attempted earlier, perhaps using the literary capabilities stimulated by the Cōḷa rulers. The *Mahāvaṃsa* says of Parakkamabāhu II in the thirteenth century, for example, that he was skilled in the treatise of Manu *(Manunītivisārada)* and brought learned Coḷan monks to Sri Lanka (Mhv LXXXIV: 1, 10), as well as books of all the learned traditions, such as logic, grammar, etc. (ibid., 27). In the eighteenth century, when King Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha and the monk Saraṇaṃkara were reviving (or renewing) the order in their own image, they invited monks from Thailand, and so what is still the leading lineage in Sri Lanka is called the Siyam Nikāya. (Another was introduced from Burma in the nineteenth century.)

connected with larger-scale polities. It later began to be imported by kings as part of their state-building enterprises, and it grew to dominance in Pagan (Burma) from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, in the Mon state of Pegu in the thirteenth century, in the First and the Restored Toungoo empires from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, and in the Konbaung empire of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; in what is now Thailand, in the Sukhotai and Lan Na polities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the Ayutthaya empire of the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries (interrupted and ended by devastating defeats at the hands of Burmese armies), and in the early Bangkok empire of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and in Cambodia, from the thirteenth century on, in the various smaller kingdoms which arose in the territory of the old Khmer empire centered at Angkor between periods of Siamese and Vietnamese control. Why did kings at this time introduce the Pali tradition and its associated monastic lineages into areas which had all known Hinduism and other forms of Buddhism and the Sanskrit language?

I will sketch out the beginnings of two possible answers. In doing so I do not mean to exclude any value or significance attributed to Pali Buddhism by its followers. Pali literature is primarily an ideology. The earliest extant texts have been preserved as the *Tipiṭaka* (Three baskets), now called its Canon, which is the *buddhavacana* (Buddha's word). Thus it claims an historical primacy. In ordination rituals, in scholarly Higher Teachings, in the widespread instrumentalist uses of Pali ("Pali Tantra," "magic"—no one term is adequate) and elsewhere, Pali Buddhism was also claimed to have an intrinsic ontological value and efficacy. In its sociopolitical aspect, this ideology had to do with naturalizing inequality in social hierarchies (through karma and the idea of merit), and with the pacification of populations, helping to make it possible for tribute-takers in the premodern agrarian states where the Teaching (*sāsana*) was established[81] to extract a surplus from tribute-givers. The Pali Buddhist ideology operated among the elite, primarily as an element in a nexus of power, as local power-holders were organized by a king into a *maṇḍala*. The practical realities of military control over large distances in premodern times meant that a king, at the center of a *maṇḍala* of client kings, had to exercise power through them, both politically and militarily. These local power-holders might control a small area by force alone, but a group of them could not be held together that way. Pali ideology was

81. This term is not to be taken in the European sense. Forms, often causative, of the verb *pati-ṭhā* (Skt. *prati-sthā*) are standardly used—as they are also, not unrelatedly, for the installation in temples of images and relics. The term has more to do with the dialectic of local and translocal than with any political-legal institutionalization of a Buddhist "church."

important in building the cultural coherence of such a dominant class but had no part in the cultural coherence of the societies as wholes, since there was none.[82] The general picture of cultural history I assume here, as an empirical hypothesis, is this: The premodern Pali imaginaire was an elite ideology, originally strongest in cities (often with branches in outlying forest regions), which over the course of the second millennium C.E. moved, sociologically speaking, downwards and outwards, and at some point before or during the modern period became a "popular," or peasant, religion. My own guess as to when this happened would put it within the last two hundred years, as an aspect of the growth of nationalism. But others may argue for an earlier date.

The concept of literature, when more specific than just "what is written," overlaps with that of ideology but differs from it in significant ways. On the one hand, elements adapted from an elite ideology can provide a medium for the expression of ideas and values other than those of the dominant ideology. For example, in 1868

> Adolf Bastian travelled throughout Siam and Indochina, sat with villagers in the evenings when stories were told, and gave summaries of what he heard. . . . The folktales have a delightful spontaneity, vigour and realism. . . . Some stories show no trace of any political structure and may pre-date Indian influence. . . . Buddhism is certainly in the background of the verse-novels, although many of the so-called *jātak* are apocryphal and it must be admitted that the heroes are not presented as the devout holy characters we might have imagined![83]

But the sense of literature most relevant to this book, on the other hand, is not folktales but *kāvya,* a product of linguistic sophistication and specific training. Criticism of kings and temporal power is common in Pali, but it is not an avenue for villagers' resistance to the ideology of the elite. *Kāvya* literature was a phenomenon of court society and educated culture, where the connection between it and the social, political, and economic aspects of life did not primarily have to do with the naturalization of inequality, as does Pali literature in its most general sense. Monks and their texts, as also their relics and images, were prestige objects, circulating in an exchange system of precious goods: law texts, for example could be and were put together with other power objects by kings in impressive displays.[84] In the perspective of sociohistorical analysis it is an element in the rhetorical, theatrical con-

---

82. My phrasing here follows that of Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner 1980: 3.

83. Jacob 1996: 9, 15, 41.

84. Huxley 1995. Huxley also argues that over the course of the second millennium C.E. an autonomous legal profession emerged in Burma to create a three-way interaction and struggle with monks and kings.

stitution of civilization-bearing state-systems: symbolic capital contributing to the prestige of both the *maṇḍala*-organizing king and his clients. Hallisey, in chapter 12 of this volume, speaks of civilization as producing both texts and persons; Kapstein of excellences and their carriers.[85] Premodern literati, like virtuoso musicians, were embodiments and indices of high culture. The Pali imaginaire as an ideology was historicist and exclusivist. Pali *kāvya,* on the other hand, always existed in a pluralist milieu: it was never identical to "high culture," but interacted with Sanskritic and vernacular forms of that culture. Distinctively Pali senses of literate excellence, personhood, and subjectivity were produced by Theravāda monasticism, but that was not—or better, was never predominantly—a literary culture; it was a scholastic culture producing ideology and its human embodiments.

Helms assembles much anthropological evidence to demonstrate the importance to kings and their local prestige of luxury goods brought from afar and of sophisticated and fine craftsmanship of all sorts, noting that "the exceptional significance associated with items from distant places is particularly evidenced in highly centralized polities."[86] Pali literature was a luxury good in at least two ways (aside from its intrinsic elegance and worth to those who could participate in it), both of which have to do with rarity and difficulty: first, it came from afar and so connoted the spatially and temporally distant. Second, the capacity to enjoy, and still more to create it, required arduous training and separation from the economically everyday. It had to do with distance and difference in both spatiotemporal and social senses. In premodern Southern Asia—a world of constantly enlarging and diminishing *maṇḍala*s of royal organization—kings with enough power and wealth aimed to build or maintain centralized states, aiming in Sri Lanka to unite the island "under one umbrella" of kingship and, in Southeast Asia, to amass enough territory to give credence to the rhetoric of the world-conquering Wheel-turning king *(cakkavatti).* They were also patrons (and controllers) of Pali Buddhism, and of the pluralist high cultures of which it formed a part. Pali literature in both ideological and *kāvya* senses was part of the process of providing coherence to the elite on which such kings and states depended.

Often the introduction of Pali Buddhism into an area by kings coincided with the introduction, or at least new evidence of, writing: in Sri Lanka inscriptions in Brahmī script concerning Buddhism date from the third century B.C.E., when the Chronicles tell us Buddhism was adopted by King Devānampiyatissa. In Burma the earliest inscriptions are in Pali, and while there are inscriptions in Pyu, Mon, and Arakanese from the first millennium, the writing of Burmese dates only from the twelfth century, after the introduc-

85. Kapstein, personal communication.
86. See Helms 1988, 1993. I quote from Helms 1988: 121.

tion of Pali Buddhism to Pagan on a larger scale than in the earlier king-doms. If Ramkhamhaeng's inscription in thirteenth-century Sukhothai is genuine, he simultaneously introduced Buddhism and invented a script for writing Thai, while not long afterwards, Fa Ngum in Lan Xang in the Middle Mekhong brought Buddhism and writing from Angkor. The major exception here is Cambodia, where writing dates from at least the sixth century, but Theravāda and Pali did not arrive on a large scale until the thirteenth century; thereafter, however, Pali displaced Sanskrit as the language of non-business inscriptions. Literacy, which Helms is right to treat as a luxury item and prestige good, has, of course, many symbolic values aside from its instrumental capacities. Literature in the *kāvya* sense is a kind of intensified literacy: literacy for its own sake, a semiotic skill celebrating itself as a civilizational achievement.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abercrombie, N., S. Hill, and B. S. Turner. 1980. *The Dominant Ideology Thesis.* London: George Allen and Unwin.

Alsdorf, L. 1957. "Bemerkungen zum Vessantara-Jātaka." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Künde Süd-Asiens* 1: 1–70.

Anuman Rajadhon, P. 1968. *Essays on Thai Folklore.* Bangkok: Social Science Association Press of Thailand.

Barnett, L. D. 1905. "The Manavulu Sandesa." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 265–83.

Bechert, H. 1978. "The Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography: *Mahāvaṃsa* and Political Thinking." In *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Ceylon,* edited by B. L. Smith. Chambersburg, PA: Anima.

Bizot, F. 1989. *Rāmaker ou l'amour symbolique de Rām et Sītā.* Paris: École Française d'Extrème-Orient.

Bode, M. 1908. *Pali Literature of Burma.* London: Royal Asiatic Society.

Brereton, B. P. 1995. *Thai Tellings of Phra Malai: Texts and Rituals Concerning a Popular Buddhist Saint.* Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University.

Chandler, D. 1996. *A History of Cambodia.* Second edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Charntornvong, S. 1981. "Religious Literature in Thai Political Perspective: The Case of the Maha Chat Kamluang." In *Essays on Literature and Society in Southeast Asia: Political and Sociological Perspectives,* edited by Tam Seong Chee. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Chavannes, E. 1910–1934. *Cinq cent contes et apologues, extraits du Tripitaka chinois.* Paris: E. Leroux.

Collins, S. 1982. *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1993. "The Story of the Elder Māleyya." *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 18: 65–96.

———. 1998. *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cone, M., and R. F. Gombrich. 1977. *The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Das Gupta, K. 1978. "Viśvantarāvadāna: Eine Buddhistische Legende." Ph.D. diss., Free University, Berlin.

Dhadphale, M. G. 1975. *Some Aspects of Literary Criticism, as Gleaned from Pali Sources.* Bombay: Adreesh Prakashan.

Dhani, Prince. 1946. "The Rama Jataka: A Lao Version of the Story of Rama." *Journal of the Siam Society* 35 (1): 1–22.

Dupaigne, B., and H. C. Khing. 1981. "Les anciennes peintures datées du Cambodge: quatorze épisodes du Vessantara Jātaka." *Arts Asiatiques* 36: 26–36.

Duroiselle, C. 1906. *Jinacarita or "The Career of the Conqueror": A Pāli Poem.* Rangoon: British Burma Press.

Finot, L. 1917. "Recherches sur la littérature laotienne." *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrème-Orient.*

Forbes, C. J. F. S. 1878. *British Burma and Its People, being sketches of native manners, customs and religion.* London: John Murray.

Geiger, W. 1905. *Dīpavaṃsa und Mahāvaṃsa und die geschichtliche Überlieferung in Ceylon.* Leipzig. (Translated by E. Coomaraswamy as *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa and their historical development in Ceylon* [*sic*]. Colombo: H. C. Cottle, 1908).

———. 1912. *The Mahāvaṃsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon.* London: Pali Text Society.

———. 1929. *Cūḷavaṃsa, being the more recent part of the Mahāvaṃsa.* Translated from Geiger's German by M. Rickmers. London: Pali Text Society.

Gellner, E. 1979. *Spectacles and Predicaments.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giteau, M. 1966. "Sur une ancienne représentation du Vessantarajātaka." *Études cambodgiennes* 5: 33–34.

———. 1975. *Iconographie du Cambodge post-ankgorien.* Paris: École Française d'Extrème-Orient.

Godakumbara, C. E. 1950. "Sādhucarita (An unnoticed Pali poem)." *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Centenary Volume,* n.s. 1: 95–103.

———. 1955. *Sinhalese Literature.* Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries.

———. 1958. *Samantakūṭavaṇṇanā of Vedeha Thera.* London: Pali Text Society.

Gokhale, B. G. 1994. *New Light on Early Buddhism.* Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

Goldman, R. 1984. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India.* Vol. 1. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gombrich, R. F. 1985. "The Vessantara Jātaka, the Rāmāyaṇa, and the Dasaratha Jātaka." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (3): 427–38.

———. 1990. "A note on Ambapāli's wit." *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15: 139–40.

Goss, L. A. 1895. *The Story of We-than-da-ya: sketched from a Burmese version of the Pali text.* Rangoon.

Hazlewood, A. A. 1986. *In Praise of Mount Samanta.* London: Pali Text Society.

Helms, M. W. 1988. *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance* . Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1993. *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade and Power.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Herbert, P., and A. Milner. 1989. *South-East Asia: Languages and Literatures, a Select Guide.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Hla Pe. 1968. "The Rise of Popular Literature in Burma." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 51 (2): 125–44.

Huxley, A. H. 1995. "Buddhist Law—The View from Mandalay." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 18 (1): 47–95.

Jacob, J. M. 1986. *Reamker (Rāmakerti): The Cambodian Version of the Rāmāyaṇa.* Oriental Translations Fund, n.s., vol. 45. London: Royal Asiatic Society.

———. 1996. *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia: A Preliminary Guide.* London Oriental Series, vol. 40. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kemper, S. 1991. *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics and Culture in Sinhala Life.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Keyes, C. 1987. *Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom and Nation-State.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Khing, Hoc Dy. 1990. *Contribution à l'histoire de la littérature Khmère.* Paris: Editions l'Harmattan.

Khoroche, P. 1989. *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey: Ārya Śūra's Jātakamālā.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lafont, P. B. 1957. *P'a Lak P'a Lam (Version Lao du Ramayana), P'ommachak (Version 'Tay Lu du Ramayana).* Paris: École Française d'Extrème-Orient.

Law, B. C. 1947. *On the Pali Chronicles of Ceylon.* Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Lieberman, V. 1976. "A New Look at the Sāsanavaṃsa." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39: 137–49.

Lienhard, S. 1975. "Sur la structure poétique des Theratherīgāthā." *Journal Asiatique* 263: 375–96.

Liyanaratne, J. 1983. "La Jinabodhāvalī de Devarakkhita Jayabāhu Dhammakitti." *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrème-Orient* 72: 49–80.

Luce, G. 1969. *Old Burma—Early Pagan.* Vol. 1. Locust Valley, NY: Augustin.

Luce, G., and Pe Maung Tin. 1920. "The Shwegyugi Pagoda Inscription, Pagan 1141, A.D." *Journal of the Burmese Research Society* 10: 67–74.

Malalasekera, G. P. 1928. *The Pali Literature of Ceylon.* London: Royal Asiatic Society.

Masefield, P. 1994. *The Udāna Commentary.* Vol. 1. London: Pali Text Society.

Maung Tin, P. 1912–1913. "*Abhisambodhi Alaṅkāra.* 'The Embellishments of Perfect Knowledge.' A Pali Poem edited and translated. Parts 1–3." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 2 (1): 174–83; 3 (1): 22–33; 3 (2): 148–59.

———. 1914. "Rājādhirājavilāsinī or 'The Manifestation of the King of Kings.'" *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 4 (1): 22.

McGill, F. 1997. "Painting the Great Life." In *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia,* edited by J. Schober. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Mendis, G. C. 1996. *The Pāli Chronicles of Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Karunaratne and Sons.

Norman, K. R. 1983. *Pāli Literature including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all Hināyāna Schools of Buddhism.* Vol. 7, part 2 of *A History of Indian Literature,* edited by J. Gonda. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

———. [1979] 1991. "Dhammapada 97: A Misunderstood Paradox." *Indologia Taurinensia* 7: 325–31. (Also published in K. Norman, *Collected Papers* [Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1990], 2: 187–93.)

Peltier, A-F. 1988. *Le Roman classique Lao.* Paris: École Française d'Extrème-Orient.

Perera, F. 1979. "The Early Buddhist Historiography of Ceylon." Ph.D. diss., Göttingen University.

Pollock, S. 1986. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Valmīki*. Vol. 2, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* . Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1991. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Valmīki*. Vol. 3, *Araṇyakāṇḍa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1996. "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, A.D. 300–1300: Transculturation, Vernacularization, and the Question of Ideology." In *The Ideology and Status of Sanskrit in South and Southeast Asia,* edited by J. Houben. Leiden: Brill.

Pou, S. 1977. *Études sur le Rāmakerti: XVIe–XVIIe siècles*. Paris: École Française d'Extrème-Orient.

———. 1979. *Rāmakerti XVI–XVIIe siècles = Ramakian/ texte khmer*. Paris: École Française d'Extrème-Orient.

———. 1982. *Rāmakerti II (deuxième version du Rāmāyaṇa khmer)/texte khmer, traduction et annotations*. Paris: École Française d'Extrème-Orient.

Raghavan, V. 1975. *The Ramayana in Greater India*. Surat: South Gujarat University Press.

Reynolds, C. H. B. 1970. *An Anthology of Sinhalese Literature up to 1815*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Rhys Davids, C. A. F. 1907. "Similes in the Nikāyas." *Journal of the Pali Text Society,* 1906–07: 52–151 (now = vol. 5).

———. 1908. "Addenda to Similes in the Nikāyas." *Journal of the Pali Text Society,* 180–88 (now = vol. 6).

Richman, P., ed. 1991. *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of A Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rouse, W. H. D. 1904. "Jinacarita." *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 1904–1905: 1–66 (now = vol. 5).

Saddhatissa, H. 1985. *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra*. London: Pali Text Society.

Sahai, S. 1976. *Rāmāyaṇa in Laos: A Study in the Gvāy Dvóraḥbī*. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation.

Schweisguth, P. 1951. *Étude sur la littérature siamoise*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.

Sen, R. S. D. 1996. *The Rāma Jātaka in Laos: A Study in the Phra Lak Phra Lam*. 2 vols. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation.

Shway Zoe [Sir J. G. Scott]. 1910. *The Burman, His Life and Notions*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan.

Singaravelu, S. 1982. "The Rāma Story in Thai Cultural Tradition." *Journal of the Siam Society* 70 (1): 50–70.

Skilling, P. 1997. "The Advent of Theravāda Buddhism to Mainland South-East Asia." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20 (1): 93–107.

Somadasa, K. 1987–1993. *Catalogue of the Hugh Nevill Manuscripts in the British Library*. London: Pali Text Society/British Library (vols. 1–4); British Library (vols. 5–7).

Srinivasa Iyengar, K. R., ed. 1983. *Asian Variations in Ramayana*. Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Strachan, P. 1990. *Imperial Pagan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Terwiel, B. J. 1996. "The Introduction of Indian Prosody among the Thais." In *The*

Ideology and Status of Sanskrit in South and Southeast Asia, edited by J. Houben. Leiden: Brill.

Thiel-Horstmann, M., ed. 1991. *Rāmāyaṇa and Rāmāyaṇas.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

von Hinüber, O. 1996. *A Handbook of Pali Literature.* Vol. 2 of *Indian Philology and South Asian Studies,* edited by A. Wezler and M. Witzel. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Warder, A. K. 1974. *Indian Kāvya Literature.* Vol. 4. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

White, O. 1896. *A Literal Translation of the Text Book Committee's Edition of Wethandaya.* Rangoon.

Works and Persons in Sinhala Literary Culture

Charles Hallisey

Throughout history the number of Sinhala speakers has been small in comparison to speakers of languages like Hindi, Bangla, or Tamil, and the space in which Sinhala has been used has always been small in comparison to that for languages like Sanskrit, Persian, or Pali. This is hardly surprising, because the use of Sinhala as a language has been restricted almost exclusively to the island of Sri Lanka, a small part of the South Asian cultural universe.[1] Within this universe, however, Sri Lanka has had a special place as a center of Theravāda Buddhism, often attracting admirers from India and Southeast Asia in particular, but also from as far away as Tibet and China and, in modern times, from Europe and North America. In contrast, Sri Lanka's importance in South Asia as a cultural center for the arts—painting, music, theater, as well as literature—has been spatially much more circumscribed. Although there have been numerous moments of local cultural brilliance in each of these arts, Sinhala artists and authors have generally learned from others rather than taught others.

---

1. For a brief but useful account of Sinhala as a language that has "a unique character within the South Asian linguistic area, as a result of its Indo-Aryan origins, Dravidian influence, and independent internal changes," see Gair 1998 (quote from p. 4). Especially noteworthy for this chapter is a quotation from Wilhelm Geiger and D. B. Jayatilaka: "Indeed, the structure of Sinhala itself appears to parallel the position of Sinhala culture and society within the South Asian culture area: clearly part of the region, and influenced in many ways by its South Indian neighbors, as well as by other nations and communities that have entered its history, but always retaining and developing its own special character throughout the over two millennia of its existence on the island of Sri Lanka" (Gair 1998: 12).

Important comments on the historical situatedness of categories like Aryan and Dravidian, as well as a valuable summary of the issues and problems involved in tracing the history of the Sinhala language, can be found in Gunawardana 1995: 7–19.

Sinhala's potential to contribute to our understanding of the history of literary cultures in South Asia belies what such facts might at first suggest. Indeed, Sinhala is heuristically key to our understanding of this history, as I hope to make clear in the first section of this chapter. Giving some examples of how this is so allows me to introduce some salient aspects of Sinhala literary cultures against the backdrop of the general history of literary cultures in South Asia. I then consider five aspects of premodern Sinhala literary cultures that mark them in distinctive ways: the relationship between literary and nonliterary identities; the language and techniques of human self-understanding; the character of the earliest literary culture, as evidenced in the graffiti at Sīgiriya; technologies of poetry in Sinhala, and the fascination with what is difficult; and last, the relationship between Sinhala and Pali.

SINHALA AND THE HISTORY OF LITERARY CULTURES IN SOUTH ASIA

Sinhala, along with Tamil, is among the first local languages *(deśabhāṣā)* used for literature in southern Asia, with significant examples of poetry and criticism surviving from at least the seventh century. Like Tamil authors and audiences, Sinhala literati seem to have considered their language the equal of Sanskrit in the work that it could do in the world quite early. Notably, literature appeared in Sinhala about the same time that theorization about poetry *(kāvya)* began in Sanskrit, though ironically Sanskrit theory denied that local languages like Sinhala were even capable of literature. That Sri Lanka already belonged to the world created by Sanskrit literary culture by this time is clear from the composition of the sixth-century *Jānakīharaṇa* (Theft of Sītā in Sri Lanka), a Sanskrit *mahākāvya* that owes much to Kālidāsa.[2] Rājaśekhara, writing in tenth-century Tripurī, knew of Kumāradāsa, the author of the *Jānakīharaṇa*—and in Sinhala tradition, a king of Sri Lanka[3]—and considered him second only to Kālidāsa as a poet.[4] Sinhala thus provides not only

2. See Dehisaspe Pannasara 1958: 129–32. The dates of Kumāradāsa are relatively uncertain, with some scholars placing him as late as the ninth century; see Dehisaspe Pannasara 1958: 109–111. On theorization about poetry in Sanskrit, see Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

3. King Kumāra Dhātusena (r. 508–16).

4. *jānakīharaṇaṃ kartuṃ raghuvaṃśe sthite sati / kaviḥ kumāradāsaś ca rāvaṇaś ca yadi kṣamaḥ* (To make a "Theft of Sītā" in the face of the "Dynasty of Raghu" would take a Rāvaṇa—or a Kumāradāsa) (anthologized in Jalhaṇa's *Sūktimuktāvalī*, and cited from that text in Dehisaspe Pannasara 1958: 107). The simile is appropriate in part because both Rāvaṇa and Kumāradāsa are associated with the island of Sri Lanka. Sinhala literary culture associated Kumāradāsa with Kālidāsa more intimately than Rājaśekhara did, usually as friends; the fifteenth-century poem *Pärakumbasirita* (The biography of King Parākramabāhu) describes Kumāradāsa as "a learned poet who was gifted to write such great epics as *Jānakīharaṇa,* and who sacrificed his life for Kālidāsa" (*Pärakumbasirita* v. 23). Rājaśekhara's verse is quoted in Vikramasinha's commentary on this verse.

some of the earliest evidence for a literary culture in South Asia using a local language, but also evidence that the choice to use a *deśabhāṣā* for literature must have involved some self-consciousness about turning away from at least some of the norms that defined literary works and persons in Sanskrit literary culture.

Sinhala also provides evidence that the transformation of a local language into a literary language (its "literarization")[5] was intentional. The ninth-century poetic handbook, *Siyabaslakara* (Poetics of one's own language), urges "clever poets" to be on the lookout for unintentional vulgarity in poor turns of expression on the grounds that they might come to be perceived as acceptable. This handbook for aspiring poets—among the earliest extant literary texts in Sinhala—is concerned with removing faults *(doṣa)* in individual turns of phrase and sentences. Indeed, to this end, the *Siyabaslakara* contrasts the historicity of Sinhala, which leaves it open to change, with the ahistorical stability of Sanskrit, the "speech of the gods," and it urges poets to be on guard against unacceptable "traditional usage" *(pera piyovak;* Skt. *pūrva prayoga)* "because as time goes on, will not our own language *[siya vadan;* Skt. *svabhāṣā vacana]* change, unlike Sanskrit *[diva vadan]*?"[6]

It is clear from evidence in Sinhala that these kinds of intentional changes to language are related to the history of collective identities as well as to politics. The very period in which we see Sinhala fully realized as a literary language—that is, around the turn of the millennium—was also the time that use of the term "Sinhala" was extended from naming the king and the ruling classes of the island to referring to the general population and their language.[7] The evidence for Sinhala literary activity thus can help us to understand better "the role that the literati, the group which occupies the misty regions on the boundaries of class divisions, played in identity formation" in South Asia, especially insofar as it reminds us that "this intellectual role was not one that was independent of, or unrelated to, the structure of power."[8]

Sinhala is also a valuable site for thinking about the subsequent trajectories of literary cultures in history. In part, this involves tracing the manner in which successive literary cultures embrace or resist both continuity and change. Sinhala literati have been self-conscious about their literary heritage for more than a millennium. Even as they have marked the possibility of innovation in literature,[9] they have frequently taken steps to preserve their literary heritage and to resist changes to the forms of Sinhala used for litera-

---

5. Pollock 1998: 41.

6. *Siyabaslakara* v. 43.

7. See Gunawardana 1995: 51–60.

8. Gunawardana 1979a: 35.

9. *Siyabaslakara*, for example, says that *alaṅkāra*s "keep on increasing . . . even up to today. Who in the world is capable of describing them completely?" (*Siyabaslakara* v. 68). The author

ture. This conservatism was institutionalized in education. If literature, to quote Barthes, is "what gets taught,"[10] then something close to a pedagogical "canon," intended to provide aspiring poets with models of "good literature," began to take shape as early as the thirteenth century. An early *mahākāvya* in Sinhala, the twelfth-century *Kavsiḷumiṇa* (Crest jewel of poetry; Skt. *Kāvyacuḍāmaṇi*), is cited as an example in poets' manuals like *Sidatsangarāva* (Compilation of methods; Skt. *Siddhāntasaṃgraha*) and *Eḷusandaslakuṇa* (Character of meter in Sinhala; Skt. *Siṃhachandolakṣaṇa*), and it quickly received a pedagogical commentary *(sannaya),* much the same as works in Pali and Sanskrit;[11] all of these pedagogical works are from the thirteenth century but they continued to be used in literary education for centuries after, just as *Kavsiḷumiṇa* apparently was.[12] Although works were added to this canon from time to time, it still had a remarkable stability, as well as longevity. Ad hoc anthologies found in manuscripts from as late as the nineteenth century, clearly meant for working poets of the time, bring together works on prosody from the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, for example.[13]

In this curriculum, which promoted the continuity of the Sinhala literary heritage up to the twentieth century, Sinhala authors and critics simultaneously and consistently created catholic literary cultures, especially by their inclusion of the works of other languages. For example, a thirteenth-century pedagogical commentary on another early Sinhala *mahākāvya,* the *Sasadāvata* (Story of the Sasa Jātaka), places the Sinhala poem within a Sanskrit literary milieu by identifying Sanskrit sources as the inspiration for various verses; among these sources are *Bālārāmāyaṇa, Māghakāvya, Śākuntala, Raghuvaṃśa, Kāvyamīmāṃsā, Kumārasaṃbhava,* and *Kāvyādarśa.*[14] Similarly, the cosmopolitan nature of the educational institutions that provided the conditions for the transmission of the Sinhala literary heritage is clear in a

---

of *Siyabaslakara* is following Daṇḍin here; Daṇḍin thought that the number of *mārga*s, or styles of composition, was endless.

10. As quoted in Pollock 1994.

11. See Godakumbura 1955: 140–142 for a brief account of the *sannaya*s on the *Meghadūta* and the *Jānakīharaṇa* in Sanskrit, and on the *Jinacarita* and *Dāṭhavaṃsa* in Pali, all of which were composed in the twelfth or thirteenth century. The dating of all premodern texts in this chapter is adopted from Vālivitye Sorata 1963, 1: xxxvii–xlii.

12. The fifteenth-century monastic poet Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula alludes to *Kavsiḷumiṇa* and *Sidatsangarāva* in his *Kāvyaśekhara;* for example, compare *Kavsiḷumiṇa* 1.16 with *Kāvyaśekhara* 2.5. A commentary on the *Sidatsangarāva* was composed in 1787 for use in the monastic educational system inaugurated by Saranamkara; see Sannasgala 1964: 495–96.

13. Somadasa 1990: Or. 6610 (1), Or. 6610 (2), Or. 6610 (3).

14. Sannasgala 1964: 113 identifies the following verses and their sources: *Bālārāmāyaṇa* (vv. 37, 117), *Māghakāvya* (vv. 50, 1510), *Śākuntala* (v. 51), *Raghuvaṃśa* (vv. 52, 286), *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* (vv. 53, 54, 81, 82, 108, 133), *Kumārasaṃbhava* (vv. 123, 131), and *Kāvyādarśa* (v. 179).

long description in the fifteenth-century *Girāsandēśaya* (Parrot's message) of a monastic center of learning at Toṭagamuva, on the southwest coast of Sri Lanka. We are told that among monastic and lay scholars studying Buddhist scriptures, commentaries, and doctrinal works, as well as grammar, the Vedas, astrology, medicine, and political science *(arthaśāstra),* there were also connoisseurs of poetry:

> In various places in that beautiful and luxurious monastery there are groups of learned men who have studied prosody *[sanda;* Skt. *chandas]*, poetics *[lakara;* Skt. *alaṅkāra]* and grammar *[viyaraṇa;* Skt. *vyākaraṇa]*. They sit as they please and recite poems and dramas composed in Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhala, and Tamil, maintaining the splendor *[siri]* of the best poets of old.[15]

Descriptions of this sort obviously tell us more about what a literary culture at a particular time was ideally, not what it actually was, and this is precisely their value for our understanding of what was involved in transforming Sinhala into a literary language. Four things stand out in this description: the study of the sciences that regulate literary activity and make literary activity a disciplinary practice, the preservation of the past within literary activity, the role of recitation, and multilinguality. I return to some of these features in what follows; for now I will only point out that descriptions of this sort should not be taken as evidence that individual authors in Sri Lanka commonly wrote in more than one language (although some did).[16] They do remind us, however, that Sinhala literary cultures have participated in more than one translocal cultural formation at a time and have been inflected by the appropriation of literary practices, genres, and values from a number of these. Most noticeable among them is Sanskrit, which had both aesthetic and political connotations for the Sinhala world; but as the verse indicates, Sinhala literary culture in the fifteenth century was also quite alert to the literary heritages of Tamil and Pali. Authors influenced by the practices and values of Sinhala literary cultures sometimes used the lat-

15. *Girāsandēśaya* v. 227. Piyaratana glosses the last clause, *pera kaviyara siri rukuḷu,* as *pūrva kavivarayan gē śobhāva (prakāśa) kaḷa vū.* (p. 217); *śobhāva* means light, radiance, splendor, as well as beauty, or *alaṅkāraya.* Exactly what the author has in mind when he mentions the recitation of "poems and dramas" in Pali is problematic; see Collins, chapter 11, this volume.

16. On the place of public recitation of poetry in Sanskrit literary culture, see Pollock 1995: 120: "The modes of the recitation of poetry centrally occupied the attention of literary critics like Rājaśekhara (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā* 7). And we know from the twelfth-century *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* that in a sense a poem was only published when it was recited before an audience: 'for a literary work without auditors to hear it is like a ship on the open sea without a helmsman; it will sink without a trace' (25.10)" (parentheses in original). See Collins 1992: 125–26, 129 for comments on recitation within a Buddhist context. On multilinguality as having "a purely imaginary status in Sanskrit literary culture," see Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

ter as a vehicle for creative expression, whereas the conventions and vocabulary of Tamil literature left an indelible mark on Sinhala poetry,[17] particularly from the fifteenth century on, when Sanskrit literary culture was everywhere waning.[18] Sinhala authors in the fifteenth century, such as Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula and the monastic author of the *Kokilasandēśaya* (The cuckoo's message), commonly knew Tamil and sometimes referred to Tamil works, while authors who were ethnically Tamil sometimes wrote in Sinhala, as, for example, Nallurutunumini, a royal minister in the fifteenth-century court of Parākramabāhu VI and author of the *Nāmāvaliya* (Garland of nouns). The involvement of Sinhala authors and critics in the creation, functioning, and self-understanding of multiple transsocietal lifeworlds defined by the use of different translocal languages (like Pali and Sanskrit) and structured by different ideologies (one religious, the other an ideology of erudition, refinement, and valor) not only illustrates the general pattern that "all literary cultures participate in what ultimately turn out to be networks of borrowing, appropriating, reacting, imitating, emulating, rivaling, defeating";[19] it also provides an important case study for discerning some of the myriad local processes that shaped the cultural contours of these cosmopolitan realms in South Asia. This is especially the case with Pali.

Sinhala is also valuable for gaining a nuanced understanding of superposition, whereby "new literatures develop in reaction to superposed or dominating forms of pre-existent literatures."[20] This aspect of the interaction of the local and the translocal in the production of literature is especially important with respect to the place of Sanskrit in Sinhala literary culture between the tenth and fifteenth centuries. As some of the examples have already suggested, during this period Sinhala authors and critics chose what counted as literature in Sanskrit without choosing Sanskrit as a literary language. That is, they combined a profound appreciation for the vision of the literary found in Sanskrit literary culture with a resolute resistance to the encroachment of the Sanskrit language on the forms of Sinhala used for poetry—or to use the idiom of Sanskrit literary culture, they refused literary *tatsama*s but embraced the equivalent of literary *tadbhava*s.[21]

Sinhala literary culture during these centuries was internally diglossic, employing one "alphabet" for writing Sinhala poetry and one for Sinhala prose. The script was the same for both; the difference between the two was the number of permitted letters *(akṣara*s*)*, prose having fifty-seven, against thirty-

---

17. See Hevawasam 1961: 241–62.

18. Pollock 2001.

19. Pollock 1994: 12.

20. Pollock 1994: 12–13, where Pollock discusses the importance of the superposition of one language on another for the history of literary cultures.

21. A *tatsama* is a borrowed word; a *tadbhava* is a borrowed concept. See Kahrs 1992: 228.

six for poetry. The alphabet for poetic Sinhala *(eḷu)* prevented the use of many Sanskrit loanwords *(tatsama*s*)* because it lacked letters for the aspirated consonants of Sanskrit, although Sanskrit loanwords became as common in Sinhala prose as they later were in the literatures of other local languages elsewhere in South Asia. Sanskrit loanwords apparently became common in spoken Sinhala too, as well as in Sinhala Buddhist discourse: the Sanskritic *dharmaya* (Truth, the Buddha's Teaching) is far more common than *daham* or *dähäm,* found in *eḷu,* whereas there is no *tatsama* in Sinhala from the Pali equivalent, *dhamma.*[22] On the other hand, poetic Sinhala frequently privileged the *ä* vowel (e.g., *dähäm*) and the half-nasal, which are not found in Sanskrit or Pali. Both of these characteristic phonemes have their own orthographic signs, and these distinguish Sinhala from practically every other South Asian language.

These are changes in the language whose appearance can only be traced to the period in which Sinhala first emerges as a literary language, that is, beginning from the eighth century.[23] Thus we see in *eḷu* a dominance of Sanskrit over Sinhala—even in the selection of *kāvya* as the preeminent "literary"[24]—and simultaneously a resistance to this dominance in the efforts to distinguish the language of Sinhala poetry from Sanskrit. This is so not only at the level of phonology; the regulation of permitted sounds in *eḷu* sometimes conflicted with the regulation of poetic effects. Some literary ornamentations of sound *(śabdālaṅkāra)* were deemed outside the scope of possibility in Sinhala; according to the *Siyabaslakara,* these include *śleṣa* ("compactness," i.e., words with double meanings), *samatā* ("evenness" of sound combinations), and *sukumāratā* (absence of harsh sounds).[25]

The Sinhala script underwent important changes around the eighth century, as Brahmi was replaced by the swiftly developed round-shaped script, basically the same one currently used. The new script, in contrast to the Brahmi found in early inscriptions in Sri Lanka, was capable of representing long vowels, and this surely was part of a process aimed, in part, at standardizing the language.[26] More significant, the development of the new script suggests that for the Sinhala literary culture of the time, not only did "the literary work, in a non-trivial sense, not exist until it [was] inscribed," but

---

22. A serious argument can be made that there are no *tatsama*s from Pali in Sinhala at all.

23. See Paranavitana 1956, 1: xxxi, xxxiii, lix–lx.

24. See Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

25. *Siyabaslakara* vv. 31–44. Of course, following Vāmana (who is referred to by the author of *Siyabaslakara* in v. 2), these aspects of literature could be taken as *arthaguṇa*s (excellences of sense), and then they would obviously be possible in Sinhala: *śleṣa* would be congruity of ideas brought forth by ingenious turns of expression; *samatā,* adherence to proper sequence of ideas and ease of understanding; *sukumāratā,* softness resulting from the absence of dissident ideas. See Wijayawardhana 1963: 58.

26. See Paranavitana 1956, 1: lxi–lxxiii.

the recognition of Sinhala as a language capable of literature was markedly new as a social phenomenon. The new script was both a "defining condition of possibility" for this social phenomenon and a celebration of it.[27] A similar pattern seems to have held with respect to the cultural hegemony of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, for as Steven Collins observes, "often the introduction of Pali Buddhism into an area by kings coincided with the introduction, or at least new evidence, of writing."[28]

As we have already noted, even though *eḷu* had some phonetic, orthographic, and poetic (as in *alaṅkāra*) independence from Sanskrit, Sanskrit still provided the norms and models for most poetry in Sinhala from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries. The new script again allowed for the superposition of Sanskrit on Sinhala literature, because it newly enabled the representation of aspirate sounds *(kha, gha, cha, tha, pha, bha, śa),* the characters for which had fallen out of use in the later Brahmi script used in Sri Lanka from the second to sixth centuries. New signs for the letter *ṣ,* for compound consonants, for the *visarga (ḥ),* and for the *virāma* (which indicates a pure consonant, without the inherent *a*) also appeared in Sri Lankan inscriptions around the eighth century.[29] In short, the new script allowed the intellectual precision of Sanskrit discourse to be textualized in a continuum with Sinhala (and with Pali, which also used the new script). The intellectual precision of Sanskrit that came from its grammatical exactness also had an impact on Sinhala grammar. S. Paranavitana has argued that the appearance of post-positions to indicate the Sanskritic instrumental, ablative, genitive,

---

27. Pollock 1995: 117. Commenting specifically on the development of the round-shaped script in connection with a new beginning in Sinhala literature, S. M. Dharmarathna (1998: 3–4) has argued that

> from the evidence of the Sigiri graffiti dated to the 8th to the 10th centuries . . . literary activity seems to have popularly spread among the general public. Accordingly, the need for a quick and easy medium of writing may have led to the adoption of the round shaped script. Another major cause that many scholars considered was the foreign factor which had influenced the Sri Lankan alphabet at that time. Many scholars consider that the Pallavas who had developed a strong political presence in South India were the main source of influence. The period of the Imperial Pallava can be assigned from 576 A.D. to 900 A.D. . . . Besides political relations, the influence of Pallava architecture is seen in the Gedige at Nalanda and in certain sculptures of the Isurumuniya temple at Anuradhapura. There are other important indications of Pallava connections with Sri Lanka. Pallava influence could be identified through literary works too, such as Janakiharana, composed by the Sri Lankan poet Kumaradasa who follows the literary style of the writer Dandin, who lived in the Pallava kingdom.

For an examination of the Pallava dynasty as "an exemplary case of the institution of a Sanskrit political-cultural idiom," see Pollock 1996: 209–13.

28. Collins, chapter 11, this volume.

29. Dharmarathna 1998: 6–8. On the importance of writing in the regularization of language, see Pollock 1994: 8; 1995: 116; and 1998: 41–42.

and locative cases, which began to appear in Sinhala at this time, "seem to have come into vogue due to the paraphrasing of Pali and Sanskrit. These post-positions, which are common in the prose works dating from the Pollonaruva period and after, seldom occur in poetical works."[30]

The impact of Sanskrit went far beyond morphological developments, however. Sanskrit discourse had a pervasive effect on prose Sinhala of the period, particularly in Buddhist scholastic works such as the twelfth-century *Abhidharmārthasangrahasanne* (Pedagogical commentary on the *Abhidhammatthasangaha,* a Pali manual on Buddhist philosophy) and the thirteenth-century *Visuddhimaggasanne* (Pedagogical commentary on the *Visuddhimagga,* Buddhaghoṣa's manual on monastic practice), where the language is full of Sanskrit loanwords and derivatives *(tatsama*s and *tadbhava*s*)* as well as "Sanskritic" modes of thinking.[31] Sanskrit writers, both Buddhist and Hindu, are also frequently cited.[32] As I discuss later, certain moral values of Sanskrit literary culture, such as prowess, valor, and prestige, also became as much a part of Sinhala literary culture as did Sanskritic literary values such as selectivity, homogeneity, and conservatism. In general, Sanskrit culture was a uniquely generative part of literary life in Sri Lanka during these six centuries, but its relation to Sinhala literary culture and to Pali in Sri Lanka was hardly simple or monolithic.[33]

It is helpful to relate the complex connections between Sinhala literary culture and Sanskrit literary culture to other patterns in cultural-political life in Sri Lanka at the time. In contrast to elsewhere in South Asia and Southeast Asia, there is a notable absence of Sanskrit in the public discourse found in Sri Lankan inscriptions, with Sinhala—admittedly often a highly Sanskritized Sinhala—almost always preferred.[34] This absence challenges us to consider just how it was that elites in medieval Sri Lanka simultaneously participated in and resisted absorption in "the Sanskrit cosmopolis," that "symbolic network created in the first instance by the presence of a similar kind of discourse in a similar language deploying a similar idiom and style to make

30. Paranavitana 1963: 1234.

31. See, for example, the use of Sanskrit grammatical analysis in *Jātakaaṭuvāgāṭapadaya* (Glossary on the Jātaka commentary): 2, 3.

32. See Godakumbura 1943, and 1955: 43–44.

33. Analogous, albeit quite different, patterns can be seen with respect to the place of English in modern Sinhala literary culture, where the literary in English was chosen without choosing English as a literary language, especially in connection with the Sinhala novel *(navakathā)*.

34. There are some important exceptions to these general comments, such as inscriptions in Sanskrit, notably a ninth-century inscription in an early form of Nagari (*Epigraphia Zeylanica* 1: 1–9.) There are also a number of inscriptions from the reign of Kīrti Niśśanka Malla at the end of the twelfth century that contain Sanskrit—perhaps not surprising since this king came from Kaliṅga in eastern India. Some Sinhala inscriptions are also in *eḷu* verse, such as a praise poem from the tenth century for Udā Siri Sangbo; see *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 3: 138–48.

similar kinds of claims about the nature and aesthetics of polity." Many of the inscriptions are in "the standard *praśasti* style" of Sanskrit literary culture both in contents and literary aspirations,[35] as illustrated in the following inscription of Mahinda IV from the eleventh century:

> Hail! The great king [Siri Sang] Bo Abā was born unto the great king Siri Sangbo Abā, the Kṣatriya Lord, descended from the royal line of the Okkāka dynasty, which is the source *(muḷin)* of a multitude of boundless and benignant virtues *(guṇa),* and which has [thereby] caused other Kṣatriya dynasties of the whole of Dambadiva *(Jambudvipa)* to render homage; [he was born] in the womb of the anointed queen Dev Gon, of equal birth and descent. After enjoying the dignities of governor and chief-governor, he in due course became king, and was anointed on his head, resplendent with the bejewelled crown, with the unction of world-supremacy. With his fame *(yasas)* he illumined the island of Lanka, with the prowess of victorious lords *(diya nāvan),*[36] displayed in the precincts of the Palace constantly filled with the wonderful presents offered by kings of various lands, he brought fame upon prosperous Lanka. With [the rise of] his majestic power *(tedin;* Skt. *tejas)* he drove away from Lanka the Dravidian foe, just as the rising sun dispels darkness from the sky, and sheds lustre upon the world.
>
> In gentleness he was like the moon, in depth [of character] the ocean, in firmness the Mount Meru, in wealth the Lord of Riches; he was a mine of good qualities *(guṇa),* an abode of the ten kingly virtues, a jewel casket for the Triple Gem, the supporting pillar for the *sāsana* of the Sage, the goddess Śrī for every prosperity and the mainstay for the world *(diyaṭ).*[37]

Inscriptions of this sort, like *eḷu* poetry itself, suggest that Sinhala was considered a language of prestige in its own right, a language of power and beauty that could be used instead of Sanskrit in both public discourse and literature, despite the claims for Sanskrit's exclusive superiority made by Sanskrit literary theorists themselves. Noting the correspondence between the use of Sinhala as a public and literary language and the political activity at the time, we can see in literature a paradigm and marker that sheds light on the political history of medieval Sri Lanka. In the large-scale imperial formations

35. See Pollock 1996: 211: "The standard *praśasti* style [comprises] the fixing of geneological succession, the catalogue of kingly traits of the dynasty, the eulogy of the ruling lord." The quotation is from Pollock 1996: 230.

36. The editor, Wickramasinghe, explains the richness of this word and helps us to appreciate the cultural politics of eleventh-century Sri Lanka: "This word can be equivalent to Sanskrit (1) *jagan-nātha* or *-nāga* 'world-lord,' an epithet of the Buddha (or a Bodhisattva as in *Kāvyaśekhara,* VI.54 [see later for further comments on Sinhala kings as *bodhisattva*s]), also of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa; (2) *jaya-nātha* or *-nāga* or *-nāyaka,* 'lord of victory'; (3) *udaka-nātha,* 'lord of water'; and (4) *udake snātvā,* 'having bathed in the water' [which could refer to the Indic ritual of installing a king with a ceremonial 'bath,' or *abhiṣeka*]." *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 1: 225 n. 4.

37. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 1: 224–25, translation slightly modified (brackets in original; parentheses added.)

of medieval South Asia, Sri Lanka's position was one of constant struggle for autonomy. As the inscription's references to invasions repulsed and to the reception of honor from unnamed kings of India indicate, the stronger a Sinhala polity was, the more it was able to act independently of the larger empires on the subcontinent. The periods of greatest poetic production in Sinhala were also those in which a particular Sinhala king was able to secure a greater degree of separateness for Sri Lanka as a political space—which suggests that the use of *eḷu* to create an autonomous literary space and the use of Sinhala in public inscriptions to make statements about the nature of polity itself constituted for Sri Lanka both participation in and separateness from the cultural-political world articulated in Sanskrit.

The long reign of Parākramabāhu VI (1411–1466) in Kōṭṭe is an excellent example of this correlation. Parākramabāhu VI not only unified the whole island for the first time since the twelfth century; he also defeated an attempted invasion by the Vijayanagara empire. Sinhala literary culture was particularly vibrant during his reign, with an outpouring of poetry—notably, numerous *sandēśa* poems[38] and the *Kāvyaśekhara* (Crest jewel of poetry), a *mahākāvya* by Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula, the most prominent monk of the day; it is Śrī Rāhula's monastery that is described in the verse from the *Girāsandēśaya* quoted earlier. Parākramabāhu VI himself is said to have composed the *Ruvanmala* (Garland of gems), a lexicon in verse of *eḷu* words. Some works composed during this period, such as Śrī Rāhula's *Kāvyaśekhara,* Vättāva's *Guttilakāvyaya* (*Kāvya* of the Guttila Jātaka), and Vidāgama Maitreya's *Kavlakuṇumiṇimaldama* (Garland of the gems of the characteristics of poetry), were added to a pedagogical canon that had first taken shape in the thirteenth century.[39]

As examination of the cultural world of Parākramabāhu VI's reign makes clear, tracing the subsequent trajectories of literary cultures in history means taking measure of the changing circumstances in which literature was made and in which literature contributed to the creation of new life-worlds. The importance of this can be seen more clearly with a simple comparison be-

38. The *sandēśa,* a messenger poem modeled on Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta,* was particularly popular among authors in medieval Sri Lanka and south India, with more than 126 *sandēśa*s written in Sinhala alone. The south Indian and Sri Lankan *sandēśa* poems portrayed the messenger's journey more realistically than did the *Meghadūta.* These *sandeśa* poems are a reminder that the historical development of Sinhala literary culture is best understood as connected with the literary cultures of south India that used Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam. The distinct macropatterns of the literary cultures of south India and Sri Lanka challenge us to investigate the processes by means of which local literary cultures impacted each other directly, without the mediation of translocal languages like Sanskrit.

39. The *Kavlakuṇumiṇimaldama* is included in the nineteenth-century manuscript anthologies for poets referred to earlier; see, for example, Somadasa 1990: Or. 6610 (1) II; Or. 6610 (3) I; Or. 6610 (4) I.

tween the literary culture of *eḷu* poetry from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries and the literary culture of southern Sri Lanka in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even though the latter is outside the scope of this chapter. As manuscripts of anthologies for aspiring poets attest, the later literary culture of southern Sri Lanka, particularly at Matara, continued to look to the heritage of the Sinhala poetic tradition, and poets judged their worth by comparison to models set in older works. Yet the social and political circumstances of the two literary cultures differed drastically. The older literary culture was preeminently a court culture, and it participated in a political economy whose ideal world was a unified hierarchy of wealth, power, status, value, and culture. In religion, politics, and literary culture, there were continuing attempts to subordinate localities to the capital, as occurred, for example, in the reign of Parākramabāhu I (r. 1153–1186). The country was unified politically, the Buddhist monastic order was reorganized into a single institutional framework, and the first handbooks to regulate literary Sinhala were produced.[40] An entirely different social and political order, however, was in place in southern Sri Lanka during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Not only had this part of the island been colonized—first by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, then by the Dutch, and finally by the British—but its culture increasingly rested on a commercial, market economy that was able to support multiple local elites irrespective of their standing in traditional social hierarchies. Literature and religion became vehicles for asserting new social aspirations and identities, and both literary and religious persons were supported by the new patterns of patron-client relations that were emerging in the market economy of the region.[41]

Obviously, then, if we are to understand Sinhala literary cultures in history, we must focus our attention on how the values and practices of literary culture in Sri Lanka interacted with the values and practices of nonliterary culture—meaning, above all, Buddhist culture. It goes without saying that we cannot understand important aspects of the literary and political history of South Asia, or of individual authors and texts, without giving close attention to religion. As Sheldon Pollock argues in chapter 1 in this volume, it is Buddhists who were instrumental in the transformation of Sanskrit from a liturgical and scholarly language to a literary one, used in drama and secular poetry; and throughout the literary history of South Asia, Buddhists continued to be active and prominent at key moments.

Conversely, one cannot understand the religious history of South Asia without looking at the practices and values of its literary and political cul-

---

40. See De Silva 1981: 60–77.

41. The basic ideas in this paragraph are drawn from comparative discussions in a workshop titled "Nationality and Locality in Society, Politics, and Culture in East, Southeast, and South Asia," held at the Asia Center, Harvard University, March, 1997.

tures. This is especially the case for Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Buddhist discourse and ritual were often used to claim and display authority.[42] A good example is provided by a Sinhala inscription from the reign of King Niśśaṅka Malla (r. 1187–1196), who hailed from Kaliṅga (in present-day Orissa) and whose claim to the throne was less than clear:

> [King Niśśaṅka Malla] ensured the long stability of the state and the religion *(lokaśāsanaya).* Moreover, considering that the island of Lanka is a noble land because of the establishment of the *sāsana* there, that the living beings in it have lofty excellences *(guṇa),* and that, therefore, they should receive advice and protection, he out of compassion, proclaimed the [following] maxims of good counsel:
>
> Though kings appear in human form, they are human divinities *(naradēvatā)* and must, therefore, be regarded as gods. The appearance of an impartial king should be welcomed as the appearance of the Buddha. When kings inflict punishment commensurate with the offence, they do so with good intentions, just as a physician applies a remedy for a bodily ailment. They restrain [their subjects] from evil and thus save them from falling into hell. They lead them to do good, thereby securing for them the [bliss of] heaven and release from re-births *(mōkṣa).* If the wishes of kings were not observed, the human world would be like hell; but if their wishes were respected, it would be like heaven.[43]

We should note, too, the overlap between the depiction of the nature of authority in this inscription and the depiction of the nature of literary "authority" found in the tenth-century *Siyabaslakara:*

> Language is like a wish-conferring cow that gives what is desirable to those who can use it in the proper manner, but for others it will only impart bovine qualities.

---

42. On the place of Buddhist discourse and public ritual in the history of imperial formations in South Asia more generally, see Inden 1979. For Sri Lanka in particular, see Gunawardana 1979b: 170–211, 225–234; and 1976: 53–62. The use of Buddhist vocabulary and imagery is also ubiquitous in the political life of modern Sri Lanka; see Tambiah 1992 and Seneviratne 1999.

43. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 2: 121, translation slightly modified (brackets in original; parentheses added.) The fifteenth-century panegyric poem *Pärakumbasirita* v. 29 seems to echo the last sentence, albeit with the vocabulary of *rasa,* saying, "Listening to [Parākramabāhu's] entirely enjoyable words *[numutu rasa bas äsuva]* brings at once the bliss of heaven." The comparison of the king to a physician obviously echoes standard depictions of the Buddha, but it should also be kept in mind that the discourse of aesthetics concerned with *prāṇa* and *rasa* in literature overlaps with medical discourse; see, for example, the thirteenth-century *Prayogaratnāvaliya* (The garland of [medical] procedures), by Mayurapada, vv. 1, 297, 319. This Sinhala treatise also locates the practice of medicine within a religious framework: "Realizing that various kinds of beings who are afflicted by all sorts of illnesses and diseases cannot gain the threefold happiness, and having compassion for them, I now describe various methods of healing, so that they may become free of illness, lead good lives, and finally attain *mōkṣa*" (v. 2).

> Therefore it is proper that even the slightest blemish in poetry should be examined; the beauty of a lovely body will be marred by a single scar.

> How can those who have not studied the *śāstra*s distinguish between what is excellent *[guṇa]* and what is a blemish *[doṣa];* does the blind person have the capacity to perceive the differences in visual objects?

> Therefore the learned men of old who were driven by the desire to enlighten the world composed treatises for those who were bringing forth [entering] the beautiful path *[visituru magga;* Skt. *vicitra mārga].*[44]

By the tenth century it was being claimed that the Buddha had predicted that "none but future Buddhas *[bosat-hu;* Skt. *bodhisattva]* would become kings of prosperous Lanka."[45] This political vision gradually came to reconfigure Buddhist ethics. For example, narrative accounts of the Buddha's visits to Sri Lanka and of Buddhist kings' roles in the history of Sri Lanka in chronicles like the *Mahāvaṃsa*—itself a product of an earlier literary culture[46]—support such claims by presenting "a moral principle distinct from those found in the Pali Canon: violence is permissible in the interest of the *sāsana,* against those who do not understand the 'true doctrine' and are opposed to it."[47]

While it has become commonplace to say that Buddhism was instrumental in the development of Sinhala literature,[48] it is just as true—but far less commonplace—to say that literary activity was central to Buddhist life for more than a millennium. Consider in this regard the *Nikāyasangraha,* a fourteenth-century historical work, which gives a list of monastic and lay authors who had composed in Sinhala "collections of verses related to the dharma *[dharmānugataślokaprabandha],*[49] translations which displayed the original's diverse meanings *[vicitrārtha prakāśa vu sanna],* glossaries, and various doctrinal works. Learning from these works, wise teachers up to the present day have made the Buddha's heritage that exists as learning *[budun-gē paryāpti sāsanaya]* shine with doctrinal works which are suitable to their own time."[50]

Becoming alert to the interaction between literature and religion, both of which have connections to the political, presses upon us a number of questions that should be addressed not only in a history of Sinhala literary cul-

44. *Siyabaslakara* vv. 7–10. The last clause is richly ambiguous, since the word *mārga* denotes both styles of poetry and the Buddhist religious life.

45. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 2: 237, 240: *siri La(k-hi) no bosat-hu no raj-vanhayi.*

46. See Collins, chapter 11, this volume. The *Mahāvaṃsa* (2.3) gives as its raison d'être the removal of its predecessor's *dosa.*

47. Gunawardana 1976: 56.

48. For instance, De Silva 1981: 57. As I discuss in the next section, however, the earliest surviving evidence for poetry in Sinhala are verses that are quite "secular" in subject matter.

49. Note especially the use of the Sanskritic *śloka* here instead of the more common and more accurate Sinhala names for verse: *gī* and *sivpāda.*

50. *Nikāyasangraha* v. 24.

tures but in a general literary history of southern Asia as well. Above all, we want to consider when literary ideals inflected ethical ideals. And when they did, was it generally in a manner analogous to the reconfiguration of Buddhist ethics by new political ideals, like the new postulate that the kings of Sri Lanka were future Buddhas? In some respects, it was—in medieval Sri Lanka, at least. One important change concerned the place of fame and prestige in the moral economy of Buddhist monastic life. The statement of the Buddha that the "aim of the religious life is not to gain material profit, nor to win veneration"[51] would seem to contravene the most basic patterns of literary culture, wherein the bestowal and acceptance of material rewards, honor, and esteem were routinely perceived as tangible signs of one's intangible worth in the eyes of others.[52] We can see an attempt at mediating the contradiction between these two moral ideals in the *Subodhālaṅkāra* (Easy-to-understand poetics), a twelfth-century Pali handbook on poetics that condemns as improper *(ocityahīnaṃ)* the praise of one's own excellences *(guṇa),* but then says that it is not a fault to praise the good qualities of others.[53]

There are equally important questions about what constraints religion may have placed on the production of literature in southern Asia. In Sri Lanka, Buddhist values and practices often define what is permissible or admired in Sinhala literary culture.[54] For example, the *Siyabaslakara* says that the sub-

---

51. *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.192.

52. Cf. *Pärakumbasirita* v. 86: "May all aspects of royalty attend on King Śrī Sanghabodhi Parākramabāhu, who is pleased at the praises of him made in the languages of Anga, Bengal, Kaliṅga, Hingula, and Kongana, and who bestows with pleasure lofty elephants in rut on those who composed poetical works *[kavi ban],* like bees at the lotus, namely, at the foot of the Buddha, whose body is ornamented with auspicious characteristics in all parts, large and small."

The complex internal rhyme pattern in this verse is similar to patterns found in Tamil:

anga mangaja manga len vädhi binga men munipākamal	*vaṭa*
anga tunga matanga jandena inga kin kaviban danan	*haṭa*
anga vanga kalinga hingula kongaṇen pävasū yasin	*tuṭa*
anga sanga valanga ven sirisanga bō pärakum rajun	*haṭa*

See also *Girāsandēśaya* vv. 247–48, which describe Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula as "having fame as his chowrie" and say: "That priest shines constantly with great prosperity *[siri],* like a wish-conferring pot, / receiving royal grants of extensive areas of villages and land in various places, like / Maha Velgodhapiṭiya from the great king Parākramabāhu, who was like the god Sakra."

The growth of monastic ownership of property notably occurred just after the emergence of Sinhala literary culture in the eighth century. If later examples like Śrī Rāhula are any indication, then recognition of the personal accomplishments of individual monks was among the motivations for royal donations to monasteries; donations were not just expressions of a generic intent to support Buddhism. See Gunawardana 1979b.

53. Fryer 1875: 96, 109 (vv. 62–63), 112 (vv. 104–5).

54. See Pollock 1994: 17–18. "The literary idiom of the transregional ecumene [of Sanskrit] is the only one available to give voice to the 'secular,' whereas the language of the regional community often finds its reason for being in articulating a local religious sensibility" (17).

ject of poetry should be the lives of the Buddha[55]—a severe restriction of subject matter in comparison to what was permitted to and expected of writers of *kāvya* in Sanskrit—and this norm is echoed in the twelfth-century *mahākāvya, Kavsiḷumiṇa:*

> The condition of being a poet *[kavibäva;* Skt. *kavibhāva]*
> is the flower on the tree of poetry *[kavidumē],*
> and accounts of the lives of the future Buddha *[bōsatsaraväṉum]* its fruit.
> May this fruit be on the lips of the learned.[56]

Buddhist religious norms shaped and enriched how the "condition of being a poet" was imagined, just as they influenced notions of kingship. The author of the *Siyabaslakara,* a king named Salamevan (Śilāmeghavarṇa), explained his motivation for writing the text in terms that echo aspirations to Buddhahood familiar in the Theravāda tradition; it is not unlikely that as a king, he may have been looking for a way to display his nature as a *bodhisattva:*

> May even these simple words of mine be for the benefit of others, my words wherein I have shown at least some aspects of what animates *[paṇa,* Skt: *prāṇa]* poetry, and ornaments of sound and sense. I have attempted to convey at least some aspects of this.

> Noble people in this world make mental aspirations *[mana piṇi;* Skt. *manaḥpraṇidhāna]* with a delighted mind; they make an effort to see that even their bone marrow is of some benefit to the world of beings.[57]

Another example in the same vein is the criticism of a monk who engaged a bit too vigorously in a nineteenth-century literary debate for conduct unbecoming for a monk.[58]

Even the apparent scope of premodern literature in Sinhala seems largely determined by Buddhist values and practices. This is true in the most material way imaginable, since all literary texts that survive from periods before the eighteenth century were cared for, copied, and handed down in Buddhist monasteries, where there was greater institutional continuity than in the royal courts, even though much of Sinhala literature was actually produced among the literati of those courts. These texts were preserved because they were considered part of the Buddhist tradition, as the comment from the *Nikāyasaṇgraha* makes clear, and it may be that works

---

55. *Siyabaslakara* v. 20.

56. *Kavsiḷumiṇa* v. 4.

57. *Siyabaslakara* vv. 404–5. Verse 405 is alluding to the *Tigress Jātaka,* known best in the version by Āryaśūra.

58. Mihiripenne Dhammaratana 1979: 12.

that were beyond the pale of Buddhist values, such as secular poetry or drama, necessarily did not survive because they were not valued by Buddhist monks.[59]

We can see, however, that Buddhism not only constrained literary activity but also reinforced the values and practices of literary culture in both premodern and modern Sri Lanka. The Buddha himself, for example, is portrayed in the *Kāvyaśekhara* as preaching in a manner that exemplifies literary values and skill;[60] and the verse in the *Girāsandēśaya* already cited that describes the poets at the monastery at Toṭagamuva echoes an earlier verse in the text that describes monks studying the Vinaya, the Buddhist canonical texts on monastic discipline:

> Some other groups of monks who are on the righteous path, taking well-known commentaries and subcommentaries one by one according to their liking, and also taking into account the words of advice given by learned teachers, investigate the deep points of the teaching of the Vinaya.[61]

The descriptions of literary study and the study of Buddhist texts highlight both that learning was pursued collectively and that it included an orientation to the past. We should also note that both depictions contain an element of freedom—the connoisseurs of poetry "sit as they please," while the students of the Vinaya take books one by one "according to their liking"— that seems to emerge in the midst of their submitting themselves to the regulating norms of what they study. Even more important is the familiarity of key aesthetic terms found in texts like *Siyabaslakara*—terms like *guṇa* (quality), *doṣa* (blemish), *alaṅkāra* (ornament), *mārga* (path), *rasa* (transforming

---

59. Martin Wickramasinghe has argued that there was a tradition of poetic drama *(kavinalu)* from at least the twelfth century, based on references to dramatic performances in texts like *Kavsiḷumiṇa* (Wickramasinghe 1970).

60. See *Kāvyaśekhara* 1.127–28:

With a voice sweet *[miyurasa]* like the song of a cuckoo,
the ocean of wisdom and virtue *[guṇa]* uttered these words,
which had various parts well decorated with ornaments of sound and meaning
       [akaratlakarin, Skt. *śabdālaṅkāra arthālaṅkāra].*
Then the multitude of monks, who were delighted and keen on hearing more,
begged for that *[jātaka]* story. The Omniscient One presented in a language shared
       by all [*siyalā hā bas;* i.e., Pali]
this sermon imbued with transforming flavor *[rasa],*
with words resplendent with color and clarity
and pure with their finish of the Four Noble Truths like a painting.

See Dhadpale 1975: 7–11 on indications that the Buddha was considered "the exemplar of Literary Skill" in the Pali canon and commentaries.

61. *Girāsandēśaya* v. 221.

flavor), and *pratibhāna* (creative eloquence)—as fundamental concepts of Buddhist ethics.[62]

There are also questions about the degree to which the values and practices of literary culture reinforced action in other cultural fields. To take another example from the *Siyabaslakara,* "there are three things that are basic causes of the wealth of poetry *[kav sapuva;* Skt. *kāvyasaṃpatti]:* creative genius that is inborn *[piḷiban;* Skt. *pratibhāna],* various sciences that have been studied, and sufficient experience in writing poetry."[63] The text goes on to say that even without creative genius, "one will still be able to shine in the assembly of the learned" with study and practice. Theravāda Buddhist ideas about the foundational importance of learning *(paryapti;* Pali *pariyatti)* and practice *(pratipatti;* Pali *paṭipatti)* in the religious life are evidently reinforced by such normative standards for literary activity.[64] The close attention to faults that was cultivated in literary culture naturally generated controversies and debates, and the practices that structured these controversies—especially the high degree of scholasticism required to participate effectively in them—provided opportunities to develop polemical skills that were then used in debates about religious matters.[65]

Constraints on religious practice from the literary were real, too. The valuing of poetic difficulty as a means to prestige in medieval Sinhala literary culture was recognized as discouraging the potential audiences of religious literature. While it was possible to argue in literary culture that "the words of the great and learned *[mahata viyatun basa],* though unintelligible, bring happiness *[tosa]* when heard, just as a bouquet of jasmine flowers can be known by sight, even if unsmelled,"[66] unintelligibility hardly seems desirable in a didactic text. Vidāgama Maitreya began his didactic poem *Lovädasangarāva* (The world's welfare) in the fifteenth century by asking his audience not to be disheartened that it was written in *eḷu,* an indication that in his day the language of poetic Sinhala could only be understood by those who had

---

62. See Seneviratne 1992: 185: "Aesthetic *rasa* enlightens and makes the inner self serenely joyous. Hence it is 'the brother of the spiritual experience' *(brahmāsvādasahodara).* In the moment of perfect aesthetic appreciation, self is submerged in the bliss of *rasa* and freed from worldly bondage—a state not too far from the meditative bliss of the ascetic" (parentheses in original).

63. *Siyabaslakara* v. 64. There is a set of three comparable things found implicit in great kings: due to previous karma, they have an inborn quality (e.g., displayed by the spontaneous appearance of the wheel of authority to the *cakravartin*) that allows them to become a great king; they study various sciences and arts (e.g., Parākramabāhu VI is described as "an ocean for the store of rules of policy, Buddhist doctrine, grammar, poetry and drama" [*Pärakumbasirita* v. 73]); and the patterns of preparation for kingship, such as the office of *yuvarājā,* give "sufficient experience" for sovereignty (e.g., the inscription of Mahinda IV quoted earlier refers to his "enjoying the dignities of governor and chief-governor").

64. *Siyabaslakara* v. 66. On *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti,* see Carter 1978: 65–66, 118, 178–79.

65. See Malalgoda 1976: 181–85.

66. *Pärakumbasirita* v. 6.

taken the time to study it.[67] The critical practices of literary culture, especially the attention to literary faults *(doṣa),* could also apparently inhibit authors who were writing more for didactic purposes than out of literary ambition. This can be seen in the thirteenth-century *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* (Garland of gems of the true doctrine; a Sinhala version of the commentary on the *Dhammapada*), which begins with an appeal by its author, the monk Dharmasena, for his readers to overlook its literary faults:

> We have abandoned the Pali method *(kramaya)* and taken only the themes in composing this work. It may have faults and stylistic shortcomings, but (you the reader should) ignore them. Be like the swans who separate milk from water even though the milk and water be mixed together, or like those who acquire learning and skills even from a teacher of low caste, because it is only the acquisition of knowledge, not the teacher's status with which they are concerned.[68]

LITERARY AND NONLITERARY IDENTITIES

Examples such as those in the preceding section make it clear that when we study Sinhala literary cultures we are inevitably drawn to investigate how literary practices interact with literary and nonliterary identities. Some of the best aids for such investigations are the portraits of literary figures found in various sources. These include extended portraits of poets found in literature itself and also briefer accounts found in historical works in both Pali and Sinhala, such as the twelfth-century additions to the *Mahāvaṃsa,* or the fourteenth-century *Nikāyasaṇgraha,* where we find mention of various kings and ministers as poets and authors. In these various portraits we can see Sinhala literary cultures interpreting the relation between literature and other cultural concerns. The portraits thus form something of a tradition of thought about the literary. As Stephen Owen observes: "The existence of a tradition of literary thought presupposes that literature's nature, role, and values are not self-evident, that literature is a problematic area of human endeavor which requires some explanation and justification."[69]

These portraits of authors invite further questions about what sorts of complex persons—persons who were religious as well as political, moral as well as social—were thought to be formed by their command of the language in its special use in literature. They form their own genre of praise-poem

67. Indeed, other didactic poems of the time began to use language that was closer to the spoken idiom. Most notable among these is *Guttilakāvyaya.* Godakumbura has said that "we have in the Guttiliya popular teachings to encourage the common people to practice good deeds. . . . The Guttiliya has set the style for a large number of poems composed by later writers for the edification of the masses. The popularity of the Guttiliya is due to the unlaboured and free flow of its poetry" (1955: 156).

68. Dharmasena Thera 1991: 3.

69. Owen 1992: 3.

(praśasti), key to which is the display of the person's unity of accomplishment. Here the interaction between literary and nonliterary identities, so important for our understanding of the literary as a social phenomenon, is masked in favor of seeing these various religious, political, and literary identities as mutually constitutive of an individual of excellence. For example, Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula fused together political, religious, and literary identities in a single image of King Parākramabāhu VI. Observe in this portrait the consistency of practice in each of the three spheres: the king's ability to dominate others depends on subjecting himself to the regulatory norms of knowledge — knowledge that is mastered by allowing oneself to be mastered by it:

> Knowing the Lord of Sages' threefold word *[te vaḷā munindu baṇa],* he put
>   aside evil.
> He crossed the ocean of poetry and drama and the arts of war *[avi sip],*[70]
> crushed the pride of fierce foes with his knowledge of strategy *[upā näṇa;*
>   Skt. *upāya jñāna],*
> and brought all of the island of Lanka to the shelter of a single parasol.[71]

Similarly, a closing statement in *Siyabaslakara* describes the personal qualities of the minister Amaragiri Kāśyapa and of King Salamevan in terms that seem to simultaneously have literary, political, and moral connotations:

> My brother, the noble person Amaragiri Kāśyapa, is like a casket for the gems
> of the virtues *[guṇa]* of a poet and is an abode for the splendors of a faultless
> *[nidos;* Skt. *nirdoṣa]* minister. On his invitation, this poem was composed by King
> Salamevan, who has splendor *[siri],* is replete with a trained army *[sen viyat;* Skt.
> *vyaktasenā],*[72] and who belongs to a lineage that has illuminated the space within
> the white umbrella by the luster emanating from the gems on the crown.[73]

The conjunction of literary and nonliterary identities was not limited to portraits of kings and their associates, as can be seen in a description of a monk named Buvaneka found in the fifteenth-century *Haṃsasandēśaya* (Swan's message):

> The elder-lord *[terahimi]* King Buvaneka [Bhūvanekarāja] constantly dwells in
> the royal monastery *[mahāvihāra]* at Kelaniya in this Lanka, which is like a field
> of merit,[74] where he is the leader of a community of monks *[gaṇanāyaka]* and

---

70. Crossing the ocean of *saṃsāra* is a standard expression for religious attainment in Theravāda Buddhism.

71. Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula, *Sālaḷihiṇisandēśaya* v. 3, in *Siri Rahul Pabanda.*

72. This clause could also be translated as "he is replete with an army of learned men."

73. *Siyabaslakara* vv. 406–7.

74. Alternatively, "like a field of merit" *[pinketvan]* can be taken as modifying "the royal *mahāvihāra* at Kelaniya": the line would then read: he "dwells in the royal *mahāvihāra,* which is like a field of merit for this Lanka." The ambiguities raised by word order in *eḷu* poetry are discussed later.

the acknowledged leader *[nāyaka]* of the ancient lineage of monks. His birth made famous the family of the minister Ekanāyaka, who has raised high the dynasty of the Lord of Men *[nirindu kula]*. He continually and habitually preaches the teaching of the Lord of Sages *[munindu baṇa],* receiving respect *[adara]* from every Lord of Poetry *[kavindun]* in prosperous Lanka because he had dispelled all doubts from his mind and knew poetry *[kavi],* drama *[naḷu],* prosody *[sanda],* and poetics *[lakara].* His fame [for all of these] spreads like the moon or milk in a conch shell.[75]

That ascetic *[yati]* sits in the shrine of the Lord of Gods *[surindu],* having taken monks of his choice, and recites protective texts *[paritta]* that are capable of dispelling every danger in the world and that perpetually govern various universes *[päväti noyek sakvaḷa aṇa saka* (Skt. *ājñā cakra*) *satata].*[76]

This is, admittedly, the portrait of an elite monk. But this only means that he represents the highest religious and social accomplishments possible in Sinhala culture at the time. It is important that Buvaneka is depicted in the company of lords, each of whom makes his own positive contribution to the well-being of the world. There is a distinctive kind of moral agency here: instead of an individual agent who is capable of acting effectively and autonomously— as the moral agent is often represented in the modern West—we see an agency that is dispersed throughout an implied network of persons yet is still free and able to act effectively in the world. Drawing on the products and powers of the other lords, Buvaneka himself flourishes, but he also is able to create goods that enable others to flourish in a variety of ways. Such an understanding of human agency acknowledges the ways that persons are bound together in acts of care, responsibility, and esteem as the conditions for the possibility and effectiveness of individual action.[77] Moreover, in creating goods in the world, Buvaneka brings together the separate spheres of these different lords, in much the same way that kings unified the separate regions of a country under "one parasol."

From the tenth to the fifteenth century, the accomplishments and capabilities of Sinhala literati, too, were commonly displayed using images of kingship. Authors were honored by kings with royal titles familiar from politics and religion, such as "universal king" *(cakravartin)* and "lord" *(īśvara).* Royal appellations and imagery were applied by Buddhist monks to great Buddhist teachers of the past, such as Buddhaghoṣa, the greatest of the Mahāvihārin commentators, who is described in the twelfth-century *Jātakaaṭu-*

75. The suggestion of these metaphors is not only that his fame pervades the world but, like moonlight and milk, it is cooling as well as beautiful and precious.

76. *Haṃsasandēśaya* vv. 107–8.

77. For a general exploration of how such ideas of decentered agency informed ideas of family and state in Southeast Asia, including the cultural ecumene of Theravāda Buddhism, see Day 1996.

vāgäṭapadaya as "the venerable teacher Buddhaghoṣa, the crest jewel among the whole crowd of learned men, who is able to destroy all his opponents as if bursting open the frontal lobes of elephants."[78] And the nineteenth-century monk-poet Mihiripenne Dhammaratna, writing near Matara, was described in the same images of prowess, valor, and frightfulness by one of his monastic students:

> From that day forward, and for a long time, that monk spent his days enjoying the words of praise constantly uttered by wise people, destroying the conceit of various poets who were his adversaries, and hoisting the flags of his victory all over the country.

> When this monk appeared on the battlefield of Lanka, as if taking the discus of wisdom in his mind, his adversaries, who were showing great prowess in the battlefield, fled with fear in their minds.

> The god of wind, namely, that monk, spread his fame in all directions in the sky of this Lanka and dispelled the heat, namely, the doubts in the minds of his friends; while the dry leaves, in the form of poets who were his adversaries, were blown away.[79]

Royal and martial imagery was used not only for authors but also for religious figures. The names for the offices of leaders of the monastic order were increasingly drawn from the realm of politics: "king of the *saṅgha*" *(saṅgharāja),* "great lord" *(mahāsvāmi, māhimi).* These titles could not be held by two monks at the same time, and those who held them were described as the "one who administered the *sāsana* in his time."[80] The fifteenth-century *Girāsandēśaya*'s depiction of Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula as a king displays his pre-eminence as a creative force in the world:

> Who is able to describe [Śrī Rāhula] other than the teacher of the gods?[81]

> He is a great king,
>   with virtue *[sil]*[82] as his army and fame *[yasa]* as his chowrie
>   with friendliness *[met;* Skt. *maitrī]* as his parasol

---

78. *sarvavādībhakumbhavidālanasamarthāśeṣavidvajjanacakracūḍāmaṇibuddhaghōṣācāryapā-dayō* (*Jātakaaṭuvāgäṭapadaya* v. 1; cited and quoted in Godakumbura 1955: 36). The long compound describing Buddhaghoṣa is a mark of the superposition of Sanskrit on this text. See Collins, chapter 11, this volume, on the Mahāvihāra's place in the history of the Theravāda.

79. "Savsatdam Vādaya" by Koggala Dhammatilaka, included in Mihiripenne Dhammaratana 1979: 94.

80. Gunawardana 1979b: 332.

81. I.e., Jupiter, who is invoked in *Siyabaslakara* (v. 2) as one among "the old masters of the science of poetry."

82. *Sila* is a general term for Buddhist virtue, but in particular it refers to avoidance of various negative precepts, such as refraining from false speech, sexual misconduct, stealing, etc.

good qualities *[guṇa]* as his ornaments
the dharma as his crown, wisdom as his sword

who had vanquished enemies
in the form of lust
and had authority *[aṇahu;* Skt. *ājñā]*
by the force of austerities.[83]

Even the Buddha was routinely addressed and described with royal and martial terminology (e.g., the conventional appellation: *budu rajāṇan vahansē* [the noble Buddha king]), and he was often portrayed in royal and martial imagery, for instance, in Sinhala narrative collections from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as *Amāvatura* (Flood of ambrosia/the deathless), *Butsaraṇa* (Refuge in the Buddha), and *Pūjāvaliya* (Garland of offerings),[84] as well as in the twelfth-century *kāvya* in Pali, *Jinālaṅkāra* (Ornaments of the conqueror).[85]

If the *praśasti*s and self-descriptions of kings, who are depicted in cultivated literary language as masters of both that language and the sciences regulating it, are products of practices that point to an aestheticization of the political,[86] then the images of monks and authors as kings point to social practices that politicized the aesthetic. But even with such examples of homologies and resonances between the religious, the political, and the literary in the context of Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka, we should not forget that questions about the value of literary competence have frequently been more pointed and the answers more ambivalent because, as Pollock observes, "Not only did Buddhism not stop Buddhists from writing Sanskrit literature, but when they did write, their behavior was not recognizably Buddhist."[87]

Some Sinhala Buddhists, both in modern times and in the past, did make similar judgments of their own about the moral import of literary activity,

83. *Girāsandēśaya* v. 247.

84. All three of these works employ royal and martial imagery throughout, but it is especially evident in their narrations of the defeat of Māra by the Buddha. See *Amāvatura* 29–31; *Butsaraṇa;* and *Pūjāvaliya* 196–203. In *Pūjāvaliya,* Māra describes the Buddha as "having great power *[anubhava]* and great potency *[tejas]*. He cannot be subdued by anyone. No creature can move him. He is a person endowed with great steadfastness *[dhairya]*" (pp. 196–97).

85. *Jinālaṅkāra* v. 170: "The one who attained the excellent white umbrella of release, / who has a community *(saṅgho)* of defeated enemies, having cut down the Māras, / and who is a sun to the three Buddha-fields [birth, authority, and space] / cried out an *udāna* because of the force of his happiness."

The idea that the Buddha's *saṅgha* consists of defeated enemies obviously represents for the monastic author of the *Jinālaṅkāra* a striking moral attitude toward oneself. See Collins, chapter 11, this volume, for information on this verse in particular (including another translation of it) and the *Jinālaṅkāra* more generally.

86. Pollock 1996: 216.

87. Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

especially that inflected by Sanskrit literary culture, as even the *Siyabaslakara*'s restrictions on subject matter for *kāvya* suggest. Thus, Martin Wickrama-singhe (1891–1976), the most important Sinhala novelist and literary critic of the twentieth century, dismissed one of the earliest *mahākāvya*s in Sinhala, the twelfth-century *Muvadevdāvata (Mākhadevajātaka),* by saying that its au-thor imitates a "decadent" tradition of "later artificial poetry" in Sanskrit and thus "spoils, with his sophisticated imagination, the natural charm of what was the product of a genuine though primitive Buddhist culture."[88] And if Śrī Rāhula's fame as a learned poet was part of his authority as the leading monk of his day, other currents in Buddhist culture at the time seem to have taken a far dimmer view of literary activity like his. For example, the *Haṃsa-sandēśaya,* also from the fifteenth century, describes another monastic cen-ter with a curriculum that is basically the same as that found in the *Gira-sandēśaya*'s description of Toṭagamuve, but it adds that its incumbent, a monk named Vanaratana, though learned enough that "his speech is the source of all poetics and rhetoric," still "regarded poetry and drama as useless."[89] Similarly, the *Dambadeṇi Katikāvata,* a monastic code from the thirteenth century, prohibits monastic involvement in "despicable arts like poetry and drama,"[90] while the *Anāgatavaṃsaya* (History of the future), a fourteenth-century Sinhala translation of the Pali text of the same name, says that "fool-ish poets who liken the face of a woman to a lotus will be born as worms in-side the bellies of those women."[91]

THE LITERARY AND THE TECHNIQUES OF HUMAN SELF-UNDERSTANDING

An awareness of the contribution of literary activity to the formation of moral and social subjects, though contested, encourages us to take seriously *Kavsiḷumiṇa*'s image of the "tree of poetry": "The condition of being a poet / is the flower on the tree of poetry, / and accounts of the lives of the future Buddha its fruit." This image turns our attention in two directions: one to-ward texts, the other toward persons. They are equally important because literary cultures are constituted by sets of situated practices that produce both, albeit in different ways. Every adequate account of a literary culture

88. Wickramasinghe 1963: 32.

89. *Haṃsasandēśaya* vv. 193, 195.

90. *Dambadeṇi Katikāvata* (para. 49, 50) says that *śloka*s, etc. should not be composed and recited for laymen; despicable arts such as poetry and drama should be neither studied nor taught to others.

91. Cited in *Dambadeṇi Katikāvata,* para. 268. The comparison of a woman's face to a lotus is a standard illustration for various ornamentations *(alaṅkāra)* in the *Siyabaslakara.* For exam-ple: "Your face, which possesses the luster of your teeth and has trembling eyes, shines like full-blown lotuses with their pollen and the humming bees" (v. 111).

will eventually need to do justice to both texts and persons, to the processes that produce them, and to the traditions of thought that explain and justify the worth of each. Flowers, of course, are valuable not only because they are capable of producing fruit.

Examining the reflexive relation of these two products of literary culture serves as a first step toward identifying the literary in Sinhala cultural history. Obviously, writers produce texts, but that is not enough to make those texts literature; nor is stipulating some special quality intrinsic to those texts as literature sufficient to make them such. Literature clearly concerns the production of texts that engender some value for a person, whether that person be author, connoisseur, patron, or subject of a work. Or, to use the words of *Siyabaslakara,* language as used in literature "is like a wish-conferring cow that gives what is desirable to those who can use it in the proper manner, but for others it will impart only bovine qualities."[92] In other words, the literary adds something desirable to the world beyond literary texts themselves.

Siyabaslakara's comment provides a second marker for investigating the literary: The pursuit of value by means of the literary takes place within a critical context that is equally alert to disvalue, that is, to the ways that the improper use of language can deleteriously affect persons and the world. For instance, a popular tradition tells us that the fifteenth-century author of *Guttilakāvyaya* was sent into exile because he began his poem with an inauspicious combination of letters.

None of this is to deny that literature was considered desirable in and of itself, as the ubiquitous use of images of gems in book titles attest.[93] But for most premodern Sinhala literary cultures, literature, like jewels, was a good that was best appreciated by the learned. As Śrī Rāhula says about his *Kāvyaśekhara:*

> Just as differences in jewels
> are not really seen
> except by those who know them well,
>   only poets will know
>   what is good or bad
>   of the many words
>   that are uttered here.[94]

---

92. *Siyabaslakara* v. 7.

93. For example, *The Crest Jewel of Poetry (Kavsiḷumiṇa* and *Kāvyaśekhara), The Garland of Gems (Ruvanmala), A Garland of Gems of the True Doctrine (Saddharmaratnāvaliya).*

94. *Kāvyaśekhara* 1.28. The *Kāvyaśekhara* is a *mahākāvya* that tells the story of the *Sattubhastajātaka* (*jātaka* tale 402), but the title indicates that its purpose has more to do with literary fame than religious instruction.

The significance of the statements in *Siyabaslakara* and *Kāvyaśekhara* becomes clearer when they are considered within the framework of what Michel Foucault called "forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself"—understandings that are cultivated in techniques or technologies:[95]

> There are four major types of these "technologies," each a matrix of practical reason: (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or significations; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; and (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.
>
> These four types of technologies hardly ever function separately, although each of them is associated with a certain type of domination. Each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes.[96]

Foucault's typology of techniques of human understanding helps us take a third step toward defining the literary in Sinhala cultural history, a step that reveals the literary as a site of quite varied forms of human self-understanding. The literary in South Asia obviously elicited a technology of signs and significations that requires both training and discipline to handle well, as is clear from the numerous works in grammar, lexicography, prosody, and poetics. But that is not all it is. The use of royal imagery to depict authors makes it clear that for much of the premodern period, the literary was considered a way of exercising power in a field of action that held both winners and losers. As a technology of power, the literary determined the conduct of individuals and made them submit to ends that they themselves did not exactly choose, even as they exercised control over others by means of the literary.[97] The same royal imagery also indicates that the literary is a technology of the self. However, the royal and martial is but one depiction of the personal transformation that results from literary training; as I have already noted several times, the aims of literature in Sinhala literary cultures were

---

95. Foucault 1997: 177.

96. Foucault 1997: 224–25.

97. See Pollock 1996: "One hypothesis I want to explore is that Sanskrit articulated politics not as material power—the power embodied in languages-of-state for purposes of boundary regulation or taxation, for example, for which so-called vernacular idioms typically remained the vehicle—but politics as aesthetic power. To some degree the Sanskrit 'cosmopolis' I shall describe consists precisely in this common aesthetics of political culture, a kind of poetry of politics" (198).

articulated with religious vocabulary and imagery, and thus the literary was embedded within various religious technologies of the self. Finally, for some Sinhala literary cultures at least, literature was a technology of production, able to increase or destroy wealth, health, and life itself. The interpenetration of the literary, the political, and the religious in the portraits of literati in Sinhala literary cultures is a quite effective way of displaying how these different types of technologies, and their correlative modes of human self-understanding, are coeval in the literary, inevitably functioning together to transform individuals and also the world.

What primarily captures our attention in investigating literature is the manner in which it is a system of signs and significations that enables a peculiar form of communication. But in Sinhala literary culture, as in Sanskrit, what is more important—what makes the literary desirable—is probably best conceptualized in terms of its affective and practical effects. The *Siyabaslakara* explains that "sweetness" *(madhurya),* one of the aspects of the literary text that animates poetry *(pana),* is "the quality whereby educated people will be delighted, just as bees get intoxicated by honey," and the fifteenth-century *Pärakumbasirita* says that "the speech of those who are learned and noble . . . brings happiness."[98] Here again we see that mastering the technology of signs in literary culture is embedded within a broader technology of the self. "What is desirable" as an affective experience has of course been defined variously by different Sinhala literary cultures. Moreover, affective experience is not the only good associated with the literary; the *Siyabaslakara* says that a *mahākāvya* should "delight the mind of the entire world," but it is also "an ornament *[lakara;* i.e., *alaṅkāra]* of poets."[99] Like the ornaments of a king, which distinguish his body from those of more ordinary men,[100] the literary distinguishes authors and connoisseurs from others. As we have seen, material reward, fame, splendor, and prestige are among the practical human goods that come with literary success, all of which make the literary a profoundly generative social phenomenon. Nor did literary figures always try to denigrate these social goods. Śrī Rāhula exulted in his own prestige and social status in a self-description found in his *Kāvyaśekhara;* the self-description is part of an explanation that the poem is a response to a request from a daughter of Parākramabāhu VI for him to compose a religious discourse *(banak)* in verse using *eḷu:*

> May you listen with pleasure
> to this discourse which is expounded

---

98. *Siyabaslakara* v. 35; *Pärakumbasirita* v. 6.
99. *Siyabaslakara* v. 26.
100. See *Kāvyaśekhara* 1.26: "In a noble king the beautiful sixty-four ornaments and his body are seen separately."

> by the chief of the Vijayabāhu *piriveṇapiriveṇa,*
> who illuminates the ten directions with his fame
> because he understands the Buddhist scriptures well,
>
> and because he has reached the limits of all learning *[śāstra]*[101]
> as if Jupiter *[guruvan]* himself had arrived on earth,
> and because he is endowed with pure virtues *[parisud sil]*
> like the crown jewel of all the world's learned men *[viyatun]*.[102]
> Just as the moonbeams
> > by opening up
> > the night lilies
> > increase themselves,
> so the scholarly man
> > who extols the virtues of others
> > shines and blossoms in the company of the learned.[103]

In considering Śrī Rāhula's self-satisfaction within a framework of religious and literary technologies of the self, it is important to recognize that as in the *Haṃsasandēśaya*'s portrait of the monk Buvaneka, Śrī Rāhula did not seem to consider his accomplishments and stature as due only to his individual skill and achievement, or as benefiting only himself. In his early work, the *Paravīsandēśaya* (Pigeon's message), in which he uses his poetic skills to compose a plea that is "beautiful in its letters, words, and meaning"[104] to the god Upulvan (Viṣṇu) to protect a daughter of Parākramabāhu VI, Śrī Rāhula attributes his literary success both to his own capabilities and to a boon he had received from the god Skanda (Kataragama), enabling him to be eminent in knowledge and wisdom:

> This is the *Paravīsandēśaya* uttered by Rahul
> > who was born in the Skandhāvara family
> > and lives in the vicinity of Toṭagāmuve
> > who had swiftly learned all literature *[kav]*
> > in the Sinhala, Pali, and Sanskrit languages
> > and who had received a boon from
> > Skanda, the Lord of Gods, in his fifteenth year.[105]

Sinhala literary cultures have commonly perceived literature as uniquely able to make nonliterary goods and experiences accessible across time. In

---

101. The *sannaya* on this verse explains that the *śāstra*s are logic, grammar, poetry, drama, poetics, etc. *(tarkavyākaraṇakāvyanāṭakālaṅkārādi).*

102. This echoes what the *Jātakaaṭuvāgäṭapadaya* said about Buddhaghoṣa.

103. *Kāvyaśekhara* 1.24–25, 27. The last verse resonates with *Subodhālaṅkāra*'s prescriptions about what is *ocitya* in poetry, although obviously the first verses do not.

104. *Paravīsandēśaya* v. 192.

105. *Paravīsandēśaya* v. 203.

this is embedded yet another aspect of the literary as a technology of the self. The *Siyabaslakara* says that "the image of the fame of kings remains visible even after their deaths, when it is reflected in the mirror of language." This understanding of the creative power of the literary helps us to appreciate why historical works, like the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa* in Pali and the *Eḷu Attanagaluvaṃsaya,* a fourteenth-century Sinhala version of the latter text, were written in highly literary styles.[106] Comparison with a subsequent Sinhala literary culture illuminates the distinctiveness of the literary culture of medieval Sri Lanka. In the twentieth century, fiction and drama have been commonly perceived as a means of experiencing an enduring Sinhala authenticity that is otherwise inaccessible to a contemporary not only because of broad cultural changes brought about by colonialism and modernity but also because of a personal alienation effected by education for the urban intellectual. The poignancy of this modern "discourse of the vanishing" is captured in the title of Martin Wickramasinghe's literary account of his travels to historical sites, especially the ancient capitals of Sri Lanka at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva: *Kalunika Sevīma* (Searching for the Kalunika).[107] The *kalunika* is a mythical bird whose nest will give its discoverer omnipotence, but it is not certain that the *kalunika* still survives.

Even if both the *Siyabaslakara* and Wickramasinghe appreciate the unique power of literature to enrich the world of human experience, they clearly differ in their understanding of the affective and practical presence of a literary person in the world. The *Siyabaslakara* portrays the literary as a means of positive gain, indeed as world-making, because "here in this world, all speech, whether learned or unlearned, makes the world exist on account of its perspicuity." In the literary culture that produced poetry in *eḷu,* in which the *Siyabaslakara* was a key text, it was commonly assumed that with the literary one can "increase all prosperity, such as long life and health." These ideas encouraged attitudes toward oneself that resonated with Buddhist ideas of the virtuous person being self-disciplined, compassionate, and capable of aiding others.[108] The pursuit of well-being for oneself and others through literature broadened the cultural borders of the community of Sinhala speakers, especially with respect to appropriating from the world of Sanskrit literary culture values and practices that would enhance one's ability to be effective in this aim. Literature was a way of coming into a world beyond one's ordinary self—another attitude toward the self that had strong and clear Buddhist resonances.

In contrast, Wickramasinghe advocated a narrowing of cultural borders as a way of reclaiming one's authentic self. He often portrayed the literary as

---

106. *Siyabaslakara* v. 6. On Pali literary culture, see Collins, chapter 11, this volume.

107. Wickramasinghe 1989. The phrase "discourse of the vanishing" I borrow from Ivy 1995.

108. *Siyabaslakara* v. 4; *Nikāyasangraha* v. 1.

the only means of recovering a certain "Sinhala-ness," though the pleasures of experiencing it through literature are inevitably tinged with sadness in the same way as "someone past forty sometimes recalls his childhood . . . — going to school after enjoying *[anubhava koṭa]* the flavorsome *[rasavat]* food cooked and given by mother—[with] pleasure, because childhood was a stream of joy, and [with] grief *[śokaya]* because it is not possible to be like a child again."[109]

The differences in the visions of the affective and practical presence of the ideal literary person in the world that are found in the Sinhala literary cultures provide one way of distinguishing these cultures from each other, and enable us to clarify our understanding of how the literary changed over time. Although I concentrate here on a single Sinhala literary culture's vision of the ideal literary person and the manner in which it instantiates all four technologies identified by Foucault, nonetheless, all literary cultures, I believe, have techniques that permit the use of sign systems as well as technologies of the self; it is the inclusion of techniques of domination and techniques of production that is more variable. Thus, the ideal person in the literary culture of the tenth to nineteenth centuries that used *eḷu* for poetry was a "world-conqueror" *(cakravartin),* able to transform the world affectively and practically through the skillful use of refined literary techniques. In this culture, the self-transformation and world-transformation effected by the literary was generic, just as each *cakravartin* portrayed in Buddhist literature, including the Buddha, was fundamentally identical to all others, and each brought the same sort of well-being to the world as all others did.[110]

By contrast, in the twentieth-century fiction of Wickramasinghe, the ideal literary person was not a world-conqueror or a unique individual but a villager, unself-consciously secure in his local experiences of the world to such a degree that he was "by nature" literary. In the fictional recollection of literature, this villager becomes a tutor to urbanized authors and readers, who must unlearn what they have been taught in school in order to regain the cultural authenticity that survives in the village. This is manifest in Wickramasinghe's description of a village coffeeshop in *Apē Gāma* (Our village), where the village is depicted as the true space of the literary:

> The old villagers *[gämiyō]* who gathered at the wood-carver's coffee shop were not poets *[kavīn]* endowed with the creative brilliance *[pratibhāva]* that comes

---

109. *Apē Gāma.* In Wickramasinghe 1989: 1. Note that Wickramasinghe uses terms here that are also part of aesthetic vocabulary, in particular *rasa;* on the overlap between theories of food ingestion and aesthetic experience in South Asian culture, see Seneviratne 1999. Unlike the understanding of the *Siyabaslakara,* according to which the ability to experience literary *rasa* is cultivated in school, according to Wickramasinghe the experience of *rasa* is found in home-cooked food and thus precedes attending school.

110. Notably, the same is found in Sanskrit literary culture of the time.

with learning from books and teachers; they were poets whose creative brilliance came from the school called living. The language they spoke lacked the artificial refinement *[kṛtaka vinīta bhāvayen]* that is learned from the pages of books, but their tall tales, their chatter, even though it was weighed down by rusticity *[grāmyatvayen],* did not lack the intelligence that belongs to age, a sense of the ridiculous, Buddhist piety *[upāsaka kam],* and the transforming flavor of laughter *[sinārasa],* such as flavors literature *[sāhitya rasayen].* They had been oppressed by the suffering *[duk]* that belongs to human life, and even their gossip was as if it had taken drops of life that were thrown off by the river of life; it is like riches *[vastu]* for the compositions of poets. Some of the old villagers are like fruit trees that sprout in the forest: they grow and open wide their branches, bloom and fruit, decay and rot in the same place. The old villagers sow their words and deeds and then die in the same place. To the poets who have the power of creative genius *[pratibhā śaktiyen yut kavīn ṭa],* villagers like this provide a large quantity of raw material that is like riches for their poetry *[kāvyayan ṭa].*[111]

Due to the influence of Sanskrit literary culture, in the literary culture of Sinhala poetry between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries, what is of the village *(grāmya)* was vulgar and outside the realm of the literary. Wickramasinghe explicitly reverses this hierarchy of value in *Apē Gāma,*[112] turning the inherited terminology of literary criticism (especially *rasa*) against itself. For Wickramasinghe, it is the literary person who must learn to appreciate the villager's speech—something Śrī Rāhula could never have imagined. Moreover, Wickramasinghe's narrowing of Sinhala cultural boundaries has an intrinsic historical component. His admiration of village culture is a sharp rejection of the Sinhala literary heritage that found in Sanskrit a way beyond itself; for Wickramasinghe, this was a loss of self that was a price paid for greed:

> Villagers experience a transforming flavor *[rasa]* that is greater that the distorted flavor of beauty *[vikṛta saundarya rasaya]* that can be gotten from the books of the learned. Some have the mistaken notion that the villager cannot experience the flavor of the things of beauty around him, just as the spoon does not know the flavor of the curry *[vyañjana].*[113] "The person who abandons literature and music *[sāhitya saṅgīti kalāvan]* is a cow without tail or horn:

111. Wickramasinghe 1989: 54.

112. The possessive pronoun in the title *Apē Gāma* contains a productive ambiguity. Sinhala linguistic etiquette can prompt use of the first person plural possessive even when only the singular is relevant; an only child may politely refer to "our mother" *(apē ammā).* Thus the title refers to Wickramasinghe's memory of "my village," yet the plural is also relevant, referring to the childhood villages remembered by many Sinhala city dwellers in mid-century.

113. Note again how Wickramasinghe uses food vocabulary that overlaps with aesthetics. *Vyañjana* also means suggestion, a key literary element in some literary cultures in South Asia, including Sinhala.

his life is the best of cows because without eating grass he still lives." The harsh ridicule of the ancient scholar is a poisoned arrow aimed straight at those who are hungry among city-dwellers, not the villagers.[114]

It is impossible to do justice to the complexities of more than one image of the ideal literary person in the space of this chapter. Yet even this broad comparison of two such images is sufficient to illustrate just how variable Sinhala attitudes to the literary have been through history. And this comparison does suggest that focusing on the image of the ideal literary person may be an alternative approach to the problem of distinguishing periods in Sinhala literary history, a problem that has yet to receive adequate critical resolution.

In modern Sinhala literary historiography, as in modern historiography of Sinhala culture in general, periodization is often structured spatially, with periods defined linearly by shifts in the island's capital over time. P. B. Sannasgala's monumental *Sinhala Sāhitya Vaṃsaya* (History of Sinhala literature) is a good example of this approach. It is divided into three parts—ancient, medieval, and modern—with the kingdom based at Anuradhapura set apart as ancient; the kingdoms centered at Polonnaruva, Dambadeṇi, Kurunägala, Gampola, Koṭṭē, Sitāvaka, and the early Kandyan period, considered as medieval; and the eighteenth-century kingdoms at Kandy and Colombo as the modern period. There are a number of problems with this way of dividing the history of Sinhala literature.[115] Obviously, it tells us nothing about the understanding of the literary in particular times and places. It also obscures the fact that distinctive literary cultures sometimes flourished far from the capital, as happened at Matara on the southern coast in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, nominally during "the Kandyan" period yet outside the political control of the Kandyan court. This model also suggests ruptures in literary history where in fact there often were none; as we shall see, there was significant continuity in *eḷu* literary culture from the tenth

---

114. *Apē Gāma.* In Wickramasinghe 1989: 54.

115. These problems are similar to what R. A. H. L. Gunawardana (1979b: 2–3) has identified as problems of periodization in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka:

Most works on the ancient and medieval history of Sri Lanka have adopted a scheme of periodization based on the location of the capital of the Sinhalese kingdom; the precolonial history of the island is thus divided into eight periods: Anurādhapura, Polonnaruva, Dambadeniya, Kurunägala, Gampola, Kōṭṭē, Sitāvaka and Kandy. The present writer began his research with the intention of writing a history of Buddhism in the "Polonnaruva Period," but, during the course of his work, he became convinced of the inadequacy of this scheme of periodization. It became increasingly clear that some of the significant changes in the organization of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in the twelfth century would become understandable only when examined in the context of the developments noticeable in the latter part of the "Anurādhapura Period."

century to the fifteenth century, even though the capital shifted more than six times during this period. In short, this conventional model, which traces a succession of Sinhala polities and affirms the continuity of a Sinhala "proto-nation" that culminates in modern Sri Lanka as a nation-state, gives—perhaps intentionally—very little guidance about the criteria by which we might distinguish one literary culture from another, or one literary period from another.

Another common model for marking Sinhala literary cultures does have the virtue of focusing our attention on literature by thematizing periods according to the supposed predominance of a particular genre or style. An example of this approach is Wickramasinghe's *Landmarks of Sinhalese Literature,*[116] in which periods are defined as "The Age of Prose" and "The Poetry of a New Age." Unfortunately, this approach does little more than make broad historical generalizations from particular texts, as chapter titles like "The Kāvyaśekhara of Śrī Rāhula" and "The Prose of Dharmasena" make clear. This mode of historiography not only exhibits excessive confidence in its knowledge of what literature is, but also quickly goes beyond an understanding of what the literary was decided to be in the past to establish its own structures of literary taste, with labels like "classical" or "decadent" freely employed as historical descriptions.

SINHALA LITERARY CULTURE AT SĪGIRIYA

Issues of periodization inevitably lead to the question of the historical beginnings of a literary tradition. The earliest evidence that we have for Sinhala literature, however, is the product of a well-developed literary culture that seems to have been an heir to an even earlier complex literary heritage.[117] This evidence is the poetic graffiti inscribed mainly from the seventh to the ninth centuries at a ruined palace complex at Sīgiriya, in central Sri Lanka. Even if the evidence from Sīgiriya does not help us to specify exactly what cultural and social processes motivated the transformation of everyday Sinhala into a literary language, it is still worth pausing to explore the outlines of this literary culture and its practices, both because of its own intrinsic interest and because of how it can illuminate subsequent Sinhala literary cultures. Not only is the poetry found at Sīgiriya a product of a lit-

---

116. Wickramasinghe 1963.

117. There is evidence for the documentary use of the Sinhala language (or, perhaps more accurately, a Sinhala "Prakrit") in inscriptions from as early as the third century B.C.E., but none are literature by any definition of the term, as a single example can make clear: *upaśaka devaha leṇe,* "the cave of the lay devotee Deva" (Paranavitana 1970: 30, no. 381). Commentaries on Pali texts were composed in Sinhala before 100 B.C.E., but the little that survives of this material suggests that it, too, hardly qualified as literature.

erary culture that broadly is the backdrop for much of the *eḷu* poetry that developed in the tenth to fifteenth centuries;[118] it also became a key part of the nativist search for a more usable Sinhala literary past that developed in the decades leading up to and just after the independence of Sri Lanka as a nation in 1948.

The palace complex at Sīgiriya dates from about the fifth century. At the center of the complex is a large granite rock, which rises almost perpendicularly above the forest to a height of about six hundred feet, on top of which is the palace proper. It is this rock that gave the site its name, the "lion mountain," because the entrance to the staircase that allowed visitors to ascend to the palace was built in the shape of the front of a lion and thus gave the whole rock the appearance of a lion sitting on its haunches.

Sīgiriya was built by Kāśyapa, a king who is remembered in the Sinhala Buddhist historical tradition as a parricide.[119] He was supposed to have built the palace as a fortress out of fear of retribution from his brother. The brother did eventually attack Kāśyapa's army, and when defeat was imminent, Kāśyapa committed suicide. The site was then apparently abandoned.

On one side of the mountain, about forty feet above the access route, is a series of frescoes of female figures. The identification of these female figures has been the subject of scholarly debate, with some identifying the figures as the wives of Kāśyapa and others seeing them as heavenly maidens. The latter theory is especially associated with S. Paranavitana, who argued that Sīgiriya was built not as an inaccessible fortress, as both historical tradition and the site itself suggest, but as a symbolic representation of the palace of Kuvera, the god of wealth in Sanskrit myth, who dwells on the summit of Mount Kailāśa.

A portion of the access route to the top of the mountain is enclosed by a finely plastered wall known as the Mirror Wall. From about the seventh to the ninth centuries, visitors to the site, already desolate in the forest, left their impressions of the site itself as well as of the female figures portrayed in the frescoes in verses inscribed on this plastered wall. The common appellation of "graffiti" for these verses is somewhat misleading, for unlike most examples of graffiti, these verses clearly indicate a disciplined and sophisticated use of language for literary purposes.

There are many surprises in the Sīgiriya "graffiti." About half of the verses

118. "[The] poetic diction [of the graffiti] appears to have taken very much the same vocabulary as is met with in classical Sinhalese poems still in existence, and thus is explained the occurrence of phraseology common to [the Sīgiriya] verses and to such poems as the [twelfth-century] *Sasadāvata,* the [twelfth-century] *Kavsiḷumiṇa,* and the [fifteenth-century] *Guttilakāvya*" (Paranavitana 1956, 1: cci).

119. See Obeyesekere 1990.

identify their authors and their social identities, and what they reveal is in itself surprising. Members of the royal court as well as villagers, men as well as women, monks as well as laymen, all left verses at Sīgiriya. More than one king left a verse. There are forms of verse, especially meters for the two-line *gī,* that seem unique to Sinhala[120] and that continued to be highly favored by Sinhala poets until about the fourteenth century; but there is also considerable evidence of a prescient awareness of Sanskrit literary culture. The notion of *rasa,* a key concept in the Sanskrit literary theory that was developing at the same time (and remained key in later Sinhala literary cultures), is already found in these verses. One verse, for example, urges visitors to become immersed in the "sweet transforming flavor" *(mihiri rese)* of Sīgiriya,[121] while a number of others explicitly employ the terminology of *rasa* for both the paintings and the poems.[122] One verse even makes an allusion to Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta,* which suggests a direct familiarity with individual products of Sanskrit literary culture:

> The poem of Lord Sirina, resident of Digalavana:
>
> O Cloud, my Lord!
>   I honor you!
>   Go to her house and speak,
>   cause her
>   whose courage is in pieces
>   whose tongue and lips are parched
>   to have faith.[123]

There is some inconclusive indication of connections, though underdeveloped, to the literary resources of Pali of the time. These connections are at the level of form, not content, for the Sīgiri verses are entirely secular in their discourse. Many of the verses take the form of questions and replies—a pattern of poetry found in some of the oldest portions of the Pali canon, for example in the *Suttanipāta* (Group of discourses).[124] The prominence of this form of poetry in Sinhala may have been what led the twelfth-

---

120. "Though the Sinhalese *gī* metres agree with those of Prākrit in being based on the principle of the number of morae in a *pāda,* there is hardly any metre in Sinhalese which is identical with any known in Prākrit" (Paranavitana 1956, 1: clxxxv).

121. Verse 613. Recall that the *Siyabaslakara,* as quoted earlier, explains that "sweetness" *(mādhurya)* in poetry is "the quality whereby educated people will be delighted, just as bees get intoxicated by honey." The *Siyabaslakara* may have been echoing this earlier literary culture, as well as giving access to Sanskrit literary culture in its translation of Daṇḍin.

122. Verses 164, 206, 302, 356, 380, 517, 556, and 657, cited by Paranavitana 1956, 1: cxcv.

123. Verse 134.

124. See Collins, chapter 11, this volume. Examples of verses in the form of dialogue include 320, 354, 423, 443, 451, 468, 474, 476, and 531.

century *Sidatsangarāva,* a handbook of grammar and poetics for aspiring poets, to include in its chapter on *alaṅkāra* a type of figure that it names "the speech of two" *(uba bas;* Skt. *ubhayabhāṣā),* explaining that "the display *[paḷavaṭ;* Skt. *prakāśa]* of the distinctiveness of action or character *[siritavese-sak;* Skt. *caritraviśeṣa]* is what is praised within the speech of two people."[125] This figure was not recognized in the Sanskrit literary culture contemporary with the Sīgiri graffiti—that is, it was not named in the comprehensive enumeration of *alaṅkāra*s in authors like Daṇḍin—and in *eḷu* poetry between the tenth and fifteenth centuries it occurs only rarely, which may be due to the superposition of Sanskrit literary theory on Sinhala poetry at that time.[126]

A number of significant literary practices are evident in the Sīgiriya verses—all connected both to the disciplinary practices of literature and to a moral technology of the self. First, subject matter is predetermined and restricted. All of the graffiti at Sīgiriya are about the site and its frescoes. Even at such a striking and inspiring site, this narrow range of subject matter is remarkable—Did no one remember something that happened on the way, or something at home? Did no one feel like reacting to the place indirectly with a verse in praise of the Buddha or a king? The absence of any verses about anything but Sīgiriya suggests that there were commonly accepted constraints on what subject matter was appropriate to the place. The restriction of subject matter heightened the challenges of creativity for the visitors, but as the verses themselves make evident, many did rise to the challenge. Especially noteworthy are the ways in which poets used even the physical qualities of the site in their verses. For example, there are frequent allusions to the hard hearts of the women in the frescoes, who were sometimes portrayed as the wives of Kāśyapa committing suicide:

> A poem composed by Sivkala, wife of Utur:
>
> Those beautiful women on the mountain side,
>
> have they hurled themselves
> from the top of the rock
>
> saying we too shall die
>
> when they were separated
> from their lord, the king?[127]

These women are literally made of stone, after all—when they fail to respond accordingly to the emotional offerings of the poets:

---

125. *Sidatsangarāva* 12.10.
126. Paranavitana 1956, l: cc.
127. Verse 237.

The poem of Digilipeli Vajur:

When you look at me,
O long-eyed one,
please don't turn away.

I won't notice
if your heart is hard.

If you feel anything for me
I shall be satisfied.[128]

The restriction of subject matter seems connected to two other practices evident at the site: criticism and competition. Some poems are comments on other poems, and the consistency of critiques suggest that they were based on shared literary values. One author, for example, commented on the poem of another by questioning whether it was literature at all:

> Is it a poem *[kavek]* because a person sat there, thought, and wrote? He thought it was a composition, but when he looked at this, didn't he write only an empty song? He composed it by taking only what appears when one looks.[129]

Obviously, in calling a verse an "empty song" *(his gī),* this critic had some aesthetic basis by which he excluded it from the realm of the literary. The terms of his critique suggest that he regarded literature as more than just documenting the world, more than just describing what one sees before one eyes; in the terms of the Sanskrit literary theory of the time, he is rejecting this verse as mere *vārtā* (report), lacking in poetic appeal because it lacks *vakrokti* (roundabout turn of expression), *atiśayokti* (hyberbolic expression), *camatkāra* (aesthetic delight), or *svabhāvokti* (description of the true nature of something, which is not perceived by ordinary people).[130] In a similar vein, another poet's critique of a verse suggests that he assumed that the literary adds something good to life:

> Purporting it to be poetry, he wrote what is in his own mind—what has come to his mind merely because life continues to exist in him. Is it by you that the people going to the rock have been stopped for the sake of what is good in life *[jiviyehi guṇaṭa]?*[131]

Other poems give some hints about what the "good in life" might have been thought to be. They suggest that poems, and the paintings to which the poems respond, give access to moods and feelings that are generalized and specific to art.

128. Verse 304.
129. Verse 492.
130. See Vijayawardhana 1970: 29–36.
131. Verse 495.

> He [the painter], by the art of painting, fixes even the real nature *[ati sabā]* of the very source of consciousness. Having seen with his own eyes a long strand of hair, he paints and fixes diverse feelings of the mind.[132]

Other critiques seem to indicate shared standards of taste and propriety in language, vocabulary, and subject. One verse refers to "the character of seasonable speech" *(tan visi bava),*[133] which seems to refer to a general sense of what poetic form and content was appropriate at Sīgiriya, while another dismisses a poet as "a conceited boor,"[134] apparently because of what was taken as a vulgar reference to the breasts of the women in the paintings. There are even verses that illustrate poetic flaws in order to critique them.[135] Some vocabulary also seems to have been proscribed in the poetry at Sīgiriya, since words that are found in other Sinhala works and inscriptions from the same period are completely absent in the verses.[136]

Such prescriptions and critiques were evidently made in a context of contests between poets, and they most likely provided the criteria for success or failure in competition. One verse is introduced with the comment that it was written when its author was about "to go away defeated," while another says that the author defeated an opponent with his poem and went away.[137] The existence of these competitions and the language of defeat associated with them suggests an incipient technique of domination in this literary culture. It also takes us some way toward appreciating the obsessive concern with identifying and avoiding literary faults *(doṣa),* which we find explicitly addressed in later works, like *Siyabaslakara.*

132. Verse 541. See also vv. 150 and 161.

133. Verse 231.

134. Verse 100, commenting on verse 138. Strikingly, the word translated by Paranavitana as "boor" *(gāhāviyā)* is literally "householder" (Pali *gahapati*), hardly a pejorative term in the wider Theravādin culture; this possibly suggests some antagonism between the literary culture at Sīgiriya and Buddhist values at the time. Another hint of this antagonism can be seen in the following verse by a Buddhist monk (verse 120):

The poem of the renouncer Riyanamiya, resident of Rajanama:

"Can you go away
without seeing
the golden-colored ones?
They live in this forest."
    And when he said that,
    my friend lured my heart
    among those golden-colored ones,
    ah, why did I come here?

135. Verse 282, for example.

136. See Paranavitana 1956, 1: clxxiv.

137. Verses 245 and 246.

Although it is possible to identify in these verses a few practices that were part of the formation of literary and moral persons, it is extremely difficult to situate these practices and discern the human character of the community or individuals who composed them. Diverse people came to Sīgiriya from scattered locales. Admission to Sīgiriya's "community" was selective only in the sense that a person had to make the effort to get there, and it is impossible to determine what practices and institutions in the various writers' hometowns contributed to the achievement of the shared literary culture that the verses display, even at just the level of techniques of expression. Moreover, even though we have the names of hundreds of men and women who left verses at Sīgiriya—more names than we know for any other literary culture in Sri Lanka before the nineteenth century—we know practically nothing more about any of them. It is equally impossible to conclude much about the generic nature of a literary person in this literary culture, apart from the little that can be inferred from examining the poems themselves.

THE TECHNOLOGIES OF SINHALA POETRY
FROM THE TENTH CENTURY TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The evidence for the literary culture that produced poetry in *eḷu* for five centuries, beginning around the year 1000, is more abundant and varied than what is found at Sīgiriya. It includes works of poetry in different genres, like the *mahākāvya*s, *praśasti* poetry in the standard Sanskritic style,[138] and numerous messenger poems *(sandēśa)*. Also included are handbooks composed with the aim of helping aspiring poets to write well, works of lexicography for poets, and finally, the portraits of individual poets who were prominent at different moments in the history of this literary culture. This evidence, taken together, covers a broad range of phenomena, and because of the multiple angles of vision that it affords, it provides an important glimpse into what the literary was held to be and to accomplish during these centuries. Most important for the concerns of this chapter, this assemblage of evidence allows us to see that the literary was used and valued at the intersection of all four of Foucault's types of techniques of human self-understanding.

The evidence for *eḷu* literary culture, abundant as it may be, is still incomplete. To reconstruct even the broadest contours of this literary culture we

---

138. Pollock 1996: 211 describes "the standard *praśasti* style" as comprising "the fixing of genealogical succession" (see *Pärakumbasirita* vv. 27–28, where a brief and vague genealogy suggests that Parākramabāhu's claim to the throne was not clear in terms of the normal patterns of succession), "the catalogue of kingly traits of the dynasty" (see *Pärakumbasirita* vv. 9–26), and "the eulogy of the ruling lord" (see *Pärakumbasirita* vv. 29–140).

must bring together individual examples of texts and persons that were actually centuries apart—centuries in which Sri Lanka was often in considerable political and cultural upheaval. Important changes in poetry also occurred during the five centuries under consideration, as a comparison of the vocabulary and meters of the twelfth-century *Kavsiḷumiṇa* and the fifteenth-century *Kāvyaśekhara* makes clear. But like the Sanskrit literary culture from which it frequently took inspiration, what divides this *eḷu* literary culture is not as important as what unifies it.[139]

The unity of this literary culture seems to have been self-consciously cultivated as part of the technology of a system of signs. In contrast to the variation permitted in Sinhala prose of the period, which allowed a single writer to experiment with radically different forms of the language,[140] poetic language is selective, homogenous, and stable. Unity in *eḷu* literary culture is cultivated not only with respect to the choice of language and the practices of phonetic conservation that preserved archaic and largely unintelligible forms; just as Theravāda Buddhist culture and Sri Lankan political culture celebrated those who looked to the past to find guidance on how to think and act in the present,[141] so authors in this literary culture portrayed themselves as looking to older literary models, as we saw in the verses from the *Girāsandēśaya* describing the kinds of religious and literary study that took place at Śrī Rāhula's monastic college. Similarly, *Siyabaslakara* introduces some varieties of meter *(chandas)* in Sinhala by referring to a poetic treatise composed by a monk named Kalanamit (Kalyāṇamitra), "who has wisdom and compassion"—prime Buddhist virtues—and who lived at Anuradhapura in the Abhayagiri monastery. And *Sidatsangarāva* ends its chapter on poetic ornamentation *(alaṅkāra)* by urging its readers not to violate the patterns of usage established by earlier poets *(perakivisamā;* i.e., *pūrva vū kavisamaya)*. All of this, while part of the disciplinary practices that displayed knowledge about the literary, was part of a broader formation of the self that insisted

139. See Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.

140. This is true of Guruḷugomi, who wrote at the end of the twelfth century. His *Dharmapradīpika* (Lamp of truth), ostensibly a commentary on the *Mahābodhivaṃsa* (History of the Bodhi Tree), is in a scholastic, highly Sanskritic style, except for the story of Prince Kalinga, which is written in a compact style using *eḷu*. The translators note that his style is so compact that "in one extreme case, seventeen English words were needed to give an adequate rendering of two words in the Sinhalese text" (Reynolds 1970: 91). *Amāvatura* is written in a unique style that echoes Pali more than Sanskrit; see Wijemanne 1984: 25–26 for comparisons of Guruḷugomi's literary language in the two books.

141. For example, Alagiyavanna, author of the seventeenth-century poem *Subhāṣitaya* (Well-spoken words), states that he is presenting in Sinhala verse "the rules of conduct *[nīti]* that are in great books that have come from the mouths of sages of old" *(pahaḷa poraṇa isivara muvīni . . . puvaḷa nīti sata gatä pada arut lada)* for ignorant people who did not have access to books in Tamil, Sanskrit, or Pali *(demaḷa saku magada nohasaḷa sataṭa dada);* see *Subhāṣitaya* v. 5.

on submission to authority as a necessary virtue in the character of an aspiring poet.

Deference was not only paid to exemplars from the distant past; it was also to be paid to one's immediate teacher. A vision of oneself in the future, based on one's teacher as a model, gave a reason to the laborious efforts to transform the self now: present humility was in service of later prestige, present deference was in service of receiving later honors, present submission to correction was in service of later creative perfection and freedom, just as sacrifice of one's desires in the present was in the service of their later fulfillment, by the workings of karma. The *Pärakumbasirita* explains the necessity of this attitude towards the teacher by using an image, drawn from Theravādin discourse, that likens morality to a fragrance that spreads in all directions:

> Through service to teachers, one comes to resemble the wind, sweet with fragrance. What skill is there in the composition of poetry or drama without such service?[142]

Thinking of literary practice as a technology of the self clarifies how new poets might have approached the handbooks, grammars, and canons for poets that began to be produced in the tenth century. These supports for literature constructed a modality of knowledge about the literary, but they were not meant for self-study; they were part of a wholly different framework of disciplinary practices that assumed that one aspired to join a translocal and transtemporal community. Models for poetry, for poetic manuals, and for literary persons were found not only in the heritage of earlier Sinhala literary cultures but also in Sanskrit and Tamil, and the difficulty of access to such resources is a visible theme of Sinhala literary culture. The *Siyabaslakara,* an adaptation of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* (Mirror of literature), says that it was written "for two groups of people: those who do not know the older treatises in Sinhala, at least in their summary form, and those who do not know Sanskrit."[143] The form of *Sidatsangarāva,* a work that brings together grammar and poetics, seems to have been influenced by the same tradition that produced the *Vīracoḷiyaṃ,* a Tamil work that combines grammar with poetics, a combination not found in Sanskrit; at the same time, it is also clear that *Sidatsangarāva* owes much to Sanskrit sources.[144] Parākramabāhu VI began his lexicon for poets, the *Ruvanmala,* by explaining that he would use what was found in the wordbooks of ancient poets *(poraṇamahakavnamhi),* but that his work would also include words from Sanskrit and Pali *(saku magadanen),* as well as Sinhala words added by himself. But it seems that he arranged his

---

142. *Pärakumbasirita* v. 5.
143. *Siyabaslakara* v. 3.
144. Godakumbura 1946: 837; Wijayawardhana 1963: 167–68.

work on the model of the Sanskrit lexicon *Amarakośa,* especially in his emphasis on the gender of nouns.[145] Authors of Sinhala *mahākāvya*s clearly found models in the works of Sanskrit authors like Kālidāsa and Māgha, something that was recognized by critics at the time.[146] Such clear evidence of extensive involvement in Sanskrit literary culture indicates that the unity of Sanskrit literary culture during this period must have helped to secure the unity of Sinhala literary culture.

Sri Lanka was recognized in Sanskrit literary culture as part of the geo-cultural space defined by the Sanskrit ecumene; and, somewhat ironically, the clearest examples of representing Sri Lanka as a literary space occur not in Sinhala, but in Sanskrit. Rājaśekhara, writing as far away as Tripurī in the tenth century, idealized Sri Lanka in the following way:

> People who produce the nectar of speech and Rohaṇa which produces
>   gems;
> and the ocean which produces pearls, these [three] are not anywhere
>   [together]
> but the island of the Sinhalas.[147]

Sinhala literary culture itself, however, tended to define Sri Lanka primarily in religious terms. In the words of the twelfth-century inscription of Niśśanka Malla quoted earlier, "the island of Lanka is a noble land because of the establishment of the *sāsana* there," but even the physical space of the island is represented in Buddhist terms and imagery, as can be seen in the *Girāsandēśaya:*

> Where the expansive ocean meets the shore,
> may you see the beautiful Toṭagamuve, endowed with all wealth,
> beautified with household gardens filled with fruits,
> where the people are delighted as if heaven has descended on earth.
> Look at how the waves of the ocean break upon the beach,
> making an excessive noise,
> as if Viṣṇu is complaining
> that his shining crest gem has been taken by Nātha.[148]
> All around the monastery, it appears as if
>   the trees themselves
>   were reciting the dharma in a sweet voice,

---

145. *Ruvanmala* vv. 5–6; see Godakumbura 1955: 322.

146. See Godakumbura 1955: 143, 145 on similarities between the Sinhala *Muvdevdāvata* and the Sanskrit works *Raghuvaṃśa, Kumārasaṃbhava, Śākuntala,* and *Śiśupālavadha.*

147. *janaś ca vāksudhāsūtir maṇisūtiś ca rohaṇaḥ / nānyatra siṃhaladvīpān muktāsūtiś ca sāgaraḥ* (*Bālarāmāyaṇa* of Rājaśekhara, 10.49; cited in Paranavitana 1956, 1: ccii). Rohaṇa is a region of southern Sri Lanka.

148. There was a shrine to Nātha, a Buddhist deity, at Toṭagamuve. For a history of the development of the cult of Nātha, see Holt 1991.

> the songs of the cuckoos,
> taking in their hands,
>   their branches,
> the *ola* leaf manuscripts,
>   the layer of flower pollen,
> on which were seen endless writing,
>   the bees.

> Here and there in that monastery
> you see the Asala tree in full bloom
> with attractive clusters of flowers,
> which bear the intensified color
> of the robes worn by the great community of monks residing there.[149]

The incumbent of the monastic college at Toṭagamuve, Śrī Rāhula, as well as the community of monks residing there, further enhance the beauty of Lanka, as the following biographical verse indicates:

> He [Śrī Rāhula] is like the Mucalinda mountain which beautified the ocean
>   the good family named Skandhavaru;
> grandson of the excellent chief monk of Utturumula
> of immaculate character; who was endowed
> with excellences *[guṇa]* and steadfast practices;

> and who was brought up by King Parākramabāhu with paternal affection
> for the welfare of the *sāsana* of the Buddha.

> Worship the well-known chief priest of the Vijayabāhu college,
> who is like a gem set in the midst of an attractive garland of jewels,
>   namely, the community of monks of the Mahāvihāra fraternity,
> a garland worn by this resplendent island of Lanka.[150]

Śrī Rāhula wrote in the fifteenth century, but already by the twelfth century, and perhaps even earlier, we see evidence that the translocal ecumene represented by the Buddhist *sāsana* was being localized in unprecedented ways. At the time of Parākramabāhu I (mid-twelfth century) we see the Buddhist monastic order divided on regional lines, rather than by ordination lineage or sectarian affiliation, in contrast to what can be seen in the career of the great commentator Dhammapāla, who lived in south India in the sixth or seventh century but who obviously considered himself as continuing the traditions of the Mahāvihāra monastery in Sri Lanka when he wrote a subcommentary on Buddhaghoṣa's *Visuddhimagga*. The work of Sāriputra, the great *ṭīkācārya* of the twelfth century, was criticized by Coḷiya Kassapa, who lived in a monastery "in the heart of the Cōḷa kingdom." As R. A. H. L. Gu-

---

149. *Girāsandēśaya* vv. 197–98, 205–6.
150. *Girāsandēśaya* v. 232.

nawardana observes, "the tenor of this criticism implies that there was something more than mere disagreement on doctrinal matters": there was clearly "a certain element of regional rivalry. . . . It is evident from these polemical writings that, while the Buddhist identity transcended political boundaries, attempts were being made during this period to mark out within this larger identity the separate positions of the Cōḷa and the Sinhala monks."[151] The process of localization was furthered by Buddhist writings in Sinhala produced at this time. Writing at the end of the twelfth century, Guruḷugomi began his *Amāvatura,* a biography of the Buddha organized around the epithet *(guṇa)* "guide of tamable beings" *(purisadammasārāthī),* by saying that his purpose "is to narrate in concise form in Sinhala *[siyabasin]* for the benefit of pious people who are not learned *[no viyat]*"[152] how the Buddha became enlightened and "subjugated *[damā]* various beings and guided them to *nirvāṇa.*"[153] The *Sinhala Bodhi Vaṃsaya* (History of the Bodhi Tree in Sinhala) says in a similar fashion that it is composed "in Sinhala *[svabhāṣāven]* for the welfare of those beings who do not know Pali."[154] Significantly, *Pūjāvaliya* explains itself by referring not to the capabilities of its audience but to the different capacities of Pali and Sinhala as languages: "There are eight benefits to the world that come from the exposition of the commentaries in Sinhala *[svabhāṣāven]* on the *saddharma,* which is veiled by the brevity of the Pali language." These benefits, which come from an exposition *"written* in Sinhala" *(svabhāṣā likhita vū),* turn out to be eight different audiences, from kings and their harems in the court to the "kings" *(mahāsthavira;* a contemporary synonym for *saṅgharāja)* of the monastic community to villagers in remote places who never see monks. These eight audiences are compared to other integral sets of eight that ornament *(alaṅkāra vū)* various things: "just as the world is ornamented by the eight persons, just as the *uposatha* day is ornamented by the eight precepts, just as *nirvāṇa* is ornamented by the noble eightfold path."[155] Both of these rationales invert the rationale for translation from Sinhala into Pali found in earlier texts, such as Buddhaghoṣa's commentary on the Vinaya commentary: "But on account of the fact that this exposition had been done in the language of the island of Sīhaḷa, and since the monks

---

151. Gunawardana 1979a: 20–21.

152. The term *no viyat* has been discussed considerably. Godakumbura translates it as "less learned" (1955: 56). Ananda Kulasuriya argues that Guruḷugomi did not mean people who were ignorant but only those who did not know Pali and Sanskrit (1962: 139). Since the text contains numerous Pali quotations, Piyaseeli Wijemanne suggests that it was, in fact, meant for those who knew Pali yet had only limited acquaintance with Pali texts; thus, *no viyat* means "less read" (1984: 4 n. 12).

153. *Amāvatura* 1.

154. *Sinhala Bodhi Vaṃsaya* 3.

155. *Pūjāvaliya* 17.

overseas cannot understand the meaning thereof, I shall now begin this exposition in conformity with the method of treatment found in the Sacred Texts."[156]

Texts like *Amāvatura, Pūjāvaliya, Sinhalabodhivaṃsaya,* and *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* mediated the world of Pali texts and successfully gave them an immediacy in a local context.[157] While it is possible to see this immediacy in terms of its constitutive connection to the collective identity of Sinhala people, we should not lose sight of the manner in which it was also part of a religious technology of systems of signs and, above all, of the self. As Gananath Obeyesekere has noted, "the abstract ethics and abstruse concepts of the doctrinal tradition were given an immediacy, a concreteness and an ethical salience in [Sinhala] peasant society" through such books and the storytelling derived from them.[158]

The literary culture that produced poetry in *eḷu* during the tenth and through the fifteenth centuries nominally participated in, and was circumscribed as well as justified by, this process of localization of the Pali ecumene, but more important, it was the primary site for the localization of Sanskrit literary culture—a culture that was resolutely secular.[159] Not surprisingly, the literary culture of *eḷu* poetry did not share the value of literary accessibility that animated the Sinhala *banapot* (preaching books); instead, it celebrated an ethos of complexity and difficulty—an ethos of relative noncommunication within the Sinhala-speaking community—that was embedded in a technology of domination. While the Pali ecumene distinguished Sri Lanka and other centers of Theravāda Buddhism from the rest of the Sanskrit cultural universe, *eḷu* literary culture still found ways of joining the Sanskrit cosmopolis, including the ways that it identified and acknowledged literary prestige. By the fourteenth century, for example, Sinhala authors were given the title of *ṣaḍbhāṣā-īśvara* (lord of six languages), a title that became current in the first half of the second millennium across India, although there is no evidence that Sinhala authors wrote poetry in even one of the Prakrits alluded

156. Jayawickrama 1962: 2. *saṃvaṇanā sīhaḷadīpakena vākyena esā pana saṅkhaṭattā, na kiñci attham abhisambhuṇāti dīpantare bhikkhujanassa yasmā, tasmā imaṃ pāḷinayānurūpaṃ saṃvaṇanaṃ dāni samārabhissaṃ* (136).

157. As G. D. Wijayawardana noted: "The corpus of stories in these literary works is a part of the cultural heritage perpetuated over a long period of time. Although their origins are to be found in ancient Indian lore, they have lived among the Sinhalese for thousands of years—handed down first orally and then in written form. In this process they have absorbed a great deal from the socio-cultural milieu of our country. The skeletal story has acquired flesh and blood from local culture, and has been transformed into something indigenous" (1979: 74).

158. Quoted by Ranjini Obeyesekere in Dharmasena Thera 1991: x.

159. Pollock 1994: 17–18.

to in the title, or even that any of the recipients of the title knew these literary languages.[160]

Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula was one of the poets who was called "lord of six languages," although the languages in which he actually wrote—Pali and Sinhala—were not recognized in this title. Nevertheless, a literary culture characterized by the difficulty, prestige, and dominance that the title celebrates thoroughly informs the portrait of Śrī Rāhula found in the *Girāsandēśaya:*

> In this time who could be considered comparable to that lord of ascetics
> > *[yatindu],*
> > > who extracts and gives to the world
> > > the ambrosia of sweet words and their meanings,
> > >
> > > churning with the stroke of Meru,
> > > > his clear wisdom,
> > > the milky ocean,
> > > > the deep Abhidhammapitaka?
> > > He extracts the great treasure of gems,
> > > > the words and meanings of the Vinaya,
> > > which is buried in great earth,
> > > > the teachings of the Buddha,
> > > extracting it in accordance
> > > with the admonitions of the teachers of old,
> > > giving it to the community of monks
> > > who wish for wealth in the form of wisdom;
> > > thus he makes them happy.
> > > He has made himself well-known over the entire earth
> > > by understanding the eightfold schools of grammar
> > > to his satisfaction
> > > like the teachers of old, who expounded these branches of knowledge
> > > and by then composing well-known treatises on them,
> > > which causes delight in readers,
> > > he has made this eightfold grammar well-known in the entire world.

160. "Six-language *(ṣaḍbhāṣāmaya)* poems" were, however, composed in the Jain community, where the very notion of the six languages may have originated with Hemacandra, the thirteenth-century Jain scholastic, who named the six languages as all "Prakrits": Prakritabhasha, Shauraseni, Magadhi, Paishachi, Chulika-Paishachi, and Apabhramsha. Sinhala literary culture generally listed the six languages as Sanskrit, Prakrit, Magadha (perhaps referring to Pali instead of Ardha Magadhi, as was understood in India), Apabhramsha, Paishachi, and Shauraseni. The presence of Paishachi and Chulika-Paishachi in these lists is clear evidence that the field of literary ability the six represented was more symbolic than real—a way of indicating literary authority by spatial comprehensiveness rather than particular literary skill in the different languages. See, for example, Punyavijaya 1972, MS. no. 3072: Somasundarisūri, *Ṣaḍbhāṣāmaya-Ādinātha-Śāntinātha-Neminātha-Pārśvanātha-Mahāvīra-stavanapañcaka;* MS. no. 2017.26, anon., *Ṣaḍbhāṣāsādhāraṇajinastavana;* MS. no. 2017.27: anon., *Ṣaḍbhāṣāmayacandraprabhajinastavana.* (These references were generously given to me by John Cort.)

That exalted lord of monks shines in the world,
    opening the wealth of the *mahākāvya*s
    composed by poets who excelled in cleverness,
bearing the wealth of immaculate fame
    like the lotuses, lilies, and the moonbeams
and constantly causing banners of victory to be tied in the entire world.
For the lotus of his mouth,
which is attractive and in full bloom,
it is prosody *[sanda;* Skt. *chandas]* and poetics *[laka;* Skt. *alaṅkāra]*
that are the soft fragrant pollen;
that lotus where the goddess Sarasvatī lived
    gladdened the bees, the ears of the poets.[161]
Then the resplendent great ocean,
    the well-polished words of that lord of monks,
is constantly filled with waves,
    the eighteen *purāṇa*s.
He is a source of good fortune for the whole world,
exalted like Mahābrahma, Kaśyapa, and Jupiter.
For him, the eighteen sciences are like his inheritance;
he, who is like the great teachers of old,
expounds the rows and rows of texts and their meanings
in a delightful manner to the pandits
who kneel around him on their knees.
The six languages are like the well-known arena
where the attractive dancing girl,
    the speech of that noble priest,
    dances with extreme dexterity;
    that priest, who is the domicile of all good qualities *[guṇa],*
    preaches the doctrine, thus opening up the minds of the people.
He constantly shines with the excellences *[guṇa]*
    of contentment and a delighted frame of mind,
suppressing the pride of enemies
    in the form of depravities within himself *[kleśa],*
    including hatred *[sados],*
not transgressing the code of good conduct, which is faultless *[nidos;*
    Skt. *nirdoṣa]*
and in accord with the way that was preached by the Five-Eyed One.[162]

Other verses in this portrait extol Śrī Rāhula's command of the *Suttapiṭaka* (The collection of discourses of the Buddha) and the six philosophical

---

161. In *Siyabaslakara,* Sarasvatī is invoked in order to bestow favor on poets, but in this verse she receives favor from Śrī Rāhula instead.

162. *Girāsandēśaya* vv. 234, 236–37, 239–42, 244–45. The phonology of *eḷu* allows the Sanskrit *dveṣa* (hatred) to become a homonym with *doṣa* (fault, misfortune; a key term in literary analysis).

schools of Indian cultural history, but the effect of each verse is the same individually and cumulatively: Śrī Rāhula was able to do what is difficult in whatever field he turned to, and his domination of these various subjects gave him a personal freedom of thought and intellectual practice and an ability to enhance the lives of others. This ability to act freely and effectively because of knowledge brought him widespread fame and prestige and a noncoercive power over others, attracting them to him in the same way that bees are drawn to fragrant flowers.

Just as kings who struggled to maintain control of even a portion of Sri Lanka were magnified as world-conquerors in *praśasti* inscriptions, so Śrī Rāhula's dominance of all fields of knowledge is exaggerated. Judging from his works, however, we can see that he was a master of Pali grammar—an intricate and demanding field of study in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition—and a great poet in *eḷu,* as well as quite learned in Buddhist thought and philosophy. In the field of grammar, his greatest work is the Sinhala-language *Pañcikāpradīpaya* (Lamp on the commentary on Moggallana's Pali grammar), in which he quotes from works on grammar, logic, and scholastic philosophy *(abhidhamma)* in Sanskrit, Pali, and Sinhala, and refers to some exegetical works in Tamil.[163] It seems that Śrī Rāhula turned to the study of Pali grammar in his later years, and thus much of his prestige as a monk was due to his achievements in poetry earlier in his life.

Because the literary is a set of practices that produces both persons and texts, we need to ask how difficulty and submission are practiced with respect to both texts and persons in this literary culture. One practice of difficulty in texts concerns a noteworthy feature of *eḷu* poetry: laxity of word order. That is, *eḷu* poetry ignores the fixed word order within a phrase that is customary in prose Sinhala (and in English) and permits a far greater looseness in the arrangement of words. For example, if we keyed the words in a randomly chosen verse from Śrī Rāhula's *Kāvyaśekhara* to the prose gloss given by the commentator, then the arrangement of the words in the verse might look like this:

6	7	5	3	4
11	12	9	10	8
15	16	13	14	
1	18	19	2	17

It is only with the aid of a commentator or teacher that a novice reader would be able to put the words together to arrive at a coherent meaning. A literal translation of a verse from another text, the *Haṃsasandēśaya,* exemplifies yet another practice of difficulty in *eḷu* literary culture: the generation of ambiguities that occur when adjectives are separated from the nouns they

---

163. See Godakumbura 1955: 317.

modify. In the Sinhala, there are no more markers of grammatical relations than in the following English version:

> Radiant like luminous emeralds
> with their beaks having torn up and sucked the juice of mangoes
> like a rainbow ascending the sky
> watch the parrots flying, to your heart's content.[164]

To understand this verse, we need to know whether the first line refers to the beaks or to the mangoes. We also need to know who ascends the sky, the parrots or the swan to whom the verse is addressed. Again, the commentator guides us away from what we might expect in the word order: the first line refers to the mangoes, not to "beaks," which is closer to it; it is the parrots who ascend, not the addressee in the fourth line.

This allowance for syntactic laxity apparently made it easier for poets to follow established poetic conventions: each verse must conform to a meter; each line has breaks (caesuras) that must be respected; words that rhyme internally and alliterate need to be placed in such a way as to create patterns within each line and within the verse as a whole. These conventions create another level of complexity of pure form and are features that *eḷu* shares with Sanskrit poetry. Sanskrit, however, is more thoroughly inflected than Sinhala, and looseness in Sanskrit word order is not at the expense of meaning, as occurs in Sinhala. The practice of difficulty was part of the technology that allowed a poet to use the sign system of literature—a system learned at the feet of teachers and through the study of the various handbooks for poets on grammar, prosody, and poetics, as well as lexical works. These works, ostensibly produced to make the sign system of poetry accessible to novices, also raised the standards of difficulty by practices of classification and standardization of literary forms that were acceptable. Such classifications and standardizations were meant to be exact, as regulatory norms (and the work of classification was considered difficult in and of itself).[165] While their specificity could give some reassurance to the aspiring poet,[166] they also could generate anxieties about mistakes and anticipated criticisms. Although we do not have any evidence of the kinds of competitions that seemed to have occurred at Sīgiriya or of the kinds of literary debates that occurred at Matara in the nineteenth century,[167] there are still indications that literary criticism

164. *Haṃsasandēsaya* v. 140.

165. *Siyabaslakara* v. 68: "*Alaṅkāra*s are the factors that bring about poetic beauty. They keep on increasing in number and forming into divisions even up to today. Who in the world is capable of describing them completely?"

166. *Siyabaslakara* v.19: "For those who are desirous of entering the deep ocean of poetry, meters are like a ship in which one can travel in comfort."

167. Malalgoda 1976: 182–85.

was intense. The unknown monastic author of the *Kokilasandēśaya,* a contemporary of Śrī Rāhula, actually took verses from other messenger poems, such as Śrī Rāhula's *Sāḷalihiṇisandēśaya* and the *Girāsandēśaya,* and offered improvements on them. He also seems to have had a minimal amount of esteem for Śrī Rāhula as a poet, mocking his title of "lord of six languages" by depicting him as having six heads, each of which was composing poetry in a different language; and when the cuckoo in *Kokilasandēśaya* stops to spend the night at Toṭagamuve, he does not listen to Śrī Rāhula's preaching but goes off with a cuckoo girlfriend.[168]

The practice of difficulty was also part of the training of the readers. To recognize what a poem was meant to signify, the readers needed to know the mechanisms by which it created its effects. What may have aided poets in writing within certain poetic regulatory norms would have made the practice of reading more difficult, and most likely the education of a poet began with reading good poetry.

Other understandings of the literary also made the practice of reading more difficult. Among these was the development of critical attention to a host of secondary signs and significations that lay obscure in a poem. At the level of signification, there were meanings that awaited discovery through the inferences made by the reader. At its conclusion, the *Siyabaslakara* departs from Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* to refer to something similar to the *dhvani* theory found in the work of ninth-century Sanskrit literary theorist Ānandavardhana:[169]

> There are two kinds of meanings to words in poetry: one meaning that is explicit, and one that comes through another meaning. The meaning conveyed when a word falls on one's ears is called the explicit meaning.
>
> The meaning that is different from the expressed meaning and that, like the object seen with the aid of the lamp, is conveyed through the force of inference is called the meaning that is conveyed through another meaning.[170]

The *Siyabaslakara* introduces this idea in a chapter that covers other difficult ways of composition *(duṣkarabandhana).* Considered the ultimate practices of difficulty in poetry and meant to demonstrate a poet's control of the language, they were far from any effort to document the world in language. Like the meaning conveyed through another meaning, they lie obscure in the poem, waiting for discovery and subsequent admiration by readers. For the reader, their significance lies in the act of recognition, which lifts them out of obscurity and also confirms one's skill as a reader. A whole chapter

---

168. Godakumbura 1955: 198–99.
169. See Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.
170. *Siyabaslakara* vv. 400–401.
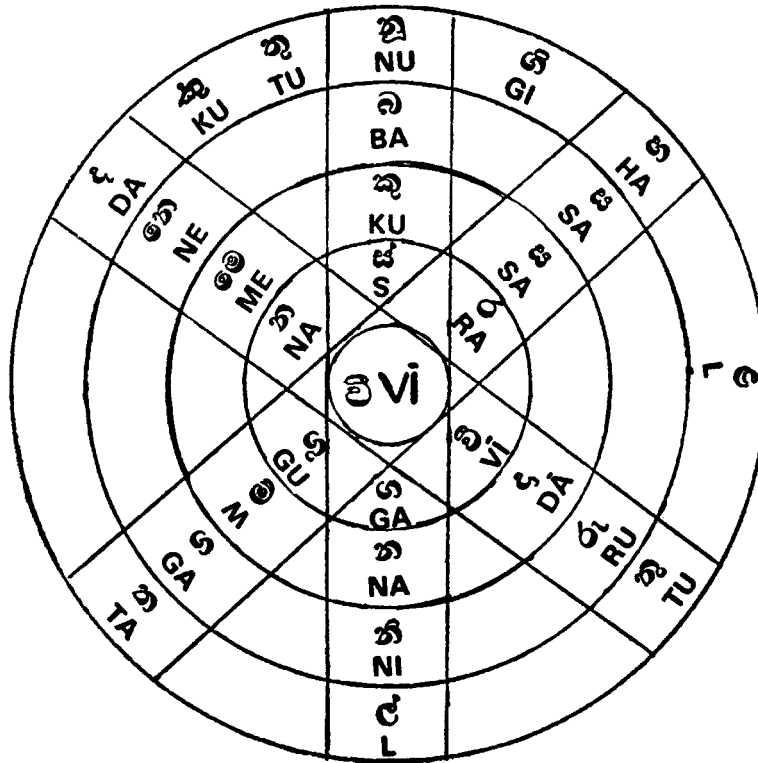
Figure 12.1: The circle composition *(cakrabandhana)* from the *Kavsiḷu-miṇa*. Reproduced from McAlpine and Ariyapala 1990.

of *Kavsiḷumiṇa* is devoted to these displays of virtuosity, with some verses using only one consonant, others only one vowel; some that could be read backward and forward, and others in which the same words have four different meanings.[171] Some verses could be arranged into diagrams, which subsequently revealed even more layers to the poem. For example, in figure 12.1 the four lines of verse 413 of *Kavsiḷumiṇa* are arranged in five concentric circles to form a wheel. The first two lines of the stanza have nine letters *(akṣara)* each, and the fourth line has eleven. The last syllable of the third line repeats as the first and last syllable of the fourth line. The first syllables of the first three lines also reappear in the middle of the fourth line:

171. *Kavsiḷumiṇa,* ch. 9.

> *nubakus vi ganannil*
> *hasasara vi gumgata*
> *turu dā vī vina mene da*
> *dakutu nugi haḷa tul tada.*

When the letters *(akṣara)* are arranged with the same vowels in the diagram, the name of the poem is given: *Kusadā nam me* (This is *Kusajātaka*). In a literary culture that saw the literary at even the graphic level of a text, it is no wonder that we find an inscription from this period, that of Mahinda IV that was quoted earlier, that depicts readers actively attacking and dominating a text:

> Where dwell bands of scholars directing their wisdom to great literary works and adorning the Abayaturā Maha Sä [the Great Shrine of Abhayuttara], just as a flock of *garuḍa*s hovers with widespread wings over rows of serpents on the Himalayan mountains.[172]

The difficult ways of composition *(duṣkarabhandana)* shade over into a technology of production. In poetic handbooks, of which *Sidatsangarāva* is the earliest, we see a concern with how the use of signs, independently of any signification they may have, can produce desired results in the world. At this point, the literary became something of an occult science—an aspect of Sinhala literary culture that became centrally visible during these five centuries—with a variety of manuals teaching techniques that became increasingly popular, especially for the composition of verses called *setkavi* (verses of well-being). These include the *Eḷusandaslakuṇa* and the thirteenth-century *Lakuṇusara* (The essence of prosody). Śrī Rāhula was undoubtedly familiar with these techniques and used them in his poetry; while one of his contemporaries, Vidāgama Maitreya, now generally portrayed by modern Sinhala critics as hostile to the influence of Brahmanical culture in Sri Lanka, wrote one of these manuals, the *Kavlakuṇumiṇimaldama,* which has already been mentioned as part of the pedagogical canon of Sinhala literary culture that existed up to the nineteenth century.[173]

Sidatsangarāva treats these "occult" aspects of poetry in a chapter called "The Capability of [Producing] What Is Desired and [Avoiding] What Is Not Desired]" *(iṭuniṭu;* Skt. *iṣṭāniṣṭādhikāra). Iṣṭāniṣṭādhikāra* forms a part of the knowledge that an author must have; through ignorance, a poet could produce evil effects for himself or for the one he is praising.[174] The *Sidat*'s

172. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 1: 226. The "serpents" are the round-shaped script used for Sinhala.

173. *Vidāgama Maitreya Himiyan gē Prabandha* vv. 25–39. For an example of the modern Sinhala critics, see Wickramasinghe 1963: 189 ff.

174. In the following discussion, I draw from *Sidatsangarāva* vv. 241–46.

elaboration of this knowledge begins by grouping letters into three divisions: letters associated with hell *(e, k, y, m, r, j, a, ā, ṇ, n, ḷ, aṃ),* letters associated with the realm of humans *(u, au, p, b, g, h),* and divine letters *(i, ī, o, ō, ṭ, ṭh, t, d, l, v, s).* A piece of *setkavi* always begins with a letter drawn from the divine group. In a second scheme, the *Sidat* groups letters into eight sets, called *yoni*s, four of which are auspicious. The eight *yoni*s are given animal names, and the natural animosity between certain animals guides the poet in avoiding mixing certain *yoni*s or bringing them into close proximity, especially with respect to the name of the poet or hero:

mongoose *(a, o, n, l)*	versus	serpent *(u, j, b, ḷ)*
deer *(ē, ṇ, r)*	versus	tiger *(h, p, g, ī)*
crow *(e, ḍ, y)*	versus	owl *(s, n, k, i)*
horse *(aṃ, m, t, au)*	versus	buffalo *(v, d, ō, ā)*

The *Sidat* also groups the letters into a third scheme using clusters of syllables called *gana*s, which are distinguished according to the sequence of weights *(matra)* in each cluster:

m gana: heavy in all places: ‒ ‒ ‒
n gana: light in all places: ˘ ˘ ˘
b gana: heavy in initial: ‒ ˘ ˘
y gana: light in initial: ˘ ‒ ‒
j gana: heavy in middle: ˘ ‒ ˘
r gana: light in middle: ‒ ˘ ‒
s gana: heavy in final: ˘ ˘ ‒
t gana: light in final: ‒ ‒ ˘

These *gana*s, when found in the first line of a verse, are then connected to particular effects they produce: *m gana* gives victory; *n gana,* fame; *b gana,* blessing; *y gana,* long life; *j gana,* disease; *r gana,* extreme sorrow; *s gana,* death; and *t gana,* destruction. The *Lakuṇusara,* another medieval handbook for poets, also treats of auspicious and inauspicious words, while later writers connected the *gana*s to other aspects of the natural world, especially to the science of astrology.[175]

This understanding of poetry-writing as an occult science lends another dimension to *Siyabaslakara'*s claim that language brings the world into existence. While we might have little sympathy for such a claim, we should not ignore the ways literature functioned as a technology of production that reinforced other technologies of power, for it represented yet another way a *cakravartin* could exert his will in the world through knowledge.

175. For a long discussion of such occult aspects of a text, see D'Alwis [1852] 1966: cxviii ff.

THE PLACE OF PALI IN SINHALA LITERARY CULTURE

The understanding of literature as a technology of production is yet another view of the literary that Sinhala adopted from Sanskrit literary culture in the period between the tenth and fifteenth centuries. It seems appropriate, then, to end this chapter with a brief consideration of the variabilities of super-position between languages in South Asia. It is too easily assumed, on the basis of the stable place of Sanskrit in the vernacularization of the literary that spread across South Asia at the beginning of the second millennium, that it is always a translocal literary culture whose values and practices are superposed onto a local literary culture for reasons having to do with the as-pirations of the local. I want to argue, however, that in medieval Sri Lanka, it was Sinhala that was superposed onto Pali for reasons having to do not with Pali, but with aspirations in Sinhala literary culture.

Steven Collins has noted that beginning around the tenth century, new styles and genres appeared in Pali that were entirely without precedent in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition (see Collins, chapter 11, this volume). I would like to mention three works in Pali that were meant to support those writing in these new ways: a handbook of prosody, *Vuttodaya,* (Exposition of meters);[176] a handbook on poetics, *Subodhālaṅkāra;* and a lexicon, *Abhidhā-nappadīpikā* (Lamp on the treasury [of words]). They represent a new atti-tude toward the potential of Pali as a language, and indeed, we may say that they represent the initial developments of a transformation, though trun-cated, of Pali into a literary language. They also represent a new technology of Pali as a system of signs. In a context where texts like the *Sidat* and *Laku-ṇusara* circulated, then *Vuttodaya*'s attention to the eight *gana*s suggests not only that *paritta* texts drawn from the canon were thought able to dispel dan-ger and misfortune, but that the equivalent of *setkavi* could be composed in Pali. It is difficult to assess the impact of the transformation of Pali into a lit-erary language analogous to Sanskrit and Sinhala, much less whether that transformation led to new collective identities, as was the case with the emer-gence of other literary cultures. The restricted purchase of these trends in Pali is suggested by the fact that a single monk, Sangharakkhita, wrote both *Vuttodaya* and *Subodhālaṅkāra.*

Works like *Mahābodhivaṃsa* and *Subodhālaṅkāra* are all derivative from San-skrit literary culture and thus it would seem that they are evidence of the su-perposition of Sanskrit onto Pali, a phenomenon that did in fact occur with scholastic styles of thought and textuality. I do not think that this is so sim-ply the case with the Pali *kabba* texts or other Pali texts like the *Mahābodhi-vaṃsa.* Key to this conclusion is an innovation found in *Siyabaslakara.* Daṇḍin

176. See Collins, chapter 11, this volume.

distinguished between two styles of poetry in his *Kāvyādarśa,* and, interestingly, given the broader geocultural trends, they are regionalized in their definition. One, Vaidarbhi, is southern, and is characterized by a simplicity of expression; the other, Gauḍi, is eastern and is characterized by baroque and unusual modes of expression. When these different styles are translated in the *Siyabaslakara,* they are relabeled as good and bad, respectively. The southern style was deemed the only good style for Sinhala literature.

At the same time, however, the values of Sinhala literary culture expected versatility from an author, to be demonstrated in skilled compositions in both styles. Since by the regulatory rules of Sinhala literary culture the Gauḍi style could not be demonstrated in Sinhala, another language had to serve as the medium. This is precisely what we see in the various ornate works produced in Pali: with their elaborate syntactical constructions, long compounds, and unusual words made up of Sanskrit *tatsama*s, they all seem to be in a Gauḍi style. We see the ideal literary person in medieval Sinhala literary culture, demonstrating his versatility in literary style, to be like a *cakravartin,* able to exert his will in any realm he chooses.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Medieval Sinhala texts are listed by title.

Amāvatura of Guruḷugomi. 1967. Edited by Kodagodha Ñanaloka. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Butsaraṇa of Vidyācakravarti. 1968. Edited by Bambarände Siri Sivali. Colombo: Gunaratna.

Carter, John Ross. 1978. *Dhamma: Western Academic and Sinhalese Buddhist Interpretations.* Tokyo: Hokuseido Press.

Collins, Steven. 1992. "Oral Aspects of Pali Literature." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 35: 121–35.

D'Alwis, James. [1852] 1966. *A Survey of Sinhalese Literature.* Colombo: Government Press.

Dambadeṇi Katikāvata. 1971. In *The Katikavatas: Laws of the Buddhist Order of Ceylon from the Twelfth Century to the Eighteenth Century,* edited by Nandasena Ratnapala. Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft, Beiheft no. 1971. Munich: n.p.

Day, Tony. 1996. "Ties That (Un)Bind: Families and States in Premodern Southeast Asia." *Journal of Asian Studies* 55: 384–409.

Dehisaspe Pannasara, Ven. 1958. *Sanskrit Literature Extant among the Sinhalese and the Influence of Sanskrit on Sinhalese.* Colombo: Wimala Dharma Hewavitane, Esq.

De Silva, K. M. 1981. *A History of Sri Lanka.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dhadpale, M. D. 1975. *Some Aspects of (Buddhist) Literary Criticism as Gleaned from Pali Sources.* Bombay: Adreesh Prakashan.

Dharmarathna, S. M. 1998. "The Influences of the Pallavas on the Evolution of the Sinhala Script from the Fourth Century A.D. to the Ninth Century A.D." Unpublished paper presented at the Multi-Disciplinary International Conference on the

Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Independence of Sri Lanka, February 23–25.

Dharmasena Thera. 1991. *Jewels of the Doctrine.* Translated by Ranjini Obeyesekere. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Epigraphia Zeylanica. 1912–. Edited by Dom Martino de Zilva Wickremasinghe. 3 vols. London: Oxford University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1997. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth.* Edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press.

Fryer, G. E. 1875. "Pali Studies 1: On the Ceylon Grammarian Sangharakkhita Thera and His Treatise on Rhetoric." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 2: 91–126.

Gair, James. 1998. "Sinhala, an Indo-Aryan Isolate." In *Studies in South Asian Linguistics: Sinhala and Other South Asian Languages,* selected and edited by Barbara C. Lust. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Girāsandēśaya. 1964. Edited with a commentary by Ven. Makuluduve Piyaratana. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Godakumbura, Charles. 1943. "References to Buddhist Sanskrit Writers in Sinhalese Literature." *University of Ceylon Review* 1: 86–93.

———. 1946. "Dravidian Elements in Sinhalese." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 11: 837–41.

———. 1955. *Sinhalese Literature.* Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries.

Gunawardana, R. A. H. L. 1976. "The Kinsmen of the Buddha: Myth as Political Charter in the Ancient and Early Medieval Kingdoms of Sri Lanka." *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* 2: 53–62.

———. 1979a. "The People of the Lion: The Sinhala Identity and Ideology in History and Historiography." *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* 5: 1–37.

———. 1979b. *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

———. 1995. *Historiography in a Time of Ethnic Conflict: Construction of the Past in Contemporary Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Social Scientists Association.

Haṃsasandēśaya. 1979. Edited by K. D. P. Vikramasinha. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Hevawasam, P. B. J. 1961. "Tamil Sources of Some Sinhalese Literary Works with Special Reference to Lokopakaraya." *Tamil Culture* 9: 241–62.

Holt, John. 1991. *Buddha in the Crown.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Inden, Ronald. 1979. "The Ceremony of the Great Gift (Mahādāna): Structure and Historical Context in Indian Ritual and Society." In *Asie du Sud, Traditions et Changements,* sponsored by C. N. R. S. Paris: C. N. R. S.

Ivy, Marilyn. 1995. *Discourses of the Vanishing.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jātakaaṭuvāgäṭapadaya. 1961. Edited by Mäda Uyangodha Vimalakirti. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Jayawickrama, N. A. 1962. *The Inception of the Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna.* London: Luzac and Company.

Kahrs, Eivind. 1992. "What is a *Tadbhava* Word?" *Indo-Iranian Journal* 35: 225–49.

Kāvyaśekhara of Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula. 1935. Edited by Ratmalane Dharmakirti Sri Dharmaramabhidhana. N.p.: D. A. Jayatilaka Mudalituma.

Kulasuriya, Ananda. 1962. *Sinhala Sāhityaya.* Maharagama: Saman Publishers.

Malalgoda, Kitsiri. 1976. *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750–1900.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

McAlpine, W. R., and M. B. Ariyapala, trans. 1990. *The Crest Gem of Poetry: "Kavilumina," the Sinhala Epic in English Verse.* Colombo: Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka.

Mihiripenne Dhammaratana. 1979. *Mihiripenne Prabandha.* Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Nikāyasangraha. 1957. Edited by Munidasa Kumaratunga. Colombo: Ratna Bookstore.

Obeyesekere, Gananath. 1990. *The Work of Culture: Symbolic Transformation in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Owen, Stephen. 1992. *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought.* Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University.

*Palikosasangaho.*1974. Edited by B. J. Bhaskar. Nagpur: Alok Prakashan.

Pärakumbasirita. 1970. Edited by K. D. P. Vikramasinha. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Paranavitana, S. 1956. *Sīgiri Graffiti.* 2 vols. London: Oxford University Press.

———. 1963. "The Evolution of the Sinhalese Language." In Vălivitye Sorata 1963, vol. 2.

———. 1970. *Inscriptions of Ceylon.* Vol. 1. Colombo: Department of Archeology.

Paravīsandēśaya of Toṭagāmuve Śrī Rāhula. 1967. Edited by W. A. F. Dharmavardhana. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1994. "Literary History, Indian History, World History." Unpublished version of Pollock 1995.

———. 1995. "Literary History, Indian History, World History." *Social Scientist* 23: 112–42.

———. 1996. "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, A.D. 300–1300: Transculturation, Vernacularization, and the Question of Ideology." In *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language,* edited by J. E. M. Houben. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

———. 1998. "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000–1500." In *Collective Identities and Political Order,* edited by Shmuel Eisenstadt et al. *Daedalus* 127: 41–74 (special issue).

———. 2001. "The Death of Sanskrit." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43 (2): 392–426.

Prayogaratnāvaliya of Mayurapada. 1948. Edited by Kiriälla Ñanavimala. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Pūjāvaliya of Mayurapada. 1953. Edited by Veragodha Amaramali. Colombo: Ratnakara.

Punyavijaya, ed. 1972. *Catalogue of Manuscripts in Shri Hemachandracharya Jain Jnanamandira.* Patan: Shri Hemachandracharya Jain Jnanamandira.

Reynolds, C. H. B., ed. 1970. *An Anthology of Sinhalese Literature up to 1815.* London: George Allen and Unwin.

Sannasgala, P. B. 1964. *Sinhala Sāhitya Vaṃsaya.* Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Seneviratne, H. L. 1992. "Food Essence and the Essence of Experience." In *The Eternal Food: Gastronomic Ideas and Experiences of Hindus and Buddhists,* edited by R. S. Khare. Albany: State University of New York Press.

———. 1999. *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka.* Chicago: University of Press.

Sidatsangarāva. 1971. Edited by Kodagodha Sri Ñanalokanayaka. Valigama: Hemacandra V. Gunasekara.

Sinhala Bodhi Vaṃsaya of Vilgammuḷa. 1970. Edited by Lionel Lokuliyana. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Siri Rahul Pabanda of Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula. 1984. Edited by Alvu Isi Säbiheḷaya. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Siyabaslakara. 1964. Edited by Henpitagedara Ñanasiha. Colombo: Svabhasa Prakasakayo.

Somadasa, K. D. 1990. *Catalogue of the Hugh Nevill Collection of Sinhalese Manuscripts.* Vol. 4. London: British Library/Pali Text Society.

Subhāṣitaya of Alagiyavanna. 1994. Edited by Kumaratinga Munidasa. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Tambiah, Stanley. 1992. *Buddhism Betrayed?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Välivitye Sorata, Ven. 1963. *Śrī Sumangalaśabdakoṣaya.* 2 vols. Colombo: Anula Press.

Vidāgama Maitreya Himiyan gē Prabandha of Vidāgama Maitrya. 1980. Edited by R. Tennakoon. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena.

Vijayawardhana. *See* Wijayawardhana.

Vuttodaya of Sangharakkhita Thera. 1877. Edited and translated by G. E. Fryer. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press.

Wickramasinghe, Martin. 1963. *Landmarks of Sinhalese Literature.* Colombo: M. D. Gunasena and Co.

———. 1970. *Sinhala Nātakaya hā Saṇḍkiṇḍurāva.* Colombo: Gunasena.

———. 1989. *Kṛta Ekatuva.* Vol. 6. Dehiwala: Tisara Publishers.

Wijayawardhana, G. D. 1963. "The Influence of Sanskrit Alaṅkāra Śāstra on Early Sinhalese Poetry." Ph.D. diss., University of Ceylon at Peredeniya.

———. 1970. *Outlines of Sanskrit Poetics.* Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.

———. 1979. "Literature in Buddhist Religious Life." In *Religiousness in Sri Lanka,* edited by John Ross Carter. Colombo: Marga Institute.

Wijemanne, Piyaseeli. 1984. *Amāvatura, A Syntactical Study.* Colombo: Lake House Printers.

The Indian Literary Identity
in Tibet

Matthew T. Kapstein

INTRODUCTION

The Tibetan language and its literature are at once both of and alien to South Asia. Among the other languages whose literary cultures are considered in this book, Tibetan resembles Persian and English in this respect. Though this comparison is limited, it does underscore two important points: First, from the perspective of language and literature (and much else besides), "South Asia" is not an entirely well-formed conception but one that blurs as its margins are neared; second, the languages occupying the ill-defined marginal territory often have lives of their own outside the realm we would ordinarily consider South Asia. Whereas English and Persian have sometimes

acted as important alien sources upon which the literatures of South Asia have drawn or to which they have reacted, the Tibetan presence in South Asian literatures has been much more restricted. Among the literary cultures we are considering here, it has perhaps loomed largest in English.[1] But Tibet was also visited, and in some cases written about, by speakers of Nepali, Urdu, Hindi, and Bangla, among other South Asian languages—especially Hindu religious pilgrims to Kailash and the members of several Muslim mercantile clans based chiefly in Ladakh and Nepal. However, the entire question of the presence of Tibet in South Asian life and thought remains largely unexamined.[2]

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Tibetan literally is a South Asian language, for even ignoring the Tibetan refugees of recent decades, Tibetan

1. *Kim* and *Lost Horizon* come to mind, not to mention Hollywood's recent fascination with Tibet. See now Lopez 1998 on Tibet in recent Western popular culture.

2. There exists a substantial literature of Hindu pilgrims' travelogues that has not been critically studied. Examples include: Pranavananda 1943; and Tapovanji Maharaj [1960?]. Marc Gaborieau (1973) has edited and translated the journal, written in Urdu, of a nineteenth-century Kathmandu-based Muslim merchant who journeyed to Lhasa. John Perry (University of Chicago) has collected over the years a number of locally published glossaries in Arabic script of Tibetan dialects of Ladakh and adjacent regions in India and Pakistan. A collection of moral maxims in Tibetan attributed to a Ladakhi Muslim author has recently been translated by Dawa Norbu (1987). Indian visitors to Tibet have included several notable scholars of the region, such as Sarat Chandra Das during the late nineteenth century and Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana in the first half of the twentieth century. The orientations of much of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Indian scholarship on Tibet are well-encapsulated in the closing paragraph (pp. xxxiv–xxxv) of the introduction to Bhattacharya 1939, a reader of literary Tibetan designed for the use of those familiar with Sanskrit:

> Reference has been made above to the Tibetan translations of Sanskrit works as well as to the indigenous literature of the country, from which one can know, in the words of Csoma, "the manners, customs, opinions, knowledge, ignorance, superstition, hopes and fears of a great part of Asia, especially of India, in former ages." As regards the translations, the Sanskrit originals of most of them have disappeared, perhaps for ever. Some may be discovered in the future in Nepal, Kashmir, Tibet, or Central Asia, but we cannot hope that they will all ever be found. The contents of these Sanskrit works are now preserved in translation in Tibetan as well as in Chinese and Mongolian. An Indian student desirous of knowing certain lost chapters in the history of literature and culture in his own country can in no way ignore or neglect these translations in Tibetan and other languages. He must bring back from those sources the treasure that has unfortunately been lost to him.

More recently, the International Academy of Indian Culture, founded in Nagpur (and later relocated to New Delhi) by Raghu Vira and continued by his son Lokesh Chandra, pioneered in the publication of Tibetan writings. During the past three decades, there has been a great volume of scholarship and popular writing on Tibet by South Asian authors, including, among many others, the diplomat and anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista (Kathmandu), the historian Zahiruddin Ahmad (Dakka and Canberra), and the novelist Vikram Seth. Representative writings on Tibet by these authors are mentioned in the bibliography.

is the language of populations in four of the SAARC member nations (for South Asia is as much a recent political construct as it is a historically and geographically defined region). It is spoken and written in much of northern Nepal and in parts of at least five Indian states (the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, and Arunachal Pradesh—and perhaps some places in the far north of Uttarachal Pradesh). A variant of Tibetan is spoken by the people of Baltistan in northern Pakistan; and Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan, is a local variety of Tibetan, while Tibetan proper is widely used in Bhutan as well.[3] Moreover, the modern Tibetan publishing industry, and also Tibetan journalism, developed to a large extent in India and expanded enormously with the arrival of large numbers of refugees after 1959.[4] However, the use of Tibetan in South Asia is not the focus of this chapter. The Tibetan-speaking communities of geographical South Asia have often been peripheral to the centers of culture in the Tibetan world, and their literatures taken alone do not reflect the full range of Tibet's rich connections with India.

The Indian influence on Tibetan literature began more than twelve centuries ago and has been felt ever since. Even so, the Indian influence is unevenly represented in the very extensive Tibetan literature to which we now have access, which includes works of philosophy, history, and science, and many types of literature in the more restricted sense, such as epic, poetry, drama, and narrative. Some types of Tibetan writings are so thoroughly and self-consciously cast in an Indian vein that the genuine Tibetan innovations

3. For a survey of the use of Tibetan in India at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Grierson 1967 (originally published 1909). The Tibetan dialects of the Western Himalaya in India and Pakistan have been subject to continuing study and documentation by the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, which has published monographs on Baltistani (1975), Brokskat (1975), Ladakhi (1976), and Purik (1979).

4. The Asiatic Society in Calcutta started publishing texts in Tibetan during the nineteenth century, using the facilities of the Baptist Mission Press. Tibetan fonts were prepared elsewhere as well, for instance, at the Calcutta Presidency Jail Press, where Sarat Chandra Das published his edition of Sum-pa-mkhan-po's history of Buddhism in 1908. Such Tibetan editions were, however, designed to be used primarily by Indological scholars and probably reached few Tibetan readers. The Tibetan Mirror Press, founded by G. Tharchin in Kalimpong, West Bengal, was perhaps the most active Tibetan publishing house in pre-Independence India and issued a Tibetan-language newspaper as well as books and pamphlets. By the 1950s Tibetans began to increasingly avail themselves of the inexpensive Indian printing industry. One of the most ambitious projects at this time was the work of an enterprising lama of the Bon religion, Khyung-sprul (1897–1956), who lithographically published the extensive collected writings of Shar-rdza Bkra-shis-rgyal-mtshan (1859–1935), a renowned Bon-po master, in Delhi. The Tibetan publishing activities of the International Academy of Indian Culture (see n. 2), and the financial incentives provided by the U.S. Library of Congress under the PL480 program, which guaranteed purchase of about twenty copies of each new Tibetan title at favorable prices on behalf of American libraries, encouraged a tremendous expansion of Tibetan publishing in India beginning in the 1960s.

they contain are effaced or denied; whereas certain other genres—notably the Tibetan epic and the vast historical literature, including several types of biography—are markedly independent and distinctively Tibetan in character.[5] Responding to the concerns of the present volume, this chapter focuses on the formation by Tibetan authors of a deliberate identification with an idealized Indian literary world, and the manner in which this came to characterize many areas of Tibetan literary production. In order to restrict the scope a bit further, I have chosen to leave Buddhist shastric (i.e., commentarial and doctrinal) writing for the most part to one side. Not that it is entirely irrelevant here, but my interest in questions of voice, style, image, and literary self-identity is better addressed by focusing upon more literary texts in the sense just specified, while the special subject matter of Buddhist doctrinal treatises is not at issue. That subject matter by itself often does little to establish the distinctively Indian literary character of the work, though Tibetan Buddhist doctrinal writings, particularly after the twelfth century, do frequently seek to emulate stylistic features of works translated from Sanskrit.[6]

Though Tibetan has been used as a literary language in some places within South Asia, its use is most widespread in the ethnically Tibetan regions now divided among five provinces of China.[7] The full geographical range in which Tibetan has served as a language of learning, however, is much greater than even this, for with the promulgation of Tibetan Buddhism among the Mongols and Manchus, Tibetan became a *koiné* among Inner Asian Buddhists by the end of the seventeenth century, and was used at the beginning of the

5. The most accessible overview of Tibetan literature so far is Cabezón and Jackson 1995, in which "literature" embraces in principle all sorts of writing. A useful short introduction to Tibetan literature (in the narrower sense emphasized in this volume) is R. A. Stein 1972a, ch. 5. For the epic literatures of Tibet, Stein's researches (1956, 1959) remain the sources of first recourse. Tibetan historical literature and the state of research about it are surveyed in great detail in Martin 1997. Autobiographical literature is considered at length in Gyatso 1998. A brief survey of Tibetan poetry is given in Tulku Thondup and Kapstein 1993.

6. Some aspects of Tibetan doctrinal and commentarial writing do reflect Tibetan innovations and adaptations. Examples include the "implication-reason" *(thal-phyir)* form for the expression of logical arguments and the extensive elaboration of topical outlines. (See, for instance, Onoda 1992 on Tibetan monastic debate, and Beckwith 1990 on scholastic method.) Determining just which features of Tibetan shastric writing are derived from India and which are innovations remains problematic, however. Wayman 1984, for instance, argues that the interlinear commentary found in some Tibetan canonical editions of Abhayākaragupta's *Munimatālaṃkāra* demonstrates the Indian origins of the Tibetan interlinear commentary *(mchan-'grel).* But it is now clear that the commentary on the *Munimatālaṅkāra* is a Tibetan supplement to the text, which reflects indigenous Tibetan commentarial traditions whose antiquity is known from Dunhuang documents. Chinese scribal practices may have in fact been the original inspiration.

7. The ethnically Tibetan regions of China include the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), much of Qinghai Province, and parts of Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan—an area roughly the size of the Republic of India. The Tibetan population of China is about five and a half million.

twentieth century as far west as Astrakhan (where the Volga River flows into the Caspian Sea) and as far east as Beijing. Indeed, following the fall of the Soviet Union, ethnically Mongolian Buddhists of the Russian Republic began to reaffirm their cultural ties to Tibet, and today literary Tibetan is again studied in Astrakhan, where the local government of Kalmykia has recently made it a required subject in the public schools.[8] And wherever Tibetan is written and read, aspects of its Indian literary heritage are present too.

Tibetan may thus exemplify to some degree the great role of Indian models in the medieval development of literary cultures throughout Central and Southeast Asia and even in East Asia.[9] The inclusion of Tibetan in the present volume, together with Steven Collins's discussion of Pali in its relation to the literary cultures of Southeast Asia, points to a broad range of literatures which, though perhaps not usually thought of as South Asian, nevertheless reflect the contributions of India to the formation of Asian literary cultures generally. In cases such as Tibetan and Thai, in which literary works inspired by Indian models have been produced down to recent times, important questions may be raised regarding the developing relationship between the literary culture in question and the special problems posed by modern identities of various kinds (ethnic, political, economic, etc.). Accordingly, in this chapter, after describing the formation over many centuries of a culturally valued *indianité* in Tibetan literature, I examine briefly the ways in which that voice has been at once reaffirmed and contested in contemporary Tibet. To restate the central concerns of this chapter (perhaps a bit starkly) as a single question: What made it possible, and to some desirable, that in a setting so removed from medieval India as post–Cultural Revolution China, a self-consciously Sanskritized genre of Tibetan would come to be revalued (though at the same time challenged) as exemplary Tibetan literature?

THE EARLY FORMATION OF LITERARY TIBETAN

Script and Literary Culture

When speech is fixed in graphic form, the choice of graphic representation is of fundamental importance. Consider for a moment the use of written Chinese in premodern times (and to varying degrees in the present) among speakers of Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese; or the use of the Hebrew script among Jews speaking Arabic, Persian, Spanish (Ladino), or German (Yiddish); or the use of the Arabic script among speakers of Persian, Urdu, Baltistani and (in earlier times) Turkish and Malay; or the significance of the

---

8. For this information I am indebted to Professor Nicolas Tournadre (Paris).

9. On the role of Indian models in Central and Southeast Asia, see Pollock 1996; on the role of these models in East Asia, see Mair 1994.

abandonment, compelled by the Soviets, of the traditional Mongolian script in favor of Cyrillic, or that of the Ottoman usage of the Arabic script in favor of romanized Turkish due to Atatürk's program of Westernization. In these and many other cases, the choice of script clearly signifies profound cultural commitments and orientations.

The development and spread of the South Asian writing systems presents complicated and intriguing variations on this theme. Should a Panjabi, a Tibetan, a Tamilian, and a speaker of Thai literally share notes, in the absence of a relatively specialized linguistic background they would perhaps notice some interesting similarities in their ways of writing, but little more. Unlike the twelfth-century Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, they would not be able to communicate in writing in the absence of common speech. And unlike the Ladino-speaker and the Yiddish-speaker, or the Ottoman Turk and the Malaysian, they would not be able to make out one another's ways of writing, only to discover that many of the words remain unintelligible. In contrast, while there are indeed among the South Asian writing systems some deep structural and genetic connections that are well known to experts, these may often be unperceived by those who write in these systems. That there may be such a deep affinity without one's necessarily being aware of it has, I think, some important implications for the way we think about the significance of the Tibetan decision, in the early seventh century, to adopt an Indic script in order to write Tibetan.[10]

Later Tibetan historiography attributes three great civilizing innovations to the emperor Songtsen Gampo (Srong-btsan Sgam-po,[11] d. 649/50): the introduction of a system of writing, the codification of the laws, and the inception of Tibetan Buddhism. These themes have been much mythologized in the writings of post-eleventh-century historians, and their accounts can only be used with great caution. Nevertheless, their association of literacy, legislation, and religious change probably does represent a genuine insight into fundamental relationships among three undeniably crucial developments in the cultural history of early medieval Tibet.[12]

The reign of Songtsen Gampo marks the beginning of the consolidation of Tibet's imperial domain. The burgeoning dimensions of his realm, the attendant increase in the complexity of its civil and military administration, and relations with Tibet's neighbors most certainly required close attention

---

10. Róna-Tas 1985: 183–242; Kuijp 1996: 431.

11. The transcription of Tibetan presents special difficulties for non-Tibetanists, as Tibetan pronunciation often does not closely resemble the orthography of the written language. I have therefore provided a rough phonemic version of each proper name used in the text, followed, on first occurrence, by its exact transcription in parentheses. In all other contexts only exact transcriptions are used.

12. Kapstein 2000, ch. 4.

to the regularization of the practices and policies of the state at many levels.[13] Under such circumstances, writing and record-keeping became indispensable technologies. The earliest extant statement of what took place, from the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (c. 800) found at Dunhuang, well reflects such concerns:

> Formerly Tibet had no writing, but during the lifetime of this emperor the Great Legislation that became the Sacred Authority of Tibet; the rank-order of ministers; the powers of both great and small; the awards in recognition of excellence; the punishments for misdeeds; the regularization, among farmers and herdsmen, of pelts, acreage and roadways; the measures of volume and weight; etc.—all of the righteous governance of Tibet emerged during the time of the emperor Trhi Songtsen (Khri Srong-brtsan). Because everyone recalled and experienced his beneficence, they called him by the name of "Songtsen the Wise."[14]

Thus, literacy, law, and the standardization of public practices were early on regarded as products of the sweeping enactments of a single monarch.

Later tradition insists that the Tibetan script was the invention of a particular minister, Thon-mi Sambhoṭa, who traveled to Kashmir to learn the principles of writing and the science of language, and who, besides creating the writing system, authored Tibet's first books of grammar. While contemporary scholars have questioned the veracity of this account, it is clear that the Tibetan script is indeed based on Indian scripts of the period.[15] This suggests close connections with Indian civilization, which raise the puzzle of just how much Indian influence there might have been during the early and mid-seventh century. Could a system of writing have been adopted without significant cultural rapport of other kinds?

Historians writing after the eleventh century of course argue for extensive Indian influence. They maintain, for instance, that the laws enacted by Songtsen were inspired by Hindu law *(dharmaśāstra)* and Buddhist ethical principles. However, fragments of the old laws found at Dunhuang make it clear that this was not the case. The laws appear to have been little or not at all influenced by Indian conventions and instead to have stemmed from the codification of indigenous Tibetan traditions. One may compare, in this re-

13. On the consolidation of the Tibetan empire, see Beckwith 1987. On the regularization of state practices and policies, see Uray 1975. The Tibetan empire, which embraced much of inner Asia, collapsed during the mid-ninth century. Tibet then remained politically fragmented until the thirteenth century.

14. Pelliot tibétain 1287, lines 451–55 in Macdonald and Imaeda 1978–79; Dbang-rgyal and Bsod-nams-skyid 1992.

15. On Thon-mi Sambhoṭa and Tibet's first books of grammar, see Vogel 1981; Sørensen 1994: 165–86. For the question of the literal veracity of this account, see Miller 1976, 1983, 1993. On Tibetan and Indian scripts of the period, see Renou and Filliozat 1985: 167.

gard, the Western medieval redaction, following the Franks' exposure to Roman learning and tradition, of Frankish common law.[16]

Moreover, though later tradition regards Songtsen as the first Buddhist monarch of Tibet, there is little evidence to confirm this. At best we can say that he may have extended some sort of official tolerance to Buddhism (and most likely to Chinese Buddhism), and that translations of a small number of popular scriptures may have been achieved during the seventh century.[17] It is clear, however, that during the latter part of Songtsen's reign, and in the generations immediately following, Chinese civilization probably exerted a greater influence upon the Tibetan court than Indian. That the Tibetans were using an Indic script and not writing in Chinese—so that the Chinese continued to consider them illiterate barbarians—thus may only reflect the circumstance that Tibetan expansion into the western Tibetan plateau resulted in a sustained Tibetan presence in regions proximate to India and the Indianized Silk Road states, where Indic scripts were already in use.[18]

Scripture and Literary Culture

It appears, then, that the Tibetan adoption of an Indic system of writing had relatively weak implications for Tibet's participation in Indian literary culture. What tipped the balance was certainly the promulgation of Buddhism in Tibet, especially after the adoption of Buddhism as the religion of the Tibetan court in 762.[19] However, a number of points must be emphasized before we can draw the conclusion that the adoption of Buddhism axiomatically implied any extensive Sanskritization of Tibetan culture.

During the period of Buddhism's spread in Tibet, Buddhism was something of a pan-Asian phenomenon, and the foreign Buddhists active in Tibet were no less likely to have been Central Asians or Chinese than Indians or Nepalese.[20] While the Indian origins of Buddhism were certainly well un-

---

16. On traditions concerning Indian influence, see Uray 1972; Stein 1986. On the laws at Dunhuang, see Richardson 1989. On the redaction of Frankish law, see Giles Brown in McKitterick 1994: 26–27.

17. On Songtsen as the first Buddhist monarch of Tibet, see Macdonald 1971; Stein 1985, 1986. Tradition attributes the translation of a number of *sūtras* to the period of Srong-btsan, but no early evidence in support of this is known. See Sørensen 1994: 173 n. 490. Nevertheless, some experiments with Buddhist translation may have commenced during the late seventh century, at least if early-ninth-century inscriptions crediting the emperor 'Dus-srong with Buddhist temple construction are to be believed.

18. On the influence of Chinese civilization, see Stein 1981, 1983. On the Chinese view of Tibetans as illiterate barbarians, see Pelliot 1961: 1, 80. On Tibetan expansion to the west, see Beckwith 1987.

19. Richardson 1980; Snellgrove 1987, 2: 408–25; Stein 1986; Kapstein 2000.

20. Snellgrove 1987, 2: 426–50; Emmerick 1967.

derstood, there is little in the record of imperial Tibet that suggests the view of India as the holy land, the sole authentic source of the Dharma, that became an important motif in Tibetan thought during the eleventh century.

Moreover, though the ideal of *cakravartin* kingship was appropriated to some extent by the Tibetan imperial court, where it melded with indigenous Tibetan and certainly also Chinese conceptions of royal authority,[21] the Tibetans never extensively adopted Indian social and political conventions. In this, the Tibetan case probably differs from the apparent parallels in Southeast Asia that come to mind. Thus, even while Buddhism was being actively promulgated in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, with numerous scriptures being translated into Tibetan, the language of the Tibetan chancery remained notably unaffected by Indian conventions, even where Buddhism is discussed in the royal inscriptions.[22] We find no evidence whatever that the Tibetan emperors shared the interest in Sanskrit *kāvya* that so delighted their Khmer counterparts. Moreover, the Tibetans, whenever possible, preferred to coin neologisms in their own language and not to borrow Sanskrit or other foreign words.

Nevertheless, the project of translating Buddhist scriptures into Tibetan involved the cultivation of a broad range of Sanskritic learning, in which the emperor Trhi Songdetsen (Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan, 742–c. 800; r. 755/56–c. 797) and his descendants during the early ninth century appear to have taken great interest. There is no better reflection of this than the long version of the introduction to the *Two-Volume Lexicon* (*Sgra-sbyor bam-po gnyis-pa,* compiled in 814), a glossary of many important Buddhist terms.[23] As an unparalleled source for Tibetan thinking about language and translation during the early medieval period that would remain influential a millennium after its composition,[24] it merits our consideration here.

The text relates that an assembly was convened by the emperor Trhi Desongtsen (Khri Lde-srong-btsan, d. 815) to address military matters, receive tribute from his territories, and bestow awards upon his ministers. Following these affairs, the emperor commanded that the Bactrian and Tibetan Buddhist preceptors present at the court should compose "a catalogue of the Tibetan translations and coinages deriving from the Sanskrit of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles." He explains his concept in detail, saying that in his father's time the translators

> coined many terms of religious language that were unfamiliar in Tibetan, among which some accord with neither doctrinal texts nor the conventions of

21. Stein 1981.
22. Richardson 1985: 26–31.
23. Simonsson 1957; Ishikawa 1990.
24. Ruegg 1973.

vyākaraṇa.[25] Those that it would be inappropriate to leave uncorrected should be corrected. Having augmented them with all those terms of language of which we are fond, and remaining in accord with the original texts of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles and with the explanations of the great former preceptors, such as Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, and with the conventions of language as they are established according to *vyākaraṇa,* write them down in a text, explaining those that are difficult to understand logically and word-by-word. As for plain language that requires no explanation and is appropriately translated in a literal manner, assign terminological conventions indicating the words [employed].[26]

Elaborating upon this, the monarch demonstrates a clear awareness of many of the precise technical problems of translation. For example, he notes the challenges posed by the differences between Sanskrit and Tibetan word order and syntax:

> In translating the Dharma, without departing from the order of the Sanskrit language, translate it into Tibetan in such a way that there is no deviation in the ease of relationships between meaning and word. If ease of understanding is brought about by deviating [from the phrase order of the original], whether in a verse there be four lines or six, translate by reordering the contents of the verse according to what is easy. In the case of prose, until the meaning be reached, translate by rearranging both word and meaning according to what is easy.[27]

Specific difficulties in establishing a translation lexicon are discussed at length, including: issues of synonymity and homonymity, cases in which Sanskrit loan words should be used in preference to Tibetan equivalents or neologisms,[28] the differences between Sanskrit and Tibetan ways of rendering

---

25. This term, referring to Sanskrit grammatical science, occurs here as a loanword, rather than the Tibetan translation term, *lung-ston-pa*, which would be preferred in later times.

26. Ishikawa 1990: 2.

27. Ishikawa 1990: 2.

28. "Where many names apply to a single saying, in accord with the context apply a name that arrives [at the appropriate meaning]. For instance, [in the case of] Gautama: the word *gau* has many senses, including 'phrase,' 'direction,' 'earth, 'light,' 'vajra,' 'cow,' and 'heaven.' In the case of *kauśika,* 'pertaining to *kuśa* grass' and 'skilled'; in that of *padma,* 'joy,' 'owl,' 'possessing a treasure,' etc. If one translates these, bringing out the ways of the words, because they suggest a great many enumerations [of meaning], it is not possible to combine all those enumerations in a single translation. But in those cases in which there is no great reason to delimit a single [usage], let it remain in Sanskrit without translation. If a term occurs that may be interpreted in several ways, then, without translating it one-sidedly, make it so as to arrive at [a suitable degree of] generality.

"If one translates the names of countries, species, flowers, plants, and the like, one errs and the terms are awkward. Though it may be correct to translate approximately, it is uncertain whether or not the meaning is just right. In those cases, add at the head [of the

large numbers,[29] and the correct use of prepositional modifications.[30] Because social rank is strongly represented in the gradations of Tibetan formal usage, it was important, too, to stipulate how this was to be carried over into translations of Buddhist texts.[31] The emperor's introduction draws to a close with this remarkable injunction:

> Besides the ways of language that are decided by order in this manner, it is not permitted for any persons, on their own, to correct and form neologisms hereafter. If there is a need for the respective colleges of translation and exegesis to assign terms in new language, then in each and every college, prior to stipulating the term in question, there should be an investigation according to the axioms derived literally from the doctrinal texts and grammars, and according to the literal usages of the doctrine, and then [the conclusion of the investigation] must be offered in the palace before the presence of the lineage holder of the transcendent lord [Buddha] and the college of the official redactor of the Dharma, and a hearing requested. After they have decided [the merits of the proposed terminology] by order, it may be added directly into the catalog of language.[32]

As this passage, along with other documents stemming from the old Tibetan court, makes very clear, the Buddhism promoted by the court involved a strong

---

word] 'country' or 'flower,' etc., according to whatever is named, and leave the Sanskrit unaltered."

The emperor is explaining, for instance, that the Tibetan word for "country," *yul,* is to be used in *yul wā-rā-ṇa-sī* in order to specify that the unfamiliar name Vārāṇasī refers to a place.

In this and the notes immediately following, I translate the text as established in Ishikawa 1990: 1–4.

29. "As for numbers, if one translates in accord with the Sanskrit, one speaks, for instance, of 'thirteen hundred monks with a half,' which, if translated in the Tibetan manner, is ordinarily 'a thousand two hundred fifty.' Because there is no contradiction in meaning, and [the latter] is easier in Tibetan, put numbers capable of summarization in the Tibetan way."

30. "If one translates such particles and ornamental expressions as are found, like [the prepositions] *pari, sam,* or *upa,* translate them literally in the semantically appropriate manner as *yongs-su* ['entirely'], or *yang-dag-pa* ['truly'], or *nye-ba* ['proximately']. But in cases where meaning is not augmented [by them] and there is no need for a surplus of words, use a designation that accords with the meaning."

Note that the Tibetan practice of translating the Sanskrit verb prepositions in this way often results in expressions in which they have a stronger force than in the original Sanskrit. Thus, *abhisaṃbuddha,* "completely awakened," is rendered *mngon-par rdzogs-pa'i sangs-rgyas,* which means "Manifestly Perfect Buddha."

31. "As for the honorific and rank-ordered terms for Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Śrāvakas, etc., translation in honorific terms is for the Buddha. For the others, only middle-rank terms and lower apply." In effect, the emperor is saying that among the Buddhist pantheon, the Buddhas were to be regarded as more or less equivalent in status to the monarch, and all others were to be relegated to an inferior position.

32. Ishikawa 1990: 4.

commitment to a broad range of classical Indian learning.[33] Nevertheless, despite the striking anticipation of the Académie Française (or perhaps of Borges!) in the reference to a "catalogue of language," there is little to suggest that during the period of the empire, outside the restricted Buddhist contexts in which it found expression, such learning had established a stable place in Tibetan culture more generally. Despite the evidence that some didactic and popular literature based on Indian materials was indeed elaborated and circulated under the empire, the creation of an enduring Tibetan literary culture modeled on Indian paradigms would take place only long after the empire had fallen. Let us recall, too, the extreme resistance on the part of the Tibetans to the inclusion of Sanskrit loanwords in their language. Thus, though a few names lacking accepted Tibetan equivalents were eventually adopted—such as *tsam-pa-ka* (*campaka* flower), and Wā-rā-ṇa-sī (Vārāṇasī)—in general, Tibetan coinages came to be strongly favored: thus we find Dga'-byed for Rāma (though in the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa* and elsewhere we also see Ra-ma-ṇa), Mnyan-yod for Śrāvasti, and Byang Sgra-mi-snyan for Uttara-kuru. Still, owing to the artificiality of many such expressions, they preserved something of a foreign and exotic (or sometimes learned) flavor despite their Tibetan appearance.

Kāvya certainly became known to some extent among learned translators and monks during the period with which we are concerned. The most comprehensive of the early-ninth-century Tibetan Buddhist lexicons that has come down to us includes Tibetan coinages for both *kavi* and *kāvya*.[34] And the eulogies *(stotra; bstod-pa)* and epistles *(lekha; spring-yig)* translated into Tibetan during the late eighth and early ninth centuries include some examples of *kāvya,* including works of Mātṛceṭa and Candragomin.[35] Probably the greatest achievement along these lines was the translation of Āryaśūra's famed *Garland of Birth Stories (Jātakamālā),*[36] a work that, as we shall see, became exceptionally influential in Tibet from the eleventh century onward.

The Old Tibetan Rāmāyaṇa

In contrast with Buddhist literature in translation, the indigenous Old Tibetan literature that survives is fragmentary and still poorly understood. Because the skills of literacy were preserved primarily in Buddhist circles after

33. Besides the *Two-Volume Lexicon,* this is perhaps most evident in the other great ninth-century lexicon, the *Mahāvyutpatti* (Sakaki 1916–1925), or in the Ldan-kar Palace catalog of translations, also compiled in the early ninth century (Lalou 1953).

34. Sakaki 1916–1925, nos. 6421–22.

35. Lalou 1953, nos. 454, 455–57, 670, 672.

36. Lalou 1953, no. 656.

the fall of the empire in the ninth century, the literary Tibetan of later centuries was first modeled on scriptural Buddhist usage.[37] But in a small number of documents transmitted in later times, in the surviving imperial inscriptions, and among the documents found at Dunhuang, we do find an older literary Tibetan and evidence of an older Tibetan literature.[38] Some difficult problems are posed by the interpretation of this material, and one must be cautious in exercising judgments about literary influences, questions of style, and related issues. We know, for example, little of the contemporaneous literatures of Khotan,[39] Sogdiana, and other cultures besides those of India and China that may have been among the relevant influences on Tibetan. And although the Chinese vernacular literature of the period is becoming better known, thanks in large measure to the evidence from Dunhuang, few scholars have been qualified or inclined to study both Tibetan and Chinese literary materials of the late first millennium.[40] In this and the section immediately following, therefore, I only offer some examples of literary Tibetan texts that may be of interest in the context of the present volume. The conclusions drawn from them remain tentative.

One relatively well-studied group of Dunhuang fragments contains portions of an otherwise unknown prose *Rāmāyaṇa*.[41] It probably represents, and may even translate, *Rāmāyaṇa* traditions that were widespread in Central Asia during the eighth century or thereabouts, though in some of its elements it also seems to reflect peculiarly Tibetan conventions. Because the Dunhuang fragments come from several manuscripts, which sometimes overlap and repeat each other and sometimes differ significantly, one might infer that it was a popular work, though so far we know little of it outside of Dunhuang. There is evidence to suggest that the story line at least remained alive in the Tibetan literary tradition long after the period of the Dunhuang manuscripts.

37. Kapstein 2000, ch. 1.

38. For a popular introduction to the discovery of the "hidden library" of Dunhuang and its importance, see Hopkirk 1984. The major portion of the Tibetan documents from Dunhuang were collected by M. A. Stein and P. Pelliot, and later catalogued by M. Lalou, L. de La Vallée Poussin, and Z. Yamaguchi. Facsimiles of many representative documents, with brief introductions including references to a wide range of earlier research, may be found in Macdonald and Imaeda 1978–79. For the Old Tibetan inscriptions, see primarily Richardson 1985.

39. Emmerick 1992.

40. Comparative work in Chinese and Tibetan Dunhuang documents has so far focused upon history, religion and linguistics, and in these areas has sometimes touched upon issues of much interest for the history of literature as well. (Examples include Coblin 1991; Imaeda 1980; Stein 1983; Takeuchi 1985.) Japanese research on Dunhuang Tibetan documents has emphasized historical scholarship and the study of the Chan sect of Chinese Buddhism, which made inroads in Tibet during the eighth and ninth centuries. (For surveys, see Demiéville 1979; Ueyama 1983.)

41. See Jong 1989 for a complete text and translation, and references to earlier studies. The translations given in what follows, however, are my own.

The story as told in the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa* is familiar in its general contours but, like many of the "other *Rāmāyaṇas,*" differs from Vālmīki's tale in important respects.[42] Among its most striking features, shared also with the fifteenth-century Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa* (discussed later in the section on the "blossoming of Tibetan *kāvya*"), is its depiction of Sītā as the actual daughter of Rāvaṇa, abandoned Moses-like in the waters owing to troubling portents surrounding her birth.[43] The following paragraphs from one of the manuscripts kept in the India Office Library illustrate certain of its resemblances to and differences from the better-known *Rāmāyaṇa*s. For instance, the broadly Buddhist milieu in which this version was circulated is clearly indicated by its opening reference to the worship of the *arhat*s:

> The king who held sway over the Rose-Apple Continent, who was called Ten Chariots [= Daśaratha], had no son, so he offered worship to the five hundred arhats who live on Mt. Ti-se [= Kailash]. They said, "In order to get a son, take [this] flower, and give it to your queen. You will have a son."
>
> Then the king gave it to his senior queen, and the queen thought, "Just as I am unhappy and ill at ease to be without a son, the junior queen [= Kauśalyā] is similarly distressed." With that, she divided the flower in two and offered [half to her co-wife]. She encouraged the king not to avoid the junior queen's company. When the king slept with his two consorts, each of them came to be pregnant with a son. The junior consort's son was three days older, and he was given the name Ramana. As for the son of the senior queen, he was named Lag-sha-na.
>
> Sometime thereafter the gods and the asuras [anti-gods] went to war, and king Ten Chariots also went to assist the gods' army. He returned after being wounded, and became grievously ill. The king thought, "Besides being advanced in years, I am terribly sick. It seems I'll not live. The senior queen has been gracious and helpful in many different ways at all times. But according to the principle of the succession of the son to the throne, the eldest is Ramana. Besides being the eldest, he has strong skills and great wondrous abilities to challenge the kings of the four continents. Above and beyond that, Ramana has captured the king's fancy. But if I should establish Ramana as king, the senior queen will be disappointed, and if I so establish Lag-sha-na, then, besides not being the one who has captured the king's fancy, the public will come to disparage him. So what am I to do?" Thinking this, he became depressed. Looking into the face of his queen, his illness increased until he was at the point of death. Ramana heard this and offered these words to his father, "I am dedicated to my father's well-being. Having renounced kingship, riches, and worldly business, without attachment, I shall conduct myself as a sage, and go to a wilderness hermitage." So saying, he went to the sages' dwelling. His

42. Iyengar 1983; Richman 1991.

43. The birth of Sītā as Rāvaṇa's daughter is common to Khotanese, Lao, Malaysian, Kashmiri, and some Jain versions of the tale. See especially the contributions of Umakant Shah, F. Bizot, and S. Singaravelu to Iyengar 1983.

father was delighted, and set Lag-sha-na upon the throne. The father then passed away.[44]

In this version of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the senior queen and Lag-sha-na (whose name is of course a transcription of "Lakṣmaṇa") seem equivalent to Kaikeyī and Bharata in Vālmīki's tale—an important difference. What I wish to emphasize, however, is not the story line, but rather that we seem to have here an *Indian* story—the story of Rāma—told in *Tibetan* prose, in which there are few apparent stylistic markers identifying it with Indian literature.[45] It may translate, or at least paraphrase, an Indic prose text, or it may not. However that may be, it is an Indian story chiefly by virtue of its frame of reference, and not, it seems, in respect to features of style. It may be compared with a medieval Flemish painting of a Bible story: we know that the story is set in ancient Israel, but still it looks just like fifteenth-century Ghent, and, owing to what the painting represented and the manner in which it represented it, was able to appear at once familiar and foreign to the fifteenth-century Ghentish. Among twentieth-century novels, a work like Hesse's *Siddhartha* in some respects exemplifies a similar intersection of the exotic and the known.

In one important respect, however, the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa* does appear to emulate a stylistic feature of Indic works translated into Tibetan. In its occasional verse passages, it sometimes employs lines that are unusually long for Old Tibetan, a rare feature that it shares only with a few other pre-eleventh-century Tibetan works, which also seem to have adopted an intentionally Indianized style.[46] An example of this occurs when the farmers, Sītā's adoptive guardians, present her to be Rāma's bride (in this version there is no contest for her hand by bending the bow). Their request that he accept her is offered in verse:

> Blue-black hair curling clockwise,
> Blue lotus eyes,
> Brahmā's voice and a pure complexion—she is
> Adorned with garlands, the best ornaments, auspicious wealth!
> Glorious and taintless, born from the lotus supreme,
> The limbs of her body fully mature,
> Like a golden image with inlaid gems,
> All the quarters are alight with her radiance,
> Her body perfumed with royal sandal;
> In the living world, with its gods, when she speaks

44. Jong 1989: A 65–73 and A 73–83.
45. Stein 1983: 217.
46. Pelliot tibétain 239, a Dunhuang manuscript dealing with funerary rituals and probably dating to the late dynastic period (ninth century), also employs unusually long verse lines in some passages, particularly in those sections in which the Indian Buddhist frame of reference is most pronounced.

> The fragrance of the blue lotus spreads about.
> When this one smiles or laughs
> We hear pleasing musical sounds.
> This jewel of a girl has come into the world:
> She will not be mastered by anyone ordinary,
> But only by you, for, in the human world,
> There can be no other lord for her.[47]

The verse lines of nine syllables are a stylistic departure from the very short lines favored in Old Tibetan verse.[48] Even if this passage is not in fact a translation, the style (and not only the imagery) of translations of Sanskrit verse clearly is being consciously emulated in it. Given also the imagery, which must have seemed very exotic to a Tibetan audience,[49] it is likely that in aspects of both form and content the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa* would have been received by some as a token of Tibet's growing participation in the sphere of Indian civilization. It would be four centuries, however, before the stylistic emulation of Indian literature could become a matter for reflection among Tibetan literati.

The Cycle of Birth and Death

Questions pertaining to the nature and degree of Indian influence upon the form and content of early Tibetan literature are also raised by the *Cycle of Birth and Death (Skye shi 'khor lo'i lo rgyus),* a verse text, found in many manuscripts from Dunhuang, that has been studied by Yoshiro Imaeda (1981). Like the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa,* this is an archaic Tibetan literary text attributable to the late eighth or early ninth centuries and reflecting immediate Indian influences of various kinds; but unlike the former, the *Cycle of Birth and Death* does not seek to translate or even to retell an Indian tale; it is an entirely original Tibetan creation. It demonstrates, above all, the effort to assimilate into a Tibetan cultural framework the new cosmology of Buddhism.

In its spread from India to other parts of Asia, Buddhist teaching had maintained the necessity of upholding the *karma-saṃsāra* cosmology literally. The picture of the world that this engendered provided much of the rationale for the soteriological concerns of the teaching, but, above and beyond this, it also involved a highly rationalized understanding of the order

---

47. Jong 1989: A 96–104.
48. Haarh 1969: 417–21.
49. Visual images of Indian beauties were probably familiar to some through paintings, which no doubt seemed exotic as well. See, for example, the four goddesses in the corners of the remarkable Amoghapāśa *maṇḍala* from Dunhuang reproduced in Giès and Cohen 1995: no. 283. The painting seems certain to date from the period of the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang and may well reflect Tibetan stylistic tendencies.

of the world: human actions, according to their nature, motivation, moral value, and so on, were taught to have precise and regular results. The chain formed in this way by deeds and their results issued in an indefinitely extended series of births and deaths. Buddhism thus presented the medieval world with an intricate set of perspectives and problems: its rationalization of the world, together with the powerfully moralistic dimensions of this rationalization, may have in some respects well served the interests of expanding states with a growing interest in public order and regular administration throughout very extensive domains.[50] However, Buddhism required acceptance of a difficult and puzzling set of beliefs concerning personal rebirth and a rigorously causalistic account of moral action. At the same time, the prospect of attaining *nirvāṇa* provided a channel for the energies of those who, whether owing to personal disposition or drawing the reasoned conclusion entailed by the cosmology, were motivated by the religious search for freedom (though, in relation to the interests of the state, this dimension of Buddhism was also possibly disruptive).

The introduction of Buddhism to peoples among whom the *karma-saṃsāra* cosmology had not been previously established often raised special problems, not the least of which was that adoption of the Buddhist worldview generally required a revaluation, if not the wholesale rejection, of prior systems of belief. Thus in China, for example, after Buddhism was introduced during the first centuries of the Common Era, a series of disputes broke out concerning the nature of whatever it was that transmigrated, with the interesting result that some Chinese Buddhists—over and against the mainstream of the Indian Buddhist tradition, which denied the existence of any permanent or enduring self or soul—posited just such an entity in order to answer their Confucian critics. And in Japan, the spread of Buddhism during the Nara and Heian periods was evidenced in the literature of the time in a great fascination with the *rokudō,* the six destinies *(ṣaḍgati)* of Indian Buddhist cosmology.[51]

In Tibet the situation was in certain respects analogous. While early Tibetan beliefs concerning the fate of the dead are not entirely clear to us, what is clear is that Buddhist views were at first largely alien.[52] A number of the old writings now available—including philosophical treatises, funeral texts, and, as in the present case, narratives—are all concerned to establish the veracity of the *karma-saṃsāra* scheme for Tibetan readers or auditors.[53] Hence, it is of utmost importance that the tale of the *Cycle of Birth and Death* begins with the discovery of death by apparently Tibetan, not Indian, gods.

50. Compare Spiro 1982: 439–53.
51. On China, see Pachow 1980: 117–62. On Japan, see LaFleur 1983, ch. 2.
52. Lalou 1952; Stein 1970; Kapstein 2000, ch. 1.
53. Kapstein 2000, ch. 3.

In its effort to explore the Buddhist cosmology in Tibetan terms, therefore, the *Cycle* parallels the contemporaneous Japanese literature of the *rokudō*.

As Imaeda has convincingly shown, the story, though certainly of Tibetan authorship, is with equal certainty inspired by the *Sūtra of the Array of Stalks (Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra),* wherein the merchant's son Sudhana travels throughout India, from one teacher to another, until he finally receives the teachings he seeks from the coming Buddha Maitreya. In the *Cycle,* Precious Jewel,[54] son of the gods, conducts a similar search throughout the several realms of existence before he arrives at the feet of Śākyamuni. At many points the author places episodes in fantastic Indian settings. It is apparent that, beyond the matter of Buddhist doctrine, the author wishes to establish an Indian frame of reference. Moreover, the episode framing the entire tale, the death of the god Light Blazing King, is most likely modeled on the story of the god Vimalatejaḥprabha (Pure Splendrous Light) found in a Buddhist *tantra,* the *Purification of All Evil Destinies (Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra),* that was well known in Tibet by this time.[55] If this is so, then the author may well represent an early Tibetan Buddhist literary culture in which familiarity with a broad range of narratives derived from Indian sources was presupposed.

India's presence within the *Cycle* is primarily imagistic. Narrative verse passages of Mahāyāna *sūtra*s in Tibetan translation, like the *Array of Stalks,* certainly influenced aspects of the author's style, particularly in his use of a seven-syllable verse line. Nevertheless, he also makes extensive use of purely Tibetan stylistic devices, such as set onomatopoetic phrases, to suggest the movements of the gods, their dress and ornaments, and so on. The brief selections that follow illustrate the interplay of Tibetan and Indian imagery in the *Cycle:*

> Throughout numberless aeons in the past,
> All corporeal beings and all of the gods,
> Have not beheld the phenomena of birth and death.
> Because they live for many years,
> So they hope to remain alive forever.
> The lord of their realm, Light Blazing King,
> Dwelt in the heavenly mansion of Exalted Light,

54.   The name is given as Rin-chen-lag[s], which may be equivalent to Sanskrit **Ratnapāṇi,* "Jewel-in-hand." Stein 1983, however, has argued with some plausibility that the Tibetan should probably be Rin-chen-legs, in which case this is likely a translation of the *Chinese* rendering of the name Sudhana, which in Tibetan translations from the Sanskrit is usually rendered Nor-bzang.

55.   Skorupski 1983. Imaeda does not mention the possibility that this text was an influence here, but the similarity of the gods' names, the tales of their deaths, and the problems that the mortality of one of their number raised for the gods strongly suggest this.

> Radiating with fine light, unbearable to behold.
> All those dwelling, above and below,
> Appeared there as if in a mirror.[56]

Much of this portrayal seems derived from Indian Buddhist descriptions of the heavens, but in the passages that follow there is, in addition, an emphasis on magical power and wizardry, expressed in terms that hark back to early Tibetan traditions, for instance, those concerning the marvelous powers of Tibet's ancient, divine kings:

> At some time the Light Blazing King of that realm
> Fell upon the time when his life had run out:
> Unable to demonstrate his qualities of magical power,
> The excellent bodily light that had blazed now dimmed.
> Forgetting to speak, forgetting even the movement of breath,
> He thought all of this was startling.
> Though he asked each and every one,
> "What was my fault? How to fix it?"
> No one knew how this was to be fixed. . . .
>
> Among the gods was one of long life,
> Called Dutara the Great Wizard.
> He came to Light Blazing's dwelling
> And explained to them their error and confusion.
> "All of you are sullied with ignorance!
> Everyone in this realm
> After seventy thousand aeons have passed
> Comes to be just like this!
> This is called the principle of birth and death.
> I know not what benefits it."[57]

It is the wizard Dutara's explanation of the Buddhist insight that even the gods must die that impels Precious Jewel, accompanied by "a retinue of many skilled in wizardry," to seek a remedy to his father's plight. He proceeds to travel throughout many domains, and each teacher he meets in turn tells him that the mystery of birth and death is too profound for him to understand and indicates where his next stop should be. Many of the teachers he encounters bear names similar or identical to those of the spiritual benefactors *(kalyāṇamitra)* encountered by Sudhana in the *Array of Stalks*. These adventures are highly formulaic and repetitive, and may be illustrated by Pre-

56. The description of the heavens here shows striking similarities with later Tibetan writings, particularly such "rediscovered treasures" *(gter-ma)* as the *Maṇi Bka'-'bum* (twelfth and thirteenth centuries) and *Padma Bka'-thang* (fourteenth century). The text follows Imaeda 1981, translated in Kapstein 2000: 5–6.
57. Imaeda 1981: 87–90, translated in Kapstein 2000: 6–7.

cious Jewel's visit to the Most Awesome Voice—the Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa of the *Array:*

> Then the son of the gods, Precious Jewel,
> Traversing many domains,
> Arrived at the land of the pure waterfall.
> Many jeweled groves shone there,
> Adorned with various flowers and fruits.
> In the midst of those varied groves
> Sat the *ṛṣi* Most Awesome Voice,
> Adorned with an ornamented turban crown,
> Wearing clothing of grass and of bark,
> With a bark skirt, and a grass mat,
> And surrounded by ten thousand *ṛṣi*s.[58]

The sage grants Precious Jewel his blessing, which causes him to experience a vision of the realms of Buddhas throughout the universe. Moved by this demonstration of splendor, he addresses the *ṛṣi:*

> "When my father, Light Blazing King,
> Changes body with the passage of life,
> Doing what shall I once again meet him?
> Doing what shall we be happy and glad?"
> In those words he posed his question,
> And Most Awesome Voice answered back,
> "That is the law of birth and of death.
> The tale of birth and death is most profound,
> And I know not the way of that law.
> By goodness depart from here,
> Ask the Brahman Scope of Victorious Warmth[59]
> About that tale of birth and of death!"
> Then the son of the gods, Precious Jewel,
> Hearing himself addressed in these words,
> Performed respectful salutations,
> And to inquire about the law of birth and death
> Went to seek the Brahman Victorious Warmth.
> Traveling there with his retainers,
> The crowns of those gods rat-tat-tattled,
> Their bejeweled chimes ru-ru-rung
> To varied drum-sounds, du-du-dum![60]

---

58. The description, drawing on stereotypical Indian depictions of forest-dwelling sages, must have seemed quite strange in ninth-century Tibet.

59. This is the Brahman Jayoṣmāyatana of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra.*

60. Imaeda 1981: plates 9–10.

Just as the quest of Sudhana in the *Array of Stalks* reaches its conclusion with the hero's encounter with the future Buddha Maitreya in the south of India, so Precious Jewel ultimately finds the teaching he seeks in Āryavarta, where he meets the Buddha of the present age, Śākyamuni. In this detail, however, the story seems to echo the *Purification of All Evil Destinies,* as it does also when the young god's dilemma is resolved through the Buddha's teaching of a tantric funeral ritual that will insure the future well-being of the deceased. Certainly Indian Buddhism is the basis for the cosmological framework and doctrinal content of this poem, but if we leave these matters of religion to one side, we may say that India is present for this literature as a source of stories and of images, which indeed must have seemed foreign and wonderful when the poem was composed. As a source of literary style, however, India remains almost as distant as the goal of the young god's quest: the seven-syllable verse line, as I have mentioned, may reflect the influence of verse narratives contained in translated *sūtra*s, but the onomatopoeia in the final verse lines just quoted is a characteristic Tibetan flourish.[61] And there is no evidence yet of the intricately ornamented diction of *kāvya.* Thus, while Tibetan authors of the eighth and ninth centuries appear to have begun to form a literary image of India, India remained an altogether alien realm, in which no Tibetan writer yet situated himself.

The foregoing examples provide some benchmarks in the study of the early medieval formation of Tibetan literature. We have seen that Tibetan literacy was first driven by the administrative and legislative needs of an expanding empire, whose realm came to embrace not only new territory but alien learning as well. The Tibetan literature produced during this period reflected this process by incorporating within the Tibetan cultural sphere stories, motifs, and images derived from the recently conquered domain. Nevertheless, our knowledge of Tibetan literary culture during the late first millennium remains in most respects vague, for with few exceptions (such as Emperor Trhi Desongtsen's proclamation on translation), neither the authors, nor the readers, nor the audiences for recitation are known to us except by inference. From the eleventh century onward, however, an abundance of biographical and historical sources permit more direct access to the Tibetan cultures in which literature was produced and received.

61. Again, interestingly, it is a convention often found in the "rediscovered treasures," most famously perhaps in the description of Padmasambhava's terrestrial abode, the Copper-Colored Mountain *(Zangs-mdog-dpal-ri)* in the *Gsol-'debs le'u-bdun-ma,* a text "rediscovered" in the fourteenth century.

INDIANITÉ AND THE PAṆḌIT'S PERSONA

The period from the collapse of the old Tibetan empire, in the mid-ninth century, until the flowering of the kingdom of Guge in Western Tibet, towards the end of the tenth century, remains obscure and is represented in traditional Tibetan historiography as a veritable dark age.[62] I need not enter into this difficult topic in any detail here, but one or two points are relevant. Tibetan appears to have survived as a literary language during this time primarily in Buddhist circles, with the result that the literary Tibetan that developed after the tenth century was derived from what had once been a language of scriptural translation. At the same time, the archaic literary Tibetan known to us from Dunhuang, the old royal inscriptions, and other early sources gradually fell out of use, becoming increasingly obscure to later generations of Tibetans. Thus, as the archaic language that had been used by the imperial civil and military administration became obsolete, Buddhist usage gradually emerged as the standard. This was the case even in subjects such as history, which had previously been written in the language employed by the state bureaucracy. Such a development would have contributed to the iconizing of Buddhism and its originally Indian context as the paradigms of learned (that is, literate) and prestigious culture.

Nevertheless, it is not at all clear that when the promulgation of Buddhism was renewed in Tibet during the late tenth and the eleventh centuries,[63] anyone at the time appreciated what this might entail vis-à-vis Tibetan interest in Indian civilization more generally. The study of Indian poetics *(alaṅkāraśāstra)* seems not yet to have been a subject on anyone's mind, though, as we have seen earlier, some works of *kāvya,* as exemplified by the *jātaka*s and Buddhist *stotra* literature, were known in translation. Indeed, owing to the renewal of translation activity, beginning in the late tenth century, the corpus of *kāvya*-influenced writings available in Tibetan was in fact growing. As I argue in this section, the new literary Tibetan was at first (and to a large extent would always be) employed with a distinctively Tibetan voice; it was different in many respects from the sort of Tibetan that the eighth- and ninth-century authors had used, but by the eleventh century had become established as the Tibetan in which one wrote.[64] There may be some parallel in the evolution of English just a few centuries later, when the Norman influence had been absorbed and was no longer felt to be particularly foreign.

62. Kapstein 2000, ch. 1.

63. Vitali 1996.

64. The precise transformations of Tibetan between the eighth and eleventh centuries, however, have yet to be adequately characterized. Tibetan historical linguistics is a relatively young discipline, and its development will undoubtedly lead to correction and refinement of the picture roughly sketched out here.

In the thirteenth century, however, a distinctive and self-consciously San-skritized voice would also become articulated through the Tibetan medium. It is this transition that I attempt to characterize more carefully here.

Travels in an Imaginal Wonderland

During the late tenth century the transmission of Indian Buddhist culture and learning to Tibet entered into a new and dynamic phase. Tibetans were translating large numbers of texts once again, and some were visiting India, sometimes living there for years in order to study. Indian and Nepalese Buddhist *paṇḍita*s and *yogin*s were also traveling to Tibet, where some (like the famous Atiśa, who taught in Tibet from 1042 until his death there in 1055) dwelt for long periods of time, gathering numerous Tibetan disciples in the process.[65]

Tibetan Buddhist commentarial writing began to flourish during this period, though few of the philosophical works of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries survive. Those that are extant suggest that there was as yet little interest in closely imitating Indian commentarial style (though some influences, of course, were inevitable). The primary concerns were to clarify the text for Tibetan disciples and to guide oral exposition. Other types of Tibetan Buddhist doctrinal literature—the plentiful works on the *bodhisattva*'s path, for instance—also seem primarily interested in expressing key doctrinal ideas in a manner that would be more accessible to Tibetans. In other words, the growing body of indigenous Buddhist doctrinal and technical literature was framed so as to mediate between the translated Indian treatises and Tibetan understanding. The concern above all was with the content of Buddhist thought, and only incidentally with its form.

At the same time, however, new literary genres were developing in which various types of Indian influence may be detected, besides the doctrinal influences of Buddhist teaching. India was now very much in vogue, and tokens of connections to the south were greatly prized.

Some of the most important types of writing that developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were associated with the growing movements of tantrism and yoga; in this respect developments in Tibet certainly echoed the emergence of new forms of vernacular literature in connection with new religious movements in India (a process discussed in other contexts throughout the present volume), especially the Apabhramsha verse of the Buddhist *siddha*s.[66] The masters of the Kagyü (Bka'-brgyud, "oral-precept lineage") were particularly renowned for their contributions to the creation of distinc-

---

65. Das 1893; Snellgrove 1987, 2: 477–84; Kuijp 1994; Stearns 1996.
66. Snellgrove 1954; Guenther 1973, 1993; Kværne 1977.

tive genres of Tibetan yogic poetry and also to the development of biographical and autobiographical literature, in which visionary and dream experiences were of key importance.[67] As an example we may take one of the most famous poems attributed to the founder of the Kagyü tradition, the renowned tantric adept and translator Marpa Chöki Lodrö (Mar-pa Chos-kyi-blo-gros, 1012–1097), on the teachings he received from the Indian *mahāsiddha* Saraha during a dream.[68] For the purposes of the present discussion, it matters little whether or not the poem as we now know it is indeed authentic: in terms of both style and subject matter, it represents aspects of the evolution of Tibetan religious narrative and poetry during the period in which it is supposed to have been composed, when examples of dream or visionary encounters between Tibetan seekers and Indian *siddha*s abound.[69]

Marpa's poem begins by describing the setting for the recitation of the poem itself: It is the festival of the tenth day of the lunar month (when Buddhist tantric practice requires the ritual of communal feasting *[gaṇacakra]* among adepts), and his disciple Lokya José (Klog-skya Jo-sras) has requested that the master sing a new composition as part of the celebration. Accepting this invitation, and offering a formal apology for his shortcomings as a poet, Marpa recounts the occasion that inspired his song:

> The other day, during the last month of the spring,
> Coming from the heart of Nepal
> To the track that is the highway of raised parasols,
> Where there is a Nepalese tax station
> In a village of outcastes,
> The taxman, unsaluted and unbribed,
> Detained us poor Tibetan travelers.
> So that I too could not but stay for some days.
>
> One night, in my turbulent dreams,
> There were two beautiful Brahman girls,
> With the characteristic of their clan, the Brahma-thread.
> Smiling a bit, glancing at me from the corners of their eyes,
> They came right before me, and said,
> "You must go to the southern mountain Śrī!"[70]

67. Chang 1962; Lhalungpa 1977; Nalanda 1980, 1982; Gyatso 1998.

68. The text as we now have it is known through fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sources (Gtsang-smyon 1984: 43–47, Karma-pa VIII n.d.: 47b6 ff.), and its authenticity seems to have been widely acknowledged within the Bka'-brgyud tradition. We are not yet, however, in a position to state with certainty whether it is or is not an original work of Marpa, though doubtlessly it derives from early traditions of his life and visionary experiences. The translated selections that follow in this section are based on the texts just cited.

69. Kapstein 1992a, 1997.

70. Śrīparvata, often identified with Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in modern Andhra Pradesh.

The girls miraculously transport him there, and upon his arrival, Marpa meets the famed *mahāsiddha* in a scene that in some respects recalls Precious Jewel's encounter with the *ṛṣi* Most Awesome Voice in the *Cycle of Birth and Death:*

> In a shaded grove of *lakṣa* trees,
> Atop a seat of antelope skin,
> Sat the great Brahman Saraha,
> Whose complexion had a brilliance I'd never seen.
> Supported by two ladies,
> He wore the adornments of the cremation ground.
> His joyful face beamed a bright smile, and
> He inquired, "Have you fared well, my son?"

Marpa is deeply moved by his vision of Saraha, and he feels his body, speech, and mind so affected by the master's blessing that he is for a while paralyzed, struck dumb, his mind cleared of all thought. While in this state he perceives that Saraha is singing to him, so that his poem now includes within it a second poem:

> Words of pure and great bliss
> Poured forth from the jewel vase of his throat:
>
> A-ho!
> I've seen inseparable emptiness and compassion,
> Incessant, the unartificed mind,
> Primordially pure, just what is,
> The union of space with space.
> Because the root is planted at home,
> Intellectual consciousness is imprisoned.
> Meditation, a subsequent cognition,
> Need not be applied to this mind.
> Knowing the entire apparent world to be of the nature of mind,
> There is no need for meditation, for correction by an antidote.
> The abiding being of mind is not to be recollected.
> Enter repose, an uncontrived disposition.
> Because you'll be free if you see the meaning of that,
> Look to the conduct of a small child, or an outcast.
> Watch the mad demon do as it pleases.
> And like a lion who has no pride,
> Let the elephant of mind wander free.
> Watch the bee circling the flower!
> Not regarding *saṃsāra* as flawed,
> *Nirvāṇa* is not to be obtained.
> Leave ordinary awareness in its own state,
> Without contrivance, in its freshness.
> You'll not attain realization in deeds,
> It doesn't abide in place or in part.
> Look to the circle of unelaborate space!
> The inmost significance is an enfolding within the point wherein phenom-

ena are exhausted.
That furthest pinnacle of the view is the Great Seal.[71]

Following Saraha's poem, Marpa gradually returns to the original setting of his song's recitation—the assembly of his disciples during the festival of the tenth day—retracing his steps through the several levels of experience he had traversed:

Something of symbolic meaning, getting at mind's essential point,
Is what I heard when the great Brahman spoke.
In a moment, casting off sleep, I awoke
And grasped it with the hook of unforgetting remembrance.

In the dark crawl space of sleep,
Opening the window of awakened gnosis,
It was as if the sun rose in the cloudless sky—
The darkness of confusion was dispelled!

It is said that these [matters] cannot be spoken,
But tonight there was no way I could not speak!
Except for just this one time,
I've never found myself talking this way before!

It has often been said that the yogic songs of the Kagyü masters were modeled upon the *dohā*s of the *mahāsiddha*s, especially Saraha.[72] But in comparing the extant Indian Buddhist *dohā* corpus with Marpa's poem, though it contains a section that resembles the *dohā*s of Saraha, it is striking in its overall difference. For Saraha's songs are skeletally bare when it comes to establishing a context or setting for their own recitation or composition, while Marpa encases his poem within a double narrative frame that provides both. The circumstances for the occurrence and recitation of the dream episode that contains the composition of Saraha's song are made fully explicit. To construct and situate the self in narration in this way is entirely characteristic of Tibetan oratory, and literary evidence of this stance can be found even in ancient historical chronicles from Dunhuang.[73] Thus, whatever the influence of the Buddhist Apabhramsha *dohā* literature may have been, Marpa's voice remains an assertively Tibetan one.

With this in mind, it is instructive to compare Marpa's poem with the de-

71. Mahāmudrā, the "Great Seal," designates the highest realization, sealing off the limits of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa,* in the traditions of the Bka'-brgyud school and its antecedent movements in Indian Buddhist tantrism.

72. Though *dohā* is often used in the context of Tibetan Buddhist tantra and yoga to describe a genre of mystical song, the term primarily refers to a specific type of New Indo-Aryan meter, which was later much employed, for instance, in the Hindi verse of Tulsīdās. Despite this, I retain here the more informal Tibetan Buddhist usage.

73. Takeuchi 1985.

scription of the *ṛṣi* Most Awesome Voice in the Old Tibetan *Cycle of Birth and Death* quoted earlier. Insomuch as both involve stereotypical descriptions of Indian ascetics, there is an element of striking similarity between them. But if we contrast the employment of the imagery of India in the two texts, an important difference is at once evident: authors like Marpa are no longer only narrating a world of the imagination but are placing themselves squarely within it. This, of course, reflects the fact that Marpa and many of his contemporaries did in fact travel to India to study with the renowned teachers of the day.[74] Itineraries in India, however, were seldom treated as literal accounts of physical and geographical voyages, for throughout the literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries Tibetan seekers emphasized above all the inner dimensions of their explorations. We have just begun to glimpse, however, how far their journey would eventually take them.

Finally, we must note that while Marpa, as a translator and exponent of the Buddhist *tantra*s, was certainly familiar with a broad range of Indian Buddhist tantric literature, including many of the songs stemming from the tradition of the *mahāsiddha*s, his translations also include one very elaborate *stotra* addressed to Mañjuśrī and attributed to the authorship of Candragomin, so that we may assume that his knowledge of Sanskrit included at least some background in *kāvya*.[75] However, the song-poems *(mgur)* of the Tibetan yogis—considered the form of poetry that became a hallmark of Marpa's tradition above all through the vast corpus attributed to his disciple Milarepa (Mi-la-ras-pa, 1040–1123), and of which we have seen one renowned example—are remarkable during this period, and frequently even much later, for their eschewal of the ornamental conventions of *kāvya*.[76] The yogic song, whose connection with Indian literature was established through its constant references to the traditions of the *mahāsiddha*s and to symbols derived from the *tantra*s, remained nevertheless a decidedly Tibetan genre, drawing freely upon well-established conventions of oratory and bardic recitation.[77] The literary culture that produced the yogic song, which we have seen reflected in the festive exchanges between the adept Marpa and the circle of his disciples, resembled in part the culture of poetic recitation and oratorial performance that continue to be practiced at weddings, rehearsals of the Gesar epic, and other public occasions throughout the Tibetan world.

74. Das 1893; Roerich 1959; Tucci 1971.

75. *Sgrub-thabs-kun-ʾdus* 1970, 2: 146–49.

76. Nevertheless, later authors of *mgur* may also draw on the conventions of *kāvya*. A notable example may be found in the ornate verses opening Milarepa's fifteenth-century biography (Gtsang-smyon 1981: 1–2). The translation found in Lhalungpa 1977: 1–6 altogether loses the poetic character of these very difficult verses.

77. On these genres, see Stein 1959; Helffer 1977; Aziz in Aziz and Kapstein 1985; Jackson 1984.

India Within

Beginning about the twelfth century, a new genre emerged that further consolidated the Tibetan cultural relationship with India: the Tibetan *jātaka* literature. What distinguishes these materials from their Indian sources is that the Tibetan *jātaka*s most often relate the past lives of contemporary Tibetan masters and not only those of the Buddha and his closest disciples, though many Tibetan *jātaka*s do place their subjects among Śākyamuni's disciples. There can be little doubt that the emergence of this type of narrative contributed to the ideological background for the development of an incarnate hierarchy in Tibet from the late thirteenth century onward.[78] But during the two or three centuries preceding, the Tibetan *jātaka*s were seldom concerned to demonstrate a continuous chain of authority from one lifetime to the next in Tibet. Biographical and autobiographical writings during that period frequently refer to their subjects' past lives, relating how their subjects acquired the virtues and accomplishments of *bodhisattva*s in previous lifetimes, and most of these are set in India. Thus, spiritual authority within the Tibetan world was justified not by reference to prior authority in Tibet but by a history of self-cultivation in India.[79] This, however, entailed that India no longer had to be found in India, for India was now present in Tibet, in the transmigrating mind-streams of notable Tibetans. Some examples will illustrate just how widespread and culturally significant this reorientation was.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the growth of an impressive literature devoted to the cult of the *bodhisattva* of compassion, Avalokiteśvara, who during this period was increasingly described as Tibet's spiritual patron.[80] In literature the seventh-century emperor Songtsen Gampo (see earlier), who had perhaps already been proclaimed as a *bodhisattva* for some centuries, came to be not only firmly identified with Avalokiteśvara, but the Indian Buddhist *sūtra*s, above all the *Cornucopia of Virtues (Karaṇḍavyūha),* which discuss Avalokiteśvara's many lives and emanations, were now taken as supplying the past history of the emperor himself. By the fourteenth century—as we find

---

78. The institution of lineage succession through incarnation appears to have taken form in the Bka'-brgyud schools during the thirteenth century. It is certain, however, that more or less informal recognition of incarnate teachers had already occurred before this time. The chief innovation in the Bka'-brgyud schools—and it was an important one—was to tie such recognition to the actual inheritance of titles, rights, and properties.

79. Examples include the eleventh-century Rnying-ma-pa master Rong-zom-pa (Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, 1: 703–709), thought to be the incarnation of the Paṇḍita Smṛtijñānakīrti, who died in Tibet, as well as Ma-cig Lab-sgron in the twelfth century (Gyatso in Aziz and Kapstein 1985) and Karma Pakshi in the thirteenth (Kapstein 1985). But at the same time, some were already claiming ancient personal histories in Tibet, as did Nyang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer (1124–1192; Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, 1: 755–759).

80. Kapstein 1992b, 2000, ch. 8; Sørensen 1994.

in the biography of the master Dölpopa (Dol-po-pa, 1292–1361), who, like the later Dalai Lamas, was regarded in Tibet as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara. These identifications required that the account of the subject's past lives include both the *bodhisattva*'s legendary history and that of emperor Songtsen.[81] Henceforth, each new generation of reincarnating Tibetan religious leaders would encapsulate both an Indian and a Tibetan past, necessitating the ongoing production of *jātaka*-inspired literary representations of their long travels through time.

Among the relatively early literary works in which the Tibetan *jātaka* is elaborated is the great account of the past lives of Atiśa's leading Tibetan disciple, Dromtön ('Brom-ston, 1004–1064), a text probably redacted in the thirteenth century, though certainly on the basis of materials first composed and compiled during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[82] At the beginning of the text we find Atiśa residing in a hermitage with Dromtön, along with another close disciple, Ngok Lekpé Sherap (Rngog Legs-pa'i shes-rab, fl. mideleventh century) also in attendance. Referring to a short verse work in which Atiśa has described the virtues cultivated by a *bodhisattva,* Ngok asks them how they have cultivated each virtue. In response, Atiśa elaborates a series of twenty *jātaka*s illustrating the verses, in each of which Dromtön is identified with the hero while Atiśa and Ngok are important characters. With the exception of one tale that takes place in China, the rest involve rebirths in India, most often in places celebrated in the life of the Buddha: Vaiśāli, Kauśambi, Vārāṇasī, Magadha, Kuśanagara, and so on. Dromtön's past lives are without exception as persons of high status—as a Brahman, a prince, or, most often, a *kalyāṇamitra* (no monkeys or woodpeckers here!)—which perhaps reflects the role of the Tibetan *jātaka* in bolstering claims to authority within the Tibetan world.

In the preceding section I argued that one of the crucial developments in eleventh-century Tibetan literature was the transformation of India from an exotic but remote land to an exotic land in which Tibetans found *their own* imaginal universe. The Tibetan *jātaka* literature in a sense takes this a step further: if figures like Marpa can be said to have *found themselves in India,* others, like Marpa's senior contemporary Dromtön, who never visited India, may be said to have *found India within themselves.*

The themes I sketch out here, involving a thorough reordering of the Tibetans' conception of their relationship with India, are reiterated throughout the literature of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries. It is during this period that Tibet came to be thought of as the terrestrial field of Avalokiteśvara in accord with the will of none other than the Buddha Śākyamuni.

---

81. As, for instance, in Dol-po-pa, 1992–93 vol. 1.
82. *'Brom ston rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs* 1994.

This development made Tibet part of Śākyamuni's world, no longer outside of Āryadeśa. Thus, the great Gampopa (Sgam-po-pa, 1079–1153) was regarded as Candraprabha, Śākyamuni's interlocutor in the *Samādhirājasūtra (Sūtra of the King of Samādhi),* while his grand-disciple Drigung Kyopa ('Bri-gung-skyobs-pa, 1143–1217), one of the great teachers of the age, came to be thought of as the very presence in Tibet of Nāgārjuna.[83] Many similar examples can be adduced. Tibetans have thus come to place themselves within India and India within themselves, and the newly developing forms of Tibetan writing are defined in large measure by these new self-situatings.

Sakya Paṇḍita and the Ideal of Sanskritic Learning

With the revival of Buddhist scholasticism in Tibet during the eleventh century, the promotion of courses of study based upon the Indian Buddhist *śāstra*s required that general elements of Indian learning, forming essential background for the understanding of often sophisticated texts, be part of the program as well. Those most expert in this respect appear to have become increasingly critical of their fellows, who, they maintained, were becoming prone to spurious interpretations and misunderstandings.[84] As a result, within a century or two, some factions within the Tibetan Buddhist world began to adopt a strikingly "Indological" standpoint, insisting that the study of Buddhism had to be to a large extent enframed within a core curriculum of Indian learning. This trend found paradigmatic expression in the works of Sakya Paṇḍita Künga Gyentsen (Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, 1182–1251), to whose contributions I now turn. The significance of Sakya Paṇḍita's role is widely acknowledged within traditional Tibetan historiography, most emphatically perhaps in the renowned history by the Fifth Dalai Lama, who explicitly relates the establishment of the Indian learned sciences *(vidyāsthāna, rig-gnas)* in Tibet to his influence.[85]

Sakya Paṇḍita's life and contributions have been discussed at some length elsewhere.[86] Most useful in the present context would be an overview of his ideals of literary learning, and of the manner in which these came to define, for later generations, a paradigm of classical learning. To draw an analogy with post-Renaissance conceptions of a "classical education" in the West seems appropriate in this case, for both involved the strong affirmation of an alien antiquity (Indian for Tibet, Greco-Roman for Western Europe) as an ap-

---

83. Kapstein 1998.

84. Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, 1: 624–25, 640–41; Lhalungpa 1977: 153–57.

85. Dalai Lama V 1988: 94. On the conception of the *vidyāsthāna*s in Tibet, see Ruegg 1995; and for traditional summaries Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, 1: 97–109.

86. Beginning with Kőrös, 1855–1856 (reprinted in 1984: 93–172); more recently Bosson 1969, Jackson 1987.

propriate model of excellence; and in both cases, it was poetic excellence that was regarded as a touchstone of moral and intellectual refinement.

One of the sharpest reflections of the manner in which Sakya Paṇḍita tied the construction of a learned persona to the refinement of Sanskrit literary culture is found in a short essay on his own scholarship, which he repeats in longer or shorter forms at various points in his writings. The fullest version is his autocommentary on a verse entitled the *Eight Ego Poem,* so called owing to its eight repetitions of the Tibetan first person pronoun. This self-eulogy, which recalls the lyrics of W. S. Gilbert, may be translated roughly as follows:

> *I* am the grammarian. *I* am the dialectician.
>> Among vanquishers of sophists, peerless am *I.*
> *I* am learned in metrics. *I* stand alone in poetics.
>> In explaining synonymics, unrivaled am *I.*
> *I* know celestial calculations. In exo- and esoteric science
>> *I* have a discerning intellect equaled by none.
> Who can this be? Sakya alone!
>> Other scholars are my reflected forms.[87]

Notably, this bit of doggerel was authored by a prominent Buddhist monk, an exponent of the teaching of the selflessness of persons. And Sakya Paṇḍita's doctrinal works make it perfectly clear, if any had thought to question it, that he would have been loath to impugn this cardinal tenet.[88] It is understandable, therefore, that some of his contemporaries expressed consternation regarding his motivations here; some suggested that he was engaging in an idle boast, while others more charitably asked whether the verse might best be taken as poetic hyperbole. These critics he sought to address in his commentary.

In its details the commentary is of interest primarily for its revelation of the precise contents of a classical Indian Buddhist literary education as Sakya Paṇḍita understood it. Explicating each of his eight self-attributions in turn, he surveys the contents of his own studies and summarizes his own writings to support the contention that he is indeed an acknowledged master of the topics concerned. In the concluding section of the essay, he argues that in composing the offending verse he was in fact adhering closely to models provided by some of the most admired Indian Buddhist thinkers: Dharmakīrti, Sthiramati, Prajñākaramati, and others had all at one point or another similarly eulogized themselves. To demonstrate this Sakya Paṇḍita provides a brief anthology of these poems of self-praise.[89] Indeed, he asserts, it has been

87. Sa-skya 1992, 1: 681–710. The verse is given here on p. 681, and the autocommentary follows.

88. Sa-skya 1992, 1: 87, 138, 157, 164; 2: 337–43

89. Sa-skya 1992, 1: 706–709.

the practice of all the great masters to adorn themselves in this way, but never to boast of the mundane virtues of their race, wealth, following, military might, or lordship, for truly learned persons would be ashamed to engage in *that* sort of braggadocio. The real reason that the wise have sometimes indulged in self-praise has been to encourage themselves to adhere closely to the ideal of learning and to exemplify that ideal on behalf of those who would learn from them.

That Sakya Paṇḍita arrived at a sort of reductio ad absurdum of the very ideal of self-construction he espoused is something we need not dispute. Despite his great and enduring (and for the most part well-deserved) legacy within Tibetan learned culture, some would nevertheless henceforth regard him above all as the very type of the self-inflated scholar, a model of conceit. In the eyes of these critics, he defined with crystalline precision the boundaries that self-assertive genius had not only to challenge but to transgress. Thus, in the satirical literature of the yogic traditions, Sakya Paṇḍita, the master of sciences, became the object of the trickster's play.[90] The culture of selflessness, we may conclude, does not absolve one from the demands of self-regard and the corresponding need to reflect upon how one is regarded by others. At the same time, it provides no assurance that one will indeed be so regarded.

Let us return now to consider some particulars of the literary curriculum that Sakya Paṇḍita sought to promote. To introduce his program of Indian classical study to the Tibetan world, he composed a number of pedagogical treatises on special topics such as metrics *(chandas)* and synonymics *(abhidhāna).*[91] His famous *Jewel Mine of Aphorisms (Subhāṣitaratnanidhi)* may also be seen as an introductory survey of the Sanskrit aphoristic literature, most of its verses being translations and paraphrases rather than original compositions.[92] However, the work in which he most succinctly sets out his program is undoubtedly the *Mkhas pa 'jug pa'i sgo,* the *Scholar's Gate.*[93] Here he formulates his conception of a trivium based upon the mastery of composition, rhetoric, and debate. The first chapter, on composition, supplies a series of fine short surveys of the elements of grammar and poetics, including the theory of designation and meaning, *rasa* theory, and a detailed intro-

---

90. Dowman 1983: 77–81.

91. These writings include: a commentary on the *Pedagogy* authored by his uncle (*Byis pa bde blag tu 'jug pa'i rnam bshad;* Sa-skya 1992, 1: 529–54); an introduction to grammar (*Sgra la 'jug pa;* Sa-skya 1992, 1: 503–23); a book of synonyms modeled on Amara (*Tshig gi gter;* Sa-skya 1992, 1: 569–99); and a treatise on metrics (*Sdeb sbyor sna tshogs me tog gi chun po;* Sa-skya 1992, 1: 600–647). To these we may also add his specialized writings on music (*Rol-mo'i bstan-bcos;* Sa-skya 1992, 1: 349–63) and his monumental work on logic and epistemology (*Tshad-ma rigs-gter;* Sa-skya 1992, 2: 1–537).

92. Bosson 1969.

93. Sa-skya 1981; Jackson 1987.

duction to the study of poetic ornament *(alaṅkāra)*. In his introduction to the work he summarizes his ideals of learning, once again, with reference to his own achievements:

> I have seen, studied, and familiarized myself with most of the famous [works]:
>
> 1. Treatises on grammar including the *Kalāpa* and *Candra;*
>
> 2. The epistemological *[pramāṇa]* texts, such as the *Samuccaya* [the *Epistemological Compendium* of Dignāga] and the seven dissertations [of Dharmakīrti];
>
> 3. Works of *kāvya,* including the *Jātaka[mālā* of Āryaśūra], the three great [poets], and the three lesser [works of Kālidāsa];
>
> 4. *The Jewel Mine [Ratnākara],* the *Prosody Collection* [perhaps the *Chandomañjarī*] among other treatises on metrics *[chandas];*
>
> 3a. In the science of poetic ornament *[alaṅkāraśāstra],* the writings of Daṇḍin, *Sarasvatī's Necklace [Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa],* and so on;
>
> 5. In synonymics *[abhidhāna], Amara's Treasury [Amarakośa], Universal Illumination [Viśvaprakāśa],* and others;
>
> 6. *Joy of the Nāgas [Nāgānanda], Bouquet of Beauty [*Rūpamañjarī]* and other dramas;
>
> 7. Among medical treatises, the *Eight Limbs [Aṣṭāṅga], Life Science [Ayurveda],* and so on;
>
> 8. In the technical sciences *[śilpaśāstra],* the proportions of images, and the examination of earth, water, and so forth;
>
> 9. The calculation of the constellations *[nakṣatra],* among external objects, and of the inner vital energies *[vāyu],* and so on, including the *Wheel of Time [Kālacakra],* which is a specialty of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, and the treatise by Śrīdhara; and
>
> 10. In the inner sciences [the Buddhist religion, *adhyātmavidyā*], the Tripiṭaka of *sūtra, vinaya,* and *abhidharma,* the four [classes of] *tantra—kriyā, caryā, yoga,* and *anuttarayoga*—and their commentaries, subcommentaries, and so forth.
>
> So I am not fabricating things, nor am I a charlatan; therefore those whose intelligence is clear should leave off attachment and aversion and study with delight this exposition of my *Scholar's Gate*. . . .
>
> One who is learned [a *paṇḍita*] is one who knows without error all branches of knowledge; otherwise, the term "learned" is also applied to one who has mastered a particular topic.[94]

94. Sa-skya 1981: 4–5. The following remarks explain briefly the names and references found in this list, which summarizes the traditional enumeration of the ten sciences. (But note that poetics, generally treated as one area of study, is here divided into *kāvya* proper [3] and *alaṅkāraśāstra* [3a], for which reason my numbering of this is irregular.)

(1) Current research on the study of Sanskrit grammar in Tibet is surveyed in Verhagen 1994. The *Kalāpa* and the grammar of Candragomin were among the best-known Sanskrit gram-

There are many interesting features of this list, which abbreviates the expanded accounts Sakya Paṇḍita and his disciples repeat at several points in their writings (above all, in his autocommentary to the *Eight Ego Poem*). The emphasis placed upon this inventory suggests that it was intended to buttress a particular ideal of learning, to be studied and emulated by others. Many of the constituents of this ideal, however, could not have been widely known in Tibet in Sakya Paṇḍita's time, as in some cases there were not yet Tibetan translations of the works in question (for instance, the writings of Daṇḍin and Amara), and in a few instances there never would be (for instance, *Sarasvatī's Necklace* and the *Universal Illumination*). What is striking is that the area best known to Tibetan Buddhist scholars, the "inner science" of Buddhism, is summarized only briefly in closing. Sakya Paṇḍita's emphasis is clearly on the branches of Indian learning that were regarded as more or less secular, in the sense that they were thought to contribute not directly to the higher aims of the Buddhist religion but rather to the refinement of this-worldly values. This comports well with the overarching aims and purposes of the *Scholar's Gate,* which except for some brief statements concerning the major Buddhist philosophical systems in the final chapter on debate, is concerned above all with the linguistic and literary sciences.[95]

In his treatment of *rasa* theory and the classification of poetic tropes, Sakya

---

mars in Tibet. (2) On the Indian Buddhist logical and epistemological traditions in Tibet, see now Dreyfus 1997a. (3) The *Jātakamālā* was perhaps the best-known *kāvya* in Tibet up until roughly Sa-skya Paṇḍita's time. As he explains elsewhere, "three great" refers to three of the major Sanskrit poets, beginning with Bhāravi, while "three lesser" refers specifically to the works of Kālidāsa, beginning with *Kumārasambhava.* (4) The metrical treatise by Ratnākara would become the most influential work of this type in Tibet; Hahn 1982. It is not entirely clear to which *Prosody Collection (sdeb-sbyor tshoms)* Sa-skya Paṇḍita refers here. (3a) Though Daṇḍin's work came to be very widely studied in Tibet, thanks to its initial promotion by Sa-skya Paṇḍita, other works on poetics with which he was surely familiar remained largely unknown, except to some extent among later Tibetan Sanskritists. The *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* of Bhoja was never translated into Tibetan. (5) Sanskrit lexicography in Tibet focused primarily upon the study of Amara and of indigenous Tibetan-Sanskrit lexicons. The *Viśvaprakāśa* of Maheśvara was probably a relatively recent work in Sa-skya Paṇḍita's time. It is not known to have had any further tradition of study in Tibet. (6) The *Nāgānanda* of Harṣadeva was the sole Sanskrit drama translated into Tibetan (Bhattacharya 1957). **Rūpamañjarī (Gzugs-kyi snye-ma)* resembles the title of a very popular Tibetan drama *(Gzugs-kyi nyi-ma)* whose known versions must postdate Sa-skya Paṇḍita by several centuries. Bacot 1957. See also Bacot 1921. (7) On the Tibetan version of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya,* see Vogel 1965. (8) *Śilpaśāstra (bzo-rig)* includes the broad range of the arts and crafts, and in Tibet is most characteristically thought of as governing the proportions of paintings, statues and *stūpa*s. See, e.g., Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, 1: 98–99. (9) On Tibetan astronomical and calendrical calculations, see Schuh 1973. The work of Śrīdhara here mentioned is probably the *Triśatika.* (10) For surveys of Buddhist works in Tibet, as well as the literature of several of these topics, see Cabezón and Jackson 1995.

95. See Jackson 1987 for the final chapter on debate.

Paṇḍita, for better or worse, cast a mold for the treatment of Indian literary theory that has endured in Tibet to the present day. The distinction between a primary emotion *(sthāyībhāva)* and the aesthetic sentiment engendered by its skillful depiction *(rasa),* all-important for the developed forms of poetic theory in India, is largely forgotten, and the primary concern is the classification of harmonious and conflicting sentiments. For example:

> In compositions involving expressions of heroism and valor, [these qualities] are contradicted by expressions giving rise to laughter, and by tropes engendering compassionate love or meekness and mental resignation due to serenity, for they defeat the force of expression. But if the force is not defeated, and there is no contradiction, then in accord with the context there is no harm in applying them.[96]

The *Scholar's Gate,* perhaps inspired by the dramaturgy of Bharata, rings the changes on all the nine *rasa*s in this fashion. Similarly, the conventions of poetry, and the ornaments, or tropes, are largely a matter of definition and stipulation, for instance:

> By reciting the hero's virtues first
> One overwhelms [the qualities of] his opponent.
> This style of expressing them
> Is celebrated among the poets.
>
> Some, however, are pleased to speak
> Of overwhelming virtues and faults only after
> Having first recited the enemy's virtues
> Of race, family, wisdom, learning, and such.[97]

This and other similar stipulations are of course derived from Sanskrit rhetorical conventions. The *Scholar's Gate,* however, does not progress much beyond the provision of such rules and guidelines, and certainly does not penetrate the subtleties that already characterized the best Sanskrit literary criticism centuries before the *Scholar's Gate* was composed. Lest Sakya Paṇḍita's work appear as only a poor shadow of its Sanskrit models, however, we should recall that the *Scholar's Gate* was intended primarily as a general survey of and introduction to Indian literary theory on behalf of a Tibetan readership with little exposure to this subject matter. In this respect, in fact, it largely succeeded, and it has enjoyed a reputation for being clear, succinct, and generally pleasant to read. It was, however, a work begging to be surpassed, not only in quantity and detail—in these areas it was surpassed by the extensive body of later Tibetan commentary on Daṇḍin[98]—but also in

---

96. Sa-skya 1981: 33.
97. Sa-skya 1981: 45–46.
98. Kuijp in Cabezón and Jackson 1995: 393–410.

the depth of its literary analysis. That this apparently was not accomplished in traditional circles was no fault of Sakya Paṇḍita's, except perhaps inasmuch as he was canonized as the paradigm of the literary scholar.

Sakya Paṇḍita certainly became renowned and influential by virtue of his learning. What may have tipped the scales in favor of the widespread adoption of his perspective on learning, however, was the spread of his influence to the Mongol empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; for under the Mongols the hierarchs of Sakya, the principality in whose ruling family Sakya Paṇḍita had been born, acted as the preeminent agents of the imperial power in Tibet.[99] The lords of Sakya, however, were content to remain pluralists in their dealings with the differing traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, and even those Tibetans who would eventually overturn their political sway were educated in their schools. (Indeed, Ta'i Si-tu, who wrested power from Sakya, studied at Sakya itself as a teenager.)[100] One result was that by the time Sakya lost its hold over Tibet, during the 1350s, Sakya Paṇḍita's ideal of *pāṇḍityam* was firmly established as a Tibetan cultural ideal. No doubt the fact that Tibetans had long since found themselves in India, and India within themselves, contributed no less than the Mongols to the authority his vision attained.

The Blossoming of Tibetan Kāvya: *Rāma Retold*

In Tibetan learned circles Sakya Paṇḍita inspired a great surge of interest in the Indian literary arts, and in the generations following his own, new energy was devoted to the translation of fundamental literary works. A key figure in this movement was Shongtön Dorje Gyentsen (Shong-stong Rdo-rje-rgyal-mtshan, thirteenth century), whose translations included the lexicon of Amara; Daṇḍin's *Mirror of Poetry (Kāvyādarśa);* Jñānaśrīmitra's metrical tour de force, the *Metrical Garland Eulogy (Vṛttamālāstuti)* ; and well-known literary texts such as Harṣa's *Joy of the Nāgas (Nāgānanda)* and Kṣemendra's *Marvelous Vine of Birth Stories (Avadānakalpalatā).* Kālidāsa's *Cloud Messenger (Meghadūta)* was translated during the same period.[101] These works left an enormous legacy in Tibet, and from the fourteenth century onwards virtually every Tibetan author of note, whether monk or layman, tried his hand at some *kāvya.*[102] Even the exponents of yogic song, who well appreciated

---

99. Petech 1990.

100. Petech 1990: 91.

101. On Shongtön Dorje Gyentsen, see Hahn 1971: 8–10; for Daṇḍin, see Banerjee 1939; for Jñānaśrīmitra, see Hahn 1971; for Harṣa, see Bhattacharya 1957; for Kṣemendra, see Das 1888–1918; for Kālidāsa, see Dpa'-ris Dor-zhi 1988.

102. Among the most renowned authors and works, I note the third Karmapa hierarch Rangjung Dorje (Karma-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje, 1284–1339) whose poetic *jātaka*s came to form

the power of the Tibetan song-poem *(mgur),* were not untouched by the allure of Ratnākara's metrics and Daṇḍin's classifications of ornament.[103] Tibetan *kāvya* continues to be written in the traditional vein (see later section), and I have even been shown an elaborate *stotra* eulogizing the elder George Bush for the defeat of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War.[104]

Given the historical duration of the Tibetan *kāvya* tradition, and the abundance of the literature now available, only the briefest sampling can be offered here. Because we have already seen something of the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa,* a useful point of comparison is the *Tale of Ramaṇa (Ra ma ṇa'i rtogs brjod),* an elaborate *kāvya* composed by a famous junior disciple of Je Tsongkhapa, Zhangzhungpa Chöwang Drakpa (Zhang-zhung-pa Chos-dbang-grags-pa, 1404–1469). The precise sources upon which Chöwang Drakpa based his version of the Rāma story are nowhere mentioned, but it is strik-

---

an appendix and expansion to Āryaśūra's collection (Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtse-mo 1988: 190–226, for selections); the Nyingmapa (Rnying-ma-pa) master Longchen Ramjampa (Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa, 1308–1363), author of a number of allegorical *kāvya*s (Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtse-mo 1988: 256–300; Guenther 1989); Je Tsongkhapa (Rje Tsong-kha-pa, 1357–1419), the founder of the Gelukpa (Dge-lugs-pa) sect, who recast the canonical tale of the *bodhisattva* Sadāprarūdita as a prose-*kāvya* (Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtse-mo 1988: 308–65); the early-sixteenth-century ruler of Tibet, Rinpungpa Ngawang Jikdrak (Rin-spungs-pa Ngag-dbang-'jigs-grags, b. 1482), whose verse biography of Sakya Paṇḍita (Rin-spungs 1985) exemplifies the latter's literary theories and whose epistle entitled the *Vidyādhara Envoy (Rig-'dzin pho-nya)* emulates Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtse-mo 1988: 577–671); the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682), perhaps second only to Sakya Paṇḍita as a promoter of the Indian literary arts in Tibet, and the author of a wide variety of poetic works and a well-regarded commentary on the *Mirror of Poetry (Kāvyādarśa)* (Smith 1970); the lay aristocrat Dokharwa Tshering Wang'gyel (Mdo-mkhar-ba Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, 1697–1762), whose writings include a Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary (Bacot 1932) and two of the best-known examples of Tibetan *campū* (Zhabs-drung 1979 [translated in Tshe ring dbang rgyal 1996], and 1981 [cited extensively in Petech 1972]); the renowned grammarian Situ Paṇchen (1699–1774), who greatly promoted the Indian literary arts in far eastern Tibet (as represented, for instance, in Khams-sprul 1986); Shabkar Tshokdruk Rangdröl (Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug-rang-grol, 1781–1850), a *yogin* who experimented prolifically with virtually every form of poetic composition known in Tibet (Ricard 1994); Dza Patrül Rinpoche (Rdza Dpal-sprul Rin-po-che, 1808–1887), best known for his popular homilies on Buddhist practice (Patrul Rinpoche 1994), but well-regarded for his *kāvya* as well (Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtse-mo 1988: 1655–1718); and Mipham Rinpoche (Mi-pham-rnam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho, 1846–1912), whose very extensive collected works include contributions to most genres, and whose most widely read book of poetry is an aphoristic collection focusing on *nītiśāstra* (Mi-pham 1983).

103. The reception and use of Indian literary theory in different Tibetan literary subcultures pose a fascinating and difficult question, which I cannot explore here. Its complexities are perhaps seen in the writings of some of the 'Brug-pa Bka'-brgyud poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially Gtsang-smyon (1452–1507), 'Brug-pa Kun-legs (1455–1529; Stein 1972b), and Padma Dkar-po (1527–1596).

104. This work, by Rdzogs-chen Mkhan-po Chos-dga', remains unpublished, which is perhaps just as well.

ing that in its broad outlines, and in many telling particulars, it closely re-sembles the Old Tibetan versions. For instance, here too, Sītā is Rāvaṇa's daughter, who as an infant is abandoned in the waters. Primarily through summaries given in commentarial glosses on Sakya Paṇḍita's collection of aphorisms and on the Tibetan translation of the *Mirror of Poetry,* we know that the tale of Rāma was kept in circulation during the period immediately preceding the composition of the *Tale of Ramaṇa,*[105] and Chöwang Drakpa was no doubt familiar with these works. It is the literary history of the Ti-betan *Rāmāyaṇa* for the period between the production of the Dunhuang manuscripts and the mid-thirteenth century that remains a mystery.

To exemplify the stylistic orientations of Chöwang Drakpa's text, over and against the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa,* let us consider the manner in which he describes Rāma's meeting with and betrothal to Sītā:

> Well-conveyed by his well-brightened chariot,
> Ramaṇa, blazing lustrous light,
> And she who'd been delivered by her river friend[106]
> Met together in the time of their flowering.
> Their eyes fell as do those of the offering-eater
> On meeting the owl's guttural cry.[107]
>
> "She is worthy to be the mirror
> That captures the king's happy visage"—
> This was the one thought that occurred
> To the host of farmer-folk.
>
> "The golden ensign of her form
> Will beautify the king's palace!"
> This aural report, the jewel of her fame,
> Became the earring of the land's daughters.
>
> The eager upon this earth
> Desired just news of her,
> And desired not even in dreams
> Other broad-eyed beauties—
> For who, holding fast to Sārasvatī's name,
> Would wish to clasp an apish mane?
> So the spell masters among the people
> Recited Sītā's name as a charm,

---

105. Jong in Iyengar 1983: 163–82.

106. In the Tibetan story Sītā was abandoned in the waters, which carried her to safety among the farmers. Whereas the Jaina version has her placed in a jeweled container, the Ti-betan speaks of a copper casket, interestingly echoing traditions concerning the disposal of the corpse of Tibet's first mortal king.

107. Their eyes fell owing to their shyness. The eyes of the crow ("offering-eater") are said to look downward at night when the call of the owl is heard.

> Until their jawbones, broken machines,
> Hung slack upon their breasts.[108]

In Chöwang Drakpa's *Tale of Ramaṇa,* narrative continuity has given way to atomic verses, each embodying a specific image or ornament. The work as a whole is not a river of story but more akin to a necklace, each verse conceived as a discrete gem. The exemplification of many different ornaments is considered desirable in poetry of this sort, and, to the extent possible, Daṇḍin's stipulations are followed with care. For example, the commentator on the *Tale of Ramaṇa* goes to great lengths to specify precisely which of Daṇḍin's prescriptions governs each verse. The vocabulary, too, is peculiar, depending to a great extent on terms known only from the Tibetan translations of works on Sanskrit synonymics. So, for instance, "offering-eater" in the first verse just quoted refers to the crow, and the Tibetan term used, *gtor-len,* was created specifically to represent the Sanskrit *balibhuj* and has no use in ordinary Tibetan.[109] Therefore, without a commentary (oral or written) the text would be impenetrable to anyone who had not been extensively trained in the Sanskrit literary arts as known in Tibet. The most notable departure from Sanskrit poetic convention here is the flexibility of verse length. Though verses of four lines, equivalent to the Sanskrit verse of four quarters, are common, so too are verses of six or eight lines, and in the selection just quoted the commentator treats the final passage as a single verse of ten lines.

What was the readership for Tibetan literature of this sort? Most of the known authors of Tibetan *kāvya,* as well as commentaries and textbooks on matters relating to poetics, were of course monk-scholars, though some lay aristocrats contributed as well: Tshering Wang'gyel is an especially prominent example. Nevertheless, monastic education, despite the promotion of Sanskrit literary knowledge by Sakya Paṇḍita and other renowned masters, was primarily a matter of Buddhist liturgy and shastric learning. Though there were always some monks who sought to master *alaṅkāraśāstra* and related topics, and despite the assumption that a *real paṇḍita* ought to be familiar with such material, the mainstream of the monastic colleges tended to look askance at such frivolity.[110] Where literary learning was most encouraged was among the lay aristocracy and the factions of the learned clergy

---

108. Zhang-zhung-ba 1983: 69–73.

109. Indeed, it is such an unusual term that it is not even found in the most complete dictionary of literary Tibetan to date (*Bod rgya tshig mdzod* 1985), though one does find there the exact synonym, *gtor-za,* listed as a term for "crow" known specifically from the *abhidhāna* treatises.

110. My evidence for this is primarily anecdotal, but discussions over many years with Tibetan monks and laypersons from diverse educational backgrounds convince me of its general veracity. The research in progress of Dreyfus (1997b) promises to clarify Tibetan monastic curricula.

who harbored reservations about the value of the scholastic debate programs. Though it would be wrong to exaggerate it, one may detect some parallel here with the late medieval and early Renaissance division in Europe between schoolmen and humanists.[111] In Lhasa it was almost a given that whereas the educated monks would master the arguments of the philosophers Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti, the sons of the nobility would study Daṇḍin and the various Tibetan imitations of Amara. Indeed, the actual production of *kāvya* among educated laypersons was certainly much greater than what we find reflected in the published literature. It is clear that the laity made use of their poetic skills in drafting government and personal documents, in journals, in love poems, and in correspondence—writings never intended for publication.[112] The literary world briefly described here changed little with the passage of centuries, until the tragic events of 1959 brought the cultural life of traditional Tibet to an end. It is only in the posthumous writings of the controversial culture-hero Gendün Chöphel (Dge-'dun Chos-'phel, 1903–1951) that we find the beginnings of a modern critique of the Tibetan *kāvya* tradition, but one inspired by his encounter with Indological scholarship in India during the 1930s and 1940s and seeking a return to the direct study of poetry in Sanskrit.[113]

KĀVYA IN CONTEMPORARY TIBET

The Revival of Kāvya *in Post–Cultural Revolution Tibet*

Following the end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1976 and the ouster of the Gang of Four two years later, China embarked upon a new course of reform that permitted, among many other things, renewed study and cautious revival of aspects of traditional cultures. These changes were vitally important for the minority nationalities of China, whose cultural traditions had been doubly assaulted by a combination of Maoist fervor and Chinese chauvinism. Tibetans, who had witnessed the destruction of their monasteries and

111. Le Goff 1993.

112. Goldstein 1989: 451 n. 85, reports the letter of Canglocen, a political figure "well-known as a poet," written when he fled Tibet in 1937, that was "memorized by lay officials" owing to its elegance no less than its contents. Taring 1970: 232, describing her 1959 escape from the Lhasa Uprising, reports that she "hurriedly wrote notes for Jigme [her husband] and our daughters in difficult poetical language." This was, of course, to protect all concerned should the notes have been intercepted by the Chinese authorities. Bstan-'dzin-dpal-'byor 1986 provides the autobiographical records of a famous eighteenth-century prime minister, which make abundant use of conventions derived from *kāvya*. Until its recent publication, this work circulated in manuscript form only among the highest-ranking noble households. Such examples abound. To collect the poetry of Tibetan laypersons at the present time would be a worthwhile venture, one certainly best undertaken by Tibetan scholars of literature.

113. Dge'-dun-chos-'phel 1990, 3: 353–535.

libraries, the exile of many leading authorities in areas of both religious and secular culture, and the persecution of most persons of such standing who had remained behind, awoke in the early 1980s to ponder both the wreckage of their civilization and the prospects for renewal that Dengist reform seemed to promise.[114]

One of the many areas in which the reforms had immediate, though not always clear, ramifications was Tibetan-language publishing. While this had been limited for almost a decade and a half to political tracts and some educational materials, it was now possible for the officially sanctioned Nationalities Presses and other publishing houses to issue a wider variety of Tibetan writings, including some traditional works. However, publication did not become perfectly free; in general, it was still felt inappropriate for purely religious writing, which had no justification for publication besides religious interest, to be published by the state-sponsored publishing houses.[115] The decisions made regarding what was acceptable to publish under state subsidy in most respects paralleled concurrent decisions with regard to Tibetan-medium education, especially in the colleges and universities in which Tibetan programs were in place or under development.[116]

The problem that all this entailed, however, was that in traditional Tibetan society religion had so thoroughly dominated the production of literature that no clear distinction between religious and other types of writing could be drawn with much consistency. Works on lexicography and grammar were generally unproblematic, while tantric ritual texts were definitely out.[117] But between the sciences that could be readily separated from religion and works that stood ideologically condemned as exemplifying the "blind faith" of the old society, there remained a vast domain whose credentials as religious or secular, culturally valuable or superstitious, were less easy to determine.

What emerged was, interestingly enough, a renewed emphasis on the main areas that formed the basis for the education of the old aristocracy. Works on the "language sciences"—grammar, synonymics, poetics, meter, and drama—together with books of history, biography, legend, and story, began to appear in large numbers. Episodes from the epic of Gesar, which could be taken as representing, in its essence, an indigenous Tibetan bardic tradition that bore only a veneer of Buddhism, became a mainstay

114. Goldstein and Kapstein 1998.

115. Stoddard 1994a.

116. During the mid-1980s, for instance, the Lhasa Teachers' College was upgraded to become Tibet University (Bod-ljongs Mtho-rim-slob-grwa, Xizang Daxue), with Tibetan-medium postgraduate programs in Tibetan language, literature, and history.

117. In fact, in recent years some state-supported Tibetan language publishers, particularly in Sichuan, have also begun to bring out works on ritual, meditation, and yoga.

of the renewed publishing industry. Encyclopedic works, although largely concerned with religion, could be justified as repositories of broad Tibetan cultural knowledge: thus, the relatively early appearance (1982) of the renowned encyclopedia by Kongtrül (Kong-sprul Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho, 1813–1899). *Jātaka* tales and *avadāna*s, albeit clearly part of the religious literature, also began to appear, though the presses seem to have been more guarded here.[118] The collected works of famous lamas, too, were occasionally published. This was justified on the grounds that the primary intent of the publication was broader cultural interest, even though much of purely religious interest was contained within them.[119] More or less scientific topics, such as traditional astronomy and medicine, were of course relatively unproblematic, and writings on Buddhist logic and epistemology also gradually reappeared.

As this brief and much-simplified survey makes clear, by the mid-1980s, even given the avoidance of religion on the part of the official publishing houses, large areas of traditional Tibetan literature began to return to public circulation, including material that was indeed intimately connected with the religious traditions of Tibet. But this revival also began to raise questions of relevance: for an ethnic Tibetan in political China in the late twentieth century, just how was one to respond to the reappearance of so much past tradition? *Kāvya,* as it turns out, has been one of the areas in which the Tibetan cultural confrontation with the Tibetan past and with the challenges of modernity has been keenly felt.

In the first decade following the Cultural Revolution, the renewed activity of Tibetan language publishing houses in China made available to the public, in inexpensive and relatively well-produced editions, much of the corpus of the most highly esteemed Tibetan *kāvya,* together with other types of Tibetan poetry, including the aphorisms of Sakya Paṇḍita (1982) and his *Gateway to Learning* (1981); the *Tale of Ramaṇa* (1983); the *Tale of the Lord of Men* (1981) and the *Story of the Incomparable Prince* (1979) by Dokharwa Tshering Wang'gyel; and the biographies and yogic songs of Milarepa (1981) and of Shabkar Tshokdruk Rangdröl (1986 and 1988), among many others. Contemporary Tibetan writers and educators produced several new commen-

118. See, for example, *Mdzangs blun* 1984. In general, the Tibetan-language presses in eastern Tibet, i.e., Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan, which are outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region, have reflected more liberal policies, and they began to publish some more or less religious texts during the mid-eighties. Private publishing enterprises have been relatively free with respect to religious publication.

119. Again, the eastern Tibetan presses were in the forefront here. Particularly revealing in this connection is the publisher's introduction (dated 1989) to Rig-'dzin Bdud-'joms rdo-rje 1991, which explicitly cites directives of the eleventh Party Congress regarding the preservation of cultural traditions.

taries on Daṇḍin and a new commentary on the Tibetan translation of Kālī-dāsa's *Meghadūta* also.[120] The rehabilitation of Tibetan poetry, and above all of *kāvya,* reached a culmination of sorts with the appearance in Qinghai in 1988 of a three-volume anthology of Tibetan literature, the first work of its kind, entitled *Ingots of Gold: Compositions of the Successive Masters of the Glacial Land (Gangs ljongs mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rtsom yig gser gyi sbram bu).*[121] The collection was compiled by two scholars of the Qinghai Nationalities Institute in Xining: Lozang Chödrak (Blo-bzang-chos-grags) and Sonam Tsemo (Bsod-nams-rtse-mo).[122] In all, some 180 works by 76 authors are represented. The list of contents reveals some prominent biases in the selection of authors and works: works of the past four centuries or so are much better represented than earlier writings, authors from Amdo (northeastern Tibet) better than those from other regions, and clerics of the Gelukpa sect better than others. These leanings may be explained at least in part by the fact that the compilers are based, and conducted most of their research, in contemporary Qinghai, which corresponds to the traditional province of Amdo and has long been prominently Gelukpa. The bias of greatest interest, however, is the strong tendency of the compilers to favor works of *kāvya* over other types of Tibetan poetic writing.[123] Unlike the others, this tendency cannot so easily be explained as the result of the contingencies of time and place alone. It is, rather, owing to a particular conception of literature itself that *kāvya* is privileged above, notably, the *mgur* literature (though the latter is of course to some extent represented).

It is unfortunate that the compilers saw fit to provide only a sketchy introduction to their anthology, so that the principles of selection and the overarching rationale of the work are not discussed in any detail. However, the following remarks offer some interesting suggestions:

120. Commentaries on Daṇḍin include Dung-dkar 1982, Rdo-rje-rgyal-po 1983, Bse-tshang 1984. For the commentary on the Tibetan *Meghadūta,* see Dpa'-ris Dor-zhi 1988. This commentary is in fact based upon a Chinese study of Mallinātha's commentary, published in Beijing during the 1950s.

121. Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtse-mo 1988. I thank the editors for their presentation of this very valuable work during my visit to the Qinghai Nationalities Institute, Xining, in July 1990.

122. The second author is in fact an ethnic Mongolian of Qinghai Province. "Tibetan studies" in China is primarily, but not exclusively, an ethnic Tibetan affair, and scholars of non-Tibetan origin often use Tibetan pen names in their Tibetan language publications. The leading Chinese Tibetologist, Wang Yao, who has also contributed to Tibetan literary studies, uses the name Dbang-rgyal, for example.

123. The anthology includes a small number of works in prose, most of which may be described as prose-*kāvya,* though there are some exceptions, all illustrating archaic Tibetan literature. It is thus primarily a poetry anthology, and not a general literary anthology at all.

Literary composition, which flows from the brushes of the masters,[124] is indicative of a society's livelihood and national character. The nationality [here, the Tibetans] need not vie with others, [its traditions of literary composition] being perfect and abundant. However, because there have been many historical obstacles and natural calamities, those exceptional compositions were mostly prevented from spreading widely and faced many obstacles. In particular, the ten years of civil unrest [during the Cultural Revolution] and so forth brought about much damage, for which reason, even if intelligent youths wish to study, it is difficult for them to get their hands on [this literature]. Under these circumstances, there have been some immature intellectuals, narrow in their learning and prejudiced, who have said that the Tibetan nationality has no traditions of literary composition. And some others have said that the literary traditions of the Tibetan nationality are limited to the aphorisms of Sakya Paṇḍita, the Vetala stories,[125] or perhaps some historical tales. These exceedingly unworthy missiles of deprecation have been hurled once and again.

In consideration of the aforementioned circumstances, we have been motivated by the hope, first, of preserving and increasing the cultural traditions of the Tibetan nationality; second, of increasing the knowledge of certain persons [the "immature intellectuals" referred to above]; and, third, of benefiting to some extent intelligent youths who are especially interested in Tibetan literary composition. We have been able to gather together just a few drops from the limitless reservoir of Tibetan literature.[126]

Clearly reflected here is an ideological dispute, which emerged in official circles involved with Tibetan affairs following the Cultural Revolution, concerning just what elements of the traditional culture were worthy of renewed support in a modern, socialist China.[127] *Ingots of Gold* was in a sense offered as a supporting dossier for one side of the argument, seeking to demonstrate that there was indeed a Tibetan literature worthy of the name. Yogic songs, with their irreducible religious commitment, evidently could not be emphasized. More folkloric genres, such as dance songs, were already favored in Chinese cultural bureaus as properly representing the cultures of minority peoples and therefore contributed little to the rehabilitation of Tibetan literary culture. *Kāvya,* by contrast, clearly belonged to the sphere of literature

124. An oddly Sinicized locution, as the bamboo pen, not the brush, is the traditional Tibetan writing instrument.

125. Macdonald (1967 and 1972) provides a study of this genre, accompanied by the text and translation of one version of the tales.

126. Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtse-mo 1988, 1: 2.

127. This dispute has intensified in the Tibet Autonomous Region since 1996, and Tibet University's Department of Tibetan Literature has at times been shut down for political reasons. Indian Buddhist texts of importance for Tibetan literary history, such as Śāntideva's famous poem, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Introduction to the Conduct of Enlightenment), were at one

(in an honorific sense), and, what is more, the religious framework of much Tibetan *kāvya* could be explained in terms of literary convention rather than religious commitment per se. The renewed interest in Tibetan *kāvya* during the 1980s, therefore, can be read in part as one dimension of a broader effort to rehabilitate Tibetan culture in the wake of earlier repression and ongoing ideological criticism.

Kāvya *in Question*

Despite its revival, the Tibetan *kāvya* tradition has also come to be regarded as problematic—and not only among the ignorant or the ideologically motivated denigrators of traditional Tibetan culture. Tibetan *kāvya* flourished in the refined and insulated world of monastic scholars and cultivated aristocrats. It is by no means clear that it provides an adequate voice for Tibetans struggling with their place as marginalized citizens in a rapidly modernizing China.

The renewal of Tibetan-language publishing in China not only facilitated a revival of traditional literature but also provided new opportunities for young Tibetan writers, who were experimenting with nontraditional genres. Such experimentation was plainly more widespread in China than it was among refugees in India; for the latter were much concerned with the preservation of tradition and were increasingly using English as a medium to voice contemporary concerns,[128] while the former were actually encouraged by Chinese authorities to emulate popular Chinese literature, for instance, the short stories of Lu Xun. One predictable result was the production of works representing socialist literary values in Tibetan; another result was that some of the younger Tibetan writers abandoned their own language in favor of Chinese, thus reaching a wider readership in China and abroad. But the experiment in modern Tibetan literature, including novels, short stories, and free-form poems adhering to the colloquial language, forged an opening nevertheless.[129]

One of the most distinctive young voices to emerge was that of the poet and scholar Döndrupgyel (Don-grub-rgyal, 1953–1985), whose tragic death

---

point stricken from the curriculum at the order of the TAR Communist party leadership. At present (2002), however, a more liberal trend has reemerged.

128. Pico Iyer, in his review of recent Hollywood films about Tibet (*New York Review of Books*, January 15, 1998) remarks, for instance, that in an interview the Dalai Lama's sister, Jetsun Pema, recalled her recent struggle to shift from English to Tibetan, which was necessitated by her election to a post in the Tibetan cabinet.

129. For writing in Chinese, see Zhaxi Dawa 1990, 1995; see also Grünfelder 1997. For examples of short stories and colloquial poems, see, respectively, Bkra-shis-dpal-ldan 1991 and Don-grub-rgyal in Padma-'bum 1994.

by his own hand has been interpreted in some quarters as a political state-ment on the Tibetan predicament in China.[130] In his scholarship, Dön-drupgyel devoted much attention to the documents and literary traditions of the early medieval Tibetan empire, and his research in this area formed the basis for his greatest achievement, *The History and Character of the Song-Poem (Mgur glu'i lo rgyus dang khyad chos),* an impressive dissertation of more than three hundred pages published in the year of his death.[131] Beginning his work with a typology of Tibetan song-poems, he turns to examine the songs found in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* from Dunhuang, offering detailed commentary upon them and attempting to adduce the formal features and poetics of the Old Tibetan song (chapter 2). This is followed by a similarly careful reading of selected songs by Milarepa (chapter 3) and then, turning to later authors, a far-reaching series of theoretical reflections on the form, inspiration (*srog;* lit. life force), ornamentation, and emotional dimensions of the Tibetan song-poem (chapters 4–8).

On surveying Döndrupgyel's study, a question immediately arises con-cerning the relationship between his vision of the poetic universe of the song-poem and traditional Tibetan understandings of *kāvya.* More clearly than any other text of which I am aware, his work demonstrates how *kāvya* has be-come both problematic and indispensable to Tibetan literary culture. He writes:

> Since the text of the *Mirror of Poetry* was translated into Tibetan, a profound power entered into Tibetan *kāvya* and song, and it provided forceful encour-agement for the promulgation of Tibetan song and *kāvya.* But because all in common relied upon the root-text of the *Mirror,* within a few centuries the rapid promulgation of *kāvya* and song slowed and high quality could not be main-tained. In terms of form and subject matter, too, though there were new and fine compositions imbued with the special character of their age and of the nationality, there were not many thus produced. Moreover, while our scholars translated many poetic works like the *Marvelous Vine [Avadānakalpalatā],* the *Cloud Messenger [Meghadūta],* and the *Tale of King Jimutavāhana* [that is, *Nā-gānanda*], and composed the *Tale of Ramaṇa,* the *Tale of the Bodhisattva Sadāpraru-dita* [of Tsong-kha-pa], and so on, and while even now there are innumerable model books on poetics, still it appears that they were unable to produce many new and novel poetic compositions that are easy to understand, facilitating comprehension. The chief reason for this was that the basis for earlier com-position and *kāvya* was not established among the Tibetan people as a whole, but instead was established only among those endowed with the learning in-volving mastery of the sciences. Owing to this, the treatises and model books

---

130. Stoddard 1994b, Padma-'bum 1994, Germano in Goldstein and Kapstein 1998: 166 n. 10; Kapstein 2002.

131. Don-grub-rgyal 1985. I am grateful to Professor Leonard van der Kuijp for providing me with a photocopy of this work.

of *kāvya* were bound up with many unknown or poorly known synonyms and archaisms, and adorned with incomprehensible poetic ornaments. Thus, the masses of the people were not able to study their compositions, or they found them hard to understand, so that the relationship between *kāvya* among our literary arts and the Tibetan people came to grow ever more distant.[132]

Döndrupgyel of course adopted here a sociological stance that accorded with accepted socialist theories of literature.[133] This, however, in no way discredits the essential thrust of his argument, and it is clear that he resisted any facile tendency to condemn the Tibetan *kāvya* tradition outright. His position is evident in his qualified praise for some past literary achievements, but above all through his recourse throughout his work to theoretical categories drawn directly from the *kāvya* tradition. Thus, one section of his work is devoted to "ornaments of the song-poem that accord with those of *kāvya*," while the lengthy chapter on the emotional dimensions of the song-poem is in fact an elaborate restatement of *rasa* theory.[134] And in his own verses, which conclude chapters and important sections of the book, Döndrupgyel is ever reliant upon the conventions of Tibetan *kāvya*. We may draw the conclusion, then, that while in certain respects the Tibetan people and the *kāvya* tradition indeed parted company, in others *kāvya* became inalienably part of their poetry.

The six volumes of Döndrupgyel's collected writings recently published in Beijing (Don-grub-rgyal 1998) include posthumous works found among his papers as well as short pieces that first appeared during his lifetime only in local Tibetan journals that are difficult to find outside collections in Gansu and Qinghai. These materials allow us to trace in some detail Döndrupgyel's ongoing involvement with *kāvya* in his own writing, a course that interestingly retraces much of the ground covered earlier in this chapter.[135]

Döndrupgyel's immersion in the literary voices of the past is in evidence, for instance, in his devotion to the Tibetan traditions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. His collected poems, occupying the first volume of his works, begin with his own delightful retelling of the epic. The introductory essay summarizes the history of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and aspects of its spread in world literatures, its modern translations and reception. That this was among his sustained interests is demonstrated by a number of his other writings: his collected works in-

132. Don-grub-rgyal 1985: 39.
133. Don-grub-rgyal 1985: 233.
134. These two sections can be found at Don-grub-rgyal 1985: 240–244 and 271–306. The term I translate here as "emotional dimension" *(nyams)* may be used for either *bhāva* or *rasa* in translations from Sanskrit.
135. The collected writings, Don-grub-rgyal 1998, became available to me only while I was working on the final revision of this chapter. See Kapstein 2002 for precise volume and page references for the works alluded to here.

clude fragments from a translation of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa,* apparently from a Chinese version, as well as commentarial notes on the renowned *Tale of Ramaṇa,* which we have considered earlier, while a modern translation of the archaic Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa* from Dunhuang is found also there. Similarly, he devoted sustained attention both to the Tibetan yogic songs and to later traditions of *kāvya,* as represented in the writings of the Fifth Dalai Lama.

These interests are prominent, too, in his prose fiction. The short story *Sems gcong* (A disease of the mind), which opens the second volume of the collected works, containing his prose fiction, is the tale of a young woman's coming of age, related in the first person by its protagonist, Detso (Bde-mtsho). The language is rich and dense, informed throughout by an interweaving of Amdo idiom with the elaborate conventions of Tibetan *kāvya,* for example, when Detso describes first falling in love: "At that time my whole body was oppressed with shame, and though I could not even lift up my head, I was nevertheless pushed on by the action of mind, afflicted with love, so that my two guiding eyes were dispatched to accompany him as he departed."[136] The use of the Tibetan coinage modeled upon Sanskrit *nayana,* "that which guides," to refer to the eyes well reflects Döndrupgyel's knowledge and employment of Indian conventions.

At the present time Tibetan literary culture, torn between traditional monasticism and South Asian, Chinese, and Western modernities, is in transition. In his own poems Döndrupgyel wished both to break new ground and to retrieve what still seemed valuable from the past. As he wrote in one of his verses:

> What fills my ears right here and now
>> is nourishment
>> for our future[137]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tibetan Sources

Karma-pa III Rang-byung-rdo-rje. 1995. *Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyi skyes rabs brgya ba.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Karma-pa VIII Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje. n.d. *Bka' brgyud mgur mtsho.* Rum-btegs, Sikkim, xylographic edition.

Kong-sprul Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho. 1982. *Shes bya kun khyab.* 3 vols. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

136. Don-grub-rgyal 1998, 2: 5: *skabs der nga yang lus yongs ngo tshas mnan te mgo bo 'degs pa'i nus pa dang bral yang brtse gdung sems kyi byed pos bskul te 'dren byed zung khong gi rjes su skyel mar mngags.*

137. Padma-'bum 1994: 100.

Bkra-shis-dpal-ldan. 1991. *Phyi nyin gyi gnam gshis de ring las legs pa yong nges.* Cheng-du: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Khams-sprul Bstan-'dzin-chos-kyi-nyi-ma. 1986. *Rgyan gyi bstan bcos dbyangs can ngag gi rol mtsho.* Gangs can rigs mdzod series 2. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.

Dge-'dun-chos-'phel. 1990. *Dge 'dun chos 'phel gyi gsung rtsom.* 3 vols. Gangs can rigs mdzod series 10–12. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang.

Sgrub-thabs-kun-'dus: A Collection of Sādhanas and Related Texts of the Vajrayāna Traditions of Tibet. 1970. 14 vols. Dehradun, U.P.: G. T. K. Lodod, N. Gyaltsen & N. Lungtok.

Bstan-'dzin-dpal-'byor. 1986. *Rdo ring paṇḍi ta'i rnam thar.* 2 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Dalai Lama V Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho. 1988. *Bod kyi deb ther dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las. 1982. *Snyan ngag la 'jug tshul tshig rgyan rig pa'i sgo 'byed.* Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Don-grub-rgyal. 1985. *Mgur glu'i lo rgyus dang khyad chos.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

———. 1998. *Dpal Don grub rgyal gyi gsung 'bum.* Edited by Phur-kho, Mgon-po Dar-rgyas et al. 6 vols. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Don-grub-rgyal and Khrin Chin-dbyin [Chen Qingying]. 1984. *Btsan po khri sde srong btsan gyi lo rgyus mdo tsam brjod pa.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Dol-po-pa Shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan. 1992–1993. *The 'Dzam-thang Edition of the Collected Works of Kun-mkhyen Dol-po-pa Shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan.* Collected and presented by Matthew Kapstein. 10 vols. in Tibetan plus 1 vol. introduction and descriptive cat-alog in English. New Delhi: Shedrup Books and Konchhog Lhadrepa.

Rdo-rje-rgyal-po. 1983. *Snyan ngag rnam bshad gsal sgron.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Padma-'bum, ed. 1994. *Don grub rgyal gyi lang tsho'i rbab chu dang ljags rtsom bdams sgrigs.* Dharamsala: A myes rma chen bod kyi rig gzhung zhib 'jug khang.

Dpa'-ris Dor-zhi Gdong-drug-snyems-blo. 1988. *Snyan ngag sprin gyi pho nya'i tshig 'grel go bde ngag rig kun da'i zla zer.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo. 1985. Edited by Zhang Yisun et al. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang. 3 vols.

Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtse-mo, eds. 1988. *Gangs ljongs mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rtsom yig gser gyi sbram bu.* 3 vols. Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Dbang-rgyal [Wang Yao] and Bsod-nams-skyid. 1992. *Tun hong nas thon pa'i bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

'Brom ston rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs bka' gdams bu chos. 1994. Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Mi-pham-rnam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho. 1983. *Rgyal po lugs kyi bstan bcos.* Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmags dpe skrun khang.

Gtsang-smyon he-ru-ka Rus-pa'i rgyan-can. 1981. *Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po mi la ras pa'i rnam mgur.* Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

———. 1984. *Mar pa lo tsā'i rnam thar.* Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Mdzangs blun zhes bya ba'i mdo. 1984. Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Zhang-zhung-ba Chos-dbang-grags-pa. 1983. *Ra ma ṇa'i rtogs brjod,* with the commen-

tary of Ngag-dbang-bstan-pa'i-rgya-mtsho. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug-rang-grol. 1986. *Zhabs dkar pa'i rnam thar.* 2 vols. Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

———. 1988. *Zhabs dkar pa'i mgur 'bum.* 2 vols. Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal. 1979. *Gzhon nu zla med kyi gtam rgyud.* Lhasa: Bod ljong mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.

———. 1981. *Mi dbang rtogs brjod.* Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Rig-'dzin Bdud-'joms rdo-rje. 1991. *Rig'dzin Bdud'joms rdo rje rol pa rtsal gyi rnam thar.* Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Rin-spungs Ngag-dbang-'jigs-grags. 1985. *Sa paṇ rtogs brjod bskal bzang legs lam.* Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan. 1981. *Mkhas pa rnams 'jug pa'i sgo zhes bya ba'i btsan bcos.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

———. 1982. *Legs par bshad pa rin po che'i gter dang de'i'grel pa.* Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.

———. 1992. *Sa paṇ kun dga' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum.* 3 vols. Gangs can rigs mdzod series 23–25. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang.

Bse-tshang Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan. 1984. *Tshangs sras bzhad pa'i sgra dbyangs.* Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Bsod-nams-skyid and Dbang-rgyal [Wang Yao]. 1983. *Tun hong nas thon pa'i gna'bo'i bod yig shog dril.* Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Non-Tibetan References

Ahmad, Zahiruddin. 1970. *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century.* Rome: Is.M.E.O.

Aziz, Barbara N., and Matthew Kapstein, eds. 1985. *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization.* New Delhi: Manohar.

Bacot, Jacques. 1921. *Trois mystères tibétains.* Paris: Éditions Bossard.

———. 1932. *Dictionnaire Tibétain-Sanskrit par Tse-ring-ouang-gyal.* Buddhica, second series, vol. 2. Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.

———. 1957. *Zugiñima.* Paris: Cahier de la Société Asiatique.

Bacot, J., F. W. Thomas, and Ch. Toussaint. 1940. *Documents de Touen-houang relatifs à l'histoire du Tibet.* Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.

Balbir, Jagbans Kishore. 1963. *L'histoire de Rāma en tibétain d'après des manuscrits de Touen-houang.* Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve.

Banerjee, Anukul Chandra, ed. 1939. *Kāvyādarśa: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts,* by Daṇḍin. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.

Beckwith, Christopher I. 1987. *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1990. "The Medieval Scholastic Method in Tibet and the West." In *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie,* edited by Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne. Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Beyer, Steven. 1991. *The Classical Tibetan Language.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Bhattacharya, Vidhushekhara. 1939. *Bhoṭa-prakāśa: A Tibetan Chrestomathy*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press.

———, ed. 1957. *Nāgānanda-nāṭaka,* by Śrīharṣadeva. Calcutta: The Asiatic Society.

Bista, Dor Bahadur. 1979. *Report from Lhasa*. Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan.

Bosson, James. 1969. *Treasury of Aphoristic Jewels*. Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series, vol. 92. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Cabezón, José, and Roger Jackson, eds. 1995. *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

Chang, Garma Chen Chi. 1962. *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*. 2 vols. New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books.

Coblin, W. S. 1991. "A Study of the Old Tibetan *Shangshu* Paraphrase." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111: 303–22, 523–39.

Conze, Edward. 1974. *The Buddha's Law among the Birds*. Repr. ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Das, Sarat Chandra. 1893. *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow*. Calcutta: n.p.

———, ed. 1888–1918. *Avadānakalpalatā,* by Kṣemendra. Calcutta: Asiatic Society.

Dawa Norbu, trans. 1987. *Khache Phalu's Advice on the Art of Living*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

Demiéville, Paul. 1979. "L'introduction au Tibet du Bouddhisme sinisé d'après les manuscrits de Touen-houang: Analyses de récents travaux japonais." In *Contributions aux études sur Touen-houang,* edited by Michel Soymié. Paris: Librarie Droz.

Dowman, Keith, trans. 1983. *The Divine Madman: The Sublime Life and Songs of Drukpa Kunley*. Clearlake, Calif.: Dawn Horse Press.

Dreyfus, Georges. 1997a. *Recognizing Reality*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

———. 1997b. "Tibetan Scholastic Education and the Role of Soteriology." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20 (1): 31–62.

———. 2002. *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dudjom Rinpoche, Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje. 1991. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*. Annotated translation by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein. 2 vols. London: Wisdom Publications.

Emmerick, Ronald Eric. 1967. *Tibetan Texts Concerning Khotan*. London: Oxford University Press.

———. 1992. *A Guide to the Literature of Khotan*. 2nd ed. Studia Philologica Buddhica, Occasional Papers 3. Tokyo.

Gaborieau, M. 1973. *Récit d'un voyageur musulman au Tibet*. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck.

Giès, Jacques, and Monique Cohen, eds. 1995. *Sérinde, Terre de Bouddha*. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.

Goldstein, Melvyn C. 1989. *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–1951*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goldstein, Melvyn C., and Matthew T. Kapstein, eds. 1998. *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Grierson, G. A., ed. 1967. *Linguistic Survey of India*. Vol. 3, part 1, *Tibeto-Burman Family*. Repr. ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Grünfelder, Alice. 1997. "Tashi Dawa and Modern Tibetan Literature." In *Tibetan*

Studies: Proceedings of the Seventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, edited by Helmut Krasser, Michael Torsten Much, Ernst Steinkellner, and Helmut Tauscher, vol. 1. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Science.

Guenther, Herbert V. 1973. *The Royal Song of Saraha: A Study in the History of Buddhist Thought.* Berkeley and London: Shambhala.

———. 1989. *A Visionary Journey.* Boston: Shambhala.

———. 1993. *Ecstatic Spontaneity.* Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press.

Gyatso, Janet. 1998. *Apparitions of the Self.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Haarh, Erik. 1969. *The Yar-luṅ Dynasty.* Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad's Forlag.

Hahn, Michael. 1971. *Jñānaśrīmitras Vṛttamālāstuti: Eine Beispielsammlung zur altindischen Metrik nach dem tibetischen Tanjur zusammen mit der mongolischen Version.* Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz.

———. 1982. *Ratnākaraśāntis Chandoratnākara.* Kathmandu: Nepal Research Centre.

Helffer, Mireille. 1977. *Les chants de l'épopée tibétaine de Ge-sar d'après le livre de la course de cheval.* Paris: Librairie Droz.

Hopkirk, Peter. 1984. *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road.* London: Oxford University Press.

Imaeda, Yoshiro. 1980. "L'identification de l'original chinois du Pelliot tibétain 1291—traduction tibétaine du Zhanguoce." *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 34 (1–3): 53–68.

———. 1981. *Histoire du cycle de la naissance et de la mort.* Paris: Librairie Droz.

Ishikawa, Mie. 1990. *A Critical Edition of the* Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa, *An Old and Basic Commentary on the* Mahāvyutpatti. Studia Tibetica 18. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko.

Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasa, ed. 1983. *Asian Variations in Ramayana.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Jackson, David. 1984. *The Mollas of Mustang: Historical, Religious and Oratorical Traditions of the Nepalese-Tibetan Borderland.* Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

———. 1987. *The Entrance Gate for the Wise (Section 3).* 2 vols. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien.

Jong, J. W. de. 1989. *The Story of Rāma in Tibet: Text and Translation of the Tun-huang Manuscripts.* Stuttgart: F. Steiner.

Kapstein, Matthew T. 1985. "Religious Syncretism in Thirteenth-Century Tibet: *The Limitless Ocean Cycle.*" In Aziz and Kapstein, 1985.

———. 1992a. "The Illusion of Spiritual Progress." In *Paths to Liberation,* edited by Robert Buswell and Robert Gimello. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

———. 1992b. "Remarks on the *Maṇi-bka'-'bum* and the Cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet." In *Tibetan Buddhism: Reason and Revelation,* edited by S. Goodman and R. Davidson. Albany: State University of New York Press.

———. 1997. "The Journey to the Golden Mountain." In *Tibetan Religions in Practice,* edited by Donald Lopez Jr, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1998. "A Tibetan Festival of Rebirth Reborn: The 1992 Revival of the Drigung Powa Chenmo." In Goldstein and Kapstein 1998.

———. 2000. *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory.* New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2002. "Don-grub-rgyal: The Making of a Modern Hero." Forthcoming in *Lungta* 12.

———. Forthcoming. *Buddhist Thought in Tibet: An Historical Sourcebook.*

Kőrös, Alexander Csoma de. 1984. *Tibetan Studies.* Vol. 4 of *Collected Works of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös,* edited by J. Terjék. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Kuijp, Leonard W. J. van der. 1983. *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology.* Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner.

———. 1994. "On the *Lives* of Śākyaśrībhadra (?–?1225)." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114 (4): 599–616.

———. 1996. "The Tibetan Script and Derivatives." In *The World's Writing Systems,* edited by Peter T. Daniels and William Bright. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kværne, Per. 1977. *An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs: A Study of the Caryāgīti.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

LaFleur, William R. 1983. *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lalou, Marcelle. 1952. "Rituel Bon-po des funérailles royales." *Journal Asiatique* 240 (3): 339–61.

———. 1953. "Les Textes Bouddhiques au Temps du Roi Khri-sroṅ-lde-bcan." *Journal Asiatique* 241 (3): 313–53.

Lama Lo-drö of Drepung. 1982. *The Prince Who Became a Cuckoo.* Translated by Lama Geshe Wangyal. New York: Theatre Arts Books.

Le Goff, Jacques. 1993. *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages.* Translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lhalungpa, Lobsang, trans. 1977. *The Life of Milarepa.* New York: E. P. Dutton.

Lopez, Donald S., Jr. 1998. *Prisoners of Shangri-la: Tibetan Buddhism and the West.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Macdonald, A. W. 1967. *Matériaux pour l'étude de la littérature populaire tibétaine.* Vol. 1. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

———. 1972. *Matériaux pour l'étude de la littérature populaire tibétaine.* Vol. 2. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck.

Macdonald, Ariane. 1971. "Une lecture des Pelliot tibétain 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047, et 1290: Essai sur la formation et l'emploi des mythes politiques dans la religion royale de Sroṅ-bcan sgam-po." In *Études tibétaines dédiées á la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou,* edited by Ariane Macdonald. Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve.

Macdonald, Ariane, and Yoshiro Imaeda. 1978–1979. *Choix de documents tibétains.* 2 vols. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale.

Mair, Victor. 1994. "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages." *Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (3): 707–51.

Martin, Dan. 1997. *Tibetan Histories: A Bibliography of Tibetan-Language Historical Works.* London: Serindia Publication.

McKitterick, Rosamond, ed. 1994. *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, Roy Andrew. 1976. *Studies in the Grammatical Tradition in Tibet.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V.

———. 1983. "Thon mi Sambhoṭa and his grammatical treatises reconsidered." In *Contributions on Tibetan Language, History and Culture,* vol. 1 of the Proceedings of the Csoma de Kőrös Symposium held at Velm-Vienna, Austria, edited by Ernst Steinkellner and Helmut Tauscher. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien.

———. 1993. *Prolegomena to the First Two Tibetan Grammatical Treatises*. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien.

Morrison, Millicent H., trans. 1925. *Ti-me-kun-dan: Prince of Buddhist Benevolence*. London: John Murray.

Nalanda Translation Committee. 1980. *Rain of Wisdom*. Boulder: Shambhala.

———. 1982. *Life of Marpa the Translator*. Boulder: Prajna Press.

Onoda, Shunzo. 1992. *Monastic Debate in Tibet: A Study on the History and Structures of Bsdus grwa Logic*. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien.

Pachow, W. 1980. *Chinese Buddhism: Aspects of Interaction and Reinterpretation*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.

Patrul Rinpoche. 1994. *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*. Translated by Padmakara Translation Group. London: HarperCollins.

Pelliot, Paul. 1961. *Histoire ancienne du Tibet*. Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve.

Petech, Luciano. 1972. *China and Tibet in the Early Eighteenth Century*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

———. 1990. *Central Tibet and the Mongols*. Serie Orientale Roma 65. Rome: Is.M.E.O.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1996. "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, A.D. 300–1300: Transculturation, Vernacularization, and the Question of Ideology." In *The Ideology and Status of Sanskrit in South and Southeast Asia,* edited by J. E. M. Houben. Leiden: Brill.

Pranavananda, Swami. 1943. *Kailās-Mānasarovar*. Allahabad. Reprint, Calcutta, 1949.

Renou, Louis, and Jean Filliozat. 1985. *L'Inde classique*. Vol. 1. Reprint, Paris: Maisonneuve.

Ricard, Matthieu, et al., trans. 1994. *The Life of Shabkar: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogin*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Richardson, Hugh E. 1980. "The First Tibetan Chos-'byung." *Tibet Journal* 5 (3): 62–73.

———. 1985. *A Corpus of Early Tibetan Inscriptions*. London: Royal Asiatic Society.

———. 1989. "Early Tibet Law Concerning Dog-bite." *Bulletin of Tibetology* New Series 3: 5–10.

Richman, Paula, ed. 1991. *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Roerich, Georges. 1959. *Biography of Dharmasvāmin: A Tibetan Monk Pilgrim*. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute.

Róna-Tas, András. 1985. *Wiener Vorlesungen zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte Tibets*. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien.

Ruegg, David Seyfort. 1973. "On Translating the Buddhist Canon." In *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Culture*. New Delhi: International Institute for Indian Culture.

———. 1995. *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel dans la pensée bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet*. Paris: De Boccard.

Sakaki, R., ed. 1916–1925. *Mahāvyutpatti*. Kyoto: Shingon University.

Schuh, Dieter. 1973. *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Tibetischen Kalenderrechnung*. Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Supplementband 16. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Seth, Vikram. 1987. *From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet*. New York: Vintage Books.

Shakabpa, Tsepon W. D. 1967. *Tibet: A Political History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Simonsson, Nils. 1957. *Indo-tibetische Studien.* Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells.

Skorupski, Tadeusz. 1983. *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Smith, E. Gene. 1970. Introduction to *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture.* Śatapiṭaka Series 80. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture.

Snellgrove, David. 1954. "The Tantras." In *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages,* edited by Edward Conze. New York: Philosophical Library.

———. 1987. *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors.* 2 vols. Boston: Shambhala.

Sørensen, Per K. 1994. *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Spiro, Melford E. 1982. *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stearns, Cyrus. 1996. "The Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian *Mahāpaṇḍita* Vibhūticandra." *Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies* 19 (1): 127–71.

Stein, Rolf A. 1956. *L'épopée tibétaine de Gesar dans sa version lamaïque de Ling.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

———. 1959. *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

———. 1970. "Un document ancien relatif aux rites funéraires des bon-po tibétains." *Journal Asiatique* 258: 155–185.

———. 1972a. *Tibetan Civilization.* Translated by J. S. Driver. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

———. 1972b. *Vie et chants de 'Brug-pa Kun-legs le yogin.* Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose.

———. 1981. "'Saint et Divin,' un titre tibétain et chinois des rois tibétains." *Journal Asiatique* supp.: 231–75.

———. 1983. "Tibetica Antiqua I: Les deux vocabulaires des traductions Indo-tibétaine et Sino-tibétaine dans les Manuscrits de Touen-houang." *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrème-Orient* 72: 149–236.

———. 1985. "Tibetica Antiqua III: À propos du mot *gcug-lag* et de la religion indigène." *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrème-Orient* 74: 83–133.

———. 1986. "Tibetica Antiqua IV: La tradition relative au début du Bouddhisme au Tibet." *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrème-Orient* 75: 169–96.

Stoddard, Heather. 1994a. "Tibetan Publications and National Identity." In *Resistance and Reform in Tibet,* edited by Robert Barnett and Shirin Akiner. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 1994b. "Don grub rgyal (1953–1985): Suicide of a Modern Tibetan Writer and Scholar." In *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies,* edited by Per Kværne. Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture.

Takeuchi, Tsuguhito. 1985. "A Passage from the *Shih chi* in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle.*" In Aziz and Kapstein 1985.

Tapovanji Maharaj, Swami. [1960?] *Wanderings in the Himalayas.* Translated from the Malayalam *Himagiri Vihar* by T. N. Kesava Pillai. Madras: Chinmaya Publication Trust.

Taring, Rinchen Dolma. 1970. *Daughter of Tibet.* London: John Murray.

Tshe ring dbang rgyal. 1996. *The Tale of the Incomparable Prince.* Translated by Beth Newman. New York: Harper Collins.

Tucci, Giuseppe. 1971. "Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims in the Swat Valley." In *Opera Minora,* vol. 2. Rome: Giovanni Bardi.

Tulku Thondup Rinpoche and Matthew Kapstein. 1993. "Tibetan Poetry." In *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* edited by Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan, eds. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ueyama, Daishun. 1983. "The Study of Tibetan Ch'an Manuscripts Recovered from Tun-huang: A Review of the Field and its Prospects." In *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet,* edited by Lewis Lancaster and Whalen Lai. Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series 5. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press.

Uray, Géza. 1972. "The Narrative of Legislation and Organization of the Mkhas-pa'i Dga'-ston: The Origins of the Traditions Concerning Sroṅ-brcan Sgam-po as First Legislator and Organizer of Tibet." *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 26: 11–68.

———. 1975. "L'annalistique et la pratique bureaucratique au Tibet ancien," *Journal Asiatique* 263: 157–70.

Verhagen, Pieter C. 1992. "'Royal' Patronage of Sanskrit Grammatical Studies in Tibet." In *Ritual, State and History in South Asia: Essays in Honour of J. C. Heesterman,* edited by A. W. van der Hoek, D. H. A. Kolff, and M. S. Oort. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

———. 1994. *A History of Sanskrit Grammatical Literature in Tibet.* Vol. 1, *Transmission of the Canonical Literature.* Leiden, New York: E. J. Brill.

Vitali, Roberto. 1996. *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang According to mNga'.ris.rgyal.rabs by Gu.ge mkhan.chen Ngag.dbang.grags.pa.* Dharamsala: Tho ling gtsug lag khang lo gcig stong 'khor ba'i rjes dran mdzad sgo'i sgrigs tshogs chung.

Vogel, Claus. 1965. *Vāgbhaṭa's Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya.* Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft 37.2. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner.

———. 1981. *Thon-mi Sambho-ṭa's Mission to India and Srong-btsan sgam-po's Legislation.* Göttingen: Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen.

Wayman, Alex. 1984. "The Interlineary-type Commentary in Tibetan." In *Tibetan and Buddhist Studies Commemorating the Two-Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös,* edited by Louis Ligeti, vol 2. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Zhaxi Dawa. 1990. *La splendeur des chevaux du vent.* Translated by Bernadette Rouis. Arles, France: Actes Sud.

———. 1995. *Tibet, les années cachées.* Translated by Émilienne Daubian. Paris: Editions Bleu de Chine.

The Twinned Histories
of Urdu and Hindi

14

A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 1

Naming and Placing a Literary Culture

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi

MODERN ORIGIN MYTHS OF HINDI AND URDU

Using the term "early Urdu" is not without its risks. "Urdu" as a language name is of comparatively recent origin, and the question of what was or is early Urdu has long since passed from the realm of history, first into the colonialist constructions of the history of Urdu/Hindi, and then into the political and emotional space of Indian (Hindu) identity in modern India. For the average Hindi user today, it is a matter of faith to believe that the language he knows as "Hindi" is of ancient origin and that its literature originates with Amīr Khusrau (1253–1325), if not even earlier. Many such people also believe that the pristine Hindi or "Hindvi" became Urdu sometime in the eighteenth century, when the Muslims "decided" to veer away from Hindi as it existed at that time and adopted a heavy, Persianized style of language, which soon became a distinguishing characteristic of the Muslims of India.[1] Even scholars often suggest or state that the language today known as Hindi is the rightful claimant to the space in Indian literary history occupied, at least up to the end of the seventeenth century, by the language today called Urdu. The positing of Hindi against Urdu has had far-reaching effects on the literary culture of Urdu, yet few of these have been documented—much

1. In recent times, this case has been most elaborately presented by Amrit Rai (see Amrit Rai 1984). Rai's thesis, though full of inconsistencies and tendentious speculation rather than hard facts—and of fanciful interpretation of actual facts—was never refuted by Urdu scholars as it should have been.

less discussed and explained in proper perspective. However, no discussion can now afford to ignore the fact that there *are* two claimants to a single linguistic and literary tradition, and that the whole issue is more political than academic. I begin, therefore, with a brief historical account of the origin myths and realities of the terms "Hindi" and "Urdu."

Early names for the language now called Urdu were (more or less in chronological order) "Hindvi," "Hindi," "Dihlavi," "Gujri," "Dakani," and "Rekhtah." In the north, both "Rekhtah" and "Hindi" were popular as names for the same language from sometime before the eighteenth century, and the name "Hindi" was used, in preference to "Rekhtah," from about the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, the spoken language was almost always referred to as "Hindi." Even in the early twentieth century, the name "Hindi" could be used—as it was by Iqbāl, for example—to refer to Urdu. "Hindvi" was in use until about the end of the eighteenth century. Muṣḥafī (1750–1824) says in his first *dīvān* (poetry volume), compiled around 1785:

> Oh Muṣḥafī, put away Persian now,
> Hindvi verse is the mode of the day.

"Urdu" as a name for the language seems to have occurred for the first time around 1780. All, or almost all, of the earliest examples are from Muṣḥafī again. He says in his first *dīvān:*

> Muṣḥafī has, most surely,
> a claim of superiority in Rekhtah—
> That is to say, he has expert knowledge
> of the language of (the) *urdū*.[2]

"Urdu" here may mean the city (of Shāhjahānābād, that is, Delhi) rather than the language. In the following instance, from the fourth *dīvān,* compiled around 1796, the reference seems clearly to the language name:

> They put *gosh* and *chashm* everywhere in place of *nāk* and *kān,*
> And believe that their language is the language called "Urdu."[3]

The name "Urdu" seems to have begun its life as *zabān-e urdū-e muʿallā-e shāhjahānābād* (the language of the exalted city/court of Shāhjahānābād) and originally seems to have signified Persian, not Urdu. It soon became shortened to *zabān-e urdū-e muʿallā,* then to *zabān-e urdū,* and then to *urdū.* The authors of *Hobson-Jobson* cite a reference from 1560 in support of "urdu bazaar" (camp-market). They also claim that the word *urdū* came to India

---

2. Muṣḥafī [1785] 1967: 91, 38.
3. Muṣḥafī [1796] 1969: 578. *Gosh* and *chashm* are the Persian, and *nāk* and *kān* are the Indic, words for "nose" and "ear."

with Bābur (1526), that his camp was called *urdū-e muʿallā* (the exalted camp, or court), and that the language that grew up around the court/camp was called *zabān-e urdū-e muʿallā*.[4] While the citation is obviously correct, the commentary of the authors is wrong for many reasons: there were plenty of Turks in India before Bābur; Bābur never had an extended stay in Delhi; Hindi/Hindvi/Dihlavi was already in use in and around Delhi before Bābur. No new language grew up in northern India as a result of the advent of the Mughals there.

By the eighteenth century, if not sooner, the word *urdū* meant the city of Delhi. It retained this sense until at least the early nineteenth century. Inshā and Qatīl say in *Daryā-e laṭāfat* (The river of lightness and subtlety, 1807) that "the residents of Murshidabad and ʿAẓīmābād [Patna], in their own estimation, are competent Urdu speakers and regard their own city as the *urdū*"; Inshā means that they are really provincial and are not true citizens of Shāhjahānābād. Further evidence is provided in the Persian literature of the time. Around 1747–1752, Sirāj ud-Dīn ʿAlī Khān-e Ārzū (1687/88–1756), the major linguist and Persian lexicographer of his time, composed *Navādir ul-alfāẓ* (Rare and valuable among words), in which he constantly uses both *urdū* and *urdū-e muʿallā* to mean Delhi. Commenting on the word *chhinel* (woman of easy virtue, harlot) for instance, he says, "We who are from Hind and live in the *urdū-e muʿallā* do not know this word." In another work he declares: "Thus it is established that the most excellent and normative speech is that of the *urdū,* and the Persian of this place is reliable . . . and poets of [various] places, like Khāqānī of Sharvān, and Niẓāmī of Ganjah, and Sanāʾī of Ghaznīn, and Khusrau of Delhi, spoke in the same established language, and that language is the language of the *urdū.*"[5] It is thus obvious that in the 1750s, the terms *urdū, urdū-e muʿallā,* and *zabān-e urdū-e muʿallā* did not, at least among the elite, mean the language that is known as Urdu today. The name *zabān-e urdū-e muʿallā* probably began to refer to Hindi around 1790–1795—at any rate, no earlier than January 1772.

Although many of the Mughal royals, including Bābur himself, knew Hindi in some measure (later Mughals knew at least one Indian language quite well), Urdu became the language used around the court only in January 1772, when Shāh ʿĀlam II (r. 1759–1806) moved to Delhi. The court's official language remained Persian, but Shāh ʿĀlam II, because of his long sojourn in Allahabad and his personal predilection, spoke Hindi on informal occasions. This informal use, along with Shāh ʿĀlam's knowledge of languages (including Sanskrit), patronage and love for Hindi, and practice of Hindi literature, gave the language respectability. In fact, in his prose narrative *Dās-*

---

4. Yule and Burnell [1886] 1986: 646.
5. Inshā and Qatīl [1807] 1850: 116; Khān-e Ārzū [1747–1751] 1992: 214, 32.

tānᶜajāʾib ul-qiṣaṣ (The strangest of stories), begun around 1792–1793, Shāh ᶜĀlam identified the language of the tale as Hindi.[6]

For their part, the English seem to have found, from the first, a set of names of their own liking or invention. Edward Terry, companion to Thomas Roe at Jahāngīr's court, described the language in his *A Voyage to East India* (London, 1655) as "Indostan," saying that it was a powerful language that could say much in a few words; it had a high content of Arabic and Persian, but was written differently from Arabic and Persian.[7] In late-eighteenth-century colonial encounters, the name that the British most favored for Hindvi/Hindi was "Hindustani." This was perhaps because it seemed orderly and logical for the main language of "Hindustan" to be called "Hindustani," just as the language of England was English, and so on. "Hindustani" as a language name was not entirely unknown. Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī cites occurrences of it in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Persian texts; he himself in fact favors it over "Urdu" as a language name because of the negative associations of the latter.[8] Yet "Hindustani" never became popular: as a language name it does not occur in any major Persian dictionary, and most native speakers preferred "Hindi" or "Rekhtah."

The British identified what they called "Hindustani" as largely a Muslim language, though they also granted that it was spoken, or at least understood, all over India. *Hobson-Jobson* describes "Hindostanee" as

> the language that the Mahommedans of Upper India, and eventually the Mahommedans of the Deccan, developed out of the Hindi dialect of the Doab chiefly, and the territory around Agra and Delhi, with a mixture of Persian vocables and phrases, and a readiness to adopt other foreign words. It is also called *Oordoo,* i.e., the language of the Urdu ('Horde') or Camp. This language was for a long time a kind of Mahommedan *lingua franca* over all India, and still possesses that character over a large part of the country, and among certain classes.[9]

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1993) is even more explicit than Yule and Burnell were in 1886, defining "Hindustani" as "the language of the Muslim conquerors of Hindustan, being a form of Hindi, with a large admixture of Arabic, Persian, and other foreign elements; also called *Urdu,* i.e. *zaban-e Urdu,* language of the camp, sc. of the Mughal conquerors."[10] Thus both *Hobson-Jobson* and the *Oxford English Dictionary* define "Hindustani" in con-

---

6. Shāh ᶜĀlam II [1792–1793] 1965: 26.
7. Cohn [1985] 1994: 300. On the use of Perso-Arabic script in the fifteenth century, see McGregor, chapter 16, this volume.
8. Sulaimān Nadvī 1939: 103–7.
9. Yule and Burnell [1886] 1986: 417–18.
10. *Oxford English Dictionary* 1993: 769.

formity with British perceptions or policy: namely, there are two languages—Hindustani for the Muslims, Hindi for the Hindus.

In 1796, well before Yule and Burnell, John Gilchrist published a grammar of the "Hindoostanee Language," which included examples from "the best poets who have composed their several works in that mixed Dialect, also called Oordoo, or the polished language of the Court, and which even at this day pervades with more or less purity, the vast provinces of a once powerful empire."[11] Writing somewhat grandly of the British adoption of the term "Hindustani," Gilchrist observed that "Hindoostan is a compound word, equivalent to *Hindoo*-land or *Negro*-land. . . . It is chiefly inhabited by Hindoos and Moosalmans; whom we may safely comprise, as well as their language, under the general, conciliating, comprehensive term Hindoostanee." He gives the following reasons for his terminology:

> This name of the country being modern, as well as the vernacular tongue in question, no other appeared so appropriate as it did to me, when I first engaged in the study and cultivation of the language. That the natives and others call it also *Hindee, Indian,* from *Hind,* the ancient appellation of *India,* cannot be denied; but as this is apt to be confounded with *Hinduwee, Hindoo,ee, Hindvee,* the derivative from *Hindoo,* I adhere to my original opinion, that we should invariably discard all other denominations of the popular speech of this country, including the unmeaning word *Moors,* and substitute for them *Hindoostanee,* whether the people here constantly do so or not: as they can hardly discriminate sufficiently, to observe the use and propriety of such restrictions, even when pointed out to them.
>
> *Hinduwee,* I have treated as the exclusive property of the Hindus alone; and have therefore constantly applied it to the old language of India, which prevailed before the Moosulman invasion; and in fact, now constitutes among them, the basis or ground-work of the *Hindoostanee,* a comparatively recent superstructure, composed of Arabic and Persian, in which the two last may be considered in the same relation, that Latin and French bear to English.[12]

In addition to cheerfully and confidently assuming the right to make decisions for the natives—since they themselves apparently have no discrimination and do not know what's good for them—Gilchrist also perpetrates a canard on Persian and Persian speakers (among whom, at that time, there were many Indians as well) by saying that in Persian *hindū* means "Negro."[13] Though he recognizes Hindvi as the "basis or ground-work of the Hindoo-

11. Gilchrist 1796: 261.
12. Gilchrist [1798] 1802: i.
13. This canard has found echoes in the modern Indian English-language press, where absurd meanings have been foisted on the Persian word *hindū*. The latest is by Wagish Shukla, a normally careful and humane scholar. Reviewing Vasudha Dalmia's book on Bhāratendu Harishchandra, Shukla claims that in Persian, *Hindū* means "nigger" (Shukla 1997).

stanee," he omits to mention—or doesn't know—that Hindvi was not a separate language but was merely an early name for the same language for which he was now prescribing the name "Hindoostanee."

Gilchrist lifted most of his theory from Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751–1830), who was one of the first to have written a grammar of the Bangla language (1778).[14] Halhed identified a language called "Hindustanic" that "had two varieties, one which was spoken over most of Hindustan proper and was 'indubitably derived from Sanskrit.'" The other was "developed by the Muslim invaders of India, who could not learn the language spoken by the Hindus, who, in order to maintain the purity of their own tongue, introduced more and more abstruse terms from Sanskrit." Thus the Muslims introduced "exotic" words "which they superimposed on the 'grammatical principles of the original Hindustanic.'"[15] Here we can see the source not only for Gilchrist's grand prescriptions but also for the definitions of the words "Urdu" and "Hindustani" that we find from Fallon (1866) through Platts (1884) and the *Hobson-Jobson* (1886) to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1993). Fallon declared "Urdu" to mean:

> an army, a camp; a market. *urdu,i m'alla,* the royal camp or army (generally means the city of *Dihli* or *Shahjahanabad;* and *urdu,i mu'alla ki zaban,* the court language). This term is very commonly applied to the Hindustani language as spoken by the Musalman population of India proper.

In strikingly similar language, Platts defined it as:

> Army; camp; market of a camp; s.f. *(urdū zabān),* the Hindūstānī language as spoken by the Muhammadans of India, and by Hindūs who have intercourse with them or who hold appointments in the Government courts &c. (It is composed of Hindī, Arabic, and Persian, Hindī constituting the back-bone, so to speak):—*urdū-i-mu'allā,* The royal camp or army (generally means the city of Dehli or Shāhjahānābād; the court language *(urdū-i-mu'allā kī zabān);* the Hindūstānī language as spoken in Delhi.[16]

The *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies "Urdu" with "Hindustani," and goes on to distinguish "Hindustani, the lingua franca," from the tongue that is the official language of Pakistan!

In his *Dictionary, English and Hindoostanee* (Calcutta, 1790) Gilchrist declares that Sanskrit was derived from "Hinduwee," which was spoken over much of India before the Muslim invasion. He further suggests that repeated invasions of Muslims resulted in the creation of "Hindustani": "Muslims referred to this language as 'Oorduwer' in its military form, 'Rekhtu' in its po-

---

14. Rocher 1983.
15. Cohn [1985] 1994: 298.
16. Fallon [1866] 1986: 28; Platts [1884] 1974: 40.

etical form, and 'Hindee' as the everyday language of the Hindoos."[17] Worth noting here first is the mutilation of the term *urdū-e muʿallā:* Gilchrist does not know that it is a compound, and its first part standing alone is meaningless, so that no one ever wrote, or spoke, *"urdū-e."* Next we might note the entirely imaginary classification of the language: military, literary, and Hindu. Finally, we can see here the source for Gilchrist's confident prediction that "the Hindoos will naturally lean to the *Hinduwee,* while the Moosulmans will of course be more partial to Arabic and Persian; whence two styles arise."[18] That the prediction found many ways of coming very nearly true should not permit us to ignore the fact that it was based on historically false and morally questionable premises.

Since the name "Hindustani" did not work in spite of Gilchrist's confidence, the British were obliged, eventually, to give it up. They found a better alternative: "Urdu" was a name that did not have the faintest reverberations of a Hindu link. On the contrary, since it was a Turkish word, its Muslim connections were obvious. As we have seen, Shāhjahānābād gradually came to be called *urdū-e muʿallā,* and the language spoken there became "the language of the *urdū-e muʿallā."* And Ḳhān-e Ārzū had, of course, described Persian in exactly the same terms. Now with the patronage and practice of Shāh ʿĀlam II, Hindi, rather than Persian, began to be called "the language of the *urdū-e muʿallā."* Though the shortened name "Urdu" didn't instantly become universally popular, the etymology of the word *urdū,* and the fact that in Rekhtah/Hindi the word *urdū* did mean, among other things, "camp," or "camp-market," made it easy for the British to propose that Hindi/Rekhtah was born in Muslim army camp-markets, and that that is why it was called *zabān-e urdū-e muʿallā.*

The earliest printed source for this fiction from an Indian author seems to be Mīr Amman Dihlavī's *Bāġh o bahār* (Garden and spring), a prose romance produced in 1803 at the College of Fort William, under Gilchrist's direction, as a text for teaching Urdu/Hindustani to British civil servants. Mīr Amman says that he wrote the story in the "language of *urdū-e muʿallā."* He adds that he was asked by Gilchrist to "translate" the story into "pure Indian speech, as spoken among themselves by the people of the *urdū,* Hindu or Muslim, women, men, children and young people." In the pages following, he proceeds to apprise the reader of the "true facts about the language of the *urdū."* He says:

> Finally, Amīr Taimūr (with whose House the rule still remains, though only in name), conquered India. Due to his advent, and extended sojourn here, the bazaar of the army entered the city. And that's why the market-place of the city

17. Cohn [1985] 1994: 304.
18. Gilchrist [1798] 1802: 2.

came to be called *urdū*. . . . When King Akbar ascended the throne, people of all communities, hearing of the appreciation and free flow of generosity as practiced by that peerless House, came from all four sides of the land and gathered in his Presence. But each had his distinctive talk and speech. By virtue of their coming together for give and take, trade and commerce, question and answer, a [new] language of the camp-market came to be established.[19]

Mīr Amman did not tell the reader that there was a gap of a century and a half, as well as a dynastic change, between the coming of Taimūr (1398) and the advent of Akbar (r. 1556–1605). Moreover, Akbar never lived in Delhi, and the only time he would have had an army camping near Delhi would have been in 1556, when he fought Hemū at Panipat, eighty kilometers away. Most important, Mīr Amman omitted to mention that the language in question was called Hindvi/Hindi from early times, and "Hindi" was its commonest name in his day. But the immense success of *Bāġh o bahār* as a school text ultimately caused Mīr Amman's narrative to prevail, in every sense of the word.

The story didn't come to prevail quickly, though. A long time was required for "Hindi" and "Urdu" to take root as the names of two different languages. The native speaker's resistance to the term "Urdu" may have had something to do with the fact that the name suggested false images about the origins and nature of the language. As late as December 1858, Ġhālib was uncomfortable with "Urdu" as a language name, and he used it as a masculine word in a letter to Shiv Nārā'in Ārām; language names are invariably feminine in Urdu, but *urdū* in the sense of "camp, camp-market" is masculine. Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī, as we have seen, preferred "Hindustani" for just those reasons; "Hindi," of course, was unavailable to him by then.[20]

Aḥad 'Alī Khān Yaktā, a poet and physician of Lucknow, wrote *Dastūr ul-faṣāḥat* (The exemplar of proper speech), a small tract on Urdu syntax—he uses both "Hindi" and "Urdu" for the language—in or before 1798.[21] He wrote the book in Lucknow and was uninfluenced by British political considerations. The *Dastūr* contains the earliest printed observations made by a knowledgeable native Urdu speaker on the origins of Urdu:

And the reason for the appearance of this exquisite language is . . . that the wise and the learned of the time and the age, and the masters of all arts and sciences, persons of excellence and erudition, poets and people from good families, wherever they were, came from all sides and all shores of the world, traveled to this large and desire-fulfilling territory, and attained their heartfelt wishes and purposes. And most of them adopted this paradise-adorned

19. Mīr Amman [1804] 1992: 2, 6, 7–8.
20. Ġhālib 1984–1993, 3: 1067; Sulaimān Nadvī 1939: 101–2.
21. Yaktā [1798] 1943: 27, preface.

land as their own native place. Thus, due to their coming and going to the court, and having to deal with the local people, it became necessary for them to converse in this language.

Inevitably, during intercourse between them and these, and these and them, in the course of conversations, they mixed in each other's vocabulary as much as needed, and got their business done. When this had continued over a long span of time, a state was reached when, by virtue of absorption of words and connections of phrases from each other, it could be described as a new language; for neither the Arabic remained Arabic, nor Persian, Persian; nor, on the same analogy, did the dialects and vernaculars included under the rubric "Indian" [which had contributed to the new language] retain their original form. But even at this time, a single mode, such as should exist, had not stabilized. . . . And every community and group used to privilege its own idiom over the others.

Yaktā goes on to say that, ultimately, persons of "knowledge and wisdom, having no choice" laid down a standard register: among its requirements was speech that was

very clear, familiar to the temperament, and easily comprehensible to the plebeian and the elite. . . . But speech conforming to the above conditions is not to be found except among those inhabitants of Shāhjahānābād who reside within the city's ramparts, or in the language of the offspring of these honorable persons, who have migrated to other cities and taken up residence there. Thus the language of those inhabitants of Lucknow who are not its ancient residents, and were not there in the past, is nowadays closer to the standard speech.[22]

These remarks are quite in accord with the privilege that the Delhi idiom arrogated to itself soon after Hindi/Rekhtah became the main medium of literature there. The literary culture of Delhi became, for all intents and purposes, Urdu's literary culture (as is discussed in a later section of this essay). The British apparently had no problems with this. But stories about the origin of Urdu were another matter.

Yaktā's observations about the origin of Urdu must have been based on the common perception of educated native speakers of those times. These perceptions were hardly suitable material for stories about Urdu as the language of "Muslim invaders" and "conquerors," a language that only those Hindus who were in the employ of a Muslim ruler had adopted—practically under duress. Yaktā was no linguist—historical or comparative—and did not know that the dialect now called Khari Boli, the developed form of which is Urdu, had existed prior to the arrival of the Muslims. Muslims functioned as cata-

22. Yaktā [1798] 1943: 4–5, 5–6.

lysts in refashioning the dialect into a full-fledged language. The broad story of Urdu's birth and growth as given by Yaktā is accurate enough, and it differs from Mīr Amman's British-approved story in every important respect.

There is evidence to suggest that the Hindus, for whose "benefit" a whole new linguistic tradition was being constructed in the nineteenth century, were initially not too happy either. Christopher King argues that a class of "educated Hindi speakers, committed to a style of the khari boli continuum which differentiated them from the Urdu speakers," had not yet arisen in the north by the 1850s. In King's words: "To find statements by Hindus educated in the Sanskrit tradition, denying the existence of this new style of khari boli, then, should come as no surprise." He narrates an incident that shows that young students at Benares Sanskrit College were unaware of what Europeans meant by "Hindi"; for them, hundreds of dialects deserved the name. Nevertheless, the British succeeded in a project that was motivated by colonial arrogance and that engendered strong emotions and a special kind of faith in "Hindi/Hindu" identity.[23]

At the time that modern Hindi was being groomed to occupy center stage on the Indian linguistic and literary scene, Urdu was being denigrated on moral and religious grounds. Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850–1885), for instance, who is widely regarded as the father of modern standard Hindi, was at that time not only switching from Urdu to Hindi but also writing savage, if vulgar, satires mocking "the death of Urdu Begam"—among whose mourners were Arabic, Persian, Pushto, and Panjabi, for they shared a common, "foreign," script. Addressing the Education Commission of 1882, Bhāratendu testified (in English):

> By the introduction of the Nagari character they [the Muslims] would lose entirely the opportunity of plundering the world by reading one word for another and misconstruing the real sense of the contents. . . . The use of Persian letters in office is not only an injustice to Hindus, but it is a cause of annoyance and inconvenience to the majority of the loyal subjects of Her Imperial Majesty.[24]

---

23. King 1994: 90–91. Vasudha Dalmia has recently quoted Grierson (1889) as saying that the "wonderful" hybrid language known to Europeans as "Hindi" was "invented" by the Europeans themselves. She goes on to say that by the 1860s, "the nationalist supporters of Hindi" who were involved deeply in "the creation of myths and geneologies [*sic*] concerning the origin of Hindi" would have treated as "preposterous" any suggestion that "their language was an artificial creation." Their belief was that "Hindi was spoken in homes across the breadth of North India and this had been the case before the Muslim invasion." Both imperialists and nationalists believed "the Hindus possessed a language of their own, which set them off not only from contemporary Muslims, but also from Muslims in the past." While the English "stressed their own agency in the creation of their language," the Hindus "claimed continuity through the ages." Dalmia 1997: 149–50.

24. Sengupta 1994: 137.

There were other anti-Urdu voices at that time, especially in Benares, but Bhāratendu Harishchandra's diatribes stand out, coming from a creative writer who began his career in Urdu and who still occupies a place in the history of modern Urdu literature. As late as 1871, he wrote that his language, and that of the women of his community, was Urdu. In fact, belonging as he did to the *pachhāhīñ* (western) branch of the Agravāl clan, he may not even have known the Benares-area folk language of his time. He certainly looked down upon the *purabiyā* (eastern) branch of the clan.[25] No other Hindu writer seems to have switched from Urdu to Hindi in the 1880s, but after that time the name "Hindi" began to be used less and less for Urdu. As we have seen, the British also more or less gave up on "Hindustani" once the name "Urdu" became almost universally popular. Writing in 1874, Platts had compromised, titling his work *A Grammar of Hindustānī or Urdū*. As late as 1879, Fallon had still named his work *A New Hindustani English Dictionary*. But by the time Platts published his famous dictionary (1884), the new nomenclature was firmly in place: its title was *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī, and English.*

New Urdu writers continued to rise from among the Hindus, but the Muslims, perhaps unconsciously responding to the pressure of official British opinion, tended to exclude Hindu writers from the Urdu canon (and the Persian canon too, but that is another story). In his enormously popular history of Urdu poetry called *Āb-e ḥayāt* (Water of life, 1880), Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād (1831–1910) ignores numerous Hindu poets of the eighteenth century, including such major figures as Sarb Sukh Dīvānā (1727/28–1788), Jasvant Singh Parvānah (1756/57–1813), Budh Singh Qalandar (fl. 1770s), and Ṭīkā Rām Tasallī (fl. 1790s). Among poets nearer his own time, Āzād makes only marginal mention of Ghanshyām Lāl ʿĀṣī, a leading poet of Delhi and a pupil of Shāh Naṣīr (1760?–1838). Āzād found only one Hindu poet worth more than passing mention: Dayā Shankar Nasīm (1811–1844), whom he discusses anachronistically and confusingly along with Mīr Ḥasan (1727–1786).[26]

In 1893, Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī (1837–1914) published his *Muqaddamah-e shiʿr o shāʿirī* (Introduction to poetry and poetics), an extensive theoretical statement on the nature of poetry and an indictment of Urdu poetry following official British ideas about what was wrong with it. Next to *Water of Life,* the *Muqaddamah* remains the outstanding work of Urdu criticism of the nineteenth century, commanding nearly absolute authority even now. The *Muqaddamah* is dotted with references to and quotations from Urdu poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the exception of four ref-

25. Dalmia 1997: 118–19.
26. Āzād [1880] 1967: 566, 308–9. See also Faruqi 1997b and Pritchett, chapter 15, this volume.

erences to Dayā Shankar Nasīm—two of them quite perfunctory and all of them disapproving—there is no Hindu among them.[27] By the end of the century a number of potential Urdu-readers were switching over to Hindi in northern India, and many institutions and movements had sprung up there to aggressively sell the Nagari script and modern Hindi. Yet the Hindu community continued to produce Urdu writers, and the end-of-century scene included a number of dominating, or potentially dominating, Hindu literary figures in Urdu.[28]

In 1939, the Delhi station of All India Radio broadcast a series of six talks entitled *Hindustānī kyā hai* (What is Hindustani?). The time and the subject were both fraught with emotion. Urdu's case was most forcefully presented by Brij Mohan Dattātreyah Kaifī and ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq. But among them all, Tārā Chand came out with the most historically succinct presentation. He said:

> For the Hindus, Lallūjī Lāl, Bādal Mishra, Benī Narāʾin, and others were ordered [by the authorities at the College of Fort William] to prepare books comprising prose texts. Their task was even more difficult. Braj did exist then as the language of literature, but it had prose scarcely even in name. So what could they do? They found a way out by adopting the language of Mīr Amman, [Sher ʿAlī] Afsos, and others, but they excised Arabic/Persian words from it, replacing them with those of Sanskrit and Hindi [Braj, etc.]. Thus, within the space of less than ten years, two new languages . . . were decked out and presented [before the public] at the behest of the foreigner. . . . Both were look-alikes in form and structure, but their faces were turned away from each other . . . and from that day to this, we are wandering directionless, on two paths.[29]

Tārā Chand thus clearly suggested the British political motivation; five years later, writing his monograph *The Problem of Hindustani,* he blamed the misguided "zeal" of some "college professors" at Fort William. His conclusion was, however, the same: the zeal of the professors led to the creation of "a new type of Urdu from which Persian and Arabic words were removed and replaced by Sanskrit words." Although this was done "ostensibly to provide the Hindus with a language of their own," the step had "far-reaching con-

---

27. Ḥālī [1893] 1953.

28. The harm, however, had been done. True, there were historians like R. W. Frazer, who said, "When [Urdu was] used for literary purposes by the Mussalmans, the vocabulary employed was mainly Persian or Arabic. When used as a *lingua franca,* for the people speaking the various dialects of Hindustan, the vocabulary is mainly composed of the common words of the marketplace. . . . High Hindi is purely a book language evolved under the influence of the English who induced native writers to compose works for general use in a form of Hindustani in which all the words of Arabic and Persian were omitted, Sanskrit words being employed in their place." (If he had said "by Mussalmans and Hindus" instead of merely "by the Mussalmans," he would have had it exactly right.) But such voices were few and far between. See Frazer [1898] 1915: 265.

29. Maktabah Jāmiʿa [1939?]: 11–12.

sequences," so that "India is still suffering from this artificial bifurcation of tongues."[30]

The sane and dispassionate accounts of historians like Tārā Chand were not enough to uproot the plant of doubt and suspicion, especially when it was fed and nurtured by waters from chauvinistic streams. Francis Robinson's conclusion that "an increasingly important development in the 1880's and 1890's [was] the tendency of the Hindi movement to become a communal crusade against the Urdu language" is borne out by the report of the Education Commission set up by the British in 1882. In his evidence before the commission Shiv Prasād, a senior official in the Department of Education (then called "Public Instruction") in U.P., who had switched his support from Urdu to Hindi, said: "For Hindus, Hindi was a language purged of all the Arabic and Persian accretions which served to remind them of the Muslims' supremacy while the Nagri script had a religious significance. . . . For Muslims on the other hand Hindi was dirty and they thought most degrading to learn it." Thus, he argued, in the "second half of the nineteenth century, Urdu and the Persian script in which it was written became a symbol of Muslim power and influence." Shiv Prasād was also unhappy over the popularity of Urdu—which, he somewhat inconsistently added, was becoming a mother tongue for the Hindus.[31]

One of the cultural consequences of the Hindi-Nagari movement of the late nineteenth century was the inculcation among Urdu speakers of feelings of guilt and inferiority about Urdu script and orthography. Not only Harishchandra, as we have seen, but also other supporters of Nagari, like Rājendralāl Mitra, an influential Sanskrit scholar of early-modern Bengal, claimed that Urdu's script was intrinsically inferior.[32] The seed for these ideas, too, had been sown by Gilchrist, who published the *Oriental Fabulist* (1803) to prove that "Hindoostanee, Persian, Arabic, Brij Bhasha, Bongla and Sanskrit" could all be written in the roman script "with ease and correctness." The great success of the colonial discourse in India can be judged from the fact that a modern, liberal historian like Siddiqi actually admires Gilchrist for his proposal to romanize the script of these languages: he looks upon it as a step toward the "unification" of the country. In fact, the roman script cannot (without diacritics) configure many important Urdu sounds, but the British introduced it for the army's use anyway; apart from army and missionary texts, however, roman script never caught on.[33] Nevertheless, calls for "improvements" in Urdu orthography, or even script, are still made, and not in "anti-Urdu" circles alone. The Urdu linguistic and liter-

---

30. Tārā Chand 1944: 57–58; quoted in Farmān Faṯẖpūrī 1977a: 53.
31. Robinson 1974: 75, 36.
32. Dalmia 1997: 132–33, 418–19.
33. Siddiqi 1963: 39–40; Willatt 1941.

ary community is perhaps the only one in the world that feels uncomfortable, and even guilty, about almost every aspect of its script and orthography. To this must be added a surreptitious feeling of guilt generated by the Urdu literary community's almost universal belief that Urdu was a "military language" after all.

The fault for this, I think, lies with Urdu historians from 1880 on, who did not stop to examine the implications of the fact that if the name "Urdu" first came into use during the last few years of the eighteenth century, as we have seen, it could not possibly have any military implications. The only literary historian who did realize the anomaly here was Grahame Bailey. He even offered a tentative explanation for the late appearance of the name "Urdu." Unfortunately, he also made a number of fanciful observations about the origin of Urdu, and as a result his writings on this matter seem not to have been taken seriously. Bailey argued that "Urdu was born in 1027; its birthplace was Lahore, its parent Old Panjabi; Old Kharī was its step-parent; it had no direct relationship with Braj. The name Urdu first appears 750 years later." And he noted some queries:

1. Why was there a delay of centuries in giving the name Urdu?
2. If a new name had to be given in the eighteenth century, why was this name chosen for the language when it had many, many years previously been given up for the army?
3. If the army was not called *urdū* till Babur's time, 1526, the language that had then existed for nearly five hundred years must already have had a name. Why was that name given up?[34]

Bailey noted that the problem was easier to state than solve. Yet to him must go the credit for at least realizing that there was a problem. Bailey in fact did suggest an answer, but with extreme diffidence: "Jules Bloch made a striking suggestion, which he admits is only an intuitive feeling required to be substantiated by proof, that the name Urdu is due to Europeans."[35] Bailey didn't investigate Bloch's idea further, for he felt that since Gilchrist always called the language "Hindustani," and in 1796 reported—as we saw earlier—that the language was also called "Oordoo," it could not have been the British who introduced the name. This is quite true. But it was the British who popularized the name, for apparently political reasons. Even Bailey fell into the "military error" by believing that *urdū* means "army" and nothing more, when in fact there is no recorded instance of this word ever being used in the Urdu-Hindi-Rekhtah-Dakani-Gujri language to denote "army." As borne

---

34. Bailey 1938: 1, 6. I am grateful to Frances Pritchett for bringing to my attention Grahame Bailey's writings on this subject.

35. Bailey 1938: 3.

out even by the definitions of the word *urdū* from Fallon and Platts that I cite earlier, its most popular meaning was "the city of Shāhjahānābād."

The blame for not effectively refuting the theories about the antiquity of modern Hindi, and even its anteriority over Urdu, must also lie with the historians of Urdu—all of whom failed to address this issue scientifically and logically, if they dealt with it at all. Premchand, though not a historian by any means, had clearer ideas than they on this subject. He advocated the use of "Hindustani"—which he defined as a simplified Urdu/Hindi—but recognized that Hindi was not a separate language as such. In an address delivered at Bombay in 1934, he declared, "In my view, Hindi and Urdu are one and the same language. When they have common verbs and subjects, there can be no doubt of their being one." Speaking in Madras before the Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, also in 1934, he said, "The name 'Hindi' was given by the Muslims, and until just fifty years ago, the language now being described as 'Urdu' was called 'Hindi' even by the Muslims."[36] But remarks like these were not decisive and had no force of theory, and so fictions about Urdu's "Muslim military character" persisted, and are generally current even now.

BEGINNINGS

Urdu literature may have begun with Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān Lāhorī (1046–1121). Nothing survives of the "Hindi" *dīvān* that he is reported to have put together. We know about it from Muḥammad 'Aufī's *Lubāb al-albāb* (The essence of wisdom). Composed in Sindh around 1220–1227, the *Lubāb* says of Salmān: "The quantity of his verse is greater than that of all the poets, and he has three *dīvān*s: one Arabic, the other Persian, and the third Hindvi, and whatever from his poetry has been heard or come across [by me] is masterly and most pleasing."[37] Since the term "Hindi" was used occasionally in the Indian medieval period to denote any Indian language, a question has been raised by modern scholars about the Indian language in which Salmān actually wrote. Khusrau, writing a few decades after 'Aufī, helps to clarify the question.

In his *Maṡnavī Nūh sipihr* (Nine heavens, 1317–1318), Khusrau devotes an entire long section to India. Placing the "Indian speech" above Persian and Turkish because of its "pleasing vocabulary," he goes on to say:

> In short, it's quite without purpose
> To try and gain the heart's pleasure
> From Persian, Turkish, or Arabic.

36. Premchand 1983: 108, 124. I am grateful to Professor Ja'far Raẓā of the University of Allahabad for drawing my attention to these texts of Premchand.

37. Muḥammad 'Aufī [1220–1227] 1954: 423.

> Since I am Indian, it's better
> To draw breath
> From one's own station. In this land
> In every territory, there is
> A language specific, and not so
> By chance either. There are
> Sindhī, Lāhorī [Panjabi], Kashmīrī, Kibar [?],
> Dhaur Samandarī [Kannada], Telangī [Telugu], Gūjar [Gujarati],
> Maʾbarī [Tamil], Gauṟī [West Bengali dialect], and the languages
> Of Bengal, Avadh, Delhi
> And its environs, all within
> Their own frontiers.
>
> All these are Hindvī, and
> Are in common use
> For all purposes since antiquity.[38]

Some of the glosses I provide here are tentative; nevertheless, one can see that Ḳhusrau distinguishes Lahori (Panjabi) from other languages like Avadhi, or the *musṭalaḥ* (specific speech) of Delhi and its surrounds.

Earlier, in the magnificent *Dībāchah* (Preface) to *Ghurrat al-kamāl* (The new moon of perfection, 1294), his third *dīvān,* Ḳhusrau said:

> I am a Turk from India,
> My response is Hindvi.
> Egyptian candy I don't have
> For doing converse in Arabic.

I have presented to friends a few quires of [my] Hindvi verse too. Here I consider it sufficient to just mention this and not give examples, for no delectation is to be had from inserting Hindvi words into sophisticated Persian, except when needed [for explaining something.]

> Since I am the Parrot of India
> If you ask for the truth
> Ask in Hindvi
> So that I reply in dulcet tones.

He then offers "An Account of the Compilation of Three *Dīvān*s" that emphasizes his own uniqueness: "Although Masʿūd Sāʿd Salmān does have three *dīvān*s, he has them in Arabic, Persian, and Hindvi." How one wishes Ḳhusrau had given some examples of his own work, for almost nothing of his "Hindvi" survives today. But his account does make two things clear: Masʿūd Sāʿd Salmān wrote in Hindvi, and so did Ḳhusrau. The reason Ḳhusrau's Hindvi works did not survive seems to be that he didn't write much in Hindvi, and didn't consider what he wrote worth saving. In *Nūh sipihr,* writ-

---

38. Ḳhusrau [1317–1318] 1948: 179–80.

ten nearly twenty-five years later, Ḵẖusrau claimed some knowledge of Sanskrit but said nothing about being a poet in Hindvi.[39]

Clearly, Ḵẖusrau did not consider his Hindvi efforts worth preserving because Hindvi still had not become a respectable literary language by his time, and he considered it suitable only for light-hearted, for-the-nonce composition. The reason Masʿūd Sāʿd Salmān's Hindvi did not survive is presumably the same. We do not know the size of his *dīvān* either; it may have been quite small, and may even have been regarded as an embarrassing oddity by his Persianate admirers. The Ghaznavid sage and poet Sanāʾī (1087/91–1145/46), who made a collection of Salmān's poems and presented it to the great man, apparently says nothing about his Hindvi poetry.[40] The odds are that Salmān wrote in Hindvi chiefly to demonstrate his virtuosity—not an uncommon practice in medieval literary culture in the Middle Eastern and the Indo-Muslim milieus. He wrote in Arabic for the same reason.

The first person whose Hindvi writings survive in substantial quantity, and with whom Urdu literature can seriously be said to begin, is Shaiḵẖ Bahā ud-Dīn Bājan (1388–1506). His grandfather came from Delhi and settled in Ahmadābād. Shaiḵẖ Bājan was born in Ahmadābād, worked in Gujarat, and described his language on different occasions as "Hindi," "Dihlavi," and "Hindvi."[41] Northerners—mainly army men and civil servants—first came to Gujarat in large numbers in 1297, when ʿAla ud-Dīn Ḵẖaljī (r. 1296–1316) annexed Gujarat after assuming the sultanate of Delhi. A larger movement toward Gujarat from the north is reported to have taken place around 1398, when Taimūr sacked and occupied Delhi. By Shaiḵẖ Bājan's time there was a considerable population of Dihlavi-speakers in Gujarat. Shaiḵẖ Bājan was a major Sufi of that part of the country. He collected some of his Persian and Hindi prose and verse in an anthology that he called *Ḵẖazāʾin-e raḥmat-ullāh* (Treasures of divine mercy and compassion), in honor of his mentor, Shaiḵẖ Raḥmatullāh. In it, he included Hindi/Hindvi poems in a verse genre called *jikrī* (after the Perso-Arabic *ẕikr,* "remembering"). It was a genre apparently much used in fourteenth-century Delhi, too.[42] Shaiḵẖ Bājan wrote:

> Poems that have been composed by this *faqīr* are called *jikrī* in the Hindvi tongue, and the singers of Hind [northern India] play and sing them upon instruments, observing the discipline of the *raga*s. Some of these are in the praise of Pīr-e Dastgīr, and of his mausoleum, or in praise of my own native land, that is, Gujarat; some are disquisitions on my own purposes, and some in the cause of pupils and seekers; some are on the theme of love.[43]

39. Ḵẖusrau [1317–1318] 1948: 63–64; 181.
40. Lewis 1995: 130–37.
41. Sherānī 1966, 1: 166–68; Zaidi 1993: 47; Madanī 1981: 50, 65–68.
42. Sherānī 1966, 1: 176.
43. Jālibī 1977: 107.

The Shaiḵẖ here establishes the parameters of Urdu language and literature for a long time to come: the language is Hindvi, the meters used are both Indic and Persian, the themes of poetry are both sacred and secular. The poetry has a strong popular base and appeal; there is an air of spiritual devotion and Sufi purity about its transactions. Love of one's native land is also a notable theme.

The quality of Shaiḵẖ Bājan's poetry is uneven; the tone is occasionally one of ecstasy, though the general mood is didactic. The following poem occupies a middle space between these two. It celebrates the inaccessibility of God, yet there is a hint of desperation. Success is not certain, failure is a strong probability. Still, there is a certain pride, a sense of distinction, in having such a distant and forbidding Beloved:

> None can walk Your path
> And whoever does
> Exhausts himself, walking, walking. . . .
> The Brahman reads the holy texts
> And loses wit and wisdom
> Yogis give up deep meditation
> The anchorites practice
> Self-denial, and do
> No good to anyone.
>
> Philosophers
> Forget philosophizing
> They bare their head, trying
> To keep the feet covered.
>
> Jains, in Your service,
> Suffer pain and do
> The most arduous penance.
>
> Look there—
> A dervish, in a new guise
> A shaven fakir; another yet,
> Master of the Age, pious
> In worship; and here's another,
> Become a wanderer
> Shouting ha, hu, ha, hu.
> There's a frenzied one,
> Openly so; another wanders
> The desert, mad, unknown.
>
> One, drunk with love,
> Raves and yells,
> And another falls
> Unconscious.

A wanderer, with long and
Matted hair, and black
And dark as night;
Another madman gets the
Shivers, shaves his head
And says only Your name.

Secretly yet another
Pronounces words of power
And domination; and
Here's someone else
Breathing out secret Names
Mad to capture the whole world.
Another, there, fasts and keeps
Awake, all night, every night.

And that one, there, becomes
A beggar, asking for
You alone, in alms.

Thus all groups and all bands,
All weeping and wasting away—
Pieces of chewed sugarcane.

That's what they see
That's what they find!
So say, O Bājan,
What can you count for?[44]

The preceding is a translation of a complete poem, comprising fifteen verses (or thirty lines) of a rather short meter in the original. The meter is Indic and reasonably regular. Bājan favors Indic meters but on occasion uses Persian ones too. The poetry is pleasing in its simplicity, but an occasional stunning metaphor (seekers after God end up like chewed sugarcane—with no juice or sweetness of life left in them, and fit only for burning) enlivens the utterance and raises its level substantively. While the poems mostly use words sparingly, they pack in a lot of meaning. The language itself seems to possess this characteristic, recalling Edward Terry's observation (quoted earlier) that "Indostan" "speaks much in few words." In fact, in Shaiḵ Bājan's time the language had not yet acquired anything from the vast, rich store of images and metaphorical words and phrases that made Persian poetry (both Indian and Iranian) very nearly unique in the world, in that it possesses a huge ready-to-use vocabulary that sets up resonances of signification the moment anything from that vocabulary is used in a poem.

44. Madanī 1981: 66–67; Sherānī 1966, 1: 169.

Like nearly all poetry in the Indian Sufi tradition, Shaiḵẖ Bājan's embodies the Islamic worldview as refracted through the prism of Indian eyes. Hindu imagery and conventions abound in the works of early Sufi poets, and sometimes even affect their names. Shaiḵẖ Maḥmūd Daryā'ī (1419–1534), another Sufi poet of Gujarat writing in Hindi/Hindvi, occasionally calls himself "Maḥmūd Dās." It is possible that Kabīr (d. 1518) and Shaiḵẖ 'Abd ul-Quddūs Gangohī (1455–1538) called themselves "Kabīr Dās" and "Alakh Dās," respectively, for the same reason.[45]

By the early fifteenth century Hindvi had become so popular in Gujarat that its vocabulary began to appear in Persian as well. In 1433–1434 a Persian dictionary, *Baḥr al-faẓā'il* (Ocean of graces), was compiled in Gujarat by Faẓl ud-Dīn Muḥammad bin Qavām bin Rustam Balḵẖī. In addition to the numerous Hindvi glosses of Persian words provided in it *passim,* it includes a whole chapter "comprising Hindvi words used in poetry." By the time of Qāẓī Maḥmūd Daryā'ī (1415–1534) and Shaiḵẖ 'Alī Muḥammad Jīv Gāmdhanī (d. 1565), the names "Hindvi" and "Dilhavi" seem to have generally been given up in favor of "Gujri."[46]

Yet even much later, "Hindi" as a language name had not disappeared from Gujarat. A *maṡnavī* called *Tārīḵẖ-e ġharībī* (A rare history), composed in Gujarat between 1751 and 1757, contains the following verses:

> Shoot no barbs at Hindi,
> Everybody knows and explains
> The Hindi meanings well.
> .   .   .   .
> And look, this Qur'an, the Book of God,
> Is always explained in Hindi;
> Whenever it is intended to expound
> Its meanings openly, to the people,
> One says and explains them
> In Hindi.[47]

It must have been in the fifteenth century, if not earlier, that literary activity in Hindi/Hindvi became popular in what is now called the Deccan. The first name that we are aware of at present is that of Faḵẖr-e Dīn Niẓāmī, whose *maṡnavī* has been tentatively called *Kadam rā'o padam rā'o* (c. 1421–1434) after its two chief characters, since the single extant manuscript of the poem does not have a name. It is a poem of great length; the manuscript comprises 1032 verses (2064 lines)—and is incomplete.

The language of *Kadam rā'o padam rā'o* is dense and difficult, perhaps be-

---

45. Jālibī 1977: 113.
46. Sherānī 1966, 1: 181.
47. Sherānī 1966, 2: 249.

cause of the poet's heavy preference for Telugu and *tatsama*-Sanskrit vo-
cabulary. Yet unlike Bājan, who rarely used Persian meters, Niz̤āmī composed
his poem in a standard Persian meter, and used it quite carefully. Niz̤āmī is
not a better poet than Shaiḳh Bājan, but he tells his story reasonably well:

> Kadam Rā'o said, Honored Lady,
> Come, and listen carefully;
> I'd heard it said that women
> Do deceive a lot, and I today
> Saw something of your tricks;
> And ever since I saw those tricks
> In real life, I have been
> In perplexity. What I knew
> By hearsay alone, I saw with
> My own eyes. And since then
> My eyes have had no peace.
> Two serpents I saw, one
> A female, high-born, the other
> A lowly male, and they together
> Were playing lover-like games
> Of sex, and lust. As God
> Did make me King, so how
> Could I see such inequity
> Of pairing? I sprang at them
> With my rapier drawn
> To finish it off then and there.
> The female fast slipped away
> With her life, leaving her tail behind.[48]

Some of my translation here is, inevitably, tentative. But the poem has an
easy flow of rhythm, once one develops a knack for reading it aloud.

THE BIRTH OF LITERARY THEORY

The most prominent feature of *Kadam rā'o padam rā'o* is its secularity: though
it has a moral of sorts, it is basically a poem about kingcraft, miscegenation,
worldly learning, magic, and mystery. It is also consciously literary. The poet
regards the use of *īhām* (double entendre, or punning), as the essence of
versifying:

> A poem that doesn't have
> Dual-meaning words,
> Such a poem does not
> Attract anyone at all—

---

48. Niz̤āmī [1421–1434] 1979: 91–93.

A poem without
Words of two senses.[49]

Ḳhusrau in his preface to *Ghurrat al-kamāl* (1294) describes himself as the inventor of a special kind of *īhām* in poetry.[50] Moreover, Faḳhr-e Dīn Niẕāmī's advent is parallel to, and quite independent of, Shaiḳh Bājan's. These first stirrings of literary theory that we see in Niẕāmī's poem suggest that by his time Hindi/Hindvi had matured as a medium for creative expression. It is significant that the first intimations of theory that we have in Urdu do not hark back to Iran or Arabia but were generated in India, and that it is a poet who was the first major literary theorist of Hindi/Hindvi.

Before proceeding further it would be good to consider Ḳhusrau's literary theory. His ideas seem to have had a quiet but far-reaching influence on Urdu and Indo-Persian literary practice, not always by providing direct guidelines but certainly by offering general support to literary activity. Niẕāmī's stress on *īhām* certainly owes something to Ḳhusrau's precept and example.

Ḳhusrau's influence may also be seen in the importance placed on *ravānī* (flowingness) in Indo-Persian and Urdu poetry. While the need for poetry to flow easily and be amenable to public recitation must have been evident to audiences and realized by poets from very early times, Ḳhusrau seems to have been the first to write about it in some detail. He created a somewhat complex, and certainly subjective, theory of *ravānī*—subjective enough to remind us that he claimed to know Sanskrit and so may have been familiar with the concept of the *sahṛdaya,* the sensitive reader of poetry.

In the preface to his *Kulliyāt* (Collected poems), which he seems to have compiled after 1315, Ḳhusrau discussed and graded his own four *dīvān*s on the basis of *ravānī*. He described the first one as "like the earth: cold, dry, dense, and brittle." His second *dīvān* contained *ġhazal*s that were "gentle and soft in the imagination like water, and superior to earth, and purged of the dust of all dense words"; they were "warm, and wet." The third contained "*ġhazal*s roasted and baked and most desirable . . . soft and delicate, and more flowing and superior." The fourth *dīvān* contained "*ġhazal*s like fire" that could melt tender hearts, soften steely ones, and destroy loveless ones with their "blazing flame and fiery brilliance."[51]

It is not necessary, and probably not possible, to give an exhaustive analysis of the theories, allusions, and wordplay involved here. The basic theme is that Ḳhusrau sees *ravānī* as a quality of the nature of fire and water. The best *ravānī* is like water-turned-to-heat (air) turned to water-turned-to-air-turned-to-water. Poetry flows like the rise and fall of music—only more freely,

49. Niẕāmī [1421–1434] 1979: 133.
50. Ḳhusrau [1294] 1975: 63–64.
51. Ḳhusrau 1967: 39–40.

because air, water, and fire essentially follow their own bent, while music is bound by time and rhythm. The *ravānī* of poetry transcends the bounds of time and rhythm, merging and transmuting disparate elements.

Ḵẖusrau stresses the role of the proper temperament in the appreciation, and also the production, of poetry. He begins the discourse on *ravānī* by appealing to people who have the proper temperament or nature. He uses the word *ṭabʿ*, the standard word in Persian/Arabic for the poet's "temperament." The root word in Arabic means "to impress something upon something," as with a seal or signet. Thus a person with the proper temperament would have to have some training, or early imprinting, as well. Ḵẖusrau twice uses the term *ṭabʿ-i vaqqād* (the brilliant-fiery-lively-heated-bright, hence intelligent and perceptive, temperament)—once with regard to the reader, and elsewhere with regard to himself. Just as the poet has the *ṭabʿ-i vaqqād* that enables him to make poems, the reader should have *ṭabʿ-i vaqqād* to see and know what the poet is doing. The resemblance here to Abhinavagupta's notion of the *sahṛdaya* reader who has "a heart with the keen faculty of perception" is obvious.[52] The idea of the union of fire and water as the essence of *ravānī* leads us to the notion of poetic energy. A poem that does not fully participate in its maker's energy as embodied in his (fiery) creative imagination, would have less *ravānī*. Fiery poems have the energy of movement. They cause things to happen, yet their energy is harnessed not to causes social or moral, but to the cause of love.

The prime importance that Ḵẖusrau placed on *ravānī* finds echoes everywhere in Persian/Urdu poetry, culminating in the assiduous cultivation of *ravānī* by the Delhi Urdu poets of the early eighteenth century. One of the earliest poets after Ḵẖusrau to place particular value on *ravānī* was Ḥāfiz̤ (1325?–1398) in a Persian verse of uncertain authenticity but significant fame:

> As for him whom you call
> "The Master," were you to look
> Truly with care: artificer he is,
> But he has no flowingness.[53]

Nearer to home, Urdu poets in the Deccan, building upon the notion of *ravānī,* took the next step in syntagmatic image-making and introduced the imagery of the ocean, and of pearls in it. Shaiḵẖ Aḥmad Gujrātī, in his *masnavī* titled *Yūsuf zulaiḵẖā* ([Prophet] Joseph and Zuleika, 1580–1585), praises his own poetry:

> Then the shoreless ocean
> Of my heart came into flood

---

52. Tewary 1984: 33.
53. Ḥāfiz̤ Shīrāzī n.d.: 135.

> And the sky bent over
> To rain down pearls.[54]

Mulla Vaj'hī (d. 1659?), in his long poem *Quṭb mushtarī* (Quṭb [Shāh] and Mushtarī, 1609–1610), builds further upon Shaiḳh Aḥmad's imagery:

> My pearls began to gleam so
> That the pearls of the sea
> Turned to water within
> The mother of pearl.[55]

Nuṣratī Bījāpūrī (1600–1674) praises his poet-king ʿAlī ʿĀdil Shāh (r. 1656–1672) in his long poem *ʿAlī nāmah* (Chronicle of ʿAlī; 1666):

> Your mind is limpid, your
> Temperament clear and pure,
> Valuer of speech, subtle
> And sharp, it can cleave
> Even a hair.
> .   .   .   .   .
> Poetry is but a wave
> From the ocean of your heart,
> The army of your thoughts
> Looks down upon the sky.

Earlier in the poem, the poet invokes God's benediction:

> Let my thoughts fly high, like the winds;
> To my temperament give
> The ocean's perpetual wave and flow.[56]

In this poem Nuṣratī also speaks of *maẓmūn* (theme), as opposed to *maʿnī* (meaning)—a distinction that seems to have first been made in India, perhaps under the influence of Sanskrit, by the Persian poets of the "Indian style" *(sabk-i hindī)* of his time. This distinction later became an important part of the poetics of the Urdu *ġhazal* in eighteenth-century Delhi.[57]

Valī (1665/67–1707/8) also uses the ocean-flow image to a double purpose: praise of the *ravānī* of his verse and praise of the beloved's flowing tresses:

> In praise of your tresses
> Truths and meanings, wave upon wave

---

54. Aḥmad Gujrātī [1580–1585] 1983: 215.
55. Vaj'hī [1609–1610] 1991: 56.
56. Nuṣratī Bījāpūrī 1959: 27, 10.
57. See Frances Pritchett's essay (chapter 15) in this volume.

> Come into flow every night
> Like the ocean of my temperament.
> .   .   .   .
> Such is the power
> Of the waves of my poetry
> That it would be proper for
> My temperament to be compared
> To an ocean.[58]

Urdu poets in early-eighteenth-century Delhi made *ravānī* one of the cornerstones of the new poetics that was emerging at that time. I call this poetics "new" in the sense that it sought, consciously or otherwise, to pull together a lot of thinking and feeling about the nature of poetry that had been gathering in the Urdu literary culture over the centuries. Here is just one instance, from Shākir Nājī (1690?–1744); it is delightful in its own right and also closely echoes Valī's verse:

> The flowingness of my temperament
> Is no less, O Nājī,
> Than that of the ocean;
> Were someone to write a *ġhazal*
> Like this *ġhazal* of mine,
> I would become his water carrier.[59]

Perhaps the single most powerful component in the matrix of Muslim literary ideas and practice is the Qurʾan, which is believed to be uncreated yet is a miracle of textual creation. Poetry tries to approximate this miracle. Khusrau said that all knowledge was "in the ocean of the Qurʾan," so that "if anyone said that poetry was not in the Praised and Exalted Book, he denied the Qurʾan." Since the Qurʾan was, again by definition, also the most beautiful text, it was proper to place both the mind and heart of poetry in the Quranic context. This great theoretical leap was made by Khusrau in the Preface to *Ghurrat al-kamāl*. He pointed out that the Prophet had said "undoubtedly wisdom is from poetry," and not "undoubtedly poetry is from wisdom." Thus poetry is superior to wisdom: "A poet can be called a philosopher *[ḥakīm]*, but a philosopher cannot be called a poet."[60]

Khusrau's brilliance lay not so much in proposing a new theory as in presenting a fusion of two worlds and enunciating a new argument in favor of the fusion. The general principle that he implied here—that poetry is a body of knowledge in its own right, and that it is concerned with larger issues and not with the statement of "truths" seen from either a personal or an "objec-

---

58. Valī [1945] 1996: 239.
59. Nājī 1989: 342.
60. Khusrau [1294] 1975: 20, 18–19. See also Jamāl Ḥusain 1993.

tive" standpoint—was implied in the literary theory of the Arabs and was not too far from that of the Indian tradition. For both bodies of theory saw poems as meaningful, but not information-giving, texts. It is in this context that Ḳhusrau's role in formulating the literary taste of Urdu seems most significant.

It is a measure of the special value placed by the Indo-Muslim poetic culture on the generation of meaning that among the "firsts" in poetry of which Ḳhusrau is especially proud is a special kind of pun *(īhām);* he relates punning directly to the generation of meaning. He says in the Preface:

> Before now, the tongue of the poets, which is the hair-dresser and adorner of poetry, did hair-splitting in *īhām* such that two subtle points resulted. This servant, by his sharp pen, split the point of the hair of meaning such that seven subtle points were obtained from one hair. . . . In brief, if in times before, the image presented by *īhām* had two faces, and whoever looked was astonished, Ḳhusrau's temperament has devised an *īhām* having more reflectivity than the mirror. For in the mirror, there is only one image, and it cannot show more than one idea. Yet this [*īhām* of mine] is a mirror such that if you place one face before it, seven proper and bright ideas appear.
>
> > Your intrepid falcon, playing
> > With its own life, would engage
> > The Sīmurġh in mortal combat
> > Were you to set, O massive-headed
> > Lion, your falcon to hunt.[61]

Ḳhusrau proceeds to show that through one change in punctuation and the polysemy of three of the words, this verse generates six meanings. His original claim was seven meanings, so the text at this point must be defective. From the verse as given in the text, however, one can actually generate eight meanings; my translation brings out only one of them (see the discussion of *īhām* later in the chapter).

While the nature of the language in which literature was being produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was never in doubt—it was a language of the common people, different from other, preexisting languages, and it did not yet have many intellectual pretensions—the name of the language continued to be dual until quite late, in the Deccan as well as in north India. People must have been traveling back and forth between the north and the south (which at that time included Gujarat) starting with the reign of Muḥammad Tuġhlaq, who in 1327 shifted the headquarters of the sultanate from Delhi in the north to Daulatabad in Maharashtra. Although he reversed this decision in 1335, travelers' transactions between the two parts of the country continued—especially because it was the elite of Delhi who had been

---

61. Ḳhusrau [1275] 1975: 56.

uprooted, and they naturally had large retinues. Not all of their numerous clients, pupils, and camp followers went back to Delhi; some retained their connections in the south, at least for some time. These persons must have described their language as Hindi/Hindvi/Dihlavi or Gujri, depending on where they came from.

Even native south-India-born speakers of the language are on record as describing their language as Gujri. Examples can be found in the work of the Sufi Shāh Burhān ud-Dīn Janam (d. 1582?), who was born in south India.[62] Hindvi poetry had already established a powerful presence in the south by the time of Faḵẖr-e Dīn Niẓāmī and Mīrānjī Shams ul-ʿUshshāq (d. 1496), the father and mentor of Burhān ud-Dīn Janam. Mīrānjī identifies his language as "Hindi." Janam calls his "Gujri" and "Hindi" on different occasions. It is obvious that Janam is making a point in literary theory: in describing his language as Gujri/Hindi, he is establishing his connections with the Sufi, other-worldly, creative literary modes of the Gujri poets, rather than with the this-worldly, essentially nonreligious though didactic world of literary activity constructed by Niẓāmī and his successors.

The Gujarati Sufi Shaiḵẖ Ḵẖūb Muḥammad Cistī (1539–1614) was the greatest Gujri poet, and a major poet by any consideration. He wrote his long poem (or series of short, connected poems) called *Ḵẖūb tarang* (Wave of beauty) in 1578. In addition to being one of the greatest poems of the mystical-intellectual tradition—strongly reminiscent of the style of Shaiḵẖ Muhyi ud-Dīn ibn ʿArabī—*Ḵẖūb tarang* also contains brilliant thoughts on the nature of poetry. Its author was aware of the interpenetrative transactions that were gradually building up a body of Hindi/Gujri language and literature. Arabia and Iran were not remote or threatening father-figures but active contributors, and the end result of these interactions was a distinct, though local, identity. He says in *Ḵẖūb tarang:*

> Like the speech
> Flowing from my mouth:
> Arabia and Iran join in it
> To become one.
>
> .   .   .   .   .   .
>
> The speech that flows
> From the heart,
> The speech of Arabia and Iran:
> Listen, listen to the speech
> Of Gujarat.[63]

62. Jālibī 1977: 129.
63. Ḵẖūb Muḥammad Cistī [1578] 1993: 247–48.

Ḳhūb Muḥammad Cistī also wrote *Chhand Chhandāñ,* a verse treatise in which he attempts to collate the systems of Sanskrit and Persian prosody. The opening verse is:

> Say *bismillāh,* and name this
> *Chhand chhandāñ,* a book
> About the *piṅgal* and *ʿarūz̤*
> And the *tāl adhyāyaḥ.*[64]

Ḳhūb Muḥammad Cistī evinces the same interest in the "poetryness" of verse, poetic devices, and poetic grammar that characterizes Ḳhusrau's literary thought; *Chhand chhandāñ* apparently influenced the poetry and poetics of the Deccani king and poet Muḥammad Qulī Qut̤b Shāh (r. 1580–1611), who was the first to put together a complete *dīvān* in Urdu/Hindi/Dakani. In another work, *Bhāʾo bhed* (Mysteries of the modes), the Shaiḳh discusses tropes and figures of speech: he defines each figure in Persian and Gujri, then illustrates it from his Gujri poems.[65] Ḳhusrau and Ḳhūb Muḥammad Cistī thus emerge as the earliest literary theorists in Urdu. As we shall see, Cistī seems to have set the trend for literary thought in the century that followed.

Shaiḳh Aḥmad Gujrātī (b. c. 1539), in his longish *mas̱navī Yūsuf zulaiḳhā* (1580–1585), spoke extensively about poetry, language, and his own views on how to write poems:

> Since I had both
> Natural and acquired capacity
> For writing poems, I was long
> In the company of learned men,
> And imbibed some of their color
> Into my own being.
> .   .   .   .
> I spent many days learning
> Syntax, many I spent
> Internalizing its voice, like a balance
> In my own heart; many days
> I spent learning grammar, whose texts
> Quite conquered me. I heard
> Disquisitions on the science of figures too,
> And picked up pearls of logic there.
> My teacher taught me religious

---

64. Sherānī 1966, 1: 197–200. *Chhand chhandāñ* = metrics, meters, or stanzas on metrics; *piṅgal* = Sanskrit prosody; *ʿarūz̤* = prosody (a general term, here applied to Perso-Arabic-Hindvi metrics); *tāl ādhyāyaḥ* = section or chapter on (musical) beats. The book as it exists, however, only has two parts, one on *ʿarūz̤* and the other on *piṅgal.* Remarks on musical beats are passim.

65. Sherānī 1966, 1: 199–200; ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq 1968: 67–68.

Philosophy and mysticism;
I obtained instruction in science
And the arts, basics of thought
And belief; and juristic texts
Also took many of my days.
I have enjoyed the essence
Of prosody and rhyme, and worked
Hard to internalize them. I am
Acquainted with astrology, medicine;
Having become a lover of Juice and Essence,
I have drunk deep of many such.

.   .   .   .
So many qualities one must have,
And so much learning, before
One can tell the story of a Prophet.

.   .   .   .
Telugu, and Sanskrit, I know well
And have heard poets and pandits;
I have read a lot of Persian,
And studied a bit of Arabic poetry too.[66]

This redoubtable inventory of skills and attainments may not have been typical, but it certainly described Shaiḵẖ Aḥmad, whose reputation spread well beyond Gujarat early in his own lifetime. The Shaiḵẖ was invited by King Muḥammad Qulī Quṭb Shāh of Golconda to be his court poet, a position he assumed in 1580–1581. Shaiḵẖ Aḥmad's list shows that literature in Hindvi/Gujri had now evolved in sophistication and refinement. It was no longer merely a spontaneous affair of the heart but had become a serious discipline. He describes the work that a truly accomplished poet can do:

It's not difficult for me to compose
In all the genres of poetry there are.
I can use rare thoughts, and rare modes,
Rare and novel tropes and figures.
My themes, auspicious, bright, would show
The light of the sky on this
Lowly earth.

.   .   .   .   .
As my words fly out high they see
This whole world as one particle.
They cleave the depth of the netherworld,
The height of the sky, unraveling them
Like the strands of a thread.[67]

66. Aḥmad Gujrātī [1580–1585] 1983: 234.
67. Aḥmad Gujrātī [1580–1585] 1983: 235.

The Shaiḳh mentions allegory, imagination, metaphor, and subtlety of thought as his special qualities:

> If I were to write in the mode of metaphor
> And simile, I would make a new world,
> A world different from this; sometimes
> I'd separate life from the living;
> Sometimes I'd take away
> The life of the Light of life. Sometimes
> I'd show the earth as high
> As the sky, and sometimes I would
> Spread out the sky like the earth.
> .   .   .   .
> I would depict thoughts, subtle and delicate
> Like finely carded cotton.
> One could see the soul of an angel,
> But not my thoughts.
> .   .   .   .
> I thought, if I could find the poems
> Made by Ḳhusrau or Niẕāmī,
> I should quickly put them
> Into Hindvi. So one day a friend
> Lent me Jāmī's *Yūsuf zulaiḳhā,*
> And I began to do it
> In the Hindvi tongue, with strong meter,
> And similes, and tropes, and figures.
> I should not be Jāmī's slave, but follow him
> In some places, and not follow him
> In some. I should extract whatever
> Poetry Jāmī had, and add some of my own.
> .   .   .   .
> I should bring in fewer
> Arabic words in the tale, nor mix
> Persian and Arabic overmuch.
> I shouldn't elide, or twist words
> To fit the meter, or write
> Incoherently.[68]

Sanskrit, Telugu, Arabic, Persian, are all grist for this poet's mill, and he is not in awe of or inclined to privilege any particular linguistic tradition. He acknowledges Ḳhusrau and Niẕāmī and Jāmī but is quite prepared to improve upon them. His language has a literary and linguistic milieu of its own, with no need to be propped up by foreign importations.

Poetry, for Shaiḳh Aḥmad, is the business of creating new worlds, revers-

---

68. Aḥmad Gujrātī [1580–1585] 1983: 237.

ing the order of things so as to make them anew. While his general debt to Arabic and Sanskrit poetics is obvious, it is hard to pinpoint exactly where their influence lies. Rather, there is an air of assimilation, an indirect intimation of connections and continuities. Like K̲h̲usrau in his Persian, Shaik̲h̲ Aḥmad is constructing not so much from the past as for the benefit of the present and the future. Anticipations of what will come to be called the "Indian style" of Persian poetry can be seen. They are not dominant yet, but they are clearly the most prominent element in the Shaik̲h̲'s poetics. The emphasis on abstract, subtle thought; the centrality of metaphor; the global reach of the imagination; and the value placed on figures of speech—all these are characteristics of the "Indian style."

Shaik̲h̲ Aḥmad's concern for the language—avoiding too much Arabic and Persian, not distorting pronunciation to suit the meter, not resorting to elisions or compressions—indicates a maturity and stabilization of linguistic usage. But this was perhaps more in theory than practice, for Gujri and Dakani poets are notoriously free with pronunciation, keeping it firmly subservient to the exigencies of meter or even topic. Often the same word is pronounced in two or three ways in the same text within a brief space, making metrical reading extremely difficult. Yet the theoretical interest evinced by the Shaik̲h̲ in keeping a "standard" pronunciation intact suggests the faint beginnings of what in the late nineteenth century became an obsession with "purity" and "correctness" in language.

Vaj'hī, writing his *mas̄navī Quṭb mushtarī* some twenty-five years later (1609–1610), shows this concern more strongly:

> One who has no sense of coherence
> In speech should have nothing to do
> With writing poems. And one should not
> Have the greed to say too much, either.
> If said well, even one single verse
> Will suffice. If you have the art,
> Use finesse and subtlety. For
> One does not stuff bags full with color.
> The difficult part of the art of poetry
> Is to make both word and meaning
> Coincide. Use only such words
> In your poems as have been used
> By none but the masters.
> .   .   .   .
> If you knew the grammar
> Of poetry, you would use
> Hand-picked words, lofty themes.
> Even if there's but one powerful theme,
> It enhances the pleasure of the speech.
> .   .   .   .

> If your beloved is beautiful like the sun,
> And if you further beautify her face,
> It is like Light upon Light. Even if
> A woman had a thousand flaws,
> She would look good if she knew
> The art of self-adornment.[69]

One can see a number of new things happening here. In addition to sharing Shaiḫ Aḥmad's interest in words and their correctness in usage, Vaj'hī is also concerned with the *parole* of the *ustād* (master, mentor). The use of words not used by the *ustād*s is not to be encouraged. He places a special value on beauty of speech for its own sake: a fine theme is doubly valuable if well expressed, but even a poor theme gains substantial beauty if expressed with élan and style. Vaj'hī proposes something like the notion of *sāhitya* (equality of words and meaning), as well as the idea that poetry is an exercise in words.[70] Vaj'hī died about 1660, leaving Gujri/Hindvi/Dakani able to boast a fully fledged literature in prose and verse. The Gujri impulse in fact reached its peak with Shaiḫ Ḫūb Muḥammad Cistī.

The literary theory that provided meaning and justification to the practices of the two and a half centuries that preceded his own time is summed up by Ṣanʿatī Bījāpūrī in his *maṡnavī Qiṣṣah-e benaẕīr* (A peerless story, 1644–1645). Ṣanʿatī does not seem to have added anything substantial of his own to the ongoing construction of the poetics for Hindvi literature, but he did say some interesting things about the language that he used. His remarks have almost a normative force:

> I did not put much of Sanskrit in it.
> I kept the poem free
> Of verbosity. Dakhani comes
> Easy to one who doesn't have Persian.
> For it has the content of Sanskrit, but
> With a flavor of ease. Having made it easy
> In Dakhani, I put into it
> Tens and scores of prominent
> And elegant devices.[71]

Note that while Vaj'hī calls his language "Hindi," Ṣanʿatī calls his "Dakhani"— and he sets it up in opposition and apposition to Persian, as Ḫūb Muḥammad Cistī did for Gujri. For Ṣanʿatī, poems should have an indigenous air, with neither too much Sanskrit nor too much Persian. But there is still room for elegant and noticeable devices, and fine artifice. Poetry, for Ṣanʿatī, is the

---

69. Vaj'hī [1609–1610] 1991: 53–54.
70. Cf. Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.
71. Jālibī 1977: 273.

soul and apogee of all human endeavor. It does not need ratification from outside authority. Nor does the poetics genuflect before the ancients, Sanskrit and Perso-Arabic. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about early Urdu literary theory is its air of independence. This tradition of independent thought continued in the south until its last great classical writer, Maulānā Bāqar Āgāh (1746–1808).

THE EMERGENCE AND DOMINANCE OF REKHTAH IN THE NORTH

Literary activity in Gujri/Hindi continued to flourish. As we have seen, the author of *Tārīkh-e ġharībī* (1751–1757) in Gujarat justified the use of Hindi in strong terms. By the later eighteenth century, ʿAbd ul-Valī ʿUzlat (1692/93–1775) had made his powerful mark, traveling from his birthplace in Surat to Delhi and then to the Deccan proper, adorning literary and intellectual gatherings all over the place. His poetry provided continuities with that of Valī and became an important learning source for the writers who followed. The preface that he appended to his *Dīvān* (1758–1759) is the first Urdu prose of its kind.

Prose of many kinds seems to have made hesitant beginnings at about this time in the north. The earliest known work is Fażlī's *Karbal kathā* (Story of Karbala, c. 1732), a translation of a Persian religious narrative. Then there are two *dāstān*s: *Nau ṭarz-e muraṣṣaʿ* (A new ornamented style, 1775) by ʿAṭā Ḥusain Taḥsīn, and *Qiṣṣah-e mehr afroz o dilbar* (The story of Mahr Afroz and Dilbar, c. 1731–1755) by ʿĪsavī Ḳhān Bahādur. The names of Harīhar Parshād Sañbhalī (fl. 1730s) and Bindrāban Mathrāvī (d. 1757), and of a prose work by each of them, also appear. Nothing else is known of them. Saudā (1706?–1781) wrote an Urdu prose preface for his *Kulliyāt*.

By the time of ʿUzlat's death in 1775, the Delhi idiom had become dominant in most of the Urdu world, and a separate Gujri tradition ceased to exist by the end of the eighteenth century. ʿUzlat described his language as Hindi.[72] This, coupled with the example of *Tārīkh-e ġharībī*, suggests that "Gujri" as a language name had fallen into disuse by about the 1760s.

The reasons for the gap in the north from Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān (1046–1121) to Ḳhusrau (1253–1325), and then the second period of silence, broken only in Gujarat in the early fifteenth century, can now be summarized as follows: Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān's and Ḳhusrau's efforts were casual and were not in accordance with any established mode of writing. The fact that there was literary activity in Avadhi in the fourteenth century (Mullā Dāʾūd's poem *Chandāʾin* in 1379), but not in Urdu, shows that Urdu did not have literary status at that time. Urdu did not attain the status of a literary language un-

---

72. Jālibī 1984: 1006–7.

til the Sufis took it up in Gujarat in the fifteenth century, closely followed by the Dakanis. No Sufi seems to have made Hindi/Hindvi a vehicle for literary expression in the north before Shaiḵẖ ʿAbd ul-Quddūs Gaṅgohī (1455–1538) and Kabīr (d. 1518); neither, however, wrote in the mainline Khari Boli Hindi/Hindvi that we know as Urdu today. The reason that the Sufis did not adopt this language in the early centuries may have been the popularity and general understandability of Persian in the north, which obviated the need for the Sufis to use Hindi/Hindvi for their popular discourse.

The earliest literary text in Hindi/Hindvi extant in the north is Muḥammad Afẕal's 325-verse *mas̱navī Bikaṭ kahānī* (Story of misery, 1625). Also known as Afẕal Gopāl, Muḥammad Afẕal (d. 1625/6) was not a Sufi in the strict sense, but he seems to have been the kind of lover that Sufis are believed to be. All we know of the poet is that he died in 1625; the poem itself is generally assumed to have been completed not long before his death. It is a major work and needs to be examined separately; that it is not strictly a religious poem is one of the more interesting things about it.

The seventeenth century did see some literary activity in the north, though of generally indifferent quality. Most of it was folk-religious in character, and almost all of it took place in the century's last quarter. Raushan ʿAlī wrote his long *Jang nāmah* (Chronicle of battle), also called *ʿĀshūr nāmah* (Chronicle of ten days), in verse, in 1688–1689; Ismāʿīl Amrohvī wrote a *mas̱navī* called *Vafāt nāmah-e bībī fātimah* (Chronicle of the death of Bībī Fātimah) in 1693–1694. Both are folk-religious poems. The former is closely modeled on Miskīn's *Jang nāmah-e muḥammad ḥanīf* (Chronicle of the battle of Muḥammad Ḥanīf, 1681) in Gujri.[73] The closeness between the dates of composition of Raushan ʿAlī's and Miskīn's poems suggests direct influence. If this is so, there must have been literary contact of a fairly immediate kind between the south and the north in the last part of the seventeenth century. Miskīn describes his language as Gujri, while Raushan ʿAlī describes his, in various instances, as Hindi, Hindustani, and Hindvi.[74] The fact that Raushan ʿAlī identifies the language he uses by a different name even though he closely follows Miskīn suggests that he considered his tradition different and separate from Gujri.

Apart from these folk-religious poems of the last quarter of the seventeenth century—and one other manuscript of folk-religious poems that cannot be dated with certainty[75]—no literary work survives between Afẕal at the beginning of the seventeenth century and Jaʿfar Zaṭallī (1659?–1713), the first writer in the north to write exclusively in Urdu, at the century's end. Yet the work of neither of them offers any clues to, or hints about, the great efflores-

73. Madanī 1990: 15, 25–26.
74. Madanī 1990: 25; Jālibī 1984: 47.
75. Adīb 1984: 17–18, 25.

cence that was to take place in Delhi early in the eighteenth century, and that would go on undiminished, through war and strife, civil commotion, political disintegration, and foreign sway, for one hundred and fifty years.

In the early centuries of Hindi/Hindvi, there seems to have been an osmosis of that language into Persian on a scale that has not yet been fully appreciated. Persian's second oldest dictionary—the first to be prepared in India—is *Farhang-i qavvās,* compiled by Faḵẖr ud-Dīn Qavvās G̱ẖaznavī in ʿAlā ud-Dīn Ḵẖaljī's time (1296–1316). It was followed by two other extant dictionaries in the fourteenth century, and three in the fifteenth century. All these dictionaries include many Hindi/Hindvi words as lexical or glossarial items. Persian dictionaries of great depth and range continued to be produced in India until well into the nineteenth century; most if not all of them were designed for an Indian readership, and they generally expected a high degree of sophistication from their users, especially from the sixteenth century onwards. It is thus not surprising that Persian-Urdu or Urdu-Persian glossaries were an important early linguistic activity in Hindi/Hindvi in the north. Thus Ḥakīm Yūsufī (fl. 1490–1530) wrote a "long poem" *(qaṣīdah)* "about Hindi words" that glosses a number of Hindi/Hindvi verbs and nouns in Persian; in 1553, Ajay Chand Bhaṭnāgar compiled a more complete glossary in verse.

The point is that in the north, up to the seventeenth century, most producers and consumers of Hindi/Hindvi literature, and followers of the discourses of the Sufis and other holy people, knew enough Persian not to need a local language for instruction and delectation. Persian, it seems, *was* a local language for most if not all of them. This would also account for the emergence of Rekhtah—first as a genre, then as the name of the language in which the *reḵẖtah* text was composed, and finally as the term for any poem composed in Rekhtah.

One of the several meanings of *reḵẖtah* is "mixed"—in particular, the mixture of lime and mortar used for building activity. Thus *reḵẖtah* became the name for a poem in which either Hindi/Hindvi was added to a Persian template or Persian was added to a Hindi/Hindvi template. The *reḵẖtah* mode is evident in the earliest Urdu poetry in the north, including even such a sophisticated poem as Afẓal's *Bikaṭ kahānī. Bikaṭ kahānī* has 325 two-line verses; of these, 41 are entirely in Persian; 20 have one line of Urdu and one of Persian; and in another 20, half of one line is Persian, the other half being Urdu. Even more complex combinations are possible: for example, in line 1 of verse 14, the first four words are Persian, the rest Urdu, while line two is entirely in Urdu; in verse 15, the first line is all Persian except for one Urdu word, artificially Persianized, and the second line is entirely Urdu except for the penultimate word, which is Persian though assimilable in Urdu.[76]

76. Sherānī 1966, 2: 104–5.

The Persian-based popularity of *reḳhtah* in the north seems to have retarded the growth of Hindi/Hindvi literature. Though not unknown in the south, *reḳhtah* never had much of a presence there. The Persianization of the north may have been the result of snobbery or of the immense prestige of "Indian style" Persian poets in that part of the country. Evidence of the tilt in Persian's favor can be seen in the distinction between *reḳhtah* and *ġhazal* that was long made in the north. But the important distinction was that *reḳhtah,* whether in mixed language or plain Hindi/Hindvi, was in early decades not considered *ġhazal,* even if it was in the *ġhazal* form. The term *ġhazal* was reserved for the Persian *ġhazal* alone. Consider the following verse of Qā'im Chāndpūrī (1722/25–1795):

> Qā'im, it was I
> Who gave *reḳhtah* the manner
> Of a *ġhazal.* Otherwise
> It was but a feeble thing
> In the language of the Deccan.[77]

No one seems to have asked what Qā'im meant by giving *reḳhtah* "the manner of a *ġhazal.*" Surely there were a lot of *ġhazal*s in both Dakani and North Indian Hindi/Hindvi before Qā'im Chāndpūrī? His own *ustād*s, Saudā (1706–1781) and Dard (1720–1785) would have been right there when he wrote this verse, probably before 1760. It should be obvious that he meant Persian when he said *ġhazal,* even if his *ustād*s would have considered this boast to be in bad taste since it belittled their own achievements.

The issue is settled beyond doubt by Muṣḥafī. In his eighth *dīvān,* which would have been compiled in the early 1820s, we find the verse:

> Muṣḥafī, my *reḳhtah* is
> Better than *ġhazal*—
> For what purpose should
> One now be
> A devotee
> Of Ḳhusrau and Saʿdī?[78]

While Delhi claims, almost imperialistically, to be the pristine seat of Urdu literature, and while this claim colors and affects the literary culture of Urdu in many ways, the fact remains that Delhi began with a bias against Dakani/Hindvi and patronized the hybrid genre *reḳhtah* for a long time, even naming the language "Rekhtah" (which also means "poured, scattered, dropped") as if to reflect its lowly origins. Considering this bias, it is not surprising that

---

77. Qā'im Chāndpūrī 1965: 215.
78. Muṣḥafī [1878] 1990: 52.

there was very little Urdu literature in and around Delhi before 1700. The surprising thing is that there was as much as there was.

Perhaps in an effort to nullify its Dakani/Gujri-linked past, or perhaps as a defense mechanism, Delhi's literary culture developed an arrogance, and consequently an indifference, toward non-Delhi kinds of literature. It was an attitude that survived well into the twentieth century. Even Delhi literature, if it didn't conform to "*ghazal* standards," was not accommodated in the contemporary or historical canon. Poets like Afẓal and Jaʿfar Zaṭallī suffered neglect, and even contempt, at Delhi's hands. Very few *tazkirah*s (anthologies) mention these two poets. To this day, the former remains practically unknown in academia, and the latter is mentioned, if at all, with an air of disapproval and disgust.

Yet both Afẓal and Zaṭallī are major poets. Afẓal was also the pioneer of the *bārah māsah* genre (a kind of "shepherd's calendar") in Urdu. Afẓal's poetry is recognized, though very briefly, by Mīr Ḥasan, who wrote in his *tazkirah* (completed about 1774–1778) that Afẓal's *Bikaṭ kahānī* had been composed "about his own state" and was written in "half Persian and half Hindi, but popularity is a gift of God."[79] Mīr Ḥasan's observations show a hint of disapproval because Afẓal wrote in the classic *reḵhtah* mode, which had fallen into disuse (and in fact, disrepute) by that time. Mīr Ḥasan's remarks may have actually turned potential readers away from *Bikaṭ kahānī*. The poem is not autobiographical, as Mīr Ḥasan assumed. It is a first-person narrative told by a lovelorn woman. The poem abounds in lively, colorful imagery and has the easy flow and controlled passion characteristic of major love poetry.

Jaʿfar Zaṭallī was perhaps the greatest Urdu satirist, and that is saying a great deal, considering that Urdu is particularly rich in satire and humor of all kinds. But Zaṭallī was more than a satirist—he was a lover of words, and of bawdiness and pornography (both soft and hard), which he used as both a weapon of satire and a means of expressing his spirits, high or low. He was a master of variety and technique, and a profound student of life and politics.

Both Afẓal and Zaṭallī are important linguistically because they use a language that is fledging itself out of its somewhat tawdry *reḵhtah* form and is on its way to becoming the nearly perfect medium that it did become within about four decades of Zaṭallī's death. Zaṭallī's vocabulary is larger—and therefore much more varied—than that of Afẓal. His career marks the major watershed in the history of Urdu literature, and not only in the north. The skills developed over the previous two centuries and more may not all have been available to Zaṭallī; and in any case, there was little humor or satire in Gujri and Dakani. Zaṭallī must have learned from his great Persian prede-

---

79. Mīr Ḥasan [1774–1778] 1922: 41.

cessors, especially Fauqī Yazadī, an Iranian who spent some time in India during Akbar's reign. Fauqī and Zaṭallī share, among other things, a proclivity for pornography for the sake of fun as much as for the sake of satire and lampoon.

Compared to Gujri and Dakani, the language of both Afẓal and Zaṭallī sounds less outlandish to modern northern ears. The reason is that it has very little *tatsama*-Sanskrit, Telugu, Marathi, or Gujarati in its vocabulary. The Persian component of their language—the effect of *reḵẖtah* or of direct natural absorption or both—is familiar enough; so is the Braj and Avadhi component. A good bit of their vocabulary, which was retained by Delhi writers over much of the eighteenth century, has been lost to mainline (Delhi-Lucknow) Urdu, but it survives in the Urdu spoken in eastern India and is also comprehensible to Urdu speakers in the south today. This suggests that except for the strong southern content, the register of Hindi and Dakani was much the same in the seventeenth century. The language of Delhi changed substantially between 1760 and 1810, while that of the east and the south remained comparatively stable. Parochialism and a chauvinistic belief in the superiority of their own idiom and usage—which became the hallmark of the speakers of the Delhi register of Hindi/Rekhtah in later years—is nowhere in evidence before the 1750s. In fact, if there was an upper register before the mid-eighteenth century, it must have been located in the south.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the "Indian style" was the order of the day in Persian poetry everywhere in Iran, Turkey, and Indo-Muslim India. The influence of Sanskrit, Braj, and Avadhi on Indo-Muslim literary thought had begun more than a century earlier and had assumed a distinct and strong presence during Akbar's reign. By the 1640s, Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha was writing poetry in Dārā Shikoh's and Shāhjahān's courts. His poetry in Sanskrit is clearly imbued with Persian influences, and most poetry of the Indian style in Persian should find responsive echoes in Sanskrit-trained ears.[80]

If the prestige and popularity of Persian retarded the growth of Hindi/Rekhtah literature in the north, the influence and power of the Indian-style Persian poetry nevertheless had salubrious effects on Rekhtah/Hindi poetry and theory when Rekhtah/Hindi came into its own in Delhi in the late 1600s. Shāh Mubārak Ābrū (1683/85–1733) was the first major poet in Delhi in the 1700s. He must have begun writing poetry late in the seventeenth century, and he is generally regarded as having adopted *īhām* extremely early in his career. We have seen that Ḵẖusrau claimed to be the inventor of a highly elaborate kind of *īhām* in poetry. But the immediate influence on Ābrū seems to have been Sanskrit through Brajbhasha (Ābrū came from Gwalior, an im-

---

80. See chapter 2, by Alam, and chapter 1, by Pollock, in this volume.

portant Braj area) and Indian-style Persian poetry. Even Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, who criticized Urdu poetry for being too Iran-oriented, acknowledged that *īhām* must have come into Urdu poetry from Sanskrit.[81]

Ābrū, and indeed whoever entered upon the business of poetry in Dakani/Hindi/Rekhtah in the early eighteenth century, came under the influence of Valī, and in many ways Valī has been the poet of all Urdu poets since the first decade of the eighteenth century.

<div align="center">VALĪ'S LITERARY REVOLUTION</div>

According to an estimate made in 1966, there were extant at that time sixty-five dated manuscripts and fifty-three undated manuscripts of Valī's *dīvān* in libraries and similar collections; his verses also appear in numerous anthologies. Nūr ul-Ḥasan Hāshmī, the leading Valī expert of our time, says that these numbers, though huge by ordinary standards, are still less than the actual corpus of Valī's extant manuscripts, which should run to over two hundred.[82]

Valī was born somewhere around 1665–1667, and he died most probably in 1707–1708. However, dates as disparate as 1720 through 1725, and even 1735, have been proposed as the year of his death. In fact, determining a late date for Valī's death is a political, rather than scholarly, issue; for one of the most famous stories about Valī is that he was advised by Shāh Gulshan, a saint and poet who lived in Delhi, to give up his Dakani style and adopt the style and the themes of the Persians. Thus the longer Valī lived after he putatively received Shāh Gulshan's advice, the easier it is to show that his poetry was Persian/Delhi-inspired, and so to reduce his status as an original poet who influenced the poets of Delhi.[83] The year 1707/8 seems the most likely year of Valī's death, however, because the oldest extant manuscript of his *dīvān* is dated 26 Rabīʿ ul-Avval, 1120 *hijrī,* which corresponds to July 15, 1708. This manuscript contains all the poetry that we at present know to be Valī's; it stands to reason therefore, especially in view of his great fame, that he was not alive and composing poetry much later than that date.

Valī's popularity is obviously attributable to the quality and the influence of his poetry. For he was not a Sufi or a religious leader whose works and words would have been lovingly and carefully preserved by his followers. Judging from the number of male (and maybe female) friends and lovers that he celebrates in his *dīvān,* he must have been a man of the world, and of his time—a period when the expression of physical love in poetry was much less inhibited than became the rule in Urdu culture from about the mid-

---

81. Āzād [1880] 1967: 99.
82. Valī [1945] 1996: 13–14; from the introduction.
83. Jālibī 1977: 534–39; ʿIṣmat Jāved 1992: 337–54.

nineteenth century onward. Besides being a poet and a man of the world, Valī was a man of learning; he was from Gujarat, or Aurangabad, or both. He revolutionized Urdu poetry. Standard Urdu literary historiography and thought have tried their best, over the last two and a half centuries, to diminish Valī's achievement—for he was an outsider, and a Dakani to boot, and it must have been gall and wormwood to the "Mirzās" of the educated upper classes and *ustād*s of Delhi to have to acknowledge the primacy and the leadership of such a person.

Even many of the earliest Delhi poets, who would have felt most keenly the positive impact of Valī, were deeply ambivalent about him, and they acknowledged their debt to him in equivocal language:

> Ābrū, your poetry is
> Like a Prophet's miracle,
> And Valī's, like the miracle
> Of a mere saint.[84]

> Valī is the master in Rekhtah,
> So who can write
> An answer to him?
> Yet to write with
> Diligent care and search
> Gives success, given
> A little inspiration.[85]

> Were someone to go and recite
> Nājī's verse on Valī's grave,
> Valī would rip open his own shroud
> And spring from his resting place
> Crying, "Well said!"[86]

> Ḥātim is not all that insufficient
> To give peace to my heart,
> Yet Valī is the true Prince
> Of poetry in this world.[87]

Shāh Ḥātim in fact said of himself, "In Persian poetry, [Ḥātim] is a follower of Ṣā'ib, and in Rekhtah, [he] considers Valī the *ustād*."[88] Shāh Ḥātim, most generous of poets, is the only one whose tribute to Valī is not left-handed.

The later masters, particularly Mīr (1722–1810) and Qā'im Chāndpūrī, took the lead in belittling the achievement of Valī by introducing the story

---

84. Ābrū 1990: 271.
85. Ābrū 1990: 295.
86. Nājī 1989: 349.
87. Shāh Ḥātim 1991: 58.
88. Shāh Ḥātim [1755–1756] 1975: 39.

of Saʿdullāh Gulshan advising Valī. The story is, in brief: Valī came to Delhi in 1700—as we know from Qāʾim—and met Gulshan, who looked at his poetry and advised him to "appropriate" themes and images from the Persians, thus enriching his own poetry. Valī took the advice seriously and implemented it successfully. Then when his *dīvān* arrived in Delhi in the second regnal year of Emperor Muḥammad Shāh (1720–1721), it took Delhi by storm, and everybody, young and old, adopted Valī's style of poetry.[89]

One is bound to wonder why Shāh Gulshan would have waited for somebody—whether Valī or someone else—to come from outside Delhi to be the recipient of his somewhat unethical advice. Delhi at that time—in fact, at any time—was home to numerous poets. Most of them wrote in Persian and also tried their hand at a bit of Rekhtah. They were perfectly fluent in Persian and knew Persian poetry as well as Shāh Gulshan did. And if there were more suitable recipients for such advice, there were also more suitable advisers. Among the major Persian poets in Delhi at the end of the seventeenth century, Mirzā ʿAbd ul-Qādir Bedil (1644–1720) and Muḥammad Afẓal Sarkhush (1640–1714) commanded greater respect and a larger following than anyone else. Bedil was in fact at the apogee of his illustrious career during the 1700s and even wrote a bit of Rekhtah himself. Gulshan himself was Bedil's follower, or perhaps even his pupil, in Persian poetry.

To be sure, Valī must have called on Shāh Gulshan, if the latter was in Delhi when Valī came there. Gulshan came from Burhanpur, Gujarat, and traveled at least once to Ahmadābād, where Valī may have met him. There is a small Persian prose tract composed by someone called Valī who describes himself as a pupil of Gulshan. According to Madanī, the master-pupil connection between Valī and Gulshan would have been for Persian and would have begun at Ahmadābād or Burhanpur.[90] On balance, then, the likelihood of Valī having known Gulshan from before his visit to Delhi in 1700 is strong enough to cast serious doubt on the stories narrated by Mīr and Qāʾim about Valī and Gulshan.

I call these accounts "stories" because the details of Qāʾim's version are very different from those of Mīr's. Qāʾim completed his *taẕkirah* in 1754. He is reputed to have been at the task earlier than Mīr. Nevertheless, neither Mīr nor Qāʾim was even born when Valī came to Delhi, so neither had any more personal knowledge than the other. Qāʾim tells an even more curious tale. Recognizing that a poet who had attained the mature (by the reckoning of the time) age of thirty-three or thirty-five—Valī was born around 1665–1667—wasn't a likely candidate for patronizing, somewhat avuncular advice from a comparative stranger, Qāʾim stipulates that Valī was not yet a poet before that momentous meeting with Gulshan:

89. Mīr [1752] 1972: 91; Muṣḥafī [1794–1795] 1933: 80.
90. Valī [1945] 1996: 40–41; Madanī 1981: 86–87.

[Valī] used occasionally to compose a couple or so of Persian *shiʿr*s in praise of the beauty of [a young Sayyid called Mīr Abuʾl-Maʿālī]. On arrival here [in Delhi], when he gained entrance to the presence of Ḥaẓrat Shaiḳh Saʿdullāh Gulshan, the latter commanded him to compose poetry in Rekhtah, and by way of education, gave away to him the following opening verse, which he composed [there and then]:

> Were I to set down on paper
> The praises of the beloved's
> Miraculous beauty, I would
> Spontaneously convert the paper
> Into the White Hand of Moses.

In short, it was due to the inspiration of the Ḥaẓrat's tongue that Valī's poetry became so well-loved that each and every verse in his *dīvān* is brighter than the horizon of sunrise, and he wrote Rekhtah with such expressive power and grace that many *ustād*s even of that time began to compose in Rekhtah.[91]

This tale might be more plausible than Mīr's, except that we know Valī was already a poet of substantial repute when he visited Delhi in 1700–1701. While it is impossible to date all of his poetry accurately, references to contemporaries who died before 1700 clearly establish that he was a serious Rekhtah/Hindi poet before 1700. There is, for example, the following agonistic reference to the famous Indo-Persian poet Nāṣir ʿAlī, who died in 1696:

> Were I to send this line
> To Nāṣir ʿAlī, he would upon
> Hearing it, spring up excited
> Like a streak of lightning.[92]

Other knowledgeable *taẕkirah* writers do not support the story of Shāh Gulshan's advice; one in fact explicitly rejects it, sneering, "Let the truth or falsehood of this statement be on the original narrator's head."[93]

It is extremely unlikely that Valī's poetry owes anything to Shāh Gulshan's instruction or example. Apart from the Dakani tradition and language in his blood, and the part that Gujri played in his nurture, he had Ḥasan Shauqī (d. 1633?) as his exemplar. Shauqī was in Ahmadnagar (then in Golconda),

---

91. Qāʾim Chāndpūrī [1754] 1968: 105. It is impossible to render this beautiful verse satisfactorily in English. "White Hand of Moses" refers to a miracle granted to Moses by God at Sinai. He was asked to put his right hand under his collar. It came out entirely white, "without stain, or evil" (Qurʾan 27.12).

92. Valī [1945] 1996: 196.

93. Amrullāh Ilāhābādī [1778–1780] 1968: 123. For others who do not support this story, see Shafīq Aurangābādī [1762] 1968: 82–84, and Mīr Ḥasan [1774–1778] 1922: 204.

but his reputation seems to have been widespread. The main characteristics of Shauqī's poetry are a richness of sensuous imagery and a language comparatively free of hard Telugu and *tatsama*-Sanskrit influences. An extreme case of these influences is the work of Faḳhr-e Dīn Niz̤āmī; more moderate but still fairly heavy influence is evident in the writing of Nuṣratī, perhaps the greatest Dakani poet. By comparison, Valī's language tilted more toward the Persian-mixed Rekhtah of Delhi. Most of the Dakani component of Valī's language is *tadbhava;* and a good bit of it is to be found in Delhi's register as well.

It appears that a strain of Dakani/Hindvi developed in and around Aurangabad after Aurangzeb and his vast armies had established a presence there. This happened even before he took the throne at Delhi. His campaigns in the Deccan continued through his long reign (1658–1707). ʿAbd us-Sattār Ṣiddīqī, perhaps the greatest modern comparative linguist in Urdu, says:

> It seems clear that by the end of the tenth century *hijrī* [1590/91], there were two forms of the Hindustani language in the Deccan. One, which was current in Dravidian[-dominated] areas of the Deccan, outside the territory of Daulatabad, and found few opportunities to renew its connections with the language of Delhi. . . . The other form of the language was that which was prevalent in Daulatabad and its surrounds. The Mughals turned towards the Deccan in the beginning of the eleventh *hijrī* century [end of the 1590s], and their influence grew fast. They also made Daulatabad their headquarters, and Aurangzeb, too, established the city of Aurangabad just a few miles from there. People from Delhi came to Aurangabad in very large numbers in the times of Shāhjahān and Aurangzeb, and brought Delhi's high Urdu with them. It renewed and refurbished the language of the territory of Daulatabad, and the Aurangabadis happily adopted the new language of Delhi. And that is the language that we find in Valī; and but for some minor differences, it was the language spoken in Delhi in Valī's time.[94]

ʿAbd us-Sattār Ṣiddīqī may have simplified the case a bit, but the picture he presents is broadly accurate. Shafīq Aurangābādī writes about Nuṣratī that his poems come "heavy on the tongue because of their being in the mode of the Dakanis." Maulvi ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq, who spent a substantial part of his life in Aurangabad, says that in the first half of the eighteenth century the language registers of Delhi and Aurangabad were practically indistinguishable. Once the Deccan became more or less independent of Delhi in the 1750s, the language of the Daulatabad-Aurangabad area lost touch with Delhi and gradually tilted back to the main Dakani mode.[95]

Ḥasan Shauqī's poetry is comparatively gentler on the Aurangabadi ear.

94. Valī [1945] 1996: 61–62.
95. Shafīq Aurangābādī [1762] 1968: 80; Tamannā Aurangābādī [1780–1781] 1936: *ze.*

Ḥasan Shauqī is the only Dakani/Hindi/Rekhtah poet whom Valī mentions as a rival, or as worthy of comparison with himself:

> It's quite proper, O Valī,
> If Ḥasan Shauqī should come
> Back from the dead, eager
> For my poems.[96]

All the others whom Valī ever mentions as equals or inferiors—and he names quite a few—are Persian poets. In a remarkable *ghazal* he fits the names of numerous Persian poets in a series, using them, through word-play, as words of praise for the beloved. Apart from Shauqī, the only Dakani/Hindi/Rekhtah poet whose name he brings in is Shāh Gulshan, and he can be described as a Hindi/Rekhtah poet only by courtesy.[97]

So what did Valī do? He showed that Rekhtah/Hindi was capable of great poetry, just as Gujri/Hindi and Dakani/Hindi were. He also showed that Rekhtah/Hindi could rival, if not surpass, Indo-Persian poetry in sophistication of imagery, complexity and abstractness of metaphor, and the "creation of themes" *(mazmūn āfirīnī)*. Historically, perhaps his most important contribution was to infuse among Rekhtah poets the sense of a new poetics—a poetics that owed as much to the Indian-style Persian poetry, and through it to Sanskrit, too, as it did to his Dakani predecessors:

> O Valī, the tongue of the master poet
> Is the candle that lights up
> The assembly of meanings.
> .   .   .   .
> The beloved has made her place
> In Valī's heart and soul
> Like meaning in the word.
> .   .   .   .
> The way for new themes
> Is not closed;
> Doors of poetry
> Are open forever.
> .   .   .   .   .   .
> The beloved
> whose name is Meaning reveals
> Herself, bright, when the tongue
> Removes the curtain from
> The face of Poetry.
> .   .   .   .

96. Valī [1945] 1996: 243.
97. Valī [1945] 1996: 292.

> Poetry is
> Unique in the world, there is
> No answer to poetry.[98]

THE NEW LITERARY CULTURE

By the early eighteenth century, many Indians—especially in the north but also in the Aurangabad area—regarded themselves as having a native speaker's competence in Persian; I have given some details of the confident eighteenth-century Indian Persian literary culture in a recent article. Most of the earliest Rekhtah writers in Delhi were Persian poets who wrote in Rekhtah only on the side. That this was the case until much later in Aurangabad too is evidenced in a *tazkirah* by Shafīq Aurangābādī. He comments that he began writing poetry in Persian by the age of twelve (he was born in 1745), had no taste for Rekhtah, and in fact looked down upon it. When Rekhtah poetry became extremely popular among his friends, he too turned to it, but not without considerable mental conflict and anguish.[99]

The new wave of Rekhtah/Hindi writers who began to arrive on the scene in the early 1700s—and whose poetry received a much-needed boost from the example of Valī—wrote more Rekhtah than Persian.[100] Yet Persian did not become the mere second string to the Delhi poet's bow until much later. There was not much "high" literary activity in Rekhtah before the impact of Valī was felt in Delhi. As we saw earlier, until quite late in Delhi's literary culture *ghazal* meant only "Persian *ghazal.*" Young writers who were turning to Rekhtah at the turn of the century in Delhi were perhaps more comfortable in Persian than in Rekhtah. Thus, when poets began composing in Rekhtah in large numbers, they needed guides or mentors to put them through their paces, whence was born the institution of *ustād* and *shāgird* (pupil, disciple), which is unique to Urdu literary culture and did not even exist in Dakani or Gujri.

Once established, the custom of forming *ustād-shāgird* relationships spread fast. In the beginning it certainly met a felt need: a literary community was giving up a foreign language in which it was comfortable in favor of the local

---

98. Valī [1945] 1996: 286, 203, 177 (these page numbers correspond to the first, second, and last three quoted verses, respectively).

99. Shafīq Aurangābādī [1762] 1968: 9. For more on Indian Persian literary culture, see Faruqi 1998.

100. By the mid-eighteenth century the Hindus, too, who had also been concentrating on Persian, began to adopt Rekhtah. In the beginning, major figures like Sarb Sukh Dīvānā (1727/28–1788/89) were bilingual in Urdu and Persian; Dīvānā established a long and illustrious line of *shāgird*s through his own *shāgird*s, especially Ja'far 'Alī Ḥasrat (d. 1791/92). By the end of the century, Hindus were active participants in the Urdu creative scene, a situation that, happily, continues to this day, in spite of politically motivated efforts to alter it.

language—the literary codes of which were seen as more or less independent, so that they needed to be specially learned. What began as a need, however, soon became a fashion, and then a minor industry and a source of patronage. Loyalties were generated and abrogated; feuds began to occur between *ustād*s, and between *shāgird*s of the same *ustād;* and poetic genealogy became an important part of a poet's literary status. Within this new system, codes of conduct and protocols of behavior—such as the *mushā'irah,* or literary gathering—were developed. These were mostly in place by the 1760s, soon spreading to all Rekhtah/Hindi centers: Lucknow, Benares, Allahabad, Murshidabad, Patna, Aurangabad, Hyderabad, Surat, Rampur, Madras, and so on.[101]

One important manifestation of this new Urdu literary culture was its almost morbid obsession with "correctness" in language. Undue—and sometimes even almost mindless—emphasis on "correct" or "standard, sanctioned" speech in poetry and prose, and even in everyday converse, has been one of the most interesting and least understood aspects of Urdu culture from the mid-eighteenth century onward. Persian's immense prestige ("Persian" here includes Arabic) may account for a part of this emphasis. The idea seems to have been to make Rekhtah approximate to the Persian of a native Persian speaker. This was elitism of a sort, and may well have been meant to be exactly that.

Shāh Ḥātim is reputed to be the person with whom all this began. He did recommend using words in accordance with their original Arabic/Persian pronunciation—something that, as we have seen, the Dakanis also recommended, but never practiced. Ḥātim also suggested removal of *hindvī bhākhā* words from the Rekhtah/Hindi poet's active vocabulary. But the suspicion remains that all this may have been a defensive ploy for creating a distance between the language of Valī and that of Delhi. For Ḥātim also emphasized, in no uncertain terms, the primacy of established idiom over bookish idiom. And Ḥātim, too, does not seem to have been at all faithful to his own prescriptions. In the selection from his *dīvān* called *Dīvān zādah* (1755/56), which he made by "purging" his older poetry of usages of which he now disapproved, one can find numerous examples of the very things that he was seeking to remove from the language of poetry.

---

101. Examples of poetic genealogy still occur: a poet from Maharashtra recently claimed to trace his poetic lineage back to Saudā (d. 1781) and Dard (d. 1785). See Ibrāhīm Ashk 1996: 4.

The *mushā'irah* had been in existence in India since the sixteenth century, but had been confined to Persian recitation alone. The new literary community of the North, gaining confidence gradually, instituted *mushā'irah*s in Rekhtah as well. It was common until the 1920s, if not even later, for Persian poetry to be recited at Urdu *mushā'irah*s without the audience or the poet feeling any incongruity. Until the 1950s and even later, individual Urdu poets' collections (including mine) often contained a bit of Persian poetry too (Faruqi 1997a). For a full discussion of the *mushā'irah,* as well as the full literary and cultural dimensions of the *ustād-shāgird* relationship, see Pritchett, chapter 15, this volume.

Compared to the prescriptions, however self-contradictory, of Ḥātim, Valī's approach was freer and more relaxed: both local and Arabic/Persian pronunciation had equal right in the language; words used by the common people did not need to be avoided. This was the credo in Rekhtah also, but Valī, because of his influence and popularity, was the great exemplar who was to be imitated—and also denied. This tension comes through clearly in Shāh Ḥātim's preface to the *Dīvān zādah:*

> This servant [Shāh Ḥātim] . . . during the past ten or twelve years, has given up many words. He has favored such Arabic and Persian words as are easy to understand and are in common use, and has also favored the idiom of Delhi, which the Mirzās of Hind [the north] and the nonreligious standard speakers *[rind]* have in their use; and [he] has stopped using the language of all and sundry areas, and also the Hindvi that is called the *bhākhā;* [he] has adopted only such a register as is understood by the common people, and is liked by the elite.[102]

One can see Ḥātim's dilemma: he wants to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare. He doesn't want to declare independence from Valī, but he also wants to emphasize his own Delhi-ness. He wants to use Arabic and Persian vocabulary, but only such as can be commonly understood. (Valī, by contrast, was quite fond of Arabic phrases.) He wants to use language that is sophisticated and secular, language used by the Mirzās and *rind*s (educated, more or less free-living, nonreligious frequenters of wine houses and market places) of the north, but the language should also be understandable to the common people of Delhi. He doesn't want to use Brajbhasha, the language of areas to the south of Delhi (that is, toward Aurangabad) from which both Dakani and Rekhtah had derived a number of *tatsama* words. (Valī's language, by contrast, abounds in *tatsama* words.)

Ḥātim's agenda was basically twofold: its negative part was his (un)conscious desire to move away from Valī; its positive part was his wish to bring the language of poetry into line with that of the Mirzās, the *rind*s, and the common people of Delhi. Balancing all these elements was a task, but great poets like Mīr performed it very well. Unfortunately, it was the least important and the least right-minded part of Shāh Ḥātim's agenda—namely, downplaying the value of *tatsama* words—that caught the eye and fancy of many later historians. What was an attempt to arrive at a secular, urbanized and urbane, modern-idiomatic, and literate yet not overburdened language was seen and hailed as exclusionism and "reformism," as if the language were a criminal or a patient who needed reform or healing and it was the duty of the poet to perform this task.

There is no doubt that the proportion of *tatsama* vocabulary declined in

102. Shāh Ḥātim [1755–1756] 1975: 40.

Rekhtah/Hindi over the second half of the eighteenth century. But was it because of Ḥātim, or for other reasons not yet discovered? Was Ḥātim describing in the guise of prescription, and was the language at that time changing faster than we make allowance for? One would need more evidence than is available at present to ascribe the decline in the number of *tatsama* words in literary Urdu to the "exclusionism" and "reforms" inaugurated by Ḥātim.

In any case, Urdu literary culture from the late eighteenth century onward does place an unfortunate stress, which is also entirely disproportionate to their value, on "purism," "language reform," "purging the language of undesirable usages," and—worst of all—privileging all Persian-Arabic over all Urdu. Urdu is the only language whose writers have prided themselves on "deleting" or "excising" words and phrases from their active vocabulary. Instead of taking pride in the enlargement of vocabulary, they took joy in limiting the horizon of language, to the extent of banishing many words used even by literate speakers or their own *ustād*s. Why this Persian-privileging and "purifying" process came into existence, and why Urdu writers themselves took an active part in establishing and perpetuating it, is a question that I have addressed, though not entirely solved, elsewhere.[103]

The linguistic restrictiveness of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Urdu contrasts most starkly with the steady expansion of literary theory that we see from Valī (1665/57–1707) to Shāh Naṣīr (1755?–1838) and Shaikh Nāsikh (1776–1838). The first major discovery in the field of literary theory was that a distinction could be made between *mazmūn* (theme) and *maʿnī* (meaning). Classical Arab and Iranian theorists use the term *maʿnī* to mean "theme, content." As late as 1752, we find Ṭek Chand Bahār in *Bahār-i ʿajam* defining the word *maʿnī* as "synonym of *mazmūn*." Barely fifty years later, *Shams al-lughāt,* the next great Persian dictionary compiled in India, defines *maʿnī* as "that which is connoted by the word." The idea that a poem could be *about* something (*mazmūn,* theme), and could *mean* something different, or more (*maʿnī,* meaning), may have come from the Sanskrit tradition. One is reminded of Ānandavardhana's classification of different kinds of meanings (literal, secondary, implied) and surpluses of meaning.[104]

In Urdu, Mullā Nuṣratī Bījāpūrī (1600–1674) seems to have been the first

103. Faruqi 1998. Muṣḥafī [1878] 1990 deals with the limitations placed on language. Of course, the power of *langue* is always greater than that of *parole,* and Urdu is no exception. Thousands of "incorrect" or "questionable" words and phrases entered even the literary language, despite the restrictions, and continue to enter even now. Yet many of the taboos that originated in the early nineteenth century are still in place. In theory, and also to a large extent in practice, Urdu literary idiom remains the most restrictive kind imaginable.

104. Bahār [1752] 1865–1866, 2: 614; *Shams al-lughāt* [1804–1805] 1891–1892, 2: 252; Todorov 1986: 12–13, 27.

to use the term *maẓmūn* in the sense of "theme, idea." Since he does so a number of times, and usually in the context of poetic excellence, he is doubtless making a point in literary theory:

> Reveal, O Lord, on the screen
> Of my poetic thought
> The freshness and virginity
> Of all my themes.
> .   .   .   .   .   .
> Your manner is new,
> And your speech
> Appeals to the heart.
> Your themes are lofty
> And colorful.
> .   .   .   .   .
> I spoke throughout
> By means of new themes, and thus
> Revealed the power
> Of God's inspiration.
> .   .   .   .
> New, fresh themes
> Are my weapons
> To cool and kill
> My opponent's breath.[105]

Nuṣratī, a man of great learning, may have known Sanskrit. Or he may have picked up a point or two from Telugu-speaking literary friends, or from Kannada—he was originally from an area which is now in Karnataka (as, for that matter, Bijapur is too). In any case, he would have been aware that such a distinction was being made, or assumed, by his "Indian style" Persian-writing colleagues—and he himself said that he made Dakani poetry resemble that of Persian. More importantly, he also said in his *Gulshan-e ʿishq* (Garden of love, 1657) that there are many "Hindi" (Indian) excellences that cannot be properly transported into Persian, and he, Nuṣratī, having discovered the essence of both, had created a new kind of poetry by mixing the essence of one with the other.[106]

The introduction of this far-reaching distinction between theme and meaning made several things possible. It was recognized, for instance, that while themes were theoretically infinite, very few of them were acceptable in poetry. Thus the creation of themes *(maẓmūn āfirīnī)*—the search for new,

---

105. Nuṣratī Bījāpūrī 1959: 9, 27, 425, 426. In the second verse quoted, he praises the poet-king ʿAlī ʿĀdil Shāh II.

106. Jālibī 1977: 335.

acceptable themes, or for new ways to express old themes—became a noble occupation for the poet.[107] This gave rise to a mode called *k̲h̲iyāl bandī* (capturing imaginary, abstract, elusive themes), in which the theme's novelty or far-fetchedness became an objective for its own sake (although far-fetched or novel themes also had to pass the test of acceptability). The mode—though not the term—seems to have begun with the Indian-style Persian poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Urdu, traces of this manner can be found in Valī, ʿAbd ul-Valī Uzlat, and Mīr. By the end of the eighteenth century, it was firmly in position as the ruling mode of the day.

Praising the beloved's beauty, for instance, was a major theme. Praising the beauty of her face was a major subtheme. Praising the eyes, lips, cheeks, and so forth, were major sub-subthemes. Praising something that was not in any of the conceivable categories presented several challenges: one had to find such a thing; then one needed to imagine, or find, some praiseworthy aspect of it; and then, hardest of all, one needed to invent terms of praise that conformed to the dictates of convention. This is how Mīr looks at the beloved's pockmarked face:

> They weren't so plentiful,
> The pockmarks on your face—
> Who has been planting
> His glances on your face?[108]

This is brilliant, for it implies beauty both before and after disfigurement by smallpox. But the verse turns upon a wordplay: in Urdu, one of the ways to convey the act of looking intently at something is to say "bury/embed/plant the eyes or the glances in/on something." Jurʾat (1748–1809) imagines a direr situation, but doesn't quite achieve the image that could bring off the desired effect:

> The body of that rosy-Rose
> Bathed in the efflorescence
> Of smallpox: like the action
> Of the moth on bright velvet.[109]

Jurʾat uses for the beloved the word *gul,* which means "rose, flower," and also "scar, spot." This is happy wordplay, but the image of the rose-body

---

107. Ali Jawad Zaidi says that Urdu poets of the early eighteenth century adopted the art of *mazmūn āfirīnī* and complex craftsmanship as a conscious design, and the underlying theory "was not different from what Bhāmaha had developed in the seventh century. . . . The tradition that travelled from Sanskrit to Persian, and from thence to Urdu, may have kept changing its form and structure, but not its spirit." Zaidi 1970: 41.

108. Mīr [1796?] 1968: 389.

109. Jurʾat 1971: 175.

doesn't go well with that of velvet. Now consider Nāsiḵẖ, greatest of the *ḵẖiyāl band* poets:

> When blisters of smallpox
> Appeared on the beloved's face,
> The *bulbul*s were deceived:
> Dewdrops on rose petals, surely?[110]

Like Mīr, Nāsiḵẖ introduces an outsider into the story; the difference is that in Mīr, the outsider causes the harm, and in causing it reaffirms the "lookability" of the beloved's face. In Nāsiḵẖ, the outsider presents another's point of view. The subtlety is that the other is the *bulbul,* or nightingale, the quintessential lover, while the rose is the quintessential beloved. Thus the beloved's ravaged face is not really ravaged; the *bulbul* takes it for rose petals bathed in dew. Both the *shiʿr*s (verses) also affirm the beloved's delicateness by suggestion *(kināyah),* but in different ways: in the Mīr verse, the beloved is so delicate that the onlooker's glances, like needles, hurt and cause breaks under the skin. In the Nāsiḵẖ verse, the delicate, rosy smoothness of the skin causes the blisters to glow like dewdrops.[111]

Consideration of *ḵẖiyāl bandī* takes us nearly half a century ahead in my narrative, however, for *ḵẖiyāl bandī* came into its own toward the end of the eighteenth century. The main mode of early-eighteenth-century poets was *īhām.* If *ḵẖiyāl bandī* sought to push to the limit the poet's innovativeness (and in fact also his luck), it was the frequent use of *īhām* (wordplay generated by the intent to deceive) that characterized the earliest major effort to make poems yield more meaning than they at first glance seemed to possess. This was called *maʿnī āfirīnī* (creation of meanings)—as opposed to *mazmūn āfirīnī* (creation of themes). In the textbook definition of *īhām,* the poet uses a word that has two meanings, one of which is remoter and less used than the other, and the remoter one is the intended meaning. The mind of the listener/reader naturally associates the word in question with the more immediate meaning and is thus deceived, or else the listener doubts that he has heard the verse correctly. Poets of the early eighteenth century, however, did much more than this. In the hands of Valī and the Delhi poets *īhām* came to include many kinds of wordplay that showed greater creativity than the conventional definition of *īhām* allowed for. For instance, they concocted situations in which the two meanings of the crucial word were equally strong, making it impossible to decide which was the poet's intended meaning; or

---

110. Nāsiḵẖ 1847: 19.

111. It must be remembered that many *shiʿr*s of *ḵẖiyāl bandī* sound faintly (or even strongly) bizarre in English translation today. One is tempted to believe, though, that they would not sound entirely outlandish to "thinking poets" (in Coleridge's words) like John Donne or other metaphysical poets.

in which the crucial word had more than two meanings, all of them more or less relevant to the poem's discourse.[112]

Let us now take a look at an instance of *īhām*. For obvious reasons, *īhām* does not fare well in translation, and excellence has to be traded off for translatability. Ābrū says:

> I hacked through life in every way,
> Dying, and having to live again
> Is Doomsday.[113]

I will now supply, in order from obvious to less obvious, the aspects of meaning that are lost in translation: "I hacked through life in every way": (1) I tried all ways of living a life; (2) I suffered all kinds of hardship. "Dying, and having to live again": (1) being resurrected; (2) dying by inches, again; (3) engaging in the cycle of living and dying over and over again. "Doomsday": (1) the day of resurrection, when all the dead will be brought back to life; (2) a major calamity; (3) a great deed; (4) a cruelty.

The main point about *īhām* is that it intends to deceive or surprise the reader/listener, to create a happy effect of wit, and, ultimately, to explore new dimensions of meaning and the limits of language.[114] It was also recognized, however, that some poems appeal directly to the emotions though their meaning, at least at first flush, and perhaps always, is not very clear or does not seem valuable. The quality that makes this possible is *kaifiyat,* a state of subtle and delicious enjoyment such as one derives from tragedy or a sad piece of music. *Kaifiyat* does not permit sentimentality in the sense of extravagance in words—that is, words that are larger and louder than the emotion that the poem is trying to convey. *Kaifiyat* makes no overt appeal to the listener/reader's emotions; in many cases, the protagonist/speaker's own mood or state of mind may be difficult to fathom, and it is always complex enough to discourage a direct, linear interpretation.

The concept of *kaifiyat* resembles the Sanskrit concept of *dhvani* (suggestion) in some respects. Krishnamoorthy has noted that Abhinavagupta

---

112. Faruqi 1997b.

113. Ābrū 1990: 270.

114. Even in its most elementary form, *īhām* was regarded as *ṣanʿat-e maʿnavī* (a figure pertaining to meaning, an *arthālaṅkāra*), and not just a frivolity, as modern Urdu critics seem to have unanimously concluded. A similar prejudice has been held against Sanskrit *śleṣa,* which deploys a number of strategies remarkably like *īhām*. Theorists have disagreed on the question of what produces polysemy in Sanskrit. Udbhaṭa seems to have denied even two senses to a word, holding that in case of *śleṣa,* "the words should be regarded as different when they have different senses, even though their forms may be the same." The position of Mammaṭa was closer to the concept of *īhām* as defined in the books: one word, two meanings (Kunjunni Raja [1963] 1995: 44–45). In the hands of the Urdu poet, an *īhām*-based utterance could convey many more than just two meanings; this is less common in Sanskrit.

appreciated in a poem "the vital animation provided by the emotional content described in all its variety, including states of mind," and that Abhinavagupta cited as an example Bhaṭṭendurāja's description of the physical and emotional responses of the village girls when they first see the god Kṛṣṇa in his full youth. Krishnamoorthy paraphrases Abhinavagupta's comments on Bhaṭṭendurāja's *muktaka* (independent stanza) as follows: "For one who cannot respond to the intensity of love in this stanza, it cannot have any poetic value. There is no recognisable figure of speech beyond two common-place similes, nor any highly striking poetic gem embodying the rasa of *śṛṅgāra* or love."[115]

While *dhvani* is a more comprehensive concept than *kaifiyat,* what Abhinavagupta seems to be describing here is precisely what most often happens in a verse with *kaifiyat.*[116] The absence of striking metaphors or images makes a verse of *kaifiyat* even harder to translate than an *īhām*-bearing verse; here is one such example:

> I looked at her, and sighed a sigh
> I looked at her with longing, once.[117]

The mood of a *kaifiyat*-bearing verse can be compared to that of an accomplished Elizabethan lyric or song. This view would be somewhat reductionistic if applied always—especially to a truly great poet like Mīr, whose *kaifiyat* poems are found very often to hold complex meanings, too. It does, however, generally hold true for verses like the one quoted here.

I round out this discussion of *kaifiyat* with an example from a *ġhazal* by Mīr, in his third *dīvān,* compiled around 1785:

> I wept away all the blood there was
> In my heart; where is any drop left now?
> Sorrow turned me to water
> And my life flowed away,
> What is there left of me now?[118]

The interrogative has a rhetorical power in Urdu that the English translation cannot match. Yet if not the rhetorical power, perhaps some of the pensive, bitter-heavy mood does come through—the voice of one who has seen all weariness, all departures, and all journeys. Mīr gives free rein to his instinct for wordplay even in such situations.

I devote so much space to *ḵhiyāl bandī* and *kaifiyat* because *ḵhiyāl bandī,* if at all known to modern Urdu scholars, is one of the unmentionables of Urdu

---

115. Krishnamoorthy 1985: 193–95.
116. Pritchett 1994: 119–22.
117. Muṣḥafī [1796] 1971, 3: 443.
118. Mīr [1796?] 1968: 556.

poetry; hardly any critic has had the courage to recognize that Ġhālib—whom most people today regard as the greatest Urdu poet—was a *k̲h̲iyāl band* to the core. As for *kaifiyat,* the term is unknown, and modern poets like Firāq Gorak̲h̲pūrī (1896–1982), some of whose poetry evinces the quality of *kaifiyat,* have been praised for entirely the wrong reasons.

Another concept, not fully developed or realized but clearly present in poets from Mīr to Shāh Naṣīr and even Ġhālib, was that of *shorish,* or *shor angezī.* The phrase *shor angez* has been present in Persian since at least the sixteenth century and seems to have become a technical term by the end of the seventeenth century. A poem was considered *shor angez* if it had the quality of passionate yet impersonal comment on the outside universe, or the external scheme of things.[119] Also important were notions concerning the grammar of poetry, like *rabt̤* (connection between the two lines of a verse) and concepts flowing from *īhām,* such as *ri'āyat* (consonance) and *munāsibat* (affinity), both of which pertain to the play of words in extending or strengthening the meaning in a poem.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Abd ul-Ḥaq, Maulvī. 1968. *Urdū kī ibtidā'ī nashv o namā meñ ṣūfiyā-e kirām kā kām* (Urdu). Aligarh: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdu, Hind.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans. 1983. *The Holy Qur'an, Translated with Commentary.* Brentwood, Md.: Amana Corporation.

Ābrū, Shāh Mubārak. 1990. *Dīvān-e ābrū* (Urdu). Edited by Muḥammad Ḥasan. New Delhi: Bureau for the Promotion of Urdu, Government of India.

Adīb, Mas'ūd Ḥasan Riz̤vī. 1984. *Shumālī hind kī qadīm tarīn urdū naz̤meñ* (Urdu). Lucknow: Kitāb Nagar.

Afz̤al, Muḥammad. 1965. "Bikaṭ kahānī." In *Qadīm Urdu* 1, edited by Mas'ūd Ḥusain K̲h̲ān. Hyderabad: Osmania University. (Also included in Sherānī 1966, vol. 2.)

Aḥmad Gujrātī, Shaik̲h̲. [1580–1585] 1983. *Yūsuf zulaik̲h̲ā* (Urdu). Edited by Sayyidah Ja'far. Hyderabad: National Fine Printing Press.

Amrit Rai. 1984. *A House Divided.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Amrullāh Ilāhābādī, Abu'l-Ḥasan. [1778–1780] 1968. *Taz̲kirah-e masarrat afzā.* Edited, abridged, and translated into Urdu by 'At̤ā Kākvī (original in Persian). Patna: 'Azīm ush-Shān Book Depot.

Aṡar, Imdād Imām. [1894] 1982. *Kāshif ul-ḥaqā'iq* (Urdu). Edited by Vahab Ashrafī. New Delhi: Bureau for the Promotion of Urdu, Government of India.

'Āsī, Ghanshyām Lāl. [1930?]. *Kalām-e 'āsī* (Urdu). Edited by Manmohan Lāl Māthur. Delhi: Kāyasth Urdū Sabhā.

Āzād, Muḥammad Ḥusain. [1880] 1967. *Āb-e ḥayāt* (Urdu). Calcutta: 'Uṡmāniyah Book Depot.

119. Pritchett 1994: 113–16.

———. [1880] 2001. *Āb-e ḥayāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry.* Translated by Frances W. Pritchett, with S. R. Faruqi. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bahār, Ṭek Chand. [1752] 1865–1866. *Bahār-i ʿajam.* Delhi: Maṭbaʿ-e Sirājī.

Bailey, T. Grahame. 1938. *Studies in North Indian Languages.* London: Lund Humphries & Co. Ltd.

Cohn, Bernard S. [1985] 1994. "The Command of Language and the Language of Command." In *Subaltern Studies IV, Writings on South Asian History and Society,* edited by Ranajit Guha. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Dalmia, Vasudha. 1997. *The Nationalization of Hindi Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Fallon, S. W. [1866] 1986. *A New Hindustani-English Dictionary.* Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy.

Farmān Fatḥpūrī. 1977a. *Hindī urdū tanāzuʿ* (Urdu). Islamabad: National Book Foundation.

———. 1977b. *Urdu imlā aur rasm ul-khaṭ* (Urdu). Lahore: Sang-e Mīl Publications.

Faruqi, Shamsur Rahman. 1995. "Constructing a Literary History, a Canon, and a Theory of Poetry: Ab-e Hayat (1880) by Muhammad Husain Azad (1830–1910)." *Social Scientist* 23 (10–12) (October–December): 70–97.

———. 1997a. *Āsmān mihrāb* (Urdu and Persian). Allahabad: Shabkhūn Kitāb Ghar.

———. 1997b. *Urdū ġhazal ke aham moṛ* (Urdu). New Delhi: Ghalib Academy.

———. 1998. "Privilege without Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India." *Annual of Urdu Studies* (Madison) 13: 3–30. (An Urdu version of this paper appeared in *Shabkhūn* [Allahabad] 210 [September 1997] and *Āj* [Karachi] 25 [spring–summer 1997].)

Frazer, R. W. [1898] 1915. *A Literary History of India.* London: T. Fisher Unwin.

Ġhālib, Mirzā Asadullāh Khān. 1984–1993. *Ġhālib ke khuṭūt* (Urdu). 4 vols. Edited by Khalīq Anjum. New Delhi: Ghalib Institute.

———. 1986. *Dīvān-e ġhālib kāmil, tārīkhī tartīb se* (Urdu). Edited by Kālī Dās Guptā Riẓā. Bombay: Sākār Publications.

Ġhiyāš ud-Dīn Rāmpūrī, Mullā. [1826] 1893. *Ghiyāš ul-luġhāt.* Kanpur: Maṭbaʿ-e Intiẕāmī.

Gilchrist, John. 1796. *A Grammar of the Hindoostanee Language, or Part Third of Volume First, of a System of Hindoostanee Philology.* Calcutta: Chronicle Press.

———. [1798] 1802. *The Oriental Linguist, An Easy And Familiar Introduction to The Hindoostanee, Or Grand Popular Language of Hindoostan, (Vulgarly, But Improperly, Called The Moors).* Calcutta: Post Press.

Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, Khvājah. n.d. *Dīvān-e ḥāfiẓ* (Persian and Urdu). Edited and translated by Qāẓī Sajjād Ḥusain. Delhi: Sabrang Kitāb Ghar.

Ḥālī, Khvājah Alṭāf Ḥusain. [1893] 1953. *Muqaddamah-e shiʿr o shāʿirī* (Urdu). Allahabad: Rām Narāʾin Lāl.

Ibrāhīm Ashk. 1996. *Āgāhī* (Urdu). Mumbai: Takmīl Publications.

Iftikhār, ʿAbd ul-Vahhāb. [1758–1759] 1968. *Taẕkirah-e benaẕīr.* Edited, abridged, and translated into Urdu by ʿAṭā Kākvī (original in Persian). Patna: ʿAẕīmushshān Book Depot.

Inshā, Inshāʾallāh Khan, and Mirzā Muḥammad Ḥasan Qatīl. [1807] 1850. *Daryā-i latāfat* (Persian). Murshidabad: Maṭbaʿ-e Āftāb-e Ālamtāb.

―――. [1807] 1935. *Daryā-e laṭāfat* (Urdu). Edited and translated by Brij Mohan Dattatreya Kaifī. Aurangabad: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū.

ʿIṣmat Jāved. 1992. "Valī kā sāl-e vafāt; ek shub'hah aur us kā izālah" (Urdu). *Iqbāl,* Adabiyāt-e urdū nambar (April–July): 337–54.

Jālibī, Jamīl. 1977. *Tārīkh-e adab-e urdū* (Urdu). Vol. 1. Delhi: Educational Publishing House.

―――. 1984. *Tārīkh-e adab-e urdū* (Urdu). Vol. 2. 2 parts. Delhi: Educational Publishing House.

Jamāl Ḥusain, Qāẓī. 1993. "Dībāchah-e ġhurrat ul-kamāl kī maʿnaviyat" (Urdu). *Shab-khūn* 168 (March–May): 9–14.

Jurʾat, Qalandar Baḳhsh. 1971. *Kulliyāt* (Urdu). Edited by Nūr ul-Ḥasan Naqvī. Aligarh: Litho Colour Printers.

Ḳhan-e Ārzū, Sirāj ud-Dīn ʿAlī Ḳhān. [1747–1751] 1992. *Navādir al-alfāẓ* (Persian). Edited by Sayyid ʿAbdullāh. Karachi: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdu. (First published in 1951.)

Ḳhūb Muḥammad Cistī, Shaiḳh. [1578] 1993. *Ḳhūb tarang* (Urdu). Edited by ʿAlī Jaʿfrī. Gandhi Nagar: Gujarat Urdu Academy.

Ḳhusrau, Amīr Yamīn ud-Dīn. 1916. *Kulliyāt* (Persian). Edited by Ḥāmid Shāhābādī. Kanpur: Naval Kishor Press.

―――. [1317–1318] 1948. *Nūh sipihr* (Persian). Edited by Vaḥīd Mirzā. Calcutta: Oxford University Press, for the Islamic Research Association. (The date given on the English title page is 1949.)

―――. 1967. *Kulliyāt* (Persian). Edited by Anvar ul-Ḥasan. Lucknow: Naval Kishor Press.

―――. [1294] 1975. *Dībāchah-i ghurrat al-kamāl* (Persian). Edited by Vazīr ul-Ḥasan ʿĀbidī. Lahore: National Book Foundation.

King, Christopher. 1994. *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Krishnamoorthy, K. 1985. *Indian Literary Theories.* Delhi: Meharchand Kishan Das.

Kunjunni Raja, K. [1963] 1995. *Indian Theories of Meaning.* Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre.

Lewis, Franklin D. 1995. "Reading, Writing, and Recitation: Sanāʾi and the Origins of the Persian Ghazal." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

Madanī, Ẓahīr ud-Dīn. 1981. *Suḳhanvarān-e gujarāt* (Urdu). New Delhi: Bureau for the Promotion of Urdu, Government of India.

―――. 1990. *Gujrī maṡnaviyāñ* (Urdu). Gandhi Nagar: Gujarat Urdu Academy.

Maktabah Jāmiʿa. [1939?]. *Hindūstānī kyā hai* (Urdu). New Delhi: Maktabah Jāmiʿa.

McGregor, R. S. 1993. *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mīr, Muḥammad Taqī. [1783] 1928. *Zikr-i Mīr* (Persian). Edited by Maulvī ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq. Aurangabad: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū.

―――. [1796?] 1968. *Kulliyāt* (Urdu). Edited by Ẓill-e ʿAbbās ʿAbbāsī. Delhi: ʿIlmī Majlis.

―――. [1752] 1972. *Nikāt al-shuʿarā* (Persian). Edited by Maḥmūd Ilāhī. Delhi: Idārah-e Taṣnīf.

Mīr Amman. [1804] 1992. *Bāġh o bahār* (Urdu). Edited by Rashīd Ḥasan Ḳhān. New Delhi: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū, Hind.

Mīr Ḥasan. [1774–1778] 1922. *Tazkirah-i shuʿarā* (Persian). Edited by Maulvī Ḥabīb ur-Raḥmān Khān Sharvānī. Aligarh: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdu.

Muḥammad ʿAufī. [1220–1227] 1954 (1333 *shamsī*). *Lubāb al-albāb* (Persian). Edited by E. G. Browne and Mirzā ʿAbd ul-Vahhāb Qazvinī. Teheran: n.p.

Muṣḥafī, Shaikh Ghulām Hamadānī. [1794–1795] 1933. *Tażkirah-e Hindī* (Persian). Edited by Maulvī ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq. Aurangabad: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū.

———. [1785] 1967. *Kulliyāt* (Urdu). Vol. 1. Edited by Nūr ul-Ḥasan Naqvī. Delhi: Majlis-e Ishāʿat-e Adab.

———. [1796] 1969. *Kulliyāt* (Urdu). Vol. 2. Edited by Ḥafīẓ ʿAbbāsī. Delhi: Majlis-e Ishāʿat-e Adab.

———. [1796] 1971. *Kulliyāt* (Urdu). Vol. 3. Edited by Nūr ul-Ḥasan Naqvī. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

———. [1878] 1990. *Dīvān-e Muṣḥafī* (Urdu). Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library.

———. 1995. *Dīvān-e Muṣḥafī* (Urdu). Edited by ʿĀbid Riżā Bedār. Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library.

Naim, C. M., trans and ed. 1999. *Żikr-e Mīr: An Eighteenth-Century Autobiography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Nājī, Muḥammad Shākir. 1989. *Dīvān-e shākir nājī* (Urdu). Edited by Iftikhār Begam Ṣiddīqī. New Delhi: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdu, Hind.

Nāsikh, Shaikh Imām Bakhsh. 1847. *Kulliyāt* (Urdu). Lucknow: Maṭbaʿ-e Maulāʾī.

Naṣīr, Shāh Naṣīr ud-Dīn. 1971. *Kulliyāt* (Urdu). Vol. 1. Edited by Tanvīr Aḥmad ʿAlavī. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

Navīdī, ʿĀlim Ṣabā. 1994. *Maulānā bāqar āgāh ke adabī navādir* (Urdu). Madras: Tamil Nadu Urdu Publications.

Niẓāmī, Fakhr-e Dīn. [1421–1434] 1979. *Maṡnavī kadam rāʾo padam rāʾo* (Urdu). Edited by Jamīl Jālibī. Delhi: Educational Publishing House.

Nuṣratī Bījāpūrī. 1959. *ʿAlī nāmah* (Urdu). Edited by ʿAbd ul-Majīd Ṣiddīqī. Hyderabad: Salar Jung Dakani Publishing Committee.

Oxford English Dictionary: The Compact Oxford Dictionary, Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically. 1993. London: Oxford University Press.

Petievich, Carla R. 1992. *Assembly of Rivals*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Platts, John T. [1884] 1974. *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī, and English.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Premchand. 1983. *Sāhitya kā uddeshya* (Hindi). Allahabad: Hants Prakāshan.

———. 1997. *Premchand: kuchh vicār* (Hindi). Allahabad: Sarasvatī Press.

Pritchett, Frances W. 1994. *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Qāʾim Chāndpūrī. 1965. *Kulliyāt-e qāʾim* (Urdu). Vol. 1. Edited by Iqtidā Ḥasan. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

———. [1754] 1968. *Makhzan-e nikāt*. Edited, abridged, and translated into Urdu in *Tīn tażkire,* by ʿAṭā Kākvī (original in Persian). Patna: ʿAzīm ush-Shān Book Depot.

Rāhī Fidāʾī. 1997. *Dār ul-ʿulūm laṭīfiyah velūr kā adabī manẓar nāmah* (Urdu). Cuddappah: Abul Hassan Academy.

Robinson, Francis. 1974. *Separatism among Indian Muslims*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rocher, Rosane. 1983. *Orientalism, Poetry, and the Millennium: The Checkered Life of Nathaniel Brassey Halhed 1751–1830*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Saksena, Babu Ram. 1952. *Dakkhinī Hindī* (Hindi). Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.

Saksena, Ram Babu. 1941. *Tārīkh-e adab-e urdū* (Urdu). Translated by Mirzā Muḥammad ʿAskarī. Lucknow: Naval Kishor Press. (Originally composed in English as *History of Urdu Literature.*)

Schimmel, Annemarie. 1975. *Classical Urdu Literature from the Beginning to Iqbal.* Vol. 8, fasc. 3 of *History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Sengupta, Sagaree. 1994. "Kṛṣṇa the Cruel Beloved: Harishchandra and Urdu." *Annual of Urdu Studies* 9: 133–52.

Shafīq Aurangābādī, Lachmi Narāʾn. [1762] 1968. *Chamanistān-e shuʿarā* (Urdu). Edited, abridged, and translated into Urdu in *Tīn tażkire,* by ʿAṯā Kākvī (original in Persian). Patna: ʿAzīm ush-Shān Book Depot.

Shāh ʿĀlam II. [1792–1793] 1965. *ʿAjāʾib ul-qiṣaṣ* (Urdu). Edited by Rāhat Afzā Buḵẖārī. Lahore: Majlis Tarqqī-e Adab.

Shāh Ḥātim. [1755–1756] 1975. *Dīvān zādah* (Preface only; in Persian). Edited by Ġhulām Ḥusain Żuʾlfiqār. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

———. 1991. *Intiḵẖāb-e kalām-e ḥātim* (Urdu). Edited by ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq. New Delhi: Delhi Urdu Academy.

Shams ul-luġhāt. [1804–1805] 1891–1892. Bombay: Maṭbaʿ-e Fatḥ ul-Karīm.

Sherānī, Ḥāfiẓ Maḥmūd. 1966. *Maqālāt-e sherānī* (Urdu). 2 vols. Edited by Maẕhar Maḥmūd Sherānī. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

Shukla, Wagish. 1997. Review of *The Nationalization of Hindi Traditions,* by Vasudha Dalmia. *The Book Review* (New Delhi) (October): 20.

Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, Navāb. 1876. *Shamʿa-i anjuman* (Persian). Bhopal: Maṭbaʿ-e Shāhjahānī.

Siddiqi, M. Atique. 1963. *Origins of Modern Hindustani Literature: Source Material: Gilchrist Letters.* Aligarh: published by the author.

Ṣiddīqī, Ẕafar Aḥmad. 1995. "*Ābrū kā īhām*" (Urdu). *Shabkhūn* 188 (November): 47–54.

Sirāj Aurangābādī. [1940] 1982. *Kulliyāt* (Urdu). Edited by ʿAbd ul-Qādir Sarvarī. New Delhi: Bureau for the Promotion of Urdu, Government of India.

Suḵẖan Dihlavī, Faḵẖr ud-Dīn. [1859] 1918. *Sarosh-e suḵẖan* (Urdu). Lucknow: Naval Kishor Press.

Sulaimān Nadvī, Maulānā Sayyid. 1939. *Nuqūsh-e sulaimānī* (Urdu). Azamgarh: Maʿārif Press.

Surūr, Rajab ʿAlī Beg. [1843] 1990. *Fasānah-e ʿajāʾib* (Urdu). Edited by Rashīd Ḥasan Khān. New Delhi: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū (Hind).

Tamannā Aurangābādī. [1780–1781] 1936. *Gul-i ʿajāʾib* (Persian). Edited by Maulvī ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq. Aurangabad: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū.

Tara Chand. 1944. *The Problem of Hindustani.* Allahabad: Indian Periodicals Limited.

Tewary, R. S. 1984. *A Critical Approach to Classical Indian Poetics.* Varanasi: Chaukhamba Orientalia.

Todorov, Tzvetan. 1986. *Symbolism and Interpretation.* Translated by Katherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Vajʾhī, Mulla. [1609–1610] 1991. *Quṯb mushtarī* (Urdu). Edited by Tayyab Ansārī. Gulbarga: Maktabah-e Rifāh-e ʿĀm.

Valī Gujarātī. [1945] 1996. *Kulliyāt-e Valī* (Urdu). Edited by Nūr ul-Ḥasan Hāshmī. Lahore: Al Vaqar Publications.

Willatt, Major J. 1941. *A Text Book of Urdu in Roman Script Delhi:* Oxford University Press.

Yaktā, Aḥad ʿAlī K̲h̲ān. [1798] 1943. *Dastūr al-faṣāḥat* (Persian). Edited by Imtiyāz ʿAlī K̲h̲ān Arshī. Rampur: Raẓā Library.

Yule, Henry, and A. C. Burnell. [1886] 1986. *Hobson-Jobson, A Glossary Of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical, and Discursive.* Delhi: Rupa & Co. (Reprint of revised edition, 1902.)

Zaidi, Ali Jawad. 1970. *Do adabī iskūl* (Urdu). Lucknow: Nasīm Book Depot.

———. 1993. *A History of Urdu Literature.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademy.

A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 2

Histories, Performances, and Masters

Frances W. Pritchett

Like almost all other Urdu literary genres, the *taẓkirah* (anthology) tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was taken over from Persian; in fact, until well into the nineteenth century most *taẓkirah*s of Urdu poetry were themselves written in Persian.[1] Etymologically, *taẓkirah* is derived from an Arabic root meaning "to mention, to remember." Historically, the literary *taẓkirah* grows out of the ubiquitous little "notebook" *(bayāẓ)* that lovers of poetry carried around with them for recording verses that caught their fancy. A typical notebook would include some verses by its owner and others by poets living and dead, both Persian and Urdu. More serious—or more organized—students might compile notebooks devoted only to certain kinds of poetry: to the work of living poets, for example, or the finest poets, or poets from a particular city, or women poets, or poets in a certain genre. There were a great many occasional poets, but only a few of them had become "possessors of a volume" *(ṣāḥib-e dīvān)* by collecting a substantial body of their own poetry and arranging it for dissemination in manuscript form. Compilers of notebooks were thus often moved to perform a public service by sharing their work with a wider circle. With the addition of a certain amount—sometimes a very small amount—of introductory or identifying information about the poets, a notebook could become a *taẓkirah. Taẓkirah*s circulated in manuscript form, and as printing presses became more common in north India they gradually began to be printed as well.[2]

1. It should be kept in mind, however, that the first *taẓkirah*s of *Persian* poetry were Indian: they were composed in Sindh in the early thirteenth century. See Alam, chapter 2, this volume. The transliteration scheme employed here is that of Pritchett 1994.

2. Khan 1991.

Since *tazkirah*s both define and embody the parameters of this literary culture, they are excellent tools with which to understand it. They can illustrate for us its highly formalized, remarkably coherent vision of poetry. By no coincidence, Urdu criticism—that is, literary criticism of Urdu literature written in Urdu—has adopted over the last century the term "classical" *(klāsīkī)* as a rubric for the poetry of this period. For the purposes of this essay, then, and to avoid definitional ambiguities, "classical" refers to the poetry created by this literary culture in north India between the early eighteenth century and the late nineteenth century. The poets of this literary culture were conscious of sharing both a vocabulary of inherited forms (genres, meters, themes, imagery) and a set of authoritative ancestors to be emulated (certain earlier Persian and Urdu poets); they were committed to mastering and augmenting a single, much-cherished canon, so that the memorization of thousands of Urdu and Persian verses lay at the heart of their training. They even shared, as we will see, an unusually codified approach to poetic practice: a formidable apprenticeship system to which much importance was given and an institutionalized set of regular gatherings for recitation and discussion. All these elements were already fully present—albeit still somewhat new—by the time of the first three *tazkirah*s (1752) and were present still—albeit somewhat on the decline—at the time of the last *tazkirah* (1880).[3] Both before the early eighteenth century and after the late nineteenth century, the absence of not just some but most of the elements in this cluster is equally striking. The sudden, seemingly full-fledged appearance of this literary culture, and then its relatively abrupt and thoroughgoing disappearance, give it clearly marked boundaries; it thus becomes, for comparative purposes, a very suitable case study.

All the *tazkirah*s document and record this literary culture—but not, of course, always in the same way. Their origin in the ubiquitous personal "notebook" explains one of their most conspicuous traits: their individuality, their insouciance, the insistence of each one on defining its own approach to its own group of poets. These idiosyncrasies can be clearly seen in their various styles of organization. Although the majority arrange their contents in alphabetical order by the first letter of each poet's pen name—and thus are emphatically ahistorical—this scheme is by no means universal; no fewer than twenty out of the sixty-eight or so surviving *tazkirah*s adopt other systems. The earliest three *tazkirah*s, all completed in 1752, present their poets in a largely random order. The fourth, completed only months later in 1752, is alphabetical. The compiler of the fifth, completed in 1754–1755 but begun

3. The fact that two of the three earliest *tazkirah*s claim to be the first *tazkirah* of Urdu poets makes it probable that we are indeed seeing the beginning of the genre, rather than simply its earliest surviving examples. However, early *tazkirah*s also refer to *other* early *tazkirah*s not now extant (Akbar Ḥaidarī Kashmīrī 1995: 13).

as early as 1744, already felt able to present the poets in an "early, middle, late" sequence.[4]

In this study I examine two *tazkirah*s in some detail, within the context of their tradition; I also consider the kinds of attack to which they have been subject since the death of their literary culture. These two *tazkirah*s are opposite enough in certain respects to reveal the whole range of the genre. The first is very early and helps to define its tradition; the second is quite late and shows us the literary culture in its fullest flower. The first works selectively and haphazardly; the second is encyclopedic and tightly organized. The first is acerbic, sharp, austere, authoritative; the second is casual, snobbish, gossipy, conventional in its judgments. The first is famous for pronouncements; the second, for anecdotes. The first grapples with questions of origin; the second is intensely present-minded. Both make legitimate claims to linguistic and literary innovation. And beneath the level of their differences, both reveal the contours of the same brilliantly accomplished literary culture, and show its trajectory during the two centuries of its creative life.

MĪR'S *TAZKIRAH*

Among the earliest group of three *tazkirah*s, one stands out as the first *tazkirah* par excellence. It opened up the tradition as decisively as *Āb-e ḥayāt* (Water of life, 1880), the last *tazkirah* and the first literary history, eventually closed it down. This primal *tazkirah, Nikāt al-shuʿarā* (Fine points about the poets, 1752), is a literary as well as historical document of the first magnitude. In it, one of the two greatest poets of the tradition, Muḥammad Taqī "Mīr" (1722–1810), gives us not only his selection of poets worth mentioning but also literary judgments about the nature and quality of their work, often illustrated with "corrections" *(iṣlāḥ)* that he felt would improve individual verses.

Mīr is well aware that he stands near the beginning of a tradition. He introduces his *tazkirah* on that basis:

> Let it not remain hidden that in the art of *reḵhtah*—which is poetry of the Persian style in the language of the exalted city [*urdū-e muʿallā,* lit. "exalted encampment"] of Shāhjahānābād in Delhi—until now no book has been composed through which the circumstances *[ḥāl]* of the poets of this art would remain on the page of the time. Therefore this *tazkirah,* of which the name is *Nikāt al-shuʿarā,* is being written.
>
> Although *reḵhtah* is from the Deccan, nevertheless, since no writer of tightly connected *[marbūṭ]* poetry has arisen from that region, their names have not been placed at the beginning. And the temperament of this inadequate one [the author] is also not inclined in such a direction, for [recording] the cir-

4. Farmān Fātḥpūrī 1972: 93–133.

cumstances of a number of them would be bothersome. Still, the circumstances of some of them will be recorded, God Most High willing.

I hope that whichever connoisseur of poetry *[ṣāḥib-e suḵẖan]* this book reaches will bestow on it a glance of favor.[5]

Mīr thus begins by pithily defining *reḵẖtah* (mixed), the commonest name in his time for what we now call "Urdu" poetry: *reḵẖtah* is poetry made by shaping Delhi urban language in the literary mold of Persian.[6]

After this definition, however, Mīr must deal with an uncomfortable fact: the existence of at least several centuries' worth of "Dakani" Urdu poetry composed in the Deccan (in Golconda and Bijapur) and elsewhere (notably, in Gujarat).[7] Within a few brief sentences Mīr performs several contortions as he seeks to explain how he has dealt with the Dakani poets. *Reḵẖtah*—the poetry, not the language itself—is "from" *(az)* the Deccan, he acknowledges. However, no writer of "tightly connected" *(marbūṯ)* poetry (a term we will examine later) has appeared there. Therefore he has not given Dakani poetry pride of place in his *taẕkirah*. Moreover, he himself is not a researcher by temperament; thus he is not inclined to trouble himself (or his readers?) with a systematic study of these second-rate poets. Still, he plans to include "some of them."

Mīr does indeed include a fair number of Dakani poets; almost a third of the 105 poets in his *taẕkirah* are southerners. One such Dakani poet was ʿAbd ul-Valī ʿUzlat, a personal friend whose "notebook" Mīr gratefully mined for information (87–102). But for over two-thirds of the Dakani poets he includes, Mīr gives little or no biographical information and records only a verse or two. Plainly Dakani poets are quite numerous, but Mīr does not know—and obviously does not want to know—much about them. They cannot be omitted, but neither are they fully accepted as peers, much less ancestors.[8]

Mīr's complaint that most Dakani poets do not write "tightly connected" poetry shows that he was thinking chiefly of the *ġhazal,* which in any case was by far the most important genre in his literary culture. The *ġhazal* was incorporated, along with so much else, from Persian; but once again, to give the picture its due complexity, it should be noted that one of the very ear-

---

5. Mīr [1935] 1979: 9. Further references to this text are given parenthetically.

6. The later—and clearly tendentious—British misunderstanding of the term *urdū-e muʿallā* as "army camp" instead of "royal court" is discussed by Faruqi in chapter 14, this volume.

7. Zaidi 1993: 36–55; Faruqi, chapter 14, this volume.

8. Some of the contours of this vexed relationship have been mapped by Petievich 1990, 1999; and by Faruqi in chapter 14, this volume. Their explorations of these complex regional and cultural tensions, though inevitably speculative at times, perform an invaluable service, opening up crucial, long-ignored areas of literary and cultural history, and showing the kinds of research that must be done before we can claim any adequate historical understanding of the situation.

liest important founders of *Persian ġhazal,* Masʿūd-e Saʿd Salmān (c. 1046–1121), was a Ghaznavid court poet in Lahore.[9] The *ġhazal* is a brief lyric poem, generally romantic and/or mystical in tone, evoking the moods of a passionate lover separated from his beloved. Each two-line verse *(shiʿr)* of the *ġhazal* was in the same strictly determined Perso-Arabic syllabic meter, and the second line of each verse ended with a rhyming syllable *(qāfiyah),* followed by an optional (but very common) refrain *(radīf)* one or more syllables long. To set the pattern in oral performance, the first verse usually included the rhyming element(s) at the end of both lines. The last verse usually included the pen name *(taḳhalluṣ)* of the poet. Each verse was semantically independent, so that the unit of recitation, quotation, and analysis was almost always the individual two-line verse, not the whole *ġhazal.*[10] This independence made the *marbūṭ* quality of each verse an obvious criterion for critical judgment.

In the conclusion to his *tazkirah,* Mīr carefully delineates the contours of this *ġhazal*-centered literary universe. He divides *reḳhtah* into six types: first, verses in which one line is Persian and one Urdu; second, verses in which half of each line is Persian and half Urdu; third, verses in which Persian verbs and particles are used, a "detestable" practice; fourth, verses in which Persian grammatical structures *(tarkīb)* are brought in, a dubious practice to be adopted only within strict limits; fifth, verses based on *īhām,* the use of "a word fundamental to the verse, [in which] that word should have two meanings, one obvious and one remote, and the poet should intend the remote meaning, not the obvious one." The sixth and last type, "the style that I have adopted," is "based on the use of 'all verbal devices' *[ṣanʿat].*" Mīr explains: "By all verbal devices is meant alliteration; metrical and semantic parallelism in rhymed phrases *[tarṣīʿ];* simile; limpidity of diction; eloquent word choice *[faṣāḥat];* rhetoric *[balāġhat];* portrayals of love affairs *[adā bandī];* imagination *[ḳhiyāl];* and so on" (161).

The first four of these categories consist of verses so closely bound to Persian that they contain whole chunks of the language, or at least incorporate its grammatical forms and structures. Poetry like this represents *reḳhtah*'s earliest history: Mīr attributes occasional macaronic verses of the first type to Amīr Ḳhusrau (1253–1325), the poet to whom he gives pride of place—in lieu of the Dakani poets—by putting him first in the *tazkirah* (10). The fifth category describes a specialized form of punning that had been highly fashionable in Mīr's youth; after its particular vogue had passed, it was destined to remain, along with other forms of wordplay, central to the technical repertoire.

Mīr reserves his sixth category for himself; and in his own poetry he wants

---

9. Lewis 1995: 58.
10. Pritchett 1993.

to have it all. He claims to use in his work the whole available repertoire of verbal devices and techniques. The subtlety and complexity of his poetry have recently been analyzed with a sophistication of which he would certainly have approved.[11] And as we have seen, Mīr particularly values poetry with complex internal connectedness; his primary reproach against Dakani poets is that they fail to create it. Later in the *tazkirah* he returns with special emphasis to this point, acknowledging that there are a few exceptions but repeating his scornful assertion that most Dakanis are "poets of no standing" who merely "go on writing verses" without knowing how to make them *marbūṭ*. About one verse by a Dakani poet he complains even more sarcastically, "The relationship between the two lines of this verse—praise be to God, there's not a trace!" (87, 91).

Mīr in his *tazkirah* outlines the terrain of his own literary culture not merely theoretically, but historically and practically as well. He is highly aware of poetic lineages: where possible, he always names the *ustād*s of the poets he includes. The *ustād-shāgird,* or master-pupil, relationship was a systematically cultivated and much-cherished part of the north Indian Urdu tradition— and, apparently, of no other *ghazal* tradition, including the Indo-Persian.[12] This apprenticeship system transmitted over time a command of the technical repertoire of verbal devices, as exemplified in verses from the classical poetic canon. At the heart of the system was the process of "correction" by which the *ustād* improved the *shāgird*'s poetry. It appears that in practice the most common kind of correction involved changing only a word or two, and that the chief goal of such changes was generally to make the two lines of the verse more tightly connected.[13]

Mīr also attaches much importance to another institution that is especially— though not uniquely, since Persian and especially Indo-Persian examples have been reported—characteristic of the north Indian Urdu tradition: the *mushā'irah,* or regular gathering for poetic recitation and discussion.[14] Mīr himself hosted one such *mushā'irah* and carefully recorded in his *tazkirah* the manner in which this came about. The poet Mīr "Dard" (1721–1785), whom Mīr venerated as a Sufi master, handed it over to him:

> And the poetic gathering for *rekhtah* at this servant's house that is regularly fixed for the fifteenth day of each month, in reality is attached and affiliated only to him. For before that, this gathering used to be fixed at his house. Through the revolving of unstable time, that gathering was broken up. Thus, since he had heartfelt love for this unworthy one, he said, "If you fix this gath-

11. Fārūqī 1990–1994.

12. Faruqi advances a thoughtful hypothesis about how this unique *ustād-shāgird* institution came about. See Faruqi, chapter 14, this volume.

13. Ṣafdar Mirzāpūrī [1918, 1928] 1992.

14. Zaidī 1992.

ering for your house, it will be a good thing." Keeping in mind the love of this gracious one, it was thus arranged. (50)

Even at this early stage *mushāʿirah*s must have been omnipresent, for Mīr casually mentions several others. "Four or five years ago there used to be a gathering of *reḳhtah* companions at Jaʿfar ʿAlī Ḳhān's house—God knows what happened that caused it to break up"; "In the old days, for several months he [the poet 'Kāfir'] had fixed a gathering for *reḳhtah* at his house; finally his rakish habits caused it to break up"; "I used to see him [the poet 'ʿĀjiz'] in Ḥāfiẓ Ḥalīm's *mushāʿirah*" (127, 135–36).

This latter instance seems to be almost the only time Mīr actually uses the word *mushāʿirah* for such sessions; usually there is some general term for "gathering" *(majlis; jalsah;* more rarely, *majmaʿ),* and once he even experiments with *murāḳhitah*—which, he explains, has been devised to refer to a gathering for *reḳhtah* "on the analogy of *mushāʿirah*" (since the latter term refers to a gathering for poetry *[shiʿr]* in general, 134). The institution thus plainly antedates the fixing of its name: there were well-established *mushāʿirah*s before there was even a well-established name for them. While many South Asian literary cultures have featured occasional gatherings for literary performance (e.g., the *goṣṭhī* in Malayalam, the *araṅkēṟṟam* in Tamil, the *kavigān* in Bangla), and a few have even had regular ones (e.g., the kind sponsored by Vastupāla in thirteenth-century Gujarat), these have generally been under the control of a courtly patron or outside authority. Urdu *mushāʿirah*s, however, even when sponsored by patrons, have been largely controlled by the poets themselves, and have had, as we will see, many of the features of technical workshops.

THE EXEMPLARY SAJJĀD

One of Mīr's favorite poets, and a personal friend as well, was called Sajjād (d. 1806?). In describing Sajjād, Mīr reveals many facets of his own understanding of *reḳhtah* and its proper practice:

> Mīr Sajjād is from Akbarābād [Agra]; he is a seeker of knowledge, has ability, and is an excellent poet of *reḳhtah*. He is a *shāgird* of Miyāñ Ābrū, and uses the pen-name "Sajjād." He is a very good man, and his poetry has already arrived at the level of *ustād*-ship: it is extremely well composed, and possesses themes *[maʿnī]*. His speech is not that of just anybody. When a piece of white paper is placed before him, then his colorful thought becomes the shadow of the [fertilizing] rain cloud on the garden of searching [for new themes]. Enjoyable construction *[bandish]* is a servant to his every line. His every verse in a short meter runs a razor across the liver; the language of his expression, in its refinedness, is the jugular vein of poetry. Injustice is another thing; otherwise [to the fair-minded] the depth *[tahdārī]* of his poetry is manifest. To anyone who knows

his hair-splitting temperament, his verse is coiled and burnt, like a hair touched by flame.

Formerly there used to be at his house a gathering of friends and a *reḳhtah*-recitation assembly. This servant too used to go. For the present, because of some misfortunes our meetings have been somewhat reduced, from both sides. May God keep him well. (60)[15]

According to Mīr, a good verse is intellectually piquant: it shows a mastery over great "hordes" of themes, and it arranges them to create fresh effects. It is vividly imagined: a colorful mind-born garden is made to bloom on the white page. It is tightly constructed: every line is inventive and is enjoyably presented. It is powerful as a razor—literally, a surgical lancet—on flesh, and delicate as the jugular vein. To ascribe to the poet a "hair-splitting temperament" is actually a compliment to his subtlety and fine powers of discrimination. His verses are "coiled"—convoluted, complex, full of multiple meanings—and also "burnt," like the suffering heart of the archetypal lover. Intellectually piquant, vividly imagined, tightly constructed, emotionally powerful, layered with "coiled" and intertwined meanings—this, in Mīr's eyes, is the ideal *ġhazal* verse.

Here we also see Mīr displaying his own love for subtle, elegant wordplay. Although he is writing—in Persian—what we would think of as critical or analytical commentary, he conveys his meaning by playing with metaphors that themselves are directly part of the *ġhazal* universe. And in a markedly belletristic way, he creates constant echoes and resonances in his own prose. For example, Mīr praises Sajjād for his sophisticated literary sensibility by attributing to him a "hair-splitting" *(mū shigāf)* temperament. Then he describes his poetry as multilayered, convoluted, "coiled" *(pechdār);* and also as emotionally intense—passionate and pain-filled, literally, "burnt" *(soḳhtah),* like the archetypal lover's heart. Both of these qualities are captured when he calls Sajjād's verse a "hair touched by flame" *(mū-i ātash dīdah):* As everyone in the *ġhazal* world knows, a hair singed by a flame will instantly form a tight curl, and the curl itself will be dark and ashy. Such use of a series of words drawn from the same domain, while conducting discourse of an ostensibly unrelated kind, is a form of elegance much valued in the medieval Persian prose tradition. Since it is supererogatory, it feels luxurious and aristocratic: it gives the mind two (or more) pleasures for the price of one.

After this introduction, Mīr provides us with many samples of Sajjād's poetry. Most of them, of course, are single verses or selected small groups of

---

15. I am grateful to Shamsur Rahman Faruqi for help in interpreting this and other examples of Mīr's difficult Persian, and for many other kinds of advice and counsel about this paper. Faruqi's work shows that the word *maʿnī,* literally "meaning," here refers to what later came to be called *mażmūn,* or "theme" (Fārūqī 1997: 14–25).

verses rather than whole *ġhazal*s. With the very first such sample Mīr offers us his own "correction" as well. It involves, as many corrections do, a change in a single word, and it seeks to tighten the verse internally. Sajjād's verse, followed by Mīr's comment, is:

> Don't demand your deserts from these infidel idols, for here if anyone
> Dies of their tyranny then they say justice was done.[16]

Although false *[bāṭil]* is false, nevertheless in the first line, in place of "infidel" *[kāfir],* according to the belief of this *faqīr,* the word "false" *[bāṭil]* is true *[ḥaq].* (60)

The beloved, in *ġhazal* convention, is well-known to be an idol: beautiful, cruel, demanding, treacherous, a false god who diverts one's attention from the true God.[17]

Mīr's words here have two dimensions. *Bāṭil* (false, vain) in the first line would be a better adjective for "idols," since it would doubly echo the "true" in the second line: *ḥaq* has a range of meanings, including truth, justice, and God. This pairing of opposites would increase the *marbūṭ* quality of the verse, thus enhancing its excellence. But Mīr is also showing once again his own delight in clever wordplay: he is using a form of allusive double meaning *(ẓilaᶜ)* much appreciated in the medieval Persian literary tradition. Since the verse is about true and false religious faith, justice and injustice, his word choices are similarly focused. He makes a point of playing with paradox: instead of saying that the word "false" is more suitable, he says that although "false is false," nevertheless "false is true." And he introduces religious double meanings by contrasting "false" with *ḥaq,* "truth, justice, God." Appropriately for the domain of meaning, he refers to himself as "this *faqīr*" and speaks of his literary judgment as his "belief." Even as he uses language analytically, he uses it playfully and creatively as well.

MĪR AND YAQĪN

Mīr not only gives us the exemplary Sajjād, he presents an anti-hero as well: the poet Inᶜāmullāh Ḳhān "Yaqīn" (1727?–1755). Yaqīn "has compiled a *dī-vān* and is very famous," as Mīr acknowledges; his *ustād* was the prestigious Mirzā "Maẓhar." Moreover, his late father was humane, sociable, hospitable, poetically inclined, and a personal friend of Mīr's. How then, Mīr implies, can the son have gone so wrong? "People have told me that Mirzā Maẓhar used to compose verses and give them to him, and he counted them as his

---

16. *kāfir butoñ se dād nah chāho kih yāñ koʾī / mar jā sitam se un ke to kahte haiñ ḥaq huʾā.*

17. Here as always, the beloved is grammatically masculine, very probably to achieve a "desirable state of nonparticularity" (Ḥālī [1893] 1969: 133) and abstraction.

own legacy." This Mīr finds hard to believe—he is even "inclined to laugh"—because "everything else can be inherited except poetry" (80–81).

He then proceeds to denigrate Yaqīn's character and abilities as thoroughly as possible. Yaqīn surrounds himself with flatterers: "To make a long story short, he has taken up some petty and worthless people [as admirers]—if you and I wanted, we too could take up such people." He is arrogant: "He thinks so highly of himself that in his presence even the pride of Pharaoh would appear as humility." And his incompetence is manifest, for "on meeting this person you instantly realize that he has absolutely no taste in the understanding of poetry," and in fact "everyone agrees" that his poetry "is not free of flaws." Mīr can even offer proof: he reports that the poet "Ṣāqib" once went to Yaqīn's house "only to test him," and "fixed the pattern for a *ghazal*" to be composed on the spot by both poets. The result? Ṣāqib "composed a whole *ghazal* in good order—and not even a single line of verse from *him!*" (80–81).

Mīr's primary accusation, bolstered by snide anecdotes, is direct and highly insulting—that Yaqīn simply appropriated his *ustād* Maẓhar's verses and claimed them as his own (the accusation seems to have been quite false). While such behavior in a senior poet was unforgivable, more subtle kinds of appropriation were a major source of tension within the tradition. The corpus of Persian *ghazal* was immense and prestigious and was constantly being augmented by contemporary Indo-Persian poets. What if a poet in effect translated (or perhaps "transcreated") a Persian verse into Urdu? If this happened deliberately, it was "plagiarism" *(sarqah)* and was held to be culpable. But what if such duplication happened accidentally? Then it was a case of "coincidence" *(tavārud),* in which parallel thought processes applied to the same material led to similar results. Such cases were an inevitable result of the way *ghazal* poetry worked. The semantically independent, internally unified, metrically tight verses were ideally designed for memorization. Poets were trained in part by memorizing literally thousands of such (Persian and Urdu) verses. Since the individual two-line verses were not semantically bound to the particular *ghazal* in which they occurred, they required a great deal of prior knowledge on the part of the audience. This knowledge included a map of the interrelated, metaphorically based "themes"—usually called *mazmūn,* though sometimes the term *maʿnī* was used—that constituted the *ghazal* universe.[18] The sharing of these themes meant that poets were always echoing or evoking (if not on the verge of "plagiarizing") each other's verses.

Mīr then shows us an example of such interrelated themes: two verses that share their basic imagery, but not culpably. One of Yaqīn's opening verses,

---

18. "Themes" is of course an unsatisfactorily broad translation for *mazmūn.* Cf. n. 15.

included among the samples of his poetry, reminds Mīr of one of his own. But the two make very different use of their basic thematic matter. Mīr cites the two verses side by side:

> This utterance of a naked madman *[majnūn]* pleases me—
> How long can one always keep on ripping? I've passed beyond my collar.[19]

This *faqīr* has a verse very near to this one, with almost the same theme *[maʿnī],* and in my opinion it is better in quality:

> Rip upon rip appeared, as fast as I had them sewn up—
> Now I've washed my hands of my collar itself. (86)[20]

The very word for madness, *junūn,* evokes Majnūn (the "mad one," lit. the "*jinn*-possessed"), the classic mad lover of Arabic-Persian-Turkish-Urdu literary tradition. And with the theme of madness we are at the heart of the *ghazal*'s system of imagery: the lover, if not always mad, is always on the verge of madness.

For the *ghazal* is always exploring borderline cases—and, in the process, playing with borderlines. The *ghazal* looks for borderlines in order to transgress them; the *ghazal* poet makes some of his best hay in fields where the wild paradox grows. This is why in the *ghazal* universe there is no coziness, no rootedness, no wives and children, no normalcy or domestic tranquility whatsoever. Instead there is transgression beyond all plausibility. Poets envision themselves as madmen; as drunkards, wastrels, or reprobates; as infidels or apostates from Islam; as criminals facing execution; as mystical seekers claiming direct access to God; as voices speaking from beyond the grave; and as lovers always of forbidden and unsuitable beloveds (courtesans, unavailable ladies in *pardah,* beautiful boys). For as Āzād shrewdly observes in *Āb-e ḥayāt,* "In presenting everyday topics, the impact of the expressive power is extremely weak." By contrast, he says, the use of "matters that are contrary to good manners" creates a kind of "heat and quickness of language"—so that "the urge evoked in the poet's heart mingles with the emotional effect of the poetry to create a little tickle in the armpits even of sleepers."[21]

Ghazal convention prescribes that a mad lover will rip apart the neck-opening of his *kurtā* because he feels himself suffocating and needs more air; he will then proceed to tear at his clothing more generally, because those in grief and despair rend their garments, and because madmen are known to tear their clothes off. Majnūn, as everyone in the *ghazal* world knows, fled

19. *mujhe yih bāt k͟hush āʾī hai ik majnūn-e ʿuryāñ se / kiyā kīje kahāñ tak chāk ham guzre gare-bāñ se.* (Amending *bayābāñ*—in this context obviously a calligraphic error—to *garebāñ,* and *āʾe* to *āʾī.*)

20. *chāk par chāk huʾā jūñ jūñ silāyā ham ne / ab garebān hī se hāth uṭhāyā ham ne.*

21. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 302.

to the wilderness after he lost his beloved Lailā. There he lived quite alone, except for the sympathetic wild animals whom he charmed with his songs of love. He rent his garments until he was virtually naked. Yaqīn's verse imagines an encounter with a naked madman, a "*jinn*-possessed" *(majnūn)* one. The madman complains, "How long can one always keep on ripping?" Beyond the collar, what does one do next?

This noninformative *(inshāʾiyah)* mode of speech, questioning or speculative or exclamatory, is a fundamental device of the *ghazal* and is far more versatile than any factual or informative *(khabariyah)* statement. In fact such *inshāʾiyah* speech is multifaceted in Urdu (and Persian) in a way that can hardly be captured in English, since it is made possible by grammatical simplicities and the absence of punctuation.[22] Such radical multivalence is part of the *ghazal*'s "meaning creation" *(maʿnī āfirīnī)*—its love for extracting the maximum number of meanings from the fewest possible words.

Yaqīn offers us *inshāʾiyah* discourse in the form of a rhetorical question that remains unanswered: How long can one keep ripping one's garment—before what? Before it falls apart into shreds and one is left entirely a "naked madman"? Before one loses patience and tears it off and flings it away? Before one's passion enters a new phase and ripping a garment no longer suffices to express it? Before one reaches a state so transcendent that one no longer attaches any importance to clothing at all? And how does this question fit together with the final brief *khabariyah* statement, "I've passed beyond my collar"? Does he rip other things now? Other garments? His own flesh?

Yaqīn's is not a bad verse, but Mīr is right to prefer his own. He knows that a twist is needed to establish originality—the introduction of some new thought, or even some especially suggestive new word. "A fresh word is equal to a *mazmūn*," as Shāh Jahān's poet laureate Abū Ṭālib "Kalīm" put it.[23] Mīr's verse seems to regard the whole process of garment-ripping in a way more mystified than mystical. He is actually trying to keep the neck-opening of his *kurtā* mended, it seems, but every time he gets a rent stitched up, another one appears. Because he is so absent-minded, so heedless, so lost in his inner desolation, he finds that these rips just seem to happen of themselves, with no indication of the cause. His reaction to the situation is one of bafflement, impatience, and ultimate indifference—he has "lifted his hand from" *(se hāth uṭhānā)* his collar entirely. I have translated this phrase with the comparable English idiom, "wash one's hands of," to show its colloquial meaning: to give up on, to renounce, to abandon all concern for.

Mīr has thus achieved an elegant kind of "meaning-creation": he has arranged for a common phrase to be read both literally and idiomatically—

22. Fārūqī 1993: 23–37; Pritchett 1994: 106–10.
23. Fārūqī 1981: 40.

such that both readings are entirely suitable to the verse, though exactly contrary in meaning. Idiomatically, "I've lifted my hand from my collar" would mean "I've washed my hands of my collar"—I've given up on it, I'm disgusted with it—let it suffer rip after rip, let it need mending, let it fall apart entirely, I don't care what becomes of it! I've abandoned the collar to its fate, and those rips that keep appearing will no doubt finish it off. Literally, however, "I've lifted my hand from my collar" would of course mean "I've ceased to touch my collar"—I'm no longer constantly ripping it open, I'm leaving my collar alone. And the addition of "now" *(ab)* seems to imply a change of state. Perhaps I do dimly realize that it was my hand all along that was causing the rips? If Mīr considers his verse superior to Yaqīn's, this witty and effective play on a common expression is surely a large part of the reason.

There is more to be said about this verse, of course—the small (and almost untranslatable) particle *hī* itself provides a range of possible fresh emphases. This tiny particle can either emphasize ("I've washed my hands of my *collar*") or restrict ("I've washed my hands of my collar *alone*") the word it follows. If it is read emphatically, it adds an expressive note of impatience and even exasperation to the verse. Read as restrictive, however, and with the literal rather than idiomatic form of the phrase, it implies "I'm keeping my hands off *only* my collar"—that is, I will rend the rest of my clothing, and maybe even tear my hair, it is only my especially vulnerable collar from which I will now keep my hands away. But in any case, pity the poor translator! How to convey all these nuances and possibilities in a single English line? Plainly, it cannot be done. Even *hī* itself involves such a wide range of choices: "just," "very," "exactly," "indeed," "truly," "only," "alone," "merely," "solely," "altogether," "outright."[24]

Moreover, these multiple interpretive possibilities are not adventitious or casual: they are absolutely fundamental to the genre. Classical poets generally go out of their way *not* to provide us with any interpretive help in choosing among such multiply arrayed meanings. Not only does nothing in this verse—and nothing we know about Mīr generally—enable us to decisively choose one interpretation out of the range of possibilities; but even worse, everything we know about this verse, and about these poets generally, tells us that they were extremely proud of their ability to lead us into exactly this sort of interpretive bind—and then leave us there. (Which is why the modern tendency among editors to guide our interpretations by inserting Western-style punctuation is such a sad sign of cultural ignorance and loss.) One's mind must be left to ricochet around among the various possibilities without being able to come to any resolution. This undecidability forms part of the piquant and inexhaustible quality of many of the best classical *ġhazal* verses.

24. Platts [1884] 1968: 1243.

MĪR'S ARROGANCE

Mīr felt, however, that such subtleties of poetic analysis were not for just any-one. As we have seen, in his introduction he hoped that not just any random reader but any "connoisseur of poetry" would look on his *tazkirah* with fa-vor. And in his conclusion he warns off outsiders in no uncertain terms: "The meaning of these words the one whom I'm addressing understands; I do not address the common people *[ʿavām]*. What I have written is a warrant *[sanad]* for my friends, it is not for just anybody." He does make some room for other views of poetry: "The field of poetry is wide, and I am well aware of the color/changefulness of the garden of the manifest" (161). But the univer-sality (of using *all* verbal devices) and the complexity (of making verses in-ternally *marbūt*) that he claims as his own appear to relegate other kinds of poetry to a second-class status.

While defining his own poetics Mīr thus makes a strong, if not quite ex-plicit, claim to superiority. The force of that claim is increased by his fear-less and famously impatient literary judgments about other poets. Not only is Yaqīn such a fake that he doesn't have even the smallest trace of poetic understanding, but "Hashmat," too, is a vulgar chatterer who "makes inap-propriate objections to people like us"; and perhaps worst of all, the hapless "ʿUshshāq" ("Lovers"), a Khatrī, not only has a foolish pen name but "com-poses verses of *rekhtah* that are extremely non-*marbūt*" (80, 102, 136). Such pronouncements soon inspired the composition of several other *tazkirah*s, as indignant poets leaped to the defense of those whom Mīr had ignored or slighted.

Mīr's poetic judgments are unaffected by the aristocratic birth, courtly rank, or wealth of those he judges. In his *tazkirah* he includes soldiers, Sufis, and poor men in need of patronage as readily as he does the rich and pow-erful. Mīr also declines to be morally selective: the poet "Ḥātim" is "ignorant" and "arrogant." But never mind: "What do we have to do with such things? He has a lot of poetry—his *dīvān*, up to the letter *mīm*, is in my hands" (75). It is Ḥātim's poetry, not his allegedly deficient character, that is important. Mīr was supremely confident in making such decrees. He was able to lay down the law—and back it with the remarkable quality and impressive quantity of his own verse. He composed six *dīvān*s in his long lifetime, and his fame eclipsed that of nearly all his rivals. The figure of Mīr the irascible purist be-came legendary within the tradition.

For this unique stature Mīr paid an ironic price. In a kind of posthumous co-optation he was made the sponsor of a radical linguistic "Delhi chauvin-ism." Many anecdotes, which were given their canonical form in *Āb-e ḥayāt* and are still widely known, illustrate the curmudgeonly attitudes later at-tributed to him. While traveling to Lucknow Mīr is made to rebuff the friendly chitchat of a commoner who is sharing his oxcart. The commoner says, "Your

Honor, what's the harm? It's a pastime while traveling—we can entertain ourselves a bit with conversation." Mīr replies angrily, "Well, for you it's a pastime; as for me, it corrupts my language!"[25]

In Lucknow itself Mīr is made to snub the local aristocrats even more pointedly than he did his humble traveling companion. When some "nobles and important people of Lucknow" call on him and courteously request him to recite some verses for them, he puts them off repeatedly, at length telling them, "Noble gentlemen, my verses are not such as you will understand."

> Finally, feeling a bit piqued, they said, "Your Honor! We understand the [Persian] poetry of Anvarī and K̲h̲āqānī. Why will we not understand your noble utterance?" Mīr Sahib said, "That's true. But for their poetry commentaries, vocabularies, and dictionaries are available. And for my poetry there is only the idiom of the people of Urdu, or the stairs of the Jāmaʿ Masjid [in Delhi]. And these are beyond your reach."[26]

In this and many similar displays of "Delhi chauvinism," the austere, severe, dignified poet from the venerable but decaying Mughal city is made to look down his nose at Lucknow, which is seen as a lively but frivolous new center of wealth and patronage.

The "Mīr" of later tradition in fact becomes the consummate Dihlavi poet; he is made to insist that one must be an educated, language-conscious, native speaker of upper-class Delhi Urdu before one can become a poet of *reḵhtah*—or even, apparently, genuinely appreciate *reḵhtah*. In view of Mīr's own life, this would have been an extraordinary attitude for him to adopt: after all, he himself, as Carla Petievich points out, "was born in Agra, moved to Delhi when he was nine years old, returned to Agra during the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739, returned to Delhi thereafter, and spent the last thirty years of his life (1781–1810) in Lucknow."[27] Analyzing the "two schools" theory that later became such a commonplace of Urdu critical tradition, Petievich shows that this Delhi-Lucknow polarization is full of cultural, historical, and psychological interest—every kind of interest, in short, except the literary kind.

But of course the Mīr revealed in *Nikāt al-shuʿarā* itself would never have dreamed of taking such a "Delhi chauvinist" stance. The poets he includes in his *tazkirah* come from various cities, yet there is no hint that the native or lifelong Dihlavis are in any way superior to the others. The only outsiders who trouble him are the Dakani poets; and with them, his struggle is never finally resolved. Moreover, it is clear that Mīr did not value the use of "pure" idiom above everything else. His favored poet, Sajjād, once again provides

---

25. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 195–96.
26. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 209.
27. Petievich 1992: 90.

a case in point: in one verse Sajjād takes liberties with an idiomatic expression. Mīr comments: "In an idiom, making such a change is not permissible"; and he quotes the correct expression. Then he continues: "But when a poet obtains masterful usage in poetry, he is forgiven" (70). The real Mīr is interested in Delhi court language not as an end in itself, but for the literary use one can make of it.

The other later, widespread canard about Mīr depicts him as a naively suffering (real-life) lover by temperament, full of pathos, innocence, and simplicity—a poet who placed a supreme value on intense emotional sincerity and disdained all mere wordplay and verbal artifice. This image of Mīr is so patently false that even the few passages from his *tazkirah* that we have examined thus far serve effectively to discredit it. Remarkably, this view persists in many popular and some scholarly quarters, despite the existence of ample evidence to refute it and virtually none (except literal readings of the stylized tropes in certain carefully chosen verses) to back it up. This view forms part of a wider vision of "natural poetry" that came to dominate modern Urdu criticism, most unfortunately for the *ġhazal,* after the shock of 1857 and the end of the *tazkirah* tradition in 1880.[28]

FORT WILLIAM COLLEGE: AN INTERLUDE

Appropriately enough in view of his status, Mīr became the first Urdu poet whose complete works were typeset and printed. The voluminous *Koolliyati Meer Tyqee* (Complete works of Mīr Taqī, 1811), an immense project, was a collaborative effort by no fewer than four editors.[29] The honor of preparing and publishing this work goes, like many other oft-begrudged honors, to Fort William College in Calcutta, which was originally set up in 1800 as a language training institute for British colonial administrators. During its first two decades Fort William published many works designed for use as language textbooks—and perhaps, subliminally at least, as role models. Urdu at this time was like a "lively boy," says *Āb-e ḥayāt,* who "was delighting everyone, in poets' gatherings and the courts of the wealthy, with the mischievous pranks of his youth." Overseeing this boy, however, was a "wise European" who was "seated with a telescope atop the fort of Fort William in Calcutta." This European "looked—and his hawk-like glance deduced that the boy was promising, but needed training."[30]

Since the Urdu *ġhazal* tradition was so well established by the beginning

28. On this extremely distorted image of Mīr, see Pritchett 1979; for an example of the persistence of this view, see Russell and Islam 1968, and Russell 1992; on "natural poetry" and modern Urdu criticism, see Ḥālī [1893] 1969.

29. Das 1978: 159

30. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 24.

of the nineteenth century, for Fort William to publish its great master Mīr no doubt seemed an obvious choice. Far more characteristically innovative was the publishing of a *taẕkirah* of Urdu poets written in Urdu instead of Persian, under the sponsorship of Fort William's "professor of the Hindoostanee language," the redoubtable John Borthwick Gilchrist.[31] This work was compiled by Ḥaidar Baḵẖsh "Ḥaidarī," a regular Fort William "moonshee" (*munshī,* or scribe) who taught, wrote, and prepared textbooks for the students' use; it was published as part of a larger work, *Guldastah-e ḥaidarī* (Ḥaidarī's anthology), in 1803. Another similar, though much shorter, *taẕkirah* in Urdu was prepared at almost the same time by Mirzā ʿAlī "Luṭf," an author loosely affiliated with Fort William, but it was not published until a century later. This work by Luṭf contains one fascinating assertion: that Mīr himself once "appeared before Colonel Scott with a view to literary employment at Fort William College, but because of his old age he could not be selected."[32]

In his early years Mīr had helped to draw the boundaries of *reḵẖtah,* separating it politely but firmly from the enveloping Persian medium in which it had been born; in his *taẕkirah,* written when he was thirty, the word "English" never occurs. Near the end of his long life, when he was eighty or so, we see him reacting to the first delicate literary probes and proddings from the English world—and reacting perhaps even favorably, if Luṭf's account can be relied upon. Mīr died in 1810; the printed version of his complete works appeared in 1811. A watershed of sorts; or as a larger watershed one might choose the year 1803, the year in which Lord Lake took Delhi—and in which Ḥaidarī's work became not only the first *taẕkirah* of Urdu poets to be published but also the first to be composed in Urdu rather than Persian (since Luṭf's was for the most part a brief and very direct translation from a Persian source).

Yet on the whole, even after 1803, the new British rulers of Delhi took pains to be as unobtrusive as possible. As one historian has noted, in studying the early nineteenth century "one is impressed by how little in feeling and in style of life, the educated classes of upper India were touched by the British presence before 1857." Or as Āzād himself put it, "Those were the days when if a European was seen in Delhi, people considered him an extraordinary sample of God's handiwork, and pointed him out to each other: 'Look, there goes a European!'"[33]

For after all, the fact that Fort William College commissioned, prepared, and published so many ground-breaking, precedent-setting books does not mean that people paid much attention to them, or that those who did read

---

31. Siddiqi 1963.
32. Farmān Fatḥpūrī 1972: 210–13, 221–25. I quote from page 212.
33. Hardy 1972: 55; Āzād [1863] 1933: 145.

them—especially in the early decades of the century—found them to be any-thing more than curiosities.[34] The *ġhazal* was the genre of choice, and "the number of Urdu poets was much greater than the number of Persian po-ets"; but when it came to prose, "the whole country was interested only in reading and writing in Persian," according to the Lakhnavi historical writer ʿAbd ul-Ḥalīm "Sharar" (1860–1926). And although Fort William Urdu prose works "may have impressed the English in those days, they did not—and could not—impress anyone among the Hindustani literary people." For "at that time the effect of English education had not changed the country's lit-erary taste," and Persian's rhymed prose, flowing diction, and artistic use of repetition "dwelt in imaginations and minds." Even the powerful tradition of Urdu prose romance, or *dāstān,* became a significant written genre only relatively late in the nineteenth century.[35]

Urdu poetry and Urdu prose thus had radically different histories in north India. The *taẕkirah*s tell us that when Valī Dakanī came north in the early eighteenth century, his poetry spread like wildfire, and *reḳhtah* at once be-gan to supplant Persian as the poetry of choice: Valī had been the first to "match Persian stride for stride." The result was that "when his *dīvān* arrived in Delhi, Eagerness took it with the hands of respect, and Judgment regarded it with the eyes of attention; Pleasure read it aloud."[36] But when Fort William provided similarly exemplary Urdu prose texts (not only for *taẕkirah*s but for other genres as well), and even conveniently published them, the resulting works had almost no impact—and in fact were rather condescendingly ig-nored for decades. Lovers of *reḳhtah* preferred to embed their verses in a ma-trix of Persian prose. *Taẕkirah*s of Urdu poetry continued to be written in Persian: eleven of them survive from the first four decades of the nineteenth century, along with only one very halfhearted Urdu work, really more of a "notebook," and even that one was linked to Fort William patronage.[37]

Not until the 1840s was the grip of Persian prose finally broken: starting in that decade, well over half the *taẕkirah*s of Urdu poets began to be writ-ten in languages other than Persian. Garcin de Tassy composed a massive and important *taẕkirah* of sorts (1839–1847) in French, and Alois Sprenger produced a *taẕkirah* (1850) in English. But most, of course, were in Urdu. Of the three Urdu *taẕkirah*s composed in the 1840s, two were small pro-ductions (twelve poets in one, thirty-seven in the other) by Delhi authors

34. Sadiq [1964] 1984: 290–91.

35. I quote from Sharar [c. 1913–1920] 1963: 181–83. There is also a useful English trans-lation of Sharar's work that can be relied on for most purposes (Sharar 1975), but I have not quoted it in this paper because I want to stay closer to the literal wording of the original. On the *dāstān,* see Pritchett 1991: 21–28.

36. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 87.

37. Farmān Fatḥpūrī 1972: 252–55.

closely associated with the British-sponsored Delhi College.[38] Thus the author of the third could almost claim to have written the first truly "indigenous" Urdu *tazkirah* of Urdu poets, the first one not to be directly inspired, or even indirectly influenced, by British patronage.

ḴHUSH MAʿRIKAH-E ZEBĀ

This third *tazkirah* compiled in the 1840s, *Ḵhush maʿrikah-e zebā* (A fine and appropriate martial encounter, 1846), by Saʿādat Ḵhān "Nāṣir," is a particularly notable example of the genre. We do not know when Nāṣir was born; we know only that he died between 1857 and 1871. He was a Lakhnavi, and a very religious Shiite; he was lively, sociably inclined, a lover of anecdotes. He had all the outward requisites of poetic status: he was accepted as a *shāgird* by a well-known *ustād,* Mirzā "Muẓnib," and in turn had *shāgird*s of his own. He composed a number of *dīvān*s of Urdu poetry, using almost every genre available; most of these are now lost. But clearly he had "no special rank" as a poet. He occasionally composed in Persian, and he translated from Persian. His only published work was the Urdu prose romance *Qiṣṣah agar o gul* (The story of Aloe and Rose, 1846).[39]

His lengthy *tazkirah* was completed in 1846—or rather, reached a stage its author initially deemed complete, for its name is a chronogram *(tārīḵh)* encoding that year. But the text's history is one of steady expansion in manuscript form over the following fifteen years or more. Four manuscripts exist, each subsequent one containing significant authorial revisions; each includes a different number of poets and slightly varies the selection of poets, although the general trend is toward expansion and improved organization over time.[40] This situation was common in the *tazkirah* genre, especially in its earlier years: since publication was not generally intended, the *tazkirah* was disseminated by repeated copying and recopying—and what author could resist the chance to make improvements? One could add new poets one had recently discovered, or include dates of death (along with the traditional chronograms that encoded them) for poets who had recently died. Nāṣir took advantage of the chance to do even more: within his remarkable *ustād-shāgird* structure he added a city-by-city grouping of poets as well.[41] The overall number of poets contained in the four manuscripts taken together is 824—a total that is large but not, by *tazkirah* standards, extraordinary.

Nāṣir's own account of his work is casual, offhand, almost perfunctory. Some *tazkirah* writers started with the creation of Adam and the whole of hu-

---

38. Farmān Fatḥpūrī 1972: 303–12, 366–72, 313–28.
39. Ḵhvājah 1972: 17–39.
40. Ḵhvājah 1972: 82–105.
41. Ḵhvājah 1972: 101–3.

man literary history; offered glimpses of selected high points of Arabic, Persian, and Indian poetry; explicated their views on poetic theory; or gave accounts of their own lives—and only after dozens of pages got around to the *tazkirah* itself. Nāṣir, by contrast, introduces his massive volume with the briefest possible description of his project:

> For some time this unworthy one had the idea of compiling a *tażkirah* of the poets of Hind. But because of a lack of information about the circumstances of the early poets, this intention was not fulfilled. In those days when the *tażkirah* compiled by the late Miyāñ Muṣḥafī Ṣāḥib came to hand, the importunities of enthusiasm roused courage to action. And in contrast to Miyāñ Ṣāḥib, whose *tażkirah* is in the Persian language, this *faqīr* wrote in Hindī, for uniformity *[yakrangī]* is better than diversity *[dorangī];* and he did not retain the rule of alphabetical order, so that wherever one would find the name of a *shāgird,* it would be written under the *ustād*'s name. And so that the [use of the] Hindi language and the manner of [arranging] the poets' names would be my invention. And those poets whose *ustād* and *shāgird* relationships are not known, and their names and identities not understood—it would conclude with them. I begin it with Mirzā Rafīʿ us-Saudā, first because he is the founding elder of composition in *rekhtah,* and second because the lineage *[silsilah]* of this insignificant one's *shāgirdī* goes back to him.[42]

Three sweeping claims are made here, and all deserve scrutiny: that Nāṣir invented the use of "Hindi" rather than Persian for *tazkirah*s; that he invented the organization of poets according to lineages; and that Saudā is the founding elder of Urdu poetry.

Nāṣir wishes to write a *tazkirah* of the "poets of Hind," or India—so what more logical language to use than the "language of Hind," or "Hindi"? Abandoning the Persian language used by almost all of his predecessors is an act justified in a single phrase: he chooses Hindi because "uniformity is better than diversity." It can be seen already in this brief preface that Nāṣir is by no means a theorist: he obviously loves order and organization, but he feels no need to explain his methodology at length. Perhaps he feels that simplifying and rationalizing the process of *tazkirah*-writing is a self-evidently desirable goal: why use two languages when you only need one?

And of course, Nāṣir participates in the wider rethinking of Persian that was going on in his time and place. Less than a decade later, another Urdu *tazkirah* writer, in Delhi, described his own sense of the situation: "A number of right-seeing companions showed me the way: Persian is the merchandise of the shop of others, and the capital of the trading of strangers; accomplishment in it requires a whole long lifetime, and some sweet-singing guide from among the nightingale-voiced ones of the garden of Iran." Instead, one

---

42. Nāṣir 1972: 1:1. I give further references to volume and page number in the text.

should concentrate one's efforts on Urdu: if Urdu could "manage to become clean and trim," then "Persian would be devoid of radiance before it, and Afghan Persian [Dari] would go out of use by comparison to it."[43] Persian, however beautiful, is ultimately the property of others; Rekhtah/Hindi/Urdu, with its great potential, is the proper locally owned field for literary work.

"Hindi" as the "language of Hind" could—and did—play an obvious role as an umbrella term. Like the term *bhāshā,* or *bhākhā,* "(colloquial) language," it could mean whatever a given writer and audience understood by it. Until a much later point in the nineteenth century Hindi was the most common name, in the literary culture we are examining, for the language we now call Urdu—a language that used the Delhi region's Khari Boli grammar and the Persianized range of its vocabulary, and was written in a modified form of the Persian script. There was no confusion with what is now called Hindi— the Khari Boli grammar written in Devanagari script—simply because as a literary presence that language scarcely existed.[44] Nāṣir uses "Hindi" very often in the course of his *tazkirah,* while "Urdu" occurs only rarely; the other term he uses—once in his brief preface and often at other points in his *tazkirah*— is of course "Rekhtah."

Nāṣir claims to be the first *tazkirah* writer to use the "Hindi" (= Urdu = Rekhtah) language rather than Persian. This claim is unfounded. However, he must have believed it, or at least expected his readers to believe it; otherwise as a proud boast in his preface it makes no sense. And indeed his claim may well have reflected his knowledge, for three of the five earlier Urdu *tazkirah*s had been composed long ago—thirty to forty years previously—and far away, in Calcutta. He might well not have known of them. The other two *tazkirah*s were only slightly earlier than his own, so that the periods of composition undoubtedly overlapped, and they were much smaller productions. Moreover, they were by Delhi authors—and while Delhi was not so far from Lucknow, local chauvinism and mutual rivalries were not exactly unknown. As we have seen, all five earlier Urdu *tazkirah*s had been produced under markedly Westernizing auspices; thus the semilegitimacy with which Nāṣir could have claimed to be writing the first truly "indigenous" Urdu *tazkirah* of Urdu poets.

But of course such subtle and hairsplitting claims were outside his purview. Nāṣir was not a scholar, as his own preface makes clear. He says he was unable to write his *tazkirah* until he obtained information about the early poets; once he obtained Muṣḥafī's *tazkirah,* he immediately set to work. At the end of the *tazkirah* (2: 585) he reports his laborious acquisition of only four sources: Muṣḥafī's two *tazkirah*s, Sheftah's, and Sarvar's. He refers much more

---

43. Ṣābir [1854–1855] 1966: 15.
44. King 1994.

often to Muṣḥafī, but he uses the others also, and he is indebted directly or indirectly to several more *tazkirah*s as well. Of course, in his world manuscripts were hand-copied, and were rarer and more difficult not only to obtain, but even to know about, than we usually remember. But even by the standards of his own time, he was definitely unscholarly, as his editor Mushfiq Khvājah notes with disapproval. He ignored a number of the most famous and valuable *tazkirah*s—ones that were "not so rare and inaccessible that Nāṣir wouldn't have obtained them if he had searched." His basic practice was to use "for one poet, material from one *tazkirah*." And even then, he was careless: "Muṣḥafī's *tazkirah*s were before him—at least Nāṣir could have copied down from them the poets' birth and death dates; but he didn't even do that much." He had "no special principle before him" as he described some poets in one sentence and others in a number of pages, and gave very few or very many samples of their work.[45]

In one respect, however, Nāṣir was the most rigorous of Urdu *tazkirah* writers. While the great majority of *tazkirah*s were alphabetical, roughly chronological, idiosyncratic, or even random in their listing of poets, Nāṣir's alone was based as scrupulously as possible on the poetic lineage *(silsilah),* the chain of transmission over time from *ustād* to *shāgird.* There was a certain logic to this organization, since in the north Indian Urdu *ghazal* tradition these relationships were so highly developed and so uniquely important. In his introduction Nāṣir claims, as we have seen, to have invented this approach to *tazkirah* organization; and this time his claim seems to be quite legitimate. He thus begins his *tazkirah* with the great *ustād* Saudā, both "because he is the founding elder of composition in *rekhtah*" and because "the lineage of this insignificant one's *shāgirdī* goes back to him." Nāṣir documents this latter claim with pride: the lineage runs from Mirzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ "Saudā" (1706?–1781), Mīr's great contemporary, through Mirzā Aḥsan ʿAlī "Aḥsan," to Mirzā Muḥammad Ḥasan "Muznib," to Nāṣir himself. As can be seen, Nāṣir places himself in the fourth literary generation, so that his two *shāgird*s—one of whom was a nawab from whom he received a regular stipend (1: 81–82)—then fall into the fifth. The maximum depth of this whole "family tree" of lineages is (in some cases) seven *ustād*-to-*shāgird* "generations," mapped over a period of roughly a century and a half.

Within this "family tree" one at once notices the immense disproportion between quality and quantity. Most of the poets on Nāṣir's list are minor and are now deservedly forgotten. Of the lineages founded by the two greatest poets in the classical Urdu tradition, Mīr and his successor, Mirzā Asadullāh Khān "Ghālib" (1797–1869), Mīr's had no more than thirteen poets while Ghālib's had—according to Nāṣir—exactly one. Among the other major po-

45. Khvājah 1972: 55–56, 69.

ets, Saudā, Nāṣir's own *ustād,* had sixty-five *shāgird*s over four generations; and Khvājah Mīr "Dard" (1720–1785) had seventy-two over seven generations; these numbers sound reasonable. But the lineage of Shaikh Ghulām Hamadānī "Muṣḥafī" (1750–1824), author of Nāṣir's favorite *tazkirah* sources, ended up with no fewer than 341 poets over six generations, or well over half of the 595 poets who are included in the whole set of lineages. Many chance factors were involved: *ustād*s who lived longer, who lived in important cities, who had sociable dispositions, whose poetry was widely popular, who needed the extra money, obviously ended up with more *shāgird*s—and even one or two talented and energetic *shāgird*s could be the makings of an impressive lineage. And poets who composed their own *tazkirah*s of Urdu poets—Muṣḥafī himself composed not one but two—could make sure that everyone knew the full list of their *shāgird*s.

Above all, from Nāṣir's *tazkirah* one can clearly see how widespread the lineage network was and how fast it ramified: how many hundreds of poets needed or wanted to have an *ustād,* and how commonly they sought a close relationship with an available local poet, no matter how minor, rather than claiming affiliation with a greater poet more distant in place and time. Plainly these *ustād-shāgird* relationships were generally based not so much on prestige or literary fame as on local access and personal affinity. One can also see from Nāṣir's presentation how the lines of power ran: it was not the *ustād* who needed the *shāgird*s, to enhance his prestige; rather, it was the *shāgird*s who needed the *ustād,* to train them in the skills of poetry-composition. In Nāṣir's view, wherever one finds the name of a *shāgird,* one should find it linked to the name of his *ustād.*

Nāṣir takes this linkage very seriously and recognizes that its intimacy lends itself to abuse. About one verse attributed to Qāʾim he says pointedly, "I have seen this verse in Saudā's *dīvān* also"—and he adds, with a heavily sarcastic disapproval reminiscent of Mīr's, "There's no harm, because the *shāgird* acquires ownership of the *ustād*'s property!" (1: 25). Although they could not (legitimately) inherit poetry, *shāgird*s could be heirs in many other senses—and this was true even if they were women, and even if they were courtesans *(ṭavāʾif)*. Nāṣir tells an anecdote about the courtesan Begā "Shīrīn," *shāgird* of the poet "Baḥr":

> One day Mīr Vazīr "Ṣabā" said to me, "I have heard that Shīrīn's poetry has been [favorably] mentioned in the *mushāʿirah.* It's a pity that she is not among the descendants of Shaikh 'Nāsikh,' so that his name would have remained radiant." Miyāñ Baḥr said, "Pupils too have the status of sons, his name will remain established through us." And he said to Shīrīn, "You too, through connection with me, are his granddaughter." (2: 582)

The practical uses of such close relationships between *ustād* and *shāgird* were, as we will see, manifold.

Like any family tree, this one invites questions about its beginnings and ends. Where did the primal ancestors come from, and what happened over time to the descendants? In the case of classical Urdu poetry, the latter question is relatively easy to answer: a decade after Nāṣir's genealogical chart had first been drawn up, the family was killed off, or at least mortally wounded. The shock of the "Mutiny" of 1857 (the "First War of Indian Independence"), and especially its bloody aftermath, in which the British avenged themselves with particular harshness on the Indo-Muslim elites, gave rise to forms of political, economic, social, and cultural restructuring that produced a notable literary restructuring as well. Āzād's *Āb-e ḥayāt* (1880) is generally held to be the last *tazkirah;* by no coincidence, this crucial canon-forming work—which is heavily indebted, as many have recognized, to Nāṣir's own lively and anecdotal narrative style—is also the first modern literary history. *Āb-e ḥayāt* looms over the *tazkirah* tradition and acts as a hinge between the old literary world and the new. Nāṣir too, like Āzād, lived to see the deathblow given to his literary culture. He initially completed his *tazkirah* in 1846, a decade before the Mutiny; but some of his addenda were made after 1857, and he may have been alive as late as 1871, to see that what Āzād called "the page of the times" had been turned—and turned with (literally) a vengeance.[46]

The question of origins is, however, more vexed. As we have seen, Nāṣir identifies Saudā, the head of his own lineage, as the founder of "composition in *rekhtah*" *(rekhtah goʾī),* and begins his *tazkirah* with him. Introducing Saudā, Nāṣir reports that Saudā's father was from Isfahan and that his mother came from a distinguished family. He then simply endows him—by means of an anecdote found nowhere else in the Urdu tradition[47]—with a divine gift for poetry:

> A radiant *faqīr* used to bestow a gaze of attention on the aforementioned Mirzā [Saudā]. After the death of [Saudā's] venerable father, he said to this solitary pearl, "This is the time when the prayer of the needy would be accepted and granted in the Court of the Fulfiller of Needs. Whatever you wish, ask for it." He petitioned: "Thanks to you I am free from care. If you insist, then please bestow on me the wealth of speech, the expression of which is poetry composition." This one whose prayers are granted smiled on him, and as a pen name for this careless madman he brought to his lips the word "Saudā" [madness]. (1: 3)

The *faqīr* also bestowed on him undying, universal fame "throughout the four quarters of Hindustan"—a fame, Nāṣir notes, that Saudā indeed possesses, for he is known and revered "in every house." After the *faqīr's* blessing Saudā went directly to Delhi, the "seat of the kingdom, where all the people of tal-

---

46. Ḳhvājah 1972: 17, 60–61, 83–84; Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 4.
47. Shamīm Inhonvī 1971: 25.

ent and accomplishment were gathered," and dazzled everyone with his poetic powers (1: 3–4). Nāṣir does not even trouble to tell us where Saudā lived before he went to Delhi: his life was his literary life, and his literary life began with his trip to Delhi.

In other *tazkirah*s, as we have seen, (north Indian) Urdu poetry tends to begin with Valī. Āzād in *Āb-e ḥayāt,* for example, describes Valī as the "Adam of the race of Urdu poetry" and meditates at length on his role as its founder, the person who "brought all the meters of Persian into Urdu," who imported the *ġhazal* itself and "opened the road" for the other genres.[48] Since Urdu poetry had a history of several prior centuries in Gujarat and the Deccan, however, Valī could at the most have been a kind of Noah, restarting poetry in the north after a great flood of forgetting had wiped the slate clean of Deccani literary activity. Mīr was too close to his Dakani predecessors to simply overlook them; by Nāṣir's time, such erasure was much easier to perform. But Nāṣir takes the amnesiac process a step further, for he is not even interested in Valī; we learn in passing only that "the foundation of *rekhtah* was laid by him" (2: 568). Instead, Nāṣir blithely begins his lineages a generation later, with Saudā and his peers. He then jumpstarts the tradition with the *faqīr*'s divine gift to Saudā: the invention or founding of Urdu poetry.

The point is not that Nāṣir has some particular revisionist view of early Urdu literary history. Rather, he seems to have almost no interest in it. He simply bundles it all up and makes it a transaction between God (through a *faqīr*) and his own founding *ustād,* Saudā. His view of Urdu poetry is synchronic, and his interest in his own contemporaries is far more compelling than his commitment to the past. His only recognition of Persian, the ancestral language, is to boast of his originality in replacing it with "Hindi" in his *tazkirah*. He is not anxious about the past, because he sees the present effortlessly assimilating it, using it, and evolving beyond it. And he does not even have much time for the past, because the present is so fruitful and the poetry so obviously flourishing. Saudā is revered "in every house" in all quarters of Hindustan; other great poets are equally universal in their appeal (1: 348–49), and more and more *shāgird*s flock to the available *ustād*s. Arranging the poets into lineages is, among other things, a way to organize the proliferation of poets that Nāṣir sees all around him. It is a way of putting one's house in order to serve the needs of the present; it is a display of one's own inventive energy and zeal. Through such a unique achievement, even a poet of secondary talent could hope to make a name for himself.

Not surprisingly, Nāṣir the Lakhnavi paints an exceptionally harsh portrait of Mīr, who was not only Saudā's great contemporary and rival but had

48. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 83.

also by then been co-opted into appearing as the quintessential Dihlavi poet. When Nāṣir tells the story of Mīr and the commoner in the oxcart, he describes the man as a grocer *(baniyā)* and makes Mīr recoil from the mere sight of the man's face and keep his eyes fastidiously averted for the duration of the trip (1: 141). He also depicts Mīr as arrogant in the extreme, to both his peers and his patrons. In Lucknow, Mīr "Soz," Nawab Āṣif ud-Daulah's *ustād,* is asked to recite a few *ghazal*s and is then lavishly praised by the nawab. Both Mīr Soz's "presumption" and the nawab's praise displease Mīr. He says to Mīr Soz, "You're not ashamed of such presumption?"—and proceeds to clarify his point: "About your venerable status and nobility there is no doubt, but in poetic rank no one equals Mīr!" (1: 143–44). Nāṣir thus, by no coincidence, heightens the contrast between the arrogant Mīr and the carefree and casual Saudā.

Nāṣir devotes to *ustād*s like Saudā and Mīr, and to some personal friends as well, a number of pages of anecdotal narrative; but most poets receive very brief entries. Nāṣir generally introduces his poets with a flourish: in many cases, with traditional (though often low-quality) Persianized rhymed prose *(sajʿ).* Here is his account of an extremely unimportant poet: "A poet with distinction *[imtiyāz];* Mīr Amānat ʿAlī, pen name "Distinguished" *[mumtāz];* being Saudā's *shāgird* was his source of pride *[nāz]*."[49] This, followed by a single verse as a select sample of his work, is all we hear about Mumtāz (1: 22–23). Rather than being credited with any special "distinction," this poet is plainly being introduced with resonant sound effects. Nāṣir is a circus ringmaster presenting his performers with a flourish: "thrilling—chilling—high-flying—death-defying!" As Nāṣir says of another poet's work, the verses are recorded "so that the reader may enjoy them"; but the truth is more complex. Poets' verses are their memorials *(yādgār),* and minor poets may well live on only in such references as this; it is an almost poignant service for a *tazkirah* writer to preserve their names. Nāṣir says of yet another poet, "Some of his verses are recorded so that he will still continue to be mentioned *[zikr us kā bāqī rahe]*" (1: 393, 390). *Zikr* is of course the literal root of the *tazkirah.*

In the case of a major poet, however, such rhymed prose not only proves no barrier to communication, but in fact is often used for especially formal pronouncements. After a few sentences of (unrhymed) biographical information, Nāṣir presents to us his great contemporary, the Lakhnavi *ustād* Khvājah Ḥaidar ʿAlī "Ātash" (1777–1847): "Now the mansion of *rekhtah* is established on this sound pillar; despite his venerable age, a maker of every verse in a romantic style; a perfect knower of divine mysteries; few are austere and pious like the Khvājah Ṣāḥib; and his poetry is all select; it is so fa-

---

49. *shāʿir-e bā imtiyāz / Mīr Amānat ʿAlī takhalluṣ Mumtāz / shāgirdī-e Saudā us kā māyah-e nāz.* (Line breaks have been imposed to show the rhyme.)

mous that there is no need to collect it" (2: 1).[50] The (non)relationship of poetry to personal biography in this literary culture is here perfectly illustrated. Nāṣir admires Ātash for his status as a venerable elder, his mystical knowledge, his austerity and piety, his religious qualities—*and* for his nevertheless making (experiencing, interpreting) "every verse in a romantic style." The word "romantic" *['āshiqānah]* literally means lover-like, and Nāṣir makes it clear that the lover-like qualities should inhere in the poetry and the interpretation of the poetry, not in the life of the poet. If Ātash invariably created and experienced poetry romantically despite his piety, venerability, and old age, this was a piquant and exemplary personal achievement. It demonstrates once again the entirely nonnaturalistic poetics of the classical *ġhazal,* which were later to be so sadly misconstrued by the cult of "natural poetry."

Nāṣir was also adept at using rhymed prose for the occasional hatchet job. Here he introduces one of his least favorite poets: "Accustomed to [improper] intervention and appropriation; Mīr Ḥusain ʿAlī 'Taʾassuf'; a *shāgird* of Mīr Sher ʿAlī 'Afsos,' extremely self-regarding and self-willed; the souls of the departed are in pain because of him; very wrongly he made objections to the *ustād*s' verses; and he put together a brief pamphlet to mislead everybody" (1: 244).[51] Nāṣir intends to refute this pamphlet in detail: he provides a series of examples that shed light both on his own view of poetry and on the kinds of literary debate in which his culture constantly engaged.

One of Nāṣir's examples of Taʾassuf's folly deals with his analysis of a verse by the revered *ustād* Ātash—a verse that Nāṣir singles out for its excellence:

A verse of Ḵhvājah Ātash's that is one of the best verses:

> I am crazy about hunting the bird of madness
> I am making a snare from the threads of my collar.[52]

About this by way of regret *[taʾassuf]* he says, "I hope that the possessors of intelligence will consider what a defect can be seen in the meaning of this introductory verse. If the bird of madness has not yet been captured, then no person in his senses pulls out threads from his collar, which is the work of a madman. And if it has already been captured, then to procure the equipment for hunting is a vain action. If he had said it like this, it would have been better:

---

50. *ab binā-e reḵhtah is rukn-e sālim se pāʾedār / bāvajūd pīrānah sālī ke ṯarẓ-e ʿāshiqānah par har shiʿr kā shiʿār / ʿārif-e kāmil / qāniʿ aur mutavakkil / Ḵhvājah Ṣāḥib sā kamyāb / aur kalām un kā sab intiḵhāb / is qadar mashhūr kih use ḥājat jamʿa karne kī nahīñ.*

51. *ʿādī-e daḵhl o taṣarruf / Mīr Ḥusain ʿAlī Taʾassuf / shāgird-e Mīr Sher ʿAlī Afsos nihāyat ḵhud-bīn aur ḵhud-pasand / arvāḥ-e marḥūmāñ us se dardmand / nāḥaq nāḥaq ustādoñ ke ashʿār par iʿtirāẓ kiyā / aur risālah-e muḵhtaṣar fareb-e ʿavām ko tartīb diyā.*

52. *saudā huʾā hai murġh-e junūñ ke shikār kā / phandā banā rahā hūñ garebāñ ke tār kā.* The word *saudā,* "madness," I have translated as "to be crazy about," in order to capture the punning effect that our own idiom also conveys.

> Whoever might be crazy about hunting the bird of madness
> Let him make a snare from the threads of my collar."

The correction that this self-deluded one has done—if he [the "I" of the verse] is a madman, how would he have a collar? And if he is not a madman and is in his senses, since when is the act of a madman done by a man in his senses? If in Ḵẖvājah Ṣāḥib's verse he had already finished with his madness, then the objection would have been appropriate. (1: 245)

Ātash's verse invokes the complex interplay between madness as an over-powering force that nullifies all personal choice and madness as an object of the lover's personal choice—one that he voluntarily and even urgently pursues. Ta'assuf is right to put his finger on the paradoxical nature of this inter-action but wrong to consider it a defect. Ātash is exploring, and relishing, the process by which the lover goes mad—a process both voluntary and beyond all volition, a process of his eagerly making a snare for something that has al-ready captured him. The verse also highlights the wordplay embodied in the common idiom *saudā honā,* "to be crazy (about)." Since everyone in Nāṣir's world shares all of this background information already, the discussion is de-voted only to matters of overall poetic effect and interpretation: does the verse create a clumsily flat contradiction, or an elegantly unresolvable paradox?

Through this kind of extremely abstract argument the treatment of *ghazal* themes *(maẓmūn)* at the broadest level is refined and developed. At a slightly lower level of generality, Nāṣir also offers, in another of his refutations of the presumptuous Ta'assuf, an argument about logical and semantic "fit":

Now please listen: About Shaiḵẖ Nāsiḵẖ he writes, "His poetry is 'the shop grand, the food bland.'" Accordingly, this verse is taken as proof:

> My intoxication and awareness are the same state—
> I never had a dream that my fortune was awake.

He says, "In this verse the defect is present, that the first line has no connec-tion *[rabt]* with the second line. In the first line the theme of madness is found, and in the second fate and destiny. He should have said,

> No one thought my sleep to be any different from wakefulness—
> My heedlessness and awareness are the same state."

Someone should ask that incoherent one: When heedlessness, awareness, dream, wakefulness—four things—are present in one verse, how can there not be connection? And when that madman likens the theme of the first line to madness—is madness mentioned in it, or bad fortune? And the lack of con-nection in the first line of his own verse is manifest: its theme has been badly fitted in. (1: 246–47)

The two lines of a *ghazal* verse form in every sense an independent mini-poem and must be related to each other in some clear and poetically effec-

tive way, so that they have "connection" *(rabt̤)*. We have seen Mīr's heavy emphasis on the cultivation of *marbūt̤* poetry—poetry that possesses *rabt̤*. Nāsik̲h̲'s first line suggests that the speaker is deeply mad—in fact he is never not mad, so that he has no intervals of lucidity. His "intoxication" of madness is identical with his normal awareness. He is so far from aspiring to better fortune that even in his dreams he never imagines that his fortune would "awaken" and would bring him good luck. Nāsik̲h̲'s verse is undoubtedly more piquant than Ta'assuf's pedestrian reworking. (And by playfully calling Ta'assuf "that incoherent *[berabt̤]* one" and "that madman," Nāṣir too, like Mīr, ties his critical language directly into the content of his discussion.) But the point is that here the argument is at the level of the line: the success or failure of the "connection" between the two lines that should make them *marbūt̤,* the fitting in *(bāñdhnā)* of a theme into an individual line. The question is one of nuts and bolts, of technical skill in verse construction.

*MUSHĀ'IRAH*S

Such disputes were sooner or later brought into the central institution of this literary culture: the poetry recitation session, or *mushā'irah,* venue for legendary rivalries, definitive site of the "fine and appropriate martial encounter" of Nāṣir's title. Here the battles often came down to a level even more detailed and finicky, as individual words were called into question. Almost all *mushā'irah*s were "patterned" *(t̤arḥī),* which meant that an exemplary line from a verse was announced in advance, and all the poets recited fresh verses composed for the occasion in that specified meter and rhyme scheme. In one of his vivid anecdotes about *mushā'irah* behavior, Nāṣir narrates such a "martial encounter." This anecdote shows us Shaik̲h̲ Imām Bak̲h̲sh "Nāsik̲h̲" (1776–1838), one of the *ustād*s criticized by Ta'assuf, assuming the offensive in his turn. Nāṣir writes in his account of Maujī Rām "Maujī":

> These few verses are his memorial:
>
> > When that unveiled one went to bathe beneath the water
> > Then because of the color of her face a rose *[gulāb]* bloomed beneath the
> > > water.
> >
> > When in a state of despair I wept from thirst
> > There appeared there the wave of a mirage beneath the water.
> >
> > Tears flowed from the weeping eyes in such a way
> > Just as water would flow from a fountain under water.

This pattern *[t̤arḥ]* was that of Mirzā Ja'far Ṣāḥib's *mushā'irah*. Mirzā Ḥājī "Qamar" and Mīr Muz̤affar Ḥusain "Z̤amīr" wanted to have Maujī Rām disgraced through the lips of Mirzā Qatīl. Mirzā Qatīl, in the open *mushā'irah,* made the following objection to [his *g̲h̲azal*]: that to call a rose *[gul]* a *gulāb* is contrary to usage; and a fountain is outside the water; and that a mirage is only [in] a

desert—what connection does sand have with waves? When Mirzā Ṣāḥib made these objections against it in the open *mushā'irah,* Shaiḳh Imām Baḳhsh Nāsiḳh found his temerity extremely displeasing. Maujī Rām took his plea to [his *ustād*] Miyāñ Muṣḥafī. Miyāñ Ṣāḥib said, "Friendship ought not to be spoiled because of a *shāgird;* one can acquire many such [*shāgird*s]." When Nāsiḳh heard that Muṣḥafī was not supporting Maujī, he himself sent for Maujī, wrote these questions and answers on a folded paper, and gave it to him. At the next gathering, he read it in the open *mushā'irah:*

> O most eloquent of the eloquent, Mirzā Qatīl Ṣāḥib, when you made these objections to this lowly one's *ġhazal,* that to call a rose *gulāb* is contrary to usage and has not entered into Urdu—it is strange that a poet like you, the pride of the age, would say such a nonsensical thing. Do you not know that in the idiom of the people of Hind, cold weather during the spring season is called *gulābī jāṛā,* and rose-color is called *gulābī?* Not to mention that Mīr Muḥammad Taqī, who has no equal or peer in the language of *reḳhtah,* says, [he quotes verses by Mīr, Maẓhar, and Muṣḥafī illustrating these usages of *gulāb*]. And when you said that a fountain is outside the water, in fact Saʿdī, in the *Gulistān,* has committed this 'mistake': [he quotes an illustrative Persian verse]. And when you said that a mirage is only in a desert and asked what connection it has with a wave—Nāṣir ʿAlī says [he quotes an illustrative Persian verse]. This is the answer to every one of your objections. (1: 514–16)

Here Nāsiḳh offers two kinds of evidence: that of colloquial language, and that of poetic authority *(sanad).* In the case of a disputed usage, citing instances from the work of recognized *ustād*s in the tradition is an extremely powerful form of legitimation. Of the five examples he offers, three are in Urdu and two are in Persian. One of the Urdu examples is by Maẓhar, who is much better known as a Persian poet. Of the two Persian examples, the first is by an Iranian and the second by an Indo-Persian poet. The interpenetration of the Indo-Persian and Urdu *ġhazal* traditions could hardly be clearer; in fact Qatīl himself, at whom this argument is directed, was known—by Nāṣir himself (1: 296–97), among others—chiefly as a Persian *ġhazal* poet. But the relationship with Persian was increasingly fraught: Ġhālib, for example, made a point of scoffing at Qatīl's Persian scholarship, claiming to respect only the Persian of native speakers—an attitude that led to a bitter and prolonged literary war.[53]

Once Nāsiḳh has demolished Qatīl's objections to Maujī's *ġhazal,* he proceeds to carry the war into the enemy's territory:

---

53. "In some gathering Mirzā recited a Persian *ġhazal.* Some persons objected to one word in it. And the objection was according to the rule that Mirzā Qatīl had written in one of his pamphlets. When Mirzā heard it, he said, 'Who is Qatīl? And what do I have to do with Qatīl? He was a Khatrī from Faridabad. I have no respect for anyone except native speakers.' Most of those people were pupils of Mirzā Qatīl. Thus, they averted their eyes from the rules of hospitality, and tumult and turmoil arose among great and small" (Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 505). For further discussion of these issues, see Faruqi 1998.

And the second *g̲h̲azal,* composed by Ẓamīr, that you claim is free of defects—in one verse of it are [grounds for] two objections:

> Even in their homeland the distracted ones *[sargashtagoñ]* find no peace at all
> As the fish's restlessness *[iz̤tirāb]* is not diminished beneath the water.

My dear sir, no poet has spoken of the restlessness of a fish under water, for the reason that a fish finds no rest anywhere except in the water. And if *iz̤tirāb* is used in the meaning of "speed"—well, there is a big difference between "restlessness" and "speed." *Sargashtah* is singular; when you form its plural, instead of [the final] *he,* the Persian *kāf [= gāf]* and *alif nūn* will come, and it will be *sargashtagān.* Where has the invention of *sargashtagoñ* come from? Those who know the Urdu language in this age are Miyāñ Muṣḥafī and Inshāʾallāh K̲h̲ān; it is vain for you to intervene where you have no standing. Your Persian is no doubt famous—let the Isfahanis enjoy it! Beyond that, you can have only our greetings and respects! (1: 516–17)

As can be seen, the "objections" here are made at a very precise and even nit-picking level. Nasik̲h̲ not only criticizes the description of fish as showing "restlessness" under water, but even takes exception to a grammatical form: *sargashtah* has been given an Urdu oblique plural ending instead of a Persian one. His tone toward Qatīl is withering: Qatīl may know Persian, but he should not plume himself on his Urdu, since the true contemporary *ustād*s for Urdu are Muṣḥafī and Inshā. Persian and Urdu interpenetrate, but Urdu maintains its own standards of mastery, and over time the relationship becomes more and more contentious—for despite many vicissitudes and purist fantasies,[54] Urdu, as can be seen, is increasingly asserting its autonomy.

SOCIAL CONTEXTS

*Mushāʿirah*s were not only complex competitive arenas and technical workshops but hothouses of gossip and general social rivalry as well. From Nāṣir's *tazkirah* we can obtain an unusually complete and lively impression of the societal range of Urdu poetry in the Lucknow of his time. The love of stories and anecdotes and small local details that Nāṣir shows in his *tazkirah* is unmatched (until *Āb-e ḥayāt*) in the tradition and is one of the special distinguishing features of his work. His contemporaries hated his *tazkirah* for its candidly gossipy stories and casually—or gleefully—unflattering anecdotes;[55] they could not have imagined how much we in our time would value it for exactly that kind of insider's approach.

In Nāṣir's world there were numerous Hindu poets; Maujī Rām Maujī was of course among them. Mirzā Muḥammad Ḥasan Qatīl (1757/58–1818) was

---

54. Fārūqī 1998.
55. K̲h̲vājah 1972: 40–46.

himself a convert from Hinduism. Nāṣir is especially strong on the Lucknow poets of his own time: for about one hundred of them he is our only source of knowledge.[56] He records about forty-five poets who seem from their names to be Hindu and seven poets named "Singh" of whom one or two were perhaps Sikhs. (Some *taẕkirah* writers, by contrast, tend more or less to ignore Hindu poets.)[57] Nāṣir also includes another Hindu poet who had become a Muslim, as well as a Muslim poet who "through his evil fortune" had been converted to Christianity (1: 275, 1: 38). He provides brief accounts of fourteen women poets (2: 577–83, 2: 628); for only two of them does he name *ustād*s. Of them all, the most fully described is the courtesan Shīrīn, heroine of the anecdote about the "sonship" of *shāgird*s—a relationship in which her *ustād,* Baḥr, as we have seen, most specifically included her.

Nāṣir also mentions a few poets from humble backgrounds, including a barber (1: 47–48), a herald (1: 204), a perfumer (1: 248), a member of the lowly Hindu porter (*kahār*) caste (1: 421), a watchmaker (2: 99), a shoe merchant (2: 397), and a jeweler's son (2: 513–14). It is clear that their relatively low social status does not exactly disqualify them from being poets, but it does let them in for patronizing treatment. Nāṣir is rather surprised by their achievements, and seeks to use them as a moral lesson. The poet "Ḥajjām" ("Barber"), for example, "obtained improvement *[iṣlāḥ]* by trimming the beard of Mirzā Rafīʿ Saudā." Nāṣir enjoys his pun on the barbers' idiomatic use of the word *iṣlāḥ* to mean "trimming or shaving the hair." And as we might expect, Nāṣir proceeds to assign all the credit to Saudā: "The company of accomplished people has the quality of a philosopher's stone: iron, although it is black inside, becomes pure gold, just as this craftsman obtained the wealth of the coin of poetry, and received praise and applause in all Shāhjahānābād [Delhi]" (1: 48). Of "Mujrim" Nāṣir says, "Although he is a shoe merchant in Dalāl Bazaar, in the mold of his temperament verses are well formed." In this case, the credit goes to his city: "And what a cultivated city Lucknow is, that nobles from elsewhere are consumed with jealousy over the eloquent word choice *[faṣāḥat]* of our craftsmen!" (2: 397). Nāṣir's use of "mold" and "well formed" also wittily evokes the shoemaker's craft, in the style of allusive double-meaning much appreciated in the Persianized literary tradition.

Among all these humble poets, particularly fascinating is Āftāb Rāʾe "Rusvā" ["Disgraced"], who according to Nāṣir amply lived up to his pen name:

> He was a jeweler's son; through the zeal and ambition of love he gave up name and honor, and wandered in streets and markets. Street urchins used to present him with a drum and a cowrie shell; with a garland of cowrie shells around his neck, this verse was on his lips:

---

56. Ḵhvājah 1972: 41.
57. Farmān Fatḥpūrī 1972: 596.

> He was disgraced *[rusvā],* he was ruined, he became a vagabond—
> Whoever passed through love's way.

Due to his distractedness, he left Shāhjahānābād [Delhi] and came to Amroha. Since in those days men from Delhi were honored and esteemed everywhere, he settled down in a Sayyid's house. One day he sent a youth to get wine, and the youth became absorbed in childish games. This verse was on his lips at every moment:

> The boy went away to get wine—how can there be entertainment?
> I give up the thought of wine—may the boy be well!

When he was dying, he requested his drinking companions to bathe his corpse in wine [rather than water]; his drinking companions acted on his request. These two or three verses, which are the pearls of his temperament, are noted by way of memorial: [Nāṣir quotes two verses]. (2: 513–14)

Here is almost the archetype of the *ghazal*'s classic lover-protagonist: wandering, half-mad, disgraced, flaunting his intoxication, violating worldly and religious norms—living out *ghazal* conventions, it would seem, in his actual life.

What is striking about this anecdote is its tone—elegiac, austere, free of the moralizing or condemnation of which Nāṣir is exceedingly capable. For Nāṣir is never one to mince words: he gleefully offers critical anecdotes and makes sweeping, hostile judgments about two dozen or so poets, many of whom he accuses of arrogance, use of vulgar and abusive language, ingratitude toward noble and generous patrons—or sexual pursuit of boys. Concerning eight or nine poets (out of 824) Nāṣir records that they loved boys. In some cases he clearly disapproves of this behavior. About "Fidvī" Lāhorī, whom he dislikes, he writes: "In his mind, his claim to poetry was beyond all limits; and passing beyond the level of poetry, he set his foot on the path of love of boys *(amrad parastī).* This vile practice caused many conflicts within his family; his body was pulverized with wounds, but he didn't have the strength to give up this weakness" (1: 126). But in the case of Nāṣir's own close friend "'Aẕhar," his tone is much more indulgent: "In the season of his youth he was restless with love for smooth-faced [beardless] ones, and unable to control his love of boys who were the envy of Houris" (2: 154).

What can be made of anecdotal commentary like this? It is not necessary to affirm the historical truth of such anecdotes to find them significant; and in fact, many of the most famous literary anecdotes, especially those in *Āb-e ḥayāt,* have been amply discredited.[58] In this case, it is the doubleness of perspective that is so piquant. For the *taẕkirah* tradition situates itself right at the intersection of social reality and literary convention: it reports—anecdotally

---

58. Vadūd [1942–1943] 1984.

at least—on the poets, as well as on their poetry. When a sexual predilection for boys is considered in its actual social context of lived behavior (as in the case of Fidvī), Nāṣir often views it as repugnant. But when the love of beautiful boys is considered abstractly or distantly (as in the case of ʿAẕhar) or is allegorized into an archetypal life of alienation, suffering, and death (as in the case of Rusvā), it arouses no such disgust. It seems then to become assimilated into the *ġhazal*'s poetic universe, along with madness, drunkenness, outcast status, apostasy from Islam, sacrificial death, and other themes of transgression.[59]

As we have seen in Nāṣir's treatment of Ātash, the romantic and passionate behavior attributed to the ideal-typical lover was emphatically *not* to be conflated with the real life of this venerable and elderly *ustād*. Still, especially in the case of minor poets, the *taẕkirah*s' anecdotal approach often faces two ways. Āzād says of a certain minor poet who died young: "He was himself beautiful, and loved to look at beautiful ones, and finally gave up his life in the grief of separation."[60] Is this biography or a romantic play on a literary archetype? In the case of the extremely numerous minor poets, about whom often little was known except as vague gossip and rumor, such conflation was understandable; and of course nobody bothered about it, since people read *taẕkirah*s for literary pleasure—for good poetry and good anecdotes, not precise factual information. Only with the cult of "natural poetry" from the late nineteenth century onward did such biography and pseudobiography become reified in the naive way that continues to be troubling to many *ġhazal*-lovers.

Many of Nāṣir's characteristic attitudes converge in a unique and often-cited passage, in which he observes with considerable disdain a new performance genre that was destined to become the start of the dramatic tradition in Urdu.[61] His report takes the form of an eyewitness account—and it is the only one we possess. Sayyid Āġhā Ḥasan "Amānat" (1815–1858) had composed, Nāṣir tells us, a *masnavī*—an extended poem, often narrative, in rhymed couplets—called *Indar sabhā* (Indra's assembly) "in the manner of a *rahas*." A *rahas* was a kind of performance involving Kṛṣṇa and the *gopī*s that was invented by Vājid ʿAlī Shāh (r. 1850–1856) and staged by him in his court at Lucknow. Amānat's work, in its new performance mode, now opened this genre to an unprecedentedly wide audience:

> And in this *masnavī* he composed *ġhazal*s and *holī*s and *ṭhumrī*s and *chhand* in the [Braj] Bhākhā language. Thus when they heard it Paṇáit Kashmīrī and Bihārī the Porter and Mīr Ḥāfiẕ selected some beautiful children and lovely moon-

59. Schimmel 1992.
60. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 186.
61. Sharar [c. 1913–1920] 1963: 173–75.

faced boys and had the boys memorize the *maṡnavī,* and educated them in singing and dancing, and set up a *rahas.* And they were retained for fifteen rupees a day. Accordingly, people saw this new-style gathering and liked it very much, and thousands of common *[bāzārī]* people began to come for it. One day the author of this *taẕkirah* too went to this *rahas* gathering of the *Indar sabhā.* I saw that thousands of people were mad and crazy for those beautiful boys. As the verse says:

> There was such a crowd of moon-faced ones
> That I was afraid my heart would be ground to pieces.

And Miyāñ Amānat was seated on a high platform, and a beautiful moon-faced boy sang before him. When I saw this, after watching for a while I came away to my home.

Lest we should fail to note his disapproving tone, Nāṣir adds a final verdict: "Just as thousands of women became prostitutes *[fāḥishah]* through Mīr Ḥasan's *maṡnavī,* so through this *maṡnavī, Indar sabhā,* thousands of men became sodomites *[lūṯī]* and catamites *[muġhlam],* and sodomy became widespread" (1: 231).

Nāṣir's comparison is to Mīr Ḥasan's *Siḥr ul-bayān* (Magic of discourse), which is by far the most famous *maṡnavī* in Urdu. Yet in his account of Mīr Ḥasan, Nāṣir has lavish praise for the *maṡnavī* and not a word to say about its alleged corrupting tendencies (1: 41–42). Apparently Amānat's work irritates Nāṣir and inclines him to dark mutterings. Even in the midst of his petulance he cannot help inserting a verse, but that does not change his basic mood. For in this performance he sees what might be called a real-world vulgarization of the love of beautiful boys: instead of being abstract poetic visions of beauty, desire, and transgression, here the boys are present in the flesh, in quantity, singing romantic verses before a huge audience of excited common people. Instead of remaining a sophisticated genre, recited in settings controlled by poets and elite patrons, here the *maṡnavī* is filled with colloquial verse forms and acted out as popular entertainment. Instead of a few commoners' being generously allowed to join the company of poets, here a veteran poet himself presides over the offering of his work for mass consumption and patronage.[62] Here is the beginning of something new, the seed of Urdu drama from which would grow the Parsi theater and so much else besides; Nāṣir seems to sense this, and he is *not* amused.

*USTĀD*S, *SHĀGIRD*S, AND POETRY-MAKING

We have noticed the confrontational aspects of the tradition—the way the *mushāʿirah* functioned as an arena for many kinds of conflict and rivalry. But

---

62. Hanson 1998.

the warmer and more supportive side of the literary experience should not be overlooked. Impromptu composition was highly valued, and many opportunities were available for the poet to show his skill. Above all, well-earned praise from one's *ustād* was sweet beyond measure. Nāṣir describes, with a becoming show of modesty, one such achievement of his own that earned his *ustād*'s praise:

> One day [a *shāgird* named] "Ṭapish" came to Ḥaẓrat Ustād [Mużnib], having composed this line and petitioning for the second line:
>
> > Sir, please just shoot your arrow with a bit of care.
>
> As it happened, this humble one too was in attendance at that time. From my lips, without thought or hesitation, there emerged:
>
> > Some awestruck one might be in the guise of a gazelle.
>
> The *ustād* was extremely pleased with the second line and gave the highest praise and applause to my inventiveness. (1: 67–68)

What does it mean to "shoot with care"? To avoid hitting an innocent passerby who stands transfixed by the sight of the beloved's beauty? Or to shoot accurately for a clean kill, to spare the hopelessly infatuated lover any prolonged suffering? Both at once, of course. This is part of the elegance of *kināyah,* "implication," one of the recognized ways to make a small two-line poem feel packed with meaning.[63]

While the *shāgird* might pull off such feats occasionally, for an experienced and long-practiced *ustād* these subtleties were routine. An *ustād* was a priceless resource: by changing a single word, he could raise the verse from the realm of the ordinary into a much finer and more complex state. Taking a mediocre verse, the *ustād* "adorned it with the jewels of correction" (2: 310–11). Many of Nāṣir's anecdotes illustrate such skills.

> > Whichever taciturn one *[kam sukhan]* I address would speak out—
> > There is such accomplishment in me that a picture would speak out.
>
> Miyāñ "Dilgīr" Ṣāḥib used to say, "One day I was in attendance upon Shaiḳh Nāsiḳh, when Mīr Saʿadat ʿAlī "Taskīn" arrived. The Shaiḳh Ṣāḥib said, "Please recite something." Dilgīr Ṣāḥib recited the verse above. The Shaiḳh said, "Your verse is good. If in place of 'taciturn' *[kam sukhan]* there were 'tongueless' *[be zabāñ],* then your accomplishment would be manifest and the verse would become peerless." Dilgīr Ṣāḥib accepted his alteration. (1: 175–76)

The difference between "taciturn" and "tongueless" is the difference between an improbability (a reticent, silent person speaks) and an impossibility (a tongueless person speaks; a picture speaks). The claim is now a miraculous

---

63. Fārūqī 1990–1994, 2: 136.

one, parallel to that in the second line—and a far more suggestive and compelling verse has been created.

The emphasis on *ġhazal* verses as independent two-line poems naturally encouraged the cult of *rabt* and the creation of various kinds of "implication" and multivalence and subtlety in small amounts of verbal space. It also lent itself to a focus on the smallest possible verbal space, the single perfect word—the word that brings the whole verse to life and delights the audience. As we have seen, Mīr reserved a separate category of Urdu poetry for verses based on *īhām,* the use of a "word fundamental to the verse" that would "have two meanings, one obvious and one remote, and the poet should intend the remote meaning, not the obvious one." Such verses carry an obvious one-two punch, since they first notably misdirect—and then abruptly correct—the audience. Nāṣir, too, recognizes *īhām* as a special style characteristic of certain poets (1: 491, 1: 505, 2: 142). In one case, he links it explicitly with the pursuit of meaning, describing a poet as not only an *īhām-*creator but also a *maʿnī band,* a "capturer/depicter of meaning" (2: 419). After the early vogue for *īhām* had passed, the concept remained as one of the technical devices in the *ġhazal* repertoire; it was merely one rather specialized form of "meaning-creation."[64]

Ġhālib, the last great master of classical *ġhazal,* was famous for this kind of convoluted, metaphysical, "difficult" poetry. He famously declared poetry to be "the creation of meanings *[maʿnī āfirīnī],* not the measuring out of rhymes." But the love of wordplay and complexity certainly goes back at least to Mīr, who, as we have seen, claimed all verbal resources as his own.

> A single utterance has any number of aspects, Mīr
> What a variety of things I constantly say with the tongue of the pen!

And again:

> Every verse is coiled *[pechdār]* like a lock of hair
> Mīr's speech is of an extraordinary kind.

Not only examples of such complex poetry, but also specific references to it and claims of prowess in it, are found in the work of virtually all the great Urdu (and Indo-Persian) poets. Samayasundar's legendary feat, at Akbar's court in Lahore, of drawing more than eight hundred thousand meanings from an eight-word sentence, might in fact be considered a sort of limit case of *maʿnī āfirīnī.*[65]

Moreover, this love of wordplay, implication, and verbal complexity was

---

64. Fārūqī 1997; Faruqi, chapter 14, this volume.

65. In this paragraph I quote from Ġhālib 1969, 1: 114–15, and Mīr 1983: 553, 615; on wordplay in Urdu poetry, see Fārūqī 1990–1994, 3: 129–31.

no mere elite pastime: at least in nineteenth-century Delhi and Lucknow it was by all accounts a widespread taste that pervaded the popular culture. According to Sharar, wordplay with double meanings *(ẓilaʿ)* was a specialty of Amānat, the author of the *Indar sabhā;* but even his expertise was outdone by the skill of the people of Lucknow in general. Sharar names several popular Lakhnavi genres of wit and quick repartee (e.g., *phabtī, tuk bandī*) and singles out for particular praise the cry of a street vendor:

> A street vendor was selling sugarcane in the market. This was his cry: "Hey friends, who will capture a kite?" Can any metaphor be more enjoyable than this? The most refined metaphor is that in which the name neither of the thing itself, nor of the metaphorical thing, appears. Only some special feature of the metaphorical thing is mentioned, to give pleasure in the speaking. What better example can there be of this than his not mentioning the name of sugarcane, or of the bamboo with which kites are captured, but only saying, "Who will capture a kite?"

The bamboo pole with which kites are captured is a metaphor for the tall sugarcane; and the pole itself is not even named, but only suggested. Sharar reports that no simile could be more to the taste of the common people *(bāzārī log)* than this, and that "hundreds, thousands" of such examples could be heard "night and day" in popular conversation.[66]

A disdain for "mere" wordplay is by now deeply engrained in the poetic sensibilities of modern Urdu-speakers. Yet, as Shamsur Rahman Faruqi points out, it is quite wrong to conceive of such wordplay as some kind of lacy ornamental frippery unrelated to the real world. "Wordplay tells us much about language and its possibilities, its colorful varieties, its subtleties." And since language itself is not merely a most important part of our world, but is also actually constitutive of that world, none of its creative and expressive possibilities should be overlooked.[67] Wordplay is, in short, always meaning-play as well. The poets and audiences of the classical Urdu *ghazal* were well aware of its multivalent powers, and valued it accordingly. Their heirs live in a literary universe that is, by comparison, much simpler, flatter, and more impoverished.

THE LAST *TAẒKIRAH?*

Nāṣir's *taẓkirah* was initially completed in 1846, and a decade later the Mutiny swept away the world of classical Urdu poetry. Old "Mughal" Delhi was destroyed, its poets dispersed. The young Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, whose father was executed by the British for participation in the rebellion, fled the

66. Sharar [c. 1913–1920] 1963: 189–93.
67. Fārūqī 1997: 46.

city on foot with his whole extended family. Placing them in safety with friends, he wandered for several years, avoiding arrest, until he settled in La-hore and eventually got a job with the Department of Public Instruction. There he lived for the rest of his life, and there he wrote, among many other works, *Āb-e ḥayāt* (Water of life)—for he knew that "poetry is water of life to the spirit."[68] He explained his purpose in this work by analyzing the traditional cultural role of the *tazkirah:*

> Moreover, those with new-style educations, whose minds are illumined by light from English lanterns, complain that our *tażkirah*s describe neither a poet's biography, nor his temperament, character, and habits; nor do they reveal the merits of his work, or its strong and weak points, or the relationship between him and his contemporaries and between his poetry and their poetry. In fact they even go so far as to omit the dates of his birth and death. Although this complaint is not entirely without foundation, the truth is that information of this kind is generally available in families, and through accomplished members of distinguished families and their circles of acquaintances. It's partly that such people have been disheartened at the reversal in the times and have given up on literature, and partly that knowledge and its forms of communication take new paths with every day's experience.

*Tazkirah*s, in other words, had always been supplemented by oral narrative and anecdote—stories about the poets were "the small change of gossip, suitable tidbits to be enjoyed when groups of friends were gathered together," so that "it never occurred to people to write about these things in books" in any systematic manner. Could anyone have known "that the page of the times would be turned—that the old families would be destroyed, and their offspring so ignorant that they would no longer know even their own family traditions?"[69]

Āzād emphasized the value of the new technology of printing, and he proposed to use it to create a new super-*tazkirah.* "All these thoughts made it incumbent upon me to collect what I knew about the elders or had found in various references in different *tazkirah*s and write it down in one place." Moreover, he would strive for a degree of narrative continuity that traditional *tazkirah*s had never remotely desired: "And insofar as possible I should write in such a way that speaking, moving, walking pictures of their lives should appear before us and attain immortal life." As he sought to renew, vindicate, and purify Urdu poetry, he had a clearly proclaimed agenda: Persian was over and done with, while "the English language is a magic world of progress and reform."[70] In *Āb-e ḥayāt* Āzād created the ultimate *tazkirah*—it was at once

68. Āzād, quoted in Pritchett 1994: 50.
69. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 3–4. (Source for all quotations in the paragraph.)
70. Āzād [1880, 1883] 1982: 4.

the self-proclaimed culmination of the tradition, the preeminent canon-forming work, a severe and sweeping criticism of the classical poetry, and the first real linguistic and literary history of Urdu. After this immensely transformative work, neither the *tazkirah* tradition nor the classical poetry could ever look the same again.

BEYOND THE *TAZKIRAH* TRADITION

In the aftermath of the cataclysmic events of 1857 and their lasting effects, and in the aftermath of *Āb-e ḥayāt,* what now survives of this particular literary culture? Certainly much of it is long gone, and over the past century and a quarter its surviving texts have been widely misunderstood and misjudged.[71] Āzād and his followers crammed the classical *ġhazal* willy-nilly into a Victorian and naively realistic mold; when they found parts that didn't fit, they were quite prepared to cut them off and cast them aside. The fact that Mīr wrote verses in which the beloved was a beautiful boy was never a problem within the stylized and well-understood world of the *ġhazal;* since Āzād's time, however, it has made many critics uncomfortable, and such verses are routinely edited out of anthologies. Mīr was proud of his verses based on wordplay and punning; nowadays some consider it insulting to his "simplicity" and "sincerity" even to point out that such verses exist. Modern Urdu readers are thus left with a monumental legacy of literary achievement, and on the whole, a very inadequate critical apparatus for making sense of it.

And what of the other "classical" genres? Our discussion here has given them short shrift in order to look as closely as possible at the *ġhazal*-based heart of this literary culture. The generic spectrum of classical Urdu poetry has been described, and its famous *ustād*s enumerated, in considerable detail elsewhere; accounts are available both in Urdu and in English.[72] Like the *ġhazal,* the other genres too have had their various problems with the post-1857 tendencies—moralistic, realist, nationalist—of the Urdu critical tradition. Ram Babu Saksena, in one of the earliest Urdu literary histories to be written in English, accused all the poetic genres en masse of a "servile imitation" of Persian poetry that made them, as he explained in carefully numbered categories, (1) unreal; (2) rhetorical; (3) conventional; (4) mechanical, artificial, and sensual; and (5) unnatural—for Persian poetry was often "vitiated and perverse."[73]

---

71. Pritchett 1994.

72. For Urdu, see Shamīm Aḥmad 1981, and Fārūqī 1981; for English, see Schimmel 1975, and Zaidi 1993.

73. Saksena [1927] 1990: 23–25. Ralph Russell has addressed this pervasive hostility in a wryly funny article, "How Not to Write the History of Urdu Literature" (Russell 1987).

And the situation is not all that different even today. The panegyric *qaṣīdah* has been found demeaningly effusive and implausibly hyperbolic; the satiric *hajv* has "degenerated" and consists of "coarse and vulgar lampoons"; the Shiite Karbala-lament, or *marṡiyah,* with its weeping and fainting heroes, is accused of excessive pathos and a lack of "manliness"; the prose romance *(dāstān)* is castigated for displaying "a complete lack of historical sense," and its looming presence is denigrated or even largely ignored.[74] All these common attitudes are easy to illustrate from a single widely known literary history, Professor Muhammad Sadiq's—and that too, sadly enough, is the very one the English-language reader is most likely to encounter in a Western library.

The trajectory of the *shahr āshob* ("city-destruction") genre is particularly illustrative of the changing times: from its Turkish origins as a sexy, witty, wordplay-filled inventory of beautiful boys (whose looks made them "city-destroyers") and their various professions, the genre evolved into a still-witty "world-turned-upside-down" poem in which the poet exulted in his verbal prowess and gloated over his upstart rivals or expressed a variety of other opinions about different professions and classes in his city (the world might be going to hell, but his art remained supreme). It also came to include some melancholy, rather abstract, *ġhazal*-influenced evocations of the utter ruin of a city. Over time, critics have increasingly sought to reify such accounts as much as possible and to view the genre as one filled with actual, reliable historical descriptions of urban decay.[75]

Whatever have been the vicissitudes of other genres, however, the *ġhazal* remains in a class by itself. According to that same authoritative literary history by Muhammad Sadiq, the *ġhazal* is guilty of a uniquely long list of offenses. Because the *ġhazal* was "tainted with narrowness and artificiality at the very outset of its career," it "lacks freshness"; it "has no local colour"; its deficiency in "truthfulness," "sincerity," and a "personal note" has made much of it into a "museum piece." Its imagery is "fixed and stereotyped"; it is "incapable of showing any feeling for nature"; it is a "patchwork of disconnected and often contradictory thoughts and feelings." Its love is "a torture, a disease," a "morbid and perverse passion"—a view that is a "legacy from Persia" and is "ultimately traceable to homosexual love." Furthermore, over time the *ġhazal* has gone from bad to worse: it has developed "wholly in the direction of fantasy and unreality" in the course of its "downward career." For all these reasons, in short, the *ġhazal* "stands very low in the hierarchy of literary forms."[76]

The *ġhazal* remains in a class by itself, moreover, not only because of its

---

74. Sadiq [1964] 1984: 38–40, 211–212, 55.
75. Naʿīm Aḥmad 1979; Pritchett 1984.
76. Sadiq [1964] 1984: 14–19, 24, 27, 29, 20.

historical preeminence or the widespread modern discomfort with its "immoral" themes and "unnatural" poetics. The other important traditional genres all involved units of composition longer than the two-line verses of the *ġhazal* and were by comparison less performative, less orally focused, less agonistic, less versatile. Textual and attributional problems in most of the longer genres were also less pervasive: since longer works were fewer and more conspicuous, their authorship was easier to establish, and they were more likely to circulate in writing than orally. In the case of the other literary forms, there was much less need (or use) for a special genre of record and dissemination like the *taẕkirah*. For although other genres were involved in a secondary way, the whole interlocked literary culture of *ustād, shāgird,* and *mushāʿirah* documented in the *taẕkirah*s was primarily devoted to the cultivation of the *ġhazal* as an elite oral performance genre.

Once the page of history had been turned on that culture, how could the *ġhazal* live? How could it maintain its subtlety and complexity, and how could the necessary level of connoisseurship be inculcated in its audience? After *Āb-e ḥayāt,* people continued to write works that called themselves *taẕkirah*s, like ʿAbd ul-Ḥayy's *Gul-e raʿnā* (The graceful rose, 1921–1922), Lālah Srī Rām's multi-volume *Ḵhumḵhānah-e jāved* (The eternal winehouse, 1906–1926), and many other less famous examples. Such works are produced to this day.[77] But authors could no longer write a *taẕkirah* naturally and unselfconsciously; they always had to take into account, for better or worse, the all-pervasive influence of *Āb-e ḥayāt,* with its naive and ruthlessly Westernizing notions of literary history.

And how to make up for the even more irretrievable loss of those bearers of oral tradition, the great *ustād*s of the past? Once the aftermath of 1857 had destroyed the patronage system—and in fact the whole culture—that had sustained such *ustād*s, what was to be done? For decades people mourned the loss of the old *ustād-shāgird* lineages, and of the poetic world they had constituted. Attenuated *ustād-shāgird* relationships continued to exist, but the heart had gone out of it all. The power of collective nostalgia eventually produced a remarkable monument: a work called *Mashshāṯah-e suḵhan* (The adorner of poetry) by "Ṣafdar" Mirzāpūrī, of which the first part was published in 1918 and the second part in 1928. According to Maulvī ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq, the first part sold so briskly that within a few years not a copy was to be had anywhere. Starting in 1927, therefore, ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq serialized the second part in his journal *Urdū,* since he considered the work so important. It offered an anthology of the great *ustād*s' corrections, he explained, and showed their extraordinary technical skill: "how changing only one word,

---

77. On *Gul-e raʿnā* and *Ḵhumḵhānah-e jāved,* see Saksena [1927] 1990: 311–12; on less famous examples, see ʿIshrat [1918] 1928; on more recent works, see Jauhar Deʾobandī 1985.

or rearranging the words, or taking out an unsuitable word and putting in a suitable one, lifts the level of the verse and the *maẓmūn* to a new height."[78] Readers so appreciated the first volume, Ṣafdar wrote, that they helped locate much new material in letters and other sources for the second volume; while the first volume featured only seventeen *ustād*s, the second volume contained exemplary corrections by fully sixty-one *ustād*s.[79]

At about the same time, Muḥammad ʿAbd ul-ʿAlā "Shauq" Sandīlvī devised a fascinating experiment, poised between the old ways and the new. He composed sixteen *ġhazal*s and sent them, with polite and deferential letters, to a number of well-known poets, asking for correction. Then he took the responses of forty-two of these *ustād*s, juxtaposed their corrections to each verse, and turned the whole thing into a very well-received book. Even today similar attempts continue to be published: corrections made by revered poets— including "corrections" of the corrections of earlier *ustād*s—are sometimes compiled and analyzed, as was recently done in the case of "Abr" Aḥsanī Gunnaurī (1898–1973).[80]

If *ustād-shāgird* relationships and the correction process survive in a kind of ghostly conceptual limbo, the *mushāʿirah* itself is far more vigorously present. Reformist *mushāʿirah*s with an assigned topic ("Patriotism," "The Rainy Season") rather than a pattern line were part of the "natural poetry" movement from its earliest days. It is true that nowadays in films and books people look nostalgically to the past, imagining consummate *mushāʿirah*s as they never were but should have been. But important modern *mushāʿirah*s too have been studied.[81] Modern public *mushāʿirah*s now take place in every city in the world where Urdu-speakers are at all numerous and organized; many readers of this volume will be able to find them if they look. They are now usually not private affairs but open public performances funded through donations and ticket sales; they are single events rather than regular meetings; they are no longer "patterned" but are free-form; they do not feature criticism or analysis of the poetry but instead are run by specially adept "comperes" who know how best to entertain the audience.[82]

The *ġhazal* itself thrives nowadays not only among popular and crowd-pleasing "*mushāʿirah* poets" (as they are sometimes called) but among serious poets as well; a list of names could be provided that would include almost

78. Ṣafdar Mirzāpūrī [1918, 1928] 1992, 2: 8.

79. Pritchett 1994: 82–84.

80. Shauq Sandīlvī [1926] 1986; on "Abr" Aḥsanī Gunnaurī, see Cistī 1990.

81. On the natural poetry movement, see Pritchett 1994: 35–39; for examples of nostalgically imagined *mushāʿirah*s, see Farḥatullāh Beg [1935–1936?] 1986, and Qamber 1979; on modern *mushāʿirah*s, see Sarvar Taunsvī 1991, and Zaidī 1992: 189–248.

82. Rahman 1983; Naim 1989.

every notable Urdu poet of the twentieth century. But these more serious poets cannot write with the expectation of oral performance, the way the classical poets could. They cannot assume, for example, that the audience would hear the first line of each verse several times, so that the audience would be held in a state of suspense before being granted access to the second line, as would have been the case in a classical *mushāʿirah;* some recitation styles actually turned *mushāʿirah* performance into almost a musical genre.[83] Nowadays, serious modern *ġhazal*s tend inevitably to be "eye poetry" meant to be experienced first and foremost on the printed page. This in itself marks them off very sharply from their classical predecessors.

In any case, in numbers and influence serious *ġhazal*s pale by comparison to the extraordinarily pervasive mass-market, "pop" *ġhazal* phenomenon. If Ġhālib's life is made, or rather remade—extremely and implausibly democratized, romanticized, and nationalized—into films and television serials, if his *ġhazal*s are sung (sometimes rather inaccurately) by Jagjit and Chitra Singh, is this a gain or a loss to historical memory? A gain, no doubt, but a bittersweet one. Anita Desai's novel *In Custody* (1984), and the successful Urdu film *Ḥifāẕat* (Protection) that was made from it, are seen by some as a trashing of the old literary culture, by others as a nostalgic lament at its decline. "Hindi" (actually, Hindi-Urdu) films are full of *filmī ġhazal*s of a naive, romantic, simplistic kind—but can the *ġhazal* still be itself, after such a sacrifice of depth for the sake of maximum breadth of appeal? The *ġhazal* thrives in modern "cassette culture,"[84] and now on CDs as well. An astonishing number of informative and interpretive websites—mostly amateurish but clearly labors of love—are devoted to both classical and pop *ġhazal*s, as anyone with a web browser can easily discover. Only the *ġhazal*'s modern readers and hearers can decide its current health, and so far they seem to show an undiminished enthusiasm.

Modern *ġhazal* is now a living genre in Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Panjabi, and other languages, with its own history in each one. And even more strikingly, we are seeing an attempted leap by the *ġhazal* into English—not through translation, but as a genuine indigenized genre. Translations have a long history: some Persian *ġhazal*s of Ḥāfiẕ Shīrāzī were translated into Latin and published by Sir William Jones as early as 1771; Ḥāfiẕ's whole *dīvān* was published in German in 1812–1813, and influenced Goethe. English translations of Urdu *ġhazal*s have included unsatisfactory versions too numerous to mention, a few textbooks for students, and one volume of literarily excellent but highly inaccurate "transcreations" by modern English poets working from literal

---

83. Qureshi 1989: 175–89.
84. Manuel 1993: 89–104.

translations. Now, however, the Indian-American poet and translator Agha Shahid Ali has been making serious efforts to work with a *"ġhazal"* genre in English by preserving the repeated element *(radīf)* at the end of each verse.[85] His efforts seem to be increasingly well received. And why should they not? English can surely make room for the *ġhazal,* and the *ġhazal* can no doubt make itself at home in one more new language.

Valī, himself a mediator between different times, places, and literary styles, has laid the groundwork beautifully:

> The road to fresh *mazmūn*s is never closed—
> Till Doomsday the gate of poetry is open.[86]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sources in English

Ahmad, Aijaz, ed. 1971. *Ghazals of Ghalib.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Ali, Agha Shahid. 1997. *The Country without a Post Office: Poems.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Barker, Muhammad Abd-Al-Rahman, et al. 1977. *Classical Urdu Poetry.* 3 vols. Ithaca, N.Y.: Spoken Language Services, Inc.

Das, Sisir Kumar. 1978. *Sahibs and Munshis: An Account of the College of Fort William.* New Delhi: Orion Publications Private Limited.

Desai, Anita. 1984. *In Custody.* London: Heinemann.

Faruqi, Shamsur Rahman. 1998. "Privilege without Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India." *Annual of Urdu Studies* 13: 3–30.

Hanson, Kathryn. 1998. "The Indar Sabha Phenomenon: Public Theatre and Consumption in Greater India (1853–1956)." In *Pleasure and the Nation: The History and Politics of Public Culture in India,* edited by Chris Pinney and Rachel Dwyer. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hardy, Peter. 1972. "Ghalib and the British." In *Ghalib: The Poet and His Age,* edited by Ralph Russell. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Khan, Nadir Ali. 1991. *A History of Urdu Journalism.* Delhi: Idarah-e Adabiyat-e Delli.

King, Christopher R. 1994. *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India.* Bombay: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, Franklin D. 1995. "Reading, Writing, and Recitation: Sana'i and the Origins of the Persian Ghazal." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago.

Manuel, Peter. 1993. *Cassette Culture.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Matthews, D. J., and C. Shackle. 1972. *An Anthology of Classical Urdu Love Lyrics: Text and Translations.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Naim, C. M. 1989. "Poet-Audience Interaction at Urdu Musha'iras." In *Urdu and Mus-*

---

85. On Ḥāfiẓ and Goethe, see Schimmel 1992: 4–6; for English translations/textbooks, see Barker 1977, and Matthews and Shackle 1972; for "transcreations," see Ahmad 1971; Ali's work with the *radīf* can be found in Ali 1997: 40, 73–74, 78.

86. Valī Dakanī 1965: 103.

lim South Asia: Studies in Honour of Ralph Russell, edited by Christopher Shackle. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.

Petievich, Carla R. 1990. "The Feminine Voice in the Urdu Ghazal." *Indian Horizons* 39: 25–41.

———. 1992. *Assembly of Rivals: Delhi, Lucknow, and the Urdu Ghazal.* New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

———. 1999. "Making Manly Poetry: The Construction of Urdu's 'Golden Age.'" In *Rethinking Early Modern India,* edited by Richard G. Barnett. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Platts, John T. [1884] 1968. *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī, and English.* London: Oxford University Press. (5th impr. 1930).

Pritchett, Frances W. 1979. "Convention in the Classical Urdu Ghazal: The Case of Mīr." *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 3 (1): 60–77.

———. 1984. "'The World Turned Upside Down': *Shahrāshob* as a Genre." *Annual of Urdu Studies* 4: 37–41.

———. 1991. *The Romance Tradition in Urdu: Adventures from the Dāstān of Amīr Ḥamzah.* New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 1993. "Orient Pearls Unstrung: The Quest for Unity in the Ghazal." *Edebiyat,* n.s., 4: 119–35.

———. 1994. *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Qamber, Akhter, trans. 1979. *The Last Mushairah of Dehli.* Delhi: Orient Longman. (A translation of *Dihlī kī āk̲h̲irī shamʿa,* by Farḥatullāh Beg, c. 1935–1936.]

Qureshi, Regula. 1989. "The Urdu Ghazal in Performance." In *Urdu and Muslim South Asia: Studies in Honour of Ralph Russell,* edited by Christopher Shackle. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.

Rahman, Munibur. 1983. "The Mushaʿirah." *Annual of Urdu Studies* 3: 75–84.

Russell, Ralph. 1987. "How Not to Write the History of Urdu Literature." *Annual of Urdu Studies* 6: 1–10.

———. 1992. *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History.* London: Zed Books.

Russell, Ralph, and Khurshidul Islam. 1968. *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sadiq, Muhammad. [1964] 1984. *A History of Urdu Literature.* 2d ed. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Saksena, Ram Babu. [1927] 1990. *A History of Urdu Literature.* New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.

Schimmel, Annemarie. 1975. *Classical Urdu Literature from the Beginning to Iqbal.* Vol. 8, fasc. 3 of *A History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

———. 1992. *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Sharar, Abdul Halim. 1975. *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture.* Edited and translated by E. S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain. London: Paul Elek.

Siddiqi, M. Atique. 1963. *Origins of Modern Hindustani Literature; Source Material: Gilchrist Letters.* Aligarh: Naya Kitab Ghar.

Zaidi, Ali Jawad. 1993. *A History of Urdu Literature.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Sources in Urdu and Persian

ʿAbd ul-Ḥayy. n.d. [1921–1922?] *Gul-e raʿnā*. Azamgarh: Shiblī Academy.

Akbar Ḥaidarī Kashmīrī. 1995. Editor's introduction to *Taẕkirah-e reḵẖtah goʾiyāñ*, by ʿAlī ul-Ḥusainī Gardezī, pp. 9–27. Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy.

"Āzād," Muḥammad Ḥusain, ed. [1863] 1933. *Dīvān-e ẕauq*. Delhi: ʿIlmī Printing Works.

———. [1880, 1883] 1982. *Āb-e ḥayāt*. 2d ed. Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy. (Facsimile of 1907 ed., Lahore).

Cistī, ʿUnvān, and Naʿīm ud-Dīn Riẓvī, eds. 1990. *"Abr" aḥsanī aur iṣlāḥ-e suḵẖan*. New Delhi: Urdū Samāj.

Farḥatullāh Beg. [1935–1936?] 1986. *Dihlī kī āḵẖirī shamʿa*. Edited by Ṣalāḥ ud-Dīn. Delhi: Urdu Academy.

"Farmān" Fatḥpūrī. 1972. *Urdū shuʿarā ke taẕkire aur taẕkirah nigārī*. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

Fārūqī, Shams ur-Raḥmān, ed. 1981. *Dars-e balāġhat*. New Delhi: Taraqqī-e Urdū Bureau. (3d reprint 1998.)

———. 1990–1994. *Shiʿr-e shor angez; ġhazaliyāt-e Mīr kā intiḵẖāb aur mufassal muṯāliʿah*. 4 vols. New Delhi: Taraqqī Urdū Bureau. (Vol. 1: 1990; vol. 2: 1991; vol. 3: 1992; vol. 4: 1994. All 4 volumes reprinted 1998.)

———. 1993. *Andāz-e guftagū kyā hai*. Delhi: Maktabah Jāmiʿah.

———. 1997. "Īhām, riʿāyat, aur munāsibat." *Sauġhāt* (Bangalore) 11: 14–70.

Gardezī, ʿAlī ul-Ḥusainī. 1995. *Taẕkirah-e reḵẖtah goʾiyāñ*. Edited by Akbar Ḥaidarī Kashmīrī. Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy.

"Ġhālib," Mirzā Asadullāh Ḵẖān. 1969. *Ḵẖuṯūṯ-e ġhālib*. Edited by Ġhulām Rasūl Mihr. 2 vols. Lahore: Punjab University.

———. [1958] 1982. *Dīvān-e ġhālib*. Edited by Imtiyāz ʿAlī Ḵẖān ʿArshī. New Delhi: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū.

"Ḥālī," Alṯāf Ḥusain. [1893] 1969. *Muqaddamah-e shiʿr o shāʿirī*. Edited by Rashīd Ḥasan Ḵẖān. New Delhi: Maktabah Jamiʿah.

"Ḥātim," Shaiḵẖ Ẓahūr ud-Dīn Shāh. [1755–1756] 1975. *Dīvān zādah*. Edited by Ġhulām Ḥusain Żulfiqār. Lahore: Maktabah Ḵẖayābān-e Adab.

ʿIshrat, Ḵẖvājah Muḥammad ʿAbd ur-Raʾūf. [1918] 1928. *Āb-e baqā*. Edited by Mirzā Jaʿfar ʿAlī. Lucknow: Maktabah Quṯb ud-Dīn Aḥmad Press.

"Jauhar" Deʾobandī, Budh Prakāsh Guptā. 1985. *Naġhmah-e nāqūs, taẕkirah-e shuʿrā-e hanūd, 1901–1925*. Lucknow: Faḵẖr ud-Dīn ʿAlī Aḥmad Memorial Committee.

Ḵẖvājah, Mushfiq. 1972. "Muqaddamah." Editor's introduction to *Ḵẖush maʿrikah-e zebā*, by Saʿādat Ḵẖān Nāṣir. Vol. 1. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

"Mīr," Muḥammad Taqī. [1935] 1979. *Nikāt ush-shuʿarā*. Edited by ʿAbd ul-Ḥaq. Karachi: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū.

———. 1983. *Kulliyāt-e mīr jild-e avval*. Edited by Ẕill-e ʿAbbās ʿAbbāsī. New Delhi: Taraqqī-e Urdū Bureau.

Naʿīm Aḥmad. 1979. *Shahr āshob kā taḥqīqī muṯāliʿah*. Aligarh: Adabī Academy.

"Nāṣir," Saʿādat Ḵẖān. 1972. *Ḵẖush maʿrikah-e zebā*. Edited by Mushfiq Ḵẖvājah. 2 vols. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

"Ṣābir," Mirzā Qādir Baḵẖsh. [1854–1855] 1966. *Gulistān-e suḵẖan*. Edited by Ḵẖalīl ur-Raḥmān Dāʾūdī. Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab.

"Ṣafdar" Mirzāpūrī. 1992. *Mashshāṭah-e suḵẖan.* 2 vols. [1918, 1928]. Lahore: Gīlānī Electric Press Book Depot. (Reprinted in facsimile in *Nigār* [Karachi] 70.4 [April 1992] and 70.9 [September 1992].)

"Sarvar" Taunsvī. 1991. *Dillī ke mushāʿire.* Delhi: Urdu Academy.

Shamīm Aḥmad. 1981. *Aṣnāf-e suḵẖan aur shiʿrī haʾiyateñ.* Bhopal: India Book Emporium.

Shamīm Inhonvī. 1971. "Dībāchah." Editor's introduction to *Taẕkirah ḵẖush maʿrikah-e zebā,* by Saʿādat Ḵẖān Nāṣir. Lucknow: Nasīm Book Depot.

"Sharar," ʿAbd ul-Ḥalīm. [c. 1913–1920] 1963. *Mashriqī tamaddun kā āḵẖirī namūnah: Guzishtah lakhnaʾū.* Karachi: Sulṭān Ḥusain and Sons.

"Shauq" Sandīlvī, Muḥammad ʿAbd ul-ʿĀlā. [1926] 1986. *Iṣlāḥ-e suḵẖan: Mashāhīr shuʿarā-e ʿaṣr kī iṣlāḥoñ kā āʾīnah.* Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy.

Vadūd, Qāẓī ʿAbdul. [1942–1943] 1984. *Muḥammad ḥusain āzād baḥaiṡiyat-e muḥaqqiq.* Patna: Idārah-e Taḥqīqāt-e Urdū.

Valī Dakanī. 1965. *Dīvān-e valī.* Edited by Maḥmūd Ḵẖān Ashraf and Ḥasrat Mohānī. Lahore: Maktabah-e Merī Library.

Zaidī, ʿAlī Javād. 1992. *Tārīḵẖ-e mushāʿirah.* Bombay: Author.

The Progress of Hindi, Part 1

The Development of a Transregional Idiom

Stuart McGregor

This chapter considers the role played by literary culture in defining a north Indian cultural identity that can be seen today as both regional and participating in India's wider culture. What is this role, and how has it been played? How have literary forms, styles, themes, and languages been perceived, and how have they been employed to express societal concerns and cultural values? In addressing these and similar questions, I discuss aspects of the literary tradition of Hindi from the fourteenth century to the late nineteenth century. The tradition is a complex one involving the participation of several related forms of language, and I make the nature of this participation an organizing theme of the chapter. To assist readers who are not specialists in South Asian studies I provide historical and other contextual background to the various topics discussed, as seems appropriate.

The way in which expressions such as "literary tradition of Hindi" are used in this chapter deserves explanation, given the linguistic ambiguity of the term "Hindi." In accordance with its meaning—"Indian"—in Persian, this word was used by Muslim groups in north India chiefly to refer to local Indian vernacular language, although it could refer in principle to any Indian language. Thus the Arab traveler and writer al-Bīrūnī used it in the early eleventh century to refer to Sanskrit. By the thirteenth century the word was used, along with its variants "Hindavī" or "Hinduī," to refer to the linguistically mixed speech of Delhi, which came into wide use across north India and incorporated a component of Persian vocabulary. This speech could be written down either in Persian script, which became normal practice in Indo-Muslim communities, or in Devanagari script, which happened mostly where Hindu influences prevailed. Those writing this language in Devanagari script normally had affiliations with traditional Sanskritic culture, and as evidence from the late seventeenth century indicates, their Hindi was liable to con-

tain a smaller infusion of Persian vocabulary as well as a proportion of loan-words of cultural connotation borrowed from Sanskrit. This Hindi/Hindui became a major component of the mixed language of the north Indian *sant* poets (discussed later), such as Kabīr of Benares. In so doing it acquired a significant literary function alongside its general communicative role across north India, and beyond. It developed eventually, by different routes, into modern Urdu and modern Hindi, which, linguistically regarded, are essentially complementary styles—Persianized and Sanskritized, respectively—of the same language.

Two other forms of north Indian language, closely related to Hindi/Hindui, were in use as literary languages from at least the fourteenth century. Brajbhasha, the speech of the Agra district to the south of Delhi, became the standard language of Kṛṣṇa poetry and court poetry; from around 1600 until the rise of literary Urdu in the later eighteenth century, it was recognized along with Persian as the leading literary language of the whole northern region. Avadhi, localized in and around the Lucknow-Allahabad region, was recognized from an early stage as the vehicle of Sufi narrative poetry; in a different role, it acquired a cultural and literary importance that continues to this day as the language of Tulsīdās's late-sixteenth-century scripture of Rāma worship, *Rāmcaritmānas* (Holy lake of Rāma's acts).

It was thus in three speeches—Brajbhasha, Avadhi, and Hindi/Hindui—that the literary traditions that are the subject of this chapter received expression and were passed down over several centuries. These literary traditions were expressed most fully (we may assume) among predominantly Hindu communities. Aspects of earlier religious and social culture that had remained vital since ancient times were also transmitted through these traditions. Cultural continuities—as also the close linguistic kinship existing between Hindi/Hindui and Brajbhasha—ensured that when modern Hindi began to emerge on the grammatical base of Hindi/Hindui, the literary and lexical traditions of Brajbhasha, Avadhi, and Hindi/Hindui would be intimately familiar to its authors and their public. From the outset they would be infused into the new style of language. The literary traditions of Brajbhasha and Avadhi would continue to inform the development of modern Hindi into the twentieth century. They had, indeed, been an enabling factor in the rise of modern Hindi in the late nineteenth century, underpinning the concept of it as a future language of literary scope. It is historically and linguistically inappropriate to speak of early Brajbhasha and Avadhi as dialects of modern Hindi, which they long preceded as literary languages; however, in the context of an early twenty-first century consideration of questions of literary culture in north India, they may properly be regarded as falling within a composite "literary tradition of Hindi."

Consciousness of cultural continuities, and hence desire for their preservation, are important concerns within Hindi literary tradition. This is well

illustrated in the earliest work dealt with in the present chapter, Maulānā Dāūd's *Candāyan* (1379). The rationale of *Candāyan* lies in cultural rapprochement and the gradual rise of new attitudes after 1200 as a consequence of the Muslim incursion and settlement, yet this work uses a stanza pattern based on late Middle Indian (Apabhramsha) models established centuries before. Running through much of the literature discussed in this chapter is a characteristic contrast between, on the one hand, a desire to express new attitudes and motivations in contemporary language and style, and, on the other, an awareness of norms of older literary culture, especially as enshrined in Sanskrit texts and language.

The bulk of this chapter is devoted to developments in Brajbhasha and Avadhi literature, and in *sant* poetry, that took place between the late fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries. The final section of the chapter deals with circumstances of the emergence of modern Hindi as a language of literature in the nineteenth century. Four localities feature as sites of innovation or achievement: Gwalior to the south of Agra, the Braj district to the north of Agra, Orccha (in Bundelkhāṇḍ to the south of Gwalior), and Benares with its hinterlands in eastern U.P. and Bihar.

Gwalior has the significance of being almost the earliest identifiable center of cultivation of Brajbhasha poetry. Here a fifteenth century poet named Viṣṇudās became the effective inaugurator of a tradition of narrative on Sanskritic *(Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa)* themes, adapted to use in a new, modern way.

The Braj district came to new literary prominence with the awakening, around 1500, of a new Kṛṣṇa devotion all across north India, Bengal, and Gujarat. Sectarian groups established themselves in the traditional sacred sites of Braj; a flourishing oral poetry of Kṛṣṇa songs, both sectarian and nonsectarian, rapidly developed, as well as a literature of more elaborate narrative and expository poetry that was early on committed to writing, and some sectarian prose. Brajbhasha remained important throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, existing in a limited literary symbiosis with Urdu at first, and a fuller one with modern Hindi later.

Orccha became an important center of Sanskritic culture and Brajbhasha poetry in the late sixteenth century and produced in Keśavdās (b. c. 1555) one of the leading poets of Brajbhasha. Thanks chiefly to the information provided by Keśavdās in the introductions to his poems, we have fairly good knowledge of the circumstances and range of literary and scholastic activities at Orccha, and of the operation of literary patronage at the Orccha court around 1600.

Benares became an early center of the diffused *sant* tradition of Rāma devotion in the fifteenth century, and in the sixteenth century the very different Ramaism of Tulsīdās's *Rāmcaritmānas* was formulated there. The eighteenth century saw the flourishing of court poets—specialists in poetic theory and

in adaptive use of age-old themes drawn from Sanskrit *kāvya* literature—in the Lucknow-Benares area. In the nineteenth century, it was at Benares that the need to develop modern Hindi as a style of language containing an alternative literary dimension to that of Urdu was first experienced. The versatile writer Hariścandra (1850–1885), of Benares, was the first major exponent of the new literary style. Most of the activities around the turn of the nineteenth century directed towards developing Hindi and its literature, and establishing it institutionally, owed something to his work in drama, prose, or poetry.

BRAJBHASHA AND AVADHI IN THE
CONSOLIDATION OF A NEW LITERARY CULTURE

Received Traditions and Bicultural Identity: Dāūd's Candāyan

Cultural rapprochement, particularly between Sufi and *nāth śaiva* communities,[1] provided conditions in which Maulānā Dāūd completed his Sufi romance, *Candāyan,* composed in Avadhi, in 1379.[2] Dāūd lived at Dalmau near Rae Bareli, and belonged to a local branch of the Cistī Sufi community. This community had long been established in north India and is known to have had close contacts with local populations. *Candāyan* testifies to the extent of Dāūd's assimilation of local culture. He finds his story in the folktale of Lorik and Cāndā (which is identified with more easterly regions today),[3] and interprets the story from a position of identification with both local culture and Sufi tradition. A tantalizing reference in *Candāyan* to *piram kahānī,* "tales of love," illustrates that *Candāyan* had predecessors in the romance genre that are now lost; it is clear that some of these were vernacular, and of Sufi type.[4]

Dāūd's introduction to *Candāyan* is strongly bicultural, though he composed it to the standard requirements of a Persian narrative *maṣnavī* (literary romance). In Sanskritic vocabulary he describes his teacher Zainu'ddīn as "setting him on the path of *dharama* that removes sin *[pāp],*" opening his eyes to spiritual teaching, and providing him with a "boat of *dharama* to cross the Ganges." Dāūd also throws light on the genesis of his poem, saying that he learned to write in "Turkish" script under Zainu'ddīn's tutelage and, having done so, recorded what he composed in the same script and "sang [it] in Hindi."[5] Elsewhere, he speaks of "uttering" the poem *(udbhās-, kah-).* A num-

1. The nath śaivas were yogis, worshippers of Śiva, who had inherited traditions of late Buddhism.
2. Ed. Gupta 1964, Gupta 1967 (references are to the latter edition).
3. Pandey 1978, 1979. Knowledge of "Lorik dances" *(lorika nācyo)* is documented from Mithilā c. 1325 in Jyotirīśvar's *Varṇaratnākara.* Chatterji and Misra 1940: 2 and introd., xv.
4. *Candāyan,* v. 172.
5. *turakī likhi likhi hindukī gāi. Candāyan,* v. 9.

ber of inferences can be drawn from these remarks. The roots in Persian literacy of the cultural tradition to which we owe the Hindi *Candāyan* are clear, as is the role of a Sufi outpost at Dalmau in mediating that tradition. It is probable, again, that the poet's own literacy aided assimilation of forms and style from the putative vernacular literary tradition. Even though the poem, or parts of it, circulated as an oral work, it was evidently also transmitted in writing from the time of its composition down to the period of the earliest extant manuscripts, in the sixteenth century.[6] The existence of an early scribal tradition of *Candāyan,* as well as the poem's popularity in the fifteenth century, is confirmed by the fact that a translation of it into Persian was undertaken at that time.[7] Finally, Dāūd's totally assured possession of "Hindi" as his literary vehicle emerges *ex silentio* from his introduction. He mentions Hindi as his spoken language only to contrast it with his use of Persian script, and for him the question of using any other language evidently did not arise.

Dāūd's indebtedness to preceding literary tradition is clear in his use of a stanza pattern combining the Apabhramsha *dohā* couplet with the four-foot *caupāī,* which has Apabhramsha analogues. We see the most distinctive stanza structure of Hindi narrative poetry established here, at the very outset of the extant Hindi literary tradition. Equally significant—and a powerful testimony to the extent of cultural rapprochement—is the presence of Sanskritic loanwords in appreciable numbers in this founding text of the tradition. The literary identity of *Candāyan* is clear again in Dāūd's treatment of the story of Lorik and Cāndā as compared with modern folk versions. Dāūd expands a single central theme of the tale, providing it with a more elaborate structure than the folk versions and a style capable of carrying the Sufi symbolism. His poetic technique draws on both Persian and Indian traditions. Thus he uses the stock-in-trade metaphors in both literatures, and finds in Indian poetics the *nakh-sikh* conventions of description of a woman's beauty and the theory of the savor *(rasa)* of love. This for Dāūd is symbolic of divine beauty and the human being's love for it, as well as of earthly love. Yet the literary merges constantly with the popular in *Candāyan.* As a courtly lover in the Kṛṣṇa mold *(nāgar chaïl),* Lorik climbs to Cāndā's balcony seeking the paradise of divine love; earlier, however, he has cut a very different figure in the bazaar when buying the rope he will need for the ascent; and when he faints at the temple, nearly mortally wounded by the "arrow" of Cāndā's glance, his collapse is that of "a goat slaughtered at Diwali."

6. This was essentially a Persian manuscript tradition. Of eight complete or partial manuscripts noted by M. P. Gupta, only one (dated v.s. 1673) is in Devanagari script.

7. This translation was destroyed before being completed, at a date before 1479. Digby 1975: 15 referring to *Laṭā'if e Quddūsī.* The historian Badā'onī (b. 1540) mentions the (earlier) reputation of *Candāyan* and its impact among Muslims, which motivated the translation. Ranking 1884: 333.

Altered Views of Old Traditions: Viṣṇudās's Poetry at Gwalior

Much of the credit for consolidating an early tradition of vernacular narrative on Sanskritic themes goes to a Gwalior poet named Viṣṇudās. Gwalior, under Hindu Tomar kings throughout the fifteenth century after a long period of subjection, became during the reign of Ḍũgarsī (1424–1454) a significant political force holding something of a balance of power between Muslim states of the north and west. It was also an important cultural center supporting Jain, *nāth śāiva,* and Muslim as well as Hindu communities.[8] The long-standing Jain use of themes from the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* in extended narratives in Apabhramsha meant that Kṛṣṇa and Rāma traditions were current in this form in western Jain centers. Two Jain poets, Yaśaḥkīrti and Raydhū, are known to have composed and recited Apabhramsha narratives of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma in the Gwalior region around 1440. A temple inscription of 1405 from near Gwalior indicates that by that time, Brajbhasha had been receiving local cultivation in formal use for at least some decades.[9] Conditions were thus locally favorable for Viṣṇudās's Brajbhasha adaptations from the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* titled *Pāṇḍavcarit* (Deeds of the Pāṇḍavas; 1435) and *Rāmāyankathā* (The story of Rāma and his deeds; 1442).

Other favorable factors were also at work. If the preface to the Maithilī poet Vidyāpati's Apabhramsha poem *Kīrtilatā* (c. 1400) is anything to go by,[10] most people, aside from some members of Jain communities, would by now have regarded Apabhramsha as an outdated medium. Many, whether Hindu or Jain, would have shared Viṣṇudās's awareness of Gwalior's role as "a thorn in the side of her enemies," as well as of the disturbing effect of Muslim presence on Indian, or Hindu, ways of life. How, Viṣṇudās asks in his version of the *Mahābhārata,* can the heart and soul of *dharma* be maintained today?[11] A poet with such a consciousness, as well as his audience, would tend to read a significance unknown to earlier Jain authors into the old *Mahābhārata* traditions, for the sociopolitical situation of his time and place lent itself to definition in terms of community identity.

Pāṇḍavcarit and *Rāmāyaṇkathā* are extensive works for singing or recitation, and are composed in stanza patterns resembling the *caupāī-dohā* of *Candāyan;* they show practice in composition and anticipate (though hardly reach) the stylistic fluency of the later Brajbhasha poets.[12] In *Pāṇḍavcarit,* themes taken

8. Dvivedī 1973; Misra 1993: 35–47. The "skills *(caturāī)* of Gwalior" referred to in the fifteenth century Mārvāṛī *Visaḷadevarāsa* probably include those of poetry. Text in Smith 1976: 118–19.

9. Bhayani 1953: 19; Dvivedī 1973: 51.

10. Saksena 1964: 6; McGregor 1984: 30.

11. Dvivedī 1973: 5.

12. Texts in Dvivedī 1973, Dvivedī 1972.

from the opening books of the *Mahābhārata* serve notionally as proxy for almost the entire Sanskrit source. The purpose of Viṣṇudās's version seems to have been to present a selection of the old legends in modern language as an allegory of the modern history of Gwalior, at a time when contemporary society had acquired both an Indo-Muslim dimension and a heightened sense of cultural ties to older times. In *Rāmāyankathā* the intention was to cover Vālmīki's story in careful outline, if unevenly emphasizing its parts, in order to maintain a coherent relation of the whole. Viṣṇudās abridges the story drastically, reducing or discarding expository passages as well as most material pertaining to ancient legend or history. Yet he reveres Vālmīki, whose Sanskrit text he has evidently studied, and acknowledges Vālmīki's authority as author of the original *purāṇa*.[13] He is conscious of what he has left out of his own version, composed in a later age to meet different needs.

Viṣṇudās's introductions to *Pāṇḍavcarit* and *Rāmāyankathā* are among the most elaborate found in Hindi *prabandha* (narrative-expository) works. They place him and his poem firmly within the literary ambience of the Gwalior court and seem to confirm that he stands near the inception of the Brajbhasha tradition of *prabandha* verse. Viṣṇudās disclaims knowledge of versification and figurative language *(chandu* and *lacchanu)* but is well versed in the latter at least. In his invocation to the goddess Sarasvatī in *Pāṇḍavcarit* he inventively replaces her standard symbol, the *vīṇā*, with a book, as if seeking acknowledgment that the new vernacular *prabandha* is now under her patronage. With a similar intention he seems to strive for an easy use of Sanskrit vocabulary in his vernacular verse.[14] It may be in accordance with his family's *śākta*[15] sympathies that he chooses to invoke King Ḍūṁgarsī's queen as *devī* in the course of referring to interests in poetry or learning on her part. He refers in *Rāmāyankathā* to learning the skills of oral poetry *(vacana)* from his guru, Sahajnāth, and the evidence of variant manuscript readings confirms that *Pāṇḍavcarit* was originally orally transmitted.[16]

Viṣṇudās thus worked within the ambit of Sanskrit literary culture while giving it a popular dimension. Standing at or near the beginnings of the Hindi literary tradition, he revived in new form the fundamental Kṛṣṇa and Rāma traditions enshrined in the old epics; in so doing he established a vernacularizing procedure that would be followed by many others during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. The fame of King Ḍūṁgarsī was not des-

---

13. McGregor 1998. The Sanskrit *purāṇa*s were a class of encyclopedic works preserving old knowledge and tradition. Viṣṇudās uses the term loosely here in its Brajbhasha form.

14. Vv. 2–3.

15. The Śāktas were devotees of *śakti,* Śiva's energizing power perceived as a female principle and equated with his wife, Durgā.

16. Text of introduction to *Rāmāyankathā,* with discussion, in McGregor 1991: 186–89; on *Pāṇḍavcarit,* see McGregor 1998.

tined to endure, as the relative indifference of a seventeenth-century Gwalior annalist named Khaṛgrāy demonstrates, and Viṣṇudās's contribution to the development of a Brajbhasha literary tradition has likewise been largely obscured until recently.[17] The importance of his demonstration of the capacities of Brajbhasha goes beyond the literary merits of his work. Eighteenth-century Persian poets of north India showed a more just historical perception than Khaṛgrāy had done when, looking back beyond the long intervening period of Braj devotionalism, they named the literary Brajbhasha of their own day the "language of Gwalior."[18]

Kṛṣṇa Bhakti *and the Revival of Traditions of the Braj Region*

The mood of passionate devotion *(bhakti)* to Kṛṣṇa that arose in north India by the early sixteenth century can be seen as a reaction against patterns of social and religious organization—Brahmanical, *śaiva, śākta*—that had long been dominant and were suddenly perceived, in an age felt as new, as needing revision. The ground was not unprepared for change. The iconoclastic Ramaite *sant* movement, western in origin but acclimatized in the north by the early fifteenth century, had presented a challenge to both Hindu and Muslim religious attitudes through its popular poetry, first in Rajasthan and then elsewhere (as in the Benares region, where it is illustrated in poems ascribed to Kabīr [fl. c. 1450?]).[19] The temporary independence of Gwalior had symbolized a reassertion of Indian, or Hindu, cultural identity, and perhaps foretold a changing political balance. The success of Brajbhasha in the fifteenth century indicates a readiness to give up the earlier Apabhramsha language vehicle and literary style, now seen as outdated. In this situation, the popular and learned Krishnaite poetry that flourished in Gujarat in the fifteenth century[20] appears to have been a developmental model for Kṛṣṇa poetry in the north. Songs of devotion to Kṛṣṇa were composed in the early sixteenth century by Mīrābāī, of the Mewar (Udaipur) region of Rajasthan, and other Kṛṣṇa poets were probably active at the same time in the more northerly Rajasthan-Braj area.[21]

---

17. *Gopācalākhyān* (text in Dvivedī 1980). In Khaṛgrāy the memory of Ḍūṁgarsī's fifteenth-century victories gives way to those of Gwalior's famed resistance to Iltutmish's siege c. 1300 and its final loss in Akbar's time, as well as to a memory of its cultural prestige under Mānsiṃh (late fifteenth century). Accurate knowledge of Viṣṇudās and his poetry begins only recently with H. N. Dvivedī's work in the 1970s.

18. As in Banvālīdās [Valī] 1877: 3, referring to the language of Nandadās (preface to his translation of Nandadās's Brajbhasha version of *Prabodhacandrodaya*).

19. The *sant*s were a community of poets and singers who denied the validity of both Hindu and Muslim teachings and taught a mystical love for a Rāma knowable only through his Name.

20. Mallison 1994: 51–56 and especially 59–60.

21. See the section on Sūrdās and the Vallabhan *pada* repertoire later in the chapter.

The mood of popular devotion centered on Kṛṣṇa's deeds as an *avatār* received support from the philosopher Vallabha's monist emphasis on devotion to a Kṛṣṇa regarded as ultimately real (c. 1500). Vallabha (1479–1531) and colleagues of the Bengali mystic Caitanya (1486–1533) took advantage of the new route between Delhi and Agra through the town of Mathurā[22] that came into use after 1505 on the foundation of the modern city of Agra to found a sectarian worship of Kṛṣṇa in the nearby Braj region. Inspired partly by speculations emanating from south India on the region's sacred status,[23] they worked to create anew the lost legendary sites of Kṛṣṇa's deeds *(līlā).* These were to serve as pilgrimage places, assuring an influx of devotees and an optimum environment for the sectarian establishments. The Vallabhans became the more important of these two communities in the development of Brajbhasha literature.

Vallabhan hagiographical tradition indicates that both successes and difficulties attended the early consolidation of the sect.[24] The building of a new temple at Govardhan funded by a merchant convert of the Khattrī community is said to have been a lengthy process, taking place against a background of Muslim incursions. Vallabha records in Sanskrit the mixed piety and indignation of his reaction to the Muslim attacks, during which the sect's chief idol was removed for safety to a remote area and he "relied on Kṛṣṇa" for refuge from temporal aggression.[25] Reaction in the temple donors' communities, however, is likely to have been based more on indignation than on piety, in keeping with the cultural awareness felt earlier by Viṣṇudās and heightened now by enhanced empathy with the Kṛṣṇa tradition. Contact with the Caitanyas throughout Vallabha's lifetime—though it was a cause of rivalries, as the communities' differing traditions show—was evidently close. The Vallabhans depended on the Caitanyas for provision of temple priests and for devotional scholarship. An analysis of *bhakti* in terms of classical Sanskrit poetics by the Caitanya theologian Rūpa was used by Vallabhan poets almost from the outset, as it was also used by poets of the later Rādhāvallabhan and Haridāsī communities. Rūpa, on the other hand, in setting out his theory of the "savor of *bhakti,*" was ready to equate Vallabhan doctrines with his own.

22. Haynes 1974: 21–27.

23. Bakker 1987: 28–30; Entwistle 1987: 248–49. (The take-up of these speculations in the poetry of different Braj sects is discussed in Corcoran 1980.)

24. Vallabhan traditions appear to have factual basis in various instances (although this is less the case where aggrandizement of the sect or idealizing interpretations of its members' doings are involved). McGregor 1973: 31–33; cf. Barz 1976 (translation of some of the texts *[vārtā]*); Vaudeville 1980: 15–45 (discussion of much of the history referred to earlier); Entwistle 1987: 261–63.

25. Sanskrit verses from Vallabha's *Kṛṣṇāśraya (Ṣoḍaśagranthāḥ)* quoted by Gupta 1947: 30 n. 2.

Creation of a Repertoire of Kṛṣṇa Literature

The institutionalization of Vallabhan *bhakti* soon created the need for inventories of vernacular songs (*pada*s). The *pada,* a song stanza of flexible meter and length evolved from Apabhramsha meters, was a genre well established both in *sant* poetry and in the Kṛṣṇa songs of Mīrābāī. Kṛṣṇa *pada*s were used in *kīrtan*—worship and celebration of the deeds *(līlā)* of Kṛṣṇa as *avatār,* especially those of his early childhood in Braj and his dance *(rās)* with Rādhā and the other Braj women. They were also important in *sevā,* or cult observance. A separate impulse to expand the range of vernacular Kṛṣṇa poetry in both subject matter and genre manifested itself only later in the sixteenth century, but was implicit from the outset in Vallabha's veneration of the Sanskrit *Bhāgavatapurāṇa.* As Vallabha and Caitanya had worked to recreate the Braj of legend and speculation in the physical here and now, so the poets of both sects were to create first a corpus of Brajbhasha Kṛṣṇa songs, and then a wider repertoire of Brajbhasha poetry in a variety of meters and forms. Some of these would be traditional, others of contemporary or very recent origin. Poets of the other sectarian communities, and also many nonsectarian poets of Braj, would make major contributions. The sacred topography of Braj would be reduplicated in the new literary tradition.

Sūrdās and the Vallabhan Pada *Repertoire*

Eight poet-singers are identified in Vallabhan hagiographical traditions as a group *(aṣṭ chāp)* consecrated jointly to Kṛṣṇa, and affiliated individually either to Vallabha or to his second successor Viṭṭhalnāth (c. 1515–?1588), in whose time these traditions probably began to be assembled. However, the first of the eight poets, Sūrdās, was in reality not a Vallabhan.[26] The appropriation of this prestigious but little-known poet seems to illustrate a wish or need on the Vallabhans' part to associate themselves with the stream of popular *bhakti* that had begun to flow strongly in the Rajasthan-Braj area during the early years of the Vallabhan movement, or shortly before. Eventually Sūrdās, the "Kṛṣṇa poet who became a pupil of Vallabha," came to be regarded as the eponymous author of the entire huge, inflated modern anthology of Kṛṣṇa songs called *Sūrsāgar* (Ocean of Sūr). This situation implies that both before and after the years when the *aṣṭ chāp* tradition first evolved, nonsectarian poets were active in larger numbers than poets of the Vallabhan and other sects, sharing their purpose if not their conscious sense of direction to fill out a new "matter of Kṛṣṇa." The popularity of Kṛṣṇa songs right across

26. Evidence derived from the Sūrdās manuscript tradition presented in Hawley 1979: 64 ff. Translation of the Sūrdās *vārtā* (sectarian account) in Barz 1976.

north India's culturally mixed society is suggested in the *Haqāiq i Hindī* (Realities of India) of Mīr Vāhid of Bilgram (Hardoi district; 1556). This work provides Islamic interpretations of personas and places of the Kṛṣṇa story.[27]

Verses attributed to the eight different poets of the *aṣṭ chāp,* when compared, can offer useful clues to the literary history of this group. Some seem to illustrate perceptible differences in the respective poets' treatment of themes, explicitness of sectarian attitude, or style. The distinction between earlier and later poets that can be made out seems to agree with their assignment to Vallabha or to Viṭṭhalnāth in the hagiographical traditions. The credibility of some of these traditions, and the authenticity of some of the verses, are to that extent reciprocally strengthened.[28] It appears that many of the extant *sevā pada*s attributed to Parmānandadās (whose traditional affiliation is to Vallabha) were assigned to him in an expanded corpus of the *Sūrsāgar* type.[29] *Sevā pada*s dealt with routines of tending the idol of Kṛṣṇa, with honoring Vallabha or Viṭṭhalnath, or with sacred places and the celebration of festivals.

Mannerist elements of the kind that became prominent in seventeenth-century Brajbhasha poetry may have been represented in Vallabhan songs from the outset.[30] This is suggested in songs on Rādhā attributed to Kumbhandās, who was reputedly the first singer at Vallabha's original Kṛṣṇa temple. An easy fusion between the mannerist and the popular was possible because, as we know from authentic early songs of the Sūrdās tradition, the Kṛṣṇa *pada* was already substantially literized. To this literization a *Gītagovinda* (Song of Kṛṣṇa) tradition mediated through Gujarat had probably contributed. In addition, the well-established currency of vernacularized (semi-*tatsama*) forms of Sanskrit words in Hindi poetry by the early sixteenth century assisted the adoption of literary usage at more popular levels. Use of the syllabic *ghanākṣarī* and *savaiyā* meters appears only in verses by the later poets, however; and the rhetorical artifice that sometimes accompanies them illustrates that the sectarian *pada* tradition was by now fully established in style and scope. Interestingly though surprisingly, the appearance of popular elements in the songs seems to have kept pace with the development of mannerist emphasis in them—as in descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's lunches *(kalevā)* with the Braj cowherds, village activities at dawn, or the progress of a *holī* festival party through the village. It is as if within the sect itself a new balance

27. Rizvi 1978–1983: 359–62; Pandey 1995: 197.
28. McGregor 1984: 84–88.
29. A couplet by the Rādhāvallabhan sectarian Dhruvdās (seventeenth century) refers to Parmānandadās and Sūrdās as marking out the "way of Braj" between them in their songs: *paramānanda aru sūra mili gāī saba braja rīti.*
30. The term "mannerist" as used here describes an approach characterized by preoccupation with display of poetic art and by a dominant interest in the *rasa* of love *(śṛṇgāra).*

had been struck between artistic performance and popular perception, perhaps with some waning of the first *bhakti* impulse. What is certain is that the *aṣṭ chāp* poets brought artistic consciousness and innovating skill to devotional use of the *pada,* adding to the literary capacities of an already versatile genre and creating together one of the earliest discrete, identifiable bodies of song literature extant in Hindi.

Nandadās and the Brajbhasha Prabandha Tradition

In Viṭṭhalnāth's time the sect consolidated its position. It asserted its organizational independence from the Caitanyas, strengthened contacts with Gujarat already established during Vallabha's pilgrimages, and won local land rights from the Mughals at Agra.[31] The elaborate and varied poetic production of the scholar-poet Nandadās (fl. 1585) confirmed the acclimatization of the *prabandha* in Brajbhasha, and together with the poetry of Keśavdās (fl. 1600) set what proved to be its enduring standards. The preservation of what may be a complete and exclusive inventory of Nandadās's authentic works in a textually trustworthy manuscript of the eighteenth century suggests that Nandadās's work had enjoyed canonical status during a preceding period.[32] Almost all of Nandadās's *prabandha*s are adaptations from Sanskrit works—some artistic and imaginative, some scholastic, some sectarian. He was later known for his poetic artistry, but in the consolidation of the literary tradition, the range of his work and his learning were as important as his art.

In several of his works, Nandadās adopts the fiction of composing that work for a "friend" *(mīta; mitra)* who is eager to understand the technicalities of the subject matter. Otherwise, apart from stock invocations to deities and in one case to his guru, Nandadās provides no introductions to his *prabandha*s. His work shows him combining two literary roles: a general role of poet, scholar, and popularizer of received culture and religion; and, within the cult, a more specifically sectarian role as composer of songs expressing profound reverence for Viṭṭhalnāth. In the former role especially, Nandadās's influence extended much beyond the Vallabhan sect. His references to the "reading" or "speaking" *(paṛh-, bhākh-)* of several of his compositions, and to their being "heard attentively and retold," imply that they were read aloud or recited and may have circulated orally among audiences of devotees.[33]

To illustrate Nandadās's many-sided contribution to Brajbhasha poetry,

31. Text of two *farmān*s (Devanagari script) in Gupta 1947: 32. See further Entwistle 1987: 161 (citing dates between 1577 and 1593).

32. This manuscript (in Persian script) was in Delhi in 1846. Details of its history can be found in McGregor 1971: 487, 490.

33. *cita dai sunai-sunāvai. Rāspañcādhyāyī* 587. Nandadās references are to Śukla 1942.

I turn now to some features of his leading compositions. His *Rāspañcādhyāyī* (Quintet on Krishna's dance) is usually regarded as his finest work. Its subject, drawn from the Sanskrit *Bhāgavatapurāṇa,* is essentially the soul's love and longing for God, matched by God's perfect love and grace. Following the *purāṇa,* Nandadās uses the human symbolism of the dance of the women of Braj with Kṛṣṇa to unfold a religious theme. *Rāspañcādhyāyī* is imbued with a tension between poeticism of treatment and scholastic discipline. The following lines from the beginning of the poem, describing the atmosphere of the moonlit groves where the dance will take place and evoking the devotee's perception of this atmosphere, illustrate its poetic mood:

> The moon lifts up his train of stars—
> Heralds the dance, and its delight,
> A lover skilled, the face to gild
> Of the beloved with saffron light;
> His soft beams throw a burnished glow—
> A haze, as of red powder hurled
> By the god of love, to fill the grove
> At this, his carnival!
> The leaves, shot through with glinting rays
> That slant to the forest floor,
> Seem for Kāmdev a canopy
> Made fast with crystal cord:
> The moon slides high, an eager spy
> Arrayed in beauty bright—
> Peeks on tiptoe, to see the show
> Now staged by Ramā's dear delight![34]

Yet Nandadās consciously distinguishes in *Rāspañcādhyāyī* between popular and scholastic "varieties of religious experience." He carefully follows the *purāṇa* in its reticence about Rādhā's status as chief among the Braj women and Kṛṣṇa's partner. Rather than recognizing Rādhā in the manner of popular tradition (and as in his own devotional songs), he will not go further in this work than to make a wordplay on her name.

Rāspañcādhyāyī was immediately successful, as borrowings from its text (by c. 1600) by the Krishnaizing Rāmānandī poet Agradās (by c. 1600) show. The many manuscript copies that still survive attest to its reputation. In Nandadās's *Siddhāntpañcādhyāyī* (Quintet of doctrine) the *rāsa* story is retold as an exposition of Vallabhan doctrine, its eroticism now sharply deemphasized. His *Dasamskandh* (Tenth book), which is in *caupaī-caupāī* meter, acknowledges

---

34. Text in Śukla 1942, 1: 101–8; the Brajbhasha text is in rhyming *rolā* couplets of twenty-four metrical instants per line. Translation first published in McGregor 1973: 65–66, vv. 160–75. Kāmdev: the god of love; Ramā's dear delight: a reference to Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa regarded as the husband of the goddess Lakṣmī (Ramā).

the *śaiva* commentator Śrīdhara of Benares.[35] This work was evidently planned as an adaptation of the whole of book 10 of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, but Nandadās did not take it beyond the beginning of the dance theme, perhaps because he now had his freer, more lively *Rāspañcādhyāyī* treatment in mind. In *Rukmiṇīmaṅgal* (Rukmiṇī's wedding) the eponymous heroine of Nandadās's version of Rukmiṇī's story shows a defiance of family convention in her love for Kṛṣṇa that makes her one of the most imaginatively recreated individuals in early Hindi poetry, and a perfect symbol of the early *bhakti* ideal of independence of community:

> I rack my brains, but don't know what to do.
> I bowed to the world's conventions, deferred to family honor,
> Only to lose my treasure, my all!
> But I will follow Hari as my beloved with all my strength—will not give him up!
> My parents, brothers, relatives—let all of them burn!
> To hell with their scruples that have lost me my love,
> Have divided me from Nandkumār, so precious, so lovely.[36]

The variations of treatment and viewpoint shown in these several works illustrate the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*'s acquisition of a new literary identity at this time and in this place as a matrix of Brajbhasha literary culture.

Nandadās is almost the first poet known to have addressed the problems of familiarizing vernacular poets and their audiences with the theory of poetics. His *Rasmañjarī* (Bouquet of *rasa*) is indebted to Bhānudatta's Sanskrit work (1450); his *Anekārthamañjarī* (Bouquet of senses) is a versified vocabulary of difficult words explained for those who "cannot understand or pronounce Sanskrit." The thesaurus *Mānmañjarī* (Bouquet of synonyms) based on Amara has a similar intention. The many surviving manuscripts of these scholastic works suggest that they played a crucial role in the consolidation of mannerist tradition among audiences, and perhaps among poets themselves. Nandadās's adaptation of Kṛṣṇamiśra's eleventh-century Sanskrit allegorical drama of theistic Vedānta, *Prabodhacandrodaya* (Rise of the moon of understanding), shows a complementary purpose to that of the above works on poetic theory, in that it was made for religious study, and specifically for reading rather than recitation. Nandadās follows Kṛṣṇamiśra quite closely; his interpretations have more the character of general than of sectarian *bhakti*.[37]

---

35. 1.10–13. Nandadās praises Śrīdhar's discernment, beside which his own (he says) is fragmentary.

36. Text in Śukla 1942: 1:143–44, 37–42. Nandkumār: a title of Kṛṣṇa. See further McGregor 1992: 155–71. Some twenty extant reworkings of the Rukmiṇī story by Hindi poets illustrate the continuing interest that has been taken in it.

37. McGregor 1986: 140–42.

The most influential of Nandadās's works, *Bhãvargīt* (Bee's song), adapts the well-known *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* theme of Uddhav's taking Kṛṣṇa's message to the *gopī*s (the Braj women). This theme had been discussed long previously in early Marathi, and was also treated in Gujarati (Bhīm, 1484). The Caitanya theologian Rūpa had treated the same theme in Sanskrit in the early sixteenth century. In Nandadās's version (the title of which is an allusion to a motif of the message theme) Uddhav's discussion with the *gopī*s becomes a debate on the values of *jñāna* and *bhakti*—knowledge and devotion—which the *gopī*s, who of course support *bhakti,* triumphantly win.[38] So considerable an alteration of the *purāṇa*'s account illustrates the emphasis placed on Kṛṣṇa's status as *avatār* in northern Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. Vallabha's form of Krishnaism had facilitated this emphasis, which was resisted by the Ramaite Tulsīdās. Nandadās's version of the Uddhav story became the model for several later versions in which the story was made a vehicle for expounding different attitudes. The *Bhãvargīt* theme remained vital into the twentieth century, when it was adapted in modern Hindi in Ayodhyāsiṃh Upādhyāy's *Priyapravās* (The beloved's exile; 1914); here Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have modern personas and stand for ideals of service and sacrifice. At a more popular level, verses of Nandadās's poem were still accurately preserved and in use around 1950, among dance troupes at Mathura.[39]

The Court Literature of Orccha c. 1600

The Bundela principality of Orccha (Madhya Pradesh, south of Jhansi) became an important center of Sanskritic culture and Brajbhasha poetry in the late sixteenth century. Orccha, with its nonsectarian Kṛṣṇa poetry and its mannerist court poetry as represented in the work of Keśavdās, displays a different local integration of the components of poetic practice and a wider artistic range in their use than is clear within the sectarian ambit of Braj. During the immediately preceding centuries the Bundelas, who had indirectly succeeded a Candella dynasty at Orccha after a period of divided control of the region, had successfully maintained their authority. References in Keśavdās's genealogies suggest that the Bundelas were conscious of reasserting Hindu *dharma* against opposition in the fifteenth century; and an inscription in Sanskrit, Persian, and "Hindi" implies the presence of an Indo-Persian element in a predominantly Sanskritic culture.[40] After the founding of Orccha under Rudrapratāp in 1531, the Bundelas continued to be largely independent of Delhi-Agra throughout the century, extending their terri-

---

38. McGregor 1974: 47–54.

39. Hein 1972: 181 and 182–222 (text of a dance-drama featuring Uddhav, containing verses by Nandadās and other Brajbhasha poets).

40. Luard 1907: 6–21 and (on the inscription) 77–78; *Kavipriyā* 1.13–16.

tories in the early Mughal years but under pressure from the time of the Afghan ruler Seršāh (d. 1545). They lost control of some areas towards the end of the reign of Madhukaršāh (1554–1592) as Akbar consolidated his power.

The introductions to Keśavdās's *prabandha*s give valuable information about Keśav himself; his patronage by Indrajit, the third or fourth son of Madhukaršāh (b. c. 1555); and the circumstances of the Orccha court.[41] Maintenance of their political and military position remained a major Bundela preoccupation in Madhukaršāh's time, as is illustrated in Indrajit's demonizing of Akbar as "emperor of the Daityas" in one of his scholastic works. However, the cultivation of music and poetry were also important to Indrajit. Described by Keśavdās as a versatile prince—*sakala dharma kau dhāma*—Indrajit commissioned Keśav's *Rasikpriyā* (Companion to love; 1591), a work that "gives knowledge of the way of *rasa* to poets who, without it, would be as Kṛṣṇa without Rādhā."[42] After Madhukaršāh's death and the division of the Orccha territories, Indrajit, the second oldest of Madhukar's surviving sons, received the *jāgīr* (freehold estate) of Kachova (Nad Kachuva, twenty miles southeast of Orccha). Keśav tells in his *Kavipriyā* (Companion to rhetoric; 1601) of Indrajit's "boundless liberality" as a patron at Kachova, and he refers to Indrajit's presiding over public and private performances of music, singing, and dance. The courtesans at Kachova were "complete in their command of the ocean of *rāga* and melody." Keśav particularly praises the singing and *vīṇā* playing of Indrajit's favorite, Rāyprabīn, who composed or recited verse "with talents rivaling those of Śārdā" (Sarasvatī, the patron goddess of speech and poetry).[43] This scenario provides a convincing background for the single *kavitta* verse on Indrajit's and Rāyprabīn's love that survives, attributed to Indrajit himself under the name "Dhīraj Narind."[44] (Indrajit appears here as an average, rather than a gifted, mannerist poet: proficient in standard techniques of alliteration, assonance, and conventional wordplay on multiple literary meanings of Sanskrit terms.)

Again from Keśavdās, we know that Orccha was a center for the cultivation of Sanskrit from the time of its foundation. Keśav's ancestors had been prominent pandits attached to the court of Mānsiṃh of Gwalior (1484–1518); one had been expert in the six traditional systems of philosophy. Keśav's grandfather had come to the new court of Orccha in Rudrapratāp's

41. See especially *Kavipriyā* and *Bīrsiṃhdevcarit,* ed. Miśra 1954, vols. 1 and 3 (references to Keśavdās text are to this edition).

42. *Rasikpriyā* 16.15.

43. *Kavipriyā* 1.38–59. Keśavdās's reference to Śārdā as "holding *vīṇā* and book" recalls Viṣṇudās's similar phrase, *pustaka-pāni* (*Pāṇḍavcarit* introduction).

44. Quoted by the anthologist Seṅgar (1878: 156); Gupta 1970: 259. *Kavitta* is an alternative name for the syllabic meter *ghanākṣarī* referred to earlier.

time and been appointed there to expound "*purāṇa*s." In *Kavipriyā* Keśav tells us ruefully of his own status, by contrast, as a "*bhāṣā* poet"—the first in his family's long scholastic line. Such self-deprecation is only nominal, however. Changed cultural circumstances brought Keśav to the use of Brajbhasha and won him (as he says) both Indrajit's patronage and "open access" to Bīrbal, Akbar's minister at the Agra court.[45] It is clear that with his family's tradition and his own poetic gifts, Keśav was an important agent in the transference of Sanskrit scholastic tradition to Brajbhasha, and that he stood near the beginning of this process, which continued to the eighteenth century. In *Vijñāngītā* (Gītā of right knowledge; 1610) Keśav is conscious of the cultural role that is to be played by Brajbhasha as both the recipient and the communicating agent of the older tradition.[46]

Scholasticism: Indrajit of Orccha

The scholastic ambience of the Orccha court was of some complexity and depth. Keśavdās's Brajbhasha poems imply his considerable knowledge of Sanskrit authors and sources (Rudrabhaṭṭa; and the *Yogavāsiṣṭha, Prabodhacandrodaya,* and many other texts); and Indrajit composed commentaries on Sanskrit texts in Brajbhasha prose. His commentaries on two of the seventh-century Sanskrit poet Bhartṛhari's three collections of epigrammatic verses *(subhāṣita)* are preserved. In his Sanskrit introduction to these commentaries Indrajit describes himself as learned *(śāstrārthavicāravān),* but his Sanskrit, with its occasional slips and errors, seems workmanlike rather than scholarly. This, taken with the academic style of his exposition of Bhartṛhari, makes it almost certain that Indrajit drew on scholastic help in composing his Brajbhasha text. From the versions of the northern recension of Bhartṛhari which he used, we can deduce that Indrajit may have had access to a commentary in Rajasthani language. It is almost certain from Indrajit's commentarial style that the purpose of his commentaries was to facilitate understanding of the Sanskrit original in a community in which learning and culture were shared (and recognized as being shared) by Sanskrit scholars on the one hand and Brajbhasha-using poets and laymen on the other: a purpose similar to that of the sectarian Nandadās in his *Rasmañjarī* and other works. The texts were intended to be read aloud and "heard," probably in a context of teaching or study.[47]

A revealing error in Indrajit's commentary on *Nītiśataka* (One hundred

45. *Kavipriyā* 2.9–18.
46. 1.12. *Vijñāngītā* is a digest of the Sanskrit *Prabodhacandrodaya* drawing also on other Sanskrit works.
47. Edition of *Nītiśataka* commentary in McGregor 1968. The work is referred to in Indrajit's introduction as *śrotṛmanaḥsukhapradā.*

verses on morality) illustrates that in the cultural ambience of Orccha-Kachova a Sanskritized style of spoken Brajbhasha was recognized and had high prestige. Indrajit makes few serious errors in his commentary, but at one point, in glossing the Sanskrit word *saṃskṛta,* he confuses its adjectival sense, "cultivated," with its nominal sense, rendering Bhartṛhari's reference to "cultured speech" *(vāṇī yā saṃskṛtā dhāryate)* wrongly as "speech that has acquired Sanskrit [vocabulary]" *(vānī ju saṃskṛtahiṃ līnai hai).* Such a slip would hardly have been possible had Indrajit not been familiar with a Sanskritized style of speech in his own society.[48] We are fortunate in Indrajit's slip, for it reveals a direct antecedent of the Sanskritized style of modern standard Hindi. We may infer that such a style is likely to have gained currency wherever sections of society (for instance, courts or sectarian establishments) felt a heightened consciousness of traditional culture.

Keśavdās and the Consolidation of Brajbhasha Verse Tradition

Situated in the culturally favorable environment of Orccha, Keśavdās produced the greatest range of major compositions of any Hindi poet. Keśav's breadth of outlook and the technical brilliance of his poetry make him the most prestigious of Hindi court poets and the leading exponent of the mannerist style. His work illustrates the consolidation of a composite poetic tradition in Brajbhasha at the moment of its full maturity. A range of polysyllabic meters, mostly variants of the *ghanākṣarī* and *savaiyā,* now complemented the four-foot *caupāī-caupaī* and the *dohā.* Scholastic analysis of poetic theory at the interface of *bhakti* and *śṛṅgāra* had provided poets with a repertoire of situations and motivations from within the Kṛṣṇa theme. The status of that theme in the general culture contributed to the popularity of not only the mannerist style but also the Brajbhasha tradition expressing it. In addition, a new dimension of the Rāma theme linking *bhakti* and the *smārta* tradition (tradition as "remembered" rather than "heard" through revelation) had been opened to vernacular poetry in the recent work of Tulsīdās. Finally, conditions providing patronage as well as discerning audiences for Brajbhasha poetry and poets existed at successful local courts, such as those of Orccha and Gwalior, and at the Mughal court at Agra. Court interests and the political relationships between kingdoms now became themes of a poetry expressing a sense of contemporary identity, with frequent allusion to the deeds and power of Kṛṣṇa as well as to the status of Rāma.

Keśavdās's poetic persona was primarily that of a scholiast and mannerist, one who would give instruction to poets in the "way of delight" *(rasa-rīti)* of poetry. *Rasikpriyā* deals with such subjects as the *rasa*s of poetry, of which

---

48. McGregor 1968: 14–15.

love, *śṛṅgāra,* is supreme; the types of "heroes" *(nāyak)* and "heroines" *(nāyikā);* the situations and conduct of different types of *nāyikā*s; the *nāyikā*'s emotions and those of her confidante; and the recognized types of poetry (three types distinguished by progressive ornateness of style, culminating in a fourth, the love of Rādhā and Hari [Kṛṣṇa]).[49] If, as Keśav tells us, the *rasa* of love is one of delight, it is art, and skill in the use of poetic language, that give access to it. Following Rudrabhaṭṭa, an innovator who in his *Śṛṅgārati-laka* (Adornment of love) had transferred the application of *rasa* theory from drama to poetry, Keśav somewhat analogously transfers the theory itself fully from Sanskrit to Brajbhasha. Nandadās had already framed definitions and given Brajbhasha examples of the standard categories, but Keśavdās went beyond Nandadās in his use of the modern meters and in his search for innovation in subject matter. His verses are tableaux on the details of his theme—vernacular in language, but self-consciously literary in flavor and style. The most routine conceits can under Keśav's handling acquire a verve and memorability that conceals, even commends, their conventionality, as when the lady's "deadly beauty" and "lightning brilliance" transform her into an incarnation of love:

> Does her beauty bewitch like the snake's, or blind like the lightning's flash?
> Is she the love god's partner, to be so lovely?[50]

We must assume that with the shift of *rasa* poetics to vernacular treatment, its theorists gained both a new capacity to make innovations in the spirit of the theory and a sharper interest in doing so.[51] The theory was brought closer to the realm of everyday life through its expression in everyday language, or something like it. Verses featuring the *sakhi* (confidante) were often contextualized in the contemporary world by drawing the *sakhi*s' occupational names from everyday local life. Some names can from their form be localized in the Braj-Bundelkhand region: "midwife," "neighbor," "betel-seller," "bangle-maker," or the euphemistically named Rāmjanī, of mixed community. The protagonists' vernacular speech enters the verse with dramatic effect—as in situations of inveiglement or where the *sakhi* exclaims at (and calls the world to witness) the depth of the lover's despair.

Keśav's *Kavipriyā* deals with rhetoric: figures of speech *(alaṅkāra),* verse forms, and metrics. A popular verse places his contribution to poetry far below those of the "*bhakti* poets" Tulsīdās and Sūrdās, but the number of extant manuscripts of *Rasikpriyā* and *Kavipriyā* testifies to the importance of

49. Schokker 1983: 307–24.
50. *bhoginī kī bhāminī ki deha dharē dāminī kī, / kāma hī kī kāminī ki aisī kamanīya hai? Rasikpriyā* 4.11; Miśra 1954: 1.21.
51. In chapter 1, this volume, Pollock notes a converse lack of vitality and innovation appearing in the Sanskrit tradition of poetics from about this time.

Keśav's vernacularization of contemporary poetic theory, and to its signifi-
cance to his many successors at later courts. For them he would remain the
foremost of *rīti* (mannerist) poets.[52] Outside of court environments Keśav-
dās's influence was also important, notably in the work of Bihārīlāl, a de-
pendent of Jaisiṃh Mīrzā of Amber (1617–67) and a poet of flair and grace.
Bihārīlāl's *dohā*s, based loosely on mannerist themes, won a more popular
acceptance for *rīti* poetry than Keśav's own verse could have obtained and
brought him a high reputation among Hindi poets that lasted until the twen-
tieth century.

In his *Rāmcandrikā* (1600) Keśavdās draws on Vālmīki's work, but he pre-
sents Vālmīki in his introduction not as revered inaugurator *(ādi kavi)* of the
Rāma literary tradition, but as a figure of contemporary relevance who com-
mends and authorizes worship of the Name of Rāma.[53] Influenced by Tul-
sīdās's constant search for new motivations for *bhakti* in his characters, Keśav
similarly sought new interpretations in presenting details of the story. If a
Brahman's identity is to be established, this can be done metrically by giv-
ing him a Brajbhasha verse set to a distinctive Sanskrit meter; if, following a
hint from Tulsīdās, the demon Bāṇa's failure to lift Śiva's bow (and so win
Sītā) is to be emphasized, the bow's inertia in Bāṇa's hands can be described
as "that of a yogi's mind"—the very negation of *bhakti*.[54] Ever a mannerist
Keśavdās regards such innovations as a display of poetic craftsmanship as
much as a contribution to the Rāma subject matter. *Rāmcandrikā* thus cre-
ates a different perspective from that of Tulsīdās on the *smārta* culture that
provides the setting for *Rāmcaritmānas*.[55] The number of extant manuscripts
of *Rāmcandrikā* illustrates its wide success in court communities. Keśavdās
was able to construct a new image of Rāma—culturally and artistically com-
prehensive in its time and place, and more potent than the image of Kṛṣṇa
received from *śṛṅgāra* literature. Secular connotations could be safely em-
phasized in this retelling of a sacred legend as a showpiece of modern po-
etic art.

Keśav's poems on affairs of court and state are based firmly in the liter-
ary culture of *Rāmcandrikā*. Prince Bīrsiṃh's rise to power at Orccha is chroni-
cled in *Bīrsiṃhdevcarit* (The deeds of Birsingh; 1607) as a "spreading vine of
conflict" that bears fruit in the prince's struggles with his brothers and with
Akbar, and in his consequent support for Akbar's son Salīm (Jahāngīr). The
events take place against the background of an elaborate description of an

52. Several commentaries on *Rasikpriyā* and *Kavipriyā* were composed, including those by
Surati Miśra (Agra, early eighteenth century) and by Sardār (Benares) as late as c. 1850.
53. Vv. 7–11.
54. 3.13; 4.26.
55. The word *smārta* refers to sacred tradition as "remembered" or recorded rather than
as "heard" through revelation.

idealized Orccha, its topography and its court life, with an interlude on the arts and duties of kingship. Allegory lightens the burden of Keśav's panegyric: when Bīrsiṃh is crowned by Dharma, Conflict vanishes; and in the acceptance of Jahāngīr's overlordship, Greed turns in the direction of *bhakti,* and Love towards Śiva, Hari, and one's guru. Keśav co-opts contemporary norms of expression of devotion and cultural piety here to express, without emphasizing it, a sense of political awareness in the court community. At the opening of the poem, however, he asserts his fellow-citizens' pride in the state identity of Orccha more pointedly, associating past deeds by members of its dynasty with those of Gwalior Kachvāhas, Rājput Sisodiyās, and now with the deeds of Bīrsiṃh, who, like these predecessors, has been marked by Kṛṣṇa for the frustration of their opponents' designs.[56]

Ramaism and Its Central Sites: Ayodhyā, Benares, Galta

Devotional Krishnaism had been preceded by a Ramaite form of Vaishnavism in north India. Roots of the latter can be found in temple inscriptions and iconography of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries in central India, and it is clear that it rests on a *śaiva* foundation. Its rise also appears to owe something to ideals of *dharma* symbolized by Viṣṇu and Rāma that were emphasized by Gāhaḍavāla kings of Benares during the last years of independence of the north Indian kingdoms (late twelfth century). This Ramaite Vaishnavism was patronized in central India by the Maratha Yādava kings of Daulatabad, including Rāmacandra (1271–1309), who resisted Alā'uddīn's incursions in west India. A contributory element to it is the cult of the Name of Rāma that is attested in northern ritual and Upanishadic texts, probably of Benares, in the eleventh century. The nonmaterial praxis of this cult appears to have aided it in Muslim times, when the building of temples faced restrictions in many north Indian areas, and the practice of calling on God's Name was in keeping with both the meditational practice of *nāth śaiva*s and the Muslim practice of *dhikr.*[57]

The measure of cross-cultural understanding achieved via contact and social interpenetration between *nāth śaiva*s and Sufis during the early Muslim centuries provided conditions in which the western and northern *sant* poets' mystical devotion to God's Name could be widely successful outside Brahmanical orthodoxy. The title *sant* means "good," or "holy." The *sant* poets' devotion, which contained a Sufi element, arose first in west India, inspired by feelings of passionate love *(bhakti)* for God as Rāma, and was transmitted quickly to north India. Devotion to Rāma as seen differently—as a supreme

---

56. 1.2.
57. Bakker 1987: 10–24. The Arabic word *dhikr,* "remembering," refers to praising God and reciting God's names.

being having personal attributes—would come to expression more slowly in vernacular poetry in the north (by the beginning of the sixteenth century), yet would command more assent in the long run. A forerunner of it at Ḍũgarsī's Gwalior can be glimpsed in Viṣṇudās's poetry (mid-fifteenth century), and the Sanskrit *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* (? c. 1500) and Tulsīdās's *Rāmcaritmānas* (late sixteenth century) show it fully developed. Its recognition in the wider society is illustrated in the striking of coin by Akbar's mint about the year 1600 showing Sītā and Rāma at Ayodhyā.

The Sant *Poets and Their Tradition*

The early north Indian *sant* poets were a loose community of poet-singers. It is their poetry that most clearly marks—along with Dāūd's contemporary work, *Candāyan*—the full emergence of vernacular language in literature. Less self-consciously literary than *Candāyan,* though drawing as that work does on Apabhramsha metrical forms, the *sant*s' poetry was essentially popular and oral. The poet-singers' view of society and religion, evolved during the period of social upheaval and adjustment from which north India was then emerging, was one of broad reappraisal of values, and moral counsel *(upades cetāvnī)* was one of its prime products. The *sant*s saw conventions, doctrine, and orthodox practice as valueless compared to a devotion that was essentially mystical, expressed in the singing of God's praises and repetition of his Name as Rāma. The *sant* poets presented these themes in terms of events and preoccupations of everyday life, but discussed them frequently in terms of concepts long ingrained in Indian thought.

Consider, for example, some verses from the west Indian poet Nāmdev (c. 1350), who is credited with establishing *sant* poetry in Rajasthan and north India:

> "Whom did you get to thatch your hut?" asks Nāmdev's next-door neighbor.
> "I shall give you twice his wages for his name."
> "I can't obtain him for you, lady;
> Behold, he is present in all things—
> The Upholder of my spirit!
> He asks the wages of love to thatch a hut,
> And comes of his own accord, if one turns from worldly ties;
> Such a one I cannot describe—he is in the hearts of all men everywhere."

> Who has seen Rām's coming, and who knows Him?
> Who can tell of and understand Him who is without kin?
> None see where the bird in flight rests,
> Nor the path of the fish in water;
> Behind the mirage the sky is not seen:
> Nor is Nāmdev's Lord Viṭṭhal known, who set in place the three worlds!

> Give up deceit and sham, oh heart:
> Be ever-mindful of Hari's Name!
> You may bathe in Ganges, Godavari and Gomti, or at the festival of Kedārnāth;
> You may make untold pilgrimages, and mortify your flesh in the Himalayas—
> But this is less than uttering the Name.[58]

The early *sant*s were able to take advantage of the changing language use and changed social conditions of their day to spread a compelling, straightforward message. By about 1400 their teachings had spread from Rajasthan to Benares, where Kabīr, a Muslim convert to the community, was active with other *sant*s from, most probably, the mid-fifteenth century. In the Benares area the *sant*s prospered early under merchant patronage.[59] The impact of their poetry is attested in the inclusion of many *sant* poets' verses in an appendix to the Sikh scripture *Ādigranth* (Book of the beginnings; 1604). However, a reference by the Gwalior annalist Khaṛgrāy (? 1631) implying resistance to their teachings suggests that the *sant*s' influence may have reached a peak by that time.[60] On the other hand, the *sant*s' continuing success is illustrated by the foundation of many communities in Rajasthan, Avadh, and Bihar in the seventeenth century, and no less by the much-expanded, dialectally confused record of their oral verses that exists in manuscripts, all of which long postdate them.

In the absence of a commanding, alternative vernacular teaching opposed to their own, everything worked at first in the *sant*s' favor: the easy metamorphosis of Apabhramsha meters and stanza forms into true colloquial forms at this time; the straightforwardness of the poets' teachings; the negating element in their teachings, which left little to be said in terms of argument yet was grist to the mill of inventiveness and paradoxical expression; and finally, the everyday subject matter of the verses and their imagery, which made for easy reception. If a village is a metaphor for the human body in a Kabīr verse, then its landlord's accountant can stand for the figure of Death, pursuing the tax-defaulting poet. Or Kabīr may be a merchant, trying to save his capital while harassed with cares about his oxen and baggage: a soul struggling in life's turmoil. A still more challenging (though no more effective) range of *sant* imagery is drawn from the *nāth śaiva* repertoire of paradoxical imagery involving yoga terminology. Here too, though, images are usually uncomplicated in the verses that are most likely to go back to Kabīr him-

---

58. *Ādigranth,* 657 (Soraṭh); 525 (Gūjrī); 973 (Rāmkalī). The translations quoted here were first published in McGregor 1984: 38–39.

59. Dharmdās, Kabīr's leading early disciple, seems to have been a wealthy merchant of Bandogarh (Rewa district). McGregor 1984: 56 and nn. 60, 62.

60. Text of *Gopālākhyān* (The tale of Gwalior) in Dvivedī 1980: the Brahman Khaṛgrāy deplores current disregard of the non-Brahmanical teaching of Kabīr and his Benares fellow-*sant* Raidās (52).

self, as opposed to verses of later tradition. Thus a churn may represent the body, the churning stick the heart, the two churning-women the yoga duality of *iṛā* and *piṅgalā,* and the butter the mystical sound *(śabda)* that symbolizes union with God.[61]

Some verses by Kabīr, including the *pada* translated here, illustrate a new, individual perspective on the credentials of religious authority, geographical space, and even the existential position of the individual:

> Allah or Rām, I live by your Name:
> Show your servant favor, Lord!—
> Why beat your head on the ground? Can you wash your sins away?
> The man that's called humble has bloody hands; the sinner's guilt lies hidden.
> Give up ablutions, whatever your faith! Why babble names of God?
> Why visit mosques, or Mecca, while you angle for men's goodwill?
> The Brahman keeps the eleventh day, the jurist keeps Ramazān—
> Unmindful of eleven months, he reserves his wisdom for one!
> If God lives in the mosque, whose is the kingdom?
> Is Rām to be found in idols or at shrines?
> The east is Hari's quarter and the west Allah's realm,
> But search your inmost hearts, one and all, to find Rahīm and Rām.[62]

After an enforced juxtaposition for some centuries of two faiths and social systems, leading to a measure of mutual understanding, Kabīr's mixed society seems to be generating a means for some, at a popular level, to surmount its own values. When Kabīr tells his audience that Hari resides in "the east," he is speaking figuratively of an "eastern" mystical region and sanctuary of the spirit, and thinking too of his own eastern speech; but to refer to Allah's realm in "the west" was to ask one's hearers at Benares to recognize that the limits of their world were widening, and in more ways than one. Their world extended now beyond the bounds of "Gujarat and Tirhut" that for Dāūd had represented the limits of north India;[63] but Kabīr's location of Rām and Rahīm beyond temple and mosque was also an invitation to regard the world, and the human being's position in it, in an entirely new light.

In another *pada,* Kabīr makes his predecessor Nāmdev a member of a kind of pantheon of divine and deified beings: a group including Śiva as well as mythical figures associated with Kṛṣṇa and Rāma.[64] If the father figure of later northern santism can be included in such a group, some atavistic sense in Kabīr of the validity of Indian cultural assumptions is surely implied. Such feelings in a former Muslim help to explain the strength of the different Ra-

61. On the authenticity of Kabīr verses, see Vaudeville 1974: 56–63; McGregor 1984: 48, 50.
62. Text in Tivārī 1961, *pada* 177. The above translation was first published in McGregor 1984: 51.
63. *Candāyan* text in Gupta 1967, v. 34.
64. Tivārī 1961, *pada* 198.

maite *bhakti* which would be popularized by Tulsīdās in the sixteenth century, limiting the impact of the *sant*s. For in a time of more positive, if less questioning, catholic affirmation, their message of mystical love would largely be lost.

The Sectarian Rāmānandīs: Kṛṣṇa Influence

The Rāmānandīs (who later became known as Rām *rasik*s) were one of two strands of sixteenth-century Ramaism that developed from roots in the wider Rāma tradition. They emerged as a community having their seat at Galta (Jaipur) in the mid-sixteenth century, a time when *saguṇī* (non-*sant*) *bhakti* may still have been mainly of Kṛṣṇa character. Agradās, the author of the Rāmānandīs' main early vernacular text, *Dhyānmañjarī* (Bouquet of meditation; c. 1580), received the patronage of Mānsiṃh of Amber about 1600 at Galta.

Dhyānmañjarī, composed in the *rolā* meter used by Nandadās, celebrates a Rāma who shows many Kṛṣṇa features and some *śākta* features. This Rāma and his city, Ayodhyā, have analogues in both Sanskrit and Brajbhasha texts. Much as in the late (? 1500) Sanskrit *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa,* Agradās's Ayodhyā has all the features of a supernatural realm. Its Pramodvan, "pleasure grove," modeled on Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvan, is a paragon among all the means of experiencing God. Its wells are set with gems, their water pure. In a garden *(ārāma)* in which a sense of ease *(ārām)* is all-pervading, trees of mysterious charm extend their fruit into the hands of passers-by in an imagery (and with a poeticism) that may recall Andrew Marvell's rapture (1640) at the beauties of his purely terrestrial garden. The Sarju river of Ayodhyā is equated with the Jumna of Braj, its dark and radiant *(ujjvala)* stream suggesting the body of Kṛṣṇa. Such Krishnaizing of distinctive Rāma tropes appears to depend ultimately on south Indian speculations during the early Muslim period, which assigned a double existence—on an earthly and a supernatural plane—to the inaccessible sites of the Vaiṣṇava *avatār*s, and offered the prospect of access to Viṣṇu's heaven in this world to those who worship at those sites. This contributed first to Caitanya's Krishnaism, and thence to a matching theorizing of Rāma devotion.[65]

But Agradās's configuration of Ayodhyā looks beyond Sanskrit texts. Not content to simply adopt the meter of Nandadās's *Rāspañcādhyāyī,* he makes a series of striking verbal and conceptual borrowings from that Brajbhasha work in his *Dhyānmañjarī* when he describes the Pramodvan and the physical beauty of Rām. The way Agradās makes these borrowings, from different parts of the source poem and evidently with close knowledge of its text, illustrates his intention and ability to make the fullest use of this contem-

---

65. Bakker 1987: 28–30.

porary, vernacular Kṛṣṇa source. The variations of topic and interpretation between the two poems, and the different order of treatment of some shared topics, means that considerable literary skill was required. Nandadās's Śuka (the mythologized narrator of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*) becomes the prototype in physical beauty, and the model for sensuousness of description, for Agradās's Rāma; and Agradās borrows phrasing from Nandadās's text to describe the site of Kṛṣṇa's round dance *(rās)* and Kṛṣṇa's supernatural participation in it in evocative Ramaite terms.[66]

The rapid dissemination of a specific, well-known literary resource implied here, and its study and sharing among sectarian communities, reveal the beginnings of what could be called a Brajbhasha public sphere at this time. Yet the Rām *rasik* and Vallabhan communities differed appreciably in their doctrines. The fact that Nandadās's poetry could exercise a substantial literary influence on Agradās illustrates how far and how readily doctrinal differences could be bridged in the late sixteenth century at levels of vernacular literature and popular devotion. The increasing tendency of the north Indian *bhakti* traditions to converge towards each other, with Kṛṣṇa motifs and attitudes usually remaining dominant, can be seen here to have arisen almost at the beginning of northern *saguṇī* Ramaism.

With fragmentation of the Galta community in the eighteenth century, new Rām *rasik* centers were established in Ayodhyā, Mithilā, and Citrakuṭ. This process was assisted by the weakening of Mughal power, the shift of the capital of Ayodhyā province to Faizabad (1754), and the rise of Hindu tributary kingdoms. Later, Rām *rasik* poetry seems to develop in the direction of late Vallabhan and Rādhāvallabhan poetry, showing Kṛṣṇa influence on treatment of Rāma themes and on the *sakhi*-orientation of poets, as Sītā gains the same prominence as Rādhā. In the nineteenth century, Raghurājsiṃh of Rewa (1833–79) composed numerous works on Kṛṣṇa themes, including a paraphrase of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.[67]

Eclectic Ramaism: Tulsīdās

Tulsīdās (1532–1623), in his greatly influential *Rāmcaritmānas* (Holy lake of the deeds of Rām), tells the story of Rāma in Avadhi language largely as received from the Sanskrit *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* (Spiritual *Rāmāyaṇa;*? c. 1500). The *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* had already combined the tradition of devotion for Rāma and his Name with a scholastic tradition of interpretation of older texts and a concern for outward religious observances. The final form of *Rāmcaritmānas* (completed at Benares sometime after 1574) shows Tulsīdās's in-

---

66. McGregor 1983: 240–43.
67. Some further illustrations of Kṛṣṇa influence in later Ramaite sectarian poetry and also in *sant* poetry in McGregor 1984: 169–70, 138, 141, 147.

tention to promote a similar synthesis of Rāma devotion with other religious attitudes. That Tulsīdās's main source was not Vālmīki but *Adhyātmarā-māyaṇa* itself illustrates this intention. He also draws on a *Śivapurāṇa* and makes Śiva the narrator of a major part of his text and the chief devotee of Rāma among the gods. In addition, Tulsīdās gives a place to the child Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and of recent Brajbhasha poetry. He pointedly emphasizes some of the subject matter of *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa,* a work that gives a Kṛṣṇa sectarian interpretation to the story of Rāma. It is very clear that Tulsīdās rejects the particular Kṛṣṇa emphasis of *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* but at the same time wants to win maximum support for his broad view of religion and culture from devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Yet his main emphasis is on the Name of Rāma, and he constantly stresses his support for *smārta dharma.*[68]

A Brahman, Tulsīdās was steeped in the study of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and other texts. He tells us in his introduction to *Rāmcaritmānas* that his guru first told him the Rāma story in childhood. After repeated study he grasped something of its meaning, and eventually resolved to compose a version of it in modern language *(bhākhā)* "in accordance with *purāṇa*s, sacred texts and other sources." It was natural, given the established sixteenth-century use of Avadhi in Sufi narrative poems, and of the *caupāī-dohā* stanza pattern, that Tulsīdās should work in Avadhi and use that stanza pattern during the earlier part of his life, which preceded the main vogue of Brajbhasha. The nature of his subject, so deeply rooted in Sanskritic tradition, and the level at which he had studied it, also naturally led him to use a considerably Sanskritized style of Avadhi: more so than we find in the Kṛṣṇa poets' Brajbhasha. This would eventually be of great significance for the development of modern Hindi. More than the language of any other work, the language of the *Rāmcaritmānas,* which became familiar everywhere and enjoyed a popularity of its own for nearly two hundred years before the rise of the modern language, created a consciousness of Sanskritic style as a formal linguistic resource.

Rāmcaritmānas proved to be a defining work of Indian culture, both in formulating a modern, broad-based religion and in establishing vernacular access to it. Tulsīdās's Ramaism could incorporate the protestant emphasis of the *sant*s but could also allow the devotee to look to the wider culture. It could recognize the charm and strength of the Kṛṣṇa tradition but match it with a larger, counterbalancing ideal. The social adaptiveness and moral content of this version of the Rāma tradition distinguished it from the vernacular Kṛṣṇa poetry of the northern *bhakti* tradition in that the latter, more

---

68. Overview of Tulsīdās's syncretism in Vaudeville 1955, xiv–xxiii; detailed discussion 303–24 and passim.

prone to secular interpretation because of the place in it of the qualified *avatār* (one possessing attributes),[69] tended to lose its early devotional impetus. Vernacular Kṛṣṇa poetry needed to be complemented with other traditions for cultural completion, such as the vernacular poetry of Rāma or the kind of *śaiva* poetry attested in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anthologies.[70] By contrast, Tulsīdās's composite Ramaism was itself already of very wide scope. For instance, the following verses from his *Kavitāvalī,* a late work in Brajbhasha, illustrate the way that this Ramaism generates a poetry of personal devotion combined with moral self-criticism:

> I call myself yours, O Rām,
>   and sing of your virtues,
> So that from respect shown to you
>   I may gather a scrap or two of bread;
> Rām, the world knows,
>   and to my mind it is great cause for pride,
> That I have acknowledged no other,
>   nor do acknowledge, nor ever will;
>
> I put no confidence in the elders,
>   nor trust in my own self;
> "You have made me your own"—
>   this I shall fully know
> When, uttering words wrought,
>   turned, pared and polished as on a lathe
> I feel the very words my mouth proclaims
>   entering my heart.[71]

The immediate success of the syncretistic *Rāmcaritmānas* is implied in the relative absence of competing nonsectarian treatments of the story after Tulsīdās's time. Manuscripts of the work, some in Persian script, have been found all across north India. Its literary status is clear from the number of Brajbhasha and other commentaries made on it, and also from the existence of several independent Rāma compositions of the eighteenth century (including some based on Vālmīki) that seem to owe something to its popularity. Later still, nineteenth-century journalists and writers would use it allegorically to bring home the relevance of contemporary issues with maximum impact. *Rāmcaritmānas* remains the leading vernacular scripture of north India today.

---

69. As well as because of the secular aspect of Kṛṣṇa traditions themselves; on the importance of this for later court poetry on the Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā theme, see later in this chapter.

70. McGregor 1994: 518–23.

71. Translation adapted from that in Allchin 1963: 154.

LANGUAGES OF THE HINDI LITERARY TRADITION

Having discussed and illustrated the process of consolidation of largely separate literary traditions in Brajbhasha and Avadhi speech, and referred also to the mixed speech of Delhi which was widely diffused beyond the Delhi region, I would like now to summarize the roles of these speeches as literary vehicles in the later premodern period. I also discuss aspects of their functioning, character, and linguistic relationships, all of which have a bearing on both the literary preeminence achieved by Brajbhasha in the seventeenth century and the rise of modern Hindi in the nineteenth.

Brajbhasha

The western Hindi speech known today as Brajbhasha first rose to literary use in areas to the south and southwest of Delhi. At Gwalior in Bundelkhand it can be seen to have inherited a literary tradition of the use in Shauraseni Apabhramsha. As used at Gwalior around 1450, Brajbhasha was already considerably literized: its word stock was open to supplementation with vernacularized (semi-*tatsama*) forms of Sanskrit words, its metrical and stanzaic forms were indebted to late Apabhramsha usage, and its grammar conformed to a broadly coherent pattern. Brajbhasha's early appearance in Gwalior (to the south of the Braj region) foretold its later character as a speech not tied closely to a home region. As it consolidated its position in and around the Braj region during the early sixteenth century, it shed some Rajasthani features that may have reflected the early stages of its emergence as a literary speech, but it retained a grammatical variability inherited in part from the Middle Indian abundance of overlapping forms and constructions. Its word stock was always able to accommodate the local origins of poets, or (in prose) of hagiographers and scholiasts. In this flexible but sufficiently standardized form, Brajbhasha spread as the vehicle of the Kṛṣṇa cult. Dominating vernacular poetry in the west from the outset, it influenced the mixed, regionally variable language of the northern *sant* poets as well as the language of some of the Sikh gurus of the *Ādigranth*. It became almost the standard vehicle for the late-sixteenth-century court poetry, with its important metrical innovations. Brajbhasha's position as a literary lingua franca, complementing that of Hindi/Hindui, the speech of Delhi, as the language of everyday urban life, was not so much established as confirmed by Tulsīdās's adoption of it for the majority of his later compositions, including his *Kavitāvalī*, excerpted from earlier. As used in literary contexts and no doubt more so in everyday speech, Brajbhasha was now absorbing an appreciable grammatical impact from Hindi/Hindui. The Jain merchant Banārsīdās of Jaunpur composed freely in mixed Brajbhasha of this kind in his autobiographical poem *Arddhkathānak* (The first half of my story; c. 1614), and when Banār-

sīdās called this mixed language *madhyadesa kī bolī* (the speech of the middle region)[72] he was well aware of its communicative reach and cultural scope.

Bhikhārīdās and His Kāvyanirṇay: *The Functional Range and Regional Variability of Brajbhasha*

Bhikhārīdās of Pratāpgarh near Lucknow was among the most original expounders of *rasa* and *alaṅkāra*. His *Kāvyanirṇay* (Verdict on kāvya; 1746) illustrates a final stage in the evolution of poetic theory in north India. *Kāvyanirṇay* clearly reveals the ambience in which *kavitta* and *savaiyā* verses articulating the theory circulated, and in which informed discussion of poetry and theory took place. Bhikhārīdās's introduction discusses the audience's discernment, the variety of opinions that could be current among audiences, a poet's responsibility to take account of these, and the "pleasures of poetry" *(kāvya-rasa)* themselves. In his view, the memorization of verses contributes to composition skills in oral poetry on poetics, and to depth of understanding; and he sees a poet's status as conferred by his birth and natural gifts, by his knowledge of *kāvya kī rīti* (the way of poetry) gained from other poets, and by his observation of the world, armed with which he may mediate *rasa,* the soul of poetry, for his audiences.[73]

Bhikhārīdās makes the successful implementation of Sanskrit poetic theory in Brajbhasha practice explicit when he comments on faults *(doṣ)* in Brajbhasha composition, and on issues to do with rhyme *(ṭuk),* a feature of vernacular poetry. His observations on categories of poets, on the range of lexical styles, and on regional variations illustrate the same situation; they also imply public awareness of a diversified practice of Brajbhasha court and devotional poetry.

With understandable vested interest, Bhikhārīdās makes his first category of poets those who have enjoyed the favor of his own patron, Hindūpati, at Pratapgarh: Toṣ, Gulām Nabī "Raslīn," and himself. He then forecasts the conventionality of later *rīti* poetry, pointing to the Kṛṣṇa tradition as the source of that poetry's continuing strength. The art and skill *(kabitāī)* of the Pratapgarh poets will not please their successors, yet their work will survive, for

---

72. Verse 7 (Dvivedī 1980). The term denotes the Panjab–western Ganges plain area seen as the main region of consolidation of culture during the early post-Vedic period. Banārsīdās (whose family connections were with Narwar near Gwalior and Rohtak near Delhi) refers to Rohtak (v. 8) as "a fine place of the *madhyadeśa* in the fair land of Bharata." Tulsīdās in *Kavitāvalī* (7.33) speaks similarly, at exactly this time, of his own birth and upbringing in "the land of the Bharatas" *(bhārat-bhūmi).*

73. The interests, assumptions, and practice of Brajbhasha court poets as indicated by Bhikhārīdās have similarities with those of some Hindi (Urdu) poets at almost the same period. Cf. Pritchett's essay on *tazkirah* culture in chapter 15, this volume.

it is a pretext for thinking of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It is the secular aspect of the Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā relationship that Bhikhārīdās chiefly has in mind here. He was probably also conscious of the weakening of the Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* impulse that had begun well before his time. Bhikhārīdās's other groups of poets are: those, such as Tulsīdās or Sūrdās, who are distinguished for religious merit; those rewarded by patronage, such as Keśavdās or Bhūṣaṇ Tripāṭhī (who attended the Maratha Śivājī c. 1675 and Catrasāl of Panna c. 1700); and lastly, those such as Rahīm and Raskhān, who had "sought fame" at Akbar's court at Agra.

Brajbhasha, Bhikhārīdās tells us, is appreciated by all discerning people as a delightful language. Of the six styles *(khaṭ bidhi)* that he distinguishes—in a way reminiscent of earlier categorizations of literary languages—the two most prominent show "well-known admixtures" of Sanskrit and Persian vocabulary; two others are, quite conventionally, those of "Prakrit and Apabhramsha" (perhaps referring to the original *tadbhava* vocabulary and to the older literary vocabulary of Brajbhasha, respectively); while the fifth and sixth styles, *jaman bhākhā* and *sahaj pārsī,* seem to refer to stronger and weaker degrees of impact of Persianized Hindi/Hindvi on Brajbhasha observed in the mid-eighteenth century.[74]

The regional variability of Brajbhasha as used by poets also receives Bhikhārīdās's attention. He enumerates some twenty poets (almost all *rīti* poets) from Braj itself and from the Ganges Doab, Bundelkhand, Delhi, and Rajasthan. The spoken language *(bānī)* of these poets, he tells us, should be enough to demonstrate that Brajbhasha is a *koiné* accommodating different usages. By implication, variations of pronunciation or grammar in this *koiné* are insignificant beside the fact of its existence, encouraging informed discussion and accepted standards in a central field of literary culture.

Brajbhasha and the Persian Literary Tradition: Tuḥfatu'l Hind

Contact between the Brajbhasha and Persian literary traditions is illustrated in Mīrzā Khān's Persian work, at least half a century earlier than Bhikhārīdās's *Kāvyanirṇay,* titled *Tuḥfatu'l Hind* (A gift from India; c. 1675–1700). This text was probably composed at the request of Āzam Śāh, a son of Aurangzīb, who commissioned a Brajbhasha version of Kālidās's Sanskrit drama *Śakuntalā,* at about the same time (1680). *Tuḥfatu'l Hind* is a survey of the

---

74. Text in Miśra 1957, 2:4, 5 (vv. 8, 14–15, 16). The expression *jaman bhākhā* means foreigners', or immigrants', language. Bhikhārīdās's identification of this category of Persianized usage predates by several decades Western perceptions of the limitations of strongly Persianized language that led to composition of modern Hindi texts at Calcutta by Lallūjī Lāl and others around 1800. Lallūjī makes use of the expression *jaman bhākhā* in the introduction to his *Premsāgar.*

subject matter of Brajbhasha poetry on poetics, with an introduction on Braj-bhasha grammar and an extensive appendix that amounts to a dictionary of the language. Its viewpoint is that the arts and literature of Braj are of great interest and value to members of the Indo-Muslim community, many of whom wish to be better informed about them in detail. Mīrzā notes that the word *bhākhā* ([vernacular] language) had by this time acquired a particular application as the "language of the Braj people." He describes the *bhākhā* of Braj as "the most eloquent of all languages," containing "verses full of color and sweet expressions and of the praise of the lover [Kṛṣṇa] and the beloved [Rādhā]," and favored among poets and cultivated people.[75]

The mother tongues of the north-Indian Indo-Muslim communities were chiefly the Hindi/Hindui of general urban use, the closely related speeches of the Doab, and Panjabi. A majority of users of these speeches would have had some passive knowledge of Brajbhasha, though nothing like mother-tongue command of it. Members of Indo-Muslim society interested in Braj-bhasha poetry thus represented a particular class of this poetry's devotees: those who did not understand the Sanskrit terms used in it but wanted to do so. It was for them that Nandadās had composed his vocabularies: *samu-jhi sakata nahī saṃskirita / jānyau cāhata nāma.*[76]

The concentration on Sanskrit and Sanskritic loanwords found in Mīrzā Khān's dictionary suggests how much the text is the product of a bipartite culture.[77] Its materials have the appearance of what we would today call a bilingual dictionary—from Brajbhasha to Persian—yet this was a bilingual dictionary with a difference, for many of the words glossed were evidently familiar. So when Mīrzā comments on the three homonyms represented by the single spoken form *bās,* he can dismiss its first, common meaning, "smell," as being "well known" *(ān maʿrūf),* and proceed straight to the other, more recondite meanings ("clothing" and "house"). In this way he attaches the Persian tag *maʿrūf ast,* meaning "this sense is well known," to many glosses of Brajbhasha words and even to glosses of simple Sanskrit words.

So the Persian users for whom the Brajbhasha material was prepared hardly needed the simpler parts of it, and we should see this dictionary not entirely as a dictionary of a foreign language. Rather, it resembles the seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century English language dictionaries of what were called "hard words": the Latin and Greek loanwords borrowed

---

75. Ziauddin 1935: 34–35 (translated text of the grammatical section). Persian text on page 54.

76. Mānmañjarī (ed. Sukla), 3.

77. Chatterji's introduction to Ziauddin 1935 gives a few illustrations of the contents of the unpublished dictionary appendix. The information given here is based on the contents of a Cambridge manuscript of *Tuḥfatu'l Hind* (Palmer 1867, no. 119). The readings of this manuscript agree closely with those of Ziauddin's manuscripts for the grammar portion of the text.

into English, or coined, in the new cultural conditions of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance. How are we to interpret this situation? The members of the Indo-Muslim community were drawn to Brajbhasha poetry by its interest and charm, but perhaps also because, in the late seventeenth century, they were experiencing growing difficulty in the use of Persian as their literary language—a development that is recognized as contributing to the rise of Delhi Urdu in the early eighteenth century. This created a dilemma: what other language could they use? At the turn of the eighteenth century, unless one was a Sufi poet, only the attractive speech of Braj was available—so close to their own speech but, as its "hard words" made painfully clear, not their own in all respects. The existence of such an undercurrent of feeling within the Indo-Muslim community may be deduced from the glosses of this dictionary and from Mīrzā Khān's attitude to them. Such a feeling would have contributed to the swift and relatively easy move to literary Urdu in north India that followed so soon after the *Tuḥfat* was composed.

In the same sense, in naming the *Tuḥfat* Mīrzā may have hoped that its readers or users would take the work in the spirit of its title, as a "gift" confirming, as it were, their involvement in the wider mixed modern culture of north India. Yet the gift, attractive as it was, was destined to finally not be fully accepted; the space given to "hard words" in the *Tuḥfat* was perhaps a portent of that situation.

Adaptations of Sanskrit Works into Brajbhasha

A partly similar, partly converse reaction to new conditions informed a new literary activity of the late seventeenth century: the making of Brajbhasha adaptations from the *Mahābhārata* and other Sanskrit works. Mention has been made of Āzam Śāh's commissioning of a *Śakuntalā* version inside the Indo-Muslim community at this time. Within the Hindu community, the interest in adaptations from Sanskrit arising at this time can be compared with the consciousness of cultural identity detected in Viṣṇudās's fifteenth-century adaptations at Gwalior. This interest continued through the eighteenth century and hardly disappeared thereafter until the twentieth. Fourteen volumes of a *Mahābhārata* version were produced by Sabalsiṃh, believed to have been a landowner of Etawah, and his successors between c. 1660 and 1724. Other adaptations made from Sanskrit works at this time included the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* version by Bhūpati, also of Etawah, which remained popular into the nineteenth century and several versions of *Prabodhacandrodaya*.[78] Composition of these works appears to illustrate a wish, arising from Āzam Śāh's time, for the reassurance inherent in redefining the values of one's own

78. Some details in McGregor 1984: 195, 156, 186–87.

culture in terms of achievements of the past during a period of social and political uncertainty. The tendency for the language of these works to be more self-consciously Sanskritized than that of the older poetry—unmodified *(tatsama)* forms of the borrowed words are more common than formerly—would seem to illustrate the same attitude. The frequency of *tatsama* forms, as opposed to the older semi-*tatsama* type, in Brajbhasha manuscripts copied from the late eighteenth century onwards is similarly likely to be due to a sense of the cultural significance of Sanskritic language as a literary vehicle.

Avadhi

Avadhi speech arose in an area rather distant from Delhi (the Lucknow-Allahabad-Benares region) that had been a center of political power in the late pre-Muslim centuries but acquired a regional identity in the period immediately following. A local tradition of its use arose early (as records indicate) among Cistī Sufis, and at Benares a scholastic practice of writing Avadhi in Devanagari script and Sanskritic lexical style existed by, at the latest, the middle of the twelfth century.[79] Use of Avadhi allowed Sufi poets access to the Indian poetic tradition, and so to the elements of Sanskrit vocabulary and the Apabhramsha-derived verse form that combined with Persian tradition in Dāūd's *Candāyan.* The success of *Candāyan* was repeated, and was exceeded artistically, by the sixteenth-century Sufi romances portraying a composite Indo-Muslim culture. Qutban's *Mirgāvatī,* composed in 1503, is mentioned over a hundred years later by the Jain Banārsīdās of Jaunpur as having been sung (by Banārsīdās himself) to small groups at Agra.[80] It is clear that Tulsīdās, who was born within a decade of one of the greatest achievements of Avadhi Sufi poetry, Malik Muhammad Jaysi's *Padmāvat* (1540), and before the composition of the main Brajbhasha *prabandha*s, received an Avadhi narrative form fully mature and posing no problems to artistic expression.

Avadhi speech is related typologically to the Bihari speeches and Bangla rather than to Brajbhasha, but the few major syntactic differences between Avadhi and Brajbhasha hardly affect their mutual comprehensibility.[81] Except in Sufi contexts and in the case of *Rāmcaritmānas,* the extension of Brajbhasha as a literary lingua franca tended to restrict the literary use of Avadhi. The easterner Banārsīdās's use of a mixed Brajbhasha in his autobiographical *Arddhkathānak* illustrates that there were no significant linguistic impediments to the spread of Brajbhasha across the Avadh region.

79. See Chatterji 1953: 1–72 on *Uktivyaktiprakaraṇa* (Treatise on spoken language), compiled to explain the grammar and usage of spoken Sanskrit to Brahman students at Benares.

80. *Arddhkathānak,* vv. 335–36.

81. The chief of these (concerning the syntax of perfective verbal expressions) happens to be illustrated in the following note.

With the general move to Brajbhasha, it was left largely to the Sufi poets to continue the local literary and regional cultural traditions of Avadhi. The extent of these poets' identification of Avadhi as the proper vehicle for Sufi romances is clear in the uncertainties expressed by Nūr Muhammad of the Azamgarh district in the mid-eighteenth century as to what language vehicle to choose. What does it matter that he has written in Hindi, Nūr asks, even though he is not a Hindu?[82] Being one of the parrots (poets) of India, he has tasted "Persian sugar" (he says in a reference to a famous verse by Ḥāfiẓ on the superiority of Persian poets to Indian), but he is now trapped by the sweetness of "Hindi."

Hindi/Hindui, the Speech of Delhi

Poetry in an Indian vernacular named "Hindi" or "Hindui" by Persian biographers was evidently composed at Lahore within a generation of Muslim settlement. Poetry in a language of the same name was in vogue among poets of Persian and their audiences at Delhi in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Its names became attached to a mixed speech of the Panjab-Delhi region that evolved in the Muslim capital and would have tended to have a Persianized vocabulary from the outset. Much as the speech of southeast England spread from London across northern and western English areas, including some that had different literary traditions, Delhi speech spread as a language of trade, administration, and military use to urban centers in areas under the control or influence of Delhi. Its spread in these functions was no doubt furthered by an earlier diffusion of related speech in the same functions from Kanauj, the center of the tenth-century Gūrjara-Pratīhāra empire, during the first emergence of New Indo-Aryan language in north India. Those who used Hindi/Hindui as poets would have had access to the vernacularized level of Indian literary tradition evident in late Apabhramsha, as well as to the Persian literary tradition. From the later fourteenth century they included the north-Indian *sant* poets. The accidents of transmission and recording of the *sant* poets' verses, noted earlier, mean that their language cannot be recaptured in detail today. The available evidence indicates, however, that the Hindi/Hindui of general urban use was these verses' major component, and that they were also liable to contain a mixture of Brajbhasha with a particular poet's own regional speech. If Kabīr's usage is representative, the early *sant*s' language could also have included a significant pro-

---

82. *hindū-maga para paira na rākheũ kā jau bahutai hindī bhākheũ?* Cited in Śukla 1957: 104 from *Anurāgbā̃surī* (The flute of love; 1764). Nūr Muhammad's question implies that Muslims might feel under pressure to use the Persianized Hindi (literary Urdu) concurrently in active development in north India. A small, first step towards later perception of modern Hindi as the preserve of Hindus was perhaps being taken at this time.

portion of Persian words and a smaller, though still appreciable, component of Sanskrit vocabulary, including *tatsama* forms. The grammatical and lexical roots of modern Hindi in particular, but also some of the same for Urdu, lie in this situation.

Being a speech of western Hindi type, Hindi/Hindui showed few major grammatical distinctions from Brajbhasha, though some distinctive differences in phonology. Its currency in areas far distant from Delhi (and the use of the Devanagari script to write it) can be observed in the record of a tax remission of Damoh district dating from 1512.[83] Intrusions of Hindi/Hindui into Brajbhasha had begun by the same century and by 1590 even affected scholastic prose, such as that of Indrajit of Orccha. In daily life at Orccha its presence must therefore have been noticeable, and its influence would have been unavoidable in literary circles at a court such as Orccha's, which was constantly involved in dealings with the Mughal court at Agra. In its Persianized form, Hindi/Hindui was studied at Narwar near Gwalior around 1570 by the Jain Banārsīdās's grandfather;[84] it is represented in Banārsīdās's early-seventeenth-century *Arddhkathānak* as noted earlier; and its most distinctive grammatical feature[85] is already found in the Brajbhasha of Khaṛgrāy at Gwalior in the first half of the seventeenth century. Banārsīdās's (literary) "language of the *madhyadeśa*" was being drawn into the ambit of Hindi/Hindui even at the height of its prestige.

Early Hindustani Dictionaries (c. 1700)

Collections of the vocabulary of the speech of Delhi—by the eighteenth century often called "Hindustani" by both Indians and Europeans—were compiled at Surat in present-day Gujarat and at Lucknow about 1700. They throw light on the scope of the speech of Delhi in these widely separate places at that time.

A *Thesaurus Linguae Indianae* (Treasury of the Indian language) was completed in 1703 by François Marie, a Capuchin friar in Surat. In the form of Hindustani glosses in Devanagari script plus roman transliteration, explaining alphabetized headwords and phrases in Latin and with French equivalents provided,[86] it amounts to a pioneering dictionary of Latin and

---

83. Hira Lal 1925: 291–93.

84. *Arddhkathānak,* v. 13 (text in Dvivedī 1980), *paṛhyau hindugī pārasī.*

85. Use of the postposition *ne* in ergative constructions.

86. The language of the glosses is described as "Hindustani." The manuscript, forwarded to Rome in 1703 by the author, was sent to Paris in 1783 at the request of the Sanskritist and Avestan scholar Anquetil Duperron, who copied it, intending to publish it. Anquetil's copy in two manuscript volumes is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale; the whereabouts of the original are not clear. The presence of the material at Paris (copy or original?) is noted in Garcin de

French to Hindustani. Compilation of this massive work (eleven thousand headwords and phrases) at Surat probably depended crucially on the portable, but still extensive, single-volume dictionaries of Latin to French (1687) and French to Latin that were available by the late seventeenth century.[87] François Marie's chief sources for his material were probably contacts of the Capuchins in the Gujarati community of Surat, speakers of both Hindustani and Gujarati. The glosses of the *Thesaurus* show the clear impact of Gujarati usage in phonology and spelling, but their grammar, phonology, and lexicon are essentially those of modern Hindi-Urdu. A significant component of Perso-Arabic vocabulary, as also a small component of Sanskrit loan vocabulary, are represented. The latter consists chiefly of abstract nouns and noun-based locutions used in contexts of faith, belief, and worship, and in the expression of other feelings or states of mind.

The recording of this mixed vocabulary in Devanagari script in a Gujarati-speaking region reflects, first, the current use of both the vocabulary and the script in the region. Mughal power and prestige at this time had clearly reinforced the impact of the language of Delhi in western India. Second, it reveals a linguistic inheritance from early Hindi/Hindui as it had been used in southern-Indian Muslim kingdoms from the fourteenth century onwards. The Sufi poet Khūb Cistī (1539–1614) had used a "Hindwi strongly mixed with Gujarati" in Gujarat in the sixteenth century.[88] The Capuchins of Surat were interested in both the transplanted southern version of the early speech of Delhi, with its Sufi poetry, and the practically oriented northern speech itself. The Sanskritic material represented in this dictionary alongside Perso-Arabic is hardly to be seen as specific to Gujarati and present in François Marie's text merely for that reason; rather, it appears to have been an integral component of contemporary northern language as used at Surat, available to be drawn on as cultural or practical needs required.

A similar, though smaller, Sanskritic component of Hindustani vocabulary is recorded in the Dutch-Persian-Hindustani glossary contained in J. J. Ketelaar's *Instructie off Onderwijsinge der Persiaanse en Hindoustanse Taalen* (Instruction in the Persian and Indian languages), compiled at the Dutch East India Company's base at Lucknow in 1698. This glossary is a practical vocabulary of some two thousand words, giving the Hindustani glosses in Ro-

Tassy 1829: 23; not found by G. A. Grierson, it was cataloged in 1912 and recataloged by Iftikhar Husain (1968). See further McGregor 2001: 9–15.

87. These dictionaries, and others from French to modern European languages, may owe something to the existence by 1673 of a completed first draft of the French Academy's dictionary of 1694.

88. Schimmel 1975: 132–34.

man script in accordance with Dutch spelling practices.[89] Ketelaar's introduction is of particular interest for his informed remarks about the mixed nature of Hindustani and the existence alongside it of a less hybridized, hence more "Indian," style of language.[90] It is in the existence of this style, and that of François Marie's "Hindustani" written in Devanagari script, that the roots of the much later nineteenth-century concept of modern Hindi as a potential link language from Bengal through to west India and into the Panjab are to be seen.

<div style="text-align:center">

THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN HINDI:
HARIŚCANDRA'S USE OF LITERARY MODELS IN DRAMA

</div>

Hariścandra of Benares (1850–1885), who would become the first major writer of modern Hindi, was motivated at the outset of his career by a new cultural certitude, but he lacked both a suitable modern literary language to express it and any substantial precedent in Brajbhasha literary tradition for drama—the genre in which he first and foremost wished to write. The consciousness of cultural and historical achievements of the Indian past that had become active in the nineteenth century was an important component of sociopolitical awareness among modern communities at Benares in the middle 1860s. This awareness, shaped in forums such as the institutes and debating societies of the northern towns, with their cross-community memberships, necessarily included knowledge of the new literature in Bangla, and of the Bangla writers' satisfaction in the use of their language. In this situation the use of modern Hindi, and the cultural significance of its Devanagari script in the context of the relative dominance of Urdu in public life, became an issue at Benares and elsewhere. The importance of the Devanagari script, structurally related to all other scripts of Indian origin and sharply distinct in this regard from Urdu, was underlined by the Bengali antiquarian Rajendralāl Mitra in a paper read at Calcutta in 1864. In the same year a member of the Benares Institute named Mathurāprasād Miśra completed his elaborate trilingual dictionary of the bipartite Hindi-Urdu and English. Two years later, Nabīncandra Rāy, a Brahmosamaj missionary

89. This work comprises a grammar as well as a glossary. Its existence has long been known, but accurate knowledge of it begins only with J. Ph. Vogel's discovery of a manuscript at The Hague and his articles and historical study (1936, 1941, 1937). Bhatia 1987 describes the history of knowledge of the text and gives details of some Hindustani glosses. Dutch text of Ketelaar's introduction in Vogel 1941: 653. At least one more manuscript of the *Instructie* is extant (Rijksuniversiteit, Utrecht). See further McGregor 2001: 18–26.

90. The Utrecht manuscript refers by name to the latter style as "hindoukie boelie" *(hindugī bolī).*

in the Panjab, was drawing attention to a possible new, national dimension of Hindi.[91] It was in the following year that the Muslim leader Saiyad Aḥmad Khān expressed doubts—usually said to mark the open emergence of the "Hindi language movement"—regarding whether Muslims and Hindus would be able to work together, through Urdu, toward the development of a new India.

Modern Hindi represented a style of language complementary to Urdu: Hindi/Hindui written in Devanagari script and, modeling Brajbhasha literary usage, open to borrowing Sanskrit vocabulary. It had some direct eighteenth-century precedents. Not "created" at Western initiative, even if it was largely "reinvented" at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the style gained important currency via the new print culture of Calcutta and northern centers such as Agra, and it was in use from 1817 in textbooks published by the School Book Societies of these centers. The North-Western Provinces Department of Public Instruction later published, commissioned, and also rewarded the preparation of textbooks. While some of these dealt with new educational subjects, others presented topics from traditional culture (such as legends of *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* heroes and heroines) that encouraged the use of Sanskritized language. The continuing high status of Brajbhasha meant that modern Hindi was still not used, or required, as a literary vehicle. But the altered consciousness of the 1860s had this result: some of those holding progressive modern attitudes, whose education had been in Urdu and might also include English, Persian, or Sanskrit, began to identify at a cultural level with use of the new Hindi style.

In his late teens, commanding his wealthy merchant family's power of patronage, Hariścandra set about creating a repertoire of Hindi drama.[92] His first attempts show him looking to Bangla and Sanskrit sources for models. By 1868, he had made a close translation of the well-known eighteenth-century Bangla romance, *Vidyāsundar.* The Sanskrit drama *Ratnāvalī,* from which he translated a three-page interlude *(viṣkhambhaka)* in the same year, had been translated into Bangla ten years before. Hariścandra's version of *Ratnāvalī* was in modern Hindi prose and Brajbhasha verse, and in his preface he mentions that he had difficulty rendering the Sanskrit verses into Brajbhasha *pada*s. But he has a larger concern here than with such matters. He is chagrined to have to admit that apart from one previous modern Hindi work—a version of the Sanskrit drama *Śakuntalā* successfully completed in 1863 by Lakṣmaṇsiṃh of Etawah—there was as yet no effective

91. Garcin de Tassy 1874: 293–94, 323 ff. Earlier references to Hindustani and to Hindi as national languages are made, respectively, in Garcin de Tassy 1829: 9, and by the Benares Sanskritist J. R. Ballantyne, *General Report on Public Instruction . . . 1846–7: 32.*

92. Details of most of Hariścandra's dramas discussed in this section—and extensive discussion of some of them—can be found in Dalmia 1997: 302–14.

use of modern Hindi for literary composition. Yet despite this situation Hariścandra is conscious of a power *(bal)* inhering in the language.[93] We may infer from his later writing that he is locating this power essentially in the modern prose language, while accepting Brajbhasha as the vehicle of verse. He understands that such power lies in Hindi's potential for use in the fundamentally new circumstances of his time. The future "power" of Hindi will depend on the extent to which it can express the perceptions and values of a modernizing society, one having deep and tenacious roots in traditional culture.

Turning next to another Sanskrit source, Hariścandra translated one act of the allegorical drama *Prabodhacandrodaya,* under the title *Pākhaṇḍviḍamban* (Hypocrisy pilloried; 1871). *Prabodhacandrodaya* had been used from the fourteenth century by Jains, Caitanyas, Vallabhans, and others as a narrative framework for the exposition of their doctrines. In the hands of Keśavdās (*Vijñāngītā,* 1610), it served as a channel for transmission of traditional culture. Many Brajbhasha versions of it exist, including one by Nandadās, Hariścandra's fellow Vallabhan sectarian. With its allegorical theme, in which Benares is abandoned by Devotion to Viṣṇu and ruled over by Deceit and Delusion, this venerable eleventh-century work could have seemed a tract for the times in nineteenth-century Benares, which was stirred by currents of modern renewal and rising political consciousness. In *Pākhaṇḍviḍamban* Hariścandra is no longer daunted by the complexities of translation as he was in his *Ratnāvalī* fragment. He successfully takes up the challenge of intermingling modern Hindi prose and varying styles of Brajbhasha verse. His purpose in this, modeled on Sanskrit convention, was to represent the language of different characters in the drama. Thus he renders the Prakrit of the women's language in the original into everyday Hindi prose, but their occasional Sanskrit into Sanskritized Brajbhasha verse; and he represents differences in the Prakrit of the Jain, Buddhist, and *śaiva* heretics by using regional variations of Brajbhasha. Such attentive care for the text suggests that Hariścandra's motivation in *Pākhaṇḍviḍamban* was—despite the drama's theme of crisis at Benares and the modern relevance that could be read into this—still largely a programmatic one. Above all, he wished to achieve a successful adaptation into Hindi from the storehouse of Sanskrit drama.

Pākhaṇḍviḍamban can be seen as the precursor of a series of three dramatic works by Hariścandra that address contemporary sociopolitical issues directly. These works illustrate the evolution of Hariścandra's views, but also his preparedness to work from sources—perhaps, too, an extent of dependence on sources. *Premjoginī* (The *yoginī* of love; 1875), planned as an independent, full-length drama on the present state of Benares, was left incom-

93. Miśra 1970: 661.

plete, with only three acts written and published.[94] A factor in Hariścandra's abandonment of *Premjoginī* was evidently that his attention had begun moving beyond Benares, for between 1875 and 1877 he worked on two dramas on contemporary issues that had a wider context. One of these, *Bhāratmātā* (Mother India), had a Bangla antecedent. The other, *Bhāratdurdaśā* (India's sad state; 1880) would come to be regarded as Hariścandra's leading work, the one for which he is best remembered today. In *Bhāratdurdaśā* Hariścandra's viewpoint is all-Indian rather than north Indian. For a framework to expound it he returned to *Prabodhacandrodaya*'s allegorical structure. The *Prabodhacandrodaya* figures of Delusion, Error, and Egoism serve as prototypes for Bhārat Durdaiv (India's evil genius), and for the leader of Bhārat Durdaiv's all-destructive army; the soldiers of this army are personifications of misfortunes brought on India by Muslim, Western, and Hindu agency, as well as by acts of fate.

It seems that Hariścandra had completed four scenes of *Bhāratdurdaśā* by 1876. At the same time he had been working on a drama titled *Bhāratjananī* (Mother India); this was an adaptation of Kiraṇcandra Vandhyopādhyāy's Bangla drama, *Bhāratmātā,* on the theme of India's former greatness and later decline.[95] *Bhāratjananī* appeared in installments in Hariścandra's magazine, *Hariścandra candrikā,* before being published as a whole in 1877. It shows an essential dependence on its source, but also considerable elaboration on it. Details of the wording and structure of *Bhāratjananī* and *Bhāratmātā* appear in *Bhāratdurdaśā,* the most notable perhaps being the frequent use in *Bhāratmātā* of the word *durdaśā,* which provided Hariścandra with his title.

Drawing on these models and on his own experience as a dramatist, Hariścandra sets out his modern theme in *Bhāratdurdaśā.* The blend of argument, anger, irony, and satire in the first four scenes of *Bhāratdurdaśā* has a freedom and effectiveness that might hardly have been predicted from his earlier Sanskrit-based drama. The mood is prevailingly informal. Long passages of Hindi prose elaborating the argument recapitulate briefer statements of it in Brajbhasha verse. The prose passages provide opportunities for comedy and farce, on the model of Shakespearean prose scenes. (Hariścandra's translation of *The Merchant of Venice* appeared in the same year as *Bhāratdurdaśā*). *Bhāratdurdaśā* was well received; performances are known to have taken place at the houses of members of dramatic and other societies, and at theaters in Kanpur (by 1885) and Allahabad.[96]

The first four scenes of *Bhāratdurdaśā* expound Hariścandra's essential argument. However, between 1876 and 1880 he added two further scenes. He

94. This title contains a reference to the hero of the play as a devoté of Kṛṣṇa. Dalmia 1997: 303.

95. In addition, he completed a very successful drama on a Kṛṣṇa theme, *Candrāvāli,* in 1876.

96. The earliest extant edition of *Bhāratdurdaśā* is that of 1887 (Patna: Khadgvilas Press).

had perhaps felt a need to dispense with allegory in concluding his drama. He may also have been prompted by the traditional six-act structure of *Prabodhacandrodaya* and other Sanskrit dramas. The conclusion of *Prabodhacandrodaya* was quite inappropriate to his account of India's situation, however, for in the Sanskrit work Benares is regained for Devotion to Viṣṇu by an army led by Reason. Hariścandra looked elsewhere for more congenial material and found sources in two recently composed Bangla poems.

Scene 5 draws on a long Bangla poem titled *Bhāratoddhār* (To rescue India; 1877), by the satirist Rāmdās Śarmā. *Bhāratoddhār* was written as an attack on posturing and extravagance in the discussion of current affairs in Calcutta. Hariścandra turns Śarmā's satire to his own purposes but on a wider Indian scale, creating a knockabout discussion between new characters: a group of editors, journalists, and other representatives of contemporary life in Calcutta, north India, and Bombay. He retains some of Śarmā's wildest farce, then speaking in his own person through one of his characters, a "north Indian gentleman," stresses the roles that education, modern skills, and literacy will play in India's future, as well as his resentment as a journalist at the recent muzzling of public opinion by the Vernacular Press Act of 1877.

Hariścandra's final scene borrows from a Bangla treatment of the theme of India's decline, Hemacandra Vandhyopādhyāy's *Bhāratbhikṣā* (India's entreaty). This long poem had been composed at the time of the Prince of Wales's visit to India in 1875. Its concluding section contemplates the extent of British power in India and its political effects, especially the catastrophic disappearance of states and dynasties, and the decline of religious centers. This has left modern Calcutta a "capital of doom" *(kalikātā kali-rājadhānī),* and Hemacandra insists that the West must now learn of India's past greatness and her present decline and sorrow. Hariścandra summarizes this theme in fluent Brajbhasha verse with great skill. At many points his specific dependence on *Bhāratbhikṣā* is very clear. He cites similar fields of early Indian cultural achievement and mentions the same ancient nations as being in India's debt. Like Hemacandra, he sees the decline in India's power and cultural preeminence as parallel to that of Rome, and he invokes India's heroic legendary history in ironic contrast with its present situation. Hariścandra's use of this passage as almost his concluding statement in *Bhāratdurdaśā* illustrates the importance to him of the theme of India's past greatness, but equally, the closeness of his contact with Bangla writers and literature.

Hariścandra depended crucially on ancient literary models and recent literary example in *Bhāratdurdaśā,* but he had the talent and confidence to adapt them successfully to the expression of a new sense of cultural identity and a new national awareness. The history of his work in drama illustrates the breadth of his language background and the cultural interdependence

of its parts. He was able to draw on this inheritance in language and culture to create the beginnings of a new literature responsive to the needs of his time, and to demonstrate its potential for literary use so effectively that it could not be ignored thereafter. His *Bhāratdurdaśā* continues to be perceived as the first milestone in the development of modern Hindi. Its completion and success signalized the emergence not so much of a genre, however, as of the language itself.

It would be some forty-five years after the completion of *Bhāratdurdaśā* that the poet Sumitrānandan Pant would write disparagingly of "rocks and stones in the forest of Braj," urging the poetic maturity of modern Hindi and giving notice that the venerable tradition of Brajbhasha as a verse standard was at an end. In a similar way, the influence of Bangla literary example and language usage had waned progressively as Hindi established itself during the early twentieth century. On the other hand, the influence of Sanskritic vocabulary on modern Hindi literary usage remained strong and overt up to and beyond Indian Independence in 1947. The use of unfamiliar Sanskrit vocabulary continued to serve as confirmation of an Indian, or Hindu, cultural identity throughout this period. As the date of India's Independence recedes, however, the use of Sanskrit vocabulary in modern Hindi is taken more for granted. Having built on a complex vernacular tradition and been nourished from the outset by its classical inheritance, the Hindi of today is asserting full literary independence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Materials in European Languages

François Marie. 1703. *Thesaurus Linguae Indianae* (MS). Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale.
General Report on Public Instruction in the North Western Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1846–7. 1848. Agra, n.p.
Husain, Iftikhar. 1968. *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in Paris: Urdu, Panjabi and Sindhi.* Karachi: Urdu Development Board.
Ketelaar, John Joshua. 1698. *Instructie off Onderwijsinge der Persiaanse en Hindoustanse Talen* (MS). 'sGravenhage: Rijksarchief.
Palmer, E. H. 1867. *Catalogue of the Oriental Manuscripts in the Library of King's College, Cambridge.* London: Royal Asiatic Society.

Primary Materials in Indian Languages

Banvālīdās [Valī]. 1877. *Gulzār i Ḥāl* (lithographed). Lucknow: n.p.
Bhayani, Harivallabh Chunilal, ed. 1953. *Paümcariu.* 2 vols. Singhi Jain Series, nos. 34–35. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
Chatterji, Suniti Kumar. 1953. "A study of the New Indo-Aryan speech treated in the *Uktivyaktiprakaraṇa.*" In *Uktivyaktiprakaraṇa,* edited by Jinavijaya Muni. With lin-

guistic study by Suniti Kumar Chatterji and an essay on material of social and historical interest in the text by Moti Chanda. Singhi Jain Series, no. 39. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Chatterji, Suniti Kumar, and B. Mishra, eds. 1940. *Varṇa-ratnākara.* Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Dvivedī, Hariharnivās, ed. 1973. *Mahābhārat.* Gwalior: Vidya Mandir Prakashan.

———. 1980. *Gopācalākhyān.* Gwalior: Gwalior Shodh Sansthan.

Dvivedī, Loknāth. 1972. *Viṣṇudās kavi kṛt rāmāyaṇa-kathā.* 2nd ed. Allahabad: Sahitya Bhawan.

Gupta, Mātāprasād, ed. 1967. *Cāṁdayan.* Agra: Pramanik Prakashan.

Gupta, Parameśvarīlāl, ed. 1964. *Candāyan.* Bombay: n.p.

Miśra, Śivprasād, ed. 1970. *Bhāratendu granthāvalī.* Vol. 1. Nagari Pracharini Sabha Granth-Mala, no. 72. Benares: Nagari Pracharini Sabha.

Miśra, Viśvanāthprasād, ed. 1954. *Keśav granthāvalī.* 3 vols. Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.

———. 1957. *Bhikhārīdās granthāvalī.* 2 vols. Benares: Nagari Pracharini Sabha.

Ranking, G. S. A., trans. 1884. *Muntakhabu't-tawārīkh.* Vol. 1. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica.

Saksenā, Bābūrām, ed. 1964. *Kīrtilatā.* 4th ed. Benares: Nagari Pracharini Sabha.

Seṅgar, Śivsiṃh. 1878. *Śivsiṃh-saroj.* Lucknow: Nawal Kishore Press.

Śukla, Umāśaṅkar, ed. 1942. *Nandadās.* 2 vols. Raja Pannalal Govardhanlal Granth-mala. Prayag: Prayag University.

Tivārī, Pārasnāth, ed. 1961. *Kabīr granthāvalī.* Allahabad: Hindi Parishad, Allahabad University.

Ziauddin, M. 1935. *A Grammar of the Braj Bhakha by Mīrzā Khān (1676 A.D.).* Vishvabharati Series, no. 3. Calcutta: Vishvabharati Bookshop.

Secondary Materials in European Languages

Allchin, F. R., trans. 1963. *Kavitāvalī.* London: George Allen and Unwin.

Bakker, Hans. 1987. "Reflections on the Evolution of Rāma Devotion in the Light of Textual Evidence." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 21: 9–42.

Barz, Richard K. 1976. *The Bhakti Sect of Sri Vallabhacharya.* Faridpur: Thomson.

Bhatia, Tej K. 1987. *A History of the Hindi Grammatical Tradition.* Handbuch der Orientalistik 2, suppl. vol. 4. Leiden: Brill.

Connolly, P., ed. 1986. *Perspectives in Indian Religion.* Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.

Corcoran, Maura. 1980. "Vṛndāvana in Vaiṣṇava Braj Literature." Ph.D. diss., University of London.

Dalmia, Vasudha. 1997. *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Digby, Simon. 1975. "ʿAbd al-Quddus Gangohi (1456–1537 A.D.): The Personality and Attitudes of a Medieval Indian Sufi." In *Medieval India, a Miscellany,* edited by K. A. Nizami. Aligarh Muslim University. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

Entwistle, Alan W. 1987. *Braj, Center of Krishna Pilgrimage.* Groningen Oriental Series, vol. 3. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.

Entwistle, Alan W., and Carol Salomon, eds. 1988. *Studies in Early Modern Indo-Aryan Languages, Literature and Culture.* With Heidi Pauwels and Michael C. Shapiro. New Delhi: Manohar.

Garcin de Tassy, J. H. S. V. 1829. *Rudimens de la langue hindoustanie.* Paris: Imprimerie Royal.

———. 1874. *La langue et la littérature hindoustanies de 1850 à 1869.* 2d ed. Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie.

Hawley, John S. 1979. "The Early Sūr Sāgar and the Growth of the Sūr Tradition." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99,1: 64–72.

Haynes, Richard D. 1974. "Svāmī Haridās and the Haridāsī Sampradāy." Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania.

Hein, Norvin. 1972. *The Miracle Plays of Mathura.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Hira Lal. 1925. "Damoh Hindi Inscription of Mahmud Shah II of Malwa: (Vikrama-) Samvat 1570." *Epigraphia Indica* 15, 1919–1920, edited by F. W. Thomas. Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch.

Lath, Mukund, trans. 1980. *Half a Tale: The Ardhakathānak of Banarasidas.* With original Hindi text. Jaipur: Rajasthan Prakrit Bharati Sansthan.

Luard, C. E. 1907. *Eastern States (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer.* Vol. 6-A. Lucknow: Central India State Gazetteer Series.

Mallison, Françoise. 1994. "Early *Kṛṣṇa* Bhakti in Gujarat." In *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature,* edited by Alan W. Entwistle and Françoise Mallison. École Française d'Extrême-Orient. New Delhi: Manohar.

McGregor, Ronald Stuart. 1968. *The Language of Indrajit of Orcha.* Oriental Series, no. 13. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1971. "Some Manuscripts Containing Nanddās's Version of the Prabodha-candrodaya Drama." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91, 4: 487–93.

———, trans. 1973. *The Round Dance of Krishna, and Uddhav's Message.* London: Luzac.

———. 1974. *Hindi Literature of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.* Vol. 8, pt. 2 of *A History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

———. 1983. "The Dhyān-mañjarī of Agradās." In *Bhakti in Current Research, 1979–1982,* edited by Monika Thiel-Horstmann. Collectanea Instituti Anthropos, no. 30. Berlin: Reimer Verlag.

———. 1984. *Hindi Literature from Its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century.* Vol. 8, pt. 6 of *A History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

———. 1986. "A Brajbhāṣā Adaptation of the *Prabodhacandrodaya* Drama by Nand-dās of the Sect of Vallabha." In *Perspectives in Indian Religion,* edited by P. Connolly. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.

———. 1991. "The *Rāmāyan-kathā* of Viṣṇudās." In *Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India. Studies in Honour of Charlotte Vaudeville,* edited by Diana L. Eck and F. Mallison. Groningen: Egbert Forsten; Paris, EFEO.

———. 1992. "Nanddās's Treatment of the Story of Rukmiṇī." In *The Indian Narrative: Perspectives and Patterns,* edited by Christopher Shackle and Rupert Snell. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

———. 1994. "An Early Nineteenth-Century Collection of Hindi Devotional Poems." In *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature,* edited by Alan W. Entwistle and Françoise Mallison. École Française d'Extrême-Orient. New Delhi: Manohar.

———. 1998. "Viṣṇudās and His *Pāṇḍav-carit.*" In *Studies in Early Modern Indo-Aryan Languages, Literature and Culture,* edited by Alan W. Entwistle and Carol Salomon. With Heidi Pauwels and Michael C. Shapiro. New Delhi: Manohar.

———. 2001. *The Formation of Modern Hindi as Demonstrated in Early "Hindi" Dictionaries.* Eighth Gonda Lecture. Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Misra, B. D. 1993. *Forts and Fortresses of Gwalior.* Delhi: Manohar.

Pandey, Syam Manohar. 1978. "Maulānā Dāūd and His Contributions to the Hindi Sūfī Literature." *Annali, Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 38, 1: 75–112.

———. 1979. *The Hindi Oral Epic Loriki.* Allahabad: Sahitya Bhawan.

———. 1995. "*Kanhāvata,* A Kṛṣṇaite Sūfī Text Attributed to Malik Muhammad Jāyasī." *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 26.

Rizvi, S. A. A. 1978–1983. *A History of Sufism in India.* 2 vols. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Schimmel, Annemarie. 1975. *Classical Urdu Literature from the Beginnings to Iqbāl.* Vol. 8, pt. 3 of *A History of Indian Literature,* edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Schokker, G. A. 1983. "Keśavadāsa's Method of Basing Braj Kṛṣṇa Lyrics on the Sanskrit Tradition of Literary Aesthetics." In *Bhakti in Current Research, 1979–1982,* edited by Monika Thiel-Horstmann. Collectanea Instituti Anthropos, no. 30. Berlin: Reimer Verlag.

Smith, John D. 1976. *The "Vīsaḷadevarāsa": A Restoration of the Text.* Oriental Series no. 26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vaudeville, Charlotte. 1955. *Étude sur les sources et la composition du Rāmāyaṇa de Tulsīdās.* Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient. Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve.

———. 1974. *Kabīr.* Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1980. "The Govardhan Myth in Northern India." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 22, 1: 1–45.

Vogel, J. Ph. 1936. "Joan Joshua Ketelaar of Elbing, Author of the First Hindūstānī Grammar." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 8: 817–22.

———. 1937. *Journal van J. J. Ketelaar's Hofreis naar den Groot Mogol te Lahore, 1711–13.* 'sGravenhage: Linschoten Vereeniging.

———. 1941. "De eerste 'Grammatica' van het hindoustaansch." *Mededeelingen der Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen,* n.s., part 4: 643–74.

Secondary Materials in Indian Languages

Gupta, Dīndayālu. 1947. *Aṣṭchāp aur vallabh sampradāy.* 2 vols. Prayag: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.

Gupta, Kiśorīlāl, ed. 1970. *Śivsiṃh saroj.* Prayag: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.

Śukla, Rāmcandra, 1957. *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās.* 11th ed. Benares: Nagari Pracharini Sabha.

17

The Progress of Hindi, Part 2

Hindi and the Nation

Harish Trivedi

The current preeminence of Hindi among the modern Indian languages is a phenomenon of surprisingly recent growth and represents a dramatic change in its fortunes. Until about a hundred years ago, Hindi was commonly perceived to be an underdeveloped and underprivileged language, fragmented into several competing dialects, backward and dusty by association with its largely rural constituency, and medievally devout and convention-bound in its literary orientation. Beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, Hindi began to refashion itself comprehensively and to assert vigorously its new identity, especially in relation to its sister language, Urdu, which inhabited the same vast and populous expanse of northern India. Through repeated and sustained struggle, it was able to enlarge its public cultural space to such an extent that it was adopted by Gandhi and Congress as the *rāṣṭrabhāṣā,* the national language. Hindi became not only the medium but also one of the major planks of anticolonial nationalism, which led to its installation after Independence as the *rājabhāṣā,* the official language of the nation-state.

Indeed, so sudden and spectacular was the rise of Hindi that most of the

other Indian languages, some of which had modernized and reinvigorated themselves in response to the colonial stimulus some decades before, now opposed the spread and "imposition" of Hindi and its encroachment, in terms of both official diktat and popular culture, upon their traditional territories. It is an ironically apt measure of the rise and rise of Hindi during the twentieth century that whereas in the colonial period it was seen as a spearhead of resistance against British imperialism, in the postcolonial period it has had to face charges of "Hindi imperialism," of exercising its own brand of linguistic dominance and expansionism, which have in turn been resisted by the other Indian languages.[1] The nationalist evolution of Hindi in the twentieth century thus describes a full circle.

Such resurgence and refashioning of Hindi was effected through a series of related and mutually reinforcing measures. The movement, which began in 1867 but assumed a sustained charge through the 1880s and the 1890s, was initially a modest demand that Devanagari, the script in which Hindi is written, be permitted as an alternative script, alongside the modified Persian script in which Urdu is written, for the purposes of administrative and judicial business at the lower levels in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh (subsequently called the United Provinces and, after independence, Uttar Pradesh, both abbreviated to U.P.). This public demand made on the British government was accompanied by an internal literary development: the search for a form of Hindi suitable for the writing of prose, which until then had hardly existed but for which a growing need was now acutely felt. The form of Hindi selected, Khari Boli (a dialect or regional form spoken in the areas of Western U.P., Delhi, and Haryana) was a new literary medium, and the choice was perhaps reinforced by the fact that virtually all the poetry in Hindi so far had been written in other regional forms, mainly Brajbhasha and Avadhi. The new prose in Hindi was thus to be uncontaminated by any preceding poetry. In fact, when the early Hindi essays and novels, which were the most popular new forms of prose in the language, used poetic quotations and allusions, as they did quite frequently, they illustrated a conjunction of two different kinds of Hindi hardly ever seen before.

Soon enough, however, a new and perhaps natural demand arose: the language of prose and the language of poetry should be the same in Hindi, as in all other developed languages (including, as was specifically pointed out, English, beginning famously with the Romantic movement). In a slow and stoutly resisted change wrought over several decades and not conclusively settled until the rise of the Chāyāvād movement (broadly, the Romantic movement in Hindi poetry, discussed later in this chapter) in the 1920s, Khari

---

1. For an early, and vigorously counteractive, use of the phrase "Hindi imperialism," see Rāhul Sāṅkṛityāyan's presidential address of 1947 to the thirty-fifth annual session of the Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan, in Mehtā 1996: 146.

Boli established itself as the medium of Hindi poetry as well. By decisively turning its back on its literary genealogy of over half a millennium and marching off into what many at the time feared might prove to be wilderness, Hindi at once made a number of crucial choices. While it lost that long corridor of echo and allusion, which constitute much of what poetry connotes, it also shed at one stroke the encumbering load of an overwrought and played-out poetic tradition, and it awaited the future as an empty vessel into which could be poured unimpeded the spirit of the times. Further, as Khari Boli is distinctly closer in grammatical structure and even basic vocabulary to Urdu than to Brajbhasha, Hindi now set up a new correlation with Urdu, one that could prove either mutually and harmoniously assimilative or sharply and divisively contestatory.

It was in debates and controversies that began to arise toward the end of the nineteenth century that Hindi first found it necessary to define and defend itself against its cultural other, Urdu—as Urdu simultaneously and perhaps even more critically defined itself against Hindi. One drastic strategy adopted for coping with this crisis of linguistic identity was for both Hindi and Urdu to pretend that the other language hardly existed as an independent entity. In the early decades of the twentieth century, many champions of Hindi asserted that Urdu was no more than a *śailī*, or style, of Hindi, while at least one eminent Urdu scholar has argued, paradoxically and against the grain of his own vast learning, that before the end of the eighteenth century, wherever "Hindi" was mentioned, it was in fact "Urdu" that was meant.[2] Some scholars have inaccurately limited the use of the term "Hindi" strictly to Khari Boli Hindi, now also called "Modern Standard Hindi," while denying the name to Avadhi and Brajbhasha, the forms or dialects in which all "Hindi" literature was written before the adoption of Khari Boli. The basic problem here seems to be a historical inability (or else ideological unwillingness) to distinguish between "Hindi" and "modern Hindi" and a refusal to entertain the possibility that any forms of premodern, nonstandard Hindi

2. See Faruqi, chapter 14, this volume. The singular originality of his argument, which leads him perhaps to overvalue the prehistory of Urdu, is best represented in the statement: "The blame for not effectively refuting the theories about the antiquity of modern Hindi, and even its anteriority over Urdu, must also lie with the historians of Urdu—all of whom failed to address this issue scientifically and logically, if they dealt with it at all." In contrast, Sadiq gives this "long history" of (Dakani/Dakhini/Dakkhini) Urdu from the thirteenth century up to Valī (fl. eighteenth century) a short shrift of 11 pages (pp. 50–60) in a history of Urdu literature that runs to 652 pages. In any case, Dakani was, in Sadiq's view, "a new language" that the "lay" Urdu reader today "can neither understand nor appreciate." Sadiq [1964] 1984: 51. See also the specific study of "Dakhini Urdu" by Ruth Laila Schmidt, in which she concludes that Dakhini is "a member of the Western Hindi dialect family," and that "even among Dakhini speakers, the Urdu of North India is used on formal occasions." Schmidt 1981: 58, ix. For a consideration of Dakhini writing as a part of Hindi literature, see Śarmā 1972: 32–33 and passim.

ever existed. Surely, "modern Hindi" presupposes an older "Hindi," and to call the latter by names other than "Hindi" is to be historically and culturally inconsistent. Given the linguistic and literary as well as cultural and communal sensitivity of the issue, perhaps there is an apparently evenhanded assumption of political parity at work here to the effect that if Urdu has existed as a literary language for only a couple of centuries, as is the commonly accepted view, Hindi could not possibly have done so for considerably longer. A strong indicator of a vital historical continuity between older Hindi and modern Hindi is the comprehensive linguistic similarity among Brajbhasha, Avadhi, and Khari Boli (shared largely also with Urdu). But an even more crucial indicator is the literary and cultural tradition itself, which these three forms of Hindi together constitute and share (and which Urdu, by contrast, does not). Significantly, the question whether or not Avadhi and Brajbhasha are to be called Hindi is never asked in Hindi (which has no such term as "Modern Standard Hindi") but only in other languages, such as Urdu or English, possibly because the geographical and historical scope and variety of Hindi, unmatched by any other Indian language, may seem in some need of being broken down for external observers.[3]

Indeed, by propagating Khari Boli as the preferred dialect in the public sphere from around the end of the nineteenth century, while allowing other forms, including Brajbhasha and Avadhi, to fall into mere domestic use and literary desuetude, the new standardized Hindi emerged clearly and indisputably as the most widely used language in the country. It was spread predominantly across seven or eight states from (to use their modern names and definitions) Himachal Pradesh in the north through Panjab (in part), Haryana and Delhi to Madhya Pradesh in central India, and from Bihar in the east through Uttar Pradesh to Rajasthan in the west. In contrast, each of the other major Indian languages, especially after the linguistic reorganization of Indian states in 1956, is consolidated in and effectively confined to one state. On this ground alone, Hindi qualified incontestably as the language most suited democratically for adoption as the common language of the nation. The emergence and spread of modern Hindi supplemented and cemented the transregional political consensus and solidarity that the nationalist movement served to bring about in the country.

The new national identity of India, whether in the colonial first half of the twentieth century or in the postcolonial second half, thus had Hindi as one of its defining components. Consonant with this role, the growth of the novel in Hindi reflected if not a conscious project to narrate the nation then at least

3. On how Khari Boli Hindi in the Nagari script "was able to subsume the potentialities of all the dialects of the Hindi language area as vehicles for literary expression," see McGregor 1970: 177. See also McGregor, chapter 16, this volume, on the "composite 'literary tradition of Hindi.'"

a marked proclivity to represent not merely local or regional but equally national and nationalist thematic concerns. Both fiction and poetry in Hindi caught up with the literature of the Western world by telescopically assimilating within a matter of five or six decades trends and movements that in the English language had taken several centuries to evolve: the romance; the popular novel of adventure and suspense; the novel of realism and the psychological novel; and in poetry, Romanticism, modernism, and progressivism. It was as if, to make up for a delayed start because of the comparatively late penetration of colonial influence into the Hindi heartland, modern Hindi literature went through accelerated development in an endeavor to draw level with world literature, especially the literature of the English colonial masters. After Independence, as if in a visible casting off of the colonial model, Hindi literature turned for inspiration to literatures written in languages other than English while it also developed an indigenous postcolonial idiom of its own, for which of course there was no precedent or parallel in English.[4]

In this essay, in consonance with the distinct methodological project of the present volume, I seek to explore selectively, and necessarily disjunctively, three related themes that seem to represent the trajectory and role of Hindi in the twentieth century: first and most important, the radically enabling transformation and expansion of the Hindi language as well as its somewhat disabling elevation to an unrealistic national role following Independence; second, the development of modern Hindi poetry after it had changed in midstream the horses of poetic idiom from Brajbhasha to Khari Boli, with reference mainly to its first major movement in the new mode, Chāyāvād; and last, the resistant reception in Hindi of a new and predominantly popular Western genre, the novel. Through this terrain of language and literature will be seen to run the *antaḥsalila,* the subterranean stream or undercurrent, of the nation and nationalism, which Hindi, with its newly reinforced transregional preeminence, saw as its special thematic burden.

THE QUESTION OF THE LANGUAGE

Scripting the Difference: Nagari and Urdu

In 1835, the English colonial power in India adopted the policy, favored by Macaulay and Bentinck, of Anglicizing the subject peoples. Accordingly, the previous practice of the acquisition of Oriental knowledge by the British was reversed, and in 1837 English replaced Persian at the higher levels of administration, supplemented by the regional languages at the lower.[5] While

---

4. For an elaboration, see Trivedi [1993] 1995: 176–98.

5. On the history of English in India and related literary-cultural questions, see Dharwadker, chapter 3, this volume.

this change worked out fairly unproblematically in most parts of the country, it led to perceptions of distortion and injustice in the Hindi-speaking areas. Here, largely because of Urdu's close similarity in both vocabulary and script to Persian, the old language of command, it was Urdu in the Persian script and not Hindi in the Devanagari script (popularly, Nagari) that was proclaimed the local official language. The situation was further complicated by the existence—since at least the founding of the College of Fort William in 1800—of the beginnings of a contentious debate over whether Hindi and Urdu were really one and the same language (sometimes in the singular called Hindust[h]ani) written in two different scripts, or whether, despite deceptive syntactic identity and a common basic vocabulary, these were in fact two languages substantially distinct in their "higher" vocabulary, their literature, and their cultural genealogy.

A few decades after the proclamation of the new policy, and after the British had reentrenched themselves more securely than ever after the "Mutiny" of 1857–1858, a demand arose that the language used in the lower courts of law and other strata of administration be permitted to be written in the Nagari as well as the Persian script. Articulated for the first time in Benares in 1867–1868, this demand was reiterated with greater force in 1882, and then from 1893 onwards. The main reasons advanced in its support were that in the Hindi-speaking areas primary education was given almost entirely through Hindi in the Nagari script, and that Urdu in the Persian script (a notably unscientific and ambiguous script anyhow, especially when compared with Nagari) was known mainly to Muslims, who constituted no more than 14 percent of the population. (Among the Hindus, only the very small communities of Kashmiri Brahmans and Kāyasths, the latter according to one definition being a relatively recently formed caste of "mixed origin,"[6] knew Urdu, for members of both communities had traditionally led in literacy and acted as officials and scribes in previous Muslim administrations.) The demand for the use of the Nagari script was thus put forward as a democratic demand on behalf of the vast majority of the population, who were otherwise denied direct access to official documents and procedures. Furthermore, in the new colonial regime in which social and material advancement often depended on one's ability to obtain a well-paid government job, use of the Persian script alone amounted to gross economic discrimination.

One of the most cogent and forthright statements in the cause of Nagari was made by Bhāratendu Hariścandra (1850–1885), often acclaimed as the father of modern Hindi literature. He was a poet in Hindi (as well as Sanskrit and Urdu), the founder of modern Hindi drama, a translator into Hindi of several major literary works from Sanskrit as well as of Shakespeare's *Mer-*

---

6. McGregor [1993] 1997: 191.

chant of Venice, a pioneering and influential journalist and editor, the charismatic center of a large literary circle, and one of the wealthy and eminent citizens of Benares. In 1882, in response to a questionnaire circulated by a British Education Commission, he stated (in English):

> The best remedy would be to make . . . the language of the court the language used by the people, and to introduce into the court papers the character [i.e., script] which the majority of the public can read. The character in use in primary schools of these provinces is, with slight exceptions, entirely Hindi, and the character used in the courts and offices is Persian, and therefore the primary Hindi education which a rustic lad gains at his village has no value, reward or attraction attached to it. . . .
>
> If Urdu ceases to be the court language, the Mussalmans will not easily secure the numerous offices of Government . . . of which they have at present a sort of monopoly. By the introduction of the Nagari character they would lose entirely the opportunity of plundering the people by reading one word for another and thereby misconstruing the real sense of the contents. . . . For example, make a mark like [a three-letter word in the Persian script], and we have 606 different pronunciations. . . .
>
> May God save us from such letters!!! What wonders cannot be performed through their medium? Black can be changed into white and white into black. . . . The use of Persian letters in offices is not only an injustice to Hindus, but it is a cause of annoyance and inconvenience to the majority of the loyal subjects of Her Imperial Majesty.[7]

The charge of monopolization of government jobs by Muslims was amply borne out by the government's own statistics, according to which the Muslims (14 percent of the population) held 63.9 percent of these positions in 1857 and 45.8 percent even in 1886–1887, by which time a substantial number of Hindus had learned Urdu in order to have a share of the spoils.[8]

The next major initiative on behalf of Nagari came in the form of the establishment of several societies to promote the cause, in Meerut, Allahabad, and elsewhere, but most importantly in Benares, where in 1893 a group of young students founded the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā (Society for the propagation of Nagari). This proved to be a crucial moment for Hindi, for not only did the Sabhā play a decisive role in ensuring the official acceptance of Nagari, but it went on to sponsor a number of major initiatives that helped shape and define Hindi language and literature in the decades to come. Besides starting its own research journal, the *Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Patrikā,* in 1896, it launched in 1900 from Allahabad another, more literary journal, *Saras-*

7. Rāmgopāl 1965 (ś.s. 1886): 113, 115, and 129–30. Incidentally, Hariścandra appears to have known a courtesan-poet, Husna, who wrote under the pen-name "Nāgarī." V. M. Śarmā 1972 (v.s. 2029): 110.

8. See Brass 1974: 143 and Robinson 1974: 46.

vatī, which under the sternly magisterial editorship (1903–1920) of Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī helped to fix the norms of the new Khari Boli Hindi and give it increasing acceptance and respectability, especially as the medium of poetry. The Sabhā also conducted systematic searches for rare Hindi books and manuscripts, contributing substantially through the publication of its triennial Search Reports to the corpus of Hindi literature; in addition, it undertook to publish authoritative editions of canonical as well as popular Hindi texts. In 1910, it organized the first Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan (Hindi literary conference), which then became an autonomous permanent institution under that name with its office in Allahabad and organized annual conferences at different venues all over the country. The Sammelan also became the chief instrument for the close affiliation of Hindi to the nationalist movement. Among its members were eminent political leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Purushottam Das Tandon, Narendra Dev, Sampurnanand, and Govind Das, nearly all of whom served as presidents of the Indian National Congress, and many of whom went on to become ministers or members of parliament in independent India. In 1929, the Sabhā published a Hindi dictionary, the *Hindī Śabdasāgar* (Ocean of Hindi words), which remains unsurpassed in both size and authority. What was meant to be a preface to the dictionary, outlining the development of Hindi literature, by Rāmacandra Śukla, turned out to be a work in fine excess of the original requirement; it remains the foundational and largely definitive history of Hindi literature. More ambitiously, in 1957 the Sabhā began to publish its *Hindī Sāhitya kā Br̥hat Itihās* (Comprehensive history of Hindi literature), in sixteen volumes. In effect, much of what we now know to be Hindi language and literature has attained its modern definition, at least in a symbolically originary sense, from a modest first meeting of the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, held on the rooftop of a stable in Benares on July 9, 1893, attended by some schoolboys led by seventeen-year-old Śyāmsundar Dās.[9]

Meanwhile, the battle for Nagari was soon won. Sir Antony MacDonnell, appointed lieutenant-governor of the North-Western Provinces in 1895, had witnessed in 1880, as commissioner in Patna, the changeover from the Persian script to Nagari (and a variation of it, Kaithi). (The use of the Nagari script in another neighboring Hindi-speaking region, the Central Provinces, had been authorized even earlier, in 1872.) A national leader of the front rank, Madan Mohan Malaviya, made out a comprehensive case for the Nagari script in his *Court Character and Primary Education in N.-W. P. and Oudh* (1897) and formally presented a copy of the book to MacDonnell when he led a deputation of the Sabhā to meet MacDonnell on March 2, 1898; he

9. See Dās 1941; King 1994; and Mehtā 1996.

also submitted on the occasion a petition signed by over 60,000 persons and bound in sixteen volumes. In his reply, MacDonnell expressed sympathy with the cause of the petitioners while observing that opposition from the Muslims was to be expected and that an arrangement that had continued for three hundred years could not be reversed in a day.[10] Finally, on April 18, 1900, the government passed an order authorizing the use of Nagari, alongside the Persian script, at the lower levels of legal and civil administration.[11]

This seemed to be a comprehensive success for the campaign for Nagari—certainly from the viewpoint of the Urdu-speakers, who, in their confident trust in the government generated by their new politics of collaboration with the British inaugurated by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his Aligarh Movement, appeared not to have anticipated it. Apparently taken by surprise, the supporters of Urdu belatedly mounted a counter-campaign. The Urdu Defence Association was established in 1900 but promptly and sternly admonished into extinction by MacDonnell.[12] The sturdier Anjuman Taraqqī-e-Urdū (Society for the progress of Urdu), established in 1903, has gone on to promote Urdu in many of the same ways that the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā promoted Hindi. Indeed, just as Hindi aligned itself with Congress nationalism, the Anjuman went on to champion the "two-nation" politics of separatism, which acclaimed Urdu as the national language of the projected state of Pakistan and as one of the main agents in the creation of Pakistan.[13]

Insofar as Nagari remained an unfamiliar and untested option to the long-entrenched Persian script, its use in the lower courts did not increase instantly or dramatically. This has misled a historian of the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā to state that "once the uproar had died down, little had actually changed," for "the triumph was little more than a symbolic one and had few practical results."[14] In fact, the triumph gave a tremendous boost to the morale of the users of Nagari and Hindi and indeed rapidly led to a reversal in the balance of power between Urdu and Hindi, resulting in a virtual rout of Urdu in the public domain of authorship and publishing. It also gave Nagari the strength to repel with ease sporadic moves to introduce the roman script for Hindi (and other Indian languages). On the contrary, it could now press, though

10. Rāmgopāl 1965 (ś.s. 1886): 48–50; also Gupta 1978: 380–81.

11. According to the three new rules now introduced, "all persons may present their petitions or complaints either in the Nagri or the Persian character as they shall desire," all proclamations issued in the vernacular were to be in both scripts, and no person could be appointed to any administrative position unless able to read and write both scripts "fluently." For the full text of the government resolution dated 21 April 1900, see Rāmgopāl 1965 (ś.s. 1886): 160–62.

12. Jain 1965: 66–67. See also Lelyveld 1978.

13. See the statement by Maulana Abdul Haq, long-serving secretary and then president of the Anjuman Taraqqī-e-Urdū, on February 15, 1961, that "Pakistan was not created by Jinnah, nor was it created by Iqbal; it was Urdu that created Pakistan." Quoted in Rai 1984: 264.

14. King 1994: 153, 156.

equally unavailingly, its own claim to be adopted as the common script for all the Indian languages, mainly on the basis of the arguments that it was more complete and scientific than the other scripts, and that the scripts of most north Indian languages were close to it anyhow, being derived from Devanagari.[15] Interestingly, Gandhi persistently supported Nagari for the role of a common Indian script even more strongly than he supported Hindi or Hindustani as a national language, though he made the singular exception of allowing that Urdu should continue with the Persian script, at least for the time being. "I know I am inconsistent," he explained, "but my inconsistency is not quite foolish. There is Hindu-Muslim friction at the present moment."[16]

Hindus and Muslims: Hindi and Urdu

The petitioners for Nagari as well as officials of the government in numerous documents, including the vital order of 1900, used "Hindi" and "Nagari" interchangeably and occasionally even employed the phrase "Hindi character" when obviously "Nagari" was meant. Christopher King is highly critical of this "confusion" resulting from the "obtuseness" of the government, which displayed an "almost incredible lack of clarity and precision" and "sheer muddleheadedness" so that its actions were rendered "close to ludicrous."[17] But this "confusion" was even more widespread, for the supporters of Urdu, too, when fighting back, always denounced the Hindi language (usually as being vulgar, rustic, and unrefined) and hardly ever the script. There appeared to be, in fact, a perfect, tacit understanding between both the warring parties and also the government as to what exactly was at stake: it was a grand imbrication, conflation, and con-fusion of script, language, culture, community, and eventually even nation.

No two languages in India (and perhaps few elsewhere) have had such a close and yet contestatory relationship as Hindi and Urdu, a relationship that has been described variously, in human kinship terms, as that between mother and daughter, between two sisters (though not quite twins, for one language or the other has always claimed to be the older), and between mutually jealous co-wives or concubines. Their complex, intertwined, and yet sorely vexed history raises a whole range of major questions that have proved historically to be of vital consequence to the Indian nation:

1. *Similarity.* Are Hindi and Urdu one and the same language, though they have always been written in two different scripts? Even if they are no longer

---

15. King 1994: 208. See also Varmā 1971 and Prasād 1989.
16. Gandhi 1965: 50. On this issue see also Gandhi 1965: 26, 27, 38, 42, 132.
17. King 1994: 178, 185, 195.

so, were they ever the same language in the past? Are there any histori-
cal grounds for considering either Hindi or Urdu as the source from
which the other originated?

2. *Split.* If Hindi and Urdu can be regarded as (having been) basically the
   same language, how did they break away from each other, and when and
   why, to cause the present divide? Can one language be held more re-
   sponsible than the other for causing and promoting this rift? How far was
   such a division due to nonlinguistic, social, or communal reasons, that
   is, to factors arising mainly from the respective religious affiliations of their
   speakers? Did the British rulers of India at any stage play a part in either
   bringing together or separating Hindi and Urdu, and if so, to what pur-
   pose and effect?

3. *Commonality.* Even after the divide, did Hindi and Urdu share common
   ground, and if so, to what extent? Was either language able to develop,
   at any stage in its historical evolution, a "composite" literary culture in
   which members of the other community participated significantly? Could
   a common language partaking (equally?) of both Hindi and Urdu, often
   called Hindustani, have served as the lingua franca of undivided India,
   or even of India after Partition (as distinct from Pakistan, where Urdu
   was designated to serve that function right from the beginning, or indeed
   from even before the creation of Pakistan)? Could such a common lan-
   guage be used not only on the street or in common conversation but also
   for "higher" creative and discursive purposes? Is there evidence on the
   ground of the use of such a common language?

A wide variety of answers have been provided to these questions, and most
have appeared partisan in terms of the conclusions reached, if not in terms
of their very orientation. It would be futile as well as presumptuous to arbi-
trate between them. What can perhaps be usefully attempted here, instead,
is to locate the provenance and politics of some of these responses and to
point briefly, even summarily, to the limitations of each, which prevent it from
being accepted as a universally satisfactory answer. In one sense, insofar as
these are not merely academic questions but issues with a live charge, the
only settled answers to them can be those so far provided by history, such as
the indisputable decline of Urdu and the rejection of Hindustani as the
"official" language of India in favor of Hindi. It may therefore be instructive
to review, apart from all the arguments, some such conclusive factual
processes as well.

The view that Hindi and Urdu are one and the same language has been
put forward from two very different points of view. The first is the strictly lin-
guistic or grammatical, and the second is the optimistically secular or non-
sectarian. In terms of grammatical structure, Urdu and the modern Khari
Boli Hindi are nearly identical, though it may be remembered that Khari

Boli became the dominant form of Hindi only about a century ago, and that the forms of Hindi in wide use for several centuries before that, Avadhi and Brajbhasha, were not quite as close to Urdu. In any case, the skeletal similarity between Urdu and modern Hindi does not extend to flesh and blood, as it were, for the larger part of the vocabularies and the cultural matrices of these languages have always been widely different, being derived from Arabic-Persian and from Sanskrit, respectively. The narrowly and technically linguistic view of language has in any case been supplanted by a wider cultural view in recent years, as in the field of translation studies, where the old hypothesis that translation is something that takes place between two different languages has been largely superseded by the view that the act of translation is a wider negotiation between two different cultures.[18]

The view that Hindi and Urdu are one and the same language is also supported by those who believe that such a stance may project or produce a more desirable state of affairs generally, to the extent that it may minimize conflict and possibly bring about goodwill and harmony between Hindus and Muslims. Sometimes, on the contrary, supporters of Hindi and Urdu have each claimed these languages to be identical as part of their larger hegemonic agenda of suggesting that their own language is more identical, so to speak, than the other, so that the other language is effectively subsumed within theirs. This is reflected, for example, in the respective claims, considered earlier, that in the period up to the eighteenth century wherever "Hindi" was mentioned, what was meant was in fact "Urdu," or, conversely, that Urdu was just one of the many varieties or styles of Hindi.

The view that Hindi and Urdu were at least initially the same language usually originates with the extraordinary example of Amīr Ḵhusrau (1258–1325), who wrote a few light and even risqué verses in colloquial Khari Boli—perhaps as a jeu d'esprit—which have probably been substantially transformed and updated anyhow during centuries of oral transmission, unlike his work in Persian, which has been more faithfully preserved.[19] Altogether, Ḵhusrau seems to be a one-off—not the sturdy common stem from which Hindi and Urdu both later branched out, but a distant straw in the wind from the point of view of literary history. For the next major figure to write verse in a comparable idiom of Khari Boli occurs in Urdu not until Valī (fl. c. 1700), four centuries later, and in Hindi not until Bhāratendu Hariścandra and his contemporaries, six centuries later.

On the issues of when and why Hindi and Urdu broke away from one an-

18. For "the cultural turn" in translation studies, see in particular the introduction in Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 1–13; also Lefevere 1992; and in general, volumes in the Translation Studies series published by Routledge, London.

19. For a scholarly retrieval of Ḵhusrau's "Hindavi" work, see Nāraṅg 1990. See also Coprā 1988: 43–44.

other and which is the more to blame, there are, predictably enough, three broad responses: (1) Urdu did it, beginning in the first half of the eighteenth century, when it systematically threw out indigenous words and overloaded itself with more and more imported Persian; (2) Hindi did it, beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in brute assertion of its numerical majority and its newly found nationalist political strength; (3) the British did it, at the College of Fort William (founded 1800) under their notorious policy of divide and rule, with John Gilchrist, the first grammarian of Hindustani and the moving spirit of that college, as the archdemon. The most comprehensively documented case for the view that Urdu was the one that broke away has been made by Amrit Rai—the novelist-son of Premchand—who had extensive linguistic competence in Hindi, Urdu, English, Bangla, and Sanskrit; his argument remains substantially unanswered. Rai also lays to rest the convenient and glibly anticolonial theory that the division was the mischief of the British; they, "like pragmatic men," may have exploited an existing fissure, he suggests, but they certainly did not cause it.[20] It may be relevant to recall here that Gilchrist's preference for the common name for Hindi and Urdu, "Hindustani," was in his own lights, prompted by an impulse quite the opposite of divisive; he said he meant it as "a general, conciliatory, comprehensive term."[21]

Even though this in-between or interstitial third term, Hindustani, has always carried the taint of denoting a language rather closer to Urdu than to Hindi—if not quite synonymous with Urdu[22]—it was to prove useful in signifying and highlighting the actual or projected common ground between Hindi and Urdu, especially after the rift between the two languages had fur-

20. Rai 1984: 11, 285–89. In a review of Rai's work, Masud Husain Khan seems to agree that "what happened to Modern Hindi at the turn of the 19th century [had already] happened to Urdu at the turn of the 18th century," but alleges that Rai "the academician turns into a politician" when he disputes "the claims of Urdu to being a common language of the Hindus and the Muslims" (Khan 1987: 148, 150). King, while admitting that Rai's analysis is "convincing," attempts to deflect Rai's main thrust by arguing that about a century after Urdu had caused the divide, Hindi reacted by causing "the other side of the divide"—as if a divide did not have two sides to begin with. See King 1994: 12–13, 175–77. Faruqi, while describing Rai's work as "full of inconsistencies or tendentious speculation rather than hard facts," acknowledges that it "was never refuted by Urdu scholars as it should have been." Asserting his own radical disagreement with Rai, Faruqi, however, seems to endorse Rai's major factual finding: "There is no doubt that the proportion of *tatsama* vocabulary declined in Rekhtah/Hindi [i.e., Urdu] over the second half of the eighteenth century. . . . Urdu literary culture from the late eighteenth century onwards does place an unfortunate stress . . . on 'purism,' 'language reform,' 'purging the language of undesirable usages,' and—worst of all—privileging all Persian-Arabic over all Urdu." See Faruqi, chapter 14, this volume.

21. Gilchrist, quoted in Dalmia 1997: 164, and also in Faruqi, chapter 14, this volume.

22. For various dictionary definitions and other sources identifying Hindustani as the language predominantly of the Muslims, see Faruqi, chapter 14, this volume.

ther widened following the Nagari controversy. Thus, there are two distinct phases to this history that perhaps need to be distinguished. In the first, Hindi overthrew the hegemony of Urdu and went on rapidly and comprehensively to eclipse it; in the second, mainly through Gandhi's efforts at conciliation shortly afterwards, Hindi somewhat halfheartedly sought to make common cause with Urdu, under the rubric of Hindustani, in the nationalist interest of Hindu-Muslim unity.

From Urdu to Hindi: Crossing the Divide

At no time in the history of Urdu did it represent more of a "composite" literary culture than just before that culture fell apart. In the last half and particularly the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there emerged what Francis Robinson has aptly called "the Urdu-speaking elite." This comprised mostly Muslims but also, so far as the reading and writing of literature was concerned, members of the old administration-friendly Hindu castes: the Kashmiri Brahmans (who numbered no more than 791 in the whole province of U.P. in 1891) and the somewhat more numerous Kāyasths. Together they formed a powerful bureaucratic elite, which even threatened to cut to size the more substantial power of the landlord elite. Almost as a side benefit of their privileged high literacy, they also produced literature in the elite language that they had in common.[23]

However, with the ever-widening spread of education and the recognition of the importance of the true vernacular Hindi (for Urdu was never the language of the rural illiterate masses, even in U.P.),[24] this elite now found itself well and truly swamped. In the public sphere of literate transaction, Hindi now overtook Urdu with a surefooted inevitability, as if it were the steadier tortoise racing against the arrogant and indolent hare. Tables 17.1 and 17.2 reflect the dramatically changed reality in terms of publications.

The quantum leap in the circulation of Hindi books and newspapers would appear to be directly attributable to the more than "symbolic" triumph of Nagari in 1900, as if at that historic moment the floodgates had burst open. The hegemony of Urdu ensured by official support up to this time seems to

---

23. Robinson 1974: 33–34.

24. In an incident in Rāhi Māsoom Razā's novel *Ādhā Gā̃v,* set largely in the Muslim half of a village in eastern U.P., where all characters, Hindu and Muslim, speak normally in Bhojpuri, the local Hindi dialect, a Muslim character, wishing to stand on his dignity, abruptly speaks a sentence in Urdu to another Muslim, and is promptly mocked for doing so: "Good Lord! Speaking Urdu now, are you!" At another point, a local person, arguing with some separatist Muslims who have come to campaign for Jinnah and his demand for Pakistan, tells them that they would not understand the local language, "for you have made Urdu the language of the Muslims. . . . When Pakistan is created will you leave Urdu behind or will you take it with you?" Razā [1961] 1984: 46, 255; see also 28 and 44 for other similar episodes.

TABLE 17.1 Number of Books Published in U.P.

	1881–1890	*1891–1900*	*1901–1910*
In Urdu	4,380	4,218	3,547
In Hindi	2,793	3,186	5,063

Source: Robinson 1974: 77.

TABLE 17.2 Number and Circulation of Newspapers in U.P.

	1891		*1901*		*1911*	
	Number	Circulation	Number	Circulation	Number	Circulation
In Urdu	68	16, 256	69	23,757	116	76,608
In Hindi	24	8,002	34	17,419	86	77,731

Source: Robinson 1974: 78.

have crumbled all at once, and the high artifice of its refined courtly literature proved to have had no wide social base. Urdu was never again going to be able to claim any kind of parity with Hindi in terms of either language or literature; after Independence, in an ironic reversal, it was indeed Urdu that pleaded in the Hindi-speaking states to be accepted as the official second language so that it could benefit from some state patronage again.

The wider prevalence of Hindi over Urdu was reflected in the careers of many individual writers of this transitional period, and their personal histories bear an intimate and revealing testimony to this literary revolution. Nearly all Hindi writers, of whatever caste or social background, who were born between, say, 1875 and 1910, grew up learning Urdu and often basic Persian, even if they never wrote in either language (and even though these languages washed off them sooner rather than later). They include writers as varied as Jagannāth Dās "Ratnākar" (1866–1932); Harivāś Rai, "Bachchan" (1907–); and S. H. Vātsyāyan, "Ajñeya" (1911–1987).[25] Even more interesting are the cases of other writers who began their careers in Urdu but, as Hindi emerged as clearly the stronger of the two languages, soon crossed over to Hindi in the most visible demonstration of the new literary order—by voting with their pens.

Although Bhāratendu Hariścandra did write verse in Urdu, he was not

25. Ratnākar passed his B.A. in English, Philosophy, and Persian, and then started on an M.A. in Persian, though he went on to write poetry in Brajbhasha; see Bhatt 1957: 4. For a more representative instance of quick learning of elementary Persian by rote and quicker forgetting, see Bachchan 1998: 79–80.

the first (as he was in so many other respects) to move from Urdu into Hindi. He is reputed to have composed his first couplet as a child, and its language is clearly and unsurprisingly Brajbhasha, in which he went on to write the better part of his poetry, besides a certain amount in Khari Boli. His Urdu verse occupies no more than six of the 1,113 pages in the closely printed double-column edition of his complete works; his Urdu *takhalluṣ,* or pen name, "Rasā," which means he who has informal access (to the beloved), is perhaps doubly apt, for he had easy access to Urdu but no real intimacy with it, and no great desire for it, either. A short farcical piece he wrote called "Urdū kā Siyāpā" (A dirge for Urdu, 1874), has come in for sharp condemnation from scholars recently; but what is often overlooked is the fact that Urdu had here "died"—as Hariścandra explained in his prefatory remarks—not as wished or alleged by any of its enemies but in the fearful rhetoric of its keenest champion, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who felt betrayed by an old friend and supporter of Urdu, Rājā Śiv Prasād (1823–1895), and apparently blamed him for doing Urdu in.[26] Rājā Śiv Prasād was the odd man out in the whole scramble between Urdu and Hindi in the nineteenth century, for he was equally reviled by both camps for seeking to bring Urdu and Hindi together through the doomed experiment of publishing Urdu in the Nagari script in several of his own works as well as in a newspaper he founded, the *Benares Akhbār.*[27]

The first significant writer of this period to have decisively crossed over from

26. Faruqi, in chapter 14, this volume, describes Hariścandra as "writing savage, if vulgar, satires mocking 'the death of Urdu Begum,'" whereas Hariścandra wrote just the one comic mock elegy. Dalmia, in her careful and elaborately contextualized reference to this piece, still says: "There was a palpable hardening of fronts. . . . Harischandra lapsed into a mock wail" (Dalmia 1997: 200–1). This may be seen as characteristic of Dalmia's whole scholarly procedure in her nevertheless indispensable study of Hariścandra: her wide learning is impeccable but her inferences are somewhat forced and ideologically predictable. Hariścandra's short poem runs as follows:

O dear Urdu, *hāy hāy.* Where have you gone, *hāy hāy?*
O my darling, *hāy hāy.* Munśi Mullā *hāy hāy.*
Wallāh Billāh *hāy hāy.* Crying and cursing, *hāy hāy.*
Dragging their feet, *hāy hāy.* Now all is lost, *hāy hāy.*
They pull their beards, *hāy hāy.* Their world upside down, *hāy hāy.*
Their livelihood gone, *hāy hāy.* All government jobs gone, *hāy hāy.*
Who has killed her, *hāy hāy?* Who brought such news, *hāy hāy?*
They gnash their teeth, *hāy hāy.* How editors loved her, *hāy hāy.*
How she could talk, *hāy hāy.* How much she talked, *hāy hāy.*
How she could flatter, *hāy hāy.* How pert of tongue, *hāy hāy.*
She's gone for ever, *hāy hāy.*

(*Hāy* means alas.) See Hariścandra 2000: 12.

27. For Rājā Śiv Prasād's contribution to Hindi contrasted with that of an eminent contemporary, Rājā Lakṣmaṇ Singh, see Saksenā 1989.

Urdu to Hindi was Bāl Mukund Gupt (1865–1907). An essayist and editor, he started by editing successively two Urdu periodicals, *Cunār Akḥbār* and *Ko-henīr,* but then learned Hindi beginning in 1888 with the encouragement of Pratāp Nārāyan Miśra (1856–1894), another robust essayist, editor, and poet of the time. Gupt's fame rests on his achievement as the editor of several Hindi journals, most notably *Bhārat Mitra,* which he edited from 1899 until his death, and for which he himself wrote, among other things, open letters to succes-sive British viceroys. Written under the persona of "Shiv Shambhu," a *bhāṅg*-swilling merry Brahman, these letters are witty and trenchant political satires, distinctly bolder than most pronouncements on the Raj by contemporary Urdu and Hindi writers, which are either loyalist or at best ambivalent. It is highly doubtful that Gupt could have produced such radical political pieces, especially in the persona (and with the traditional privileges) of a carefree, outspoken Brahman, had he gone on writing in Urdu. That his crossing over from Urdu to Hindi also marked for him the beginning of a firm new loyalty is indicated by his prompt and strong response in Khari Boli verse to the protests by the supporters of Urdu against the Nagari decision of 1900.[28]

The emblematic example of an Urdu writer going across to Hindi has to be Premchand (1880–1936), not only because of his towering literary stature but also because of the reasons he cited for making the move. Premchand is acclaimed as the founder of the modern novel in both Urdu and Hindi; more-over, he is still regarded as the greatest novelist and short-story writer in either language. He was born in a Kāyasth family; his father had a lowly government job in the postal department, and he grew up in a village near Benares learn-ing Urdu and Persian from the village *maulvī* (traditional Muslim scholar). Urdu was thus the literary language to which he was born, and between 1902 and 1917 he wrote his first five novels and some eighty short stories exclu-sively in Urdu. But beginning in 1915, he moved gradually and steadily to Hindi, first publishing Hindi translations of some of his Urdu short stories (done by himself or by others under his supervision) and then writing orig-inally in Hindi. Although he continued to produce some shorter works, such as stories and speeches, in Urdu to the end of his career and made his works available in Urdu as well as Hindi (though not simultaneously), nearly all his major novels, including the two discussed later in this essay, were written and published first in Hindi in more or less the last decade of his life.

Apparently, Premchand moved from Urdu to Hindi more through the force of larger cultural circumstances than from individual caprice or predilection. His fifth novel, *Bāzār-e-Husn* (The brothel), found no publisher in the drastically shrinking Urdu literary market, even though he already had a considerable reputation in Urdu. However, it was snapped up in Hindi

---

28. See Gupt 1988; Gopāl 1990; Varmā 1986: 381–82; and Śarmā 1972: 146.

under the title *Sevāsadan* (The house of service, 1919) with an eager demand from publishers for more works. But there were other reasons that motivated Premchand besides the primary needs of an author for a readership and for financial reward; in a letter written in 1915 to his closest friend, the Urdu editor Dayānārāyan Nigam, he stated: "I am now practising to write in Hindi as well. Urdu will no longer do. Has any Hindu ever made a success of writing in Urdu, that I will?"[29]

Behind this expression of anxiety and unease lies Premchand's sense that Hindu writers in Urdu before him were all too few and in any case had never been fully accepted. That this was no mere subjective or biased impression is borne out in a history of Urdu literature by Grahame Bailey published in the middle of Premchand's career in 1928, which concludes: "About 250 authors have been mentioned in this work. Apart from Premchand . . . only eight are Hindus, the rest are Muhammedans. The only famous writers among them are Daya Shankar Nasim, Ratan Nath Sarshar, and Durga Sahae Suroor."[30]

A more recent history by Muhammad Sadiq, over three times as extensive as Bailey's, still names only seventeen Hindu writers in Urdu, including journalists. As if confirming all the apprehensions of communal bias in Urdu that Premchand had entertained, Sadiq says: "But this much will have to be admitted that Muslims continued to treat him [Premchand] more or less as an outsider."[31]

Inventing Hindustani: Gandhi and Premchand

A last chance arose for the two languages to make common cause, even to join as one, at least for some practical purposes, when the Hindus and the Muslims united for a brief period during the nationalist movement from the time of the Lucknow Pact (1916) up to about 1935. This was the period when under the common name and banner of Hindustani, Hindi and Urdu attempted not only to intertwine but actually to commingle, not out of any strictly linguistic, literary, or cultural impulse but in accordance with a larger nationalist political agenda and on the meager basis of a common *bāzār* vocabulary of probably no more than five hundred words.[32]

---

29. Rai 1991: 130. For all information relating to Premchand, Amrit Rai's biography has been my main source.

30. Bailey, cited in Trivedi 1984: 109, which contains a fuller discussion of the reasons and consequences of Premchand's move from Urdu to Hindi.

31. Sadiq [1964] 1984: 439. As for the proportion and reception of Muslim writers in Hindi, they were numerous and prominent up to c. 1800, nearly totally absent from that point up to Independence, and back in numbers in the postcolonial, post-Partition phase, making a strong and distinctive contribution to Hindi. See Trivedi 1993: 40–42.

32. See Anderson 1983: 47, on how different vernaculars that assembled to form various national languages in Europe necessarily stabilized at a level "above the spoken vernaculars,"

To begin toward the end of this all too short episode, a defining moment for the campaign for Hindustani seems to have come at 9 A.M. on April 24, 1936, when at the first and last convention of the well-meaning new organization Bhāratīya Sāhitya Pariṣad (Indian literary council) at Nagpur—attended by many of the most important national leaders as well as Hindi and Urdu writers, including Premchand—Gandhi, in the chair, began to speak. He suggested that the most appropriate medium for the business of the Pariṣad would be "Hindi or Hindustani," for "Hindi" alone suggested a language replete with Sanskritic words, while "Urdu" alone indicated a language laden with Arabic and Persian. But Gandhi's apparently neutral formulation caused a veritable storm. It was put to the vote and carried by 25 to 15 (rather than unanimously, as most of Gandhi's proposals were in most Indian bodies most of the time), and it seemed to open up all the old wounds, especially among the supporters of Urdu.[33] From this moment on Hindustani was a dead horse.

The delicate but vital nuance on which it all hinged was that Gandhi had advocated not "Hindustani" but "Hindi or Hindustani," thus allegedly leaning more toward Hindi than Urdu. Gandhi had of course been supporting "Hindi" as the national language at least since he had first presided over the Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan in 1918; it was in that capacity that he had taken the initiative to establish in the same year the Dakṣiṇ Bhārat Hindī Pracār Sabhā (Society for the Propagation of Hindi in South India). Meanwhile, however, Gandhi had in many ways distanced himself from the Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan; when he was invited to preside over another annual session in 1935, he had even there used the term "Hindi-Hindustani" and gone on to remind the Sammelan that what he had meant by "Hindi" might have been different all along from what the Sammelan meant: "Even in 1918 I had said that Hindi is the name given to the language which both Hindus and Muslims speak naturally and without effort. There is no difference between Hindi and Urdu. Written in Devanagari, it is Hindi; the same written in the Arabic script becomes Urdu."[34] When in 1942 Gandhi founded yet another organization for promoting his favored national language, he called it the Hindustānī Pracār Sabhā, and in 1944 he resigned from the Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan (even as he had resigned from Congress in 1934).

Even so, Gandhi's preference for "Hindi or Hindustani" on April 24, 1936, seems to have come as a bolt from the blue for the supporters of "Hindustani." Of all those present, Maulana Abdul Haq, secretary and subsequently

---

while in contrast Nehru was trying to work out a "Basic Hindustani" with a vocabulary of one thousand words on the pattern of a Basic English proposed by C. K. Ogden. See Rāmgopāl 1965 (ś.s. 1886): 75; and King 1997: 82.

33. For a vivid account of this meeting, see Rai 1991: 354–57.

34. Gandhi 1965: 35.

president of the Anjuman Taraqqī-e-Urdū from 1923 until his death in Pakistan in 1961 and acclaimed as Bābā-e-Urdū (the Grand Old Man of Urdu), seems to have been the most seriously upset. Back from the meeting, he wrote in his journal, *Urdu,* of Gandhi's great betrayal, interpreting it in openly communal terms:

> So long as Mahatma Gandhi and his followers hoped to be able to arrive at a political agreement with the Muslims, they kept chanting "Hindustani, Hindustani." . . . But when they could no longer entertain such a hope . . . they cast off their cloak of deception and came out in their true colors. Let him now propagate Hindi as much as he likes. If he cannot let go of Hindi, we cannot let go of Urdu either.

This seems written out of a broken heart but arises in fact from a piece of fond self-deception quite comparable to the "deception" that Haq accused Gandhi of. Earlier in the same piece, Haq had recalled happier times: "The day has been when Mahatma Gandhi had written in his own hand a letter to Hakim Ajmal Khan in Hindustani, that is, in the Urdu language and in the Persian script."[35] If this is what Haq's notion of "Hindustani" really was—Urdu language in the Persian script—no wonder it needed to be qualified or at least supplemented, as by Gandhi, with the term "Hindi" to ensure that it occupied some kind of middle ground.

In this battle, Premchand, also a committed supporter of Hindustani, had stood his ground heroically, like the boy on the burning deck. He alone had spoken out at that convention to disagree publicly with Gandhi (though apparently not to his face, for Gandhi had left before discussion began), and now he wrote to remonstrate with Haq, explaining how this seeming defeat was in fact a victory, for though only three Urdu writers had been present, as many as fifteen votes had been cast for "Hindustani." But it was too late to mend fences. The bluff of "Hindustani" had been called, on both sides, and there was nothing left to salvage. Perhaps there had never been any real common ground.

Premchand himself had already made Hindustani his overriding mission in the last year of his short life. Between January and June 1936 (when his fatal illness began), he traveled constantly—to Allahabad, Agra, Purnea, Delhi, Lucknow, and Lahore—to propagate everywhere his ideal of a common language; it was as if he now traveled in Hindustani. Interestingly, at about this time he also returned to Urdu to write a couple of his best-known shorter works in it, including the short story "Kafan" (The shroud), published in Urdu in December 1935 and under the same title in Hindi in April 1936. However, the two versions served (if unwittingly) to point up both the com-

---

35. Rai 1991: 355, and 1984: 264.

mon ground and the distance between the two languages. The dialogue between the two main characters, both illiterate villagers, is pretty much identical in the two versions, but the descriptions and commentary by the narrative voice are far from so. The very first line of dialogue in the story, *malūm hotā hai bacegī nahī̃*, is exactly the same in both versions. But the first sentence of the last paragraph, describing the climax, has little in common in the two versions except the unremarkable final verb:

> [In Urdu] *sārā maiḵẖānah maḥv-e tamāshā thā aur yih donoñ maikash maḵẖmūr-e maḥviyat ke ʿālam meñ gāye jāte the.*

> [In Hindi] *piyakkarõ kī ā̃khē̃ inkī or lagī hui thī̃ aur yah donõ apne dil mē̃ mast gāye jāte the.*

In another of Premchand's famous stories, this time published first in Hindi as "Śatrañj ke Khilāṛi" (The chess players, October 1924) and then in Urdu as "Śatrañj kī Bājī" (A game of chess, December 1924), it seems as if the two versions were calculated to show how wide apart the two languages were or could be. Describing in the opening paragraph the decadent Lucknow of 1856 just before the British marched in to annex it, the Hindi version says:

> *jīvan ke pratyek vibhāg mē̃ āmod-pramod kā prādhānya thā. śāsanvibhāg mē̃, sāhitya kṣetra mē̃, sāmājik vyavasthā mē̃, kalākauśal mē̃, udyog dhandhõ mē̃, āhārvyavahār mē̃, sarvatra vilāsitā vyāpt ho rahī thī.*

In Urdu this reads:

> *zindagī ke har ek shúbe meñ rindī o mastī kā zor thā. umūr-e siyāsat meñ, shiʿr o suḵẖan meñ, ṯarz-e múāsharat meñ, ṣanʿat o ḥarfat meñ, tijārat o tabādle meñ, sabhī jagah nafas-parastī kī duhāʾī thī.*[36]

These languages are not only different, they are mutually incomprehensible, and the examples cited here fully support Ralph Russell's general observation that on the matter of Hindustani, there was a "remarkable contrast between Premchand's theories and his practice."[37] But on this issue, as famously in much of his fiction, Premchand was apparently inspired by the "idealistic realism" that he himself described as his preferred mode.[38] He knew even better than Gandhi that except in a basic and minimal sense the common language called Hindustani did not exist; but, like Gandhi, he believed that ideally it should exist and that every right-minded person should work

---

36. Quotations from both short stories are from the facing-page parallel text edition by Goyaṅkā 1990: 228–229, 242–243, and 326–327. It needs to be added that the Hindi/Urdu versions of Premchand's Urdu/Hindi texts may not always have been rendered wholly by himself, though no other translator or collaborator is ever acknowledged.

37. Russell 1999: 135.

38. Premchand 1962: 35.

toward it. He recognized even in theory that while in the making this mixture of the two languages would look like "an odd couple": "A word from Urdu will be seen intruding into Hindi like a crow among swans, at one place, while at another, a Hindi word in the midst of Urdu will ruin the flavor like salt in a sweet dish."[39] This was a fully realistic recognition of how two supposed versions of the same language could in juxtaposition produce what might sound like utter discord.

Though he was an active supporter of the Hindustani Academy founded in Allahabad in 1927 (and funded generously by the British government), Premchand was not blind to the mutually accommodating but self-defeating arrangement at the Academy's annual convention in January 1936, by which there were two different presidents: Maulana Abdul Haq for the Urdu section and Pandit Ganganath Jha for the Hindi section. As Premchand, himself a participant at the convention, later commented: "The wall which has been coming up between Urdu and Hindi was thus raised a little higher." He noted too how when the historian Dr. Tara Chand, secretary of the Academy, made a speech in the new-fangled and unsettled Hindustani, it was met with roars of derision. Elsewhere, skeptics were challenging supporters of Hindustani to produce a single discursive work, as distinct from novels and short stories, in the kind of mixed language they were advocating. "What we wish to ask our separatist brethren," Premchand candidly if somewhat ingenuously replied, "is that if such a language already existed, where would be the need for an institution such as this Academy?"[40]

That Hindustani remained a sweet, idealistic (and ideological) fiction is borne out by the separatism that ensued, through which, especially after Independence and Partition, the two languages have been even more acutely polarized. Perhaps from the very beginning of the worthy campaign to support it, Hindustani was a utopian dream, the more unrealizable for the fact that the whole project was primarily communal—that is, anticommunalist—in its inspiration and orientation, rather than strictly linguistic. As Gandhi had said (quite unrealistically) in his presidential speech at the Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan in 1918: "The distinction made between Hindus and Muslims is unreal. The same unreality is found in the distinction between Hindi

39. Rai 1991: 323.

40. Premchand 1962: 316–18. While arguing that the kinds of language used for discursive works and for creative writing are necessarily different, Tara Chand repeatedly employed the iterative phrase *ilm aur adab, vidyā aur sāhitya;* the first three words mean "knowledge and literature" in Urdu and the last three mean the same in Hindi, thus illustrating a tautological procedure common in Hindustani that may be considered self-defeating. Chand 1971: 7. In January 1931 the Hindustani Academy began to publish a quarterly journal under the common title *Hindustani,* which however was published separately in Hindi and Urdu—the Academy's practice thus directly contradicting what it preached. See Chand's annual report as general secretary for 1931–1932 in Chand 1932: 246.

and Urdu. . . . A harmonious blend of the two will be as beautiful as the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna and last forever."[41] Later, Gandhi too, like Premchand, acknowledged that Hindustani was more a cherished dream than a hard fact: "But what is Hindustani? There is no such language apart from Urdu and Hindi. . . . There is no such written blend extant."[42]

On another, even later occasion, Gandhi developed his earlier metaphor of holy confluence to give it a mythic dimension: "If Hindi and Urdu mingle, there will emerge the Saraswati greater than both the Ganga and the Yamuna."[43] But as Gandhi knew very well, there is no Sarasvātī river visible where the Gaṇgā and the Yamunā meet at Prayag/Allahabad, except to the eye of faith.

The year after Gandhi died, the Constituent Assembly of India hotly debated the question whether "Hindi" or "Hindustani" should be the official language of the nation; and despite the fact that the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was a Kashmiri Brahman strongly in favor of Hindustani and often critical of Hindi language and literature, "Hindi" narrowly won the crucial vote in the end. During his long tenure of office (1947–1964), Nehru made sure to make haste slowly in promoting Hindi in its new role, especially as opposition grew from non-Hindi-speaking states.[44] In this intranational postcolonial struggle, owing to the preference both Gandhi and Nehru had constantly expressed for Hindustani, Hindi did not enjoy any carry-over goodwill from the nationalist period. Indeed, the battle it won in the Constituent Assembly may well have lost it the war—at least, ironically, in the wistful reflection of probably the most Sanskritic of all contemporary writers of Hindi, Vidyānivās Miśra: "We made a mistake just after Independence. We did not dislodge English immediately, and . . . we did not go by the late Nehru's wishes and adopt 'Hindustani' in the Devanagari script as the national language. Had we done so, perhaps the language would have begun to be used from day one and would have developed of its own through being used."[45]

41. Gandhi 1965: 14. Employing as metaphor the confluence of Gaṇgā and Yamunā, rivers holy to Hindus, may seem another example of Gandhi's use of communalist symbols, except that a mixed Hindi-Urdu style is sometimes called *gaṅgojamanī* in Urdu, as for example in the title of a volume of poems by the Urdu poet "Nazīr" Banārsī (1962).

42. Gandhi 1965: 63.

43. Gandhi 1965: 83.

44. For the view that the opposition to Hindi from Tamil speakers, which was the most fierce among the speakers of non-Hindi languages, was part of an ongoing anti-Brahman, anti-Sanskrit campaign—for "the Tamils rather regard [Hindi] as a sort of Sanskrit, if not a would-be Sanskrit"—see Jesudasan and Jesudasan 1961: 270. For an account of passionate anti-Hindi agitations even before Independence, in which unlikely Tamil-speaking allies made common cause, see Venkatachalapathy, 1995: 765–67.

45. Miśra 1997: 16.

"Hinglish" Now: The Globalized Hybrid

Fifty years after Independence and Partition the relationship between Hindi, Urdu, and Hindustani is palpably less tense and strained. Nehru's "Hamlet-like" procrastination[46] in implementing the decision to install Hindi promptly as the official language of the state and the decision of the government to continue with English as the additional official language indefinitely, beyond the designated fifteen-year period of transition (1950–1965), have effectively dispelled all apprehensions of Hindi imperialism. They have also perhaps saved India from the fate, suffered by Pakistan, of further fragmentation when the attempt was made to impose Urdu on Bangla-speaking East Pakistan, which then broke away to become Bangladesh; or that suffered by Sri Lanka, where the introduction of a Sinhala-only language policy has centrally contributed to the rise of secessionist Tamil dissidence. India remains a nation effectively without a national language, but at least—and perhaps precisely for that reason—it remains a nation.

Even between Hindi and Urdu, there has recently developed perhaps an easier and freer relationship. The immensely popular "Hindi" films produced in Bombay, which have over the decades probably done more to make the language intelligible all over India than any official decree could, have always used a fairly predictable basic vocabulary that might as well be called Hindustani. Even in the higher reaches of literature, numerous editions of the major Urdu poets reinscribed in the Devanagari script (with ample footnotes) have been published, along with many popular anthologies of Urdu poetry, though, conspicuously, Hindi poetry has not been accommodated in Urdu to any comparable extent. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Urdu *ġhazal* emerged as a form of popular music that provided the first real alternative to Hindi film music. The soap operas on the numerous television channels broadcast by satellite have a common audience all over India, Pakistan, and beyond, and their content and commonly accessible language often naturally transcend the shadow lines that mark national boundaries.[47]

The fire has gone out of the century-long Hindi-Urdu rivalry partly for such pragmatic reasons as these, and partly because the accomplished historical fact of Partition has effectively settled the matter. But no less important is the fact that both Hindi and Urdu (and for that matter all the other Indian languages) now face a rival of a different dimension altogether: global

46. King 1997: 99, also 109, 115, 123.
47. For giving currency to the notion of national boundaries as shadow lines, see Ghosh 1988. Firdaus Azim, a Bangladeshi academic, once remarked that a youth in her country nowadays speaks Bangla at home and English at the workplace, but falls in love in Hindi after the patterns of behavior presented through Hindi films and satellite television. Personal conversation.

English is transforming Hindi in public as well as domestic use, while the spectacular rise of Indian writing in English (following the wide success of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* 1981) threatens to overshadow literary production in all the indigenous Indian languages. On television, in talk shows, and in interviews during newscasts, it is not at all uncommon for the interviewer to put a question in Hindi and for the interviewee (including even Hindi film stars) to understand it perfectly but then begin answering in either English or in a mixed language in which the nouns and adjectives are usually English and the verbs Hindi. Code-switching and code-mixing are not an exception but the order of the day, though in these interlocutions it often appears that while Hindi has most of the questions, it is English that has all the answers.

In 1887, at the height of the movement for both Nagari and Khari Boli, one of the most tireless champions of the cause, Ayodhyā Prasād Khatrī (1857–1905), had divided Khari Boli into five categories, namely, "Ṭheṭh Hindi," which had no "foreign" or "difficult Sanskrit" words; "Pandit's Hindi," with "large Sanskrit words"; "Munshi's Hindi," which lay "midway between the Pandit's and [the] Moulvi's Hindi and is styled by European scholars as 'Hindustani'"; "Moulvi's Hindi," which comprised "a number of Persian and Arabic words" and which its writers also referred to "by the name of Urdu"; and finally, "Eurasian Hindi," into which "difficult English words are imported." In this taxonomy Khatrī was not only comprehensive with a vengeance but has also proved prescient, for the fifth kind of Hindi, the "Eurasian," which however he did not associate with native speakers of the language, seems set to become the new trend in contemporary India. The examples Khatrī reprinted of "Eurasian Hindi" included:

> Rent Law *kā ġham karẽ, yā* Bill of Income Tax *kā?*
> *Kyā karẽ apnā nahī̃ hai* sense right nowadays. . . .
> Darkness *chāyā huā hai Hind mẽ cārõ taraf*
> *Nām kī bhī hai kahī̃ bāqī na* light nowadays.

> Shall we bemoan the Rent Law, or the Bill of Income Tax?
> Alas we are not in our right sense(s) nowadays. . . .
> Darkness is spread all over India
> There isn't left even a ray of light nowadays.

And the succinct line in another piece:

> *Jāke* London *mẽ badal ḍālẽge* nation *apnā.*

> We'll go to London and change our nation.[48]

---

48. Khatrī [1887] 1960: 112, 297, 298.

At the time Khatrī compiled them, these samples must have seemed a bit of a lark, for few Eurasians spoke much Hindi, but in contemporary India similar instances of code-mixing represent a kind of slack and elementary bilingualism, which is spreading rapidly and widely. The poet Vishnu Khare (1940–) hits this new linguistic-cultural nail on the head when he represents a politician saying during a speech to his small-town Hindi-speaking constituency of Chindwara in Madhya Pradesh (M.P.):

> *Tum bāt karte ho* tribals villager employment *aur* railway line *kī*
> *Are mil kar kām karē to* Chindwārā *mẽ khul saktā hai* Disneyland
> International airport *aur khul kar rahẽge ek din*
> M.P. *mẽ* progress *kī* possibilities endless *haĩ*.

> You talk merely of tribals, villagers' employment, and the laying of a new railway track,
> But if we work together we can set up another Disneyland in Chindwara
> And an international airport, and we shall certainly have them one day.
> The possibilities for progress in M.P. are endless.[49]

Nor is this a parodic exaggeration, for one can hear sentences in "Hinglish" (as this hybrid Hindi is sometimes called now) every passing day on the news bulletins of television channels (especially Zee TV): "Prime Minister *ne kahā hai kī* Leader of Opposition *ne jo bhī* charges *lagāye haĩ ve sab* absolutely baseless *haĩ*" (The Prime Minister has stated that all the charges leveled by the Leader of Opposition are absolutely baseless). Khatrī had envisaged only a tiny and marginal minority of "Eurasians" (racially hybridized people) using this type of Hindi. But a larger and more hegemonic social fraction of the culturally deracinated elite is now using this pidgin. However, to take a more positive view of this seemingly irresistible cultural development, one may think that (as evidenced in Hindi's dramatic evolution through the twentieth century from Brajbhasha to Khari Boli through Hindustani now to Hinglish), "Hindi *mẽ* progress *kī* possibilities endless *haĩ*."

MODERNIZING POETRY

From Brajbhasha to Khari Boli: A New Patriotism

The transformative shift from Brajbhasha, the form of Hindi in which most poetry had been written from the sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, to the newly adopted common form of Khari Boli had already begun in a substantial sense with Bhāratendu Hariścandra. Although most of his poetry is still in Brajbhasha and fully redolent of that tradition, some of

---

49. Khare 1994: 76.

it makes a path-breaking if diffident approach to Khari Boli, and a small part of it (as we saw earlier) is in Urdu, which had always been written in Khari Boli. Thus, one of his best known poetic dicta, on the importance of language, is written in Brajbhasha: *nij bhāṣā unnati ahai sab unnati ko mūl* (The progress of one's own language is the key to progress of all other kinds), while another pronouncement, cited just as often, on colonial economic exploitation is in a couplet in which the first line is (perhaps unwittingly) in Khari Boli and the second in Brajbhasha.

> *Āṅgrez rāj sukh-sāj saje sab bhārī*
> *Par dhan bides cali jāt yahai ati khvārī.*
>
> Under British rule are arrayed all kinds of means of comfort,
> But for the mortification that our wealth is drained abroad.[50]

The gap between Brajbhasha and Khari Boli, though far from nonnegotiable, is no less wide than that between, say, Chaucerian and twentieth-century English, and for a literary community to will itself to effect such a transition within a matter of decades, rather than let it slowly and surely evolve over centuries, must be rare in the history of languages. This shift is fairly well documented in histories of Hindi literature as far as the publication history of works in Khari Boli is concerned, yet it is seldom asked why it was felt necessary to effect the change in the first place. An obvious factor was the felt oppression of Hindi by Urdu, along with the frequent charge by the champions of Urdu that Brajbhasha and Avadhi and the other dialects that comprised Hindi were vulgar, rural, and unrefined. To adopt as the medium of literary expression a form of language that was the only one ever known to Urdu itself would be to strike at the very roots of this prejudice. It would also be to shed at a stroke the medieval thematic baggage of *bhakti* (devotionalism) that had degenerated over the centuries into *rīti* (the courtly style that had become mechanical convention) and to enter the modern age with a new kind of humanist sensibility. As S. H. Vātsyāyan, "Ajñeya," the foremost modernist poet in Hindi, was to say, "The rise of Khari Boli marked the introduction and acceptance in [our] literature of this-worldliness *[laukiktā]*."[51]

Surprisingly, the fact that hardly any Hindi poetry had ever been written before in Khari Boli was not considered an impediment. Whatever form of language was good enough for the new and modern genre of prose in Hindi (where, again, Urdu in Khari Boli had distinctly more to show for itself than

---

50. Hariścandra 1988: 461
51. Vātsyāyan [Ajñeya] 1976: 45, 51. Saccidānand Hirānand Vātsyāyan ("Ajñeya") published under three different names: Vātsyāyan, for criticism and essays, and two different spellings of his pen name—Ajñeya (the Sanskrit spelling) and Agyey (the Hindi phonetic spelling)—for poetry and fiction.

Hindi) would also, it was hoped, be good enough for Hindi poetry. It truly was a leap in the dark—and perhaps the single most crucial turn in the centuries-long literary history of Hindi. With it, Hindi virtually traded off much of its poetic heritage and its traditional base in the wide countryside (where Brajbhasha and Avadhi continued to be spoken over vast areas) so that it could be thought capable of attaining urban refinement and becoming truly modern. (Oddly, Urdu, with all its Khari Boli tradition, was to find it much harder to develop a modern literary idiom, for larger cultural reasons.)

The first notable writers of Hindi verse in Khari Boli, as well as the editors facilitating this process, were, relatively speaking, modern men with a grounding in English and an exposure to the modernizing projects of the British Raj acquired through service in various departments of the government. The dominant figure of the age, after whom the period spanning the first two decades of the twentieth century is named in some histories of Hindi literature, is Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī (1864–1938). He started his schooling in Urdu in the *madarasā* in his village in U.P. while he learned Sanskrit at home. At the age of thirteen he moved thirty-six miles away to a small town to begin learning English (and also, though unwillingly, Persian, because, as he tells us, Sanskrit was treated as an "untouchable" at that school and was not taught).[52] He later taught himself Gujarati, Marathi, and Bangla. Unable to finish school because of financial hardship, he acquired the new skill of a telegraphist, worked as a signaler in the railways, and was eventually promoted to chief clerk. He resigned after twenty-two years of service following an altercation with his white superior.

He had meanwhile been writing and translating works from both Sanskrit and English in a wide range of fields. He also published a fastidious book-length review of a school textbook, on the basis of which he was offered in 1903 the editorship of *Sarasvatī,* the journal founded by the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā in 1900. As editor he acted with magisterial authority to encourage and shape creative and discursive writing in Khari Boli Hindi while settling with a firm hand matters of grammar and usage in this new form. He was the first to publish in his journal nearly all the eminent writers of his age, nurturing and directing their talent even as he fashioned through peremptory editorial emendation the language they wrote. For his role as a maker of modern Hindi he earned a stature greater than that of many of the creative writers who wrote for him, as warmly acknowledged by the writers themselves. He was truly an *ācārya,* a guru whose conduct is worth emulation by his disciples—a title conferred on him early on by literary consensus.

In accordance with his definition of literature as "the name given to the

52. Dvivedī 1996: 1–9; for another short autobiographical account, see Dvivedī 1961: 641–45.

accumulated treasury of all knowledge,"[53] Dvivedī made *Sarasvatī* not merely a literary journal but a vehicle for disseminating anticolonial discourse on all kinds of social, political, and economic issues, so that he came to play a pioneering role in what is now called *hindī navjāgraṇ,* Hindi reawakening or renaissance. His advocacy of poetry in Khari Boli can be seen to be part of the same modernizing nationalist endeavor. As he could note with some satisfaction as early as 1914, poetry in the sweet but by now mindless Brajbhasha had steeply declined, while poetry in "the Hindi of daily conversation" had prospered because that conversation contained good and attractive *bhāv* (ideas/sentiments) and because, as he put it in a doubly emphatic compound of Hindi-Urdu synonyms, the *samay-zamānā,* the very times, demanded such poetry.[54]

Of the pioneering poets in Khari Boli Hindi, Śrīdhar Pāṭhak (1859–1928) is a particularly significant and engaging figure. Though he apparently began learning Sanskrit from his father almost before he learned to read Hindi, he went on to pass the school and university entrance examinations in English, and later also read for two years for a law degree at the Muir Central College, Allahabad. Among the early-modern Hindi writers, he probably had the best English—an advantage reflected in his career of over thirty years as a government employee (in the railways, the Censor Commission, the Public Works Department, and the Irrigation Commission), during which he rose to be an office superintendent, and had the opportunity to travel widely across India. Like Dvivedī and several other Hindi writers, he too eventually resigned his government job following a disagreement with his English superior.

Pāṭhak's English showed up in his literary output in various new ways. He was the first Hindi poet whose work bore the clear impress of his having read the English Romantics and their eighteenth-century precursors. He wrote a large number of poems on nature, treating it not as a quarry for suitable or fanciful similes for human beauty, as Sanskrit and Hindi poets had traditionally done, but often reversing the poetic procedure by personifying nature and ascribing to it human attributes. Nature was seen in his poetry as a source of attraction in its own right, and not as a universal presence but as wearing different aspects in different locations. Pāṭhak wrote in particular about the hills and mountains—Shimla, for example, and Kashmir and Dehradoon—regarding such places not as holy or divine (in the tradition of Kālidāsa, who described the Himalayas as *devatātmā,* possessing a divine soul) but in a new, British or Western light, in which they were attractive for their climate and aesthetics, unlike the hot and dusty plains. (Pāṭhak him-

---

53. Dvivedī 1996: 12.
54. Dvivedī 1996: 216.

self had more than once spent time in the hills as a convalescent, again a very British healing procedure new to India.) Indeed, some of his early poems were written in English, including one titled "The Cloudy Himalayas."[55]

Pāṭhak's nature poetry is thus in one sense distinctly Westernized; in another respect, however, it remains patriotically Indian. Several of his poems pointedly assert that it is nature in India, and not nature as such, that is so beautiful, and some participate in a pan-Indian nationalist poetic discourse beginning to develop in many languages around this time: the geographical shape of India is personified as Bhāratmātā, Mother India, with the Kashmir Himalayas in the north being the resplendent crown on the head of the human figure and Kerala in the south being the feet, which are washed by the three seas that meet at Kanyakumari. Pāṭhak published a volume of poems titled *Bhāratgīt* (Songs of India), comprising hymns and anthems composed with nationalist lyrical intensity. Yet we also find in him (from our postcolonial viewpoint) the ambivalence, if not contradiction, characteristic of nearly all contemporaries and some successors of Bhāratendu Hariścandra, for Pāṭhak also translated "Rule Britannia" into Hindi and composed encomiums for Queen Victoria and King George V.

Another marker of the increasing permeation of Hindi by English literature and sensibility is Pāṭhak's important role as a translator. Besides rendering into Hindi Thomas Gray's "The Shepherd and the Philosopher" and adapting Keats's "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil," Pāṭhak translated three long works by his favorite English poet, Oliver Goldsmith, who along with Gray was a modest forerunner of the English Romantics much as Pāṭhak himself was a forerunner of the Hindi Romantic (Chāyāvād) poets. The romantic yet restrained love story of Edwin and Angelina titled "The Hermit" was translated by Pāṭhak as "Ekāntvāsī Yogī" (1886), "The Deserted Village" as "Ūjar Grām" (1889), and "The Traveller" as "Śrānt Pathik" (1902). The Hindi titles themselves speak of a deep cross-cultural affinity and adaptation, as the texts represent a congenial meeting of sensibilities. Like Pāṭhak's own poetry, some of his translations are in Khari Boli and some still in Brajbhasha, in accordance with the opposing pulls of his transitional times. In the preface to the third edition of "Ūjar Grām" Pāṭhak offers a poignant image to justify his choice to translate this work into Brajbhasha: "The young maiden Khari Boli was rapidly appropriating the place of the old lady Braj, and in fact had already done so to a large extent. . . . So it seemed only natural that the aged language should approximate to the condition of the deserted village."[56]

Far less ambivalent than Pāṭhak in his commitment to both Khari Boli

55. Raghuvāś 1991: 44.
56. In Raghuvāś 1991: 40.

and to patriotism was his younger contemporary, Maithilī Śaraṇ Gupt (1886–1964), who proved to be the foremost Hindi poet of the Dvivedī era. He was rather more classical than Romantic in temperament, was a regular contributor to *Sarasvatī,* and came as close to fulfilling all of Dvivedī's dreams for the progress of modern Hindi as any writer did.[57] Unlike Pāṭhak, he was and remained a thoroughly homespun man and perhaps had less command of English than most Hindi poets of the twentieth century. His first major work, which instantly made him famous, was *Bhārat Bhāratī* (The voice of India, 1912), a rousing nationalist survey of the state of the nation and particularly the *hindū jāti* (Hindu community). His other great work, the epic *Sāket* (*Sāket* being a synonym for Ayodhya, 1931), is a modern reworking of the story of Lord Rāma, with innovative departures. These include making Rāma a little more earthly than divine and according a sympathetic representation to some unregarded or maligned female characters, such as Urmilā, Lakṣmaṇa's left-behind wife, who is made the protagonist and the central consciousness of the poem, and Rāma's villainous stepmother, Kaikeyī. After Gupt had written, the question of the suitability or desirability of modern Khari Boli Hindi as the medium for poetry was once and for all settled. In his prolific poetic career, Gupt, who had a modest nationalist, Gandhian profile, kept pace with the times, and in the period immediately following Independence came to represent the Hindi community like no other writer; he was popularly acclaimed as the *rāṣṭrakavi* (national poet) and was the first writer to be nominated to the Rājya Sabhā, the Upper House of the Indian Parliament.

Bhārat Bhāratī, the more urgently topical of Gupt's two masterpieces, became the song of an age—with numerous admirers able to recite from memory large portions of it for decades afterwards—because it gave to inchoate patriotism a focus and a form, in a fluent and easy rhetorical style. This long poem contains 259 quatrains recalling and extolling the glorious past of India, 156 lamenting its sunken and wretched present state, and 140 on its *bhaviṣyat,* or future, which are not so much cosily utopian as they are admonitory and hortatory. The tone is set by the famous first half of quatrain 14:

> *ham kaun the kyā ho gaye haĩ aur kyā hõge abhī*
> *āo vicārẽ āj milkar ye samasyāẽ sabhī*

> What we once were, what we have now become, and what we may go on to be:
> Come, let us together consider all these issues.[58]

57. Aptly, Gupt (in a manuscript tribute printed in facsimile on the opening page) led the homage to Dvivedī in the diamond jubilee issue of *Sarasvatī* in 1961: "If Bhāratendu gave a new birth to Hindi, it was Dvivedī-jī who brought it up." Gupt 1961: 1.

58. Gupt [1912] 1987: 10.

The main inspiration behind this searching poetic introspection provides a vital clue to the formation of what is now (only too?) readily identified as Hindu (rather than Indian) nationalism. It was an earlier work in Urdu, Altaf Husain Hali's *Musaddas* (originally titled *Madd-o-Jazr-e-Islām* [The ebb and flow of Islam]), which when published in 1879 ran "like wildfire among the Muslims" because it lamented the contemporary plight of Islam.[59] Gupt now sought not to counter but indeed to emulate it in his own work, in a poetic endeavour that is not so much reactionary or reactive as it is responsive and complementary. Moreover, it was not Gupt's own idea to do a Hali in Hindi; the suggestion that he do so was made by Rājā Rampal Singh, K.C.I. (Knight Commander of India), a loyal subject of the British.

In accordance with the political mindset of the times, the project that Gupt advocated for the uplift of Hindus and Indians (for the terms were used by him interchangeably, as often in Hindi) was not anti-British but instead extolled the British for having established a liberal regime in India by the grace of the god Nārāyaṇa and for ensuring peace and permitting liberty of religion to the Hindus (with the implication that the earlier Muslim rulers had not always done so).[60] But, more surprisingly, Gupt's very Hindu poem had no anti-Muslim sentiments to express either. It was due to internecine rivalry between various Hindu kings, he said, that "we" had "invited" the Muslims to come and rule over us. Even the most fanatical/pious of the Mughal emperors, Aurangzeb, was not to be blamed for his discriminatory and repressive measures against the Hindus, for

> Our own karma was to blame, and the vicissitudes of time
> By which it is now bright day and now it is dark night.

And Akbar's liberality, of course, was hardly matched among the rulers of any race.[61] *Bhārat Bhāratī* thus provides a useful insight for historicizing the chicken-and-egg debate on the interrelationship between the revivalist Muslim discourse and the comparable Hindu nationalist discourse.

The catholicity and liberality of a poet such as Maithilī Śaraṇ Gupt are the more remarkable for the fact that personally he was perhaps as devout a Hindu as Tulsīdās had been three and a half centuries before him. While his *Sāket* now ranks next only to Tulsī's supreme classic, the *Rāmcaritmānas,* among all poetic versions in Hindi of the story of Rāma, Gupt, with characteristic modesty, declared:

> Rām, your name itself is [a guarantee of] poetry
> One only has to write about you to become a poet.

59. Sadiq [1964] 1984: 347.
60. Gupt [1912] 1987 : 86, 182.
61. Gupt [1912] 1987 : 81, 83.

It may not be too far-fetched to say that Gupt's blend of *bhakti* and patrio-
tism achieved a popular effect similar in nature, though of course not in scale,
to that achieved by Tulsīdās in his own beleaguered times.

Chāyāvād: Something New and Strange

While Maithilī Śaraṇ Gupt unquestioningly and even proudly belonged to
the mainstream of Hindi poetry and sensibility, within the same decade in
which *Bhārat Bhāratī* was published there arose a poetic movement that ini-
tially no one seemed to know how to account for or where to place. This was
Chāyāvād, the allegedly romantic-mystical-ethereal-escapist school of poetry,
which became controversial as soon as it was born and is critically alive even
today. The movement as such lasted barely two decades, broadly from 1917
to 1936 (or, as variously dated, from 1920 to 1942); it was denounced and
dismissed by many contemporary critics as so new as to be bizarre, and so
strange as to be reprehensibly foreign. Now, after several more poetic move-
ments have come and gone, opinion seems to be consolidating that Chāyāvād
was, on the contrary, the most vital turning point as well as the greatest
achievement of modern Hindi poetry, and all that followed through the twen-
tieth century would hardly have been conceivable without it.[62]

Chāyāvād (from *chāyā;* lit. shadow, shade, comparative darkness, reflec-
tion; also, an apparition or specter) was a term given currency by the de-
tractors of the movement rather than its practitioners or champions, and
makes no more sense etymologically than does English "metaphysical" po-
etry. However, it has stuck, unlike two other terms alternatively used in the
contemporaneous debate: *rahasyavād,* which means mysticism; and *svacchan-
datāvād,* from *svacchand,* which generally means "self-willed, unrestrained"
or "following one's own will," but which is also the standard Hindi transla-
tion of the English "Romantic."[63] Indeed, one of the earliest critical responses
to this new poetry was to attempt to detect or impute links between it and
British Romantic poetry, either directly or filtered through the latter's ex-
isting influence on Bangla poetry and especially on Rabindranath Tagore,
who having sensationally won the Nobel Prize in 1913, was very much in the
minds of both rising poets and comparative critics in all the Indian languages.

The intention in either case was to denounce Chāyāvād poetry as deriva-
tive and inferior while also rejecting it as alien to the very nature and tradi-

---

62. See V. M. Singh 2000: 4.

63. See Chaturvedi and Tiwari [1974] 1979, and McGregor [1993] 1997. Singularly,
Baccan Singh, in his history of modern Hindi literature, views the whole period from 1900
to 1980 in terms of variations on *svacchandatā-vād,* calling 1900 to 1918 the *pūrva-svacchan-
datāvād-kāl,* 1920 to 1940 the *svacchandatāvād-kāl,* and 1940 to 1980 the *uttar-svacchandatāvād-
kāl.* See Singh 1979.

tion of Hindi. Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī got in an obvious gibe early on when, pleading disingenuously his complete bafflement by the movement and its name, he surmised that it probably meant the shadow cast by the ideas and emotions of one poem upon another.[64] He may have had reason to be put out, for Chāyāvād poetry, though written in Khari Boli as he desired, was among other things so sonorously lyrical as to make much of the poetry that he himself had preferred and promoted seem distinctly prosaic and pedestrian. Rāmacandra Śukla reacted to Chāyāvād in his canon-forming *History* with a gut hostility tempered by patient, discriminating engagement. He gave one of the poets of the movement more space than he had given any writer except Tulsīdās, but still drew two red herrings across the path of its critical appreciation. One was that the much-speculated-upon "chāyā," or shadow, was presumably the "phantasmata" of the Christian saints; the other, that the name "Chāyāvād" came directly from a movement of poetry in Bangla also so named.[65] Both suggestions are quite baseless, though it would be doing Śukla a patent injustice to call them canards. Chāyāvād in fact has proved to be the acid test of the range of sensibility and resourcefulness of all the major Hindi critics since Dvivedī and Śukla, most of whom have felt drawn into writing a book on the subject. To put it another way, the very standards of Hindi criticism have risen as the debate on Chāyāvād has evolved, just as the stem of a lotus flower does when the level of water in the pond rises (in a very Chāyāvādi image suggested by probably the foremost of all these critics, Namvar Singh).[66]

So, what was Chāyāvād, and how did it alter the paradigm of both poetic and critical discourse in Hindi? Recognized as representing the widely varying characteristics of the movement are about a dozen poets, of whom three or four are regarded as its forerunners: Śrīdhar Pāṭhak, Mukutdhar Pandey (1895–1984), Rāmnareś Tripāṭhī (1889–1963), and Makhanlāl Caturvedī (1889–1968). (In a vital variation on the usual characterization of these poets as precursors of Chāyāvād, Śukla said that they represented a *svābhāvik svacchandatā,* a natural or organic Romanticism, while the greater poets who came later were Romantics shaped by some alien influence.)[67] The great trinity of Chāyāvādi poets is unanimously acknowledged to be Jayaśaṅkar Prasād (1889–1937); Suryakānt Tripāṭhī "Nirālā" (1899–1961); and Sumitranandan Pant (1900–1977). Another name readily added now—only partly out of gendered political correctness—is that of Mahādevī Verma (1907–1987),

64. Cited in Singh [1955] 1968: 11–12.

65. Śukla 1940 (v.s. 1997): 784. (Cf. n. 67.)

66. Singh [1955] 1968: 151; see also p. 15: "Chāyāvād is the poetic expression of the national awakening, which sought freedom from old conventions on the one hand and from foreign rule on the other." For an overview of Hindi criticism of Chāyāvād, see Singh 1989.

67. Śukla 1940 (v.s. 1997): 729.

the only major Hindi woman poet since the *bhakti* poet Mīrābāī (?1498–1562), with whom she is indeed often compared for thematic similarities.

Distinctly the oldest poet among the four, who is also seen as having been a little aloof from the others poetically, was Prasād. He began his poetic career by publishing two volumes, in each of which some of the poems were in Brajbhasha and some in Khari Boli; when these were revised by him and reprinted, one volume contained only Brajbhasha poems and the other only Khari Boli. No less symptomatic of the transitional times was that a long poem he had first published in Brajbhasha was rendered by himself into Khari Boli eight years later under the same title, *Prempathik* (Traveler on the path of love; 1909 and 1917, respectively).

Prasād's magnum opus and last work is an epic, the only poem on that scale in all of Chāyāvād poetry, *Kāmāyanī* (Daughter of Kāma [another name of the heroine, Śraddhā], 1935); it stands as the single most impressive achievement of the whole movement. Prasād narrates a Hindu genesis myth, which he maintains in his prose preface is "historical," though he treats it by and large allegorically. The hero, Manu, represents *manan,* both thought and emotion; his companion and progenitive mate, Śraddhā, signifies in both name and act feminine devotion or reverence; while another female character, Iṛā, logical intellect, completes an initially uneasy ménage à trois, which however is harmoniously reconciled at the end with a journey to the holiest of all mountains, Kailāś. The depiction of love and other emotions has an unprecedented psychological subtlety even when the characterization remains allegorical: Iṛā, for example, appears to us with her hair disheveled, like a logical tangle, while on her breast are heaped together in two mounds all knowledge and all the arts.[68] The style (in conformity with the main source of the story, the *Ṛgveda*) is high Sanskritic and suggestive of the sublime, and any contemporary relevance, as highlighted by the radical poet and critic Gajānan Mādhav Muktibodh and others, seems to lie in the epic's attempt at a *sabhyatāsamīkṣā,* a critique of civilization, especially of a civilization such as the one ruled by Iṛā, which is overly intellectual, overly materialistic, and overly industrialized (improbable as this may sound in a genesis myth; it is perhaps a veiled representation of the modern West).[69]

Sumitranandan Pant also concluded his long and prolific career with a would-be epic—a poem about six times the length of Prasād's work—*Lokāyatan* (Abode of the people, 1964), but that was long after Chāyāvād was dead and gone and he himself had dried up to become a didactic philosophical versifier. He had begun very differently from Prasād, as a stunningly fresh and devoted poet of nature—an inclination apparently engendered by his birth

---

68. Prasād [1936] 1979: 72.
69. Muktibodh [1961] 1986: 338 and passim.

and upbringing in an enchanting village in the U.P. Himalayas, Kausani. Unlike Prasād, whose schooling had come to an end after the sixth standard, Pant went on to attend high school in Benares and then to read for a degree at the University of Allahabad, which he left in 1921 to join Gandhi's Noncooperation movement. He was the first Chāyāvād poet to make an impact, and consequently became the butt of much critical ridicule. Polemically joining battle in a thirty-seven-page introduction to his first major volume of poems, *Pallav* (New leaf, 1926), he trenchantly counterattacked the moribund tradition of Brajbhasha poetry and rousingly asserted the triumph of Khari Boli:

> The era of the battle for survival between Brajbhasha and Khari Boli is already over. . . . From the womb of that delicate mother has been born this vigorous daughter, who shines in resplendent beauty everywhere and whose tongue is as lightning. Hindi has stopped lisping now. . . .
>
> The Kṛṣṇa that is India has now laid down his flute and picked up the Pāñcajanya [the conch shell he blew during the *Mahābhārata* war]; the sleeping voice of a sleeping nation has come awake, and Khari Boli is the conch-trumpet of that awakening. Braj had the sweetness of slumber but this has the vibrancy of awakening; that had the moonlight of dreamy inaction but this has the vocal and action-urgent light of day.

Surveying the whole tradition of earlier Hindi poetry in both Brajbhasha and Avadhi and giving credit to the few to whom it could hardly be denied—Sūr, Tulsī, Kabīr, and Mīrā—he characterized the later Brajbhasha poets as wallowing in grotesque and vicious luxury. Speaking of the requirements of changed times, Pant declared:

> We need not just a language but a language for the nation; not a language of books but the language of human beings, in which we laugh and cry, run and play, embrace and quarrel, breathe and live; a language that would be the ideal medium for the new face and mental makeup of the country. . . . It is a highly ridiculous and shameful fallacy that we should think in one language and express ourselves in another, that the language of our thought should not be the language on our tongue, that the corpus of our prose should be different from the corpus of our poetry, . . . that the heart of our literature, the soul of our country, should be divided into two by raising in the middle an artificial wall![70]

Pant's high rhetoric here represents the imperative voice of Hindi modernity and Indian nationalism in a way that his poetry fully did not—at least not yet. He was at this stage above all else a poet of nature for nature's sake, famously preferring it over human attractions:

> Abandoning soft arboreal shade,
>   Breaking off my magic bond with nature,

---

70. Pant [1926] 1967: 15, 16, 24.

How can I, maid, enmesh my gaze, in the coils of your tresses
      Forgetting this other world of mine?[71]

Nor, as this translation seeks to suggest, was his poetic diction anywhere near everyday speech; indeed, nearly all Chāyāvād poetry showed a predilection for a distinctly higher, Sanskritic register than the poetry that preceded or followed it, which may have been one of the reasons for its alluring musicality.

So complete and sufficient was Pant's devotion to nature that he even called it his "Goddess, Mother, Companion, Soul!" However, he was at the same time strongly moved by not merely the spirit of the times but indeed the call of the times, *yugdharma;* he certainly has more volumes of poems whose titles begin with *yug* (the age) than any other Hindi poet. During the 1930s, he predictably enough added Marx to Gandhi as a new mentor; inspired by both, he published a volume of poems, *Grāmyā* (Of the village, 1940), devoted to describing not only village scenes but the poor, low-caste, and untouchable villagers themselves, who may be a little prettified but are recognizable subalterns nonetheless. A particularly popular poem in this volume begins *bhāratmātā grāmvāsinī,* "Mother India is a villager"—echoing directly Gandhi's famous assertion that India lives in her villages—and it goes on to describe her in hues of dusty destitution and despondence.

Suryakānt Tripāṭhī "Nirālā" (the pen name means rare, unique; also, a solitary spirit, following the etymology from *nirālay,* meaning without a fixed abode) today stands fairly clearly by himself as the greatest of the Chāyāvād poets. He was the most rebellious, unconventional, penurious, and yet carefree of the three poets—unlike Prasād, who came from a long-established business family and for all his Romanticism was marked by a classical temper and elegance; or Pant, who also came from an affluent, well-educated family, and who cultivated a refined, delicate, mild-mannered poetic persona. Though by the mid-1910s Nirālā had already published a few of his best-known poems, it was through his affiliation with the literary circle that gathered in Calcutta in the mid-1920s around Seṭh Māhadev Prasād, who founded—and funded—the journal *Matvālā* (The intoxicated; the wayward or free spirit), that he effectively found his poetic voice. In turn, he now fashioned a new persona to go with the journal by adopting the pen name Nirālā, which was nearly synonymous with the title of the journal besides rhyming with it, and became its star contributor.[72]

---

71. Pant [1926] 1967: 89. The *tatsama* Hindi text runs: *choṛ drumō kī mṛdu chāyā / toṛ prakṛti se bhī māyā / bāle! tere bāl-jāl mē kaise uljhā dū̃ locan / bhūl abhī se is jag ko!*

72. For all information relating to Nirālā, I have followed the three-volume critical biography by Rām Vilās Śarmā ([1969] 1994), which ranks as one of the two best literary biographies in Hindi, the other being Amrit Rai's biography of Premchand, *Qalam kā Sipāhī.*

Nirālā, whose ancestral home was in a village in central U.P., was born and brought up in Bengal in the small princely state of Mahishadal and grew up speaking Bangla as well as Hindi.[73] Nirala's later relationship with Bangla was complex and on occasion even hostile, but there is no denying that he brought to his Hindi poetry a new pattern of sound and syntax that has a discernible Bangla trace. He was fairly competent in English and read its literature with discrimination and relish, but he also bristled against the language from time to time for reasons that may aptly be called postcolonial; in his last, disturbed years he would often launch into impassioned monologues addressed to Jawaharlal Nehru, the highly Anglicized prime minister of the country.

Of all the modern Hindi poets, Nirālā has the widest range of both theme and style, and the greatest intensity as well as formal virtuosity. He was the first to write in free verse in Hindi (beginning in 1916),[74] and he experimented with adapting Urdu meters to Hindi, besides devising some new ones of his own. He wrote poems of acute social consciousness, such as the one describing the heart-rending sight of an emaciated beggar whose stomach and back have become as one, or the one about a female stone breaker hammering away at high noon in hot summer by a shadeless roadside in Allahabad. His trenchant political satires include *Kukurmuttā* (1942), a long Marxist-dialectic exchange in free verse between the elitist rose and the bottom-of-the-heap mushroom (called in Hindi *kukurmuttā,* or dog piss, and, unsurprisingly, regarded as inedible). Some of his lyrics stage a seemingly improvised play with sheer sound rather in the manner of a classical singer in the Hindustani style, while others, especially from his last period, build on devout phraseology hallowed for centuries in *bhakti* poetry.

The pillars of Nirālā's fame, however, are three of his longer poems, published at about the same time but each in a different mode. "Sarojsmṛti" (In memory of Saroj, 1938) is an elegy for his daughter, who died shortly after marriage at the age of eighteen. The informal conversational style that Ni-

73. He is thus one of a galaxy of twentieth-century writers who came to Hindi from another language or from a bilingual upbringing: Bālmukund Gupt and Premchand (both from Urdu), Ajñeya (from Panjabi and English), Amṛtlāl Nagar (from Gujarati), Yaśpāl and Ashq (both from Panjabi/Urdu), Muktibodh (from Marathi, the language in which his brother chose to write), Kṛṣṇa Sobti (from Panjabi), and several other, less eminent writers. Such instances of interlingual transition in the inveterately multilingual Indian situation perhaps also place in perspective the intralingual changeover from Brajbhasha to Khari Boli, which, though momentous enough, was nevertheless a smaller and smoother domestic matter.

74. "As men gain release so does poetry. Release for men is to get rid of the shackles of karma, and release for poetry is to get rid of the rule of metre. . . . Truly free verse is that which stands on the ground of metre and is yet free" (Nirālā [1929] 1966: 12, 19). Elsewhere in the "Bhūmikā" (preface) to his early volume of poems, *Parimal,* Nirālā acclaims the rise of Khari Boli and argues strongly against Bengali opposition to Hindi's claims to be the *rāṣṭrabhāṣā* (9, 9–12).

rālā adopts for it not only guarantees authenticity of emotion but also allows it to develop into an autobiographical poem with a multilayered richness, with humor and irony punctuating penitential regret at his bereavement. "Tulsī Dās" (1938), written in a complex stanza of six lines rhyming *aabccb* with the *b* lines longer, is a well-wrought tribute from the poet to his greatest predecessor, who was also his all-time favorite poet. He explores the springs of Tulsīdās's magnificent creativity in both the personal and the cultural context, subtly suggesting that the latter has a parallel in the colonial situation in Nirālā's own times. And in "Rām kī Śaktipūjā" (Rāma's worship of Śakti, 1938), Nirālā joins the long tradition of rewriters of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* his point of departure being not Vālmīki or Tulsī but an episode from the Bangla *Rāmāyaṇa* by Kṛttibās. In the incident Nirālā chooses to recreate, Rāma is deep in battle with the evil Rāvaṇa, but the demon, under Śiva's protection, is far from ready to succumb to the good that Rāma represents. So Rāma must now propitiate a superior divinity, the female *śakti* (cosmic power), by performing a sacrifice through the night. At the culmination of the worship he is ready to offer his own lotus-like eyes in the absence of actual lotus flowers until the goddess intervenes to bless him. The epic sublimity of the poem and its vigor as a poem engaged thematically with power *(śakti-kavitā)* are lit up, as Rām Svarūp Caturvedī has pointed out, through contrast with two tender and intimate moments of psychological depth, in the first of which Rāma recalls his first meeting with Sītā, over whom the battle is being fought, and in the second, how his mother used fondly to compare his eyes to lotus flowers.[75] Stylistically, the first eighteen lines are perhaps the loftiest rhymes yet attempted in Hindi, seeking to convey through sound as much as sense the tumult and the exhaustion of another inconclusive day of battle; anyone who can read them aloud with feeling and without faltering over the consecutive Sanskritic *samastapada*s, or long compounds— and many can do so from reverent memory—has proved his credentials as a true *rasika,* a worthy connoisseur of the poetic tradition of Hindi.

The fourth and last of the four major Chāyāvād poets, Mahādevī Verma, is well served in English by Karine Schomer's book-length study, which attends with assiduous sympathy to each aspect of her poetic and personal achievement, just as David Rubin's *The Return of Sarasvatī* offers a considered (if overly defensive) introduction to Chāyāvād, together with a useful body of translations of each of the four major poets of the movement.[76] The youngest of the four, Māhadevī displayed in her five slim volumes, published in breathless succession over twelve years (1930–1942), perhaps the most

---

75. Caturvedī [1986] 1994: 146.
76. See Schomer 1983 and Rubin 1998.

accomplished formal control and verbal felicity among them all, and a remarkable thematic and stylistic integrity. She expressed in a majority of her poems a transcendental mystical yearning, which is by definition insatiable and whose keynote is intense *vednā,* painful and anguished suffering, which for her is paradoxically welcome and sweet. Negatively viewed, such delimited achievement has led to the charge that Māhadevī throughout wrote the same poem in the same manner. As if in self-knowing response, she abruptly stopped writing poetry in 1942, to take and strictly observe some Gandhian nationalist vows—always to wear *khādī,* for example; and to speak always in Hindi with never a word in colonial English, with the result that her spoken Hindi soon evolved into a model of felicity. In his introduction to Māhadevī's first volume of poems, a comparatively literal poet of the Dvivedī generation, Ayodhyā Singh Upādhyāy, "Hariaudh," had slipped in the recommendation that the voice of Mother India should also be heard in her poetry. Even if she did not seem able to heed the advice during her poetic career, Māhadevī devoted the rest of her long and productive life to becoming a worthy instrument of that nationalism. Having already separated from an incompatible husband, she served for long years as a teacher in a nationalist women's school (later college), the Prayāg Mahilā Vidyāpīṭh, and wrote prose works that show a sensitivity unprecedented in Hindi to poor and lowly women and what may retrospectively be called subaltern characters, thus inaugurating a nationalist-feminist discourse in Hindi some decades before the current wave of literary and activist feminism began to sweep the West.[77]

The Importance of Chāyāvād: A Second Golden Age?

Of the post-Chāyāvād Hindi poets, who early weaned themselves away from Chāyāvād's pervasive and beguiling influence and then struck out along their own very different poetic directions, the two most prominent are Saccidānand Hirānand Vātsyāyan "Ajñeya" (1911–1987) and Gajānan Mādhav Muktibodh (1917–1964). They are now seen as polar opposites, which is a huge historical irony given that the two had initially appeared together as kindred spirits

---

77. How Māhadevī Verma's "explicit and vigorous feminist concerns" as embodied in her poetry and her "position as a major feminist philosopher of our times" have remained "sadly unexplored" is noted in a recent anthology of women's writing in India—except that the piece by which she is represented in it is a prose character sketch, which hardly strengthens her claims in either respect. This anthology also represents Subhadrā Kumārī Cauhān (1904–1948), a contemporary and friend of Verma's, by a similar minor prose piece and not by her best-known poem, which is indeed the best-known modern Hindi poem by any woman, possibly because in it Cauhān describes the Rani of Jhansi, one of the bravest fighters in the "Mutiny" of 1857, as having "fought like a man." Tharu and Lalita 1993: 459–69, 419–24.

in a pathbreaking anthology of post-Chāyāvād poetry, *Tār Saptak* (The seven [musical] notes, 1943), a selection of the work of seven rising young poets picked and introduced by Ajñeya. The common thread, as Ajñeya saw it, was an interest on the part of all the poets in modernist experimentation, while five of the seven in their introductory autobiographical statements at the same time claimed to be "Marxist" or "Communist." This unlikely (and possibly at that stage somewhat innocent) alliance could not last long, and in recent decades it has become the custom in Hindi literary criticism to praise Ajñeya only while routinely denouncing Muktibodh—or vice versa—with only one or two younger successors, such as Sarveshvar Dayal Saxena (1927–1983) and Raghuvīr Sahāy (1929–1991), able to pass muster on both sides of the critical divide. In retrospect, this post-Independence ideological polarization and indeed dissociation of critical sensibility (to adapt T. S. Eliot's controversial but suggestive phrase from another context), may also be one of the reasons why the earlier achievement of Chāyāvād, and in particular of its defining genius, Nirālā, continues to be almost unanimously acclaimed as the last great turn in Hindi poetry, with both the modernist and the Marxist critics seeming equally keen to appropriate it as the great source of their respective traditions.

Such valorization of Chāyāvād of course marks a major revaluation, even a reversal, from the times of Chāyāvād's inauguration, when it was condemned as the outcome of some alien influence, or as romantic escapism in the midst of the mounting nationalist struggle for independence. But the sweeping cultural critique of the West allegorically offered by Prasād in contrast with his epic invocation of originary Indian values; Pant's long journey from a wide-eyed, solitary fascination with nature to a depiction of the acutely deprived masses inhabiting village India; the rousing refiguring of the favorite Hindu god, Lord Rāma, as also of his chief bard, the saint-poet Tulsīdās, by Nirālā; Mahādevī's resolute turning away from the making of mystical-erotic transcendent verses to a life of highly purposeful social commitment—all these contributed to the realization that however sugar-coated its intensely lyrical mode might occasionally be, Chāyāvād poetry remained a salutary, vitalizing pill for those embattled times. The early charge that it derived from British Romantic influence was soon blunted by the growing perception that its major themes were all deeply indigenous. In any case, the influence of the British Romantics in Hindi was nothing compared with the headlong fervor it had excited earlier in Bangla or was exciting contemporaneously in Kannada. The latter, having remained landlocked in its (Brajbhasha-like?) poetic conventions, was revolutionized in 1921 by a volume called *English Gītagaḷu,* a translation of selections from Palgrave's *Golden Treasury.*[78] Largely because

---

78. "If there ever was an instance of a single book of poems, translated from English into an Indian language, changing the course of development of that language," it was this work,

Hindi had already initiated on its own terms the process of formally mod-
ernizing itself without forsaking its thematic home turf, it was in little danger
of being "crushed by English poetry"—the fear expressed for Marathi by
Viṣṇu Kṛṣṇa Cipluṅkar (1850–1882), a contemporary of Bhāratendu Hari-
ścandra, in the more vulnerable late nineteenth century.[79]

In terms of internal linguistic and stylistic evolution, too, Chāyāvād marked
a new point of departure. By adopting high Sanskritic diction confidently
and comprehensively, this new poetry seemed to enunciate and affirm a
natural and inherent tendency of linguistic development that Khari Boli
Hindi would follow. The specter of Urdu was now well and truly laid and the
chimerical pursuit of Hindustani quite abandoned, at least in literature if
not yet in politics. If many Hindi poets returned to the more common and
relatively Urdu-enriched diction, as they notably did beginning in the 1960s,
it was of their own free-ranging stylistic will and not under any political per-
suasion, and they did so while retaining, when the theme or occasion de-
manded, the high-Sanskritic option.

Altogether, nothing more reassuring or gratifying could have happened
to Khari Boli Hindi so soon after its adoption as the new poetic medium than
Chāyāvād. Through attaining a memorable musical felicity quite compara-
ble with Brajbhasha at its sweetest, through negotiating a rather more indi-
rect and therefore perhaps more artistically effective mode of engaging with
topical political concerns than Pāṭhak or Gupt, for example, had been able
to devise, and through absorbing Western Romantic-individualist influence
while incorporating it into a newer Gandhian-Marxist ethic, Chāyāvād not
only raised a number of new stylistic and thematic possibilities but also went
on by and large to fulfill them, all within a couple of exceptionally produc-
tive decades. The repeated claim that Chāyāvād constitutes a second golden
age of Hindi poetry, after the *bhakti* movement some four or five centuries
earlier (also, as it happened, at the beginning of a linguistic shift, in the midst
of a political upheaval, and featuring three or four poets of outstanding gifts
and caliber), may be palpably exaggerated, but it is not entirely unfounded.

THE NOVEL AND THE NATION

Resisting a Genre: Nāvil, Upanyās, Kādambarī

Of all the genres of Indian literature, the novel had perhaps the most abrupt
start. It is often asserted that the novel did not exist in India until exposure

---

according to Rao 1997: 66. For a postcolonial reading of how works such as this one serve as
"strong models of the kinds of effects which translations have at specific moments in the in-
terplay between colonizing and colonized cultures," see Viswanatha and Simon 1999: 166.

79. Chandra 1992: 17–70.

through British education to the Western and especially English model of the genre led to emulative efforts in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In recent decades, often in a gesture of postcolonial counter-assertion, this statement has been modified to say that though the novel may not have existed in precolonial India, prose narrative certainly did exist in a variety of forms, even in Sanskrit. An exploration of the circumstances in which the novel in India arose thus offers an instructive double perspective: on the formation of Indian nationalism, with which this new literary form is coeval, and more broadly, on the interaction between the colonial master-literature and an Indian literature such as Hindi, which was seen as suffering from a deficiency that the West supplied. The genre of the novel, like the railways or cricket, seems to have been a modernizing "gift" of the colonizers' civilization, but as it did not run along fixed tracks nor was obliged to adhere to any officially codified rules of the game, it mutated in ways that show both clear traces of the impress of the West as well as necessarily blurred signs of its erasure. The growth of the novel in India provides as richly complex a literary instance as one can expect to find anywhere of reception as resistance.

Both the lack of the novel and the presence of narrative in India are emblematically reflected in the very naming of the new object when it did come into existence. In many Indian languages it was called *upanyās,* through appropriating for this specific need a Sanskrit term that generally meant "putting down" in a considered "juxtaposition" of its relative parts any well-organized literary composition;[80] in other languages, such as Urdu and Panjabi, it came to be called directly *nāval* or *nāvil;* and in yet others, like Marathi, in an act of cultural recall and accommodation, the new genre was given the name *kādambarī,* after the highly sophisticated Sanskrit novel or narrative of that name by Bāṇa Bhaṭṭa (seventh century), rather as if all subsequent Spanish novels had been called "quixotes" or all English novels "clarissas."[81] Thus, although the novel may have been a new literary form in India it was, as a form of complex prose narrative, quite old and traditional, in fact, a *purāṇa.*[82] This double if ruptured genealogy of fiction in India makes the search for

80. See *upanyāsa* in Monier-Williams [1889] 1997. For a wide-ranging study of Indian adaptations of Western literary terms, see S. K. Das 1980: 13–30. For an account of the early use of both "novel" and *upanyās* in Bengal, see Dasgupta 1997: 54–65. An early debate on the form and content of the early Hindi novel is recounted in Gulerī [1903] 1995: 25–42. For a discussion of the role of the early novels in constituting the Hindi "public sphere," see Orsini 2002.

81. For Gujarati, see Yashaschandra, chapter 9, this volume.

82. A useful synoptic view of the earlier Indian narrative tradition and the transition to the novel is found in Mukherjee 1985: 3–18.

the "first" novel not a matter merely of archival retrieval and chronological priority but rather one of critical arbitration. There are perhaps half a dozen different prose narratives in Hindi, all of which approximate in some but not all respects to the generic expectations of a Western novel. The more interesting task here is not to decide which one of these scores the most points on a scale of conformity, but to account for the various significant ways in which these narratives both approach and depart from the Western literary model.

In speaking of the novel in India, we might also ask whether an imported literary form comes complete with the social and economic determinants of the historical moment of its formation in the originary culture. If so, what is the role of the very different set of historical circumstances attendant upon the induction of this form in the recipient literary culture? According to a widely respected older theory, the novel arose in England with the rise of the middle classes consequent upon the Industrial Revolution. According to some newer and even more influential theoretical notions, the novel is almost coextensive with the nation that it narrates (almost into existence), while the nation itself is an imagined community invented in Europe almost out of a felt necessity caused by factors such as the decay of religion, standardization of a national language, and the advent of print capitalism. In another hotly contested formulation, Third World novels are (to be) read as "national allegories"—presumably by a non–Third World reader.[83]

If there is any common factor here, it is that all these formulations have understandably been devised without reference to the specificities of the literary and historical situation of the novel in India. The middle class in India is, in common opinion, beginning to rise only now, a century after the novel did. The novel in most Indian languages (with the partial exception of Hindi, the purported national language) sought to narrate not the nation but its own particular linguistically constituted (or imagined) regional community. And the growth of the novel was clearly informed by Indian readers (including potential or actual writers of novels) who read a vast number of English, French, or Russian novels as if those too were allegorical representations of their respective nations and the major source from which Indian readers formed their notions of these countries and their culture. In an important sense, then, to speak of the "novel" as written in Indian languages not only in its early stages but perhaps even now is to subscribe to the many assumptions about the very form and the role of the genre in the West that do not apply to its development in India.

83. See, respectively, Watt 1957; Bhabha 1994; Anderson 1983; Jameson 1986; and Ahmad 1992.

In his canon-forming history of Hindi literature, Rāmcandra Śukla identified the first Hindi novel in terms that repay our attention: "The first original novel of the English kind to be published in Hindi was indeed *Parīkṣā-guru* [Trial as teacher, 1882] by Lālā Śrīnivās Dās."[84] The work is thus distinguished not only from earlier texts that were in effect translations or adaptations of Western novels and thus not "original," but also from any other original novels that might not have been of the English/Western kind, or at least not sufficiently so. Keenly aware of various cross-generic mutations, Śukla is not begging any questions here by adopting the strategy of offering a narrow definition that draws attention to the exclusivity of its own parameters. If he is ruling out some earlier narratives that illustrate the diversity of the initial Hindi variations on the form of the Western novel, he is also implying that not all narratives are or need be novels "of the English kind."

The Early Hindi Novel: The Tyranny of the Form

The first of the Hindi "novels," which preceded *Parīkṣāguru* by a good eighty years, is as early a work as can be considered a novel in any Indian language. It was written in 1801 by an Urdu poet, Inshāʿallāh Ḵẖān, at the court of the Nawab of Lucknow, away from the reach of any colonial Western influence.[85] His *Rānī Ketakī kī Kahānī* (The story of Rānī Ketakī) is passed over in histories of Hindi literature as a curiosity for the indigenous simplicity of the language avowedly used in it, but its formal and thematic aspects are even more remarkable than the virtuoso linguistic performance. This is the love story of a princess and a prince in which, to prevent the intended marriage, the prince and his parents are turned into deer through a curse and are put out to graze. All is resolved happily in the end through recourse to the god Indra, who then graciously attends the wedding and gifts the couple with twelve lovely fairies from his celestial court to serve as maids to Ketakī (while strictly instructing them not to have much to do with the prince); a sapling of the wishing tree, Kalpavṛkṣa; and a she-calf of the wish-fulfilling cow, Kāmadhenu, which he conveniently tethers to the tree. The story is repeatedly punctuated by passages of verse, in the last of which Ketakī's old and trusted maid-in-attendance merrily chides her for having impetuously consummated the marriage even before the prescribed rituals allowed.[86] Though this work would seem not to qualify as a novel because of its brevity (thirty-six pages in a modern reprint) and the use of the supernatural and of verse, the gods

84. Śukla 1940 (v.s. 1997): 541.

85. This work heads the "Chronological List of Major Novels in [the] Indian Languages Published Between 1801 and 1900," in Mukherjee 1985: 189–92.

86. See Ḵẖān [1801] 1950.

in it are endowed with a novelistic sense of human comedy, while the verses are far from uplifting or didactic.

Verse (composed, as in *Rānī Ketakī kī Kahānī,* by the author himself) constitutes a far more substantial part of the work in *Śyāmāsvapna* (Dream[ing] of Śyāmā, 1885) by Ṭhākur Jagmohan Singh, and the verse is mostly in Braj-bhasha, which at places also colors the Khari Boli prose. The author was brought up and educated by the British government after his father, a minor ruler who rose against the British in 1857, was captured and jailed for life and soon after committed suicide. On the title page Singh described his work as falling into two generic categories, each belonging to one of the two literary cultures that had formed him: as *gadyapradhān cār khandõ mẽ ek kalpnā* (a work of imagination/fiction/fantasy *[kalpnā]* in four parts, mainly in prose), and also (in English and in roman characters) as "an original novel." Hindi critics have called it a *gadyakāvya* (prose-poem) or a *campū* (a mixture of prose and verse), evoking categories familiar in Sanskrit literature. (The term *kāvya* is common in Sanskrit to all literary creation, though in the modern Indian languages it came to be used narrowly for verse alone.)[87] A liberal use of verse, either quoted or of the author's own creation, is in fact a common feature of several early Hindi narratives; its presence serves comparatively to problematize the sharper distinction between verse and prose in English and the insistence, as for example in Henry Fielding's originary definition, that the (English) novel is "a comic epic-poem *in prose.*"[88]

Along with the frequent passages of verse, these early Hindi narratives include other features that are distinctly new and modern. In *Śyāmāsvapna,* for example, the love story involves protagonists from different castes, causing some soul-searching anguish for the hero that is foregrounded by the author; the intensity of the emotion depicted is markedly personal and individual (not universalized or ascribed to gods, as in earlier Hindi literature); and nature is described in a new, patriotic, and nationalist manner. There is also a long, phantasmagorically vivid scene centering on a new object recently imported from the West, a railway train, and another, shorter scene in which the hero goes to buy another object that had newly become available, a pair of spectacles, from a shopkeeper who comes from the *śveta-dvīp*—the island of the whites.[89]

Indeed, in the Indian literary situation, any depiction of interaction with white characters; any accommodation within the narrative of Western institutions and objects brought in through the colonial intervention; or any use of words, phrases, literary passages, or allusions from the English lan-

---

87. Singh [1888] 1953: 14. For *kāvya,* see Pollock, chapter 1, this volume.
88. Fielding [1742] 1979: 25 (my emphasis).
89. Singh [1888] 1953: 90–91, 114–15.

guage may in itself be regarded as a sign of the modernity of the text and possibly also of its enhanced eligibility for inclusion in the Western category of the novel. Such is the author's self-conscious use of the English word "novel" on the title page of *Śyāmāsvapna*. Such, too, are the persistent references in *Parīkṣāguru* to the hero, a rich young man of Delhi, being taught Shakespeare, Jonson, and Swift by an Indian private tutor; or to the profligate hero declaring himself bankrupt and being taken into custody under a new and somewhat bewildering legal system introduced into India by the British. In the very opening scene of the novel, the first of many in which the hero is beguiled into extravagant and useless expenditure, he is persuaded to buy a pair of large framed mirrors, which he can ill afford, by an English shopkeeper, "Mr. Bright," while another Englishman, "Mr. Russell," an old business acquaintance of the hero, lies his way out of having to lend him money when the hero needs to be bailed out—all examples of human conduct that could have come straight out of a classic English novel such as *Vanity Fair*.[90]

In some pre-*Parīkṣāguru* narratives, the juxtaposition, if not conflictual interaction, of Indian and Western ideas and objects still leans more toward the traditional Indian, which is possibly why these works are seen to fall outside the domain of the Western kind of Hindi novel. In Śraddhārām Phillaurī's *Bhāgyavatī* (1877), for example, a work set in contemporary times, the deft and wise young heroine, finding herself accidentally separated from her party while traveling on pilgrimage, approaches the local *rājā* for help, and introduces herself and her unfortunate situation to him in Sanskrit *śloka*s that she composes on the spot. At the beginning of the novel, her father acclaims the British rulers in traditional legitimizing terms, as "Mahārāj Aṅgrez," and himself as their *prajā,* their childlike subject. And at the end of the narrative, as her father-in-law lies dying, Bhāgyavatī is able to persuade her mother-in-law to call in an *āgrezī dākṭar*—an Indian doctor trained in Western medicine—even though the medicines he might prescribe would instantly contaminate the old Brahman and imperil the purity of his caste.[91] Such explicit intrusions of modernity can be seen to mimic the intrusion of the Western form of the novel itself, within which they are enacted.

The dominant presence in many Indian novels of the joint, or extended, family also stands in contrast with the situation in a substantial proportion, if not a majority, of Western novels, where the focus of interest only too pre-

90. "This would be a new kind of book in the language. . . . In writing this book I have derived great help from Sanskrit works such as the Mahabharata, Persian works such as the Gulistan, essays in *The Spectator* and those by Lord Bacon and Goldsmith, and current journals such as *Stribodh*. . . . " Dās [1882] 1974: 12–14.
91. See Phillaurī [1877] 1973: 11, 45, 96, 117.

dictably is the romantic relationship between a man and a woman yet to marry, with the novels often ending as soon as the protagonists have exchanged wedding vows. *Bhāgyavatī* is one example of this radically different, more communal, and less individualistic Indian social paradigm, but a more apt case in point is *Devrānī Jeṭhānī kī Kahānī* (1870). This narrative by Pandit Gaurī Dutt (also famous as a dedicated propagator of Nagari)[92] is about an elder daughter-in-law and a younger daughter-in-law who are married to brothers who, at the beginning of the novel, are still living under the parental roof. In comparison with such domestically populous narratives, the one-man, one-woman story line of many Western novels must have seemed positively one-dimensional, for by and large even today's Indian novelists have not yet adopted this abiding Western stereotype and begun focusing on a romantic love interest to the exclusion or at least neglect of the extended family. In the majority of Hindi novels and short stories, it is fathers, mothers, and brothers, to say nothing of *devrānī*s and *jeṭhānī*s (younger and elder daughters-in-law), who occupy the center of the stage. The kind of love that seems to be the consuming passion of Western novelists and readers alike is pushed to a corner and confined to occasional interludes. The Indian novel is different from the Western not merely in formal terms, such as the significant presence of verse; it is also thematically different in expressing quite another view of the individual, the society, and the world.

Even the early adventure novel and the detective novel in Hindi bore strong features that distinguished them markedly from their generic counterparts in English. The most "gothic" and seemingly escapist of all the novels of this period, *Candrakāntā* (1888) by Devkīnandan Khatrī (1861–1917), with its multipart sequel, *Candrakāntā Santati* (Candrakāntā's children, 1896–1905), proved phenomenally popular and indeed broadened the very constituency of Hindi readers; after many reprintings, the cover still proudly proclaims that "lakhs [hundreds of thousands] of [mostly Urdu] readers learned Hindi to be able to read this novel."[93] The sources of its magic were far from English; the bag of mystifying stage effects here is rather more Persian-Muslim, while the landscape around Chunar and the Hindu characters, with all their unrealistic actions, still add up to a meaning that has been interpreted as strongly ur-nationalist.[94]

---

92. Dutt [1870] 1986. When Pandit Gaurī Dutt reached the age of forty, he renounced domestic life and took *sannyās* (ascetic renunciation), gave away all his property for the cause of Nagari and dedicated himself whole-heartedly to its propagation, even adopting the greeting *"jaya nāgarī"* in place of *"praṇām"* or *"jaya rām."* See Śukla 1940 (v.s. 1997): 578.

93. In a reassertion of their undying popularity, *Candrakāntā* and *Candrakāntā Santati* were adapted for Hindi television in the 1990s, running to high ratings for over a hundred episodes.

94. It has even been suggested that since *Candrakāntā,* with its locale of several independent Hindu kingdoms over which seems to fall neither a British nor a Muslim shadow, proved

The early Hindi novel is thus undeniably the result of the intervention of a Western genre, and yet in its form as well as substance it is far from convincingly Western. Too many historians of the early Indian novel have overvalued the external features of the form to conclude that the early Indian novel is "something that is not yet a novel," as if it were a less-developed and retarded specimen rather than a valid variant in its own right.[95] Thus, Meenakshi Mukherjee's thesis in *Realism and Reality* that the realist mode of the nineteenth-century English novel, which was "the immediate model for the first generation of Indian novelists," did not quite fit the Indian "social reality," describes in fact only part of the mismatch. Even nonrealist modes of the English novel, such as the gothic or the romantic-historical, were not of much use to Indian writers, not only because the local gothic or historic "reality" was different, but also because they did not accord with older and often very different indigenous modes of literary representation and narrative.[96]

The recent tyranny of the novel over other modes of narrative, through which "the very word 'novel' has become a term of praise when applied to earlier narratives"[97]—or indeed to culturally "other" narratives—was compounded in India by the tyranny of British rule and British education. The novel may or may not have arisen in England with the rise of the middle classes, but it certainly arose in India concurrently with the rise of colonial cultural hegemony. Considering that (to adapt a phrase of Bakhtin's) "the birth and development of the novel [in India] as a genre took place in the full light of [not merely 'historical' but specifically] colonial day," a more explicit theoretical connection perhaps needs to be argued between the oppression of both British rule and the British novel.[98] That may help us ex-

---

successful in countering the wide cultural influence of pan-Islamic tales then popular in Urdu, such as *Dāstān-e-Amīr Ḥamzah* and *Ṭilism-e Hoshrubā*, it performed a role in the restoration of "the Hindu *dharma* and the Indian sensibility," as Tulsīdās's *Rāmcaritmānas* had done before. After the defeat of the armed Indian uprising of 1857, novels began to valorize men with mental and magical abilities that turn them into invincible wizards *(aiyār);* they often had independent, brave, and spirited women characters led by the heroine; and the complete, and allegedly "escapist," absence of the British in this novel was a significant erasure. See Yādav 1981: 23, 24, 32, 38, 45, 54.

95. Das 1991: 114.

96. Mukherjee 1985: 10, 13, argues that "Indian literature did not have any tradition of this variety of realism [i.e., the Western] because it was based on a rather different view of reality," but that "whatever term for the novel was adopted in an Indian language, the formal and thematic aspirations of the early Indian novel were the same as those of the English novels read by pioneering Indian novelists."

97. Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 8.

98. Bakhtin 1981: 3.

plain precisely why the transplantation of the novel has been a source of lasting unease in Hindi literary culture. To judge by translation, that litmus test of cultural accommodation, novels by some of the most outstanding Indian novelists (including one or two Hindi novelists discussed in what follows) are thought so aesthetically imperfect by their Western, or even Westernized Indian, translators that not only significant changes but even large-scale deletions are blithely made, showing up the difference between the Western and the Indian notions of narrative and in particular the drastically different "sense of an ending" (in Frank Kermode's phrase) in the two literary traditions.[99]

Nor was this an early teething problem that has now gone away or been resolved. In a panel discussion sponsored by a Hindi journal in 1992, when some of the most eminent Hindi writers and critics were invited to name their best ten Hindi novels, some chose to stop well short of that number, while others who dutifully did go the distance joined them in asserting that "we haven't yet been able to master *[sādh]* the form of the novel," and one or two even wondered whether the genius of Hindi had yet been able to contribute anything to the form.[100] To read such statements as mere confessions of artistic failure would be to subscribe to colonial claims of the superiority of Western literary models. What these acknowledgments of unease point to, equally, is a wide discrepancy between a literary form that came into existence in peculiarly Western social and cultural conditions in the modern age following the Industrial Revolution, and an Indian sensibility and worldview traditionally shaped by very different notions of society and culture. The novel as a genre remains imperfectly assimilated not only in Hindi but also in the other Indian languages for the good reason that witting or unwitting resistance to the form has marked all attempts to imitate, adapt, or domesticate it. If the Indian novel is still taken to narrate the Indian nation or to constitute a national allegory, it can only be because, like the Western novel, the Western nation too is a category arbitrarily imposed on India.

99. For example, in their truncated translation of Bibhutibhūṣaṇ Bandopādhyāy's *Pather Panchali,* T. W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherjee cut out the last sixty-eight pages, claiming that the remainder "is something of an anti-climax," and that excising it reveals that Bandopādhyāy achieved a coherence and a dramatic unity "without fully realizing that he had done so." Quoted in Mukherjee 1981: 89. I discuss later in this chapter Ajñeya's deletion of a substantial part of Premchand's *Godān* in his translation. For an example of the same sort of mismatch, but from the opposite direction, see the adaptation of an English work of fiction by the Bengali novelist Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy, who left out the last part of the original; S. K. Das (1991: 114–16) discusses this and concludes: "The structural considerations were vital in distinguishing the traditional stories, katha, akhyan, upakhyan etc. from the novel."

100. *Iṇḍiyā Tuḍe* 1992–93: 14–15.

Premchand: The Wretched of the Nation

Premchand, the first major novelist in Hindi or Urdu, is still universally acknowledged to be the greatest novelist in either language, except that some think that he is an even greater short story writer. Whether or not Indian writers may be said to have mastered the Western form of the novel, they certainly have taken to the related but crucially different form of the short story in a way unparalleled in either English or even American literature, possibly because it does not enforce the same requirements of protracted "consistency" of characterization that would lead up to a realization of the individual self, nor demand organization of the material into an elaborate "organic" plot necessarily culminating in a (Western) vision of life, with all ends neatly tucked in.[101]

In any case, the first major event in Premchand's writing career happened in 1908 when his first collection of short stories, *Soz-e-Vaṭan* (The lament of the nation), ran into trouble with the British government, by whom he was then employed in the minor office of a sub–deputy inspector of schools. He was summoned overnight to appear before the British head of the district, told to destroy all copies of his seditious book, and exhorted to congratulate himself that he lived under the civilized British administration rather than the preceding Mughal one, for then his hands would have been chopped off.[102] In prudent self-interest, Premchand now severed anyhow the pseudonym he had been publishing under, Nawab Rai, to become henceforth Premchand.[103]

Of his twelve completed novels (including four early and minor novellas, which were the only ones to be first published in Urdu), *Raṅgabhūmi* (The arena of play, 1925) and *Godān* (The gift of a cow, 1936) stand out as of-

101. For example, Guleri's short story "Usne Kahā Thā" (1915), which narrates with subtlety of plot, psychological sophistication, and emotional restraint a love story set in part in the battlefields of Flanders, could hardly be matched by any Hindi novel for many years afterwards. Rāmcandra Śukla in his *History* once again made a vital observation when he said that short stories "of so many shapes and complexion" had already appeared in Hindi that "they cannot now all fit into Western characteristics and norms. . . . We shall have to recognize that this too is a form of the short story. If Western norms haven't been followed in this case, well then, they haven't." Śukla 1940 (v.s. 1997): 652–53.

102. Rai 1991: 73–75.

103. Whereas among English writers pen names have been used primarily by a handful of women novelists, among Hindi writers only poets have written under pen names. These have usually been a part of their given names, rather than an emotively expressive and freely chosen *taḵẖalluṣ,* as in the case of Urdu poets. Premchand felt obliged to assume successive pen names to get around the rule that government servants could not publish anything without prior official approval. The name "Ajñeya" (the unknowable) was suggested for Vātsyāyan by Jainendra Kumār when the latter clandestinely submitted a short story for publication in Premchand's journal *Hans* on behalf of Vātsyāyan, then in jail.

fering contrasting representations of the state of the country in his charged nationalist times. Of the three-hundred-odd short stories he wrote, the large majority are about villagers oppressed by landlords and priests alike; about overly Westernized city men and women and rich collaborators with the Raj, nearly all of whom in the course of the story have a change of heart; and (in his last phase) about the poor, some of whom, unsettlingly, seem to have stopped caring that they are poor.

Premchand started writing *Raṅgabhūmi,* the finest Gandhian novel in Hindi, shortly after he had heard Gandhi speak at a public meeting at the height of the Noncooperation movement in 1921 and subsequently resigned from his government job. The hero of the novel is a simple, devout blind beggar called Sūrdās—blind beggars as a type being called after the blind *bhakti* poet of the sixteenth century of that name. In his general conduct and view of the world, Sūrdās's character evokes a deep cultural symbol of the kind that Gandhi was particularly adept at enlisting in the cause of nationalist politics. Gandhi is not directly mentioned in the novel, but Sūrdās clearly stands for him as he resists with passive nonviolence the plot to dispossess him of his inherited patch of land, which he shares with his community. An Indian Christian industrialist, a big Hindu landlord, and the British Collector all collaborate, and Sūrdās is ultimately shot down by the Collector. The novel has a wide range of simple and good-hearted characters; it has several rambling episodes and seems altogether loose-limbed and overlong; and it includes in a minor key a distinctly shy and unfulfilled love story concerning two highly idealistic, emotional, and self-sacrificing young persons. With its share of facilitating coincidences and improbabilities—and in other respects, too—it may seem to strain fictional credibility. But it also has an unmistakably powerful and moving impact. It is a strong example of the artistic indirection by which political nationalism is rendered more effectively as cultural nationalism. Premchand's own favorite among all his novels, it remains untranslated into English.[104]

Godān has been translated twice, once each by Indian and American translators—as has *Nirmalā* (1927), a conveniently slim novel and the only one by Premchand with a woman protagonist. (Notwithstanding Premchand's stature, all of his other novels remain untranslated.) *Godān* tells how Horī, who cultivates a smallholding of his own and dreams of owning a cow (which would not only provide milk but, no less important, allow him the opportunity to perform the meritorious deed of fondly serving it), is ground into dust by mounting extortionist debts and social inequity. Even as he lies dying, he ritually donates to a priest the cow he himself could never own, except for a tantalizingly brief interlude, while he lived. The British rulers

104. Premchand [1925] 1988. For short extracts in English translation from this novel, see Allen and Trivedi 2000.

are not so much as mentioned (far from their shooting or raping anyone, as in Premchand's earlier novels); the village landlord is a distant, absentee figure who has enough problems of his own; and while the role and relevance of the many characters who constitute the urban subplot (set in Lucknow) remain a major crux of Hindi literary criticism, they are certainly not in any way demonized. The novel has been read as a text of economic nationalism and even as a Marxist critique of bourgeois nationalism, but also alternatively as Premchand's recognition of the deep allegiance that a character like Horī owes, without any thought of protest, to traditional religious and social values—an uninterrogated internalization that proves to be a greater burden for him than any external instrument of exploitation.

Premchand remains an—if not the—iconic figure of modern Hindi literature. His strengths as a writer as well as the fissures of his sensibility all seem to lie on the surface for any reader to take in, but his long evolution as a writer contains some bends that are a little harder for us to negotiate. He had grown up reading notoriously but deliciously escapist Urdu narratives of the kind then widely believed to be the surest means of corrupting tender minds, but he soon devised for himself the fictional tenor of a kind of realism not found in any discussion of realism in the West, which he called *ādārśonmukh yathārthvād.* His own English translation of this term is "idealistic realism," but more precisely, perhaps, it is "ideal-oriented realism," realism tending towards or serving to project an ideal state of affairs. He believed, as he famously declared in his presidential address to the first All-India Progressive Writers' Conference in 1936, in literature with a dynamism and a purpose, without however acknowledging that in his own case what made such purposeful fiction palatable was his generous sense of human comedy. In *Godān,* as the spring season of harvesting arrives and the mango and *mahuā* trees spread the fragrance of their blossoms while the *koel* sings, Horī, in the midst of all his troubles, also bursts into song and then proceeds to exchange affectionate pleasantries that verge on the flirtatious with a woman moneylender to whom he is deep in debt.[105] Even Premchand's bleak final works, such as the short story "Kafan" (The shroud, 1936), are lit up with an unlikely but instinctively carnivalesque affirmation of life that defies any ulterior ideal or ideology and goes beyond the oppressive economics of exploitation, politics of inequality, or realism of stark reality.

It has proved hard to slot Premchand neatly into any artistic or political category on the whole because of his thematic variety and complex ideological evolution. He has been viewed as belonging to the revivalist Hindu-patriotic

105. Premchand [1968] 1987: 298–99. Roadarmel's translation extinguishes the erotic by having Horī say: "You really look young today, sister," though the Hindi *bhābhī,* elder brother's wife, with whom one could by tradition have a flirtatious relationship, is also used later in the exchange.

mode in his early works (such as the proscribed Urdu work, *Soz-e-Vaṭan*); to the mainstream Gandhian-nationalist mode in his middle-to-late work; and to the incipient progressive school in some of his last texts, which include the hard-hitting essay of 1936, "Mahājanī Sabhyatā" (Capitalist culture). In each of these roles, however, he refracts the changing shades of Indian nationalism, as did the contemporary Chāyāvād poets such as Nirālā and Pant. Though he earned his B.A. degree late in life, he had always read English and other Western literature with discrimination and enthusiasm, and he kept up the vital Hindi writerly tradition of also translating a variety of congenial authors, including the early Urdu novelist "Sarshar," Maeterlinck, Tolstoy, George Eliot (whose *Silas Marner* he adapted into a distinctly Indian version of the sentimental pastoral), Anatole France, and John Galsworthy.[106] At the same time, with his increasingly firm commitment to purposive social realism, he also expressed a distinct lack of personal sympathy for Bangla literature, explaining tactfully that though it gets "closer to the heart," this is because "a feminine quality is predominant in it. I myself haven't enough of it." He thought that the tenderness of nostalgic emotion was only one part of creativity, that another equally important component was the sterner resolve to look forward. "Rabindra[nath Tagore] and Sarat[chandra Chatterji] are both great writers. But is theirs the only way for Hindi?"[107] Even apart from his own inclination and example, Hindi writers and readers in general were turning away or cooling off so far as Bangla literature was concerned. Bangla had imbibed the colonial cultural influence sooner and rather more enthusiastically than probably any other Indian language, especially in the matter of a new form such as the novel, and had therefore been the object of admiration and envy all over India—and certainly in Hindi since the times of Bhāratendu Hariścandra—but its first-innings lead now seemed to be played out.[108]

After Premchand: Versions of the Postcolonial

The Hindi novel after Premchand acquired a greater interest in individual subjectivity as revealed in a socially conflictual context, especially in the works of Jainendra Kumār (1905–1988) and Ajñeya. A card-carrying Communist writer such as Yaśpāl (1903–1976) explored in his fiction possibilities of a workers' revolution as well as complexities of social and sexual morality; he also wrote the monumental Hindi novel on Partition, *Jhūthā Sac* (The false truth). Bhagvatī Caraṇ Varma (1903–1981), a mainstream realist novelist, produced

106. For a list of the works translated by Premchand into Hindi, see Rai 1991: 492. For a discussion of *Ahaṅkār,* Premchand's adaptation of Anatole France's *Thais,* in the context of the colonial contestation between England and France, see Trivedi 1997: 407–15.

107. Rai 1991: 252–53.

108. On colonialism and literature in Bengal, see Kaviraj, chapter 8, in this volume.

engaging if schematically simple family sagas depicting the nationalist move-
ment as perceived and articulated through political differences between fa-
thers and sons and among brothers. The first major Hindi novelist to emerge
after Independence, Phaṇīśvarnāth "Reṇu" (1921–1977), took Hindi fiction,
with its growing urban middle-class preoccupations, back to village life, which
he depicted with a cultural interiority that seemed to surpass even Prem-
chand's, while he viewed popular nationalist aspirations and frustrations from
his effectively postnationalist vantage point. These five novelists, with all their
individual inclinations and peculiarities, had this in common: even when they
explored psychologically or sociologically the growth and development of in-
dividual characters or a community at large, their narratives were still dipped
in the dye of contemporary nationalist issues. In terms of representative vari-
ety as well as originality and stature, Ajñeya and Reṇu stand out among all
the Hindi novelists after Premchand. Unlike the Chāyāvād trinity, these three
preeminent novelists did not belong to the same movement or even to the
same generation, and it is in fact in the mutually illuminating contrast that
they offer that the richness of Hindi fiction is truly reflected.

Ajñeya was primarily a poet, though he also wrote three novels, widely
spaced over time and varied in theme. The first of these, *Śekhar: Ek Jīvanī* (Śek-
har: A life, 2 vols., 1941, 1944), was probably as Western a novel as was ever
published in Hindi, both in its form, which is that of the "self"-centered *bil-
dungsroman,* and in its theme, which is the formation of identity as explored
in an explicitly social-political frame. It is also existentialist *avant la lettre,* for
it appeared even before existentialist fiction began to be written and ac-
claimed in Europe. Significantly, the novel is called not a novel but "a life"
(that is, a biography, in a double meaning of the word also available in Hindi),
and is narrated in a flashback under the shadow—and fear—of imminent
death, the very first one-word sentence being *phā̃sī!* (Gallows!). The hero is
a rebel many times over: at home as a child irrepressible in his questioning
of everything, against society as a student fired by the spirit of reform, against
British rule as an armed revolutionary (which is why he is in jail and faces
the prospect of execution by hanging), and also in an overarching existen-
tialist sense. Throughout, his quest to realize his individuality is described
with an unprecedented lyrical intensity, which is supplemented by a constant
stream of quotations from Sanskrit, Bangla, and Hindi, but most of all En-
glish, poetry. In the first edition the English verses were printed in the ro-
man script without Hindi translations, which were later appended in foot-
notes on public demand; indeed, an early outline of the novel, drafted in
jail, was apparently largely written in English.[109]

---

109. See Hooker 1998 for a focused study of selected aspects of Ajñeya's fiction.

Unlike Ajñeya's two later novels, which he himself translated into English in an efficient but not particularly inspiring demonstration of his bilingualism, *Śekhar* remains untranslated. Ajñeya did translate, however, two classic Hindi novels by his elder contemporaries in both of which he made breathtaking changes reflecting both the wide gap between his own aesthetic sensibility and theirs and his utter confidence in his own. In *Tyāgpatra* (1937; translated as *The Resignation*) by Jainendra Kumār, a slim enough novel (at eighty-eight pages) to start with, Ajñeya dropped a whole chapter; and in his translation of Premchand's *Godān,* he chose, even more drastically, to translate only the rural main plot, leaving out the whole of the urban subplot, which, even if some critics see it as problematically irrelevant to the main plot, constitutes over 40 percent of the novel. Ajñeya's version of *Godān* fortunately was not published until one of his American students translated the rest of the novel and joined the two parts together.[110]

Of all the twentieth-century Hindi writers, Ajñeya was probably the most privileged by birth and the most widely traveled by upbringing. He was educated in places as far flung as possible within India—Srinagar, Lahore, and finally Madras, where for a year he read for but did not finish his M.A. in English. In a striking reversal of his attitude toward colonial rule (for Śekhar's imprisonment for being an armed revolutionary is closely modeled on the author's own life), he chose during World War II to serve as an officer in the British Indian army, apparently because it was for a larger cause. In 1951 he published a book of poems written in English, and from 1961 to 1964 and again in 1969 he taught Indian literature and culture at the University of California, Berkeley. However, his very cosmopolitanism has served to prevent him from being accepted by ideologically committed Hindi critics, who have been equally scathing, on the other hand, about his exploration of the roots of traditional Indian culture (for example, his valorization of the traditional Indian conceptualization of time above the Western). This has been seen as a return swing of the pendulum, as not only a compensatory but also a reactionary activity. Writers like Ajñeya and Nirmal Verma (1929–)—the latter by consensus the outstanding contemporary Hindi novelist—who may have attempted to evolve a sensibility that is no less Indian for being sensitively receptive to the West, still risk a double condemnation for allegedly leaning now too far to the West, and now too much back to the East, from some quarters in Hindi that maintain an exaggerated critical anxiety concerning both Western influence and any suggestion of nativism. Ajñeya's vari-

---

110. See Premchand [1968] 1987: xii, for a muted acknowledgment by the translator, Roadarmel: "A manuscript by S. H. Vātsyāyan was very helpful to me in translating the village section of this novel"; more explicit information came from Ajñeya, in personal conversation.

ation on the key existentialist endeavor, "May I become just what I am," acquires a wry intercultural circularity here.[111]

Like Ajñeya's, Reṇu's first novel, *Mailā Ā̃cal* (1954; translated into English as *The Soiled Border*), is considered his best work. He took the title from Sumitranandan Pant's poem, mentioned earlier, describing Mother India as a poor villager, the fields with their dusky, grain-laden crops representing the hem of her dusty and dirty sari. The Hindi word *ā̃cal* means primarily the front edge or border of a sari, which passes over the breasts (with erotic and also maternal associations). By extension, it also means a border region, and Reṇu's novel not only marked a return to village India but also inaugurated a new subgenre in Hindi, which in the preface Reṇu himself called *ā̃calik upanyās,* or the regional novel. This kind of fiction depicts a remote geographical and cultural region with a rare intimacy and with selective, authenticating use of the local variant or dialect of Hindi, often with footnotes supplied to gloss the rare local terms, as in Reṇu's own novel. By contrast, in *Śekhar,* the footnotes explain the passages that are in English, but then Ajñeya's novel and Reṇu's novel represent in almost every other respect, too, the two poles of the wide social range of the novel in Hindi.

Reṇu was born in a village in the district of Purnea in Bihar, which he used as the setting for *Mailā Ā̃cal.* He was a political activist who participated in the Quit India movement of 1942 and in the armed revolution that overthrew the tyrannical Rana dynasty in neighboring Nepal in 1950. He turned to literature following a long illness in 1952–1953, but toward the end of his life returned to active politics, renouncing official honors conferred on him and going to jail during the massive popular movement of the mid-1970s that was partly the provocation for Indira Gandhi's imposing a state of emergency. It therefore comes as a disappointment to some politically committed readers to find that *Mailā Ā̃cal* is not a revolutionary novel; indeed, it is not even much of a political novel, but rather is what may be called a cultural novel, evoking in unparalleled richness of acute and cherished detail the life of a village in all its many dimensions.[112] The village comprises clearly demarcated though highly interactive quarters for each major caste, including the tribal Santhals; it has its full share of exploitative wealthier villagers; and it has local political leaders, too, with differing ideological convictions of which they themselves have only a hazy grasp. The time span is 1942 to

111. Quoted by Śāh 1990: 21. See also Miśra 1978: 3–45 for as extensive and reliable an account of Ajñeya's life and career as is so far available.

112. Reṇu [1954] 1990. For an unremitting recent critique of the representation of the idea of revolution in the work of three Hindi novelists (Ajñeya, Yaśpāl, and Reṇu), which also betrays incidentally the double bind of Marxist criticism on an ideological issue such as this, see P. Singh 2000.

1948—from the Quit India movement to the assassination of Gandhi, which is symbolically replicated at the end of the novel in the death of the one true Gandhian, the dwarf Bavandās, who is brutally crushed underfoot while trying to stop a convoy of bullock carts carrying smuggled goods across the India–East Pakistan border. Reṇu describes how, as soon as Independence is attained, the Gandhian Congress in and around the village is corrupted and travestied anyhow by all the enemies of freedom, and old collaborators of the Raj turn around and claim to be truer followers of Congress than the old dedicated workers.

Mailā Ā̃cal was the first "postcolonial" novel in Hindi, not perhaps in any of the recognizable senses of the rarefied theoretical debate that has been swirling around that buzzword of the Western academy in the last decade or two, but in the simpler, more forthright, and substantive sense that it describes what happened immediately following Independence;[113] for it caught the first stirrings of the *mohbaṅg,* or disenchantment, with all the high expectations that the common people hoped would be fulfilled upon the nation becoming free. Reṇu, always too much of an artist not to want to tell the whole truth, presented in his next novel, *Paratī Parikathā* (Episode of the barren land, 1957) a more encouraging postcolonial development in the same geographical region (the implementation of a big irrigation project initiated by the new government) without any loss of cultural authenticity, but it was eventually the tone of disenchantment that predominated in his own later fiction, and in Hindi fiction and poetry generally.[114]

Two later novels that in very different ways represent some other dimensions of self-critical postcolonialism of the indigenous variety are *Rāg Darbārī* (1968; translated into English under the same title, which could be translated as "the sycophant's song") by Śrīlāl Śukla (1925–), and *Kali-Kathā: Via Bypass* (1998) by Alkā Sarāogī (1960–). In his relentlessly comic-satirical novel, Śukla revisits a village much like those depicted by Premchand a few decades after Independence to show how the new gains in education, democracy, and general economic development have been turned into subtler and even more effective tools of dominance by a newly emerged but firmly entrenched rural elite. "Kali-Kathā" denotes a story of the Kali Yuga, the last, "leaden" era; but it is also a pun on "Calcutta," or in Bangla "Kolikatā," where the novel is set. Saraogi narrates over a 150-year time span the internal diaspora of her community, the Marwaris—a trading caste perhaps rather more notorious than celebrated for their industriousness and prosperity—from Rajasthan and Haryana to the new British capital, Calcutta; the high ideal-

113. For a wide range of Indian viewpoints on aspects of the current postcolonial discourse, see Trivedi and Mukherjee 1996.

114. Accounts of various aspects of Reṇu's life and work are available in the special Reṇu memorial issue of *Sārikā,* 1979.

ism of three young friends in three contrasted shades of ideology at the height of the nationalist movement; and finally, the crass and cynical materialism of the post-Independence generation—all presented in a remarkably sophisticated and knowing narrative that even includes a couple of parodic nods in the direction of that other, more globally diasporic postcolonial writer, Salman Rushdie.[115]

HINDI NOW

Hindi language and literature have traveled a longer historical and cultural distance in the hundred years since the recognition of Nagari in 1900 than they had in the previous six centuries—or than most other Indian languages have over the same period. While the wide acceptance and reach of Nagari helped Hindi realize and assert its vast potential, the more or less simultaneous movement from Brajbhasha to Khari Boli served to cut it off substantially from its accumulated literary idiom and tradition and its grassroots vitality. A whole century has now passed at the end of which, while modern standard Hindi dominates in the public sphere, there is probably no village or even small town in the entire vast Hindi terrain where people still do not speak, while conversing with family or friends, with a perceptible measure of the local dialect, thus practicing a doublespeak in which the language on their tongues is markedly different from that at the tip of their ballpoint pens, to say nothing of what they tap out on the keyboard. This exceptional gap between language and literature and the uncertainty, for some decades beginning around 1880, of negotiating it may have retarded the growth of Hindi drama and to a lesser extent of the Hindi novel, as compared with these genres in some other major Indian languages, since both forms depend considerably more than poetry or discursive prose on verisimilitude of speech. On the other hand, this in-betweenness of double enunciation, if not register, may have turned out to be a creative resource, as can occasionally be glimpsed in the profusion of speech varieties authentically deployed in the Hindi rural or regional novel.

However, any possibility of a modern Manipravalam emerging out of a literary commingling of Brajbhasha and Khari Boli was ruled out by the increasing, self-imposed pressure on Hindi to standardize itself for internal export as the national language.[116] Another political compulsion affecting the natural growth of Hindi, at least until Independence and Par-

---

115. See Śukla [1968] 1988, and Sarāogī 1998.

116. For the idea of *maṇipravāl,* see Freeman, chapter 7, this volume. Incidentally, Premchand, coming from Urdu, adhered to his artistic decision to have even the lowest of his village characters speak throughout in standard Hindi, unlike Reṇu, in whose work even the narrator's voice osmotically takes on a regional flavor.

tition, was for it to remain closer to Urdu than to its own premodern forms, such as Brajbhasha, so as to champion the lost cause of a united nation. The increased "Sanskritization" of Hindi after Independence was not, as is often alleged, imposed from above by the various apparatuses of the state (which mainly introduced the technical neologisms) but rather an organic tendency of the language that helped it expand its expressivity in all directions and, once the incubus of Urdu was lifted, brought it closer to the other Indian languages, most of which already had a vocabulary no less Sanskritic. Hindi after Independence also began to function as the treasury of Indian-language literatures by translating most prolifically from them, thus affording many of these sister literatures a far larger potential readership and higher visibility while of course enriching itself in the process.[117] In drama, the sparsest genre of Hindi literature, for example, it is generally conceded that *hindī ke nāṭak* (Hindi plays) may not have as much to show for themselves as *hindī mẽ nāṭak* (plays [available] in Hindi). At the same time, there has been a growing recognition all over the country that literature written originally in Hindi in the twentieth century (as distinct from the nineteenth) was no less developed and rich than literature in any other Indian language. The advantages, such as they were, of earlier exposure to the colonial literary stimulus—earlier than in the case of Hindi—which accrued to some other Indian languages, have long since worn off, as have the effects of the earlier spread of literacy and modern Western education. As is sometimes pointed out, the prestigious Jñānpīṭh award, given each year to an outstanding writer in any of the eighteen or more Indian languages, has gone more often to Hindi writers than to writers in any other Indian language.

Now, in our predominantly audiovisual age, when we seem to have reverted from half a millennium of Hindi literature in written form to increasing use of the spoken word as the chief means of communication and entertainment, Hindi finds itself, not only through films but even more through the innumerable television channels, with a wider, even pan-Indian, reach than ever before. Hindi may not be, and may no longer aspire to become, the national language; and it seems to have passed on even some of its share of linguis-

117. While a large proportion of the works translated from other Indian languages into Hindi (including those by Mahasweta Devi and U. R. Anantha Murthy) have been brought out by private publishers, the extensive translation publishing programs sponsored by the Sahitya Akademi and the National Book Trust have also served substantially to enrich Hindi. Though these government-funded bodies are required to maintain a broad parity of opportunity among all the eighteen Indian languages recognized in the Constitution, their lists reveal a strong trend for more translations into Hindi than into any other Indian language. Indeed, in 1999, nine out of the eighteen winners of the annual translation prizes awarded by the Sahitya Akademi for each language turned out to have translated not from the original text in some other Indian language but from an existing Hindi translation of that text.

tic chauvinism and expansionism to other, smaller subnational languages, notably Tamil and even Indian English. But it is a language, perhaps like none other in the long history of India, that a very large part of the nation at least passively understands and assimilates. It is certainly a less powerful language to know and especially to speak than English, but even upper-class and elitist English in India is now unabashedly contaminated by Hindi, notably in the punch line of many television and print commercials, thus suggesting the emergence of a middle-class middle ground at least in the marketplace. The colonial prejudice against Hindi, due to which it was regarded much like the untouchable *punka-wallah* squatting in the hot and dusty verandah of the colonial bungalow in which the *memsahib* English resided (to adapt an abiding image from *A Passage to India*), has now given way, in a paradoxical postcolonial development, to both Hindi and English inhabiting (while also contesting with apparent civility) the domestic space of the Indian nation, with Hindi perhaps as the fading *jeṭhānī* and the younger English as the more indulged *devrānī*.[118]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmad, Aijaz. 1992. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures.* London: Verso.

Ajñeya: see Vātsyāyan, Saccidānand Hirānand.

Allen, Richard, and Harish Trivedi, eds. 2000. *Literature and Nation: Britain and India, 1800–1990.* London: Routledge.

Anderson, Benedict R. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Bachchan, Harivansh Rai. 1998. *In the Afternoon of Time: An Autobiography.* Edited and translated by Rupert Snell. New Delhi: Viking.

Bakhtin, M. M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.* Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bassnett, Susan, and André Lefevere, eds. 1990. *Translation, History and Culture.* London: Pinter Publishers.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture.* London: Routledge.

Bhaṭṭ, Viśvambharnāth. 1957. *Ratnākar: Unkī Pratibhā aur Kalā.* New Delhi: Pustak Sadan.

Brass, Paul R. 1974. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chand, Tara. 1932. "Hindustānī Academy kā vārṣik kārya-vivaraṇ." *Hindustānī* [Hindi edition] 2.2: 246.

118. Of Raghuvīr Sahāy's many poems on the role and status of Hindi in India after Independence, especially in relation to English, perhaps the most succinct is a two-line poem titled "English": "The English taught us English to turn us into subjects / Now we teach ourselves English to turn into masters." For the English translation of another poem by Sahāy titled "Hindi," see Weissbort and Rathi 1994: 7–8.

———. 1971. "Bhāṣā kā Savāl." In *Hindī Bhāṣā aur Nāgarī Lipi: Hindustānī Patrikā Nibandh Saṅgrah,* edited by Lakṣmīkānt Varmā. Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.

Caturvedī, Rāmsvarūp. [1986] 1994. *Hindī Sāhitya aur Samvedanā kā Vikās.* 4th ed. Allahabad: Lokbharati Prakashan.

Chandra, Sudhir. 1992. *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Chaturvedi, Mahendra, and B. N. Tiwari. [1974] 1979. *A Practical Hindi-English Dictionary.* 5th ed. New Delhi: National Publishing House.

Coprā, Sudarśan, ed. 1988. *Amīr Khusro.* Delhi: Hind Pocket Books.

Dalmia, Vasudha. 1997. *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bhāratendu Hariśchandra and Nineteenth-century Banaras.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Das, Sisir Kumar. 1980. "Western Literary Terms and Their Indian Adaptations." *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature* 18–19: 13–30.

———. 1991. *A History of Indian Literature.* Vol. 8, *1800–1910, Western Impact, Indian Response.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Dās, Śrīnivās. [1882] 1974. *Parīkṣāguru.* Edited by Rāmādarś Miśra. Delhi: Rishabh Charan Jain evam Santati.

Dās, Śyāmsundar. 1941. *Merī Ātmakahānī.* Allahabad: Indian Press.

Dasgupta, Subha Chakraborty. 1997. "Issues in Reception: A Case Study of the Early Bengali Novel." Special issue titled "Comparative Literature in India." *New Comparison* 23: 54–65.

Dutt, Gaurī. [1870] 1986. *Devrānī Jeṭhānī kī Kahānī.* New Delhi: Rishabh Charan Jain and Santati.

Dvivedī, Mahāvīr Prasād. 1961. "Ātmanivedan." In *Sarasvatī Hīrak Jayantī Aṅk 1900–1959,* edited by Śrīnārāyaṇ Caturvedī. Allahabad: Indian Press.

———. 1996. *Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī: Pratinidhi Saṅkalan.* Edited by Rāmbakśa. New Delhi. National Book Trust.

Fielding, Henry. [1742] 1979. *Joseph Andrews.* Edited by R. F. Brissenden. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Gandhi, M. K. 1965. *Our Language Problem.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Ghosh, Amitav. 1988. *The Shadow Lines.* Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher.

Gopāl, Madan. 1990. *Bālmukund Gupt.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Goyaṅkā, Kamal Kiśor, ed. 1990. *Premacand kī Hindī-Urdū Kahāniyā̃.* New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith.

Gulerī Candradhar Śarmā. [1903] 1995. "Hindī Bhāṣā ke Upanyās Lekhakō ke Nām," and "Kiśorī Lāl Gosvāmī ke Upanyās." In *Candradhar Śarmā "Gulerī": Pratinidhi Saṅkalan,* edited by Viśvanāth Tripāṭhī. New Delhi: National Book Trust.

Gupt, Bāl Mukund. 1988. *Śiva Śambhu ke Ciṭṭhe.* New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks.

Gupt, Maithilī Śaraṇ. 1961. [Untitled tribute to Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī]. In *Sarasvatī Hīrak Jayantī Aṅk 1900–1959,* edited by Śrīnārāyaṇ Caturvedī. Allahabad: Indian Press.

———. [1912] 1987 (v.s. 2044). *Bhārat Bhāratī.* 36th repr. Chirgaon: Sahitya-sadan.

Gupta, S. L. 1978. *Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya: A Socio-Political Study.* Allahabad: Chugh Publications.

Hariścandra, Bhāratendu. 1988. *Bhāratendu Samagra.* Edited by Hemant Śarmā. Varanasi: Hindi Pracharak Sansthan.

———. 2000. "A Dirge for Urdu." Introduction and translation by Harish Trivedi. Part of a series titled "Past Continuous." *The Hindu Literary Review* (August 6), 12.

Hooker, Roger Hardham. 1998. *The Quest of Ajneya: A Christian Theological Appraisal of the Search for Meaning in his Three Novels.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Iṇḍiyā Tuḍe. Sāhitya Vārṣikī. 1992–1993.

Jain, M. S. 1965. *The Aligarh Movement: Its Origin and Development.* Agra: Sri Ram Mehra & Co.

Jameson, Fredric. 1986. "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital." *Social Text* 5 (3): 69–88.

Jesudasan, C., and Hephzibah Jesudasan. 1961. *A History of Tamil Literature.* Calcutta: Y. M. C. A. Publishing House.

Ḳhān, Inshāʿallāh. [1801] 1950. *Rānī Ketakī kī Kahānī.* Edited by Śyāmsundar Dās. Varanasi: Nagari Pracharini Sabha.

Khan, Masud Husain. 1987. "An Erudite Study." Review of *A House Divided,* by Amrit Rai. *Indian Literature* 30 (3): 147–50.

Khare, Viṣṇu. 1994. *Sab kī Āvāz ke Parde Mẽ.* New Delhi: Radhakrishna Prakashan.

Khatrī, Ayodhyā Prasād. [1887] 1960. "Kharī Bolī kā Padya." In *Ayodhyā Prasād Khatrī Smārak Granth,* edited by Śivpūjan Sahāy and Nalin Vilocan Śarmā. Patna: Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad.

King, Christopher R. 1994. *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India.* Bombay: Oxford University Press.

King, Robert D. 1997. *Nehru and the Language Politics of India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Lefevere, André, ed. 1992. *Translation/History/Culture: A Sourcebook.* London: Routledge.

Lelyveld, David. 1978. *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McGregor, R. S. 1970. "The Rise of Standard Hindi and Early Hindi Prose Fiction." In *The Novel in India: Its Birth and Development,* edited by T. W. Clark. London: George Allen and Unwin.

———, ed. [1993] 1997. *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mehtā, Nareś. 1996. *Hindi Sāhitya Sammelan kā Itihās, Pratham Khaṇḍ, 1910–1976.* Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.

Miśra, Vidyānivās. 1978. *"Parichay" to Ajñeya.* 7th ed. Delhi: Rajpal and Sons.

———. 1997. "Dr. Vidyanivas Mishra." In *Bhāṣā aur Rāṣṭrīya Asmitā,* edited by Rāmkamal Rāi. Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.

Monier-Williams, Monier. [1889] 1997. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. 1985. *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mukherjee, Sujit. 1981. *Translation as Discovery and Other Essays on Indian Literature in English Translation.* New Delhi: Allied Publishers.

Muktibodh, Gajānan Mādhav. [1961] 1986. *Kāmāyanī: Ek Punarvicār.* In *Muktibodh Racanāvalī,* edited by Nemi Candra Jain, 2d ed., vol. 4. Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan.

Nāraṅg, Gopicand. 1990. *Amīr Khusro kā Hindavī Kāvya: Sprenger Saṅgrah kī Berlin Prati*

Sahit. Translated from the Urdu by Nūr Nabī Abbāsī. New Delhi: Seemant Prakashan.

Nazīr Bāṇārsī. 1962. *Gaṇgojaman.* Varanasi: Bharatiya Jnanpith.

Nirālā [Sūryakānt Tripāṭhī]. [1929] 1966. *"Bhūmikā"* to *Parimal.* 10th repr. Lucknow: Ganga Pustakmala.

Orsini, Francesca. 2002. *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Pant, Sumitrānandan. [1926] 1967. *Pallav.* 8th ed. Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan.

Phillaurī, Śraddhārām. [1877] 1973. *Bhāgyavatī.* New Delhi: Sharada Prakashan.

Prasād [Jayaśaṅkar Prasād]. [1936] 1979. *Kāmāyanī.* Varanasi: Prasad Prakashan.

Prasād, Maheśvar. 1989. *Devanāgarī: Ek Nayā Prayog.* New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith.

Premchand. 1962. *Vividh Prasaṅg.* Edited by Amṛt Rāi. 3 vols. Allahabad: Hans Prakashan.

———. [1968] 1987. *The Gift of a Cow.* Translation of *Godān* (1936) by Gordon C. Roadarmel. London: Lokamaya Press.

———. [1925] 1988. *Raṅgabhūmi.* 2 vols. Delhi: Hind Pocket Books.

Raghuvāś. 1991. *Śrīdhar Pāṭhak.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Rai, Amrit. 1984. *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1991. *Premchand: His Life and Times.* Translation of *Premcand: Qalam kā Sipāhī* (1962) by Harish Trivedi. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Rāmgopāl. 1965 (ś.s. 1886). *Svatantratā-Pūrva Hindī ke Saṅgharś kā Itihās.* Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.

Rao, S. Balu. 1997. "English Romantic Poetry and Kannada Poetry." Special issue titled "Comparative Literature in India." *New Comparison:* 23: 66–80.

Razā, Rāhi Māsoom. [1961] 1984. *Ādhā Gā̃v.* New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks.

Reṇu, Phaṇīśvarnāth. [1954] 1990. *Mailā Ā̃cal.* New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks.

Robinson, Francis. 1974. *Separatism among Indian Muslims.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rubin, David, trans. 1998. *The Return of Sarasvatī: Four Hindi Poets.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Russell, Ralph. 1999. *How Not to Write the History of Urdu Literature and Other Essays on Urdu and Islam.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sadiq, Muhammad. [1964] 1984. *A History of Urdu Literature.* 2d ed. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Śāh, Rameścandra. 1990. *Ajñeya.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Saksenā, Manju. 1989. *Ādhunik Hindī ke Janmadātā.* Udaipur: Himanshu Publications.

Sarāogī, Alkā. 1998. *Kali-Kathā: Via Bypass.* Panchkula: Aadhar Prakashan.

Sārikā. Reṇu Smṛti Aṅk. 1979. (April 1–15) 19 (240).

Śarmā, Rām Vilās. [1969] 1994. *Nirālā kī Sāhitya Sādhanā.* Vol. 1, *Jīvancarit.* New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan.

Śarmā, Śrī Rām. 1972. *Dakkhinī Hindī kā Sāhitya.* Hyderabad: Dakshina Prakashan.

Śarmā, Vinay Mohan, ed. 1972 (v.s. 2029). *Hindī Sāhitya kā Bṛhat Itihās.* 16 vols. Vol. 8, *Hindī Sāhitya kā Abhyutthān: Bhāratendu Kāl.* Varanasi: Nagari Pracharini Sabha.

Schmidt, Ruth Laila. 1981. *Dakhini Urdu: History and Structure.* New Delhi: Bahri Publications.

Scholes, Robert, and Robert Kellogg. 1966. *The Nature of Narrative.* London: Oxford University Press.

Schomer, Karine. 1983. *Mahadevi Varma and the Chāyāvād Age of Modern Hindi Poetry.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Singh, Baccan. 1979. *Ādhunik Hindī Sāhitya kā Itihās.* Allahabad: Lok Bharati Prakashan.

Singh, Jagmohan. [1888] 1953 (v.s. 2010). *Śyāmāsvapna.* Edited by Śrīkṛṣṇa Lāl. Kashi: Nagari Pracharini Sabha.

Singh, Nāmvar. [1955] 1968. *Chāyāvād.* Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan.

Singh, Omprakāś. 1989. *Chāyāvādī Kavitā kī Ālocanā: Svarūp aur Mūlyānkan.* Kanpur: Aradhana Brothers.

Singh, Prem. 2000. *Krānti kā Vicār aur Hindī Upanyās: Ajñeya, Yaśpāl aur Reṇu kā Viśiṣṭa Sandarbha.* Shimla: Bharatiya Uchcha Adhyayan Sansthan.

Singh, Vijay Mohan. 2000. "Bīsvī̃ Sadī kā Hindī Sāhitya: Bahatī Nadī par Paṛtī Dhūp aur Chāõ." In *Iṇḍiya Tuḍe,* 4–10.

Śukla, Rāmcandra. 1940 (v.s. 1997). *Hindī Sāhitya kā Itihās.* Allahabad: Indian Press.

Śukla, Śrīlāl. [1968] 1988. *Rāg Darbārī.* New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan.

Tharu, Susie, and K. Lalita. 1993. *Women Writing in India.* Vol. 1, *600 B.C. to the Early Twentieth Century.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Trivedi, Harish. 1984. "The Urdu Premchand, the Hindi Premchand." *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature* 22: 104–11.

———. 1993. "Muslim Contribution to Indian Literature: Hindi Literature." In *Muslims in India,* edited by Ratna Sahai. New Delhi: Folio.

———. [1993] 1995. *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

———. 1997. "India, England, France: A (Post-)colonial Translational Triangle." *Meta: Journal des traducteurs* 42 (2): 407–15.

Trivedi, Harish, and Meenakshi Mukherjee, eds. 1996. *Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context.* Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.

Varmā, Dhīrendra, chief ed. 1986. *Hindī Sāhitya Koṣ.* Vol. 2. Varanasi: Gyanmandal.

Varmā, Lakṣmīkānt, ed. 1971. *Hindī Bhāṣā aur Nāgarī Lipi.* Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.

Vātsyāyan, Saccidānand Hirānand [Ajñeya]. 1976. *Ādhunik Hindī Sāhitya.* Delhi: Rajpal and Sons.

Venkatachalapathy, A. R. 1995. "Dravidian Movement and Saivites: 1927–1944." *Economic and Political Weekly* 30 (14), April 8, 761–68.

Viswanatha, Vanamala, and Sherry Simon. 1999. "Shifting Grounds of Exchange: B. M. Srikantiah and Kannada Translation." In *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice,* edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi. London: Routledge.

Watt, Ian. 1957. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Weissbort, Daniel, and Girdhar Rathi, eds. 1994. *Survival: An Experience and Experiment in Translating Modern Hindi Poetry.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Yādav, Rājendra. 1981. *Aṭhārah Upanyās.* Delhi: Akshar Prakashan.

INDEX

Titles can be located under author/compiler, when author/compiler is indicated in text.

Verelst, Harry, 209
Verma, Mahādevī, 991–92, 996–97, 997n. 77
vernacular: British encouragement of, 185; vs. cosmopolitan, 17–18, 26, 32; emergence of, 187; and global English, 26; interaction between master language and, 25–26; and literary inscription, 21; music and, 632–33; and orality, 22; places, production of, 28–29; and religion, 24
vernacularization: and class, 627; and identity, 31–32; and inscriptional writing, 326; of *kāvya,* 64; of Kannada, 326–27; and Sanskrit decline, 101–2; in Sri Lanka, 28
versification, 231
veśa (plays), 592–93, 592n. 40
Vesatura-dā-sanne, 667n. 43
Vessantarajātaka, 17; compared to *Rāmāyaṇa,* 659–63; descriptive technique in, 655; distribution of, 666–68, 667–68n. 45, 668–69n. 46; story-matrix shared by *Rāmāyaṇa,* 649
Vetālapañcaviṃśati, 554
Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai, C., 287; *History of Tamil Language and Literature,* 291; *Piratāpamutaliyār Carittiram,* 287n. 34
Vibhaṅga, 664
Victor Emmanuel (king of Italy), 230
Vidāgama Maitreya: *Kavlakuṇumiṇimaldama,* 699, 740; *Lovādasangarāva,* 706–7
Vidyācakravarti, 667n. 43
vidyādāna, 284n. 27
Vidyākara, 69; *Subhāṣitaratnakośa,* 114–17
Vidyānātha, *Pratāparudrayaśobhūṣaṇa,* 56n. 37
Vidyāpati (Maithili poet): and Bangla identity, 507, 513; 513n. 17; and literary temporality, 556; as *padāvalī* model, 522, 527; and Vaishnavism, 505–6, 523–24; work: *Kīrtilatā,* 917
Vidyāsāgar, Īśvaracandra, 540, 543–44, 555; *Sītār Vanabās,* 543
vihāra (Jain mendicant travels), 572–73, 585
Vijayabāhu I (king), 653, 680n. 80
Vijayanagara: conquest of Kerala, 473; Kannada literary culture in, 19, 368; language policies of, 371; multilingualism of, 94; and *Rāmāyaṇa,* 105–6; Sanskrit

literary culture in, 94–95, 101, 120–21; split in literary intelligentsia of, 368–71; Telugu literary cultures and, 377–78; Virashaivism and collapse of, 351, 370–71
village, as space of literary, 718–20
Vinaya, 651
Vīrabhadrā Reḍḍi, 385
Vīracōḻiyam, 293, 729
virahiṇī (longing woman symbol), 637
Vīraśaivadharmaśirōmaṇi, 378
Vīraśaivānandacandrike, 378
Virashaivism: centers of textual production, 336, 370, 377–80; divide in intelligentsia of, 368–71; and formation of political-cultural community, 367–68; origins of, 347–48; revolt against secular poetics, 352–54; in Telugu literary culture, 397–400; *vacana* used in, 19, 21, 347–54, 361
Viṣṇu, king as, 413–14
Viṣṇudās (Gujarati poet), 583
Visnudas (Hindi poet), 914, 917–19, 944; *Pāṇḍavcarit,* 917–18; *Rāmāyankathā,* 917–18
Viṣṇupurāṇa, 6on. 50, 590n. 36
Visuddhimaggasanne, 697
Viśvanātha, 67; *Sāhityadarpaṇa,* 68n. 64
Viṭṭhalnāth (poet-singer), 921–22
vittiyātāṉam, 284n. 27
vivakṣā (intention), 48–50, 48n. 17, 49n. 19
Vivekananda (swami), 242, 602–3
Voltaire, 223
Vṛndāvan, 526n. 28, 530
Vṛndavandas (biographer), 518
Vyāsa (Sanskrit poet), 388, 392, 401. *See also Mahābhārata* (Vyāsa)

Walsh, William, 246
Warangal, 385
Warder, A. K., 671
Warton, Thomas, 6n. 6
White, O., 667n. 45
Wickramasinghe, Martin: on ideal literary person, 718–20; on moral import of literary activity, 712; on recovering Sinhalaness, 717–18, 718n. 109; on Sinhala poetic drama, 705n. 59; on Sri Lankan cultural politics, 698n. 36; works: *Apē Gāma,* 718–19; *Kalunika Sevīma,* 717; *Landmarks of Sinhalese Literature,* 721
Wijayawardana, G. D., 733n. 157
Wijemanne, Piyaseeli, 732n. 152