

# Before Translation?

PETER GERARD FRIEDLANDER

*La Trobe University, Australia*

**Abstract:** *This chapter addresses the question of the existence of a tradition of translation into Hindi prior to the adoption of the term anuvād to mean translation (circa 1870). To this end it examines definitions of the concept 'language' and their relation to the Indic terms bhāṣā, saṃskṛta and prakṛta and explores how the term 'Hindi language' may be understood. The chapter then discusses the history of Hindi medical literature since the late sixteenth century, providing an example of early forms of translation. Finally, developments from the late eighteenth century onwards which led to the adoption of the term anuvād to mean translation in Hindi are analyzed. The chapter concludes that the question of the existence of a tradition of translation into Hindi before 1800 needs to be re-examined, especially in light of medical works, previously available only in Sanskrit or Persian, that were rendered comprehensible to new Hindi bhāṣā speaking publics from the sixteenth century onwards.*

## Introduction

The question I wish to explore in this chapter is whether there existed a translation tradition in Hindi prior to the adoption of the term *anuvād* to mean 'translation' around 1870. In an attempt to answer this question in the following pages I discuss pre-1870 Hindi texts that were based on writings in other languages.

Hindi is today one of India's national languages, spoken by over half of India's population of over one billion. Linguistically, Hindi is a member of the Indo-European family of languages: it shares a number of basic characteristics with modern European languages due to a common origin in a proto-language that was once spoken in central Asia, giving rise to Greek and Latin in the West and to Sanskrit in South Asia. Modern Hindi traces its roots to dialects spoken in India as early as the twelfth century CE. However, contemporary modern standard Hindi was still in the process of formation at the start of the twentieth century. At the time a process of language standardization associated with modernity in India gave rise to what was hoped by many would be the Indian National Language. But what was meant by this concept? Before going any further in addressing issues of translation history in India, it is important to consider the question of what the word 'language' itself signifies.

In Europe since the eighteenth century the word 'language' has been understood in two distinct ways. In his seminal English dictionary of 1755 Samuel Johnson gave two definitions of language. The first definition was 'Human speech', to which he added, quoting from William Holder's *Elements of Speech* (1669) "We may define language, if we consider it more materially, to be letters, forming and producing words and sentences; and if we consider it according the design thereof, then language is apt signs for communication of thought". However, Johnson's second definition of language was

“The tongue of one nation as distinct from others”. The first definition was linguistic, defining language as a particular system for communication, whilst the second definition was typological, defining language in relation to the cultural productions of a particular people or nation.

In India these European ideas, and their interaction with the Indic notion of *bhāṣā*, discussed below, have had an enormous impact on the understanding of the relationships between Indian languages. In particular, it has been the idea of language as a distinct characteristic of a nation which has played a critical role in modern India. Modern scholarship on the history of language in South Asia categorizes three periods in their development. Old Indo-Aryan languages (hereafter OIA) such as Sanskrit; Middle Indo-Aryan languages (MIA) such as Pali; and New Indo-Aryan (NIA) languages, including modern Indian languages such as Hindi and Punjabi.

During the NIA period, and particularly in the nineteenth century, the way in which individual modern Indian languages came to characterize themselves was based on a mixture of linguistic and typological considerations. This has led scholars of South Asian languages, such as Masica, to point out that the definition of what constituted a particular language in modern India contains considerable ambiguities (Masica 1991:447).

It is against this background of ambiguity about what constituted a language that the development of modern Indian languages such as Hindi took place. Indian scholars such as Ram Chandra Shukla (1882-1942), who wrote the most authoritative history of Hindi literature in the early twentieth century, saw Hindi not as a particular grammatical or lexical system but rather as an expression of a national culture. The process of deciding what constituted ‘Hindi’ was undertaken by scholars classifying a range of speech forms as dialects of Hindi. However, these speech forms, such as Braj Bhāṣā and Avadhī, were, and are, only marginally mutually intelligible, as each is marked by its own grammar, morphology and vocabulary. Nevertheless, they were defined as varieties of Hindi, and Hindi itself was said to have yet another grammar, morphology and vocabulary, which was to be based on an earlier form of speech called Kharī Bolī, formerly spoken in and around the area of Delhi. As a result, although modern Hindi does have a standard grammar, it also incorporates texts written in a range of language forms that do not conform to standard Hindi grammar. This is analogous, perhaps, to the ways in which the term English can be used to refer to language forms as diverse as Old English, Middle English, and Modern English. However, whereas in English these different grammatical and lexical patterns are no longer used or widely understood by the general public, in Hindi the ‘dialects’ still form part of the fabric of the modern language.

The above-mentioned state of affairs has an important impact on any discussion of translation in pre-modern South Asia. In particular, it opens up the question of what may be meant by ‘translation’ when the term ‘language’ does not relate to particular grammatical and lexical systems. I suggest that thinking about translation in relation to language and grammar is, in fact, not as helpful as typically assumed. What may well be more useful is considering the process that took place when individuals or communities, familiar with texts in particular forms of speech, wished to convey those texts anew to target audiences unable to access the original speech forms. This perspective calls for a careful examination of the Indic term *bhāṣā*, which literally means ‘speech’ but can also nowadays be translated as ‘language’.

In addition to carefully studying understandings of the terms language and *bhāṣā* it is also appropriate to review translation studies scholarship that specifically relates to India (Tymoczko 2007:68-71). Since the second half of the twentieth century there has been considerable discussion of the term ‘translation’ in modern Indian literature written in English. As part of this debate the term transcreation was coined by P. Lal (1972), a well-known author, poet and translator based in Calcutta, to refer to a version of a work which was faithful to the spirit of a text, but was not a literal word for word translation of that text. Concerning the antiquity of translation traditions in India, Gopinathan of Calicut University has been a proponent of the view that India possesses an ancient tradition of translation, but that translation has taken the form of the transcreation of works (Gopinathan 2000). There has also been a strong focus on the study of the translation of works from Indian languages into English, with fewer studies conducted on the development of translations between, and into, Indian languages. An instance of this is that a recent major study of translation in South Asia, Rīta Kothari’s *Translating India* (2003), is actually a study of the history of translation into English. In another study of translation into English in India, Salvador (2004:190) argued that India had a rich tradition of translation theory and practice between its languages.

More recently, Harish Trivedi (2006:103), a well known contemporary scholar on South Asian literature, argued that there was a ‘non-history’ of translation in South Asia in the pre-colonial period. Trivedi’s view was that there was no evidence of any non-Indian text being translated into Hindi, or any other Indian language before 1800 CE (*ibid.*:103). He also examined the question of whether versions of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa story in languages other than Sanskrit could be considered ‘translations’ or not, and concluded that discussion of whether a work such as Tulsīdās’s Hindi *Rāmcaritmānas* was a translation of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa would not contribute to establishing whether or not there existed a tradition of translation into Hindi (*ibid.*:108).

In this chapter I attempt to examine whether Trivedi’s proposal, that there was a ‘non-history’ of translation in South Asia before 1800, offers a productive viewpoint to scholars of translation. To this end I revisit the question of developments in Hindi ‘before translation’.

## ***Bhāṣā*, Speech or Language?**

To begin, we must take a careful look at the terms requiring consideration, and in particular the word *bhāṣā* and its relationship to the idea of speech or language. Madhav Deshpande (2004) approached this topic by examining the relationship between the term *bhāṣā* and the concept of language as sacred speech in India (2004).

In the fifth century BCE Pāṇini defined *bhāṣā* in his grammar as the form of speech used in learned grammatical discourse, in distinction from Vedic forms of speech, which were in poetic metre and were called *chandaḥ*, ‘verse’. In Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya*, composed between 150 BCE and the mid-second century CE, the term *bhāṣā* also refers to forms of speech. Possibly the earliest reference to forms of speech that includes the term ‘Sanskrit’ appears in Valmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa, composed in the final centuries BCE. In one verse, Hanuman wonders whether to address Sīta in Sanskrit speech, as a twice

born (Brahmin) should, or whether to address her in a human form of speech (Pollock 2006:45-80). Sanskrit was regarded in India as divine speech (*dev vani*). This belief was noted by the Chinese Buddhist Pilgrim Hsuan Tsang (602-664), who wrote that in middle India Sanskrit was spoken in a way reminiscent of the language of the gods (*devas*) (Staal 1972:5). It is notable that in these early usages of the term *bhāṣā* as ‘Sanskrit’ it implies speech that accords with certain norms and is distinguished from natural speech or Prakrit. Of the distinction between Sanskrit and Prakrit the Indian scholar D. C. Sircar (1970:1) wrote:

Prakrit or the Prākṛita-bhāṣā indicates the common or ordinary speech, or the language of the common people. The word prākṛita, literally, “non-artificial,” points the difference between this language and the literary or ceremonial language that was thought to be artificial. ... Sanskrit (=saṃskṛita, the refined speech) is the reformed, literary and elegant form of the same language at an early stage of its development.

Over time in India the term *bhāṣā* gradually came to signify any current form of speech other than Sanskrit. This can be seen in the writings of the Jain Scholar Hemacandra (d. 1172), who wrote of the possibility of composing an epic poem, a *mahākāvya*, in *grāmyabhāṣā* or ‘village speech’ (Pollock 2006:99).

The histories of Hindi language and literature which were first composed in India in the mid-nineteenth century typically traced Hindi’s origins back to the early twelfth century. Pre-1800 works which are now defined as Hindi ones were often described in the works or manuscripts themselves as being written in *bhāṣā*. In this case then the idea of Hindi overlaps with the earlier category of *bhāṣā*. However, as the term *bhāṣā* now refers to all vernaculars in the pre-colonial period, it can also refer to languages that differ greatly from Hindi, such as Malayalam (Freeman 2003:442).

The famous fifteenth-century poet saint Kabīr is nowadays regarded as having spoken his verses in Hindi. However, there are no known instances in pre-1700 works attributed to him in which he described himself as speaking in Hindi. There is, nonetheless, a well known traditional verse attributed to him in which he describes Sanskrit as well water, i.e. fixed, and his own speech as *bhāṣā*, like flowing water:

*sanskṛt hai kūp jal, bhāṣā bahatā nīr*  
Sanskrit is well water, bhāṣā is flowing water

The seventeenth century author Anantadas wrote a work which is now regarded as Hindi depicting the lives of several saints, including Kabīr. However, he also never referred to his works as being in Hindi; rather he described what he had done as having spoken the stories in Prakrit (*prakrit bhāṣyo*).

These usages indicate the existence of a long standing tradition in India prior to around 1800 of employing terms such as *sanskṛta*, *prakṛta* and *bhāṣā*, but this does not mean we can ‘read’ into them, retroactively, differences in conceptualizing language that are equivalent to those we find acceptable today. Rather, they appear to have been used quite consistently to mean registers of speech.

Furthermore, the term Hindi does not appear in texts composed, or copied in manuscripts, from prior to around 1800. In a survey of approximately eight hundred Hindi manuscripts dating from before and around 1850 in the Wellcome Institute of Medicine Library in London which I conducted during 1991-1996, there were virtually no references to 'Hindi'. Instead, most of the works noted that they were written in *bhāṣā*, if they indicated the form of speech used in them at all. Where the language was further specified the main terms used were Braj *bhāṣā* and *Avadhī*. Currently, all these language forms are regarded as belonging to what is termed Hindi. This is because Hindi authors traditionally used different forms of speech, originating in different areas, for different textual genres. A work of devotion to the god Krishna was written in Braj *bhāṣā*, the grammar of the speech of the Braj area around Mathura in North India. But a work of devotion to the god Ram was written in *Avadhī*, the form of speech typical of the Ayodhya region. The determining factor was the genre, rather than the period when a work was composed or its site of composition.

Indian audiences listening to sacred teachings typically expected, and still expect, to take part in a discourse of which a part is presented in the form found in older texts, often in Sanskrit or older forms of Hindi. This older section is combined with a commentary articulated in the audience's contemporary speech.

In a mirror of this, and although some Hindi manuscripts contain works written entirely in *bhāṣā*, many manuscripts take the form of interleaved lines or verses, with an original or *mūl* in Sanskrit, and a second version, often called a *bhāṣā* or a *ṭikā*, offering a Hindi commentary. Indeed the format of a text and a commentary is often found even when both texts are in forms of Hindi, as when an older *mūl* ('root') Hindi text such as the *Avadhī* text of the *Rāmcaritmānas* appears along with a more modern *bhāṣā* commentary. The tradition of commentaries on earlier works is typical of Indian literary culture prior to 1850 and endures even to the present.

Despite the existence of fairly standardized grammars for *Avadhī* and *Brāj Bhāṣā*, it is immediately apparent when reading Hindi works from before 1850 that these often do not consistently follow any single grammatical system. Rather, for metrical or thematic purposes authors constantly switch between grammar systems. Indeed, the speech of the Sant poets, such as Kabīr, which is often called *sādhukārī bhāṣā*, has as one of its characteristic features a lack of grammatical consistency. It is sometimes described as having been a kind of *lingua franca* into which the grammars of numerous forms of Hindi were absorbed, with hardly any verses maintaining conformity with any particular pattern of grammatical usage.

## The Concept of a Work

Another factor that requires consideration in relation to pre-1850 Indian texts is the notion of what, in fact, constituted a work and a textual tradition. There were undoubtedly some texts created that represented particular authors' works, such as Banārasī Dās's autobiography, the *Ardhakathanaka*, which is the first example of a Hindi autobiography and dates from 1641 (Lath 2005). However, in the public sphere in India most works

existed as continually shifting textual traditions rather than new textual forms duplicating earlier ones.

The great epic traditions, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, were ones in which new versions were constantly being created. This process was independent of the speech forms being used in daily life. New Sanskrit versions with novel additions and alterations to the narrative appeared often. The same occurred for versions in regional Indian speech forms that began taking shape from the eleventh century onwards. Although no doubt owing a debt to Vālmiki's version of the story, these were not, as Lutgendorf rightly noted, "simple translations of Valmiki's story, but rather reinterpretations of it" (Lutgendorf 1991:4).

In the case of Tulsīdās, studies of his retelling of the Rāmāyaṇa, the *Rāmcaritmānas*, show that it drew on elements from numerous prior works belonging to the Rāmāyaṇa tradition while also presenting new and original material distinctive of Tulsīdās's own interpretation of the story. Lutgendorf noted that "The *Rāmcaritmānas* is an original retelling, in a literary dialect of Hindi, of the ancient tale of Prince Ram of Ayodhya" (*ibid.*:3), and referred to the earlier scholar Whaling, who in 1980 summarized the state of knowledge about the sources of Tulsīdās's *Rāmcaritmānas* by writing that "the sources were Vāl[miki Rāmāyaṇa] (in the general sense), the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Śiva Purāṇa* the medieval dramas on Rama (especially the *Mahānāṭaka* and the *Prasanna Rāghava*), and the medieval *Bhuṣuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa*" (Whaling 1980:224).

Another genre which was fairly common in works now identified as Hindi from before 1850 was the retelling of stories found in Sanskrit sources. These included tales from Hindu texts called the Upanishads, a type of philosophical religious texts. There are some such works attributed to Charaṇḍās (1703-1782). However, these take the form of summaries of the contents of Upanishads rather than word for word retellings of what appeared in any particular text. A typical process of a story's transmission is evident in a reference by George Grierson (1910:368) to Charaṇḍās's *Nāsiketopākhyāna* (first print edition, Bombay 1882) as being based on the Nāsiketa story from *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, itself based on the *Kaṭha Upanishad*.

I have suggested that in order to consider the question of whether or not there existed a pre-1800 translation tradition in India it is pivotal to first confront the issues of defining 'language' and 'work'. I have discussed a range of terms used in India, including *Sanskrit*, *Prakrit* and *bhāṣā*, but the relationships between these terms and the English term 'language' is not a simple or clear cut one. Were there, then, genres within Hindi literature in which works were created in ways that were understood as forms of translation?

## Medical Literature

An important genre in Hindi literature was Hindi (Braj bhāṣā) retellings of Sanskrit medical treatises. There were a great many such medical works composed from the sixteenth century onwards. The majority of these were either retellings of individual Sanskrit works or digests of one or more Sanskrit works in a single Hindi work. However, it should be noted that Sanskrit medical works themselves were also often compendia

of earlier texts periodically revised and altered over time, so that authors composing in Hindi were simply continuing a tradition that was already established in Sanskrit. The titles of such works often took the form of the title of the earlier work followed by a term such as *bhāṣā* or *ṭīkā* ('commentary'), as discussed above, or *sār* or *rasa* ('essence'), as in the 'juice' extracted when a fruit is pulped. Yet other texts described themselves as *saṅgraha* ('anthologies') or *śāstra* ('treatises'). The common factor appears to have been that such texts consisted of retellings by individual authors of prior texts in new forms of speech.

The question of *why* manuscripts in a form of *bhāṣā* presently termed Hindi began to appear in the sixteenth century requires consideration. I would argue it was because this form of Hindi *bhāṣā* was becoming the *lingua franca* of the newly evolving urban and trade communities of Mughal India. It is also apparent that most early examples of this literature are composed in verse and comprise textual forms of existing oral literary traditions. This tendency indicates that early Hindi *bhāṣā* medical literature is a textual adaptation of oral traditions being written down for an emerging segment of society that patronized written Hindi works. This section of society included both Hindus and Jains. From the manuscripts preserved it is evident that among the most important communities patronizing the copying of Hindi literature was the Jain mercantile community. This community patronized a wide range of written textual traditions including Sanskrit, Jain Prakrits and various forms of NIA languages. I suggest that their patronage of Hindi medical texts indicates their interest in creating written forms of medical texts that they could use for reference. Older Sanskrit medical works were by comparison inaccessible to them as the majority of Jains did not understand Sanskrit well enough to use such works of everyday reference. Members of the community also continued to patronize the copying of Sanskrit and Prakrit religious texts, however such religious works did not need to be readily understandable due to their greater liturgical significance.

From the introductory verses to some of these medical compositions it is evident that in most cases they were written by medical practitioners, *vaidya*, who recast earlier medical texts in more contemporary language forms in order to make them more accessible.

Probably the earliest Hindi medical work was the *Vaidya-manotsava* by Nainasukha, a Jain author who composed a work he described as a *bhāṣā* in 1592 during the reign of the Emperor Akbar, in Sirhind (Patiala district, Punjab). The text included citations from a wide range of famous Sanskrit medical texts such as the *Caraka-saṃhitā*, *Suśruta* and *Sāraṅgadhara saṃhitā*. A notable feature of its introduction is that Nainasukha refers to having seen the works of earlier physicians and to the issue of 'making comprehensible the incomprehensible':

All the works of the Vaidyas are well spoken, they make manifest the means, medicines, illnesses and causes. My intellect is small and the intellects of those poets is incomparable. Yet I shall try to make comprehensible the incomprehensible, forgive me if I offend. This work is called 'The physician's celebration' it is an exposition on those works I have seen by Nainasukha son of Kesavarāja a dweller in a family of the Śrāvaka community. (Friedlander 1996:33)

Other important early works included the *Rāma-vinoda* by Rāmacanda, composed in 1663 in the town of Sakki in Rajasthan, and the *Kavi-vinoda* by Manaji, completed

in 1688 in Lahore. Both works are general medical treatises, with sections dealing with the ingredients for, and production of, remedies, and sections addressing diagnosis and treatment.

Another important early work, *Kṣemakutūhala*, discussed the relationship between diet, health and cookery. The Braj bhāṣā version was prepared by Sukhadeu (active ca. 1670 CE) who according to the text composed his *bhāṣā* version of the *Kṣemakutūhala* following an audience with Sikh Gurū Teg Bahādur. The Sanskrit original was by Kṣemaśarman (c. 1549 CE), who attended the court of king Vikramasena. The first 14 stanzas of this work contain an interesting introduction which explains the circumstances of its composition. In it the author noted: ‘there are many books on medicine in Sanskrit but who can read them without grammars?’. However, Gurū Tegha Bahādura (Gurū from 1664 to 1675) summoned to his court those Pandits who knew the six philosophies and ordered that a *Braj bhāṣā* version of the *Kṣemakutūhala*, titled *Chemasarasa*, be written and copies sent in all the four directions. The work itself seems to concentrate mostly on the relationship between diet and health (Wellcome Punjabi MS 54).

From all I have thus far discussed it is evident that there existed a widespread tradition from the sixteenth century onwards of authors composing Hindi texts based on earlier Sanskrit textual sources, with medical treatises forming an important element of this tradition. It is striking that in both the earliest known such work, the *Vaidya-manotsava* by Nainasukha of 1592, and in the *Kṣemakutūhala* (c. 1670), explicit references were made to retelling the texts anew, with a goal of rendering them comprehensible to publics for whom the older texts were inaccessible.

## Hindi Retellings of Pre-1850 Persian Works

While I was working at the library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine I studied a large number of Hindi manuscripts created between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Amongst the manuscripts I found some which were quite distinct from the works described so far in this chapter as they clearly indicated a Persian origin.

A particularly notable example was *Kavi Taraṅg*, a work composed in 1703 by Sītārām. This is a Hindi (Braj bhāṣā) version of a Persian medical work. Sītārām was a poet and a physician from Ropar, in Ambala district in the Punjab. In the introductory stanzas he describes how a Persian physician visited India and met with the Hindu pundits comparing works and looking at volumes of the Sanskrit *Caraka Saṃhitā* and other medical texts. He also spoke of how his heart filled with joy when he saw the work composed by the Persian doctor and how he has translated it from difficult Persian into ‘easily accessible verses’ (*subodh chanda*). There is also a copy of a Persian version of the same work in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine (WMS.Pers.376b), which includes a reference to Abū Yūsuf as the name for the Persian physician involved. One of the striking facts about the process by which *Kavi Taraṅg* was composed was that it involved a collaboration between Sītārām and Abū Yūsuf in which Sītārām was composing his *bhāṣā* on the basis of the Persian physician’s explication of the text (Friedlander 1996:59).

A second interesting work was the *Vaidyaka Candrodaya*, a work in Braj bhāṣā by

Sukhā Singha, a poet who attended the court of Gurū Gobinda Singh (Gurū from 1675 to 1708 CE). This work is a general medical treatise based on Persian sources, and in particular a text titled the *Yūsabī phārasī*. It is possible that this is a reference to Ibn abī Uṣāibi, the Muslim-Syrian physician and historian of medicine from Damascus (1203/4-1270 CE). It is divided into 36 sections and composed in metres such as the *dohā* and *caupāī* verse forms. The subject matter includes diagnosis by examination of the pulse and urine; the nature of the humours and their characteristics; the treatment of fevers and illnesses; methods for the preparation of remedies and the indications for their use and their efficacy (Wellcome Punjabi MS 35).

There was also another medical work, which was unfortunately missing its first folio and its title in the final colophon. However, it was undoubtedly a Braj bhāṣā prose version of a Persian medical work, as the text was divided into chapters and within them into sections marked as *bāb* and *faṣl*, Persian terms clearly indicating that it was based on a Persian text. According to the colophon of the manuscript it had been completed in 1805 in Lahore by a person called Fakīr Nurihusaini (Wellcome Punjabi MS 26). Yet another manuscript contained a work titled *Dastūr al-ilāj*. This was apparently a version of a Persian medical treatise on the Yunānī system of medicine titled *Dastūr al-ilāj* by Sultan-Alī, composed in 1526-27 CE (Wellcome Punjabi MS 36).

I also found one text which explicitly described itself as being a *tarjuma*, a word which means ‘translation’ or ‘commentary’ in Urdu. This was a work in Braj bhāṣā on how to purify metals for medical and alchemical purposes. This particular copy was made in Kangra in 1856, an area only annexed by the British in 1849, and was explicitly described in its final verses as being a *tarjuma* of a Persian work titled *Phavāid al Javāhir* (Friedlander 1996:79). This must have been a popular work as I also found another copy in the Wellcome library collection in an undated nineteenth-century Braj bhāṣā version written in Gurumukhi, i.e. Punjabi script (Wellcome Punjabi MS 24).

I would argue that taken together this sample of works provides evidence for a tradition of retelling medical texts in contemporary forms of speech, a tradition active from at least as early as the late sixteenth century in what was to become the Hindi speaking region. Furthermore, it included not only retellings of works known from earlier Sanskrit traditions, but also retellings of works in Persian.

It is also critical to note the motivations for the productions of these treatises. In the one case there is a reference to how the new compositions make comprehensible matters which are incomprehensible in the earlier works (cf. Nainasukha’s *Vaidya-manotsava* of 1592); in a second case there is a reference to making a Sanskrit text, difficult to understand without a grammar, comprehensible (Sukhadeu’s *Kṣemakutūhala*, c. 1670); whilst in the third case there is a reference to how a text composed in ‘difficult’ Persian has now been cast in ‘easily accessible’ verses (Sitārām’s *Kavi Taraṅg* of 1703). These are, it may be argued then, indications that from the sixteenth century onwards processes were unfolding in which *bhāṣā* texts were being created for new publics who found materials in Sanskrit or Persian difficult to understand. There may be debates about how, precisely, such works relate to definitions of translation as understood by modern Western scholarship. However, these texts show that before the British began the process of translating texts into Hindi in the late eighteenth century there were already local Hindi traditions

of composition motivated by a desire to translate ideas expressed in difficult forms of speech into comprehensible and accessible forms.

## Translation into Hindi 1796-1873

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the influence of the British was increasing and the impact of their thoughts and practices on the development of Hindi needs to be considered. A key point to be made was that in English documents related to Hindi the word ‘translation’ is used, leaving no doubt about the matter under discussion. Several of the first texts to be translated from English into Hindi at the behest of the British included items such as the English ‘articles of war’ or military code of conduct, translated by 1796 (Gilchrist 1826:220-53). Another example of early translation was a version of the story of Nāsiketa called *Chandrāvati* by Sadala Miśra which was published in Calcutta in 1803 and which Grierson (1910:368) regarded as one of the first translations into modern Hindi of a Sanskrit work.

The British also commissioned works at the Fort William College in Calcutta which they intended to be translations of works from what they saw as one language, Braj bhāṣā, into another language, Hindi. In particular two works are notable: Lallu Lal’s *Sukhsāgar*, a prose Hindi version of an anthology of stories composed in Braj bhāṣā, and the *Baital Pacchisi*, a prose Hindi version of another Braj bhāṣā work.

The British understood the primary meaning of *bhāṣā* as ‘language’, so that creating a new *bhāṣā* version meant making a translation into a new language. However, Lallu Lal’s perspective appears to have been that the primary meaning of *bhāṣā* was ‘speech’, so the new version was the same text spoken in the current vernacular. Indeed, Lallu Lal in the introduction to one of his works wrote that what he had done was to make a *tarjuma* (translation or commentary) of works into the *rekhtā* form of speech of Braj bhāṣā (*braj bhāṣā mẽ rekhte kī bolī mẽ kiyā*; quoted in Pandey 2002: 42). It is notable that he does not say he has translated them into Hindi, but rather that he has ‘made’ (*kiyā*, past perfective of the verb *karnā*) them into one type of Braj bhāṣā from another form of Braj bhāṣā.

I would suggest that the next significant juncture in this development took place around 1870 during the life of Bharatendu Harishcandra (1850-1885). At this time, a movement for reform in Hindi was developing and Bharatendu played a very significant role in it. In particular he was a prominent advocate of the idea that Hindi should drop the use of Braj bhāṣā and adopt a grammar based solely on that of Khaṛī bolī, the form of speech once current in Delhi. This movement was successful and modern standard Hindi grammar is now based on Khaṛī bolī (Dalmia 1997).

Inherent in Bharatendu’s project was the need not only to create new texts using modern standard Hindi grammar, but also to transform older texts into modern standard Hindi forms. Thus, part of his activities involved a process of translation for which he used the term *anuvād*. The word *anuvād* means ‘as it is spoken’ and since this period has become the standard Hindi equivalent to the English ‘translation’.

There are many instances of the use of the term *anuvād* in the Harish Chandra magazine published by Bharatendu. For instance, in the edition for 15 October 1873 there is a

text described as being ‘translated from the Bengali’ (*baṅg bhāṣā se anuvād kiyā*; Harishcandra 2002:23). At times Bharatendu also qualified the term *anuvād*. When describing his drama titled *Viḍya Sundar*, a loose translation of a Bengali play, he referred to it as a *chāyā anuvād* (Kumar 2005:36). The term *chāyā* means literally a ‘shadow’ or ‘image’. Hence, the *chāyā* is a retelling which conveys the essence of a text, but not its details, just as a shadow only conveys the general outline of an object but not its details.

I have been unable to determine with certainty whether Bharatendu was indeed the first Hindi author to use the terms *anuvād* and *chāyā anuvād*, but it is clear that from around his life time *anuvād* came to be the standard Hindi term for ‘translation’, while earlier terminology related to rendering texts into Hindi from other forms of speech began to lose currency.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the issue of Hindi texts that comprise retellings of works from other languages prior to the time when the term *anuvād* came to mean translation in Hindi. I have suggested that it is important to realize that the meanings of many of the terms which are now used in Hindi for the concept of language, and the names of languages, have shifted over time. In particular, the term *bhāṣā*, now understood to mean language, was typically used to refer to forms of speech rather than a particular language. I showed that there were several ways in which new *bhāṣā* texts were created, one of which was by composing original *bhāṣā* works which were retellings of textual traditions, such as the *Rāmcaritmānas* of Tulsīdās. However, through an investigation of Hindi medical literature, I suggested that Hindi also had a second and distinct tradition of retelling texts in which the authors’ motivations were to create contemporary *bhāṣā* forms of earlier Sanskrit works which were no longer readily understandable.

Furthermore, a comparison of how works were created, like Tulsīdās’s *Rāmcaritmānas* and medical works like the *Kavi Taraṅg*, shows that there were at least two quite distinct modes of creation of Hindi texts. One process involved individual authors composing original works based on earlier textual traditions. A second process involved collaboration between a Hindi speaker and a speaker of another language, such as Persian, in order to create a Hindi retelling of a particular Persian text. A key factor in the motivations for the production of new medical texts in what has come to be regarded as Hindi *bhāṣā* was the need to provide treatises that would be comprehensible to new Hindi *bhāṣā* speaking publics which began to emerge in the sixteenth century.

Thus despite doubts being raised about the existence of a Hindi translation tradition before 1800, it is clear that by acknowledging local definitions, understandings and motivations for retelling texts in Hindi, rather than imposing an outside definition of ‘translation’ upon them, we can confidently claim that Sanskrit and Persian texts were being written anew in Hindi prior to the nineteenth century.

## References

- Dalmia, V. (1997) *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Deshpande, M. (2004) 'Bhāṣā', in S. Mittal & Gene Thursby (eds) *Hindu World*, London: Routledge, 505-30.
- Freeman, R. (2003) 'Literary Culture of Premodern Kerala', in S. Pollock (ed.) *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 437-500.
- Friedlander, P. (1996) *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Hindi Manuscripts in the Library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine*, London: Wellcome Trust.
- Gilchrist, J. B. (1826) *Dialogues: English and Hindoostanee*, London: Kingsbury, Parbury & Allen.
- Gopinathan, G. (2000) 'Ancient Indian Theories of Translation', in Marilyn Gaddis Rose (ed.) *Beyond the Western Tradition: Essays on Translation Outside Standard European Languages. Translation Perspectives XI*, Binghamton: Center for Research in Translation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 165-73.
- Grierson, G. A. (1910) 'Charan Dāsīs', in J. Hastings (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, Volume 3, 365-68.
- Hariścandra (2002) *Harishchandra's Magazine*, Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan: Prayāg.
- Johnson, S. (1755/1983) *A Dictionary of the English Language*, London: Times Books.
- Kothari, R. (2003) *Translating India*, Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.
- Lal, P. (1996) *Transcreation, Seven Essays on the Art of Transcreation*, Calcutta: A Writers Workshop Publication.
- Lath, M. (2005) *Ardhakathanaka: Half a Tale*, Delhi: Rupa & Co.
- Lutgendorf, P. (1991) *The Life of a Text: Performing the Rāmcaritmānas of Tulsīdās*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Masica, C. P. (1991) *The Indo-Aryan Languages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pandey, S. (2002) *Baitāl pacīsī, Nāgarīpracāriṇī Sabhā: Vārāṇasī, Nāī Dillī*.
- Pollock, S. (2006) *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Salvador, D. S. (2004) 'Indian Fiction in English as Transcreation', in A. Branchadell and L. M. West (eds) *Less Translated Languages*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 189-206.
- Sircar, D. C. (1943/1970) *A Grammar of the Prakrit Language*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass.
- Staal, J. F. (ed.) (1972) *A Reader on the Sanskrit Grammarians*, Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Trivedi, H. (2006) 'In our Own Time, On Our Own Terms. 'Translation' in India', in T. Hermans (ed.) *Translating Others*, Volume 1, Manchester, UK & Kinderhook USA, St Jerome, 102-19.
- Tymoczko, M. (2007) *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, Manchester: St Jerome.
- Whaling, F. (1980) *The Rise of the Religious Significance of Rama*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass.