SAGAREE SENGUPTA

Krsna the Cruel Beloved: Hariscandra and Urdu[1]

I

"Bharatendu" hariscandra (1850–1885) of Banaras has been viewed in India as the "father of modern standard Hindi" because of his landmark works in prose; Hariścandra's enormous poetic output, however, was largely in Brajbʰāṣā, the courtly North Indian literary language which developed out of the Vṛndāvan-based Kṛṣṇa-ite devotional (*bʰakti*) poetry of Sūrdās and others in the sixteenth century. Born into a wealthy and devout Vaiṣṇava Agarwal family, Hariścandra received poetic training at home in Brajbʰāṣā and Sanskrit, and learned Persian, Urdu, and English under private tutors.[2] Hariścandra was a facile and copious writer in Hindi, Brajbʰāṣā, and Urdu; he produced several pieces in Sanskrit, Bengali and English as well. Although he railed against Urdu as an inaccessible élite medium,[3] the intricacies of which created legal and

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[2]The biographical information, unless otherwise noted, derives from Lakṣmīsāgar Vāṛṣṇey, *Bʰāratendu Hariścandra* (Ilāhābād: Sāhitya Bʰavan (Prā.) Limiṭeḍ, 1974 [4th ed.]), pp. 13–31; and R.S. McGregor, *Hindi Literature of the 19th and early 20th Centuries* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), pp. 75–76.

[3]"Education Commission Evidence of Babu Harishchandra (1882)," in Hemant Śarmā, ed., *Bhāratendu Samagra* (Varāṇasī: Hindī Pracārak Saṁstʰān, 1987), p. 1057. This collection of Hariścandra's works will be referred to as *Samagra.*

professional disadvantages for common people, Hariścandra himself, like many sophisticated urban North Indians of the time, cultivated the language as a medium of poetry and personal communication. The Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani debate was underway in Hariścandra's time, and it was through much conscious effort that he and the circle of upper-class Hindu writers he was associated with cultivated Hindi—especially prose—written in the Devanagari script. The following look at Hariścandra's interesting relationship with Urdu is intended to bring attention to an earlier stage of the modern equation of language style and cultural agenda in North Indian writing and other verbal arts.

Hariścandra is considered the last major poet of Brajbʰāṣā by scholars of Hindi, and indeed, his range and volume in this medium are astounding. He wrote only a slender amount of poetry in Kʰaṛī bōlī Hindi, and was dissatisfied with the results. Despite his protestations that it was a harsh and graceless medium for poetry,[4] Hariścandra's Kʰaṛī bōlī in all its manifestations can be as urbane and fluent as his Brajbʰāṣā is tender (even sentimental) and pious. His "Urdū kā Syāpā" (A Lament for Urdu), first published in the June 1874 issue of *Hariścandracandrikā,*[5] is notable because the adept manipulation of tone through the use of colloquial, irreverent diction is perceptible even in a translation of this short prose piece:

> From the Aligarh Institute Gazette and the Banaras newspaper, one learns that Lady Urdu has been killed and that Rājā Śivprasād, despite being the most non-violent person, has committed this act of violence—alas, alas! It's a dark day indeed if Lady Urdu has sacrificed herself on her husband's pyre! Although we observe that even now the three-and-a-half-yard-tall she-camel of a Lady is still alive and chewing her cud, we have complete faith in the Urdu newspapers. We have a tale that goes like this: "A certain gentleman (*miyāṁ sāheb*)[6] was employed as a clerical officer in a foreign

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[4]Hariścandra, "Hindībʰāṣā (ka)" [1882/83], in Kṛṣṇadatta Pālīvāl, ed., *Bʰāratendu ke Śreṣṭʰa Nibandʰ* (Naī Dillī: Sacin Prakāśaṇ, 1987), p. 69.

[5]In *Bʰāratendu Grantʰāvalī* [Vol. 1 ed. Śivaprasād Miśra, Vols. 2 & 3 ed. Brajratan Dās] (Kāśī: Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabʰā, 1935 & 1954–55), Vol. 2, pp. 677–78. This standard set contains a large number of Hariścandra's works and will be referred to as NPS 1, 2 or 3.

[6]Indicating a *Muslim* gentleman.

> country. After some time a servant from home arrived and said 'Miyāṁ Sāheb, your spouse has become a widow.' As soon as the gentleman heard this he beat his head, moaned and cried, left his bed behind and sat on the hard ground; he started mourning, and people also came by to pay their respects. Among them, four or five of his friends asked, 'Miyāṁ Sāheb, how can you be an intelligent person and actually utter such a thing—I mean, how can your spouse become a widow while you're still alive?' The gentleman then replied 'Brother, what you say is true, God has given me some brains also; and I too understand that my spouse can't become a widow while I'm alive. But the servant has been with me a long time, and he would never lie.' At any rate, these days sorrow for Urdu is manifest, so we too will sing a version of the lament for Urdu here. If our readers don't feel inclined to weep then they are also sworn not to laugh, because it is no laughing matter that Lady Urdu, a mere spring chicken,[7] died while still young and sturdy.

Among the mourners are the Arabic, Farsi, Pashto and Panjabi languages—all of which would have shared a script with Urdu, and are thus her "relatives"—who stand around the corpse, beat their breasts and wail:

> *hai hai urdū hāy hāy / kahāṁ sidʰārī hāy hāy /*
> *merī pyārī hāy hāy / munśī mullāh hāy hāy /*
> O Urdu, alas, alas / Where have you gone, alas, alas /
> My beloved, alas, alas / Say the clerks and clerics, alas, alas /

In depicting the northwestern "Muslim" languages as mourning scribes and religious officers, Hariścandra castes Urdu as the darling of special interest groups, rather than an appropriate national language. The "death" of Urdu is supposedly "mourned" by Rājā Śivaprasād Siṁh (1823–1895), the Banaras newspaper editor and educator[8] who supported

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[7]Literally, "a three-day-old goat kid."

[8]R.S. McGregor, *op. cit.,* p. 71.

the continuation of the Urdu language style in the Nāgarī script and who was looked down upon by Hariścandra's camp as a British toady. By making the news of Lady Urdu's demise look exaggerated and absurd, Hariścandra also makes her claims to any real life—other than that of a lowly domesticated animal—tenuous.

Several years later, Hariścandra's report to the Education Commission of 1882[9] (in his own English) restates his socio-linguistic concerns about Urdu in a more straightforward tone.

> But in these days the two forms of our vernacular occupy the thoughts of the people and afford to them an attractive topic of discussion and a theme for long debates and harangues. The Muhammadans and their fellow companions, such as the Kayasths of Benares and Allahabad, the Agarwalas and Khattris[10] of the more western portion of the provinces, call this dialect Urdu, and there are several reasons for their doing so. The Muhammadans for a long time were the ruling power in India, and consequently the dialect spoken by them was considered in these provinces as most respectable. Those who wished to be looked upon as fashionable or polite to public meetings or other assemblages spoke Urdu, and many have recourse to the same practice up to the present day. Excellence in Urdu is imagined to be contained in the use of big and high sounding Persian words to such a degree of profusion as to leave only the verb of the sentence Hindi.[11]

After this attack on the élitism of Urdu, Hariścandra continues in a more scurrilous vein:

> …The Musalmans not only have a sharp and oily tongue, but are also very forward and headstrong, and this is the cause why they over-power other people. [12]

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[9]Hariścandra, "Education Commission Evidence of Babu Harishchandra (1882)," *Samagra,* pp. 1053–60.

[10]The castes mentioned are non-Brahmin upper castes often associated with courtly, legal, and scribal functions. Hariścandra himself was an Agarwala.

[11]Hariścandra, *op. cit.,* p. 1056.

[12]*Ibid.*

He fears that Muslims will not easily give up their monopoly of jobs requiring knowledge of Urdu, and even gloats a little that "…if Urdu cease to be the court language, the Musalmans will not easily secure the numerous offices of Government."[13] Pragmatic, populist worries about the difficulty of the script and vocabulary of Urdu follow; even here, Hariścandra highlights his partisanship through characteristically sharp turns of metaphor: the harvesting of petty legal fees by scribes and agents is compared to the presumably more rightful harvests of exploited farmers and landowners:

> …By the introduction of the Nagri character[14] they would lose entirely the opportunity of plundering the world by reading one word for another and thereby misconstruing the real sense of the contents. The Persian Character particularly Shikast,[15] in which at present the court business is carried on, is an unfailing source of income to mukhtars,[16] pleaders[17] and cheats.
>
> May God save us from such letters!!! What wonders cannot be performed through their medium? Black can be changed to white and white into black. Writing, which is at present a perpetual source of income to hangers-on of the court, will cease to fill their coffers if Hindi is introduced. Bombast and high-sounding Persian words which have never been heard of by landholders, cultivators and traders, are forced into composition purely with a view to yield a harvest to interpreters. If Hindi is introduced who will pay four annas[18] to learn the contents of a summons, or eight annas to one rupee for writing out a small petition? … 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. Because Urdu is the language of the court, a few people are favourably impressed towards it.[19]

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[13] *Ibid.,* p. 1057.

[14] That is, Devanāgarī script, used for Hindi.

[15] Denoting the "broken" or cursive script style in which connecting and non-connecting letters alike are joined together.

[16] Agents or representatives.

[17] Trial lawyers.

[18] 16 annas = 1 rupee.

[19] Hariścandra, *op. cit.*

He thinks to include an appeal to the form of democracy the British practice at home:

> In all civilized countries the language spoken by the people and the character written by them are also used in the courts.[20]

In a final effort to dislodge the prestige of Urdu, he strikes a blow simultaneously at the urban culture with which the language is associated and at his own class.

> There is a secret motive which induces the worshippers of Urdu to devote themselves to its cause. It is the language of dancing girls and prostitutes. The depraved sons of wealthy Hindus and youths of substance and loose character, when in the society of harlots, concubines and pimps speak Urdu, as it is the language of their mistress and beloved ones. The correct pronunciation of Urdu, with its shin, ghain, and guttural kaf, is indispensable in such a company, and one unable to twist his tongue into unnatural and unpleasant distortions is not a welcome or an agreeable companion.[21]

Against the backdrop of these incendiary statements about the use of Urdu as an educational and legal medium, there is Hariścandra's continued and profound involvement with the language at the creative level. In fact, his image as a member of the pleasure-seeking, sophisticated urban élite set of his time is incomplete without Urdu as an accessory. With two courtesan mistresses, one of them a Hindu woman named Mādʰavī who had converted to Islam, Hariścandra himself—despite his literary preeminence—qualified in the embarrassed eyes of later Hindi writers as one of the "depraved sons of wealthy Hindus" mentioned in the passage above. As if to legitimize the aura of earthly sexual intrigue which he associates with it in statements exemplified by the one above, Hariścandra incorporated the Persian-Urdu literary legacy directly into his Vaiṣṇava work. Inversely, involving Kṛṣṇa in his Urdu poetic products seems to sanctify the delight he obviously took in the language despite his colorful protests against it in other contexts. The move can also be seen to be one of the many he made in order to facilitate the transformation of

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[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Ibid.,* p. 1058.

the hedonistic and personal cultivation of poetry into edifying public texts aimed at reshaping Indian consciousness.

Hariścandra's devotional Hindu use of Persian-Urdu genres is one of the more striking examples from his corpus of his penchant for turning multifarious materials to his own purposes. Even his pen-name, or *takhalluṣ,* in Urdu is "Rasā," the "juicy" or "essence-appreciating" one, echoing the name of Raskhān, the much-celebrated sixteenth-century Muslim devotee-poet of Kṛṣṇa who "got it," i.e. mastered the essence of *bʰakti.* From a strictly devotional point of view, Hariścandra—the Hindu/Vaiṣṇava poet of Urdu—seems determined to flit from one medium to the next, extracting the delightful essence of each and offering it to his deity. *Bʰakti,* after all, was added as a tenth rasa to the Sanskrit aesthetic canon by Vaiṣṇavas.

Hariścandra uses the Persian *ghazal* verse below in the dedication (to Kṛṣṇa) of his 1873 (1930 Samvat) satirical play *Vaidikī Hiṁsā Hiṁsā na Bʰavati* (Vedic Violence Is Not Violence):

> *čashm-e man bar čashm-e tō čashmān-e tō jā-ye digar*
> *man tamāshā-ye tō bīnam tō tamāshā-ye digar*[22]
> My eyes are on your eyes but your eyes are elsewhere,
> I watch the spectacle of you while you watch some other.

He respectively conflates Kṛṣṇa with the "cruel beloved" and himself, the devotee, with the hapless lover of the *ghazal* tradition. His freewheeling yet pious literary appropriation reaches into the medium of the Persian language itself. He has found a resonance of Kṛṣṇa's teasing *līlā* in the spectacle of the beloved's blandishments and cruelties.

In his use of the *ghazal,* Hariścandra makes sure to remind us of his novel relationship to it; in the following, it is more than the poet's name that points outside the classical idiom:

> *bakʰt ne pʰir mujʰe is sāl dikʰāī holī*
> *soje pʰurqat zebas mujʰko na bhāī holī*

[22]NPS 2, p. 3.

śolae iśk jʰaṛaktā hai to kahtā hūṁ rasā
dil jalāne ke lie āh yah āī holī[23]
My luck has played Holī with me again
this year—
Brother, I didn't get to put an end to
the flames of my yearning;
When the spark of love flares up, I,
Rasā, say—
"Here comes Holī, a sigh to burn up
the heart."

Holī, the spring festival during which rambunctious play and jest loosen the usual social norms, is invoked by Hariścandra to highlight his own pathetic condition as one ignored by his beloved deity. Anxiously anticipating a chance to participate in joyous frolicking with Kṛṣṇa during Holī, Hariścandra is cheated by his fate instead. The poet's luck has played "Holī"—or a trick—on him instead of allowing him to play along. Instead of sprayings of colored water, burning sighs and hot yearning are his fate. The idioms of the Urdu *ghazal* and Kṛṣṇa *bʰakti* are completely blended here. By raising the poet's expectations and then denying him his heart's desire, springtime, the season of merriment, becomes one of deprivation for the subject of the poem, much as the rainy season is a tragic one for the desirous but neglected heroine of Sanskrit and Hindi rīti poetry. Meanwhile, the hot sighs (straight from the Perso-Arabic desert of Majnūṅ) that escape from the poet's lips cause the nightime bonfire of Holī to flare up higher, causing annihilating pain to the poet, as if his heart were a moth—another image from the Persian-Urdu tradition.

Embedded in the verses above is the figure of Kṛṣṇa as the hero of Holī. We imagine a scene in which Kṛṣṇa grants his company to all his other devotees or *gopīs* and plays Holī with them—splashing and scattering colored water and powders, enjoying uninhibited merriment and affection; Hariścandra is the only one left out, not receiving even a glimpse of his beloved during the amorous season. If springtime can bring destruction to the house of Ghalib (1797–1869)[24]—

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[23]NPS 3, p. 857.

[24]Asadullāh Khāṅ Ghālib, *Dīvān-e Ghālib* (Na'ī Dillī: Ghālib Insṭīṭyūṭ, 1986), p. 124.

ug rahā hai dar-o-dīvār sē sabza ghālib
ham bayābān mēṅ haiṅ aur gʰar meṅ bahār ā'ī hai
Ghalib, greenery is sprouting from your walls and doors!
We live in the desert and spring has come to our house!

—certainly Holī, the spring festival, can bring desolation to Hariścandra.

II

Obviously, conscious commitment to language reform and aesthetic habit could not always agree: just as Hariścandra kept up his versification in Brajbʰāṣā despite his active promotion of Kʰaṛī bolī Hindi, the poetic-performative milieu he was part of was too invested in the *ghazal* to discontinue its cultivation. The pragmatic handicap of Urdu, as Hariścandra identified it, lay primarily in the difficulties of the script, and it is conceivable that since the enjoyment of song transcends script allegiances even now in South Asia, the *ghazal* in its musical form did not present a problem for his formulations of Hindu identity. Hariścandra wrote Urdu *ghazals* with the same fluid ease as his Brajbʰāṣā poetry. From the point of view of artistic originality his *ghazals* are blatantly derivative, combining and recombining recognizable phrases and images, and have not commanded the interest of modern Urdu scholars. As a site of stylistic and cultural experimentation, however, the Urdu work of Hariścandra and that of his father Giridhar Dās is interesting in the extreme.

Hariścandra's artistic involvement with Urdu is not only evinced by his own *ghazals,* but also extends to his anthologizing of *ghazals* by other poets in the chapbook *Gulzār-e pur-Bahār.* A popular anthology such as this was purportedly designed for secular, non-sectarian consumption. It is like a singer's personal notebook of lyrics in printed form and could cross the boundaries between Hindu and Muslim, oral and written, private and public. Among the poets who are included is Hariścandra's father Giridhar Dās, who died when his son was ten years old. The *ghazals* by which Hariścandra chose to represent himself and his family tradition in *Gulzār-e pur-Bahār,* and the cultural assertions embodied in the poems, subtly support the idea of a resurgent Hindu culture. Giridhar Dās was not only his earliest and most important poetic mentor, he was

also an exemplar of Vaiṣṇava devotion for Hariścandra. In the process of using poetic Urdu, Hariścandra and Giridhar Dās were also forwarding avowals of their Vaiṣṇava—generalized to "Hindu"—faith in a somewhat unorthodox medium. As much as it was a part of their own social life and literary culture, Urdu was already identified by Hariścandra as representative of the "Muslim" component in North India. My assertion that Hariścandra's seemingly playful use of the Persian-Urdu literary tradition in the following poems is the marker of a strained yet intimate relationship with it is corroborated by the overt arguments against the official use of Urdu that Hariścandra mounted in his prose work.

Gulzār-e pur-Bahār[25] contains a generous sample of the assorted vernacular lyrical modes which circulated through live musical performance in North India well into the twentieth century. The long subtitle on the title page of the pamphlet names the other song-forms included with the *ghazal* collection:

The Garden in Springtime

in other words

a very fine collection of the very best select
kavitt, ghazal, ṭʰumrī, khyāl, ṭappā,
bʰajan, holī, dapʰkīholī, bahār, basant,
gʰāṭo, malār, kajalī, lāvanī, dādrā,
kaharva, and regional songs
etc. suitable for singing[26]

Other material on the title page of the 1900 edition is worth noting for the glimpse it gives us of the intersection between poetry and commerce. As the impractical inheritor of a commerce-derived fortune, Hariścandra sporadically made attempts at recouping some of the enormous expenditures incurred through his literary, educational, and social activities. Presumably his descendants, including his son

[25]Hariścandra, ed. (Banāras: Vidyāvilās Pres, 1957 Samvat [1900 c.e.]). This is the earliest edition I was able to examine. The cover states that a thousand copies of this edition were printed. Further references will be by the name of the volume.

[26]*Ibid.,* title page.

Brajbʰuṣaṇdās named below, were likewise not loathe to make some profit through the sale of Hariścandra's literary products:

> Bʰārat Bʰūṣaṇ Śrī Bābū Hariścandrajī ne
> saṁgraha kiyā.
> Yah kitāb Bābū Brajbʰūṣaṇdās ke dukān par milaigī
> Ṭʰikānā Cāndnī Cauk ke uttar Naī Saṛak Banāras[27]
> The Gracious Bābū Harŝcandra, Ornament of India, collected [this]. This book is available at the shop of Bābū Brajbʰūṣaṇdās; address: Naī Saṛak [New Street] north of Cāndnī Cauk, Banāras.

The quaint syntax effected by avoidance of the passive—i.e. "collected by"—points to a level of Hindi usage older and less formal than one we might see in a post-Independence publication of the same type. A printing of a thousand copies in the 1900 edition—fifteen years after Hariścandra's death—indicated the expected success of the item. The prominent notice for the family shop was no doubt meant to facilitate this success.

The "selection" contained in *Gulzār-e pur-Bahār* begins with a disproportionately large number of *ghazals*—about half of the total. Into seventy-nine *ghazals* (meaning sequences of several couplets) by well-known Urdu poets which are intermingled with independent couplets labeled *"tarjia band"* [*sic*] and *"dohā,"* Hariścandra embeds nine of his own and two of his father's (Nos. 19 and 77). Other Hindu poets to be found in the *ghazal* section are Rājā Balbān Siṁh (No. 14) and Bābū Badrīnārāyaṇ (No. 30).

It can be no accident that the first *ghazal* is Hariścandra's and is a Kṛṣṇa *bʰakti* poem; it is as if he was putting the stamp of Vaiṣṇava justification on this collection of lyrics aimed at a secular audience. Whatever their content, their performance and enjoyment would almost certainly occur in the worldly surroundings of an evening assembly of courtesans, upper-class men and perhaps a few upper-class women in elaborate purdah arrangements. To post-Independence South Asian tastes such products can seem bizarre or embarrassing, but this virtuoso amalgam "shows off" the *māyā* of Viṣṇu, and the "illusory" cultural differences caused by it, as well. The display of versatility and virtuosity was not just an end in itself for Hariścandra—this particular facet of

[27] *Ibid.*

courtly poetic performance is repeatedly appropriated by him and diverted into Vaiṣṇava belief. It only takes the gaze of faith, namely Hariścandra's, rather than the head-banging of doctrinal argumentation, to perceive the god Viṣṇu everywhere beneath the apparent diversity of the universe. Here, the "Rasā" of the *takhalluṣ* ("Harīcand" is what he used in his Brajbʰāṣā colophons), echoes both the Persian verb *rasīdan,* "to reach," and *rasa,* the savoury delight which poetry and music impart to a connoisseur or devotee.

Wherever you look, there is my beloved Kṛṣṇa;
All that is known in the world is just a manifestation of Him.
Who has the ability to understand the qualities of the creator's creation?
O friend, this [helplessness] is what made the Vedas cry out "Not this, not this"—
None of their remedies worked, all four of them were beaten without a chance—
The wretched Vedas tried so hard to understand You!
Whatever we say about You, this too is a manifestation of You, or else
Who would have the power to even open his mouth—here everyone has lost the argument against You.
If the conchshell sounds, Hindus fill it with Your breath.
It is You, dear one, whom the Sheikhs[28] call in their summon to prayer;
If the idol is made of stone, then what is in the Kaaba other than dust and stone?
He who has wracked his brains over this

[28]Sheikh: head of a Sufi establishment, but used generally to indicate a Muslim religious leader.

difference has forgotten much—
If You had not been the Manifester,
then this church would have fallen
down long ago.
Even the totally wretched have You for
their refuge in the end—
Your light exists in everything from
straw to mountain, Dear One;
It is You to whom the Hindus have
called out "Lord, Lord";
Forgive my sins and let Rasā reach Your
feet—
Whether he's bad or good, Beloved, he
is Yours.

Hariścandra's fast hand at word-play—*na kuch cārā calā lācār cāro hār kar baiṭhe / bicāre ved ne pyāre bahut tum ko bicārā hai /*—"None of their remedies worked, all four of them were beaten… The wretched Vedas tried so hard to understand You!"—collapses Perso-Arabic borrowings (*cārā, lācār*) with Indic words (*bicārā [vicāra]*); this is only a foretaste of the collapsing of Islam with Purāṇic Hinduism a few lines further on—"If the idol is made of stone, then what is in the Kaaba other than dust and stone?"—and finally with Christianity in the following couplet when *girjā,* "church," is echoed in *gir jātā,* "would fall down." The change of a single vowel changes the lowly and insignificant straw, *kah,* to the high mountain, *koh.*

Through the admixture of language and image—every element reflected in another—Hariścandra collapses apparently conflicting cultural artefacts of the world into one vision with impressive dexterity. The rapid juxtapositions force the poetic realization that opposites only seem to be so; behind the poet's bravura word-play is the play of cosmic illusion itself—*māyā*—staged by Viṣṇu.

A *ghazal* by Zafar (Bahādur Shāh, that is, the characteristically melancholy poet and deposed Mughal monarch; 1775–1862) follows fast on the heels of the first *ghazal* on Kṛṣṇa by Hariścandra in *Gulzār-e pur-Bahār.* Although the whole *ghazal* genre is known by its tendency to

break up into independent fragments[29] even within a single poem, for a reader leafing through the chapbook there is a continuing note of tragic futility between even the first selection and Zafar's verse:

na bosā denā ātā hai na dil bahlānā ātā hai—
tujʰe to ai but-e tarsā pʰaqat tarsānā ātā hai[30]
You don't know how to grant kisses, neither do you know how to ease anyone's heart;
O pagan idol, all you know is how to tantalize.

The first couplet in Zafar's poem hinges on the pun between the words *tarsā* which means an infidel[31] in the Persian context—namely a Zoroastrian or a Christian, typical love objects and representatives of transgression in the classical Persian *ghazal*—and *tarsānā,* the definition of which is "to cause to thirst for, to cause to long for or to desire eagerly, to tantalize, to teaze [*sic*]."[32] The idea of the "pagan idol" representing a Hindu icon in the Indian context is an easy ironic reversal to accomplish, a reversal which is seized upon by Hariścandra and Giridhar Dās writing as devout Hindus. Of course, love of God is expressed through the "metaphor" of human desire in traditional Persian and Urdu *ghazal,* but contrast the language of the couplets below in which, as is widely agreed upon by commentators, the object of love is transcendent and divine:

Hafiz (1325/6–1389/90):
ze 'eshq-e nā-tamām-e mā jamāl-e yār mustaghnī'st

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[29]See the discussion by Bruce R. Pray in "A Re-Examination of Structure and Continuity in the Urdu Ghazal," in M.U. Memon, ed., *Studies in the Urdu Gazal and Prose Fiction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Center for South Asian Studies, 1979), pp. 143–67.

[30]*Gulzār-e pur-Bahār,* pp. 1–2.

[31]John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī and English.* (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint, 1977 [1884]), p. 318.

[32]*Ibid.*

ba āb-o-rang-o-khāl-o-khaṭ če hājat rū-ye zībā rā
The beauty of the beloved does not need my imperfect love
What need does the exquisite face have of hue or color or beauty marks or kohl lines?[33]

Ghalib (1797–1869):

jab voh jamāl-e dil-feroz ṣurat-e mehr-e nīm-rōz
āp hī hō naẓārah sōz pardeh meṅ muṅh čʰupā'ē kyōṅ?
When that heart-inflaming beauty—as bright as the noonday sun—
Can itself burn up the gaze of the beholder, why should it hide its face behind a veil?

In the "beauty" referred to above, the attributes are grand, if not totally abstract, and deliberately dissociated from concrete human charms.

A *ghazal* by Giridhar Dās, who was a well-known Brajbʰāṣā writer in his own time, also speaks of a divine beloved, but in a dizzying extension of typical *ghazal* tropes. In his *ghazal,* Giridhar Dās ostensibly points to his own feeling of inadequacy in the Urdu medium while protesting his attachment to "that raven-tressed idol," but that leads us to wonder why he insists on using the language:

They've started calling me a lover of that faithless one as well,
Alas, they've started counting me among the roster of love-crazed Majnūṅs;
Thinking of the stony-hearted one, I've begun gnawing on rocks—
I keep the faith but they've started calling me a friend of the idol.

[33]My translation follows notes by Michael Hillmann.

The beloved has become annoyed with
me and does not come anymore,
Ever since all the other faithless ones
came and began to browbeat him.
All my waiting has yielded for me is this
sigh today,
People have started saying that I'm
halfway in the grave…
Whom are the the black curls of that
tormentor killing today?—
Look at all the ways in which those
snakes have begun to twist and turn.
As long as I was alive he never said a
word to me—
After I died he began to come to my
tomb.
O Giridhar Dās—Servant of the
Mountain-Lifter[34]—you've only
studied Hindi well—
Why have you begun to be counted
among the poets of Urdu?[35]

The "reason why" Giridhar Dās might be included as a poet of Urdu, despite his disarming protestations at an imaginary *mushā'era,* is because Kṛṣṇa himself inspires his outpourings. His humility is somewhat disingenuous, because Giridhar Dās seems to know the Urdu poetic idiom quite well. If God's grace can work all the other wonders known to Vaiṣṇavas, making a devout *"bʰāṣā"* ("vernacular") poet adept in the ultra-refined and urbane medium of Urdu is surely short work! The poetic "inadequacy" which Giridhar announces for himself is customary in *bʰakti* poems, but can also be read as a subtle subversion of the Urdu poetic tradition rather than as a serious deprecation of his own qualities.

Considering Giridhar Dās's entire poem line by line reveals an interlocking series of poetic conventions: Kṛṣṇa with his many *gopīs,* or devotees, cannot be faithful to any one of them. For a *bʰakta,* it is a boon to be obsessed by love for Kṛṣṇa—the seeming shame of joining the ranks

[34]I.e. Kṛṣṇa.
[35] *Gulzār-e pur-Bahār,* p. 51.

of the "impassioned" (and therefore socially marginalized) is a spiritual boast. Majnūṅ was the single lover of Lailā, but Kṛṣṇa has a whole roster of lovers, like a popular court beauty with numerous admirers. Gnawing on rocks in despair for the sight of his beloved, the poet becomes an "infidel" in the Islamic sense, bewitched as he is by a figured form. Passionate lovers and idol worshippers are equated in the *ghazal* tradition for having an embodied form as the object of their attentions. "Enchanted" by what is most likely embodied by a marble icon, Giridhar Dās is "called" an idol worshipper for his devotion—what a perfect circle! The poet uses an idiom in which non-Islamic practices are associated with renegades against proper society, to proudly and literally claim those very practices, which in his case happen to be quite orthodox in the Vaiṣṇava tradition. In corroboration, Hariścandra also declared his faith in "idol worship" (*mūrti pūjan*) as the "correct" and most ancient Hinduism in other works.[36]

Kṛṣṇa does not come to Giridhar Dās when called; the poet's bereavement is at the heart of *bʰakti.* The god might have been kinder had others not inveigled him away: Giridhar is playing the sulking Rādʰā here. The pining reaches a point at which the lover is nearly dead. As always, the bereft lover's jealous assumption is that the beloved is dallying with others: the beloved's locks are compared to black snakes which coil and twist in every cruel way around their victims—their admirers—and even poison them to death. As long as the devotee is alive, Kṛṣṇa does not actually appear to him, but if the devotee is fortunate, he may unite with the god in *vaikuṇṭʰ* after he dies. The figure Kṛṣṇa is compared to is the cruel beloved who takes pity after it's too late, and the relevant couplet seems to be a simplified parallel of Ghalib's verse:

kī mērē qatl kē baʿd us nē jafā sē tōba
hāʾē us zūd pashēmāṅ kā pashēmāṅ hōnā[37]
She had already slain me when she finally swore off cruelty—
Too bad the repentance of this hastily-repenting one didn't come a little sooner!

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[36]"Dūṣaṇ Mālikā" [1870], NPS 3, pp. 589–98; "Vaiṣṇavatā aur Bʰāratvarṣ" [ca. 1884], NPS 3, pp. 789–802.

[37]Ghālib, *op. cit.,* p. 22 (No. 18).

Now, if the beloved is Kṛṣṇa, the "merciless" (or "without a *pīr*") and "stony hearted" one can also literally be a temple image made of stone. The Vaiṣṇava's actual fidelity is to the image of his deity, so the "idol worshipping" slander contains a doubly ironic twist: in the scenario of the poem Giridhar Dās is being put in his true and desired category even though the superficial intent is not congratulatory. The second verse, in which the beloved "does not come anymore," is reminiscent of Braj-Kṛṣṇa poetry in which the god dallies with Rādʰā only to be distracted by other women.

In appealing on an ostensibly secular level to his readership, Giridhar Dās uses impeccable Urdu vocabulary in the *'ishq-e majāzī* vein to produce a piece that is best read as a devotional poem. Kṛṣṇa does have curly black locks, he is wilful and random with his erotic love, and since he's not a Muslim seeker, of *course* he doesn't have a *pīr!* The poem has an unusually forthright and humble[38] *takhalluṣ* or colophon line—unusual for a *ghazal* but not for Vaiṣṇava *bʰakti* poetry—which again ironically points at Giridhar's real orientation while deprecating his skills in Urdu. The deprecation in turn devalues the medium—Urdu—with the implication that if an established poet like Giridhar is "no good" at it, it has no particular prestige except as just another medium of appeal to Kṛṣṇa.

III

Most of the poetry Hariścandra published in book format during his own lifetime comprised Brajbʰāṣā Vaiṣṇava works or love poetry in the same idiom, although these were usually published in journals and newspapers first. In the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabʰā edition of Hariścandra's poetry, there is a final section of undated "stray poems"[39] culled from various sources after his death. The "stray" section is where most of the Urdu and Kʰaṛī bolī poems appear: they were not the ones Hariścandra saw fit to present in the slender volumes where much of his Brajbʰāṣā poetry was preserved.

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[38]For instance, Sūrdās's "Quick, save me, says Sur, I'm dying of shame: / who ever was finer at failure than I?", as quoted in Jack Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 113.

[39]"Sphūṭ Kavitāeṁ," NPS 2, pp. 818–66.

In a *samasya pūrtī* poem ending in *Rām binā be-kām sabʰī* from the section described above, Hariścandra takes on the lifestyle of his own class. He uses the context of a religious poem to criticize society. Here too, Hariścandra displays his fluent Kʰaṛī bolī/Urdu skills, although he chose not to write in this vein very often. Despite the fact that the topic is yet again Vaiṣṇava devotion, the urbane refinement—a slickness, almost—comes through as it usually does when Hariścandra uses this mode. The doggerel nature of the fixed rhyme (all the lines end in *sabʰī*) adds to the street-taunt or popular farce associations which the tone of the poem evokes:

Your courtly array, horses, elephants, chariots, footmen, all kinds of other possessions and houses—
Diamonds, pearls, emeralds and rubies, your golden crown and garland on your chest, it's all—
Eating and drinking, watching dances and spectacles, all these thousands of luxuries—
Useless without Rām the way a cooked dish is without salt.

A twenty-one gun Salute, a top-level job—it's all—
Getting knighted with the Orders of the Cross, Star, or Bath, becoming titled *Mahārāj, Bahādur*—it's all—
You got worldly fame, you earned kingdoms and enjoyed every kind of luxury and comfort,
But you didn't learn the essence, you remained deluded—it's all useless without Rām.

Knowledge of Brahma, meditation, realization of God and breath-yoga is all…
Consulting tomes and yakking away, repeating mantras and ascetic

practices for twenty-four hours a day,[40]
Yoga, magical powers, renunciation, devotion, worship, ritual books and obeisances all
Are useless without love; without Kṛṣṇa and Balarām—all is worthless.[41]

Characteristically, while using Kʰaṛī bolī—still closely associated with Urdu—Hariścandra knocks down every worldly thing associated with knowledge of the language. Since the *samasya* or end rhyme for a poem like this is usually set by someone else before the poet composes the work, Hariścandra had to have made the decision to attack the badges of high secular culture to contrast with the transcendent reality of Rām, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The poem is one more effort on his part to reshape literature and culture simultaneously. It was to be future generations of very differently educated Hindi-speakers who would claim a deliberately non-Urdu and Brajbʰāṣā-free Kʰaṛī bolī for a public medium of communication.

By producing and promoting *ghazals* in the praise of Viṣṇu, Hariścandra did give Urdu a position somewhere in his hierarchy of languages, as he worked to develop Kʰaṛī bolī in Nāgarī script. The poet's sensibilities and the social reformer's frustrations were somewhat at odds, but Hariścandra was able to argue most cogently against Urdu in his witty, colloquial prose. Paul Hacker's concept[42] of Hindu religious inclusivism can be extended to Hariścandra's multilingual enterprise. The languages and literary modes used by this major South Asian writer, on the cusp of modernity, fit into a network of mutual influence and

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[40]1 *jām* [Sanskrit *yāma*] = 3 hours; 8 *jāms* = 24 hours. Rāmcandra Varmā, ed., *Saṁkṣipt Hindī Śabdsāgar* (Kāsī: Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabʰā, 1987), p. 364.

[41]NPS 3, p. 865.

[42]"The meaning of inclusivism is that an individual declares the central concept of an outside religion or a group-world-view to be identical to one or another central concept of the group to which he belongs himself. Most of all, Inclusivism possesses the explicit or implicit claim that the outsider who is asserted to be identical to one's own self is [actually] subordinated or inferior." "Inklusivismus," in Gerhard Oberhammer, ed., *Inklusivismus: Eine indische Denkform* (Wien: Sammlung De Nobili, 1983), p. 12 (my translation).

interdependence often overlooked by nationalist scholars who study texts in categories sealed by later linguistic identities. Hariścandra practiced an inclusivism of language which undermined the status of Urdu without eliminating it entirely from his cosmos. His collection is only one example of the many ways in which he promoted a Hindu—specifically Vaiṣṇava—cultural view through many different modes and with varying degrees of intensity. The inclusivism of Hariścandra's mild and amusing hybrid poetry is actually a harbinger of separatism and amnesia in South Asian writing. The works of this versatile poet, ironically though not unwittingly, stand at the beginning of a pattern of ever more rigidly defined cultural identities on the subcontinent.