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Rekhta, Poetry in Mixed Language

The Emergence of Khari Boli Literature in North India

Introduction

In one of my classes a student was puzzled by a short poem inserted into an Urdu prose narrative. The poem had hardly any Perso-Arabic vocabulary but was written in the Urdu script as was the rest of the text. She complained that in spite of being a native speaker of Hindi who had learnt the Urdu script she could not tell the difference between Hindi and Urdu was. This spontaneous eruption is in dramatic contrast with the political role the Hindi-Urdu divide played in twentieth-century India, manifesting itself in sentences such as Abdul Haq stating that “Pakistan was not created by Jinnah, nor was it created by Iqbal; it was Urdu that created Pakistan.”² Although since the eighteenth century Hindi and Urdu have developed two distinct literary traditions, the borderlines between the two are far from being as clear as political boundaries.

The papers in this collection show that, apart from the script, the divide was blurred in certain intermediary literary genres even in the late nineteenth century,³ and the example of the perplexed student shows that the uncertainty persists to the present day. Instead of recognising their common linguistic and literary heritage in a plethora of North Indian vernacular dialects that from an outsider’s point of view were simply called *Hindavi*, ‘language of India’, or *Bhākhā*, ‘language’, to distinguish it either from Persian and Arabic or from Sanskrit and Prakrit, discourses on their early literature evolved in the two languages from the eighteenth century onwards that are marked by appropriation, neglect and exclusion,.

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² Addul Haq: ‘Qaumī zabān.’ *Bulletin of the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdu* (16 Feb. 1961), p. 22, quoted in Rai 1991, p. 264.

³ E.g. Orsini 2003 on nineteenth-century Bārahmāsā printed books.

While histories of early Hindi literature tend to be integrative, often including the borderlands of Apabhramsha, Maithili or Dakkani, those of early Urdu either try to restrict themselves to the Khari Boli dialect and to Muslim authors⁴— making allowance for Muslim authors writing in Hindavi dialects other than Khari Boli, such as those of the Avadhi masnavi tradition or, more catholically, for Hindu authors who show some input from Khari Boli. The latter approach is the one adopted from Muhammad Husain Azad’s *Āb-i ḥayāt* (1880) to the most comprehensive recent history of early Urdu, Jain and Jafar (*Tārīkh-i adab-i urdū 1700 tak*, 1998). Though this last work excludes the Avadhi masnavis, the authors are well aware of the vagueness of their approach. They give up the idea of restriction to Muslim authors on the basis that authorship is an element external to language⁵ and include poets central to the Hindi tradition such as Mirabai and Tulsidas because of the Khari Boli features of poems attributed to them. However, they also admit that calling this poetry Urdu would render the Hindi-Urdu distinction meaningless and therefore hail approaches, such as that of Sahil Bukhari, which examine the history of Khari Boli literature in the Perso-Arabic and in the Devanagari scripts together, showing the overlap of Urdu and Hindi traditions.⁶ It is indeed the most suitable approach to investigate the early development of this idiom, all the more because the use of Khari Boli is not closely linked to any writing system. Apart from the Perso-Arabic and in the Devanagari scripts Khari Boli was also written in Gurmukhi in the seventeenth century and later in the Kaithi script. The term Urdu derived from an eighteenth-century phrase referring to the courtly vernacular of Delhi as the language of the exalted court (*zabān-i urdū-i mu‘allā*). In the nineteenth century it has acquired a sense of being separate from Hindi. Since the modern meaning of Urdu implies this separation it is unfortunate to refer to the language with this word before the late eighteenth or nineteenth century, when this contrast was not felt so markedly by its speakers and when the language was not even called Urdu. Instead of referring to the separate early histories of Hindi and Urdu I propose to make a different distinction. In this article the word Hindavi or Hindustani (which is not a colonial invention as some believe⁷) will be used to refer

⁴ The latest and most coherent example of such efforts is Faruqi 2001.

⁵ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, p. 371.

⁶ Sahil Bukhari, ‘Urdū kā qadīmtarīn adab’ *Nuqūsh* 105 (May 1945) and *Urdū kī kahānī* (Lahore, 1975), pp. 160-198, quoted in Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, p. 451.

⁷ Faruqi p. However already the 15check c., R^oajatarangin^oi of Sr^oivara and Suka / edited, critically, and annotated with text-comparative data from original manuscripts and other available material by Srikanth Kaul. Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, Vikrama 2023 [1966] p. 142.v.

generally to the varieties of Hindi and Urdu prior to the articulation of their separate identity and the linguistically neutral phrase Khari Boli will refer to the template dialect of modern Hindi and Urdu.

The most influential recent study to deal with the origins of modern Hindi and Urdu is Shamsur Rahman Faruqi's *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (2001),⁸ which is a close English reworking of his *Urdū kā ibtidā'ī zamāna* (1999). Faruqi's view of Urdu literary history is also exclusivist, and early Urdu literary culture appears limited to Khari Boli literature by Muslim authors. In opposition to this is the general (and official) Hindi stand emphasising the composite aspect of Hindi, which encompasses a surfeit of dialects such as Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Braj Bhasha, Rajasthani, Khari Boli and others. This view is expressed in English in Amrit Rai's *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi-Urdu* (1984), which in turn was based on Suniti Kumar Chatterji's *Indo-Aryan and Hindi* (1942). Rai's examples are taken from both Hindu and Muslim authors.⁹

The polemic is well illustrated by the search for the earliest poet. While Chatterji and Rai trace the development of early Hindi from Apabhramsha and consider Gorakhnath (11th c.) and the Nathpanthis followed by Amir Khusrau (1253–1325) to be the first Hindi authors, Faruqi suggests that Urdu literature began with Mas'ud Sa'd Salman (1046–1121) of Lahore followed by Amir Khusrau. Both speculations are problematic, however. No Gorakhnath manuscript is available prior to the late seventeenth century,¹⁰ and thus we are not able to say with certainty what form of language Gorakhnath used. Similarly, the earliest quote from Khusrau's Hindavi is in the *Sabras* of Vaj'hi of Golkonda written in 1636. Faruqi himself points to the fact that nothing of Mas'ud's and Khusrau's Hindavi corpus is available today and 'the first person whose Hindavī survives in substantial quantity, and with whom Urdu literature can seriously be said to begin', is an author not from the North but from Gujarat, namely Shaikh Bahauddin Bajan (1388–1506)¹¹ of Ahmadabad.

Rekhta as mixed poetry

122 used *hindusthāna vāca* to refer to the vernacular of Hindustan and the seventeenth-century Bītak used the word *hindustāna* for an early form of dialectically mixed Hindi.

⁸ A shorter version of this study appeared in Pollock 2003.

⁹ This Hindi expansionist tendency is refuted by Faruqi, who examined the origins of Urdu as independent of the Hindi and indeed Hindu tradition and labelled Rai's work as 'full of tendentious speculation' and dismissed it in a footnote; Faruqi 2001, p. 1 (note 1).

¹⁰ Singh 1983, p. 56.

¹¹ Faruqi 2001, p. 71.

The Persian word *rekhta* ('poured, interspersed, mixed') had several technical meanings. Prior to the eighteenth century, it was part of musical terminology and also referred to a mode of writing, namely to poetry written in a language that mixes lines, phrases and vocabulary from Hindi and Persian (the reference to Persian also includes the Arabic vocabulary imbibed by Persian), in which the Hindavi component is normally Khari Boli and sometimes Braj Bhasha or a mixture of the two.¹² As a musical term, *Rekhta* appears in Alauddin Barnavi's musicological treatise *Cishtiya bihishtiya* (1655). Barnavi defines *Rekhta* as a kind of text in which one sets the words of both languages to a *rāga* and a *tāla*.¹³ Although Mahmud Sherani's suggestion that this definition of *Rekhta* originated with Amir Khusrau cannot be substantiated, this passage indicates an early link between *Rekhta* and Hindustani music.¹⁴ It is in the same year that another occurrence of *Rekhta* in the sense of 'mixed language' appeared in the colophon of a manuscript of *Vājīd* I am to discuss below. So far no documentation has been found of the same technical use of the term prior to the mid-seventeenth century.

In the eighteenth century *Rekhta* appears also as the name of Khari Boli mixed with Perso-Arabic vocabulary, the language which is today called Urdu. The greatest Urdu poet of the century, Mir, referred to his language not as 'Urdu' but either as Hindi or as *Rekhta*.¹⁵ The meaning of the word, however, varied even within Mir's usage: he used the word *rekhta* interchangeably with *shi'r* (verse).¹⁶ In his *tazkira Nikāt ash-shu'arā*, for example, he called *rekhta* 'poetry which is in the style and

¹² This is what was theorized by Mir in the eighteenth-century, see below.

¹³ 'Every *farsi* —*farsi* being consonant with Hindavi *khayāl*— in which one sets the words of both languages [Persian and Hindavi] to a *raga* and a *tala* is called *rekhta*. This *rekhta* is composed in every *parda* [musical mode], [thus] increasing pleasure and enjoyment'; tr. based on that by Katherine Butler Brown, 'Hindustani music in the time of Aurangzeb', unpublished PhD thesis, SOAS, University of London, 2003, p. 240. The original reads: 'har *fārsī* ki ba *mazmūn-i khayāl-i hindavī muṭābiq bāshad va alfāz-i har do zabān-rā dar yak tāl va yak rāg bar bast namūda bāshand... ān-rā rekhta-rā dar har parda mibandand va zauq va lazzati afzūn mīdahand'. Shahab Sarmadee (ed.), *Tarjamā-i Mānakutūhala va Risāla-i Rāgadarpana*, New Delhi, 1996, xxxii-xxxiii. *Farsi* at this stage was a musical composition sung in the „Khusravi” style of qawwals in Delhi (i.e. that of *qaul* and *tarāna* later known as „qawwali”); see Brown 2003, p. 239.*

¹⁴ Sherani 1926, p. 3.

¹⁵ E.g. *guftagū rekhte mē hamse na kar, yah hamārī zabān hai, pyāre*. [*Kulliyāt-i Mīr* I. 548] 'It is my own tongue, my dear, don't contend to me in *rekhtah*.' (Tr. by Faruqi in Faruqi 2001 p. 23).

¹⁶ *sar sabz-i hind hī mē nahī kuch ye rekhte; hai ghūm mere shi'r kī sāre dakhān ke bīc* [*Kulliyāt-i Mīr* II. 790]. 'My poetry grows green not only in the northern planes. In all the Deccan too the praises of my verse resound.' (Tr. by Islam and Russell 1969 p. 215)

manner of Persian poetry, but in the language of the exalted court of Delhi'.¹⁷ In this work, he distinguished between six kinds of rekhta, two based on style and four based on the linguistic mixing of Hindi with Persian, i.e. (1) Persian and Hindi lines alternating; (2) the same line half in Persian and half in Hindi; (3) the use of Persian verbs, prepositions and conjunctions within a Hindi line, and (4) the use of appropriate Persian phrases in Hindi.¹⁸ (The list in fact is not exhaustive, and Ali Jawad Zaidi in his *History of Urdu literature* presents yet another linguistic type: (5) Persian couplets with Hindi refrains.¹⁹) In the eighteenth century Mir, as his poems illustrate, only approved of the fourth type and normally used the word rekhta in a restricted sense to refer to the fourth type only. For the sake of convenience, I will refer the other forms of rekhta as 'macaronic' poems, borrowing the term from Italian renaissance literature, where the word *maccheronico* referred to mixed Latin-Italian verse.²⁰ The fact that in Gujarat or in the Deccan the mixed language was not called Rekhta, and Mir's consciousness that he wrote in Rekhta suggests that in the eighteenth century Urdu poetry was perceived as the inheritor not only of Dakkani but also of earlier Rekhta experiments in North India.

In this essay, if not indicated otherwise, I will call Rekhta any poetry in either the extended Persian, the Gurmukhi, the Kaithi or the Nagari scripts, which *consciously* mixes the vernacular Hindavi (including Braj Bhasha) and the cosmopolitan Persian. This Rekhta is different from *Sadhukkari*, the *spontaneously* mixed literary language of the Sants, that blends elements from various North Indian dialects and languages. Although *Sadhukkari* may include Sanskrit and Arabo-Persian words it is rather a blend of several vernaculars. As we shall see, in north India Rekhta was a literary idiom that was (a) first practised in certain Sufi circles from the early sixteenth or maybe late fifteenth centuries, (b) patronised in the Mughal court, (c) taken up occasionally by Nirgun sants, (d) by some Sikh authors of the *Janamsākhīs* (e) by Krishna bhaktas, (f) by syncretistic authors and (g) court poets in Rajasthan in the seventeenth and particularly in the eighteenth centuries.

¹⁷ *rekhta ki shi'r ast ba-taur-i shi'r-i fārsī ba-zabān-i urdū-i mu'allā-i shāhjahānābād-i dehlavī*. Khan, n.d., p. 1.

¹⁸ Khan n.d., pp. 186-7.

¹⁹ Zaidi 1983, p. 30; this type can also be conceived as a variety within Mir's first category.

²⁰ Ugo Enrico Paoli, *Il latino maccheronico*, Firenze 1959, quoted in Phukan 2001, p. 42.

Early Rekhta poetry in the Persian script figures to a greater or lesser extent in most histories of Urdu literature²¹, but no study exists of its counterpart in the Nagari, Kaithi and Gurmukhi scripts. Nagari Rekhta (i.e. Rekhta in these latter three scripts) was composed by mainly Hindu Vaishnava, Sant or Sikh authors since the late sixteenth century. It is based on Khari Boli (the dialect associated with Delhi in its origins) and written down in the Nagari, Kaithi or Gurmukhi scripts either at the moment of composition or later. This Rekhta is a literary language with a (usually loose) Khari Boli template (that is a base language or grammatical structure) and a relatively high Perso-Arabic vocabulary compared to Braj works. In this way, although linguistically not different from Urdu, which was also called Rekhta in the eighteenth century, Gurmukhi Rekhta is part of the Sikh lore while its Nagari and Kaithi counterparts are included into Braj Bhasha or the Sant devotional tradition. As such Nagari Rekhta works entered in literary histories and manuscript catalogues along with Braj Bhasha texts since they tended to use the metres and themes of Braj and Nirgun Sant literature. Many of their authors wrote the majority of their works not in Rekhta but in Braj Bhasha or in *Sadhukkari*.

In spite of using Khari Boli and the Nagari script, this genre was not hailed as the precursor of modern Hindi literature, even though Rekhta was produced well into the nineteenth century and was, directly or indirectly, influential in the development and acceptance of modern Hindi. If the history of Nagari Rekhta is taken into consideration, then modern Hindi should not be considered as a language originating only at the artificial experiments of the Fort William College but also as the continuation of a now forgotten literary idiom. Yet Rekhta became neglected from the 1850s onwards, the time of Bharatendu Harishchandra. Instead of allying themselves with this literature, Bharatendu and his circle fought against ‘Urdu Begam’ and should probably be held responsible for denying the existence of literature in Nagari Rekhta as a possible meeting point between Hindi and Urdu.

Today it is only a small group of Braj Bhasha scholars who know about the trend of writing Krishna poetry in Nagari Rekhta, current mainly in the eighteenth century. Although Nagari Rekhta is incomparably smaller in its output than the mainstream Braj Bhasha or Sant literature, and its poetry has not exercised such influence as the Avadhi narratives, there are beautiful pieces in it. Indeed, many of the

²¹ E.g. Jalibi 1977 pp. 19-83, Zaidi 1983 pp. 19-35, Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, pp. 371-462, vol. V. pp. 9-97.

best poets of the eighteenth century, such as Anandghan (Ghan Ānand), Nagaridas and Brajnidhi, tried their hands at Rekhta, along with many lesser-known authors like Manohardas and Rasrashi.

In this essay I will present a sketch of the history of Rekhta and Khari Boli poetry in North India. In the first part, I will talk about the unsubstantiated claims to early Rekhta and describe the development of Rekhta through its sixteenth-century extant versions manifest in the different varieties of macaronic poetry written chiefly in the Perso-Arabic script marginalised after the success of Vali's *Dīvān* in Delhi. In the second part, I will show how in seventeenth century north India Nagari-script Rekhta coexisted with sporadic Urdu-Rekhta, and I will follow up its record in sectarian and court literature until the mid-nineteenth century, when it became neglected due to the exigency of defining clear linguistic and literary boundaries.

A fundamental difficulty in writing the early history of Hindavi is the lack of philological background work to the texts studied. Even when we have critical editions based on manuscripts, we cannot be sure that the text in a later manuscript represents the same linguistic situation as at the time of its composition. One cannot state with certainty that the text of the critical edition of works as the *Bikaṭ kahānī*, based on manuscripts dating from at least hundred years after the death of the author, corresponds to the language of its birth in the early seventeenth century. As we are going to see traditional attributions to early authors found in relatively late handwritten books are far from reliable since it was common in early modern South Asia to link poems to the prestige of established names. But the undependability on manuscript transmission is only one of the many problems. An immense part of early Hindavi literature still lies unpublished in manuscript collections, and the picture that we can get on the basis of published material is bound to be distorted. The published material is, more often than not, available in publications whose principles are far from that of a critical edition. The editors often standardise not only the orthography but also the language. Studies on early literature often give examples without specifying their sources and in this way the reliability of their quotes is uncertain. This paper aims to follow up the emergence of Khari Boli literature in north India by a search for works in early dated manuscripts. Then by using this material as a point of reference in language and style, poems with less reliable transmission can be examined. In this way I will present traditional attributions to sixteenth and

seventeenth-century poets when the styles of the individual works are consistent with that of other works found in dated manuscripts.

A philological approach is by definition restrictive since it cannot take into consideration the rich oral tradition that is almost impossible to document today. Already Amir Khusraw mentioned that he had composed poems in Hindavi, and there must be other Indo-Persian poets who also did so. This Hindavi poetry, however, did not initially enjoy much prestige and was probably never committed to writing. We do not have many documents about the spread of the speech of Delhi, the ‘Dehlavi’, throughout the Delhi Sultanate as a lingua franca. It was from this lingua franca that the first documented literary languages based on Khari Boli, namely Dakkani and Gujri, emerged in areas south of the modern ‘Hindi belt’ (see **Samira Sheikh in this volume**). Although poetry with Khari Boli features or macaronic stanzas may have existed prior to the sixteenth century in north India, due to the lack of reliable sources observation on the nature of such material can hardly be more than conjecture.

Claims to beginnings

Khari Boli literature, just like that of all modern languages, emerged at a certain point in History. It can be argued that the spoken language in all probability with links to the literary Shauraseni Apabhramsha of North-Western India developed into idioms of which among others Khari Boli was the literary version. Some Hindu scholars argued for the continuity of linguistic forms in the literary languages Apabhramsha and Khari Boli. Their ideas would be supported by lines such as the one from the *Apabhramshaprakaraṇa* of Hemacandra’s *Shabdānushāsana*,

bhallā huā ju māriā bahiṇi mahārā kantu;
(*Shabdānushāsana* 8, 4, 351)²²

It is good, my sister, that my husband was killed;

This line indeed shows Khari Boli and Panjabi features indicating at a period of development when the two idioms were not separated, a phenomenon attested also by the Panjabi elements of early Dakkani. Most of the Khari Boli features in this work and in other Apabhramsha compositions, however, are isolated instances and are far from any use of systematic Khari Boli as can be seen from the second line of the same couplet,

²² Vyas 1981 p. 8.

lajjejjamtu vayamsiahu jāi bhaggā gharu emtu.

I would have been put to shame among my friends, if he had run away (from the battle) and come home.

It can, therefore, be more fruitful to examine extant material that shows a systematic use of Khari Boli. The claim to earliest extant Hindavi-Persian Rekhta verses comes from a poet who flourished after the Muslim conquest of north India, namely from Mir Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-e Shakar, popularly known as Baba Farid (1175-1265).²³ There are several poems in Hindavi attributed to him, but in the absence of early manuscripts it is impossible to say whether any of them were written by him or by a namesake from the sixteenth century. The following *naẓm*, for example, is quoted in different Urdu literary histories. According to Jain and Jafar the language of the poem is too modern to date from the thirteenth century (Perso-Arabic words and phrases are in bold),²⁴

'ishq kā rāz yah nyārā hai; juz madad pīr ke na cārā hai.
*tan ke dhone se dil jo hotā hai pūk; peshrau anbiyā ke hote khūk.*²⁵
*khāk milne se jo khudā pāē; gā'e bailān bhī vaṣilām ho jāē.*²⁶

Comment [I1]: Metrum (ha minden igaz): khafif –u– /u-u/--// (vagy utolso utem; uu-)

Strange are the misteries of divine love;
And nothing helps here except the help of the divine guide.
If the heart could become pure by washing the body,
Pigs would enjoy precedence over the divine seers;
If one could get to God by applying mud to the body,
Cattle would as well attain divinity.

(Translated by Ali Jawad Zaidi)

²³ Zaidi 1993, p. 20.

²⁴ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I., p. 381.

²⁵ The unusual forms *pūk* and *khūk* obviously stand for *pāk* and *khāk*.

²⁶ Zaidi 1993 p. 20. A variant with some Panjabi features is quoted in Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I., p. 381. They give its source as an old album (*bayāz*) found by 'Abdul Haqq and published in Haqq, *Urdū kī ibtidā'ī nashv-o numā mē ṣūfiyā'e kirām kā kām*, Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū, Karachi 1977, p. 12.

Probably the best known example of macaronic Rekhta is a popular poem attributed to Amir Khusrau Dehlavi (c. 1253-1325) in which the first half of each line is in Persian and the second in Braj Bhasha:

*zi ḥāl-i miskīn makun tagāful, durāya nainā banāya batyā;
ki tāb-i hijrān na dāram ai jān, na lehu kāhe lagāya chatyā.*

...

*ba-haqq-i ān rūz-i fazl-i maḥshar, ki dād mā-rā fareb khusrau
samīpa man ke davārī rakhū, jo jān pāū parāya rakhyā.²⁷*

Do not be negligent towards this poor one— You hide your eyes and invent excuses.

Since I do not have the strength to bear the separation, o my love, why don't you embrace me at once?

...

I swear by the Day of Gathering that she deceived me, Khusrau,
I will keep a sentry near my heart if I find my beloved guarded by someone else.²⁸

A similar composition is attributed to Khusrau's contemporary Amir Hasan Sijzi²⁹ Dehlavi (d. 1337):

*har lahza āyad dar dilam dekhū use tak jāya kar;
gūyam ḥikāyat ḥijr-i khud bā ān ṣanam jīv lāya kar.*

...

*bas ḥīla kardam, āy ḥasan, bejān shudam az dam ba-dam;
kaise rahū tujh jīva bin tum le gae jang lāya kar.³⁰*

Comment [I2]: A fazl helyett nem fasl-nak kene lennie? Fazl: grace, fasl: season; decision, judgment (mint faislah). Davāri change to davāri

Comment [I3]: Metrum: rajaz muthamman saalim - - u - / - - u - / - - u - / - - u - / - - CHECK metrical corrections against original

²⁷ This text is quoted on the basis of Partab Singh's album in Sherani 1931, p. 88. Panchal (2001 p. 75) gives a variant version without referring to an original source. The final couplet, for example, is as follows: 'ba-haq āmmah ki roz-e maḥshar, badād mā-rā fareb Khusrau/ so pīt man kī durāya rākho, jo jāya pāū piyā kī khatiyā.

²⁸ The meaning of the last line is unclear.

²⁹ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, pp. 419-422.

³⁰ Zaidi 1993, p. 28. Jalibi (1977 p. 35) and Jain and Jafar (1998 vol. I. p. 420) give a slightly different text based on 'Abdul Qadil Sarvari: 'Aligarh tārikh-i adab-i urdū pp. 148-9. Jalibi says that the poem was found in an old album at the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-yi Urdu (Pakistan). Neither Zaidi nor Sarvari had given any indication of source.

Each moment I feel like going out to catch a glimpse of her,
setting my heart on that beloved I myself tell the story of my separation.

...

I tried many tricks, o Hasan, at every instant I lost my life.

How can I remain without you, my life? You have taken it and brought war.

There are similar claims for other poets to be the precursors of Khari Boli and of Rekhta literature by thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Sufis such as Farid's son-in-law 'Ali Aḥmad Sābir Kaleri (Kalyari) (d. 1265), Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri (d. 1273), 'Ali Qalandar Panipati (d. 1363), Shaikh Sharafuddin Maneri (d. 1381) and others.³¹ There are candidates for early Rekhta and Khari Boli with Hindu background as well, such as the fourteenth-century poet-saint from Maharashtra, Namdev:

*sāvadha sāvadha bhaja le re rājā; nahī āvai aisī ghaḍī jū.
uttama naratanu pāyā re bhāī; **gāphila** kyō huvā divāne jū.
jinne janma ḍārā hai tuja kūṃ bisara gayā unakā gyāna jū.
phira pastāyegā **dagā** pāyegā; nikala jāyegā āvasāna jū.*

...

*aisī bāta sunake nāmāṃ sāvadha huvā; guru ke pāva miṭhī ḍārī.
māī ānātha dubale sharana saye tuja kū; āba jo merī lāja rākhī jū.*

(Pad 192)³²

Worship the King with complete alertness; you will never have the opportunity again.

O my Brother, you received the highest estate, a human body; why have you become so negligent, so deranged!

You abandoned the knowledge of the one who conferred life upon you.

You will repent, will be cheated, and you will go away in the end.

...

Hearing such words Nāmdev became alert and took the dust of the guru's feet.

I took refuge with you as a frail orphan; now, please protect my honour.

³¹ See Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, pp. 383, 422-8; Zaidi 1993, p. 19 and Rizvi 1978 vol. I, pp. 327-8.

³² Callewaert and Lath 1989, p. 360.

In the absence of early evidence such as manuscripts or dated references, the attribution and the dating of all these poems are problematic and they may not reflect the linguistic situation of the times of their putative authors.³³ To illustrate the pitfalls of traditional attributions let us have a closer look at the most famous of these early Rekhtas, namely that of Khusrau. As has been mentioned, no manuscript evidence for his Hindavi exists prior to the quotes in Vaj'hī's *Sabras* (1636). The *rekhta* quoted above first emerged as Khusrau's in the album of Partāb Singh copied in 1719. Since then the poem started to appear in *tazkiras* under the name of Khusrau. The same *rekhta*, however, is also present in an earlier album dated to 1652/1656, which was in possession of Mahmud Khan Sherani. Here, however, the *takhallus*, pen name, inserted into the last but one line is not of Khusrau but of a certain Ja'far, about whom nothing is known,

ba-mihr-i ān shokh carkh-i bad-mihr (ki) burd m̄-rā shikeb ja'far.

*su p̄ta man m̄h durāya rākhū jo tūha p̄vō parāna katyā.*³⁴

I swear by the love for that coquettish beauty that the unkind fate took away my patience, Ja'far,³⁵

I will hide my love in my heart, when I am killed at your feet.

³³ Baba Farid's earliest documented poems as quoted by Bajan (1388–1506) and in the *Guru Granth* (1603-4) do not show the systematic use of Khari Boli features with which some later authors credit him (see Jalibi 1977, pp. 27, 35). As far as Maneri is concerned, two independent collections of his spiritual discourses agree that the mystic was inimical to Hindavi singing because of the frankness of its expression (See below). Although Namdev's songs are present in manuscripts from the second half of the sixteenth century, namely in the *Goindwal pothis* and in the Fatehpur manuscript, the *padas* with substantial Khari Boli elements and Perso-Arabic vocabulary are not there. The song quoted above, for example, was found only in an undated copy of a lost manuscript from Pandharpur. The poem found in the undated Pandharpur manuscript is taken into the critical edition from Bhagirath Mishra and Raj Narayan Maurya (eds.): *Sant Nāmdev kī Hindī padāvalī*, Pune 1964. Similar claims to Kabir's Khari Boli poems (e.g. *rahanā nahi desa*, *birānā hai* or *sumirana bina gotā khāoge*, see Rai 1991, pp. 157–9) cannot be confirmed due to the lack of early written evidence since none of these poems is present in the earliest available manuscripts dating from between 1570 and 1681 (see Callewaert 2000). In his *History of Rajasthani Literature* Hiralal Maheshwari (1980, p. 9) claims that occasional Khari Boli usages (sometimes mixed with Panjabi) occur in Rajasthani bardic literature such as in Badar Dhadhi's (fl. c. 1450) *Vir māyan* written in the *nīsānī* metre and in Sandu Mala's (1573-1679) *jhūlnās* (*Mahārājā Rāysinghī rā*, *Akbar Pātsahjī rā*, *Dīvān Pratāpsinghī rā* etc.) as well as in the *arillas* (also called *candrāyaṇas*) of Kesaudas Godara and Vajind and in the songs attributed to Qazi Mahmud (15th c.). Most of these works, however, are still inaccessible. There are, however, indications that Maheshwari's statement should be treated with caution. The *Vir māyan*, for example, dates not from the fifteenth but from the nineteenth century (Menariya 1978 p. 222). In spite of the fact that Vajind or rather Vajid was the author of a Rekhta composition (not mentioned by Maheshwari), his *arillas* do not show Khari Boli features.

³⁴ Sherani 1931 p. 88.

³⁵ The line can also be interpreted as 'I swear by the love of that coquettish, unkind Fate, who took away my patience.'

Moreover, Sherani demonstrated that the sixteen-morae form of its metre (~~~~ /~~~~ /~~~~ /~~~~) called *mutaqārib fu'ūlu fi'lun shānzdah ruknī* was not used before the mid-fifteenth century.³⁶

Nevertheless, one needs not be over-sceptical and should also take into consideration that 'the language of Delhi' was already used and understood by literati during the Sultanate period. It is also possible that there were poems in a Khari Boli template circulated orally but are lost today since by the early sixteenth century 'Dehlavi' had become the vehicle of the Sufis of Gujarat and was cultivated in the courts of Deccan and Gujarat as a literary language. Khari Boli elements were also current in the mixed language of the Nirgun Sants as attested for example in the vocabulary of the *Guru Granth* where verbal and pronominal forms such as *kiā, gaiā, mujha, tujha, mujhai, tujhai, tumhārā/tumhārī/tumhāre* etc. figure in abundance.

The search for mixed Hindavi-Persian, Rekhta, and for Khari Boli features shows that most early claims link Rekhta with Muslims rather than with Hindus, and raising the expectation that the use of Khari Boli and of Rekhta was more closely linked to Muslims. But can anything at all be known about the literary Hindavi that Muslims used during the Sultanate period? After all, the dialect of the Hindavi romances was Avadhi, ever since Maulana Daud's *Candāyan* (1399).

References to the use of Hindavi as well as Hindavi phrases and sometimes even poems are embedded into Persian works, such as the letters or the discourses (*malfūzāt*) of leading sufis delivered to a select gathering of disciples and visitors.³⁷ These discourses were embellished with didactic poetry, anecdotes and apophthegms. In the absence of early Hindavi manuscripts, it is in the works of the *malfūzāt* genre that a systematic and critical search can reveal the earliest recorded occurrences of Hindavi poetry. Although pieces of this genre may date from centuries after the death of the *pīr*, some of them are reliable sources of information about the times of the Sultanate. Some *malfūzāt* were discourses recorded soon after they were delivered by a spiritual master and some were collected by a descendant or disciple of a sufi after his death. The most important source for early Hindavi, the *Surūr aṣ-Ṣudūr*³⁸, belongs

³⁶ Sherani 1931 pp. 91-94.

³⁷ Bailey 1930, pp. 205-8 based on works by Mahhmud Sherani, Shamsullah Qadri and 'Abdul Hay Nadvi. See also Jalibi 1977, pp. 26-9 and Orsini 2007.

³⁸ The manuscript of this work is found in Habibganj, Aligarh Muslim University. See also Nisar Ahmad Faruqi, *Naqd-i malfūzāt*, Delhi 1989, pp. 26-7a.

to the second category. It contains the sayings of Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri (d. 1273), the successor of Khwaja Mu'inuddin Ajmeri³⁹ as recorded by his grandson and successor Shaikh Fariduddin bin 'Abdul 'Aziz (d. 1334).⁴⁰

What is attested in works from the fourteenth century onwards is that Sufis and other musicians used Hindavi in their musical gatherings in the North, and this may have been a tradition going back to earlier times. A spiritual discourse of Nizamuddin Auliya dated from 1316 tells us how the weaver Shaikh Ahmad Nahravani (fl. 1235)⁴¹ became the disciple of Faqih Madhaw, the imam of the Jami' Masjid at Ajmer, who had been entranced by Nahravani's Hindavi song and "said to him that it was unfortunate that he was just wasting his melodious voice in singing Hindavi songs, and advised him to memorise the Qur'ān."⁴²

The use of Hindavi is also associated with the person whom Nizamuddin Auliya credited with the introduction of *sama'* singing to Delhi, namely Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri (d. 1273).⁴³ The *Surūr as-Sudūr* quotes several Hindavi verses attributed to Hamiduddin:

jo bistarai to sabai sikata (jo) samkoya;
*sau sau eka puruṣa ke nāmva biralā jānai koya.*⁴⁴
Everything that expands, basks and shrinks:⁴⁵
Hundreds of names for the one God — the outstanding man understands it.

The Hindavi of this poem (with the exception of the *-ā* ending in the word *biralā*, which suggest Khari Boli usage) and that of the other ones found in the same

³⁹ Faruqi 1996, p. 426.

⁴⁰ Literary histories also refer to the *malḥūzāt* containing the sayings of Baba Farid (e.g. Zaidi 1993, p. 19). It is recorded, for example, that Baba Farid, who is supposed to have used Hindavi in his conversations when living in Ajmer and Delhi, used to call a friend 'bhaiyā' (Bailey 1930, p. 205) The *malḥūzāt* containing his sayings, 'Ali Asghar's *Javāhir-i Farīdī*, dates from the Mughal era, three hundred years after the time of the Shaikh with the aim of glorifying the spiritual achievements of Baba Farid and his descendants. Rizvi 1978, p. 13.

⁴¹ Nizamuddin Auliya stated that Nahravani had been present at the *sama'* gathering in 1235 where a Persian verse produced such powerful extasy in Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki that he died a few days later. Shaikh Baha'uddin Zakariya (1182-1262) also talked with respect about him. See Faruqi 1996, pp. 325-6.

⁴² Faruqi 1996, p. 326.

⁴³ Faruqi 1996, p. 426.

⁴⁴ *Surūr as-Sudūr* p. 69, quoted in Rizvi 1978 vol. I, p. 327.

⁴⁵ The first line of this couplet seems to be corrupt. The metre is close to that of a *dohā*.

work⁴⁶ is what later was called Braj Bhasha. This instance warns us that the Hindavi favoured by North Indian Sufis in their gatherings was probably closer to Braj Bhasha than to Khari Boli or Rekhta.⁴⁷

Rekhta at the Mughal court

In the sixteenth century Rekhta seems to have been practiced both in Sufi circles and in the Mughal court. From Babur's evidence below and the existence of Rekhta attributed to other sixteenth-century Persian poets such as Saqqa, Mu'aiyid and Mashhadi, one can argue that the earliest Rekhta writing may coincide with the beginning of Mughal times. One might even suspect that the poems attributed to Khusrau and to the other poets mentioned above date from this century. Prior to the early eighteenth-century success of Vali's *Dīvān*, however, no serious effort was made to record Rekhta poetry in the north. The lack of manuscripts is indicative of the neglect of poetry that had not found its way into a larger composition and also suggests that the use of Rekhta must not have been very widespread, or that it may have been an oral genre considered too frivolous or undignified for committing to writing.⁴⁸

An important pre-Mughal religious lineage that used Rekhta is that of Miran Sayyid Muhammad from Jaunpur (d. 1505),⁴⁹ who after a pilgrimage to Mecca travelled widely in India including Gujarat and Bedar in the Deccan and eventually died in Baluchistan. In 1497, in Ahmadabad, probably prompted by the approaching millenium of Islam in 1591/2, he declared himself a Mahdi, the leader who is expected to rise before judgement day. He is credited with the use of mixed language.⁵⁰ Among the nine couplets attributed to him in various sources one is in the Rekhta form in a Perso-Arabic metre:

⁴⁶ On p. 74 *birale cīna jo rogīna gāī jaugīna karī guna gāī ko dosa; ayana rasāyana saṃcarai raṃga jo mārai osa*. On p. 302: *auṣadhi bhejāna dhani gāī ou bhāī birahīna; auṣadhi doṣa na jānāī nāri na cetāī tīna*. Both are quoted in Rizvi 1978 vol. I, p. 327.

⁴⁷ The same phenomenon is recorded in the sixteenth century in Mir Abdul Wahid Bilgrami's *Haqāiq-i Hindī* (1566). In this work Bilgrami interpreted the Radha-Krishna imagery in a Sufi light and the examples of Hindavi quoted are in Braj Bhasha.

⁴⁸ I owe this last suggestion to Allison Busch.

⁴⁹ A study of their contribution to Urdu can be found in Sherani: 'Dā'ira ke mahdaviyom kā urdū adab kī ta'mīr mē hiṣṣa' In.: *Maqālāt-i Sherānī* vol. II, pp. 146-242. On the beginnings of Mahdism and its connection to Jaunpur see Rizvi 1965, pp. 74-5 and McLeanCHECK.

⁵⁰ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, pp. 428-33.

For poor people, sufficient are water and bread.

After Babur, there is not much dated early manuscript evidence for Rekhta in the North for more than a century. The most important manuscript is the album written by Jaimal Thal in 1652-56, which contained Ja'far's Rekhta that was later attributed to Khusrau. Apart from Persian compositions, this album contains poetry in the mixed language by several poets as can be known from the pen names: Jamali, Faizi, Bairam, Jani, Sedan, Fatah Muhammad, Ja'far and an unknown author.⁵⁷ With the exception of Fatah Muhammad, all these authors produced macaronic poetry with Persian template. One poem later attributed to Khusrau is in Persian but two words can be read as a pun and be interpreted as Rekhta,

guftam gahe dar khāna-yi ma'mūn-i tū bāsham;

*guftā ki dar-īn khāna balā'īst mamānī.*⁵⁸

I said that I would be for a while in your safe house;

She said that calamity resides in this house — don't stay!

And reading it with the Indian meaning of the words *māmūn* and *mumānī*,

I said that I would be for a while in the house of your uncle.

She said that her aunt was a calamity in that house.

There is a poem in the same album under the pen-name 'Jamali' who must be identical with Maulana Hamid bin Fazlullah known as Shaikh Jamali Kamboh (d. 1536). He travelled to Mecca and to other Muslim lands and in his later life lived in Delhi as a member of the Suhrawardi order and maintained good contacts with Babur and Humayun whom he accompanied on his expedition to Gujarat. He was a Persian poet and author of *Siyār ul- 'ārifīn* (*Biographies of Holy Men*, c. 1530-36), a tazkira on

⁵⁷ The identification of the poets with known personalities is not without problems. The names of Sedan and Ja'far do not figure anywhere else in literary histories. (There is however, a Braj Bhasha work on conjuring called *Adbhūt vilās* written in 1638 attributed a certain Mira Sedan Guhar who may be identical with our author. A manuscript of this work is mentioned in Menariya 1942 vol. III, pp. 228-9.) Three other names present a different challenge since there were several poets with the names Faizi, Bairam and Jani.

⁵⁸ Sherani 1931, p. 76.

the lives of Chishti and Suhrawardi holy men dedicated to Humayun.⁵⁹ Jamali's poem in the album is in Persian with an abundance of Hindavi words:⁶⁰

ān parī-rukhsār cūn shāna ba cotī mīkunad, jān darāz-i 'āshiqān-rā 'umr-i choṭī mīkunad.

cashm-rā qaṣṣāb sāzad khaṅjar az ghamza zanad; 'ishqbāzān-rā judā boṭī zi boṭī mīkunad.

cūn zanad khaṅjar ba jānam khūn zi jānam mīcakad; hamcū murg-i nūn basmal lot-poṭī mīkunad.

bar darat āyam raqīb-at gūyad-am dar khāna nīst; īn cunūn kambakht bā mā bāt khoṭī mīkunad.

dar rah-i 'ishqat jamālī gashta (cūn) zār-o nizār; 'āqibat az muflisī dar tah lāgoṭī mīkunad.

When that fairy-faced woman is combing her hair, she makes the long life of the lovers short.

She makes her eye into a butcher and turns her glances into a dagger. She cuts into pieces the enamoured ones.

When she thrusts her dagger into my heart blood drips from my heart and it rolls about like a half-sacrificed fowl.

I come to your door but your doorkeeper /my rival/ tells me that you are not at home; that wretched one speaks to me so falsely.

On the path of your love Jamali has become miserable. Out of poverty, in the end, he ties a loincloth in several layers on his waist.⁶¹

Another, incomplete Rekhta of Jamali which, according to Sherani, is present in several tazkiras and albums, uses similar phrases:

khvār shudam zār shudam luṭ gayā; dar rah-i 'ishq-i tū kamar tūṭṭā hai.

garci badam guft raqīb-i kutṭan; uskā kahā mat karo yah jhūṭṭā hai.

gāh nagufta ki jamālī tū baiṭh; tham karo kyā apnā karam phuṭṭā hai.⁶²

⁵⁹ On Jamali and his *Siyār ul- 'arīfīn* see Siddiqui 1979, pp. 82-98.

⁶⁰ Jalibi (1977, p. 52) says that the poem is found in a manuscript album (nr. 3/633) at the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-yi Urdu, Karachi. This might well be the same album since it does not figure in the catalogue of Sherani's manuscripts donated to Punjab University. See Husain 1968.

⁶¹ There is a word play here. If a loincloth can be tied in several layers, it means that its wearer is extremely emaciated. The idiom 'to tie a loincloth' also means to renounce the world

I became wretched and weak; I am plundered. – On the path of your love one breaks his back.

Though my mischievous rival spoke ill of me, “don't do what he says, he speaks falsely!”

Didn't he say many times, “Jamālī, sit down here, pull yourself together, is your fate broken?”

Though Ja'far's Rekhta in the album mentioned above used Persian half-lines mixed with Braj Bhasha, the blend of Persian and Khari Boli of this last poem proved to be more popular among sixteenth-century authors.

There are even more occasional Rekhta poems by Persian poets from Humayun's and Akbar's time, as the examples of Bahram Saqqa Bukhari and his contemporaries Mu'ayyid Beg Kur, 'the Blind', and Mashhadi show. The identical rhythm and the rhymes of their Rekhtas suggest that all may have been written for the same poetic gathering, and they are a one-off experiment.⁶³ The first quotation is by Saqqa, the second by Mu'ayyid and the third by Mashhadi,

[1]

bāz hindū baca-t qaṣḍ-i dilam dhartī hai; kūch nahīm jāno az īn khasta (ki) kyā⁶⁴ kartī hai.

cīn bar abrū zada barbasta kaṭāra⁶⁵ ba-miyām; cal cal ay dil manigar tūjh kanē⁶⁶ ū lartī hai.⁶⁷

hāt mahndī lāyḥā⁶⁸ dast farū burda ba khūn; kih base kushta zi dastān-i gam-ash martī hai.

...

⁶² Sherani 1930, p. 16, Jalibi 1977, p. 52.

⁶³ The poems appear in an album which was possibly written between 1556 and 1572 and was found by Nazir Ahmad at the Library of Habibganj. See Nazir Ahmad: 'Salāṭīn-i mugaliya kā nayā kalām.' *Fiqr-o nazar-i alīgarh*, Jan 1963, quoted in Jafar and Jain 1998 vol. I, p. 444. Sherani (1931, pp. 78-79) quotes f. 183 of the manuscript of Saqqa's *Dīvān* as the source of the poem but does not give the details of the manuscript. Jain and Jafar (1998 vol. I, p. 444) mention that copies of this *Dīvān* are found in the Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna and at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.

⁶⁴ Emendation from *kī*.

⁶⁵ Emendation from *katāra*.

⁶⁶ Emendation from *tū ci kunī*.

⁶⁷ Zaidi (1993, p. 29) gives a metrically correct variant reading of the first two couplets, but his source is not indicated.

⁶⁸ This word is problematic. The metre would require two short syllables and a long one.

cup kar ay dil-shuda saqqā zi gam-i yār manāl; gar jafā raft ba jān tū miyān kartī hai.

An Indian girl wants to take my heart again.

— You do not know what she is doing to this poor one!

With brows knit and the dagger tucked to the waist,

Go, get away, o my heart, do not watch, she is fighting with you.

The henna on her hand is as if she had plunged it into blood,

So many die at the hands of the grief for her.!

...

Be silent, o lost-in-love Saqqa, don't lament of the sorrow caused by the beloved,

If torment penetrated your soul, you act as its sheath.

[2]

Har gah ān sāqī-yi hindī ki tarab kartī hai; kāsa-yi mai zi sharāb-i lab-i khud bhartī⁶⁹ hai.

khāham ahvāl-i dil-i khwesh bigūyam bā tū; lek az nāzukī-yi tab'-yi tū-am dartī hai. gasht cūn qīṣṣa-o afsāna ba har pūr-o javān; ki mu'aiyid zi gam-i 'ishq-i bute martī hai.⁷⁰

Whenever the Hindi Saqi is making merriment she fills my cup with the wine of her lips.

I want to tell you the condition of my heart but I fear because your disposition is so fragile. The news, like stories and fairy tales, reached all, young and old, that Mu'aiyid dies out of his love for an idol

[3]

hindū-i cashm-i tū goftam ki ba-man larī hai; raft dar khanda o goftā ki mugal dārtī hai.⁷¹

I complained that her black eyes were ever at war with me.

She burst into laughter, "Oh! the Mughal is afraid."

Common to the authors of these Rekhta authors is that they are Persian poets and their Rekhta is scant. While they use the Persian ghazal form, their rhymes and end-rhymes

⁶⁹ The original reads *bartī*, the emendation is by Jafar and Jain.

⁷⁰ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, p. 444 and Zaidi 1993, p. 29.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

are in Hindavi and the rest of the lines are to a varying extent in Persian conforming to Mir's third category, namely the use of Persian verbs, prepositions and conjunctions within a Hindi line. The feminine is not a fortunate solution in the rhymes. It might be due to Dakkani influence where the protagonist can be feminine or maybe it was used for masculine either in this form or pronounced as *-e* for masculine plural. Some critics have argued that this confusion is due to the authors' limited acquaintance with Hindavi.⁷²

Jaimal's album also contains a poem with the *takhalluṣ* "Bairam". Bairam is a Turkish name meaning "the Festival of 'Id". The only literary figure known to us with this pen name is Abdurrahim's father, Bairam Khan (1525?-1561), author of Persian and Turki *Dīvāns*.⁷³ Even though the poem is not found in these *Dīvāns*, and we cannot exclude the possibility that the poem was composed by another person known by this name, the Turkish pen name suggests Mughal authorship,

*dilā kun yād-i ān sā'at darūn-i gor jab sove; 'azāb-i sakht-tarīn⁷⁴ bāshad ki lohū
ānsuvān rove.*

*na ānjā khwesh nai qurbat na sāthī bāp aur bhāī; na zan farzand ko belī dar-ān tārīk
tanhāī.*

*biāyad jānsitān nāgah cū⁷⁵ malak ul-maut darbūrat; jo haigā jīv kar sancā kunad
dar yak zamān gārat.*

*tihī raftand ān mardum jinhō ke lākh the pāle; na bā-khud burd yak jītal ki rete hāth
uṭh cāle.*

...

*gumān dāram dar īn dunyā do gaz ghar bās arū māfī; pasārā dūr kar candīn cū
luqmān bāndh rah ṭāfī.*

*(ki) bairām naqd jo hove (to) ṣarf-i rāh-i ū kīje; are jo chāḍkar jānān harā'in khāe le
līje.⁷⁶*

O heart, remember the hour when you'll sleep inside a tomb. There will be such terrible torment that you will weep tears of blood.

⁷² Mas'ud Hasan Rizvi, 'Miraṣī-yi rekhta', in *Tahrīr-i Dillī* April-June 1971, p. 8. Quoted in Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, p. 445.

⁷³ Ross 1910.

⁷⁴ Emendation from the *sakht-tar*.

⁷⁵ This word is hypermetrical here.

⁷⁶ Sherani 1931, p. 84.

There is no family, no kinsman, no companion, no father or brother. No woman will protect her child in that dark desolateness.

Suddenly the Angel of Death, Taker of Souls, arrives at your court. Whatever happens, concentrate in your heart, because it plunders you at once.

Millions who were nourished⁷⁷ were not even to take one *jītal*⁷⁸ when they left with empty hands.

...

I am proud in this world to have two yards for home and soil. Running around, I have stretched so much as Luqmān built fence on the road.⁷⁹

Bairam, spend the money you have in God's path; oh, if you abandon the Beloved, consider it defeat.

There is another poem in the same album, with the pen name Faizi. At least two known poets are candidates for its authorship. One is Sheikh Allah-dad Sirhindi, the author of the dictionary *Madār ul-Afāzil* (*Pivot of the Most Learned Ones*, 1592) and of a contemporary history called *Akbar-nāma* (1601),⁸⁰ the other is Abu'l-Fazl's brother and Akbar's poet laureate Abu'l-Faiz Faizi (1547/8-1595). The poem in this album follows a Persian template with a strong input of Hindavī words:

*ay ān-ki hast la'lat cūn āb-i zindagānī; tā tishna lab namīram īnak pulāo pānī.
gufī fasāna gūyam jānān ba jān va lekin; tū sust man pareshān kyō kar bane
kahānī.
ay dīl zi la'l-i jānān kāmam nagasht ḥāṣil; zīrā-ki zar nadāram vo bastu hai
birānī.
man dardmand-i 'ishqam bar man kanūn vafā kun; 'umram guzasht dar gam
nis jāgte bahānī.
ba-shnū to faizī az man ba-gzār rū-yi jānān; tū 'āshiq-i va sāda vo zāt hai
sayānī.⁸¹*

⁷⁷ An alternative meaning is: 'People who protected millions are left empty-handed.'

⁷⁸ I was not able to interpret this word.

⁷⁹ This is a reference to a fable connected to Luqmān, a legendary sage who featured as a pre-islamic sage in the Qur'ān and to whose name many proverbs and fables came to be linked. I was not able to find the story or the proverb relating to his fencing the road.

⁸⁰ Hadi 1995, p. 146.

⁸¹ Sherani 1931, p. 83.

O, you, whose ruby-lips are like the water of life; behold, here is rice and water, so that I don't die of thirst.

Oh beloved to my heart, you told me to tell my story, but you are lazy and me disturbed; how could the story build up?

O my heart, my desire got no fulfilment from her ruby-lips, since I do not have gold and she is a treasure belonging to others.

I am afflicted by love fulfil your promise now. My life was spent in sorrow and I spend my nights awake.

Listen to me, oh Faizī, leave the face of the beloved! You are a lover and are honest, and she is of a clever race.

Though the above attributions to Bairam and to whichever Faizi remain somewhat uncertain, and we cannot exclude later appropriations of a famous author's name as was the case with Khusrau, the identification of Faizi and Bairam with the Mughal noblemen would fit well into the syncretistic picture of the Mughal court. Moreover, other sources seem to corroborate this attribution.⁸²

As Babur's example showed, it was not only Persian that was cast against Hindavi in Rekhta poems. The experimenting spirit at Akbar's court is attested by the "macaronic" poems attributed to Abdurrahim Khankhanan 'Rahim' (1556-1627). He mixed Khari Boli with Sanskrit and used not the ghazal but the quatrain form in Sanskritic metres. His *Madanāṣṭaka* is in the *mālinī* metre, while the following poem in *shārdūlavikrīdita* (Sanskrit passages are not italicised):

ekasmin divasāvasānasamaye *māi thā gayā **bāga** mē;*
kācit tatra kuraṃgabālanayanā ***gula** toraṭī thī khaṛī.*
tāṃ dṛṣṭvā navayauvanāṃ shashimukhīm *māi moha mē jā paṛā;*
no jīvāmi vinā tvayā shrṇu priye *tū **yāra** kaise mile.*⁸³

One day at dusk I went to a garden

where a woman with eyes of a young gazelle stood plucking flowers.

Glimpsing that woman in her prime, whose face shone like the moon, I fell in love.

I do not live without you, listen my beloved, how can I meet you?

⁸² Sherani, for example, mentioned that he had seen other Rekhtas attributed to Abu'l Fazl and to Faizi. Sherani 1931, p. 83.

⁸³ Mishra 1999 p. 173 and Chaudhuri 1954, p. 22. Neither of them mention their source.

It should be mentioned that multilingual compositions are not exceptional in Indian literature, or indeed in any literary culture which is either multilingual or is marked by diglossia between a classical language and vernacular(s).⁸⁴ Sanskrit dramas already used different Prakrits according to the characters' role and social status. Dialogue across linguistic boundaries in early modern times was also alive in south India both in historical writings⁸⁵ and dramatic literature.⁸⁶

Mixing idioms did not stop at drawing on two languages. The Maharastrian Jayarāma Pindye's *Rādhāmādhavavilāsacampū* used twelve, while in north India a quatrain written in Sanskrit, Braj, Gujarati, Marathi, Rajasthani, Khari Boli, Punjabi, Arabic and Telugu, a real virtuoso performance, is attributed to the above-mentioned Rahim:

bhartā prācīm gato me (Sanskrit) *bahuri na bagade* (Braj) *shū karū re have hū*
(Gujarati)

mājhī karmāci goṣṭhi (Marathi) *aba puna shanasi* (?) *gāmṭha dholo nāi the*
(Rajasthani)

mhārī tīrā sunerā (Rajasthani) *kharaca bahut hai* (Khari Boli) *īharā tābarā ro* (?)
diṭṭhī ṭaimḍī dilō dī (Punjabi) *ishaqa ila fidā* (Arabic) *oḍipo baccanāḍū*⁸⁷ (Telugu)

My husband went east and is not coming back — what shall I do now?

This is my fate.⁸⁸ Please listen, I do not have a coin in my purse.

Listen to me, the expenses are high and there are many in the family.

In order to see him I sacrifice my heart for love. — 'It is he who is coming!'⁸⁹

All the Rekhtas surveyed in this section, apart from Babur's couplet and possibly of Saqqa, Mu'ayyid and Mashhadi, are preserved in later manuscripts. Yet the relative abundance of macaronic Rekhta from the sixteenth century makes it difficult to

⁸⁴ See e.g. María Angeles Gallego, 'The languages of medieval Iberia and their religious dimension', *Medieval Encounters* 9, 1 (2003), pp. 107-39 and Claudio Giovanardi, 'Il bilinguismo italiano-latino del medioevo e del Rinascimento', *Storia della lingua italiana*, vol. 2, *Lo Scritto e il Parlato*, Torino, Einaudi 1994, pp. 435-67. I owe this information to Dr Francesca Orsini.

⁸⁵ Subrahmanyam 1999, pp. 280-321.

⁸⁶ The Telugu play *Annadāmahānāṭakamu*, for example, uses colloquial Tamil. Rao 1992, p. 334.

⁸⁷ The Telugu part seems to be a corruption of *āḍē-po vaccināḍu*. (*oḍipo vaccināḍu* means 'he came to be defeated'.)

⁸⁸ Literally 'This is the accumulation of my karma'.

⁸⁹ Translated on the basis of the Khari Boli translation in Mishra and Rajnish 1984, p. 174.

question their authenticity on the same grounds as was done for Baba Farid, Amir Khusrau, Hasan Dehlavi or Namdev.⁹⁰ In the following section I will consider the possible motives that induced poets to compose such macaronic poems.

Motives for linguistic hybridity

Much research has been done in recent years on language choice in India's multilingual society. Some scholars explain language choice through motives external to the language and its literary culture, while others search for internal forces. Some influential modern theories explain it in terms of its teleological contribution to some project such as proselytising or integration. According to an early idea of Richard Eaton, based on Annemarie Schimmel,⁹¹ Sufis in Bijapur adopted Dakkani Hindi as an instrument of proselytization.⁹² In a similar vein, Muzaffar Alam has explained the Mughal choice of Persian on the basis of its non-sectarian aspect, which made Persian an effective tool for negotiating difference within Indian society and thus contributing to the consolidation of the empire.⁹³ In his later research, however, Alam seems to have abandoned these ideas.⁹⁴

Another theory based on external motives has been put forward by Sumit Guha, who has examined language choice in the early-modern Maratha region in connection with the power of patronage. According to Guha languages were marked by a tension between hybridisation and identity. In the case of administration the use of a vernacular invoked shared ethnic and territorial rootedness, while the higher Persianate register signalled cultural superiority as well as a wider subcontinental identity.⁹⁵ He has argued that the same phenomenon can be seen in poetry and was sometimes used to display poetic virtuosity as in the case of the above-mentioned *Rādhāmādhavavilāsacampū*.

⁹⁰ Surveys of sixteenth century Rekhta in North India can be found in Jalibi 1977 (pp. 51-61), Zaidi 1993 (pp. 28-35) and Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. I, pp. 428-50.

⁹¹ Annemarie Schimmel, 'The Influence of Sufism on Indo-Muslim Poetry,' in Strelka, Joseph P. (ed.), *Anagogic Qualities of Literature*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971, p. 196. Quoted in Eaton 1978, p. 143.

⁹² The same idea occurs in Zaidi 1993, p. 20.

⁹³ Alam 1998, p. 349.

⁹⁴ On Eaton see Phukan 2001, p. 38, note 11. Alam did not emphasise the secular aspect of Persian in Alam 2003.

⁹⁵ Guha 2004, pp. 21-22.

Moving away from political and religious explanatory paradigms, Allison Busch and Christina Oesterheld in this volume examine lexical hybridity within the field of literature as a genre- and context-sensitive issue. They both find that a more *tadbhava* register was used for a female voice in opposition to highly Sanskritised or highly Persianised registers.⁹⁶ Making a similar point, Shantanu Phukan argued on the basis of works such as the *Bikaṭ Kahānī* and a *marṣiyā* by Sauda that Hindi was perceived by Mughal elite male authors as ‘especially effective in moving emotions’ and was embedded in Persian or Persianate Urdu to invoke a domestic female tone as opposed to the male and the non-domestic female world of the ghazals.⁹⁷

The use of a vernacular for female voice can be observed in a narrative poem from the sixteenth century by ‘Ishqi Khan (d. 1582),⁹⁸ which describes how the Turkish, Tajik and Indian wives of a wealthy *jagirdar* talk in Turkish, Persian and Hindi respectively. This is, for example, how he is received by his Hindustani wife on his return home,

*zan-i hindī zi yak ʔaraf gūyad; haū tirī lauṇḍī tū mirā **khvandgār**;*

tum jo mujh kō piyār karte ho; haū bhī kartī hū tihārā pyār.

apne kothe pai māī bichāūṃ palang; ūs ūpar leṭ jīo pāō pasār;

*bīc tūṃ leṭ loṇḍiyā cau-gird; **haramān** ās pās tum backār.*⁹⁹

On one side the Indian wife said, I am your woman and you are my kind lord;

The way you love me, I love you in the same way.

Let me make up a bed in my room, come and lie down on it stretching your legs.

Lie down surrounded by girls, there are relatives round here — be careful.

And this is how an Indian wife receives a poor husband:

zan-i hindī zi yak ʔaraf gūyad terī mā golī terā bāp camār;

jhūṭh tujh thē bahut sunā mat bol; sac tirā haū kahaū mirā mat mā.

tujh thē mujh ko na rotī o pānī; tujh thē mujh kō nahūṃ savād¹⁰⁰ o sīgār;

⁹⁶ Reference to Allison and Christina p. in this volume.

⁹⁷ See Phukan 2001.

⁹⁸ ‘Ishqi Khan, a descendant of the Turkish spiritual guide Isma‘il Tash, was a *mir munshi* during Akbar’s reign and authored a Persian *Dīvān*. In his Persian qasida, *Sard-o garm-i zamāna*, he used some Hindi and Turkish stanzas. Haq 1931, p. 101.

⁹⁹ Haq 1931, p. 101. An alternative interpretation of the last expression is, *ba-ci kār* ‘what are you doing?’

*ab na rāhūṃ tire **khudā** kī saū; nīkalūngī tihāre ghar thē bahār.*¹⁰¹

On one side the Indian wife said, your mother was a cowherd, your father a leather-worker;

Don't say a word, I have heard enough lies from you, if I tell you the truth, don't beat me.

I don't get bread or water from you, neither delicious food nor ornament.

I won't stay with you, I swear, I will leave your house.

Phukan briefly considered the possibility that the motive behind mixed-language be irony, as was the case for Latin-Italian macaronic parodies of the Renaissance.¹⁰² Although he quickly dismissed the idea in favour of a more homely or pathetic effect, the humorous effect of the 'Persian' couplet attributed to Khusrau, Rahim's macaronic poem or 'Ishqi Khan's mimetic lines seems unequivocal.

Sometimes we have an indication from the users of the languages themselves on how they perceived the "ecology of Hindavi" in their literary world. I have mentioned above Nizamuddin Auliya quoting – and apparently seconding – Faqih Madhaw's opinion that Shaikh Ahmad Nahravani was wasting his time on Hindavi songs. We can see a more straightforward condemnation of Hindavi in the discourses of Shaikh Sharafuddin Maneri (d. 1381), who once forbade the singing of a Hindavi *chakrī* saying that,

Chakri is found on the lips of women. It is a very free sort of thing. There were also some young men in the assembly. Can you tell me where one and all acquire the power to bear such things? Confusion would result, for "melodious songs are as enchanting as adultery." For that reason it was forbidden. If, however, it takes place in privacy, and all present are ascetics, men of struggle with self and having much knowledge, as well as being capable of making lawful exceptions, then they can do so.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Emendation from savār.

¹⁰¹ Haq 1931 p. 102.

¹⁰² Phukan 2001, pp. 33–58. **Giovanardi 1994**, however, distinguishes between "pedantic" texts of a serious nature, which combined the morphology of the vernacular with vocabulary from classical Latin, medieval Latin and the vernacular, and "macheronic" poems whose phonology and morphology looked like Latin for parody. I owe the latter reference to Francesca Orsini.

¹⁰³ *Bahr ul-ma'ānī* (Ocean of Meanings, unnumbered manuscript in the Fatuha (sic!) collection in the Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna, 759AH/1358), translated in Jackson 1987, p. 111.

At another musical gathering where after some Persian songs the minstrels had switched to Hindavi Maneri said,

Hindavi compositions are very forthright and frank in expression. In purely Persian verses, there is a judicious blend of allusion and what can be fittingly expressed, whereas Hindavi employs very frank expressions. There is no limit to what it explicitly reveals. It is very disturbing. It is extremely difficult for young men to bear such things. Without any delay they would be upset. This is why there are difficulties involved in allowing young men to listen to such things. The members of this group, however, experience only grief and pain.¹⁰⁴

It is not difficult to imagine the growing fashion of Hindavi singing hinted at by these lines and the perplexity of the elder generation. We can also assume that since songs in Persian (and Arabic) and other languages alternated at Muslim musical gatherings, multilingual compositions must not have been out of place. In fact, Maneri's condemnation seems to have been of no avail since Hindavi words and verses begin to appear in the Persian writings of his followers, especially in those of Muzaffar Shams Balkhi (d. 1400/01).¹⁰⁵

Other authors similarly conversant with Persian and Hindavi such as Gesudaraz and, four hundred years later, Anandram 'Mukhlis' underlined the emotional capacities of Hindavi.¹⁰⁶ In the earliest phase of Hindavi literature Gesudaraz is credited to have emphasised the tenderness, clarity and musicality in this

¹⁰⁴ *Mukhkh ul-ma'ānī* (The Core of Spiritual Realities), Mufid-i Am Press, Agra 1903, p. 154, translated in Jackson 1987, p. 134.

¹⁰⁵ Jackson 1987, p. 135.

¹⁰⁶ While discussing the early use of Hindavi in *sama'* gatherings, Athar Abbas Rizvi, the author of the monumental *A History of Sufism in India*, voices a similar opinion claiming that Hindavi songs "were not composed for propaganda purposes but were a natural evolution from the deep and personal involvement of ... mystics with their environment. Hindavi was a more convenient language in which to utter the feelings of a heart filled with divine love." Rizvi 1978, p. 327.

language¹⁰⁷, while Anandram ‘Mukhlis’ spoke about the Hindavi romance *Padmāvat* as having “an eastern melody brimming over with pain”,¹⁰⁸ evidence that Hindavi retained a similar emotional appeal in the eighteenth century. Sumit Guha suggests that embedding eastern Hindi dialects in Persian or Persianate Urdu texts was a choice that aristocratic men of letters made to evoke intimate domains of affection and loss especially connected to childhood, when they were surrounded by the rustic speech of the unlettered wet-nurses and attendants in the women's quarters.¹⁰⁹

Another possibility is that writing poetry in a mixed language meant imitating spoken usage. In pre-modern India, just like today, informal speech very often mixed phrases and words of an Indian cosmopolitan language with those of a vernacular, as the example of the *malḥūzāt* showed. Mixing, however, also had its rules. Normally a vernacular was mixed with a cosmopolitan language, and it is rare that elements of two vernaculars were mixed consciously.

The list of external and internal forces mentioned so far is far from exhaustive and further possible motives could have been at work behind linguistic choice and hybridity. For example, in the case of Sant poets such as Dadu Dayal, literary polyglossia was a powerful means of reaching out and impressing the audience.

Noblemen of Turk descent such as Bairam Khan, Rahim and ‘Ishqi may have felt encouraged by the innovative and hybridising spirit of the Mughal court to experiment with the several languages at their disposal, including those of the Mughals’ ancestors and of the people of the country. It was, however, not only Turkish noblemen who tried Rekhta. The unprecedented nature of cross-cultural interaction at the Mughal court between intellectuals whose work belonged to Sanskrit and Persian traditions has already been noted by Sheldon Pollock.¹¹⁰ In Persian poetry a call for new and for detesting imitation appeared as the preference for the *tāza-gū’ī* (freshness in composition),¹¹¹ while in the imperial painting studios this spirit manifested itself as the “delight in originality” of artists like Daswant¹¹² and

¹⁰⁷ Jāmi’ al-kalām (Compendium of works) *Khawājā Gesūdarāz Sayyid Muḥammad Akbar Ḥusainī kī vāñī*. Intizāmī Press, Usmānganj, 1937/8 pp. 172-3. Translated into English in Rai p. 121.

¹⁰⁸ Jāmi’ al-kalām (Compendium of works): *Khawājā Gesūdarāz Sayyid Muḥammad Akbar Ḥusainī kī vāñī*. Intizāmī Press, Usmānganj, 1937/8, pp. 172-3. Translated into English in Rai 1991, p. 121.

Phukan 2001, pp. 34–35.

¹⁰⁹ Guha 2004, p. 20.

¹¹⁰ Pollock 2001, p. 20.

¹¹¹ Alam 2003, pp. 172-4.

¹¹² Beach 1992, p. 41.

produced the unique Mughal style of miniatures uniting elements of Irani, Dakkani, Rajasthani and European painting.

Motivation behind the use of mixed language composition cannot be explained with one factor or another but should rather be perceived as the working of multifarious rationale with different intensity at different places and at different stages.

Rekhta in the Nagari script: Early stray poems (*muktakas*)

We have seen so far that Rekhta poetry in the Persian script was cultivated in the Deccan, in Sufi circles in north India and was patronised by the Mughal court already in the sixteenth century. In this section we will see that the same genre was taken up by Hindu religious poets in the second half of the sixteenth century. Since we have scarce material at our disposal, it is difficult to tell exactly under what circumstances Rekhta in the Nagari script emerge.

The oldest corpus of Rekhta poems in the Nagari script can be found among Nirgun Sants, whose teachings often contested and blurred the Hindu-Muslim division and whose mixed language could sometimes be very close to Khari Boli. Indeed it is the linguistically most adventurous Sant poet, Dadu Dayal (1544–1603), who not only used elements from different languages or dialects with confidence but composed poems in Rajasthani, Gujarati, Braj, Panjabi, Persian and Sindhi. His use of Khari Boli may have been prompted by the similar practice of the Sufis and the increasing popularity of Rekhta in the Mughal court. His literature is attested in early manuscript material and his Khari Boli *muktakas* can be considered to be the earliest extant examples of Nagari Rekhta. The following song, rather Sufistic in content, is already present in a manuscript from 1636 and no substantial variant readings exist to it:¹¹³

alā terā jīkar phīkar karte hāī;

āśaka mustāka tere; tarasi tarasi marate hāī.

ṣalaka ṣesa digarā nesa; baiṭhai dina bharate hāī.

¹¹³ Dādū Mahāvīdyālay No. 12. It is also present in mss from VS 1715, 1733, 1765 and 1770. On the solid manuscript tradition of Dadu see Callewaert and Beeck 1991 vol. I., p. 14.

*dāima darabārī tere; gaira mahala ḍarate hāi.
tana sahīda mana sahīda; rāti divasa larate hāi.
gyāna terā dhyāna terā; isaka āgi jarate hāi.
jāna terā jyāda terā; pāū sira dharate hāi.
dādū dīvāna terā; jara ṣarīda ghara ke hāi.*

(Dadu Pad 398)¹¹⁴

O God, I remember and reflect upon you.
I am your passionate lover dying of intense longing.
I have no other place (?) in the world; I spend my days sitting here.
I am your permanent courtier — frightened outside your palace.
My body is martyred, my soul is martyred; I fight day and night.
My knowledge is yours, my meditation is yours; I burn in the fire of love.
My soul is yours, my life is yours; I bow my head to your feet.
Dadu is your steward; I am of your house bought with your money.

Dadu also experimented with the consciously mixed language of the Mughals by interspersing his Hindavi with long Persian phrases as in *Pad 81*.¹¹⁵

By the early seventeenth century the Sants developed their own vehicle of expression in a language that mixes various vernacular languages and dialects and what is by modern Hindi scholars called *Sadhukkari* (*sādhukkarī bhāṣā* or *khicrī bhāṣā*). This must be the reason why, though many of Dadu's disciples had a rich literary output in *Sadhukkari*, most of them did not continue their guru's experiments with Hindavi–Persian hybridity or with Khari Boli, with the exceptions of Sundardas and Vājīd. Here is an example by Sundardas where the first line of the poem is almost entirely in Khari Boli (with one Persian word) and the second is in Braj Bhasha:

*māi hī ati gāphila huī rahī seja para soi.
sundara piya jāgai sadā kyaūkari melā hoi.*¹¹⁶
4 (*Bandagī kau aṃga*) 27

¹¹⁴ Callewaert and Beek 1991 vol. I, p. 263. Further examples include *padas* 75, 81, 84, 271 etc.

¹¹⁵ Callewaert and Beek 1991 vol. I, p. 213.

¹¹⁶ Callewaert and Beek 1991 vol. I, p. 517.

I was too negligent and remained asleep on the bed.

My beautiful beloved is always awake. — In what way can we meet?

Vājīd¹¹⁷ (fl. 1600), today a relatively unknown author¹¹⁸, according to the *Bhaktamāl* of Rāghavdās¹¹⁹, was a Paṭhān Muslim. When he killed a pregnant gazelle compassion arose in his heart. He broke his bow and arrows and without returning home set off in search of a guru, which he later found in the person of Dādū. From the mention of Khadgasen as his office-keeper and Khadgasen's reference to him as *thākur* we can surmise that he was a landlord. Rāghavdās counts Vājīd among the hundred disciples Dādū Dayāl and several of his *padas* and *sākhīs* are also collected in the Dādūpanthī *Sarvāṅgīs* of Rajjab (1620?) and Gopāldās (1627) and in Jagannāth's *Guṇ Gañjanāmo*. His most celebrated works are his stray *arillas* that have been published four times in four different books,¹²⁰ and which inspired the modern guru Osho to deliver discourses on Vājīd.¹²¹

In manuscript catalogues over hundred different works of his are mentioned.¹²² Most of them fall into the Nirguṇ Sant tradition and many are about morals (*nīti*). He was, however, a prolific author whose literary output include entertaining religious works such as *Andhā kūbrā sagun* 'Omens of the blind and the hunchback', *Guṇ rājkr̥t* 'The acts of the king (The story of the previous birth of a king, a carpenter a merchant and a leper)' or *Guṇ mūrikh-nāmo* 'The book of the stupid'.

His published works do not show any significant use of Khaṛī Bolī or Perso-Arabic vocabulary and the editor of his *arillas* in the *Pañcāmṛt* is astonished by the

¹¹⁷ On Vājīd and his Rekhta see Bangha 2005.

¹¹⁸ Apart from two *padas* and some 180 *sākhīs* (*dohās* and *arillas*) in the *Sarvāṅgī* of Gopaldas the only published poems of Vājīd are his *arillas* in modern collections such as the *Pañcāmṛt* (Mangaldas 1948). Indeed it is his *arillas* that even today are current as popular sayings in Rajasthan. (Maheshvari 1980 p. 126).

¹¹⁹ Raghavdas: *Bhaktamāl* 428 Nahta, 1965 pp. 201-2.

¹²⁰ Ayodhyāsīmḥ Vishārād, 1932 *Vājīnd kī arelām*. Svāmī Maṅgaldās, 1948, *Pañcāmṛt*. (Jaipur, Śrī Svāmī Lakṣmīrām Trust), Sukhdayāl Dādū, 1976 (VS 2033), *Maharṣi Vāzīdī Mahārāj ke arill*. (Śrī Dādūdayāl Trust, Delhi) and Prof. Govind Rajnīsh, 2004, *Pañcāmṛt aur Pañcrang: Madhyakālīn sant-kaviyoṃ kī prāmāṇik pāth-sampādan*. (Māyā Prakāshan Mandir, Jaipur) pp. 43-72.

¹²¹ Osho, 1995, *Kahai Vājīd pukār: Osho dvārā Vājīd vāñī par die gae das amṛt pravacanō kī apratim saṃskaran*. (The Rebel Publishing House, Poona).

¹²² More than sixty of his compositions can be found in the City Palace collection in Jaipur. We have relatively lot of manuscript material from his lifetime or right after his death. His earliest manuscript, containing his eight works is dated from 1600¹²² and we have a manuscript of his *Guṇ gañjanāmo*¹²² from 1613, of his *padas* and *Guṇ ajāib-nāmo*¹²² from 1636 A critical edition of his works is being prepared by D. Mistry and I. Bangha.

fact that ‘he used a very pure form of Hindi’.¹²³ Nevertheless some titles suggest a greater influence of Persianate culture such as the *Guṇ Sekh Saṃvād* or the *Guṇ Sūphī-nāmau* while his works on separation such as *Guṇ Virah-nāmau* ‘The book of separation’, *Virahvilās* or *Virah sumiraṇ hit upākhyān* suggest some Krishna context. Vājīd’s *Rekhta* includes some technical musical terms such as *Malhār* and *Ahīrī* (ragas) or *mandra* (svara), evidence that the author was at home in the world of music, and that it would be fruitful to examine further the earliest links between the use of *Rekhta* and music.

Vājīd is the author of a work called by its scribes *Rekhta* or *Śrī rekhtā thākur kā*¹²⁴ ‘The *Rekhta* of the Lord’, a collection of some 14 *kavittas* in *Rekhta*, of which I have found four manuscripts copied in 1651, 1655, 1752 and one sometime after 1667. The grammar of this work is *Khaṛī Bolī* with very strong traces of Braj. One of the most salient features of the text is the high number of Perso-Arabic words: 105 different words of Perso-Arabic origin are used 156 times, which means a proportion of 19%.

In a few poems the Sufi idea of linking worldly love to transcendental one is dominant while the majority of the quatrains are concerned with the Vaishnava (and courtly) theme of the cowherd-women’s separation from Krishna. The beloved is sometimes God described as a woman (*kavittas* 1, 4, 10) but more often Krishna. Sometimes the lovers speak directly to one another and sometimes we hear the words of a messenger as favoured by the Indian tradition. A popular context is the cowherd women’s complaint to Krishna’s messenger, Uddhava,

gopī gāi gvālani tau behāla haī bihārī bina
hotā na māluṃma makasūda kyā tumhārā hai;
īnāyata rahai makāmma kīne hai kamala naina
maiṃnamathi mārai mādhau cārā kyā hamārā hai;
jau tau takasīra kachu bhaī hai hamārī hari
kājīye jū māpha tuma jīte hama hāryā hai;
tuma tau sakhā hau sāṃkhī sāṃcī kini kahau bali
ūdhau brajanātha braja kāhe tāi bisārā hai. (7)

¹²³ Mangaldas (1948 p. ka).

¹²⁴ Pothikhana 2422, 3404, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur 10902(1) and Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Allahabad 2145 (3) - 1354.

Without Krishna the cowherd-women, the cows and the cowherds are despondent. Nobody knows what you are up to.

“The lotus eyed one favoured us, taking up residence in us — I have been smitten by the ‘Soul-Churner’ Love, o Krishna, what is our way out?

“If ever we offended, Hari, please forgive us, you have won, we are defeated.”

You are his friend — whom else can we call a true witness? — Uddhava, why has the Lord of Braj abandoned us?¹²⁵

In the following poem the masculine verbal form in the expression *khalak hī yāra huvā* ‘the world has been made her (his) lover’ suggests a male lover,

dīla kī dilāsā sārī dunī kā tamāsā kuli

gama kā karāra dunī dekhai jīsa ūba hai;

vākī muhabati dekhāi khātari māi yau kyau āvai

ālama kī sāhibi tau aisī jaisī dūba hai;

rāga khūba raṅga khūba āṅkhāi khūba bhauṃhai khūba

hausa khuba hāmsī khuba saphā kaisī khūba hai;

umara kī khūbī para khalaka hī yāra huvā

kaumna kaumna khūbī kahaū khūba mahabūba hai (1)

All consolation of the heart, the whole spectacle of the world and the permanence of sorrow — witnessing this on earth one loses spirit.

Seeing her love why should I show regard for this? The dominance of the world is only like a blade of grass.

Her passion is splendid, her colour is splendid, her eyes are splendid, her eyebrows are splendid, her desire is splendid, her smile is splendid and how splendid is her purity.

With the splendour of her prime youth all creation has been made her lover.

Why pronounce on her splendour? The beloved is splendid.

Other Sants outside Dadu’s lineage continued this tradition. For example, Malūkkdās (1574–1682?) from Kara (Allahabad) frequently used a Khari Boli

¹²⁵ Some phrases are addressed to Krishna and the last line is directed to Uddhava. It is possible that the cowherd-women unconsciously address Uddhava as Krishna. Such double vocatives are also found in Surdas.

template with Perso-Arabic words in his *padas* and especially in his *kavittas*. The transmission history of Malūkdās has not yet been critically studied and there is a possibility that some of the songs of his corpus belong to later poets bearing the same name.

bhīla kada karī thī bhalāī jiyā āpa jāna
phīla kada huā thā murīda kahu kisakā.
gīdha kada jñāna kī kitāba kā kinārā chuā
byādha aura badhika nisāpha kahu tisakā.
nāga kada mālā lai ke bandagī karī thī baiṭha
mujhako bhī lagā thā ajāmila kā hisakā.
ete badarāhō kī badī karī thī māpha jana
*malūka ajātī para etī karī risa kā.*¹²⁶

Has a tribal ever done any good intentionally?

Has an elephant ever become a disciple of anyone?

Has a vulture ever touched the edge of a book of knowledge?

Has a fowler or a hunter done any justice to it?

Has a snake ever welcomed anyone sitting with a garland?

— I also had a rivalry with Ajamil.

You have pardoned the sins of many wicked people,

Why are you so angry with your worshipper, the castless Malūk?

10 words out of 60 in this poem are of Perso-Arabic origin. Malūkdās used an even more Persianised language (24 out of 83 words) abounding in Islamic technical terms, where stronger Sufistic message was intended,

¹²⁶ *Malūkdāsī kī vñī* 1912, p. 30.

terā māi dīdār divānā.
gharī gharī tujhe dekhā cāhū, suna sāheba rahamānā.
huā alamasta khabara nahī tana kī pīyā prema piyālā,
ṭhārḥa hoū to giri giri paratā tere rāga matavālā.
kharā rahū darabāra tumhāre jyō ghara kā bandājādā,
nekī kī kulāha sira dīye gale pairahana sājā.
taujī aura nimāja na jānū nā jānū dhari rojā,
bāṅga jikira tabahī se bisarī, jaba se yaha dīla khojā.
kahā malūka aba kajā na karihaū dīla hī sō dīla lāyā,
makka hajja hiye mē dekhā pūrā murasīda pāyā.¹²⁷

I am crazy about seeing you.

I want to see you every moment, hear me, o gracious lord!

I became intoxicated, I do not know my body; I drank the cup of love.

If I stand up, then I fall again and again — drunk with the colour of your love.

Let me stand in your royal assembly as a slave born in your house.

I donned the hat of virtue and wear its cloak on my shoulders.

I know no arguments, no prayer, I do not know how to fast.

Since I searched my heart I have abandoned the muezzin's call and the remembrance of God.

Malūk says now I won't make up for my missed prayers, I willingly fell in love.

I have seen Mecca and the Pilgrimage in my heart, and received my perfect spiritual guide.

Apart from the Perso-Arabic and in the Devanagari scripts Khari Boli was also written in Gurmukhi in early Sikh literature. *Janamsākhīs*, such as Miharvān Sodhī's *Janama sākhī shrī guru Nānakdevjī* or Hariji Sodhī's *Gosati guru Miharivānu*¹²⁸, written in Sadhukkaṛī mixed Braj features with Khari Boli and Panjabi. Some works, such as the *Ādi Rāmāin* by Miharvānu Sodhī 'Manohardās' (1580-1640), the grandson of Guru Rāmdās, are occasionally dominated by Khari Boli. In contrast with the Nirgun sant works mentioned above, in the Sikh compositions Khari Boli is very

¹²⁷ *Malūkdāsī kī vāṅī* 1912, p. 6.

¹²⁸ Singh 1962 and Rājguru 1974.

strongly mixed with other dialects and the high input of Perso-Arabic vocabulary is missing.

*tab brahmādik kī bārī āī. tab brahmādi ehi kahiā ji he srī dev jī mujh kaii ehī lamkā dehi. tab srī mahādev kahiā ji mai dīnī. tab itne kahne sāth pārbatī karodhu kīā. jī he adharmī tujh kaii ehu bāt kiu kari kahinī āī hai? mai aje iskaū dekhi bhī nahī nibaḍī. paru jāhi je sati paramaisur hai. taba je kou is lamkā ke bīc baḍegā so tatkāl hī bināsu hoi jāegā. tab lamkā kaii pārbatī kā sarāpu bhaiā.*¹²⁹

Then it was the turn of Brahmā's son, Brahmādik. Brahmādik said 'O great god, give me this very Lanka.' Shiva said: '(It's yours.) I have given it to you.' When this much was said Parvati became angry: 'O you unlawful one, how could you say this? I haven't even seen it fully yet. **But I swear by** the highest true God, if anyone enters this Lanka, he will die immediately.' So Lanka was cursed by Parvati.

Although the early practice of Nagari Rekhta can be found chiefly among Nirgun Sants, an early Krishna-poet also seems to have experimented with it. Here is an example of the use of Khari Boli with Perso-Arabic vocabulary, which comes from the heartland of Braj, from Vrindaban. It is a song by Svami Haridas, the founder of a school of Krishna devotion who is also celebrated as the initiator of the *dhrupad* style of singing.¹³⁰ In this case we lack manuscript evidence prior to the mid-eighteenth century and thus there is a tint of uncertainty on its authorship and date, yet it is difficult to imagine that this odd poem would make its way to the limited sectarian Haridas corpus from outside and would withstand the 'Brajifying' tendencies of the scribes,

bande akhatiyāra bhalā;

cita na ḍulāva āva samādhi bhītar na hohu agalā;

*na phiri **dara dara pidara dara** na hohu adhalā;*

kahi haridāsa karatā kiyā su huvā sumera acala calā.

(6 Aṣṭādash Siddhānta¹³¹)

¹²⁹ Śāstrī 1989 p. 4.

¹³⁰ For Svami Haridas, see Rosenstein 1997.

¹³¹ Rosenstein 1997, p. 108.

O, worshipper, this choice is good.

Waver not in mind, enter into profound meditation, be not an adversary;

Do not wander from door to door [or seek] your father's door, do not be blind.

Haridās says: what the creator causes, comes to pass — even immovable Meru moved.

(Translated by L. Rosenstein)¹³²

Although the poem is far from being pure Khari Bolī and has Braj Bhasha forms (like the repeated imperative *hohu* 'be') it is rather isolated in the Haridas corpus. It is possible that a poem with Khari Boli features and some Perso-Arabic vocabulary was smuggled into the Haridas corpus in order to justify the Rekhta attempts of eighteenth-century Haridasi poets such as Sahacarīsharan and Sītaldas. If this quatrain is genuine then the reason behind the use of Khari Boli forms and Perso-Arabic vocabulary may be an early attempt to evoke the atmosphere of music patronised enthusiastically in Islamic courts. It is also interesting to observe that there is nothing specific about Krishna bhakti here and the poem is rather similar to those by Nirgun Sants.

The seventeenth century — Rekhta in the Persian script

The seventeenth century saw an increased production of Rekhta in the Persian, the Gurmukhi and the Nagari scripts. According to Faruqi the earliest literary text in Hindi/Hindavi extant in north India is the *Bikaṭ Kahānī* (Dire tale, 1625), a poem of 325 *shi'rs* in the masnavi form describing a woman's pangs of separation during the twelve months of the year, whose author, Muhammad Afzal, is also known by the half Hindu name of Afzal Gopal.¹³³ The problem with this poem is similar to that of Kabir and others. It was transmitted orally for a long period and its text is preserved in eighteenth-century or later manuscripts.¹³⁴ It is possible that the language of the published text does not represent seventeenth-century features.

¹³² Rosenstein 1997, p. 189.

¹³³ "His actual poem may be earlier, but the only datum we have about the poet is 1625, the year of his death, though it is generally assumed that he completed the *maṣnavī* not long before his death." Faruqi 2001, p. 113.

¹³⁴ Hashimi and Khan 1979, pp. 18-22.

This poem, Faruqi notes, was neglected by early Urdu tazkira writers and has only been reclaimed as part of Urdu literary history in the twentieth century (Sherani, Zaidi, Faruqi, Jain and Jafar). What could be the reason behind this neglect? Faruqi argues that macaronic poetry has been rejected by eighteenth-century Urdu poets. It can be claimed that probably before the nineteenth century “Hindi” and “Urdu” represented a *literary* division within Hindavi manifest in metrical forms and genres (rather than in language or script). *Padas*, *dohas* or *kabittas* were not accepted as part of the high Urdu tradition no matter how Persianate their vocabulary. In much the same way no *ghazal* or *rubai* could be produced within the Hindi tradition even if they lacked Persianate vocabulary. However, *Bikaṭ Kahānī* belongs at least as much to the popular Indian Barahmasas, ‘twelve months’ poems rejected by Urdu high tradition, as to the Persian masnavi genre.¹³⁵

Out of its 325 couplets forty-one are directly in Persian, twenty have one line in Hindavi and one in Persian and another twenty lines are half in Persian and half in Hindavi.¹³⁶ Since its Hindavi template is not pure Khari Boli but also shows Braj Bhasha features, *Bikaṭ Kahānī* is very close to the Nagari Rekhta poems. In the following lines, for example, *jare* and *bādara* are Braj Bhasha forms,

sakhī bhādō nipaṭ tapṭī paṛe rī; tamām-i tan-badan merā jare rī.

*siyāh bādar cahārō or chāye; liyā mujh gher piu ajahū na āye.*¹³⁷

My friend, the rainy season burns me severely; my entire body is aflame.

Dark clouds have spread everywhere and surrounded me — my beloved has not come yet.

Bikaṭ Kahānī is thus truly in an “intermediary” position—linked to Indian tradition through its genre and to Persian through its metre, which all Urdu Barahmasa writers adopted after Afzal.¹³⁸ With works such as Vājīd’s rekhta, the *Bikaṭ Kahānī* and the *Prem prakāsh* by Shah Barkatuddin Marharvi/Bilgrami (1660-1729), a Sufi and Persian poet, who used the pen name *Ishqī* in his Persian compositions and *Pemī* in his Hindavi, we see the emergence of a hybrid linguistic and literary *koine* that

¹³⁵ After Mas’ud Sa’d Salman **the genre was neglected in Indo-Persian tradition. See Orsini in this volume.**

¹³⁶ Faruqi 2001, p. 117.

¹³⁷ Khan 1965, pp. 418–9 quoted in Rai 1984, p. 123–4.

¹³⁸ See **Francesca Orsini’s** essay in this volume.

combines and chooses between Persian language, poetic imagery and metres and Hindi (Khari Boli or Braj Bhasha) phrases, metres and poetic *topoi* and genres.

Prem prakāsh uses not Perso-Arabic but Braj Bhasha metres and shows an even more sustained engagement with Hindi poetic forms: it contains 202 *dohas*, 50 rekhtas in *kabitt* (quatrain) and *pad* (song) metres, 20 rekhtas in question-answer-form, 113 *kabitts* and *pads*, 1000 lines of rekhta besides *irshād* (guidance), *arīza* (humble petition¹³⁹), *bārah-māsā* and *ṣaḍṛtu varṇan*.¹⁴⁰ Pemī in his Rekhta mixes Persian phrases with Khari Boli inflected by Braj forms,

camke tere paṭoṭa mẽ mukh rūp ujyārā — jīvan sē¹⁴¹ badlī mẽ

bagzār ki dar rūy-i tū bīnīm khudā-rā — ab sūnī galī mẽ.¹⁴²

Under your veil your bright face radiates — like water¹⁴³ in a cloud,

Allow me to see God('s manifestation) on you(r face) — in an empty lane.¹⁴⁴

Other seventeenth-century authors who composed poems with one line in idiomatic Hindi and one in Persian include Mullah Nuri Azampuri.¹⁴⁵ Though this kind of macaronic poetry, Mir's third category, continued in the eighteenth century,¹⁴⁶ it was Persianized Hindavi, Mir's fourth category, which became mainstream Rekhta.

Several seventeenth-century Persian poets continued to use Khari Boli and the mixed language as in the previous century. The best documented example is that of Baba Fatah Muhammad (d. 1669), who was the son of Shaikh 'Isa Jand Ullah, a

¹³⁹ Probably the Urdu form of the Braj *vinaya*.

¹⁴⁰ Zaidi 1993, p. 21; Jafar and Jain 1998 vol. V, pp. 93-4 and Khan 1966, p. 130.

¹⁴¹ *sē* is the reading of Jafar and Jain 1998 vol. V, p. 93. Khan 1966 has the uninterpretable *saṣ* here.

¹⁴² Khan 1966, p. 130.

¹⁴³ The word for water, *jīvan*, also means life thus suggesting the meaning "the water of life".

¹⁴⁴ The interpretation of the tags at the end of both lines is problematic.

¹⁴⁵ E.g. *har kas ki kḥiyānat kunad albāṭṭa bitarsad; bīcāra-yi nūrī na kare hai, na ḍare hai*. (Everyone who does treachery is certainly afraid; this poor Nuri does not do it, and he is not afraid.) Jalibi 1977, p. 59 on the basis of Qa'im Chandpuri's tazkira *Makhzan-i nikāt* (Storehouse of subtle points), Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū, Aurangabad 1929, p. 3. Also quoted in Sherani 1931, p. 87. This poet is not identical with Shaikh Muhammad Nur, the author of a prayer in Hindavi published in Sherani 1930, pp. 244-6.

¹⁴⁶ As attested by a *marṣīya* of Sauda (*Kulliyāt II*, Allahabad 1971, p. 376). See Phukan 2003, p. 45 note 22. Ghazals attributed to Munshi Vali Ram Vali, a Persian poet at Shahjahan's court, follow a similar blend but avoid Braj Bhasha forms. See *Khazīna al-'ulūm* (Treasury of the sciences) by Durgaparshad Nadir (1879), quoted in Sherani 1930, p. 235. Also quoted in Jalibi 1977, p. 71, Zaidi 1993, pp. 64-6, and Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, p. 35-6.

friend of Abdurrahim Khankhanan.¹⁴⁷ The following poem is in an Indian moraic metre (16+13 morae) and its language is Braj with some Khari Boli features,

*isa kula bhītara mīta na kou, āpa svāratha saba dekhe;
tumha sāga janama akāratha bītā, jo bītā to kita lekhe.*

...

*jhūṭha **dagābzī** baṭamārī, ghāta bisāsī madhu-pītī;
aba kāhe pachatāvana lāgā, taba kyō soca na mana kītī.*

***fataha muḥammada** kyā samajhāve, nakha-sikha tū yō **ālūdā**;
apanā āpa sāvāra **divāne**, aurana sō kyā **maqasūdā**.¹⁴⁸*

No one is your friend in this family — everyone is after his own self-interest.

Your life has passed in vain. You lived, but for what reason?

...

Falsity, deception, robbery, murder, treachery, debauchery —

Why did you start to repent it only now? Why did not you think of it then?

How much should Fatah Muhammad explain, you are defiled from head to toe.

See to it yourself, madman, why do you expect it from others?

The importance of this poem lies in the fact that it was included into a Persian and Rekhta album and that, despite its linguistic features, was considered to be part of the Persian/Rekhta tradition. The poem was called Rekhta by Sherani although it rather shows Braj Bhasha features with a minimum input of Khari Boli. The distance between the Rekhta of *Bikat Kahani* or of *Prem Prakash* and that of Fatah Muhammad shows two alternatives of mixed language. Unlike Afzal and Shah Barkatuddin, Fatah Muhammad used Indian metre and Braj Bhasha template rather than Khari Boli.

A poem attributed to Candrabhan Brahman (1574-1662),¹⁴⁹ Dara Shikoh's *mir munshi* and later *vazir*, shows the blend of Hindavi and Persian that became common in the eighteenth century with Vali Aurangabadi. Although Jalibi claims to have found it in an old album, the first dated occurrence of the poem is in a tazkira called

¹⁴⁷ Fath Muhammad was the author of a book on religious and Sufi beliefs, the *Fath ul-'aqā'id* (The Triumph of Religious Tenets) and a tract on prayers, the *Miftāh us-Ṣalāt* (Key to Blessing). See Hadi, 1995, p. 117.

¹⁴⁸ Sherani 1931, pp. 86-7. The poem was found by Sherani in Jaimal's album dated 1652-56.

¹⁴⁹ On Brahman see Rizvi 1978 vol. II, p. 414, Jafar and Jain 1998 vol. V, pp. 36-8, **Sunil Sharma (2008)**.

Khumkhāna-yi Jāved (1908), and some scholars question its authorship.¹⁵⁰ Its imagery and language, however, suggest an early date of composition. Post-seventeenth century Rekhta is less likely to use archaic forms such as *haman ko* (us), *lāe ḍālā* (thrown) or the nasalised postpositions *sē* and *kō*,

khudā ne kis *shahar* andar *haman ko lāe ḍālā* hai;
na *dilbar* hai, na *sāqī* hai na *shīsa* hai na *pyālā* hai.
piyā ke *nāva* kī *sumran* kiyā *cāhū* karū kis *sē*;
na *tasbī* hai na *sumran* hai na *kañṭhī* hai na *mālā* hai.
khwubān kī *bāg* mẽ *raunaq* hoe to kis *tarah* *yārān*;
na *daunā* hai na *marvā* hai na *sosan* hai na *lālā* hai.
piyā ke *nāō* ‘*āshiq* kō *qatl* *karnā*¹⁵¹ ‘*ajab* *dīkhe*;
na *barchī* hai na *karchā*¹⁵² hai na *khanjar* hai na *bhālā* hai.
barahman vāṣṭe ashnān ke *phirtā* hai *bagiyyā* *sē*;
na *gangā* hai na *jamnā* hai na *naddī* hai na *nālā* hai.¹⁵³

Inside what city has God thrown us?

— There is neither beloved, nor cup-bearer; neither flask, nor cup.

If I want to repeat the name of my beloved, by what means should I do it?

— There is neither rosary, nor rudraksha, neither necklace, nor garland.

If beauties were to illumine the garden with their presence, then how would they do it, o friends?

— There is neither rosemary nor marjoram; neither iris nor tulip.

To attribute the killing of the lover to the beloved — how strange it seems!

— There is neither lance nor sword, neither dagger nor spear.

Brahman wanders in the garden for the sake of taking bath.

— There is neither Ganges nor Jamuna; neither river, nor brook.

Since neither Vali Ram nor Brahman composed a Hindavi *Dīvān*, their Rekhta poetry has been neglected in the same way as that of many others.¹⁵⁴ Modern Urdu scholars

¹⁵⁰ Kaifi Dihlavi Brijmohan Dattatreya (ed.), *Khumkhānah-yi Jāved* by Khurshid Ahmad Khan Yusufi, vol. 1, Islamabad, Muqtadirah-yi Qaumī Zabān, [1990-] See also Jalibi 1977, p. 72, Zaidi 1993, p. 65 and Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, p. 37, who also discuss Hashimi and Khan’s views.

¹⁵¹ Jalibi’s text has a lacuna here and Jafar and Jain have *bā*. The conjecture *karnā* is by C. M. Naim.

¹⁵² Jalibi’s text has *karchī* here. Jafar and Jain suggest *karcī*. The emendation *karchā* is by C. M. Naim.

¹⁵³ Quoted in Jalibi 1977, p. 72 from an old handwritten album preserved at the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū, Karachi. No further reference is given.

have been eager to rediscover early examples of Urdu Rekhta in north India, though they have not viewed it in the context of a continued engagement with Hindavi but as prehistory of Urdu poetry.

There is also evidence of a widening of the domain of Rekhta in seventeenth-century north India. Some longer works produced in loose Khari Boli include Shaikh Maulana ‘Abdullah Ansari’s treatise on the religious jurisprudence of India entitled *Fiqh-i hindī* (1663),¹⁵⁵ Shaikh Mahbub ‘Alam’s three long poems, the *Mahshar-nāma* (The book of the Day of judgement), the *Masā’il-i Hindī* (The Precepts of the Prophet in Hindi) and the voluminous *Dard-nāma* on the life of Prophet Muḥammad.¹⁵⁶ The language of these works is influenced by Braj and Panjabi and comes thus very close to the mixed language of the Sants, as the following *dohas* from the *Mahshar-nāma* show,

rabbā merā eka tū nāhī koī dūjā; tujha sā sāvī chāra kara kisa lāū pūjā.

...

sārī qudrat tū rakkhā cāhā so kīnī; ekō kāyā chīna lī ekō māyā dīnī.

*eka rakkhe nita rovatē rovē bahu bhātā; eka rakkhe nita sovate sovē dina rātā.*¹⁵⁷

Only you are my lord, no one else.

Abandoning a lord like you whom else should I worship?

...

You protect the whole creation and do whatever you want;

You took away the body of one or put another in illusion;

You keep one continuously weeping — weeping in many ways;

You keep another continuously sleeping — sleeping day and night.

¹⁵⁴ See e.g. the Hindavi verses attributed to Sufis like Shaikh Junaid (fl. 1618), Shaikh ‘Usman Jalandhari (fl. 1625), Shaikh Faziluddin Batalvi (d. 1738), Sayyid Atal Narnoli, Shaikh ‘Ata Banka, the stray poems by Mir Ja‘far Zatali (1659?-1713), Mirza Mu‘izuddin Muhammad Musavi Khan Fitrat (1640-89), Naushah Ganjbakhsh (See Sherani 1930, pp. 240-1, Jalibi 1977, p. 81, Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, pp. 86-97), and the marsiyas in the albums described by Ma‘sud Hasan Rizvi Adib (*Shumālī hind kī qadīmtarīn urdū nazmē*, Lucknow, Adabistan, 1984 see Faruqi 2001, pp. 114-5) or those attributed to the notoriously difficult Indian-Persian poet Shaikh Nasir ‘Ali Sirhindi (d. 1697). (Sherani 1930 pp. 232-3 and 242-3, Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, pp. 34-5, 52-79). Even the most famous Indo-Persian poet of his times, Mirza Bedil, is credited with some couplets in Mir’s tazkira *Nikāt ash-shu‘arā*, but their language is too modern to be Bedil’s (Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, pp. 88-89).

¹⁵⁵ Jalibi 1977, p. 79 and Sherani 1930, pp. 236-9. See also Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, pp. 38-45. Sprenger (1854 p. 617) in his description of an undated manuscript in the Royal Collection of Avadh (nr. 644) mistakenly identifies the *Fiqh-i hindī* with ‘Ālam’s *Mahshar-nāma*. See Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, pp. 48.

¹⁵⁶ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, pp. 45-51.

¹⁵⁷ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, p. 49. The earliest manuscript of the *Mahshar-nāma* dates from 1745 (1158AH).

In all probability Ansari's and Mahbub 'Alam's works attempted to communicate the most important teachings of Islam to circles that were less familiar with Persian. The language sometimes relies more on Khari Boli, as in the opening lines of the *Masā'il-i Hindī*,

qayāmata ke aḥvāla mā hindī kahī kitāba; maḥshara-nāma nāva hai jāno aiy aṣhāba.

maḥshara-nāma bīca hai suna va'da aisa diyā; ina 'ājiz darvesha ne bījho khola hiyā.

amra-nahī kī bāta mō hindī bolī bola; shar' tarāzū dīna kī judī jo dūgā tola.

bāra cauda barasa laga va'da lāgī dhīla; muḥammad jīvana yāra ne kahā āy beqīla.

va'da kō ākḥir karo amra-nahi kī bāta; likha diyo hindī bola kara bācū māī dina rāta.

ṭalaba bahuta isa yāra kī dekhī sācī sūjha; likhī kitāba us vāste hindī bolī bījha.

masā'il-i hindī nāva aba isakā kaha de yāra; parho fātiha mujha upara je bakhshē

*karanāra.*¹⁵⁸

I have composed a book in Hindi on the final judgement; you know, it is called *Maḥshar-nāma*, o companions. In the middle of *Maḥshar-nāma* I, this lowly poor man, you know, openly made a vain promise that 'I will tell the commands and prohibitions in Hindi. The Law is the scale of Religion even though I give different measurements.' For some thirteen years I was lax with the promise, when my friend, Muhammad Jivan said: 'O you speechless one, fulfil your promise of telling the commands and the prohibitions, write them in Hindi and I will read them day and night.' I saw that his eager solicitation was earnest; know it therefore, that I wrote this book in Hindi for his sake. Call it now by the name of *Masā'il-i Hindī*, my friend, and read the prayer for the soul above me so that God may forgive me.

¹⁵⁸ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, p. 50.

The number of the Rekhta works quoted so far testifies that by the seventeenth century a specific Northern Rekhta *koine* had developed which was distinct from that used in the South. Northern Rekhta poets had a predilection for macaronic poetry and their Hindavi, though based on a Khari Boli template, showed strong Braj Bhasha influence and was free from Dakkani features. That this was not a fixed language in the seventeenth century is shown for example by Mahbub ‘Alam’s use of different registers. Indeed, writing on Muslim themes in the vernacular in the North was not restricted to Khari Boli or the mixed language. The tradition of writing popular works in Avadhi was kept alive by works such as Shaikh Faizullah’s translation of the Persian, *Qiṣṣā-i Jamjam*.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, Rekhta texts belonging to the Urdu-Persian masnavi tradition also began to be written in north India towards the final years of the century, after the genre had long become popular in Gujarat and the Deccan. Raushan ‘Ali wrote his *Jang nāma* (War chronicle), also called ‘*Āshūr nāma* (Tenth-day chronicle) in 1688/9, and in 1693/4 Isma‘il Amrohvi wrote his *Tavalludnāma-yi bībī fātima*¹⁶⁰ (Birth chronicle of the lady Fatima), a biography of Fatima. His other masnavi, *Qiṣṣa-yi mōjjiza-yi anār* (The story of the miracle with the pomegranate) was written in 1709. Significantly, the language of these two *maṣnavīs* shows strong Dakkani features, though their author proudly announces at the end of each that they were written near Delhi.

*vaṭan amroha merā hai shahar nām; isī jā par merā hai jā-(ye) qiyām.*¹⁶¹

My homeland is the town called Amroha; in that place is my permanent home.

There is some indication that Rekhta activities in the North were strengthened also through an early interaction with Gujri.¹⁶² Faruqi observed that Raushan ‘Ali’s masnavi is modelled on Miskin’s (fl. 1681) Gujri *Jang nāma-yi muḥammad ḥanīf*

¹⁵⁹ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, pp. 52-7.

¹⁶⁰ Faruqi 2001, p. 113; Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, pp. 79-86. This masnavi was published by ‘Abdul Haqq under the title *Vafāt nāma-yi bībī fātima* (Death chronicle of the lady Fatima) in *Risāla-yi Urdū* Karachi, April, 1951.

¹⁶¹ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. V, p. 83. They suggest that in spite of this statement Isma‘il Amrohvi must have lived in the south, where his literary language imbibed its Dakkani characteristics.

¹⁶² The dictionary of the Capuchin Frier François Marie prepared in Surat in 1703, the *Thesaurus Linguae Indiae*, is a dictionary of Gujri with a significant component of Perso-Arabic vocabulary but the Hindavi words are represented in the Nagari script thus hinting at further Nagari-Rekhta connections in Gujarat. McGregor 2003, pp. 947-8. A manuscript copy of the dictionary is at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

(Battle chronicle of Muḥammad Ḥanīf) written in all probability in 1681.¹⁶³ But while Miskin describes his language as Gujri,¹⁶⁴ Raushan ‘Ali refers to his as *Hindū/Hindustānī/Hindvī* on different occasions.¹⁶⁵

Another example of traffic between Gujarat and north India and of linguistic and literary syncretism — in this case connected to religious syncretism— is Prannath (1618-94),¹⁶⁶ a Gujarati *kṣatriya* and a religious reformer with a wide outlook who even knew about Christianity. After travelling in his youth Arabia he eventually settled in Panna in Bundelkhand in 1683, where he became the spiritual mentor of King Chhatrasal (d. 1732). Prannath proclaimed himself both the Mahdi of Islam and Kalki of the Hindus and founded a sect that integrated Islamic and Hindu elements. His fourteen treatises in Hindi and Gujarati verse are collected under the name *Quljum-sharīf* (also called *Kuljam-svarūp* or *Tārtam Vāñī*).¹⁶⁷ In these treatises he made extensive use of Khari Boli and in some works, such as the *Kiyāmat-nāmā* (Book of the day of Judgement), he shows a strong preference for Perso-Arabic vocabulary.¹⁶⁸ His acquaintance with Gujri through his Gujarati background might account for this inclination.

The *Kiyāmat-nāmā* as published in the nineteenth century by Growse (who received the text from a member of Prannath’s sect) is written in *caupāīs* in a mixture of several languages, Khari Boli, Panjabi and Gujarati/Rajasthani,

...*agyārai sadī hosī bevāka.* (2)

barakata duniyāñ ora kurāna; ora phakīro kī meharabāñna.

e dargāh se āai bayāñna; jabarāīla le āsī makāñna.(3)¹⁶⁹

Eleven centuries shall be completed silently after the blessing of the world by the Kurán and by him, who was merciful to the poor. A voice shall come from the tabernacle and Gabriel shall take them to the appointed place. (based on F. S. Growse’s translation)¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ Jain and Jafar 1998 vol. IV, pp. 293-5.

¹⁶⁴ Zahiruddin Madani, *Gujrī maṣnaviyā*, Gujarat Urdu Academy, Gandhinagar 1990, pp. 25-26, quoted in Faruqi 2001, p. 113.

¹⁶⁵ Faruqi 2001, pp 113-4.

¹⁶⁶ McGregor 1984, pp. 141-2. Barthwal 1978, pp. 260-2.

¹⁶⁷ A manuscript in the Persian script is found at the Asafuddaula Public Library, Lucknow and a portion of it at the headquarters of his sect in Panna.

¹⁶⁸ Ram 1996, p. 124.

¹⁶⁹ Growse 1879, p. 172.

¹⁷⁰ Growse 1879, p. 177.

In the first chapter of his *Sanandh*, Prannath also spoke about his language choice of ‘Hindustana’ in terms of its general accessibility,

sabako pyārī apanī jo hai kula kī bhākha;

aba kahū bhāṣā mē kinakī, yāmē to bhāṣā hai lākha. (13)

binā hisābe boliyā mine sakala jahāna;

sabako sugama jānake kahūgī hindustāna. (14)

Everyone prefers the language of his own family. Now in whose language shall I speak? — There are millions of languages here. Idioms in the world are countless, but I will speak in Hindustana since I consider it accessible to everyone.

The evidence presented so far suggests that by the end of the seventeenth century mixed poetry in Rekhta, and the domain of Hindavi, had spread quite widely in north India in Muslim and syncretic religious circles like Prannath’s. Even in Mughal aristocratic circles Persian poets dabbled with Rekhta, though without undermining the cultural hegemony of Persian poetry. According to Shamsur Rahman Faruqi the popularity of macaronic poetry retarded the growth of Hindavi literature in the North.¹⁷¹ With a retrospective view, one could indeed consider this kind of poetry a dead end, considering the later flourishing of Hindavi/Urdu. Yet the existence of this kind of poetry in north India *before* 1700 suggests that the fashion for Persianized Hindavi that Vali brought to Delhi did not “create” Rekhta poetry in north India but rather displaced the pre-existing fashion for mixed language poetry. It can be argued that it was this existing fashion which contributed to the quick acceptance of the new style introduced by Vali. Rekhta using Khari Boli or Braj Bhasha templates did continue, but was now associated with what were considered lesser genres like marsiyas or Barahmasas, as the neglect of tazkira writers suggests.

Nagari Rekhta in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Rekhta poetry was also composed in the Nagari script in the seventeenth century although we know much less about it than about its versions in the Persian script.

¹⁷¹ Faruqi 2001, p. 119.

Nagari Rekhta is documented from the princely court Jaipur as well as from the syncretistic movement of Prannath. One of the earliest courtly composers¹⁷² was Prannath Shrotriya in Jaipur, who wrote his *Bejārnāmā* for Maharaja Ram Singh (r. 1667-89),¹⁷³ Prannath's disciple, Laldas composed his guru's biography, the *Bītak*, in 1694 in Khari Boli¹⁷⁴, which at times is very close to modern usage¹⁷⁵ and at times is influenced by Braj or Panjabi.¹⁷⁶

The eighteenth century saw a particularly rich production of mixed poetry in the Nagari script, possibly influenced by the rising tide of Rekhta in the Persian script, and can be considered the heyday of Nagari Rekhta. Despite the overwhelming popularity of Braj Bhasha *rīti* poetry, in the eighteenth century we find Nagari Rekhta all over the Hindi region, from Bihar to Rajasthan.¹⁷⁷ We can identify three contexts for Nagari Rekhta activities: the circles of Nirgun Sants, a few Krishna Bhakti poets and courtly *rīti* poets who mainly wrote in Braj Bhasha but also, significantly, experimented with Rekhta. While Nirgun Sant poets wrote in Khari Boli with a large admixture of Perso-Arabic, Panjabi and Avadhi words, *rīti* and Krishna Bhakti poets evolved a new hybrid poetic form which “assimilated” Perso-Arabic vocabulary, bending it to Braj Bhasha phonology and using a Khari Boli linguistic template. Titles like *Ishk-caman*, *Ishk-latā*, *Ishk-phanda* etc. suggest that what is at work now is rather a poetic curiosity towards the new, and sensational, success of Urdu/Rekhta verse than Sufi influences, which had already been present for long. High Brajbhasha literature was more open towards *literary* influences than towards religious ones. Hindu poets like Nagaridas were cautious not to identify the beloved overtly with

¹⁷² A Rekhta in a manuscript of 21 folios is attributed to none other than Maharaja Jasvant Singh of Jodhpur, the celebrated author of *Bhāṣā bhūṣan*, a treatise on aesthetics in Braj Bhasha in the catalogue of the Hindi Sahitya Sammalan, Allahabad as ms nr. 3-193/ 2145-3. The rekhta in this manuscript, however, is Vājīd's.

¹⁷³ He also wrote stray *Rekhta* as well as works with titles that suggest a high Khari Boli input such as *Vasant kī khabri hai* and *Vaid Phajīhatī*.

¹⁷⁴ McGregor 1984 p. 205.

¹⁷⁵ e.g. *taba gujarāta se āye dīva mē bhāī sāthī jayarāma ke ghara; uṭha mile ānanda so baṛo sukha pāyo dekhkar*. (Then he arrived from Gujarat in Dīv to the house of his brotherly companion, Jayram./He came to receive him with joy and was overwhelmed with delight to see him.) *Bītak* 20,3 quoted in Rām 1996 p. 180.

¹⁷⁶ e.g. *bhīma syāma bhāṭṭa sunī karane āye dīdāra; caracā ita baṛī bhāī uno kiyaṅ baṛā pyāra*. (Having heard this Bhimshyam Bhatt came to see him./They had a long discussion and he showed him great affection.) *Bītak* 21,25 quoted in Rām 1996 p. 181.

¹⁷⁷ Most of this Rekhta is still unpublished and the following survey is based on the various manuscript catalogues printed by the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Nagari Pracharini Sabha (Benares), Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (Allahabad), Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad (Patna) and other smaller centres.

God.¹⁷⁸ In his *Ishk-caman*, where he speaks about love with Islamic imagery and vocabulary, Nagaridas's interpretation is different from that of the Sufis since he considers the lover, God and the beloved to be three different entities while in sufism *Khudā*, God, and *maḥbūb*, the beloved, are the same,

āsika pīra hamesa dila lagāi casma ke tīra,
kiyā khudā mahabūba kaū sadā sakhata bepīra. (15)¹⁷⁹

The lover's heart is always tormented struck by the arrow of the glance;
(But) God made the beloved to be continuously hard and unfeeling.

When philosophical Sufi influences were accepted, it was rejected by strong circles within the Brajhasha literary community as the case of Anandghan (Ghan Ānand) shows. The larger part of Anandghan's quatrains can be read as relating to both *his own* secular and transcendental love, as was done by the scribe who tried to change the word for the beloved, *sujān* into expressions like *ju syāma* to make sure that it is not read as mundane. However, when the quatrain was too overtly mundane, then *sujān* was changed into *su pyārī* and the like to make sure that this 'secular' poem does not have any religious reference. It never happened in Hindi literature before Anandghan that the human beloved was identified with the absolute as Anandghan's double usage of the word *sujān* suggests. This twofold reading of the poems was peculiar rather to Persian and then to Urdu and was vehemently rejected by Anandghan's contemporaries.¹⁸⁰

Let us now examine the various kinds of Nagari Rekhta separately. In the case of Nirgun Sants, quite often the choice for it is simply due to the fact that the spontaneously mixed language of the Sants tilted more towards Khari Boli. Dariya Sahab (c.1680–1723¹⁸¹) of Bihar, who established a tradition indebted to the Kabir Panth, used a tinge of Khari Boli in his *Ātmakathā*¹⁸² and also wrote some Rekhta in

¹⁷⁸ On Nagaridas and the literary atmosphere at Kishangarh-Rupnagar see Bangha 2007/forthcoming.

¹⁷⁹ Gupta 1965 Vol. II p. 49.

¹⁸⁰ Bangha 2001 pp. 175-90.

¹⁸¹ For the date of birth, see McGregor 1984 p. 145. Barthwal 1978 pp. 265-6. For the date of his death see Mishra 1972, p. 160.

¹⁸² Mishra 1972, p. 164.

the mixed Sant language.¹⁸³ Another poet of the same name from Mewar (1676-1758),¹⁸⁴ a Muslim weaver, often composed poems with a strong Khari Boli input,

dariyā guru pūrā milā nāma dikhāyā nūra;

*nisā sukha ūpajā kiyā nisānā dūra.*¹⁸⁵

Dariya found his definite guru — God's name showed the light;

I received the bliss of fulfilment and removed the sign.

As we have seen in the case of court poets and Krishna-bhaktas Rekhta poetry flourished due to literary rather than religious influences. Nirgun Sants and syncretists, however, were more open towards Sufi ideas, imagery and terminology. One example is Charandas (c.1703–82), who was born in Kotwa in Rajasthan. He was brought up in Delhi and later he returned to his native place where he lived as a yogi and became the leader of a sect that combines the worship of the *Bhāgavata*'s Krishna with Sufism creating poetry that is close to that of the Nirgun Sants.¹⁸⁶ His engagement with Sufism is reflected in his technical vocabulary (*khudī*, *murshid*) and in the use of composite expressions (*suhbat sādho kī*),

do dina kā jaga mē jīnā hai, kartā hai kyō gumān; ai besahūr gādī tuk rām ko pichān.

dāvā khudī kā dūr kar apane tu dīl setī; caltā hai akar akarke jvānī kā jos ān.

mursid kā jñān samajh ke husiyār ho sītāb; gaflat ko chor suhbat sādho kī khūb jān.

daulat kā zauq aise jyō āb kā dubāb; jātā rahegā china mē pachatāyagā nidān.

din rāt khovtā hai duniyā ke kārbār; ik pal bhi yād sāī kī kartā nahī ajān.

*sukdev guru jñān carandās ko kahaī; bhaj rām nām sēcā pad mukti kā nidhān.*¹⁸⁷

We live only for two days in this world. Why are you so self-important?

O you drowsy dim-witted one, recognise God just a little!

Remove the claim of egotism from your heart;

¹⁸³ *Dariyā sāheb* 1913, pp. 9-19.

¹⁸⁴ McGregor 1984, p. 145.

¹⁸⁵ *Dariyā sāheb* 190, p. 3. The first half of the second line is hypometrical.

¹⁸⁶ McGregor 1984, p. 146, Menariya 1978, pp. 295-6. Barthwal 1978, pp. 266-7.

¹⁸⁷ 'Cetāvanī' *shabda* 23 (*Carandās* 1908 pp. I. 113-4). 'Cetāvanī' *shabdas* 22, 25 (*Carandās* 1908 pp. I. 112-5) are similar Rekhta poems. In his work about the development of Hindi language and literature Hariiaudh, usually attentive to traces of modern Hindi, did not notice that Charandas used Khari Boli. Hariiaudh 1934, p. 455.

the moment of vigour of youth goes away crookedly.
 Understand the guru's knowledge and become aware at once!
 Give up negligence and recognise the speech of the true ones.
 Desire for wealth is like a bubble of water,
 it will go away in a moment and you will repent at the end.
 You waste your days and nights in wordly chores,
 and do not remember your lord even for a moment, you ignorant.
 Sukdev gives this teaching to Carandās,
 worship God's name, a true object, the treasury of liberation.

Several other Nirgun Sants are listed in the catalogues as authors of Rekhta compositions,¹⁸⁸ in particular a very high number of Niranjani figure amongst them,¹⁸⁹ as well as several followers of Bavri Sahab in Delhi and Avadh.¹⁹⁰ Their Rekhta poetry shows that for them it was not just poetry in mixed language but also in mixed metre. Some poems in Braj Bhasha *without* any considerable Perso-Arabic input, though sometimes with a tinge of Khari Boli are classified as Rekhta in manuscripts. More research is needed to investigate the basis of this attribution. Poems by Bulla Sahab (1693-1768) mix Braj Bhasha forms with Khari Boli ones so much that even the past tense of the verb to be can appear in Khari Boli (*huā*) and in Braj Bhasha (*bhāī*) within the same poem.¹⁹¹ The *Aliphnāmā*, a poem by Bhikha Sahab (or Bhikhanand) (d. 1791), a disciple of Gulal Sahab (who had been a disciple of Bulla Sahab) and followed him as the leader to the Bavri community,¹⁹² is an

¹⁸⁸ E.g. there are several poems attributed to Ramdas of Marwar (1726-1798), who after trying to follow the teachings of eleven various gurus found his spiritual guide in Hariramdas of the Ramsnehi school. Rasik Govind was the author of *Kalijug rāsau* (1807) a longer composition classified as *nītikāvya*, poetry on morals. He is not identical with the Sikh Guru Ramdas (b. 1534, see McGregor 1984, p. 55). See Bhagirath Mishra 1972, p. 499.

¹⁸⁹ Such as e.g. (Jan) Haridas (d. c. 1645), Tursidas, Mohandas, Hariram (maybe identical with Hariramdas and/or with Kisna), Gangadas, Kisandas (maybe identical with Kisna) and Sevasdas (1640?-1741?), the successor of Tursidas. For (Jan) Haridas see Menariya 1978, p. 307, for Sevasdas see Chaturvedi 1957, pp. 221-3.

¹⁹⁰ Some Rama worshippers also composed Rekhta, e.g. Tulsi Sahab (1763-1843) of Hathras, who considered himself a reincarnation of Tulsidas, and (Svami) Ramcharan or Ramcharandas (b. c.1760), who produced many works such as a commentary on the *Rāmcāritmānas*. See Gupta 1942, p. 74 and McGregor 1984, p. 170. The manuscript catalogues mention Rekhta by various authors about whom nothing can be known, such as Ratanlal, Kalramji Maharaj, Vallabh Gosvami, Daulesh and Jan Dharam.

¹⁹¹ *Rekhta 2* in *Bullā sāheb* 1910, p. 23.

¹⁹² McGregor 1984, p. 144. His autobiography is claimed to be Rekhta by a cataloguer of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha *Samksipt vivaraṇ* II, p. 332. The selection as published in the *Hindī sāhitya kā brhat itihās*, however, does not show any input of Perso-Arabic vocabulary but rather a mixture of Braj

interesting composition in which each line starts with a consecutive letter of the Arabic alphabet (modelled on his *Kakaharā*, a composition on the Sanskrit alphabet). Though Bhikha is not bothered by the subtleties of the Arabic alphabet and does not distinguish between characters like *jīm*, *zāl*, *ze*, *zāl* and *zo'e*, the *Aliphnāmā* abounds in Perso-Arabic vocabulary. As in the case of Bulla Sahab, the use of Khari Boli varies in Bhikha's poetry as well. The following poem in the *jhūlnā* metre (similarly to many other quatrains) is classified as Rekhta but is actually in Braj Bhasha,

*pāpa au punna nara jhulata hīḍolanā, ūca aru nīca saba deha dhārī.
pāca aru tīni paccāsa ke basa paro, rāma ko nāma sahajai bisārī.
mahā kavalesa dukha vāra aru pāra nahī, māri jama dūta dē trāsa bhārī.
mana tohī dhirakāra dhirakāra hai tohī, dhṛga binā hari bhajana jīvana
bhikhārī.*¹⁹³

Man swings on the swing of sin and virtue and takes high and low bodies.

Controlled by the five substances the three qualities and the twenty-five elements
he easily forgot God's name.

He suffers much anguish and grief and does not find the other shore. When he dies
Death's messengers heavily torture him.

Shame on you, o soul, shame on you, shame, you wasted your life without
worshipping God.

It was not only the Nirgun Sants and related poets that wrote in Rekhta, but there were also Krishna-bhaktas who continued the tradition of Svami Haridas, and we even find some mixed language compositions, this time with Panjabi elements, current under the signature of Surdas.¹⁹⁴ One of the earliest documented authors is the Gaudiya Vaishnava Manohardas (fl. 1700) whose following quatrain resembles those of Vājīd,

*khosavakta dekhyā māi pharajaṃda bābā naṃda jī kā
phaiṃṭā dhotī jarda baṃsī charī hātha līyā hai.
sāvalā nāma kīnā jara javāhira makaṃbūla
jauvana kī maujē phaila jevāisa dīyā hai.*

Bhasha, Khari Boli, Avadhi and Panjabi thus nearing Sadhukkari. Examples are found in Chaturvedi 1968, pp. 239–40.

¹⁹³ *Bhikhā sāhab* 1909, p. 61.

¹⁹⁴ *Rāmjī kā bārahmāsā* ms Nr. 4241/1 at the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Allahabad.

jīva garakāva khūbhsūrata dariyāva bīca
saboroja mahajūja mastahāla kīyā hai.
aba sahī jīndagānī mahabūba dilajānī
su huī dīdāvanī dāsa manohara jīyā hai. (Gaurangagunāvalī)¹⁹⁵

In a happy moment I caught sight of Nanda's son
wearing a small turban and a yellow dhoti and holding a flute and a stick in his
hands.

The 'Black One' makes the names of 'gold' and 'jewel' shine.

The surges and delights of prime youth spread ...¹⁹⁶

My soul drowned in the middle of the beautiful river.

He made my days and nights happily intoxicated.

Now my life is true, my love of the heart,

I have a glimpse of you, and your servant, Manohar, lives.

The Krishna devotees normally wrote Rekhta with a Khari Boli template,
though it could also be Panjabi as in the case of Anandghan's *Ishk-latā*,

ānāda ke ghana tuma binā mujanū nahī bhāvai.
nayana asāde lāganai tujahī nū dhāvai.
huṇa kyā kījai lāḍīle vekhana nahī pāvāi.
julama karāi ye bāvare mujanū tarasāvāi.

tāḍe mukha para tila abe ati khūna karādā.

alakāi taiṃḍī yaū chuṭī dvai nāgina lasādā.

... (Ishkalatā 35–36)¹⁹⁷

Cloud of bliss, without you I get no pleasure.

My searching eyes run to you.

What shall I do now? I cannot glimpse my beloved.

These naive ones oppress and torture me.

¹⁹⁵ Bansal 1988, pp. 20-21— quoted from an undated manuscript (nr. 4487-GI at the Vrindaban Research Institute).

¹⁹⁶ The text is unclear at this point.

¹⁹⁷ Mishra 1952, p. 180.

Alas, the black spot on your face slays me.
Your loose locks of hair shine as two snakes.
...

We can conclude our survey of Nagari Rekhta devotional verse with two Haridasi ascetics belonging to the community of Tatiya Sthan in Vrindaban writing Rekhta in the early nineteenth century. In his *Saras mañjāvalī* Sahacharisharan, the abbot of the Tatiya Sthan between 1821 and 1837, continued the tradition of the *māñjh* (or *mānj*) metre with slight admixture of Punjabi. Sitaldas, a disciple of Thakurdas (1799–1811) who was allegedly infatuated with a boy called Lal Bihari (the name Lal Bihari occurs in his poems as a name for Krishna) used Khari Boli and a wide range of cultural referents in his *Gulzār-caman*, *Ānand-caman* and *Bihār-caman*,

majanū pharahāda mādhavānala ye the maharama isa bastī ke;

lalai shūrī mē līna hue ura kāmakandalā kistī ke;

yaha ishka candrikā chāya rahī aba taka bāyasa isa mastī ke;

jānī dhūḍhe hī milate hāi gāhaka is husnaparastī ke.

(*Ānand-caman* 20)¹⁹⁸

Majnun, Farhad and Mādhavānal were the relatives of this settlement,
Their heart was absorbed in Laila and Shirin and in the boat of Kāmkanalā.
This moon of love is still shining over the tree of this passion.
My friend, costumers of this worship of beauty can only be found with difficulty.

Finally, we find Nagari Rekhta literary activity at princely courts in Rajasthan already in the seventeenth century in all probability prompted by similar experiments at the Mughal court and by the popularity of the Nirgun Sants' poetry. Jaipur (Amber) regularly patronized Rekhta writing, as the manuscript collection of the City Palace attests. A few decades after Prannath Shrotriya (fl. 1680) Kavikalanidhi Shrikrishna Bhatt composed *Ishk-mahtāb*, which used a wide range of vocabulary including Avadhi, Braj Bhasha, Apabhramsha, Persian depending on the sentiments evoked in

¹⁹⁸ Published in Albelisharan and Sharma 1999, p 113.

the poem.¹⁹⁹ In fact, by the eighteenth century the leading Braj Bhasha poets of the time wrote Nagari Rekhta, not just as occasional poems but even as longer works such as Nagaridas's *Ishk-caman*, Anandghan's *Ishk-latā*, Brajnidhi's *Rekhtā saṃgrah* and *Rās kā rekhtā* and Rasrashi Ramnarayan's *Ishk-phanda*,²⁰⁰ *Ishk-latā*,²⁰¹ *Ishk-paccīsī* and *Māhai mālik mukām kī* or *Ishk-daryāv*.²⁰² The high number of manuscripts of his *Ishk-daryāv*, written in the 'Rekhta' and 'Ghazal' metres during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh (r. 1778-1803), testifies to the popularity of this work.²⁰³ One of the latest Rekhta authors in Rajasthan was (Gangadas) Bakhatavar (1823-96) who served at the Udaipur court.²⁰⁴ Brajnidhi's interest in *Rekhtā* is also shown by the fact that he asked his court poet Rasrashi to compose similar verses. One such work composed for Brajnidhi is the *Rasik-* (or *Rasrāshi-*) *Paccīsī*.²⁰⁵

A somewhat intermediary position between Rekhta and Braj was occupied by poems which had a Braj template with a high input of Perso-Arabic vocabulary, such as in this passage from the *Ishk-nāmā* of Bodha (1748?–1803?),²⁰⁶ a court poet from Panna in Bundelkhand,

pahicāne prema rakāne je beparada darada dariyāva hilai;
magarūra dikhāte ākhira yā dilasūra prema ko paṃtha pilai;
taki tabiyedūra udāra vāhi aru ganai na dhaka dai naina jhilai;
taba khūba iska bodhā āsika jaba mahirabāna mahabūba milai.
*(Isk-nāmā 33)*²⁰⁷

The one who openly drowns in the river of pain knows the ways of love.

Even if the beloved appears proud, the lover after all trods the path of love.

¹⁹⁹ In battle descriptions for example he imitated *Prthvīrāj Rāsau* both in dialect and verse form. Chaturvedi 1968, pp. 5 and 389. His other known work, the *Durgā-bhakti-taraṅgini* (1712) is based on the Sanskrit *Durgā Śaptasatī*.

²⁰⁰ Ms nr. 27787 (9) at Jodhpur RORI ff. 106-08 (copied in VS1857).

²⁰¹ Ms nr. 9720 (5) at Jodhpur RORI ff. 14-16.

²⁰² Ms nr. 30075 (1) at Jodhpur RORI ff. 1-5 (copied in VS1916).

²⁰³ Four manuscripts are found at the Khasmohar Collection in the City Palace of Jaipur (Nr. 2367, 2373, 7799(2), 1546 (1) and one at the Wellcome Library, London (MS Hindi. 365.03 — erroneously given under the name of Ghanānand in the catalogue). This work has been **published in 2007 by Kishorilal Gupta**. Rasrashi's *Kavitta ratnamālikā saṃgrah* comprising 801 poems by earlier authors and 108 by Rasrashi was compiled for Singi Jivraj, Pratap Singh's divan. The *Mishrabandhu Vinod* (p. 839, Nr 950) puts his floruit around 1770 (VS1827).

²⁰⁴ RORI, Jodhpur ms. nr. 10847(2) 33-4.

²⁰⁵ This work on the *Bhramargīt* theme is preserved in manuscripts at some branches of the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute: Jodhpur 9720(1) ff 1-5, Udaipur 31, ff 1-9, 465 ff 1-12 and 3029 ff 1-3. His other preserved works are his *Prem Patrikā* and *Chandāṣṭak*. Jodhpur RORI 9720 (3-4).

²⁰⁶ Also called *Virahī-subhān-dampati-vilās*. See Mishra 1974, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ Mishra 1974, p. 6.

Deeming the beloved a generous companion, he does not count betrayals but his eyes are absorbed.

The love of the lover, Bodhā, is great when he meets the compassionate beloved.

This tradition continued well until the emergence of modern Khari Boli literature, and miscellaneous Rekhta under the name of several poets can be found in Nagari manuscripts dating from the nineteenth century. All these poets were primarily Brajbhasha poets who experimented with Rekhta. In their case this normally meant a Khari Boli template, though it could also be Panjabi as in the case of Anandghan's *Ishk-latā*.

Conclusion

Hindavi was a literary language in India along with Persian since the fourteenth century, though there are strong indications that it has been used already some decades after the Muslim conquest of north India. Hindavi songs were sung along with Persian ones in Sufi *sama*' and maybe in other gatherings despite the initial opposition of leading masters such as Sharafuddin Maneri. However, Hindavi did not reach the same status as Persian, and the scarcity of Hindavi material also suggests that Hindavi works were considered inferior to Persian ones in prestige and remained limited in quantity. The few extant examples of Hindavi used at these gatherings are very close to Braj Bhasha both in language and poetic form, not to Khari Boli, which only later became more closely associated with Muslims.

Indeed, the earliest use of Khari Boli and of the mixed language in north India can only be documented from the sixteenth-century Mughal court although there are indications that it had been promoted somewhat earlier in Sufi circles. This suggests that, contrary to perceived notions, Khari Boli literature *was* cultivated in north India almost parallelly to its counterparts in the south, namely Dakkani and Gujri. In north India under Mughal patronage it took the form of macaronic poetry written in Persian metres mixing phrases and half-lines of Hindavi and Persian. Although the normal templates of Rekhta were that of Persian or Khari Boli and the languages used were Hindavi and Persian, there was in fact a wide range of possibilities within Rekhta, including Braj or Panjabi templates and the mixing of more than two languages or dialects.

It was in the experimental and syncretistic environment of the Mughal court, which as Allison Bush also shows in this volume was receptive to Braj Bhasha riti poetry as well, that we find Mughal noblemen writing light-hearted poems with words and phrases from Hindavi. Often these words, phrases and images had to do with the feminine. 'Ishqi Khan's poem suggests a mimetic use mirroring the multilingual Mughal court. The example of Abdurrahim Khankhanan demonstrates, that composing in Hindi is a show of virtuosity for the multilingual poet. These are the compositions that can be most pertinently called "macaronic", since they seem to have a mimetic/ironic bend.

While the earliest documented Rekhta poetry developed within Muslim circles, later in the sixteenth century the Nirgun Sant tradition that blended Muslim and Hindu ideas also developed its own Rekhta, written down not in the Persian script but in Nagari and using Indian metres rather than Persian ones. Their Rekhta, just like in the South and probably prompted by similar poems of wandering Sufis, mixed Persian words and phrases into a Hindavi grammar. The Persian-script version of this variety developed into the literary language today called Urdu. The earliest extant Nagari Rekhta texts originated in Rajasthan, namely with Dadu Dayal and his disciples. This use of Rekhta spread mostly among Nirgun Sants but we also find a stray example among the songs of a leading Vaishnava of Vrindaban in the sixteenth century, Svami Haridas. Due to the burgeoning world of Sadhukkari poetry Dadu's disciples, with a few exceptions, did not continue with Nagari Rekhta and its occurrence remained scarce until the eighteenth century.

The earliest extended composition in north India that can be considered Khari Boli is a work by Vājīd, the 'Rekhta of the Lord', which survives in several early manuscripts and whose composition in all probability predates that of the *Bikaṭ kahānī*. The fairly complex structure of Vājīd's Rekhta suggests that by the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries Rekhta had become an independent genre and Nagari Khari Boli literature existed not simply as occasional rambles into the field but in highly developed compositions. In Vājīd's case we see a move just opposite to Svami Haridas, a Krishna devotee who wrote a poem like the Nirgun Sants. Vājīd was a Nirgun Sant who wrote Krishna poetry. Both authors seem to have been at home in the world of music, and it can be fruitful to examine further the earliest links between the use of Rekhta and music.

Material from the seventeenth century suggests that Mughal macaronic poetry integrated the achievements of the Nirgun Sants's experiments with a Khari Boli template. The best example of this integration is the *Bikaṭ Kahānī*. By the end of the century mixed poetry in Rekhta, and the domain of Hindavi, had spread quite widely in north India in popular Muslim and syncretic religious groups like Prannath's sect. Even in Mughal aristocratic circles Persian poets dabbled with Rekhta. The existence of this kind of poetry in north India before 1700 suggests that the fashion for Persianized Hindavi that Vali brought to Delhi did not create the Rekhta poetry in north India but rather displaced the pre-existing fashion for mixed language poetry.

In the next century more and more examples of Nagari Rekhta are attested, both from courts and by Krishna devotees, showing that Rekhta pervaded all fields of Hindi literature. It was the court of Amber and Jaipur, perhaps the Hindu court most open to Mughal culture, that provided patronage to Rekhta activities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while among Krishna devotees the leaders of the Haridasi school produced some memorable Rekhtas. In the case of Vaishnavas Perso-Arabic vocabulary was normally assimilated into a familiar Braj Bhasha template.

Rekhta production was incomparably less in quantity than that of poetry in Braj Bhasha or in *Sadhukkari*. Yet a careful sifting through manuscript catalogues reveals a significant number of Rekhta works, probably comparable to the heritage of other literary dialects such as Avadhi. We know, however, little about its readership, although several theories can be found attempting to explain the motives for its use. The reasons lying behind the use of Nagari Rekhta *vis-à-vis* Braj or *Sadhukkari* Bhasha and other Hindi dialects are not entirely clear. Probably the growing success of its use by Muslims prompted some Hindu authors to experiment with it — perhaps to evoke a courtly atmosphere since the court *par excellence* was a Muslim one, that of the Mughals. The use of Hindavi within the world of Persian is relatively better researched — Hindavi was used to reach out to people who may have been little acquainted with Persian and more importantly it was considered more effective than Persian in evoking emotions and was also perceived as closer to the world of women. Raja Rao said in his *Foreword* to *Kanthapura* that “English is the language of our intellectual make-up — like Sanskrit or Persian was before — but not of our emotional make-up.” Similarly, in early modern India Persian may not have provided

the same emotive strength as did Hindi and hence there was a continuous need of a mother-tongue for expressing emotions.

In all its various forms, Rekhta literature, though neglected by modern scholarship, is more than one of the most important meeting points between Hindi and Urdu, it was the shared early life of two gradually separated languages.

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