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Na Turk, na Hindu:
Shared language, accents and located meanings
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> 'The words of a language belong to nobody, but still we hear those words only in particular individual utterances, we read them in particular individual works' (Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 1986, p. 88)

> 'languages do not exclude each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways' (Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* 1992, p. 291)

1. *Bhakha* and circulation

Modern language ideologies firmly believe that languages "belong" to specific communities, be they ethnic, regional, or religious. These imagined communities, Benedict Anderson has taught us (1991), get simultaneously projected in the past, present, and future. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries the slogan "Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan" projected Hindi (in the Nagari script) as the language of Hindus in north India "from the beginning", urged contemporary north Indian Hindus to embrace it, and claimed that Hindi would become the national language of all Indians, explicitly coded as Hindus.[1] This modern imagination forged a continuum of script-language-community in the face of long histories of multi-scriptual and multilingual practices in which languages have commonly been written in more than one script and people learnt more than one language and knew how to navigate a multilingual social world.[2] As the other essays in this

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[1] As Sudhir Chandra (1992) pointed out, the slogan began as a *cri de coeur*/impassioned cry about the indifference of Hindus in north India towards "their" language, but then became a rallying cry for Hindi/Hindu nationalism in the 1920s, and is still invoked today. There is a vast literature on modern language ideologies and their implications: Dalmia, King, Rai, Orsini, Mir.

[2] Thus Hafiz Mahmud Sherani (1966, p. 132) viewed the early instances of the north Indian vernacular (interchangeably called Hindi/Hindui/Hindavi) in *Perso-Arabic script* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (8/9c H) as evidence of the creation of Urdu as a *Muslim* language: 'These words and expressions, in my opinion, are enough evidence for the antiquity of the Urdu language, and in truth it can be said that this language was commonly spoken *among Muslims* in this period… we see *that Muslim peoples (aqwām) created a special language for themselves in India* and as they spread thanks

volume make clear, multilingualism in India has not been exclusive to literate elites or embodied in specialists but has permeated every aspect of the social world, from endogamous families to the workings of the bazaar, from local and higher-level administration to the law, from religious preaching to singing and story-telling (Orsini & Schofield 2015). It is flying in the face of this persistent multilingualism that modern language ideologies have carved out separate pasts and futures. Moreover, ideas of script-language-community produce their own expectations. For example, if a language "belongs" to a community, then when others use it they are "borrowing" it, with the result that one ends up being endlessly surprised that such "borrowing" is so extensive, repeated and regular. Utterances, too, "belong" originally to a speaker or a community, and others "borrow", "appropriate" or "distort"them.

But what if we step back and take a different view of language altogether? What if, in the spirit of Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophy of language, we think of language as socially shared, containing a multitude of 'languages of various epochs and periods of socio-ideological life' (1922, p. 291), with utterances constantly accented and re-accented depending on one's position and audience? What happens if, in the context of multilingual North India in the early modern period, a society with several High languages (Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic) which lived in writing but also in aural genres such as preaching and exposition and a less differentiated *'bhakha'* or *'hindi/hindui/hindavi'* that could be written in a variety of scripts and that encompassed both local speech varieties and more supra-regional *koinés*, whether literary Brajbhasha or the 'mixed' language of the sadhus and Sants (see Orsini 2012),[3] we take seriously Bakhtin's

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to their conquests and victories, this language spread eastward, westward, to the North and to the South as well, together with them'; emphasis added. See Orsini (2012) for a fuller discussion of early modern multilingualism in North India.

[3] This is a different position from that argues that there are no languages but just language in its multiplicity; while it is true that differences between *bhakhas* may not have been audible to speakers, and to some Persian or Sanskrit speakers Persian-*hindavi* or Sanskrit-*bhakha* may have seemed as part of a continuum (as Ronit Ricci argues in the case of Arabic-Javanese or Arabic-Malay, Ricci 2011), in

contention that 'at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom' and that 'languages do not exclude each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways' (1992, p. 291)?[4] Then we stop thinking in terms of "original" and "imitation", or of "belonging" and "borrowing" and rather think in terms of accenting and re-accenting and of dialogue and audiences. And instead of expecting to see language circulating through channels of formal translation, we shift our attention to the registers and traces *within* languages that provide evidence of how words, expressions, ideas, tropes and tastes actually circulated within this multilingual society (Orsini unpublished). This is not to say that formal translation was completely absent or irrelevant within India, as has been sometimes argued (e.g. Trivedi 2006), but that formal translation occurred under specific circumstances (e.g. d'Hubert 2010, Cort 2015), and pales in volume before the constant informal traffic between languages and repertoires (Kothari 2015a and b).

In this essay I focus on one specific utterance—"*Na Turk, na Hindu*"— and follow its circulation across different religious and linguistic contexts in early modern north India as an example of informal translation and of accenting and re-accenting according to specific audience and context of discourse. I argue that while its rejection of at least certain aspects of formal religious identities is undeniable and its repeated occurrence shows the shared and circulatory nature of language in this social world, it took specific meanings depending on the context of discourse and on the intended audience.

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the case of the High languages we find a clear sense that they were different from *bhakha/hindavi*; in fact the most common expression for the act of language transference was "making into *bhakha*" (Busch 2010, Cort 2015).

[4] '…at any given moment, languages of various epochs and periods of socio-ideological life cohabit with one another... Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form... Therefore languages do not exclude each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways' (Bakhtin 1992, p. 291).

2. Liminality, syncretism, and borrowing in religious terms/spaces

'Transferring themes and symbols from one religious sphere to another has long been a well-attested practice in South Asia,' notes Denis Matringe (1992, p. 190). Terms like *brahma, karma, śūnya,* or notions about the yogic body have been endlessly reaccented, there is nothing unusual about it. Yet when the transfer happens between "Hindu" and "Islamic" spheres, concepts, and symbols it gets charged with several layers of signification and intention. The phrase *Na Turk na Hindu*, uttered by Sants, Sufis, and Ismailis alike in early modern north India, becomes evidence that they shared not only the same language but also the same thoughts: that they rejected social and religious identities in favour of a common human core and wanted to create a hybrid, inclusive individual and group identity. "Shared language" in this view becomes a shorthand for shared values and a common, syncretic ground that set them both in open contrast to *kattar* Brahmins and *shari'a*-minded qazis and 'ulama. But how useful, or misleading, is this understanding?

Several scholars by now have criticized this syncretistic reading of Sant Bhakti and Sufism (e.g. Stewart & Erns 2003), both because it presupposes the existence of pure, distinct identities to which distinct set of terms, characters, and stories "belong" and out of which a hybrid one is created, and because it imposes a specific intentionality (to bridge the gap, to create social harmony, e.g. Barathwal 1978 [1936]) and forecloses other possible ones. Pemberton and Nijhawan note that, 'As an interpretative model, syncretism fails to offer an adequate explanation of the confluence of factors that make up, and affect the articulation of, identities.' Instead, syncretism underscores an oppositional framework between official/hegemonic and popular/subaltern religion. In so doing, 'syncretist interpretive models offer explanations of identity and experience that make possible a number of troubling

presumptions.' First, 'the existence of a "pure" (and thus somehow "hegemonic") hybridized variant (as opposed *to the cultural borrowing that is germane to most forms of religious, social, ritual, and literary expression)'—* in other words, borrowing, or circulation as I would rather put it, is the norm. Instead, and this is the second presumption, syncretism becomes 'essentially transgressive'. Third, syncretism gets valorised and privileged 'in relation to identities that do not define themselves along these lines' (2009, p. 2).[5]

Tony Stewart has instead usefully proposed a translational approach to provide an alternative explanation of the use of "Hindu" religious vocabulary by Bengali Sufis in utterances such as the following, by Ali Raja:

> In the beginningless space the prime mover (*kartā*) alone existed. The Stainless One (*nirañjan*) was a creamy essence in the thick of the enveloping universe of bleak inertia (*tama guna*). When the one called Stainless (*nirañjan*) rent the interior of that orb, he transformed into the Lord Ishwara. Forms (*akāra*) began to differentiate within that universe and the unitary formless (*nirākara)* metamorphosed into seventy-one forms. When the formless (*nirākara)* assumed form, the Stainless (*nirañjan*) took the name of Vishnu… (quoted in Stewart 2001, p. 277)

Tony Stewart has convincingly argued that Bengali Sufis were not 'borrowing' but *thinking* and *translating* 'Islamic thoughts in the local language.' In doing so, they sought the closest 'terms of equivalence', and in doing so they thought 'new thoughts in Bengali' (2001, p. 273). This essay supports a similar view. We should read instances of the use of the same terms, phrases, characters and stories by poets of different affiliations not (necessarily) as evidence of syncretism, or of

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[5] Or see Tony Stewart (2001, p. 262): 'Syncretism is predicated on the assumption that preexisting and discrete doctrinal or ritual systems are mysteriously combined to form some unnatural mixture' (and the constituent parts are 'idealized, essentialized, and completely stripped of their historical grounding.'

'standing on the threshold' (Sila-Khan)—though that is clearly what some communities like the Meos did and do. Nor should we assume that terms, idioms, and stories "belong" to a certain community and if others use them they are "borrowing" them. Rather, in the spirit of Bakhtin's philosophy of language outlined above, with its emphasis on the 'social (and productive) nature of the utterance'—shared, accented, and re-accented by each speaker in constant dialogue with real or imagined listeners and other speakers—I suggest that we read such utterances as instances of "re-accenting" terms, phrases, characters, and stories, or even "multi-accenting" them if they sought to address different audiences at once or be particularly clever (e.g. Orsini 2015). As we shall see in the case of *Na Turk na Hindu,* even if the phrase remains the same, the textual context within the song-poems, and the performance context and location of the songs and their authors show that the phrase produced and carried different meanings. My first set of examples makes a case for (re-) accenting; the second example will show an example of "multi-accenting"; and the third example shows how sensitivity to dialogue and location enhances our understanding.

3. *Na Turk na Hindu*

This phrase was uttered and shared widely in the religious sphere of north India, among Sants like Kabir, Ismailis like Pir Shams, and Sufis like Malik Muhammad Jaisi and Bullhe Shah, to give but a few examples. The utterance was repeated (almost) verbatim, suggesting that its recognisability and the audience's familiarity with it was important to the poets, but also that it was inherently dialogic and responded to other versions of the same utterance.[6] Of course we know that listeners could and would have attached *their* preferred meaning, but it is still important for us to ascertain the text's

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[6] And equally it shaped itself in anticipation of an addressee's response: 'As a word, it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee' (Bakhtin, *Marxist Philosophy of Language*, quoted in Morris 1994, p. 54).

own preferred meaning, and attend to the variations and circulation of this utterance… to the present day. Let us start with a song-poem from Kabir's *Bījak*, the compendium produced within the Kabir *panth* also known as the "eastern recension" (Vaudeville 1974, Hess & Singh 1983).

a) Kabir *sabad* 55

ऐसो भेद बिगूचनि भारी।
बेद कतेब दीन अरु दुनियाँ, कौंन पुरिख कौन नारी ।। टेक
एक रुधिर एकै मल मूतर, एक चाम एक गूदा।।
एक बूँद तैं सृष्टि रची है, कौन बांह्मन कौन सूदा ।।
माटी का पिंड सहज उतपनां, नाद अरु बिंद समांनां ।
 बिनसि गया तैं का नाम धरिहौ, पढ़ि गुनि मरम न जांना   ।।
रज गुन ब्रह्मा तम गुन संकर, सत गुनी हरि है सोई ।
कहै कबीर एक राम जपहु रे, *हिन्दू तुरुक न कोई* ।।[7]

It's heavy confusion.
Veda, Koran, holiness, hell, woman, man,
a clay pot shot with air and sperm…
When the pot falls apart, what do you call it?
Numskull! You've missed the point.
It's all one skin and bone, one piss and shit,
one blood, one meat.
From one drop, a universe.
Who's Brahmin? Who's Shudra?
Brahma *rajas*, Shiva *tamas*, Vishnu *sattva*…
Kabir says, plunge into Ram !
There: *no Hindu. No Turk*. (tr. Hess & Singh 1983, p. 67, emphasis added)[8]

We find here some of Kabir's typical themes and images: our usual categories, holy texts, religious concepts, gender and so on *hide* true reality. The song-poem proceeds by denying a whole set of binaries, questioning

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[7] *Kabīr Vāṅmay,* vol. 2, *Sabad,* edited by Dr Jaydev Singh and Dr Vasudev Singh (Varanasi, Vishwavidyalay Prakashan 2002), p. 75.

[8] *The Bījak of Kabir*, tr. by Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), 67.

our common sense belief in them. Instead of caste ideas of purity and pollution, the poem vividly foregrounds physicality and the common experience of embodiment, but also need for direct experience of reality ('plunge into Ram'). It is at this point in the poem that the phrase 'no Turk, no Hindu' (*hindū turuk na koī*) occurs, suggesting that *there*, once you dwell within Ram's name, outer differences *disappear*. If we go back to the refrain, leaving these outer identities behind is part of the 'heavy confusion', the puzzling mystery (*beda bigūcani bhārī*).

Let's compare this meaning with a similar set of images and ideas—creation out of a claypot, the Lord-Guru within, the address to religious leaders—in an Ismaili hymn *ginan* attributed to Pir Shams.[9]

hamadīla khālaka allāha sohī vasejī jeṇe kāyama kudarata calāī
The Creator (Khaliq) is in my heart and
in all else, too; He has brought the
Eternal Universe into existence.

Listen to me Mullas and Qazis,
Who created the Universe?

He brought the whole world into being
out of clay. *Who in this world is a Hindu
and who a Musalman?*

The Hindu goes to the sixty-eight
places of pilgrimage, while the
Muslim goes to the mosque.
Yet *neither the Hindu nor the
Muslim knows my Lord*, who
sits – Pure.

My mind is my prayer mat, Allah is my Qazi
and my body is my mosque.
Within I pass time in prayer
What can the vulgar and ignorant

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[9] Text in *Ginan-e-Sharif: our wonderful tradition* (London: Ismailia Association for the UK, 2982), p.? Ginans are very difficult to date given the absence of old manuscripts; this is attributed to Pir Shams (d. 1276CE/675AH), though the language is more modern.

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know of my Way?...
Heed what Pir Shams says,
how will you reach the shore
without a Guide (Pir)?
      (tr. Azim Nanji, p. 122, emphasis added)10


Beyond reminding us of the commonality of human
embodimen, 'neither Turk nor Hindu' here does not mean
rejecting both religions but rather positing a true
Islam. We see it in the repeated emphasis on the true
momin who alone understands who the pure God is, and on
internalized devotion rather than formal ritual—though of
course this is a statement expressed in the course of the
ritual of communal singing. Neither Turk nor Hindu serves
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[10] The wording of Tazim R. Kassam's translation (1995, pp. 232-3) is slightly different:
'The universe is in my heart, and Allah resides with it;
It is He who eternally sustains nature.
        Indeed, he is Allah!
Listen, O Scholar (*mullah*)! Listen, O Judge *(qāḍī)*!
It is He who gave rise to creation.
        Indeed, he is Allah!
From the very clay, He fashioned the entire world!
So how do you tell the Muslim apart from the Hindu?
        Indeed, he is Allah!
The Hindu is the one who goes on sixty-four pilgrimages;
The Muslim is the one who goes to the mosque.
        Indeed, he is Allah!
But neither of them, Hindu nor Muslim, knows of my Shāh;
The Shāh [= Imam] sits within – he is the Immaculate (*nirañjan*).
        Indeed, he is Allah!
My heart is a prayer-mat, and Allah is my judge;
My body is my mosque.
        Indeed, he is Allah!
Within myself, I sit and submit my prayers (*namāz*);
What can a foold know of my worship (*tāʻat*).
        Indeed, he is Allah!
If [food] comes my way, I feast—if not, I fast;
Thus my minds reminas fixed on my Sāheb.
        Indeed, he is Allah!
A believer (*mu'min*) is he who comes to know all the secrets;
He walks upon the path of kowledge (*'ilm*).
        Indeed, he is Allah!
Through study (*gyān*) and meditation (*dhyān*)
        he comes to realize all things;
Searching and penetrating, he discovers all.
        Indeed, he is Allah!
Says Pīr Shams, Listen, O my Brothers!
How can you cross to the other shore without the Pīr?
        Indeed, he is Allah!

to point to true Islam and the salvific role of the Ismaili Pir-guru that is superior to the Islam of orthopraxy.

Finally, here is one of the eighteenth-century Punjabi Sufi poet Bullhe Shah's most famous song-poems:

bullhā kī jāṇāñ maiñ kauṇ

nā maiñ moman vicc masītāñ, nā maiñ vic kufar dīāñ rītāñ
nā maiñ pākī vicc palītāñ, nā maiñ mūsā nā faraun
bullhā kī jāṇāñ maiñ kauṇ

nā maiñ andar bed kitābāñ, nā vic bhogāñ nā sharābāñ
nā vic rindāñ mast ḵharābāñ, na vic jāgaṇ nā vic sauṇ
bullhā kī jāṇāñ maiñ kauṇ

nā vicc palītī pākī, na vic śādī nā ghamnākī,
nā maiñ ābī na maiñ ḵhākī nā maiñ ātiś nā maiñ pauṇ
bullhā kī jāṇāñ maiñ kauṇ

nā maiñ bhet mazhab dā pāyā, nā maiñ ādam ḥavvā jāyā
nā maiñ kuch apnā nām dharāyā, na vic baiṭhāñ na vich bhauñ
bullhā kī jāṇāñ maiñ kauṇ

nā maiñ arabī nā lāhaurī, nā maiñ hindī śahir nagaurī
nā hindū nā turak paśaurī, *nā* ==maiñ XXX vic== *nadauñ*
bullhā kī jāṇāñ maiñ kauṇ

avval āḵhar āp nūñ jāṇāñ, nā koī dūjā hor pachāṇāñ
maithoñ hor koī siāṇā, bullā shahu khaṛā hai kauṇ
bullhā kī jāṇāñ maiñ kauṇ

Bullha, what do I know about who I am? [or: Who knows who I am?]
I am not a believer in the mosques, nor do I follow the rites of unbelief.
    I am not among the pure or the polluted. I am not
    Moses or Pharaoh.
I am not in the Vedas or in the scriptures; I am not in drugs or in liquor.
    I am not among the drunken reprobates. I am not in
    waking, nor am I in sleep.
I am not in joy or in sadness, nor am I in pollution or purity. I am not of water

        or of earth, nor am I fire or air.
I am neither an Arab nor from Lahore, nor an Indian from
the city of Nagaur. *I am not a Hindu, nor a Turk from
Peshawar*. Nor do I live in Nadaun.
I have nor dicovered the secret of religion; nor am I
born of Adam and Eve. I
    have not given myself a name; nor am I found in
sitting or moving
    about.
I know myself to be first and last, I do not recognize
anyone else. No one is
     wiser than I am. Bullha, who is the lord standing
there?
         (text and tr. by Shackle, Bullhe Shah 2015, p.
, emphasis added)

As in Kabir's *pada*, Bullhe Shah refuses categories of
religious identity, conventional purity, and ontological
fixity, and by proposing and rejecting a series of
oppositions and extremes comes back and again to his
basic question—What do I know about who I am/Who knows
who I am? I am not holy, I am not drunken, I am not
asleep. I am neither Turk nor Hindu, which comes two-
thirds through the song, after a similar opposition is
initially voiced in distinctly Islamic terms between the
momin and the *kafir* (suggestive of its original context
and audience)*,* is not its main point. Rather, it is *only
one* among the rejections of ethnic and religious
identities along a search that is both ontological as
well as existential. In the course of this interrogation
in fact the "I" shifts back and forth, pursuing
indeterminacy and blurring the distinction between the
seeker, the man within whom God resides (I have not
discovered the secret of religion), and God (I am not in
the mosque, I was there at the beginning and I'll be
there at the end, I was not born from man and woman).
    'The words of a language belong to nobody, but still
we hear those words only in particular individual
utterances, we read them in particular individual works',
Bakhtin argues (1986, p. 88). Who does the phrase
'neither Turk or Hindu' belong to? Sant, Ismaili, Sufi,
contemporary singing—we hear it uttered in all these

various contexts along the centuries, and once we pay attention to them the phrase, apparently straight forward and definite in what it articulates, begins to mutate and reveals different meanings and accents: a rejection of certain forms of religiosity in favour of others, a rejection of religious authorities, an existential question, and so on.[11] Who it responds to, who it appeals to, what view of the social world and of the world beyond it is part of differ ever time.

These contexts could also be mixed, or plural, requiring particular skills of multi-accenting, so that the utterance could be decoded in multiple ways by the mixed audience. A striking example of this ability to multi-accent this utterance comes from the sixteenth-century Sufi master poet of Awadh, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, in his version of the Krishna's story, *Kanhāvat* (1540).

4. Re-accenting and multi-accenting

Jaisi's retelling of the *Harikathā* after he had heard it and watched it during Diwali, is a definite case of re-accenting. The story of Krishna as an avatara sent on earth by the supreme god *paramesura* angered at Kamsa's pride; the ten avataras; Krishna's *lila*s with the gopis and with Radha/Rukmini (coalesced) and Chandravali; Krishna's battle with his wicked uncle, all the elements of Krishna's story appear in this work, though the

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[11] Rabbi Sher Gill's 2005 video of his rendering of the song firmly takes the existential route, necessarily making interpretive strategies. The singer stands in front of or inside various places of worship (gurudwara, mosque) in the flurry of traffic, looking straight at us while voicing the question in the refrain. In terms of visual imagery, we have over-exposed shots of dramatic natural settings (the desert), old men and labourers looking straight at the camera (questioning us viewers instead of themselves?), sadhus and ordinary believers (children, women, even a Jew). The retro quality of the over-exposed shot and "traditional" looking people makes them look less realistic and suggests a different dimension of the everyday. The visuals follow the words rather closely (e.g. the mention of wine is glossed visually by a liquor shop). The reference to iconic Indian monuments (Jaipur's Hawa Mahal, Hyderabad's Chahar Minar) and locales (Rajasthan, Bombay) offers a kind of counterpart to the Rajiv-Gandhi era government national propaganda video *Mile sur mera tumhara* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jf6pwtPqCs, last accessed 17 August 2016). This suggests a more national addressee, with human figures who are strongly connotated in religious, regional, occupational, and gender terms: the man with dark glasses and moustache looks very sure of who he is, the old fisherman and labourers looking much less sure, perhaps wondering at what their place is in contemporary India; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTxZy32Fv_0, last accessed 18 August 2016.

sequence of episodes and the cast of characters is partly rearranged so as to make it also work as an allegory for the Sufi Chishti path of love, with a typical Sufi preamble (Orsini 2015, Pauwels 2012).

But in a manner even more striking than other Awadhi Sufi romances (Behl 2012), Jaisi's *Harikatha* is also an example of multi-accenting. On a theological plane, the frequent references to the paradox of Krishna's divine nature (formless, beyond appearance) and his very beautiful form ('*rūpa anūpa'*) become a way to *also* articulate a very Sufi distinction between appearances (*żāhir*) and the hidden Truth (*bāṭin*) that only the initiated and guided can grasp. In the process, several sets of equivalences are established, as we shall see. Krishna is also compared to a *bahurūpiya*, a performer who can take on many forms (Jaisi 103 doha, 1981, p. 188). When he enters Mathura to challenge Kamsa, everyone sees him in his own image:

Krishna disguised himself (*bhesa apuna kīnha*) so that each saw him according to his own hue (*barana*).
A king saw him as a king, a young man as a marvelous young man,
*Daitya*s saw him as a *daitya*, and Kamsa saw in him his death.
Khatri (Kshatriya) heroes said: "He's a hero", Ahirs said: "He's an Ahir",
Jogis said: "He's is a jogi", and Brahmins said: "He is a *jyotikhi*."

Doha: He appeared so clearly (*darasana nirmala*) as if in a special mirror;
    If they looked at Kanha, each saw their own face (287.2-7, doha)

The mirror is another multi-accented image in Indian poetry, and here the accent seems to be on God who wants to make Himself visible as if through an unblemished mirror, a typical image of Sufi poetry.

Back to *na Turk na Hindū.* When Chandravali, in the Vaishnava tradition one of the important *gopi*s who loved Krishna and here his second wife, asks Krishna why he is dressed like a

beggar when he is in fact a king, Krishna first reveals
that he is *actually* not a yogi but Gopal the *rasa-bhogi*
and avatara of Vishnu. And when questioned further he
reveals his 'hidden knowledge':

सुनु गौरा अस ज्ञान हमारा। दुख सुख हई निनारा।। १
ना कुछ आयें ना कछु गयें।   जैस परै सहे चुप रहें।। २
ताकँह कहै मूल   ज्ञानी। लाभ न हसै न रोवइ हानी।। ३
यह विधि क   खेल हौं ताहीं। अन्तर पिंड जैस   परछाहीं।। ४
प्रगट भेस गोपाल गोबिंदू।   गुप्त ज्ञान *नहिं तुर्क न हिन्दू।* ५
 अपने रंग   सो रूप मुरारी। कितहूँ राजा कितहूँ भिखारी।। ६
कितहुँ सो पण्डित कितहु मूरख।   कितहु इस्त्री कितहूँ   पूरख।। ७
सो अपनें रस कारन, खेल अन्त सब खेल।
होइ   नानां प्रकारं, सब   रस लेइ अकेल।।

"Listen Gaura this is my knowledge, I am untouched by
pleasure or pain.
Nothing comes, nothing goes, I [one] sit quietly
throughout.
This is what you call a basic knower (*mūla gyānī*), one
who does not smile at pleasure or weep in pain.
This is the game of the creator, and I am it, like the
shadow inside the *piṇḍa.*
Outwardly I look (*pragaṭa rūpa*) like Gopala Gobinda, but
the hidden knowledge (*kapaṭa gyāna*) is: *neither Turk nor
Hindu.*
Murari's *rūpa* comes in different shades: sometimes a
king, sometimes a beggar.
Sometimes a pandit, sometimes a fool, sometimes a woman,
sometimes a man.

Doha*:* So, for the sake of my *rasa*, it's all a game, after
all.
    Many different shades/guises, the only one (*akela*)
takes pleasure
    in all. (217)

Here Krishna is diegetically addressing Chandravali, but
extra-diegetically Jaisi is formulating a statement that
can be interpreted in different ways at once. If in

general terms we can read Jaisi's take on Krishna as an example of "re-accenting" a popular god and his story, this shows how his re-accening is in fact a case of "multi-accenting."For at one level this declaration is perfectly readable with the theology of Krishna bhakti: Krishna has created his beautiful form, in fact any form, for the sake of his *lila,*[12] and he is at one time the ineffable Being *and* the *saguṇa* God. But at another level, according to the Sufi theology of *waḥdat al-wujād* this is Allah, the only God, revealing that he is immanent in all people and that there is a hidden realm in which no outward difference matters; the enlightened seeker knows this and remains unmoved by appearances and events because he can see through them. Neither Turk nor Hindu, once again employed as a stock phrase, belongs squarely to the hidden knowledge, like Kabir to that stage or state of deep understanding where all kinds of external differences fall away.

In a context where Jayasi's *katha* would be recited to mixed audiences, who of course would have had *their own* interpretation of Krishna and his story, Jayasi uses language, concepts and metaphors in a way that allows him to speak to all at the same time. Once again, syncretism and the desire to create a mixed religion seems inappropriate a framework and intentionality. Rather, this kind of double-speak suggests/implies some kind of equivalence between the different religious terms and ideas—*paramesura, mūla gyānī, pragaṭa* and *guputa, rūpa, rasa* and *raṅga*. Is this Sufi re-accenting of Krishna an act of appropriation, of symbolic violence? a student asked in class. The multi-accenting makes me reluctant to follow this line of argument. Jaisi does not seem to suggest that the Krishnaite reading belongs to the realm of external appearances whereas the "true" knowledge is the Sufi one. Both are equally possible and valid.

5. **Conclusion: oirculation and located meanings**

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[12] Here the term used is *rasa*, which is a key and polyvalent term for Awadh Sufis (Behl 2012).

One of the advantages of the convergence and interdisciplinary momentum of scholarship on early modern literature in the last few years is that we are moving away from single models of vernacularization (centered on either courts or Bhakti groups) that abstract and generalize from *one* set of materials, agents, and archive, to a polyvocal, multilocal understanding that is not simply interested in the *process of vernacularization* (as a teleological, zero-sum game) but in the *proliferation*, trajectories, and indeed discontinuities of literary production and circulation in *both* High languages *and* vernaculars.

This multilingual/polyvocal approach takes orality, the "semireach" of High languages like Sanskrit and Persian, performance spaces, and the shape of books and their circulation as important elements and clues (Orsini and Schofield 2015). It not only leads us to consider neglected sources and genres, but also to look at canonical figures and texts with new eyes and ears that look for the *other* voices around a text with which it may be conducting *unacknowledged dialogues*. 'Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive... Any utterance is a link in the chain of communication' (Bakhtin 1986, pp. 68, 84). Mikhail Bakhtin's wonderful intuition is of great value to us students of multilingual South Asia.[13] It helps us move away from ideas of languages and ideas as 'original' or 'belonging' to certain individuals and groups, but also from magmatic accounts of total undifferentiation and comprehensibility. We are reminded that 'others' used the same words, other groups and audiences listened on, songs and stories held appeal and circulated across religious groups – but without falling into the trap of equating this plurality necessarily with pluralism.

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[13] Also: 'The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's "own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language... but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions; it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own' (Bakhtin 1992, p.294).

Rather, Bakhtin's idea of language as intensely social, and of utterances as intrinsically dialogical, always accenting, re-accenting, and possibly multi-accenting words, phrases, symbols, characters, and stories, open the way for different possible intentionalities, or rather for raising intentionality as a question, heeding to Allison Busch's warning not to overinterpret, but also not to underinterpret (2009).

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