



Translating Bhakti: Rethinking the Bhakti Movement as a Movement of Translation

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Abstract:

This essay argues that the Bhakti movement in India can be seen as a translation movement, focusing on conveying spirit, emotions, and individuals rather than just linguistic meaning. It examines the historical context of translation practices in India, the idea of bhakti, and the significance of bhakti poetry and saints in juxtaposition with the process of translation. By exploring the etymological and cultural aspects of translation and bhakti, the paper advocates for a more inclusive view of translation that goes beyond language barriers. The Bhakti saints, acting as translators, showcase the dynamic relationship between experience, language, and societal criticism, enhancing the field of translation studies. The article presents a case for reading the Bhakti Movement as a Movement of Translation. The article has important implications for the Indian knowledge system as it lies at the intersection of bhakti and translation, both of which are integral to the Indian culture.

Keywords

Bhakti movement, translation, saints, Indian literature

Introduction

The discipline of translation studies is a vast field. There are different schools and traditions, evolution from linguistic to cultural turns, and questions related to translating different genres such as drama, poetry, non-fiction etc.¹ The scope of the term translation which comes from the Latin *trans-latio*, meaning carrying over or across, is possibly even broader, given that it does not specify what exactly is

¹ Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* Third edition (USA: Routledge, 1980); Mona Baker (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2001); Carmen Millán and Francesca Bartrina (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

being carried over or across, or how. Early usage of the word connotes a linguistic transference of meaning, often in and through speech.² Since the call for the formulation of the discipline of translation studies in the 1970s by James Holmes, several studies have traced the history of linguistic translation and given shape to the discipline retrospectively.³

With regard to translation practices in India, Sujeet Mukherjee notes that “[i]n this country, we have been practising translation for a long time without giving it such a name or style.”⁴ In line with this thought, Harish Trivedi argues for a “non-history” of translation in pre-modern India.⁵ As a substantiation of his claim about non-history in a multilingual and multicultural space such as India, Harish Trivedi also mentions while thinking about translation and its theories, the West often forgets “that translation is the need of the monolingual speaker.”⁶ What this implies is that while the practices of linguistic exchange or transference of meaning for communication have existed in South Asia even in pre-colonial times, no structured discipline with enough theoretical engagement with those practices was in place. As the discipline evolved with the advent of English in India, mainly as a colonial and post-colonial encounter, the need to seek a consolidated history of translation practices and traditions also arose.⁷ It is essential to highlight here that despite acknowledging several different traditions of translation (of form, language, retelling, intralingual commentary, etc.), translation itself has primarily

2 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “translate (n. & adj.),” July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3223649544>. According to OED, the word translate has been used since 1500 CE.

3 James Holmes, “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies,” in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, (London: Routledge, 2000). This 1972 paper calls for the need for a translation studies discipline separate from the field of comparative studies. Also see Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (eds.), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992) for a pre-history of the discipline.

4 Sujeet Mukherjee, “The Craft not Sullen Art of Translation,” in *Translation, Text and Theory: The Paradigm of India*, ed. Rukmini Bhaya Nair, (India: Sage Publications, 2002).

5 Harish Trivedi, “In Our Own time, On Our Own Terms: Translation in India,” in *Translating Others*, vol 1, ed. Theo Hermans, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

6 Ibid, 103.

7 Sujit Mukherjee, “Re-slating translation,” in *Translation as Recovery*, ed. Meenakshi Mukherjee, (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004).

been considered between Sanskrit (or English or Persian—the languages of the court or the state) and bhashas (modern Indian languages as noted by G N Devy) or between bhashas as the discipline took shape in India.⁸ Conversely, Rita Kothari's edited volume called *The Multilingual Nation* brings together scholars from several Indian languages to put pressure on the instability of the 'original' in the Indian context and highlight translation practices among Indian languages and cultures, and not necessarily between the language of the court or power—Sanskrit, Persian or English now—and the bhashas.⁹ Scholars have attempted to explain this lack of theoretical engagement with translation through the idea of "translation consciousness."¹⁰

Despite this non-history of translation among Indian languages, several modern scholars have attempted to sketch a brief history of translation practices in the Indian subcontinent, including Mukherjee and Trivedi.¹¹ These studies note a significant exchange of all sorts of texts—literary, medicinal, and governmental documents—primarily for the purpose of communication and circulation of information which flowed from the court/state to the subjects. For instance, Ramesh Krishnamurthy refers to the Indian Emperor Asoka/Ashoka, who "erected numerous pillars with inscriptions that record his edicts in local languages..."¹² According to Krishnamurthy, these inscriptions are in several scripts, which would have required some form of "translation-type activities" on account of the scribes. In the context of Buddhist encounters in the pre-classical period (c 800

8 G.N. Devy (ed.), *The Being of Bhasha: A General Introduction*, Volume 1 (People's Linguistic Survey of India) (India: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2014).

9 Rita Kothari (ed.), *A Multilingual Nation: Translation and Language Dynamic in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

10 G N Devy, "Translation and literary history – an Indian view," in *Post-colonial Translation*, eds. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, (Routledge, 1999), 185; Also note Suniti Kumar Chatterjee cited in Indra Nath Choudhuri, who writes: "Vatsyayan's phrase *lokopichanuvada* which means 'translatibility' explains the historical length of existence of India's translating consciousness." Indra Nath Choudhuri, "Towards an Indian Theory of Translation," *Indian Literature*, 54, No. 5 (2010): 113.

11 Rita Kothari and Krupa Shah, "More or Less Translation," in *A World Atlas of Translation*, eds. Yves Gambier and Ubaldo Stecconi, (John Benjamins B.V., 2019); Ramesh Krishnamurthy, "Indian Tradition," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*; Sachin Ketkar, "Is there an Indian School of Translation Studies," in (Trans) *Migrating Words* (VDM Publishing, 2010); Mini Chandran, "The Practice of Translation in India," *Sahapedia*, <https://www.sahapedia.org/the-practice-of-translation-india>

12 Ramesh Krishnamurthy in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 466.

BC – AD 100), he notes that the Buddhist texts were not only being translated to the vernacular languages, but also in Sanskrit concluding that translation thus, became the key form in which Buddha's teachings were circulated or transmitted.¹³

While the translation was from the language of the court to the language of the people in the pre-classical period—a process which can be called vernacularisation, in the classical period (c 100 – 1000), it moved from the local Prakrit versions to Sanskrit with regard to the Ramayana and Mahabharata.¹⁴ Possibly in a similar manner, in Buddhism and Jainism, later texts were written in Sanskrit.¹⁵ However, this situation changed during the bhakti movement, in which 'original' materials were created and reiterations of stories from the Sanskrit epics in the vernacular. These re-iterations or translations during the bhakti period, while emerged as a political and social movement of empowering the lower castes/classes and women, could have been motivated by possibly what Urvashi Butalia and others noted as the love for the text—in this case, the desire to have a close intimate relation with God.¹⁶ Given the personal appeal of bhakti as well as translation projects based on love for god or the texts, I suggest that the bhakti corpus be treated as a result of a translation movement.

Bhakti and Translation:

The term bhakti in the Vaishana context first appears in the Bhagwat *Gita* and is derived from the root bhaj present in early sources such as the Rigveda, where it was used in the context of sneh, Priti, and prem.¹⁷ It has several connotative meanings ranging from to share, participate, service or homage, being a part

13 Ibid, 466.

14 Ibid, 466.

15 Krihsnamurthy suggests that this is possibly because the vernaculars had become too unintelligible with each other, which I find difficult to follow. However, Sheldon Pollock suggests two revolutions: one, when Sanskrit became the key language, and two, when it was resisted in light of the bhakti (and vernacular) movement. See. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (India: University of California Press, 2006).

16 Women Translating Women: Inaugural Talk by Urvashi Butalia," (Ashoka center for Translation, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4MrPY2FIM>

17 R Raj Singh, *Bhakti and Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Lexington Books, 2006).

of belong, revere or devote or even divide.¹⁸ These ideas were later highlighted in the *Gita* and the bhakti movement. At its heart, the idea of bhakti involves sharing spaces through devotion and love or service and division. Broadly, to bhaj is to sing, dance and remain invested in the name of God so much so that you feel a oneness with him; either alone or within a group. The word 'bhakti' is translated to mean devotion, but if the understanding is that devotion is a very personal thing, one might want to look at the meaning of bhakti in a new light that is in the domain of public.¹⁹ J S Hawley, while discussing the various meanings in which bhakti has been interpreted, refers to bhakti as "a glorious disease of the collective heart."²⁰ By the quoted phrase, Hawley indicates that bhakti is a medium of direct connection of the deity with the individual. This connection results in a strong desire to be one with the deity, which remains unrequited and makes the individual find healing in their poetry and performances.

The literature written by these bhakti saint poets is circulated and studied in a way that appears to be a part of one movement integrating the Indian subcontinent at various levels. Bhakti poetry is said to have emerged from South India, more specifically in Tamil Nadu, in the Sixth Century A.D. According to Sisir Kumar Das, Jainism and Buddhism had been popular in South India, which bred hatred in the Shaivites and Vaishnavites towards these sects.²¹ He points out that around the Sixth Century C.E., Hinduism or Brahminism also started asserting itself with

18 According to VS Apte's Sanskrit-English dictionary, the word means: Separation, partition, division. -2 A division, portion, share. -3 (a) Devotion, attachment, loyalty, faithfulness; तदभक्तिर्लक्षितबुद्धिमानमारुहकैलासमिवप्रतस्थे Ku.7.37; R.2.63; Mu.1.15. (b) Faith, belief, pious faith. -4 Reverence, service, worship, homage. -5 Texture, arrangement; अवतिविरलभक्तिमल्लनिपुष्पोपहारः R.5.74; मणिमरीचिरचितेन्द्रवापभक्तयःविद्याधरपतयः Nāg.5. -6 Decoration, ornament, embellishment; सुकृतेहामृगाकीर्णसूक्तीर्णभक्तिभिस्तथा Rām.2.15.35; आबद्धमुक्ताफलभक्तिचित्रे Ku.7.10.94; R.13.55.75; 15.30. अधिकृष्टासवज्जभक्तिचित्रम् (आसनम्) Bu. Ch.5.44. -7 An attribute. -8 The being part of, belonging to. -9 A figurative sense, secondary sense; भक्त्यानिष्क्रियवादःस्यात् MS.4.4.28 (भक्त्या here seems to have been used as an indeclinable); cf. also MS.8.3.22. -10 Predisposition (of body to any disease). -Comp. -गम्य a. accessible by devotion. -गन्धि a. one who has only a small measure of devotion; भक्तिगन्धिरमुनाकलिकर्णः N.21.32. -चित्रम् drawings; बह्वर्थाभक्तिचित्रं ब्रह्मणापरिनिर्मितम् Rām.7.15.38. -छेदः 1 a coloured streak, lines of painting or decoration; भक्तिच्छेदेदिवविरचितांभूतिमङ्गेज्जस्य Me.19. -2 distinguishing marks of devotion to Viṣṇu. -ज a. faithfully attached. -जम् a. making a humble obeisance. -पूर्वम्, -पूर्वकम् ind. devoutly, reverentially. -भाज् a. 1 devout, fervid. -2 firmly attached or devoted, faithful, loyal. -मार्गः the way of devotion; i. e. devotion to god, regarded as the way to the attainment of final emancipation and eternal bliss (opp. to कर्ममार्ग and ज्ञानमार्ग). -योगः loving faith, loyal devotion; सस्थाणुःस्थिरभक्तियोगसुलभोनिःश्रेयसायास्तुतः Vikr.1.1. -रसः 1 a sense of devotion. -2 a sentiment of devotion; भक्तिरसस्यैवहास्यशृङ्गारकरुणारोद्रभयानकबीभत्सशान्ताद्भुतवीररूपेणा-नुभवादव्यासादिभिर्वर्णितस्यविष्णोर्विष्णुभक्तानांवाचरितस्यनव- रसात्मकस्यश्रवणादिनाजनितश्चमत्कारोहिभक्तिरसः Muktāvalī. -रागः affection, deep devotion. -वादः assurance of attachment. V S Apte, The practical Sanskrit-English dictionary (Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1957-1959).

19 Christian Lee Novetzke, Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India (New Delhi: Columbia University Press, 2008).

20 John Stratton Hawley, A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.

21 Sisir Kumar Das, A History of Indian Literature (500-1399): From Courtly to the Popular (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005).

more rigidity, which made God very much an entity for the upper caste, making it less accessible for the people from lower strata in society. This led to discontent among the Shaivites and Vaishnavites. These Shaiva and Vaishnava saints then travelled from place to place to spread the idea of intense bhakti, which is an individual connection with the deity, and their disapproval of Jainism, Buddhism and Brahminism. Many people became followers of these saints as they travelled from one temple to another, leading to a mass movement.

In many ways, this core aspect of bhakti comes close to the post-colonial feminist project of translation in which translators are driven by their love for the texts they would want to be a part of, which becomes a political act. Such acts of translation function to carry across the translator as well as the text not only between languages and cultures, but also between language and experience at a personal level, often re-creating meanings somewhere at the edge of experience and language.²² For instance,

We and the saints, saints and us! The Sun and the rays: are the two different?
 The lamp and light, light and the lamp! Dhyān and jap: are the two different?
 Peace and disenchantment, disenchantment and Peace! Resolution and satisfaction: are the two different?
 Disorder and disease, disease and disorder! The body and the organs: are the two different?
 Ear and act of listening, the act of listening and the ear! Renown and respect: are the two different?
 God and Sant, Sant and God! Jani says the bhāv is the same.²³

Bhakti songs are motivated by a desire to be close to god, people's faith in these saint figures is also driven by their desire to be in god's presence where their troubles would be resolved. In that sense, saints function as god's stand-ins for people, the mediators between god and the ordinary public. In the above poem too, the saints occupy this space between the divine and the human. The poem carries over the emotion, the bhāv, from us to saint to god, as it begins with us

22 Rita Kothari's *Uneasy translations for a unique theorization of the symbiotic relationship between translation, language and experience, sometimes in the (literary) text, sometimes outside of it, and the ineffability of experience as well as the institution of language itself*. Rita Kothari, *Uneasy Translations: Self, Experience and Indian Literature* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).

23 Shree Namdev Gatha, eds. Sarojini Babar and committee, (Mumbai: Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya aani Sanskruti Mandal, 1970), 976, poem 381, my translation.

(āmhi) and sant²⁴, and ends with sant and god. The experience in the form of different concepts, practices, and (everyday natural) objects gets carried across with each line in the poem, not necessarily from one language to another. Thus, uniquely, this poem portrays a translation which while happens at the site of language, does not necessarily require two different languages. Instead, the entire poem shows or suggests that two conceptually adjacent terms (which can also be considered through a metonymic association) in one language while distinct from each other cannot be distinguished completely, because the emotion, the faith, the bhāv towards them or of them remains the same. Thus, instead of a kinship of languages, this poem poses the question of kinship of concepts and/or words and thus, translatability or untranslatability among them.²⁵ This movement from us to god based on bhāv and the indistinguishability of these concepts, despite referring to them with different referents or words, and separating them with the conjunction 'and' (āni), asks us to address translation differently than we are used to, broadening the scope of translation and bhakti studies.

Furthermore, the poetry composed by the bhakti saints is often filled with the longing for a union with god while also exclaiming that the union has already happened. Thus, the paradox of presence-absence allows for further versions of god to be created, often in spaces outside the dominated, such as the quotidian, the every day, and the body. Karen Pechilis calls this phenomenon of being situated in the material and the bodily as "theology of embodiment."²⁶ Doniger's idea that the saints are like "mobile-temples" helps highlight why a bhakti saint to undertake this study about the relationship between experience and language.²⁷ In many ways, the presence-absence paradox is formulated in the way the devotees approach saints—god-like, almost gods, god but not quite. The saints

24 The word sant is often translated as saint. However, Karine Schomer and W H McLeod suggest against this kind of translation of sant to saint given the difference in their religious context. See, Karin Schomer and McLeod W. H. (eds), *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).

25 Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," tr. Harry Zohn in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, (London: Routledge, 2000).

26 Karen Pechilis Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

27 Wendy Doniger, "Sagun and Nirgun Images of the Deity" in *On Hinduism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

lie at the edge of two different cultures and languages and in the "liminal zone" between experience and language.²⁸

Tika: Critique, translation?

In the Medieval period, the language of the court shifted from Sanskrit to Persian. Thus, there are records of Sanskrit texts being commissioned to be translated into Persian or Arabic.²⁹ Krishnamurthy, like many scholars of Marathi, notes that during the medieval period, Marathi flourished with the patronage of the Yadava rulers. Christian Novetzke corrects this narrative in his sophisticatedly argued book, *The Quotidian Revolution*. Novetzke shows that the Yadava rulers more or less were indifferent to Marathi despite their eagerness to associate themselves with the devotional space of Pandharpur.³⁰ According to him, Marathi blossomed outside of court, in the "public sphere" through a form of everyday vernacularisation in and through the compositions of Chakradhar Swami of Mahanubhav and Jnandev of Varkari Sampradaya. Studying Jnaneshvari—the key text for not only the Varkari tradition, but also popularly considered the first text of Marathi literature—Novetzke claims that:

...while the Jñāneśvarī functions in some sense as a "translation," it is not a formal translation of the Bhagavad Gītā, but a transfer of its words, meaning, and, most importantly, its salvational potential. The Bhagavad Gītā is only in Sanskrit, but the meaning of the Bhagavad Gītā, and the soteriological value of understanding that meaning is a subject that should transcend Sanskrit, according to Jnandev's Jñāneśvarī.³¹

Novetzke's observation about Jnaneshvari not being the "formal" translation of the Bhagavad *Gita* but a transference of its 'spirit' which goes beyond its original language of Gods—Sanskrit—is essential to highlight a significant difference between the modern and major Western notion of translation which emphasised on equivalence and fidelity to the formal elements of the text in the beginning

28 I develop Kothari and Shah's idea of a liminal zone of translation between difference and inside—the two meanings of the term antar.

29 Krishnamurthy, 469.

30 Christian Lee Novetzke, *The Quotidian Revolution: Vernacularization, Religion, and the Premodern Public Sphere in India* (Columbia University Press, 2016).

31 Novetzke, *The Quotidian Revolution*, 223.

of the discipline given its roots in the Bible translation as well as the domination of linguistics in conceptualising the discipline. In contrast, G Gopinathan argues for a tradition of translation in the form of transcreation in India.³² According to him, the notions of creative writing and translation have never been distinct from each other in the Indian tradition since ancient times, thus enabling a tradition of transcreation. He credits P. Lal for first using the term 'transcreation' in 1972 for his English translation of *Shakuntalam* and *Brahadaranyaka Upanisad*.³³

Gopinathan notes:

It is a holistic approach in which a range of techniques including elaboration, interpolation, explaining the cultural value of the original text, image change, image recreation, translative explanation and elucidation, are all possible. In such texts, the translator enters into the soul of the original author and, regenerating the original work becomes its re-creator. The translator performs an act of *parakayapravesa* or enters the body and soul of the original text and, thus, of the original author to bring the spirit to life in a new form.³⁴

The correlation of transcreation with *parakayapravesha*, which is an important concept in Tantrism or Yoga practices, suggests a reading of translation in light of mystical and/or spiritual understanding as opposed to merely a linguistic transference between texts. Prabhakar Machwe also compares *parakayapravesha* with translation on account of how difficult both practices are as he notes: "It is not a mere change of language, nor is it merely an independent adaptation based on the original idea or theme. In Tantrism there is a technical word, *Parakayapravesha* (entering another body) and translation is as difficult as that Tantric practice, for it is not just a masquerade, a jugglery like ventriloquism."³⁵ Similarly, Purushottam Agarwal uses this phrase to describe Kabir's awareness of social issues and his commentary on it in his art in the following words:

32 G. Gopinathan, "Translation, Transcreation and Culture: Theories of Translation in Indian Languages" in *Translating Others*, vol 1, ed. Theo Hermans (New York: Routledge, 2014).

33 Gopinathan, 236.

34 Gopinathan, 237.

35 Prabhakar Machwe, "The Problem of Translation: Hindi and other Indian languages" in *Indian Literature*, vol 10 (Sahitya Akademi, 1967), 68.

वे जानते थे कि सिर्फ अपना और अपने जैसों का ही नहीं, बल्कि अन्यो का भी दुख समझने की कोशिश किए बिना, परकायाप्रवेश की साधना किये बिना कविता न लिखी जा सकती है, न सुनी जा सकती है.³⁶

Translation:

He [Kabir] knew that without trying to understand the pain of others, not just one's own and that of people like oneself, that is, without meditating over parkayapravesh, poetry can neither be written nor be heard.

This embodied reading of translation functions to blur the boundaries between self and the other, the original and the copy or translation. It can be understood as translation having two layers or stages: 1) reading the text in the form of surrender to the text, and 2) rewriting it to assert one's own reading of the text. When rewriting a text as one's own and becoming part of it, the 'author' essentially becomes a translator, while the translator turns into an author. The etymological meaning of carrying across then does not remain about a carrying across only linguistically, but rather an exchange between sensory experience of the world and words on paper.

In the same line of that, Ayyappa K Paniker also demonstrates that the anxiety of being faithful to the original was not part of the psyche of an Indian 'translator'—I will come to the Indian terms adjacent to translation and thus the possible definitions of translator in a bit.³⁷ He notes: "All through the Middle Ages, throughout the length and breadth of India, Sanskrit classics like the epics and puranas continued to be retold, adapted, subverted and 'translated' without worrying about the exactness and accuracy of formal equivalence."³⁸

Thus, coming back to Jnaneshwari, Novetzke's hesitation in calling the Jnaneshwari a translation also illuminates a glaring gap in the Indian notions of translations, which is of the category of tika or commentary. Trivedi engages with terms such

³⁶ Purushottam Agrawal, *Akath Kahani Prem ki Kabir ki Kavita aur Unka Samay* (Rajkamal Prakashan Pvt. Limited, 2009), 38.

³⁷ Ayyappa K Paniker, "The Anxiety of Authenticity: Reflection on Literary Translation," *Indian Literature*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (1994), pp. 128-138.

³⁸ Paniker, 129.

as anuvada³⁹, vivartanam⁴⁰, chhaya⁴¹, roopantar⁴², bhashantar⁴³, molipeyarttall⁴⁴ and tarjuma⁴⁵ to argue that none of these terms is synonymous with the word translation, neither that they can be considered synonymous with each other except if and when they belong to the same language and culture.⁴⁶ Rita Kothari and Krupa Shah expand this list as they survey the adjacent terms that are used for translation practices when they add aadhar⁴⁷, mozhipeyarttu (molipeyarttall), parivartanam⁴⁸, punarlekhan⁴⁹, deshantar⁵⁰, veshantar⁵¹, kalantar⁵², sphurthi⁵³,

39 Etymologically derived from Sanskrit prefix anu, meaning after, and the verb vad meaning to speak. The word, thus, comes to mean to speak after, and most dictionaries define it as repetition, reiteration, resound or imitate. Trivedi on how different dictionaries defined the term, p 110-113; also see <https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/anuvad>; Quoting Monier Williams dictionary (1899), which defines anuvad also as translation, Trivedi points that it is difficult to ascertain when exactly anuvad came to imply translation included in Monier-Williams. Another paper by Peter Gerard Friedlander also notes the usage of anuvad to mean translation in Hindi speaking region to 1870s. He responds to Trivedi's claim to demonstrates a renewal of Sanskrit, Prakrit texts in Hindi prior to 19th century. See, Peter Gerard Friedlander, "Before Translation" in Translation in Asia: Theories, Practices, Histories, eds. Ronit Ricci and Jan Van der Putten (Routledge, 2014); Kothari and Shah also note that anuvad in Gujarati also means 'pramane boli' meaning speaking in proportions.

40 Malayalam. Synonyms: molimattam, paribhasha. Meaning: turning round, revolving, transformation, whirling around; See Trivedi.

41 Shadow, primarily used as chhayanuvad in the performance of Sanskrit plays where characters from lower castes and women would be made to speak in Prakrit(s) and these Prakrits would be translated into Sanskrit as chhayanuvad. This translation practice happens when one language is treated as the shadow of another. See Trivedi.

42 Change or difference of form; another form; According to McGregor's Hindi-English dictionary: "changed or new form, transformation; version, rendering, adaptation (of a tale, a work)"; R S. McGregor, The Oxford Hindi-English dictionary (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); an aesthetic adaptation. See Trivedi.

43 Change or difference of language; another language

44 According to GJV Prasad, this Tamil word first occurs in the Tolkappiyam and literally means "to shift or move word or language"; Kothari and Shah cite Prasad to explain the meaning: "mozhi meaning language and peyarttu meaning 'to dislodge, to carry across or to migrate' in Tamil (Prasad 2009: 19-20)." GJV Prasad, "Caste in and Recasting language" in Decentering Translation Studies: India and Beyond, eds. Rita Kothari and Judy Wakabayashi (Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company, 2009).

45 According to Trivedi, the word "comes from Arabic through Persian, and it is available as a less common alternative to anuvad in some other languages as well, including Hindi, Bengali and Malayalam." Trivedi also notes another word for translation in Urdu, which means to reverse. Friedlander notes one text in Braj bhasha from 1856, which explicitly describes itself as a tarjuma of a Persian work. According to him, Tarjuma means commentary or translation in Urdu; For Kothari and Shah, used in Islamic literature to refer to the biography of a Sufi, saint, or scholar but later came to be used for translation

46 Trivedi, 117; Trivedi highlights the fact that these terms are used for translation in the modern period.

47 Kothari and Shah explain the meaning as a text based on 'the original' but not necessarily faithful.

48 Kothari and Shah's meaning of the term: a transformation.

49 Writing again or rewriting.

50 A change of locale.

51 A change of dress or attire.

52 A change of historical period.

53 Connotes inspiration or vitality and refers to a nimbleness in movement.

bhavanuvad⁵⁴, gagyanuvad^{55, 56} Highlighting a pattern of devising these words by adding a suffix 'antar', they show that translation not only relies on difference or another but also inside or self. Their observation stems from comparing translation the way we understand it now—"predicated on the idea of 'other' with the pre-modern understanding of it which "was not preoccupied with 'other languages.'"⁵⁷ They observe:

The notion of change or 'antar' as already inherent in the activity of translation meant that a 'translated text' was already and always distant from the 'original.' But this difference was not seen as a dilution or a corruption of the 'other.' Antar, which is both a spatial and a temporal metaphor, denotes simultaneously 'interval' and 'distance.' ... Furthermore, 'antar' also refers to 'the inner' or 'of the self' which implied an organic link between 'text' and 'translation.' The activity of translation thus was not a movement away from the 'text' but a change within itself. This notion of internal change and interaction seems vital to an understanding of an Indian sense of translation.⁵⁸

Trivedi emphasizes antar as a difference when he cites V.S Apte's The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary published 1890, as: "antara, means "another, other, changed, altered", as defined by Apte, who adds: "in most cases, it can be rendered by the English word 'another'" (Apte 1890: 26)."⁵⁹ This selective quoting from a 5-page entry on the meanings of the prefix and concept antar assumes an understanding of translation based on difference, as the need for a monolingual speaker. A preliminary investigation of the meanings of the suffix or the word 'antar' suggests that in early Sanskrit sources, it was used to connote to in-between, middle, proximate, intimate, inside, in, interior, midst, interval, entrance, separation, difference, remainder, another, various, manifold, absence, distance, gradation, intermediate among many.⁶⁰ Even the Marathi dictionary functions

54 A rendering of emotion.

55 A rendering of prose.

56 Kothari and Shah, p 128-29.

57 Kothari and Shah, p 130.

58 Kothari and Shah, p 129.

59 V S Apte, Dictionary, p 88-93.

60 V S Apte, Dictionary, p 88-93.

with both understanding of it,⁶¹ quite aligned with Kothari and Shah's observation. This dual meaning of antar as inside and difference in the context of Indian practices of translation comes uncannily close to the idea of bhakti highlighted earlier as personal and divisive, as something shared.

As mentioned earlier, Novetzke's reluctance in referring to Jnaneshwari—which Jnandev explicitly mentions is a tika—as a translation in its "formal" sense points towards a gap in the way translation has been defined when the need to theorize and formulate a tradition and discipline of translation appeared in front of the post-colonial scholars in India.⁶² Given that the Jnaneshwari is written in the form of ovis and opposed to the shlok form of the original Gita, I do understand why it cannot be treated as a translation in its formal sense. However, as charted above, the practice of kirtan in Maharashtra can itself be treated as a form of tika which involves vyakhan or pravachan in between singing and listening the main text. Thus, while performing, the kirtankars 'translate' the texts, themselves, their audience, as well the saint-figure in another dimension by repeating, explaining, and even questioning the text of their engagement, but not necessarily in another language. In fact, scholars of translation and literature often refer to Jnaneshwari as a translation as well as a commentary.⁶³ Furthermore, the Molesworth Dictionary defines tika as: "A commentary or comment: also an annotation or a note: also an interpretation, whether by a paraphrase or a semi-translation. ...2 fig. Swelling, amplifying, embellishing (of a simple matter). 3 fig. Remarking censoriously, commenting upon."⁶⁴

The absence of tika from the Indian list of words for translation is striking because of the way most translated texts appear now—with the translator's note, explanations of terms and contexts, glossaries, and footnotes to underscore the diversion from the 'original' looks very similar to the tradition of tika or

61 According to the Molesworth Dictionary, antar is defined as: Interval. 2 Intermission. 3 Difference. 4 Disagreement. 5 Variance. 6 Omission (in duty, &c.) 7 In-accuracy. 8 The mind or the heart. 9 In comp. Another; as आर्षांतर, देशांतर. 10 Poet. The heavens or midspace. 11 The inside or inner place. J. T. Molesworth, A dictionary of Marāthī and English (Bombay 1857), p 15.

62 Shree Jnaneshwari, (Gorakhour: Geeta Press, 2015), last verse.

63 Rita Kothari, Translating India: The Cultural Politics of English (Routledge, 2014), p 7; Sachin Ketkar, "Dnyaneshwar's 'Duji Shrushti': Poetics and Cultural Politics of Pre-colonial Translation in the Dnyaneshwari" in India in Translation, Translation in India, (ed.) G.J.V. Prasad (New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2019).

64 Molesworth Dictionary, p 182.

commentary in India.⁶⁵ If there was no word that referred to translation the way we as modern subjects understand it, and the aforementioned Indian terms were later 'adapted' to imply a sense of translation, why was tika not considered a part of this tradition of retelling and rewriting? This absence can suggest the assumption that translation while changing the original, does not rely on critiquing it. However, juxtaposing the two Indian traditions of bhakti and translation shows that the translation practices have taken social critique in the form of translation seriously since the Middle ages.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, given that the discipline of translation has evolved by focusing on 'difference', as charted earlier, translation does not occur as the primary method of studying the songs composed in the bhakti tradition where the inside, the soul is emphasised along with a strong social critique which stems from the notions of difference.⁶⁶ Thus, this essay presents a case for the notion of bhakti that is spread through what is referred to as the Bhakti Movement in the Indian subcontinent as a movement of translation. For this purpose, the paper reads translation in its etymological meaning of carrying across spirit, emotions and individuals as opposed to the transference of meaning placed upon words by treating the saints as translators.

⁶⁵ Cutler Norman, "Interpreting Tīrukkuraḷ: The Role of Commentary in the Creation of a Text," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol 112 (1992).

⁶⁶ Linda Hess, "When a Text Is a Song" in *A Multilingual Nation: Translation and Language Dynamic in India*, ed. Rita Kothari, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

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