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978-0-521-05228-3 - The Language of Indrajit of Orcha: A Study of Early Braj
Bhasa Prose

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PART I

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INTRODUCTION

For centuries, until the consolidation of modern standard Hindi after 1900, the Hindi dialect known as Braj Bhāṣā enjoyed great prestige as the vehicle of the Kṛṣṇa cult literature of northern India, as well as for the brilliance of its secular literature. Most of this material was in verse, although since the beginning of this century we have had knowledge of the existence of texts in Sanskritised Braj Bhāṣā prose, chiefly sectarian chronicles and commentaries, from a relatively early date. We owe this knowledge above all to the efforts of the Nāgarī Pracārīnī Sabhā of Banāras, which in the year 1900 instituted its search project for Hindi manuscripts, and has published reports of its investigations;¹ other societies, and private individuals, have carried out searches at later dates in different parts of the Hindi language area.² Few of the prose texts which have thus been brought to light appear to date in any form from earlier than the seventeenth century A.D., and the vast majority are preserved only in late-eighteenth- or nineteenth-century manuscripts.

The present study originates in the fact that the India Office Library contains a manuscript of one of the earliest texts in Braj Bhāṣā prose (composed *c.* A.D. 1600) which are known to be extant. It consists essentially of an edition of this unpublished text, on which is based a descriptive study of its language. The chief aim of the latter is to throw some light on the types of language which will have underlain the literary Braj Bhāṣā of the medieval poets; it is hoped that it may also afford a comparative basis for further detailed investigations of medieval Braj Bhāṣā and other Hindi dialect prose.

¹ *Reports on Search; Khoj meṃ upalabdha hastalikhīt hindī granthom ke traivāryik vivaraṇ.*

² Particularly in Rājasthān; for a summary of work done before 1942 see *Rājasthān meṃ hindī ke hastalikhīt granthom kī khoj*, Intro.d., pp. 5 ff.

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Studies of literary and colloquial Braj Bhāṣā

A number of linguistic studies of literary and colloquial Braj Bhāṣā have been made, of which the more important are the following:¹

1. Mīrzā Khān's introduction to his Persian *Tuḥfatu-l Hind*, a handbook of Braj Bhāṣā prosody, rhetoric and allied topics compiled before A.D. 1675. The *Tuḥfatu-l Hind* is unpublished, but the section of the introduction dealing with the morphology of Braj Bhāṣā has been edited from three MSS (more are extant) and translated into English by M. Ziauddin. This deals with a contemporary form of spoken language, but, except in some particulars, in a rather summary way.

2. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies: leaving aside elementary handbooks prepared for East India Company officers, various remarks on Braj Bhāṣā are to be found in the scholarly works of Garcin de Tassy, Hoernle, and Tessitori; an article by Beames on the grammar of the bardic *Prthvīrājarāso* is the earliest study noted which deals specifically with an aspect of Braj Bhāṣā. The chief advance at this time was made by Kellogg, who in his *Grammar of the Hindi language* gave a detailed descriptive and historical account of the morphology of Braj Bhāṣā as it was known, as well as of the other principal Hindi dialects; this was based chiefly on the prose texts prepared for the East India Company at Fort William College by Lallūji Lāl and others at the beginning of the nineteenth century, rather than on medieval texts. In the early twentieth century Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* presented specimens of the modern sub-dialects of the Braj Bhāṣā area and those of neighbouring areas, with analyses of their grammar and interrelationships.

3. More recent studies: The first of these is Dhīrendra Varmā's *La langue braj*, which deals fairly concisely with the phonology and morphology of both the modern spoken sub-dialects and the medieval language, drawing its material for the earlier period almost exclusively from poetic texts. Some examples from the prose *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavana kī vārtā* are, however, included. A later, more specialised work is Premnārāyaṇ Ṭaṇḍan's *Sūr kī bhāṣā*; this includes among other material a valuable descriptive account of the range of grammatical forms found in the *Sūrsāgar* (based on

¹ For a fuller list see Siṃha, pp. 10ff.

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three published editions; there is no definitive text) as well as chapters on phonology, vocabulary and literary style. Specialised in a different sense is Śivprasād Siṃha's *Sūrpūrvā braj bhāṣā*. This work is based on the discovery in recent years of poetic texts going back to A.D. 1354, and demonstrates that Sūrdās was not the inaugurator of the Braj Bhāṣā literary tradition, but to a large extent the product of a pre-existing tradition. It connects the language of these early texts with Śauraseni Apabhraṃśa on the one hand and the language of Sūr and his successors on the other, and gives an analysis of the literary language of c. A.D. 1350–1550 based on thirteen of the texts, including, for want of any other authentic specimens of the prose of the period, a series of very short prose passages of one to three sentences found in a MS of the *Pr̥thvīrājarāso*.¹ Finally, Rāmsvarūp Caturvedī's *Āgrā zile kī bolī* is a pioneer attempt to apply some of the techniques of modern descriptive linguistics to a modern sub-dialect of Braj Bhāṣā.

Early Braj Bhāṣā prose texts: Indrajit's prose and its significance

What detailed knowledge of medieval Braj Bhāṣā we have is thus confined almost entirely to Braj Bhāṣā verse. Of most of the prose texts, including all those whose date of composition can be clearly put before A.D. 1600, little more than the short extracts printed in the notices of their discovery are readily accessible. In the absence of editions or lengthy published extracts from most of these texts, successive writers on pre-nineteenth-century prose in Hindi dialects have frequently resorted to citing the same meagre illustrative quotations from the material as their predecessors, more often than not without giving any information on MSS or their whereabouts. For instance, one and the same passage from the *Gorakhasāra*, an apparently very early work reported by the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā in 1903, is cited not only in two of the standard histories of Hindi literature, published in 1929 and 1938 respectively, but also in a study of medieval Hindi prose published

¹ Pp. 239 and 371–3, where a selection is given. Their language certainly seems old in most respects. But it is noteworthy that they show the use of the agentive postposition *nai, ne*, a form very uncommon in medieval BrBh. verse, but normal in KhB. and later BrBh. Siṃha expresses some doubt as to the authenticity of these forms, while accepting the language of the passages as authentic in general.

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as recently as 1959.¹ And there are minor, but disturbing, differences in the versions given by these three works, which are quite unaccounted for by any reference to the MS (or MSS?). It is clear that the texts have tended to be considered primarily as general evidence of the existence of a pre-nineteenth-century Sanskritised prose tradition in northern India, rather than as literary and linguistic monuments worthy of detailed investigation in their own right.

Caution is necessary in attempting to evaluate the language of the texts, many of which appear to be of uncertain, possibly composite authorship, and if indeed fully authentic to have been exposed to the possibility of inaccurate transmission over a long period. The few Braj Bhāṣā texts which are completely in prose, and for which a date of composition prior to A.D. 1600 has not been questioned in studies of Hindi literature, are all apparently preserved either in undated MSS or in MSS of later date than A.D. 1750.² The authenticity of the language of most of the extant pre-seventeenth-century monuments of Sanskritised prose is thus open to serious question at the present time.

It therefore seemed certain that the two extant prose commentaries of Indrajit of Orchā on the *Nīṭisāṭaka* and *Vairāgyasāṭaka* of Bhartṛhari would reward detailed investigation from a linguistic point of view. We know from historical and literary sources that Indrajit was a son of the Bundelā rajah of Orchā, Madhukar Śāh (d. A.D. 1592), and a poet and patron of literature. The balance of the historical evidence and that afforded by the introduction to his *Nīṭisāṭaka* commentary suggests that the commentaries were composed after the death of Madhukar but before Indrajit's political eclipse on the death of Akbar in A.D. 1605. Thus although their age cannot remotely rival that of the earliest extant specimen of

¹ *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās*, p. 370; *Hindī sāhitya kā ālocanātmak itihās*, p. 111; *Madhyakālīn hindī gadya*, p. 69.

² The only such works seem to be: (a) *Gorakhasāra* and *Gorakhanātha kī bānī*, believed to date from about A.D. 1350 (*Report on Search*, 1903) and (b) *Śṛṅgārasamañḍana*, *Yamunāṣṭaka* and *Navaratna saṭika*, attributed to Viṭṭhalnāth (A.D. 1515–85) (*Reports on Search*, 1909–11, 1912–14). (The age of a *Nāsiketupurāna bhāṣā*, possibly by the poet Nanddās, c. A.D. 1560, seems to be in doubt, see *Nanddās granthāvalī*, p. 35, and *Report on Search*, 1909–11. The *Caurāsī* and *Do sau bāvana vaiṣṇavana kī vārtā*, frequently attributed to Gokulnāth (A.D. 1551–1647), may represent rather a compilation of spoken utterances of Gokulnāth's by his disciple Harirāy in the last days of Gokulnāth's life, see *Aṣṭachāp paricaya*, p. 78; but also *Vārtā-sāhitya*, pp. 124ff., arguing earlier compilation.)

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Kosali (Avadhī) prose,¹ they are still among the oldest prose texts in a Hindi dialect whose period of composition can be determined with any precision.²

Orchā, in Bundelkhaṇḍ, is outside the modern Braj Bhāṣā area proper, but the general features of Indrajit's language in these commentaries are so closely identifiable with forms which are attested as standard, or at least as standard variants, in medieval Braj Bhāṣā verse that it seems quite appropriate to describe it as 'Braj Bhāṣā'. It admittedly reflects influences whose character is Bundelī (in terms of modern dialects), but these do not preponderate, and in the present state of our knowledge it would therefore seem wrong to think of it without further grounds as representing directly a little-known 'medieval Bundelī' co-extensive with the modern Bundelī area as designated by Grierson.³ It seemed almost certain in any case that the language of such texts as Indrajit's commentaries would not represent the truly colloquial level of language of the area where they were composed, but an educated style, which would inevitably have undergone some influence from Braj Bhāṣā. That Indrajit should call such a style his *svabhāṣā* in the Sanskrit introduction to his commentary need cause no surprise. Even if the true colloquial of Orchā in Indrajit's time was as distinct from Braj Bhāṣā as is modern Bundelī from modern Braj Bhāṣā (and this cannot be certain, see p. 9 below), this description would have been as natural as a reference by an educated native Braj Bhāṣā speaker of present-day Āgrā, say, to modern standard Hindi as his *mātrbhāṣā*.

Any prose text of authentic early date, such as these commentaries, could be expected to throw light on the scope and character

¹ The twelfth-century *Uktivyaktiprakaraṇa* of Dāmodara (Bibliography, no. 6), a manual of Sanskrit composition with parallel Old Kosali illustrations. There is also a prose passage (loosely rhymed for the most part) in the eleventh-century *Rāulavela* of composite Apabhraṃśa–New Indo-aryan character (Bibliography, no. 37). Since the present study was completed a study of the language of the *Uktivyaktiprakaraṇa* by V. Miltner has appeared (Bibliography, no. 13).

² For details of these commentaries, MSS preserving them, and their probable date of composition see my article 'Some Bhartṛhari commentaries in early Braj Bhāṣā prose'.

³ By his references to the tradition and extent of Bundelī literature (except those to the Ālhā and Ūdal epic cycle) it is certain that Grierson meant only literature produced in Bundelkhaṇḍ, not composed specifically in a local dialect: see LSI, vol. ix, pt 1, p. 89, also LSB, pp. 14–16, where the scanty evidence for medieval Bundelī is discussed.

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of early literary activity in prose, while if shown to have been carefully transmitted it would represent a genuinely early stage of language as used for non-poetic purposes. Its language would not have been liable to distortion by the demands of rhyme or metre, and while it might be Sanskritised in vocabulary would certainly have been less exposed than that of the Braj Bhāṣā poetic texts to influence from a standard literary style. One might hope to learn from it how many of the apparently equivalent grammatical forms which co-exist in medieval Braj Bhāṣā poetry taken as a whole were in fact equivalent in the educated usage of one time and place, and how far other forms were current in that usage; and a bridgehead might be established from which further investigations could be launched into forms of language underlying the relatively little differentiated verse standard of Braj Bhāṣā.

Scope of the present study

Since no detailed study of the language of a Braj Bhāṣā prose text has yet been made, what was required in the first instance was a descriptive study of the language of Indrajit, based on the best text of one of his commentaries available, and supported by whatever textual study and annotation seemed necessary. It was clear fairly quickly that of the known extant texts that of India Office Library Sanskrit MS 3318, the only one to contain the *Nītiśataka* commentary, is the best transmitted.¹ This text contains many fewer non-Bhartṛhari verses than either of the other MSS, and has obviously been copied by a more careful scribe, who was concerned to preserve the readings of his antecedent text in detail. Its period of transmission is perhaps 130–40 years, but there seems little doubt that it may be taken as a sound basis for the study of the language of Indrajit.

As far as has been practicable the language of the text selected

¹ The MSS considered were: IO 3318, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute 350, and Jodhpur 10956a. For further details of them and an estimate of their respective value as specimens of Indrajit's language, see 'Some Bhartṛhari commentaries in early Braj Bhāṣā prose'. A MS of a prose *Vairāgyaśataka* commentary called *Vivekadīpikā* is listed in the *Hastalikhit hindī pustkōm kā saṅkṣipt vivaraṇ* (1964), dated sv 1747 and attributed doubtfully to Keśavdās; this proved on inspection to be of Indrajit's *Vairāgyaśataka* commentary. It is more carelessly written than IO 3318, perhaps representing the usage of a scribe more frequently than that of Indrajit.

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has been analysed in its own terms, with the aim of avoiding false equations between its grammar and that of the standard poetic language or other extraneous forms of speech. Forms adduced from other texts have usually been cited for comparative purposes, or to confirm, rather than to establish, the function of their analogues in this text. In some cases, the mode of analysis adopted has led to a different presentation of aspects of the material from that which has been customary, but it is thought that this has not greatly obscured any grammatical feature, and may have brought certain features into clearer relief. The work has not been envisaged as a historical study, since broadly acceptable derivations of most of the grammatical forms have been worked out, although it was clear that the material had to be approached from a historical as well as a descriptive point of view to some extent. The determination of historical sources for the contents of the commentary seemed to be an almost entirely separate study, and has not been undertaken here.

As was expected, the information contained in the grammatical surveys mentioned above does not by any means account fully for the forms used by Indrajit. But while the discrepancies between Indrajit's language and that of 'classical' Braj Bhāṣā can be stated, it should be noted that they often cannot be explained with confidence in the light of present knowledge. To take one instance, the postpositional forms *kahum*, *kaham* are extremely common in the language of Indrajit but rare, though attested, in medieval Braj Bhāṣā verse texts; they occur more commonly in medieval Avadhī texts. In the modern dialects, they appear to be represented pre-eminently by Bundelī and Baghelī (E. Hindi) forms, although they can also be related to *kh* of some W. Pahārī dialects, which may represent an original Rājasthānī influence. Are we to explain the forms at what would seem to be their face value, as specifically local, Bundelī elements in Indrajit's language, or should we rather assume, in view of the relative freedom of Indrajit's language from unambiguously Bundelī traits, that these forms were earlier current over a wider area than are their modern descendants, and were genuine features of a non-poetic style of Braj Bhāṣā proper? The former explanation seems the more probable, but in default of further evidence it is impossible to be sure.

Again, we find a few apparent Bundelī forms in the text which are of isolated occurrence only; we must reckon with the

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probability that these, if genuine Bundelī features, may be scribal only rather than Indrajit's own.

Similarly, we may feel certain that other grammatical forms than those of the text here studied (including Khaṛī Bolī forms) were used in the Braj Bhāṣā area and Bundelkhaṇḍ in Indrajit's time,¹ but without further evidence it is impossible to tell how wide a currency any such forms will have enjoyed. The fact that the best text of Indrajit's prose contains rather fewer traces of Khaṛī Bolī influence than the more indifferently transmitted ones probably implies that at the time in question a Sanskritised prose style of Braj Bhāṣā was resistant to Khaṛī Bolī influences in grammar and vocabulary to some extent. This might in turn suggest that a tradition of its use was already of some standing in Orchā.² We should also bear in mind the likelihood that such a style will have been used outside Orchā as well, serving as a means of communication between Hindu courts, and educated Hindu speakers of different local Western Hindi dialects, in much the same way as modern standard Hindi now unites educated speakers of all the regional dialects of Hindi. But analyses of a series of prose texts of whose composition and history something is known with certainty will require to be made before clear answers to such questions as these can begin to be given.

¹ See App. 1, p. 239.

² For some confirmatory evidence of this see ch. 1, p. 15.

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INDRAJIT'S 'NĪTĪŚATAKA' COMMENTARY

The MS and its transmission

The only MS which is known to preserve the text is India Office Library Sanskrit MS 3318.¹ This contains only the work in question, viz. the *Nītiśataka* of Bhartṛhari, with Indrajit's Braj Bhāṣā prose commentary, which is part of a larger work called *Viveka-dīpikā*. Keith's catalogue gives the name of the *Nītiśataka* commentary itself as *Vivekadīpikā*, but the conclusion of the text implies that it is in fact only one part of the *Vivekadīpikā*, which is a 'Bhartṛhari *ṭikā*': *Iti śrīmatśakalanṛpatimaṅḍanamānīśrīmadhukarasāhinṛpatitanūjaśrīmadindrajidviracitāyāṃ vivekadīpikāyāṃ bhartṛhariṭikāyāṃ nītiśataṃ samāptaṃ*, 26 a 5f. There is little doubt that this *ṭikā* will have embraced all three of the Centuries of Bhartṛhari. The MS is well preserved, carefully written in one hand which is very clear and regular throughout, and complete in 26 folios.² It is dated 1792 Vikram. (A.D. 1735) in the scribe's colophon.³

It is probable from two pieces of internal evidence that the text was copied at least once between its date of composition about A.D. 1600 and the MS date.⁴ The evidence consists of apparent errors by a first scribe retained and compounded by a second. There is no evidence regarding the date at which this presumed earlier copying will have taken place. Given the length of the period of transmission it may seem likely that the scribe of MSIO 3318 was copying a MS some decades old at least, and in view of the minor nature of the two errors which suggest the earlier copying it is probable that the readings of this MS were not very different from those of Indrajit's autograph.

As for the scribe of MSIO 3318, it is clear that he was usually at pains to transmit the forms of his text accurately, and the extant text may thus be given more authority as a record of

¹ Keith 7210. For details of the history of the MS see 'Some Bhartṛhari commentaries in early Braj Bhāṣā prose', p. 315.

² F. 26b is ruled with side lines, entitled, and numbered, but the text itself is clearly complete half-way down f. 26a.

³ Quoted by Keith, together with other information on the MS not given here.

⁴ See notes to 11a7, 18a15.