Chapter 1

Terms of Engagement

A Guide to the Assumptions of Hindi Poetics

To approach the subject of this book, several basic questions need to be addressed, both for the uninitiated reader of Hindi texts, and for the scholar of Hindi who is reading the poetry of 1885–1925 anew. These questions are: What was the poetic background out of which Hindi poets composed? What would the term "modern Hindi poetry" signify at the beginning of this period? What is conventional wisdom about the period as a whole, especially in regard to Hindi nature-in-poetry? The bulk of this chapter will address each component of the term "modern Hindi poetry," to establish basic premises for understanding the world of the Hindi poet, and point to particular features within the idea of "modern Hindi poetry" that inform the nature poetry within it. The latter two sections will address how the literary eras are configured, and how nature has figured in these precepts of conventional wisdom of the decades following. Altogether, these sections will equip us with the literary and cultural logic that has informed the nature-phenomenon in Hindi poetry.

There are many constituent parts comprising the entity of "modern Hindi poetry." We must address the basic impinging terms and circumstances in order to establish points of reference for the particular period (1885–1925), genre (poetry), and theme ("Nature") analyzed in this book. To do this, I will parse this phrase "modern Hindi poetry" in the manner of a Sanskrit compound, and start the story with the last, or head word, "poetry," then proceeding to the vexed terms "Hindi" and "modern." This introduction will thusly rehearse some of the basic literary history familiar to scholars of Hindi, and also provide a context specifically for engaging with the concept of poetic Nature.

Definitions and Ideals for Poetry in Nineteenth Century North India

A functional definition of poetry held special difficulties in the late-nineteenth century poetic context.[1] It was the end of a century that had seen the displacement of the old elite poetic norms and the partial inculcation of new edicts and models for poetry from Britain. Sanskrit literature, to which Hindi poets often looked for inspiration, had boasted one of the most developed and complex poetics in the world. It possessed the category of *kāvya*, poetry per se, using something called *vakrokti*, "crooked speech," of which *mahākāvya*, the "great *kāvya*," demonstrating features of meter and subject, and length, was an archetype. Features from the highly developed poetics of Sanskrit would surface in the other genres as well, cropping up in the *Ramayana* narrative, or appearing in tandem with the explication of a "scientific" topic. Shorter *kāvya* forms often merged with song, and this was de rigueur for much of the devotional poetry of the second millennium CE which were usually performed as songs, or at least possible as such. For nineteenth-century poets, for whom the classical and devotional traditions were quite alive and well, verse remained something for performance, but became more textual as demands for a printed modern canon grew. With the addition of the novel form, the lack of which many Indians bemoaned, poetry became more a category of the past than of the future, which the novel and essay commanded.

The Hindi poet of the late nineteenth century was caught in a bind between varying poetic worlds: on the one hand he would have complex and intimate knowledge of Sanskritic and Persian poetic traditions, and on the other, some kind of familiarity with the much more foreign English poetic world, in original or translation from English, which represented the new worldliness, and knowledge of which had become a standard for the new gentlemanliness. Authors of the preceding twenty years had broached this basic conflict, but without a satisfying hybrid solution. The question of how to integrate past and present poetic ideals remained an open question of the day. We will consider first English, then Sanskrit, and the vernacular poetries of Braj Bhāṣā and Urdu, to highlight the complexity of the question of poetics in this context.

English Poetics in Colonial India

The question of the variegations of influence of English on the poetics of late nineteenth-century India is a complicated one that scholars have not adequately researched as yet. In assessing the English influence

on Hindi poetry, we have to first consider the extreme stratification of access to English and ideas of "Englishness." While certain Indians would have been privy to the latest in British poetry, depending on their relationship to education, profession, financial means, and their own literary interest, others saw only certain English books, or read only translations from English in periodicals, and even then may have had deep interest in things English and felt variously committed to the cosmopolitanism they represented. Thus, there was a wide spectrum of engagement with English literary mores, and this does not even account for the very real "lag" in time and space, in getting English literature into India at this time.

Of course, the educational literary canon, in laboratory in India, as Gauri Viswanathan has shown in her *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*,[2] took a preeminent place in the imagining of English poetry and what it had to offer. While a thorough study of the dissemination of English poetry in India has yet to be done, we can get glimpses of the nature of this poetry from the *Education Reports* and the *Statements on Registered Publications*, of which the latter shows several guides for English literary readers.[3] We can also consult the extant syllabi of English-medium colleges and other testing institutions.[4] Besides what one might glean from extant educational records, we can also assume that a component of English poetry floating around India consisted of the most "popular" type: poetry in popular anthologies, illustrated gift books perhaps, and magazines. Thus, along with the famous poems of Indian English education, such as Gray's "Elegy," and Wordsworth's "Daffodils," a mish-mash of other English poems would have appeared in tandem in the North Indian publishing market.

A sense of competition and confrontation with English literature underlay much writing in Hindi, and in the early twentieth century poetry was becoming overshadowed by the perceived "English" genres of prose—the novel, the essay, the story—as representing modern citizens, their concerns, and their preoccupations. Both imported English novels and Indian novels tended precisely toward social concerns, and ultimately themes of morality, which Priya Joshi has argued formed a transcendent world of principles in literature, in contrast to the subjugation of colonial life for an Indian.[5] Indeed, we find this trait of moralization across Hindi genres, poetry as well as prose, throughout the period we address here.

As Frances Pritchett described the poetic world of nineteenth-century Urdu poets, English influences were manifold and "floating in the air," and therefore extremely difficult to pin down or quantify.[6] This largely holds true for those writing in Hindi as well. As for the

nineteenth-century Urdu poets, the new dominance of English political, economic, and educational institutions had induced a sense of cultural loss of their previous "golden era," and a concomitant sense of current cultural decadence, but English literature also represented some truly hopeful cultural possibilities in their view. From the writings of Hindi poets and others, we can see clearly that many accepted the idea that moral decay brought about Indian subordination. Brought up on British histories of the Roman Empire, as well as indigenous ideas of fallen times, from the Islamicate one described by Urdu poet Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī (addressed in the following chapter), to the *kali yug* (age of destruction) of Hindu thought, many educated Indians likely found such an argument of a decadence-induced fall from glory familiar, if not simply logical. In the words of Marathi author Viṣṇu Kṛṣṇa Cipaḷūṇkar (1850–82), analyzed by Sudhir Chandra in *The Oppressive Present*, Indians found themselves "crushed by English poetry," and sought to revivify a glorious past—"inventing tradition" in the classic Hobsbawmian sense—believing they were culturally inferior to the English in the present. Further, according to Chandra, poetry functioned as both a synecdoche for the entirety of colonial hegemony, and a cause of the current political cum cultural state. In Cipaḷūṇkar's words, "Crushed by English poetry, our freedom has been destroyed. . . . [and] under their laws we have become bankrupt."[7] Knowing English poetry held weighty cultural import, as a sign of an individual's elite education and "progressivism," and also a sign of Indian cultural/political loss.

Furthermore, for many Hindi authors, English did not truly offer the "last word" in terms of defining poetry. Deeply attached to their own poetic pasts, these poets had to find a way to reconcile their understanding of the valuable parts of indigenous poetry with their understanding of what English poetry could offer them. While "taking light from English lanterns,"[8] certain tropes and theories from English came to the fore that would take on lives of their own as markers of the modern in the Hindi poetic context. The adoption of English literary values did not replicate the English literary situation; the meaning of poetry for our authors could not have been that of the contemporary London scene, but the world of classical Sanskrit, the centuries-old Hindi dialect of Braj Bhāṣā, and contemporary Urdu poetics, mixed with avant-garde Bengali experiments with Western styles, and the English poetry of canon and popular anthologies.

So from whence did the Hindi poetics of 1885 come? *Rasa*, *bhāva*, devotional idioms (in turn derived from the latter), and an Indo-Persian allusive world of love and longing, war and lament, all appeared in the foreground, as poetic choices for the Hindi poet to brandish expertly, reform,

or reject. The values of English poetry would somehow mix in with these supposedly less "modern" native forms, and Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, and Urdu authors had already begun such syncretistic experiments.[9]

Classical Sanskrit Poetics

By far, the most referenced poetic theory by the Hindi poets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the concept of *rasa*, cornerstone of classical Sanskrit aesthetics. Other scholars have delineated *rasa* (lit., juice, essence) in great depth, and from its earliest known sources.[10] Here it will suffice to say that this theory of aesthetics deriving at least from the tenth century, from Bharata's work on dramatics, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, categorizes aesthetic experience according to emotional categories that are presented in the dramatic work, and then inspired in the educated audience. These emotional categories ordain particulars of subject matter and setting of the dramatic, and by extension poetic, work. *Rasa* is an all-encompassing abstraction that defines the aesthetic experience, and according to Edwin Gerow (upon whose works we will rely for standard and brief explications of these matters):

> a medium of experience, emotional awareness, "taste" that is first and foremost in or of the audience . . . [*rasa*] is a mood, an emotional consciousness, wherein all the disparate elements of the play, language, gesture, imitations, scenery, coincide, and are understood after all not to be disparate. . . .[11]

Importantly, *rasa* is ultimately an abstraction of the experience portrayed, which is shared among the connoisseurs of the audience. The self-conscious "feeling of a feeling" of the *rasa* theory bears some resemblance to modern thinking on aesthetic perception by I. A. Richards (by the late 1920s a favorite of Hindi critics), J. Wood, Langer, Gassett, and the "synaesthetists," as Gerow has noted.[12]

Conventionally *rasa* falls into eight categories,[13] and the category which dominates them all as the topic of poetry and drama is that of *śṛṅgāra*, the "erotic sentiment" or "mood of love," known as the "king of *rasa*s." Other *rasa*s can appear as subthemes within a *śṛṅgārik* work.[14] While the *rasa* system is at root prescriptive of character, setting, plot, etc., art within the *rasa* aesthetic world is intended to create an effect that apotheosizes the particular abstracted emotion as an end in itself. *Bhāva*, the "feeling" induced by a *rasa*, similarly becomes an end in itself. As Abhinava interpreted in the eleventh century:

> . . . the drama, the poem . . . generalizes the conditions of emotion and consequently generalizes or abstracts emotion itself—makes it into something essentially shared. This is Abhinava's *rasa*, emotion turned inside out—determining its conditions (the fictive play) rather than being determined by them (the real world)—and thus free of its conditions. Abhinava interprets this inversion as the experience of the possibility of experience itself, an experience that both cancels the boundaries separating men and kindles in them a desire for the essentially similar experience of liberation . . . the Advaita [monistic] inversion of cognitive point of view: the precondition of being is understood as more real than the particular manifestations of being.[15]

Such abstraction of emotion, and its role as determiner of conditions, "rather than being determined by them (the real world)," is important to remember as we consider how Indian authors in the nineteenth century grappled with incorporating Western poetics. But more practically speaking, *rasa* meant supplying a particular apparatus of *bhāva* ("feeling," the concrete experience of the *rasa* in question), *anubhāva* ("after-feelings," or "consequents," such as gestures indicating a feeling), *uddīpana* ("incitants," one of the category of "determinants," such as objects in the setting that encourage the experience of the *rasa*), and other conditions that would determine the features of the work. These were most elaborated over the centuries in relation to *śṛṅgāra rasa*, such that the presence of a *papīhā* bird, a night-blooming lotus, a creeper on a tree, etc., would ergo signify a theme of love.

Another stream of criticism elaborated the many sorts of *alaṃkāra*, "ornament," comprising poetic speech. These ornaments were conceived as belonging to the categories of sense and of language, as *arthālaṃkāra* (ornament of sense/meaning), e.g., various types of simile, and *śabdālaṃkāra* (ornament of language/phoneme/sound), e.g., alliteration, assonance. The Hindi authors of the nineteenth century would have studied to some considerable degree this science of verbal ornament originating from the late seventh-century authors Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin. This tradition included even "natural" or "direct" description (*svabhāvokti*) as an ornament among the others (which surprisingly held only minor interest for our Hindi poets emulating the language of speech and realism). This *alaṃkāraśāstra* and the ongoing theory of response that was *rasa* remained pertinent for all those trained in Sanskrit belles lettres, and writing in the vernacular genres emulating Sanskrit, well into the twentieth century.

Uniting the *rasa* of dramatic theory and *alaṃkāra* was the concept of *dhvani*, exposited in the ninth-century text *Dhvanyāloka*, by Ānandavardhana. *Dhvani*, literally "echo" or "sound," is then "interpreted as an expressive function inherent in language," and in more concrete terms, an "other meaning" that arises from a poetic utterance within the rubric of *rasa*: "as system of meaning in which the signifier is fixed but its corresponding signifieds theoretically infinite."[16] This location of multiple signification in language ultimately served both the apparatuses of *rasa* and of *alaṃkāra*:

> The denotative level [i.e., the *vibhāva*s, etc., of *rasa* theory, and the *alaṃkāra* of poetry per se] persists and is not cancelled; a further "content" is suggested via that denotation, which suggestion turns out to promote primarily the stable *rasa* as well.[17]

Thus *rasa* is often referred to as *rasa-dhvani*, with *dhvani* as the suggestive, "echo"-function of language to take the auditor's thoughts to further significations within the context of the understood *rasa*. As we shall see in the following chapters, the concept of *dhvani* would have been a viable, even desirable one, for the innovating Hindi litterateur of 1885–1925, but surprisingly, the term was rarely elaborated or even used in reference to contemporary poetry of this modern era. It remained by and large an understood component of the functioning of *rasa* in poetry.[18]

Along with *dhvani*, the concept of *aucitya*, appropriateness or decorum, a term found in Bharata, Ānandavardhana, and the works many others, persisted quietly in Hindi poetic world of the nineteenth century. This *aucitya*, which had ordained conventions of propriety in poetry's subjects and language, would be a key element of Chāyavād rebellion; less so for the poets of the preceding decades we examine here, who experimented more subtly.

Beyond the basic premises of *rasa* (essence, sentiment, relish, "feeling of a feeling"), *śṛṅgāra* (the erotic sentiment, "king of *rasa*s"), *dhvani* (echo, suggestion), *alaṃkāra* (ornament), and *aucitya* (propriety), the developments of the sixteenth century are of prime importance in understanding the vernacular poetry in North India. This century witnessed the explicit integration of aesthetic experience and religious experience in influential Vaishnava sects devoted especially to Krishna, in his forms as an infant and as a seductive cowherd among the gopis (cowherdesses) in the pastoral region of Braj.

> A completely new turn to the *rasa* theory (in its dramatic context) was given by the Vaishnava theologians of Bengal,

> notably Rūpa Gosvāmin [in his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*] who took the preeminence of *śṛṅgāra* among the *rasa*s and boldly identified that *rasa* with the sentiment of the worshipful Krishna bhakta, thus in effect turning the real world of religious concerns into a drama, wherein everyone enacts the play of Krishna and the gopis.[19]

The sixteenth century aesthetic turn in Krishna theology, found most apparently in adherents of Caitanya, as Rūpa Gosvāmin mentioned above, would profoundly affect poetics in the North Indian vernaculars, and especially that of Braj Bhāṣā, to which we will now turn.[20]

Braj Bhāṣā into the Nineteenth Century

Braj Bhāṣā, the dialect associated with Krishna's home region of Braj, and the language of the legendary poet saint Sūr Dās (fl. late 15th–16th c.), became widespread in Hindu and Mughal courts, transforming into a pan-regional vernacular with cosmopolitan associations. The development of Brajbūlī, a mixture of Braj and Bengali, among devotees of the Bengali guru Caitanya, whose followers made Braj a pilgrimage place, attests further to the interregional nature of Krishnaite religiosity and the languages of its poetry, based often on the variety of Hindi in the Braj region. Braj Bhāṣā poetry, which soon developed a literary standard independent of its spoken dialect, most often addressed Krishnaite subjects, but in the courtly context, the relationship of Rādhā and Krishna merged with the ostensibly secular classical Sanskrit exposition of *śṛṅgāra* via the taxonomy of the hero and heroine (*nāyak* and *nāyikā*), and the modes of their relationship. In regard to the *nāyikā-bhed* (taxonomy of heroines) genre, R. S. McGregor has written that Nand Dās (fl. sixteenth century) wrote his *Rasamañjarī*, a text often illustrated in miniature paintings, with the idea that "the *nāyikā-bhed* theory [is] the key to an understanding of the nature of divine love."[21] Other sects that established themselves in the pilgrimage region of Braj "are described as *rasik* because they concentrated exclusively on the emotional experience (*rasa*) generated by contemplation of the love-play of Krishna and Rādhā."[22] Along with the merging of courtly aesthetic theory with bhakti theology, some Braj religious institutions held quasi-political status with the Mughal powers in nearby Agra, receiving some degree of royal patronage; in turn, some devotional idioms took on a strong courtly cast,[23] while bhakti devotion itself remained defined as a movement of more rough-hewn cultural origins. In this, Braj poetry merely resembled Indic arts generally, all over the subcontinent, in this inextricable court-temple aesthetic connection.

This courtly poetry, often called *rīti*,[24] or *rīti*-era poetry, would often be indistinguishable from the explicitly devotional and folk bhakti poetry on Krishna and Rādhā, in a mutual interdependence of content and idiom. As Braj courtly poetry used devotional idioms and references, so Braj bhakti poetry would use the *alaṃkāra* of high poetics. The importance of *śṛṅgāra* to Braj Bhāṣā poetry cannot be underestimated, as the sentiment of erotic love appeared in Braj renditions of Sanskrit works, and also devotional poetry on Krishna. Not unlike the European pastoral, such poetry on Krishna and the gopis in Braj often took the form of an urbane idealization of the non-urbane, in a kind of "staged pastoralism."[25] On the other hand, the body of poems on the pastoral loves of Krishna merges with those referencing the urbane (*nāgara*, lit. of the city/town, sophisticated) Krishna, whose identity shifts to one like the courtly hero in his love play. Braj poetry thus cultivated a double persona for Krishna and his lover Rādhā: on one hand simple village youth, on the other sophisticated characters in the roles of *śṛṅgāra*'s taxonomy of love.

The content of this Sanskritic tradition, in the medium of Braj Bhāṣā, consisted then of the two poles of high Sanskritic imitation and simple folksy songs of devotion, and all points in between.[26] Common to all of this poetry was a preoccupation with love for Krishna, on the part of the gopis, of Rādhā, or the author of the poem itself, all serving the idea that all-consuming, ecstatic and sometimes painful love approximates love for god. In certain respects then, this vernacular tradition resembles the troubadour poetry of Europe, but with more elaboration of its formal poetics, and a much longer life in popular culture. These literary dialects of Hindi were languages of courtly pastoral, as well as languages of "the street" and its living religious devotion. This latter feature would remain—today, too, Braj Bhāṣā bhajans are sung—but the high literary use of Braj would wane considerably in the early twentieth century.[27]

To illustrate the folk-poetry side of this poetic situation, see the following verse from blind saint-poet Sūr Dās, who legendarily spurned the summons of Emperor Akbar, but was adopted by the Vallabha sect that worshiped Krishna with courtly pomp and circumstance. This famous verse was found in a booklet for the use of devotees, sold among the many small, colored books of the bazaar and the stalls outside temples[28]:

> Night and day our eyes rain [tears]
> The rainy season remains with us always
> Since Śyām departed.
> Night and day our eyes rain [tears].
> The kohl doesn't stay on our eyes,

Our hands and cheeks have gone black.
Our bodice-cloth never dries,
Rivulets flow in between our breasts.
We are awash with tears down to our feet
The whites of our eyes flow away
Sūr Dās says, Braj is immersed
And no one can be saved.

Here a situational irony delivers the poetic pleasure: the rainy season—the season of love—stays with the gopis when their lover Krishna is absent. The refrain itself reinforces the irony of having the pain of separation, *viraha*, in the season of union, as the beginning of the line, *nisi din barasata* (night and day rain . . .) delays its subject, *naina hamāre* (our eyes), creating a momentary expectation of rain as rain, only to reverse the import of this sign. The irony doesn't stop here: the latter two lines declare that Braj is irretrievably immersed in this flood of tears, but signifies in fact a happy circumstance. *Ḍūbata*, drowned or immersed, commonly verbalizes the state of engrossment in and enjoyment of *rasa*, a liquid essence after all, and thereby signifies the positive effect of this pain of love: to helplessly long for god is the point of devotion, and like the women of Braj, the devotee should wish to be in such a dire but perhaps delicious plight of being steeped in love for Krishna. To be in this state, where "no one can be saved," is in fact to achieve salvation through Krishna from the ocean of existence. The hyperbole (rivulets between the breasts, etc.), possibly even humorous, only further suggests the ultimately happy subject of this image. This type of poem is most certainly a song; the refrain "day and night our eyes rain [tears]" would be repeated at the end of each verse, and its plain-spoken diction falls in a memorable AABA rhyme scheme. Like much of the Sūr oeuvre, here complexities of rhythm and rhyme impart semantic force.[29]

Another kind of verbal virtuosity characterized high courtly poetry in Braj on exactly the same themes. Take the following example from Keśav's *Rasikapriyā* (Beloved of the Connoisseur), a work delineating the types and interactions of a hero and heroine couple, identified as Krishna and Rādhā. This verse exemplifies "Rādhikā displaying the *viraha* (pain of separation) of *karuṇa rasa* (the pathetic mood)." The original text interspersed will indicate the highly alliterative and punning quality of this work, which many consider an epitome of courtly *rīti* style.

Looking upon (*herata*) the green green field (*harita harita hāra*),
it steals (*harata*) my heart,
I am exhausted (*hārī hauṁ*), I who have deer (*harina*) eyes; I
don't find Hari anywhere.

Upon the densely forested Braj (*banamālī*), a line of clouds (*banamālī)* rains
How can I bear the sorrow that the one wearing the forest flower garland (Banamālī) is far away, O Keśava?
In the lotus of my heart, seeing the eyes of the Lotus-eyed one (Kamalanaina)
I will become [his,] the woman of the Lotus-eyed one (*kamalanaini*[30]), what more can I say?
You yourself, O Cloud-dark one (Ghanaśyāma), just like the clouds (*ghanahiṁ se*), you are like an anvil (*ghana*) weighing upon me heavily (*ghane).*
How can I remain in these days of the rainy season without Ghanaśyāma?[31]

The Hindi interposed here gives good indication of the poetic goals of this text: alliteration, assonance, and overall, poetic gaming with pun and double-meaning. Each couplet uses alliteration heavily in the first three feet, and then in the last quarter shifts away from this technique to direct exclamation. We find examples of what is classically termed *yamaka*, the repetition of a word in its various meanings, and *śleṣa*, "double-meaning." Each line plays upon an epithet of Krishna; thus Keśav cleverly repeats the name of god.

No less devotional than Sūr's poem above, still we might say that Keśav's poem is the inverse of Sūr's. Keśav's poem seems lighter in tone because of its very elaborate wordplay; when his Rādhā points out the irony of having the rainy-season *ghan* (clouds) without Ghanaśyām (Krishna), it is primarily a quandary based on words. Sūr's poem uses the more emotionally intense tactic of associating the pain of love with its own season, alluding to theological truths and possibilities more than accruing dazzling double entendres. Taking the latter Keśav poem to represent broadly the literary specificities of court, we may attribute to this courtly Braj poetry an even more judicious and allusive use of formal poetics than found in most songs attributed to a bhakti poet par excellence like Sūr. Keśav's poems held a more puzzle-like pleasure, and a concern with sound at a more minute level, such that they are aesthetic first and foremost, as well as conducive to devotion. Such were the classical models of Braj, at the micro-level of practical poetics, to which our late nineteenth-century authors looked.

Urdu Poetics

Indubitably the dominant vernacular poetic form known to our Hindi poets of the late nineteenth century was the Urdu *śer*, a highly developed

and beloved form from the eighteenth century, performed in poetic gatherings in and out of court. In a language more similar to the pan-regional lingua franca speech style than Braj (see discussion below), the Urdu *śer* held an epiphoric pleasure for its audience, who would exclaim at the repetition of the shared line-final or couplet-final syllables that bound verses together in a ghazal. Often inspired by its Persian forebear, the ghazal intimated the refined world of court as it simultaneously spoke plainly yet elliptically of pain and love. An example from eighteenth-century Dakhini Urdu, by Sirāj can serve as an example here:

> I have seen my beloved without a veil
> I think I have seen a dream.
> . . .
> In the manuscript of beauty,
> I have seen your stature as a line of choice verse.
> . . .
> Ever since the army of Love came,
> I have seen the land of the heart laid to waste.
> . . .
> O Siraj, in the fire of love
> I have seen my heart [burn like] a kebab.[32]

The repeated final phrase "have seen" joins the couplets, but the wordplay in fact comes just before that, with each line presenting a different word ending in –āb: first "dream" (*khvāb*), then "choice" (*intikhāb*), and then a dramatic flourish with "ruined" (*kharāb*), and even more drama—or perhaps humor—but at any rate, surprise, with "kabob" (*kabāb*). In language quite direct and resembling (even in this southern style of Urdu) the language of speech, these verses are yet highly wrought, and based upon wordplay both entertaining and poetically intensifying. The early poets of the modern Hindi canon most definitely read every form of Urdu literature and criticism of their day; only in the 1920s did the Hindi-Urdu divide begin to take effect at the level of textual literacy.[33] Thus Urdu poetics—however briefly it can be discussed here—was fundamental to the poetic world of the Hindi author.

The general educated public of North India functioned in the Urdu medium in the nineteenth century—Urdu was indeed the official language of court and administration in the North-West Provinces, Bihar, and part of the Central Provinces by 1837. Unsurprisingly, Urdu poetry was a crucial element of the learned social sphere. Urdu poetry, its poetics, and its poetic terms held high esteem with many of these Hindi poets, who sometimes had styled themselves as Urdu poets in their youth

(e.g., Ratnākar, described in Chapter 3). The dominance of Urdu poetics was likely most prominent in regions renowned for Urdu poetry, namely the former Nawabi Oudh, in the heart of the "Hindi belt," and the Mughal capital cities of Delhi and Agra, the latter located next to the region of Braj. We can in fact index the poetic dominance of Urdu in a Hindi courtly publication of 1894, by the Maharaja Pratāpanārāyaṇ Siṁh of Ayodhya in Oudh. This massive *Rasakusumākār* [Rasa in the Form of a Flower] *or A Book on Rhetoric*, had its many Sanskritic terms for metaphor, etc., glossed in their Persian/Urdu equivalents, suggesting that he saw need to educate or bring about a Braj audience.[34] Not only did the text give evidence of its Persianate literary context, but also its British one: the Maharaja described *śṛṅgāra rasa* and its constituent parts with a diagram, a practice which he described as "the English style" of explanation, as opposed to the norm of verse explication. That such an exposition was necessary, and in "the English style," testifies to the varied poetic world of Braj Bhāṣā's public.[35]

Definitions and Ideals for the Hindi Language in the Nineteenth Century

One unique feature of any attempt to define Hindi in the late nineteenth century was the sociolinguistic situation: the language(s) we now call Hindi and Urdu, write in very different orthographies, and associate with Hinduism and Islam, respectively, were for centuries profoundly intertwined, and fluidly crossed boundaries of sect and script. The Hindi belt was the location of historical centers of Urdu—i.e., Persianate Nastaliq-script literature. The center of Urdu was in a sense everywhere, as it was the language of courts generally, and among the Hindu public, especially those of communities associated with court, e.g., Kayasths, and Khatris. Hindi authors of the late nineteenth century, newly committed to the use of one script over the other, were friends and colleagues with Muslim authors in Urdu, despite increasing Hindu/Muslim social segregation. They spoke grammatically the same language, and shared the same "Ganga-Jamuna" composite culture, of the cultural "rivers" of Sanskrit/Hindu and Perso-Arabic/Muslim traditions, which merged like the rivers Ganges and Yamuna in the center of North India. They interacted in the many new publishing houses, cultural institutions in themselves. Indeed, the Naval Kishore Press of Lucknow, one of the most important presses of India in the last half of the nineteenth century, published in both Hindi and Urdu, "defying the ongoing dichotomization of Hindi and Urdu."[36] At the same time, a history of Hindi excluding Urdu-script

literature and foregrounding Hindu and classical Sanskrit themes began to be conceived and reproduced in essays and anthologies.[37] Thus, Hindi poets wrote in the midst of a paradoxical world: a dichotomizing sociolinguistic context, and yet a still unified intellectual sphere.

Poetry in the script of Hindi—that is, in Devanāgarī, a dominant script of Sanskrit—was, grammatically speaking, most all in the Braj dialect until the 1870s. The very choice to compose poetry in modern Hindi, most especially in the style of speech, was not only experimental, but contained a social agenda implicit in the rhetoric of "natural language" in colonial India: to write in Kharī Bolī was to demonstrate a belief in "progress" toward "modernity" and a sort of "democracy" of demotic speech, a belief serving the merchant classes of the towns, not the elite of traditional court or English power structures. Writing in Braj Bhāṣā had little of the cachet of modern progress, but would still serve to support the Hindi/Hindu equivalence. The transition was slow, and around the turn of the century the grammatical line between Khaṛī Bolī Hindi and Braj Bhāṣā in poetry increased somewhat. The idea that modern poetry should be in the language of speech escaped no one, no matter which side of the fence they were on. For those supporters of Khaṛī Bolī, there was then a subsequent definitional problem, linguistically and culturally: how should this Khaṛī Bolī—speech style—Hindi in the Devanagari script be differentiated from its twin in the Nastaliq script, and what would make its poetry poetic, without the meters or vocabulary of Braj, Sanskrit, or Persian? In the words of the famous Hindi essayist Pratāpanārāyaṇ Miśra in 1888, besides casting it in Braj or Persian meter or that of current popular song (*lāvanī*), "to use any other meter in [Khaṛī Bolī poetry] would be like putting a coat and boots (*koṭ būṭ*) on a tender-limbed beauty (*komalāṅgī sundarī*)."[38] Heartfelt wrangling over these matters would persist through the early decades of the Hindi movement and into the 1920s.

THE CULTURE OF THE HINDI MOVEMENT

The authors examined in this book belonged to the "Hindi movement," a phenomenon of language politics that formed the cultural background of Hindi writing of our period. The Hindi movement essentially began as a movement against the use of Perso-Arabic script, and very shortly evolved into a movement to Sanskritize not only lexicon, but culture at large. Essayist Pratāpanārāyaṇ Miśra's slogan, "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan," although ironically a lament for Hindi's losses, has stuck as a catchphrase for the religio-political import of the Hindi movement, a nationalist identity-based movement seeking to align the future Indian state with

"Hinduism." In regard to this, Christopher King has cogently elaborated the Hindi movement's role in "multi-symbol congruency," which Paul Brass had brought to the discussion of language and nationalism.[39] Vasudha Dalmia and King, among others, have given detailed accounts of the beginning of the Hindi movement in the nineteenth century. Dalmia has described extensively the writings of Bhāratendu Hariścandra, the Father of Modern Hindi, as its first major publicist and promoter. She has also delineated the precise ways in which definitions of Hindi were made to align with Hindus and their political agendas, through education reform and political battles over the language of government.[40]

Agitation for Hindi as a language of government and education had begun in earnest in the 1870s, and had achieved some success in the Central Provinces and Bihar, while the North-West Provinces and Oudh, the origin of the authors discussed in following chapters, remained Urdu-medium. It was only in 1900 with the Nagari Resolution in the United Provinces that Hindi attained equal status with Urdu in "a largely symbolic victory."[41] However, the Hindi movement thrived in the city of Varanasi, where three graduates of Queen's College founded the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā in 1893, The Society for the Promotion of Nagari.[42] The NPS dedicated itself to Hindi in the midst of communal rioting in the region surrounding the Cow Protection movement, and in a general atmosphere of Hindu militating against a perceived anti-Hindu Muslim population and indifferent British authority. The NPS, as major organ of the Hindi movement, arose as part of the larger fabric of Hindu-Muslim conflict, and became an institution unto itself; virtually all of the Hindi authors mentioned in the present study were known members of the NPS, and many in fact served as *sabhāpati* at their annual meeting, giving the keynote address.

The Society's position on what exactly constituted Hindi remained somewhat murky, but consistently it linked "Hindi" to "Hindu." Devakīnandan Khattrī's Nagari-script novels, which nevertheless were replete with Persianate vocabulary, were condoned (but not promoted) by the Society,[43] and Braj Bhāṣā poetry on Krishnaite and national themes continued apace in the publications of the Society's members. But from its beginning, the idea of cultural reform, really a sort of cultural "cleansing" of non-Hindu, "foreign" words and cultural tropes, animated its projects. As King has elaborated, the Society's committees performed this even retroactively, in their manuscript searches in order to create a Hindi literary canon in Nagari script Braj, Avadhī, etc. that would give the appearance of a Hindi tradition partitioned from Urdu completely. What manuscripts they found in Persian scripts, by Hindu authors on Hindu themes, were presented merely as sad artifacts of "foreign

rule" by Muslims. The vitriolic controversy of the years leading up to and shortly following the 1900 Resolution, was part and parcel of the Hindu intellectual world. Speeches, poems, and dramas were written on the topic, often embodying Hindi and Urdu as females—the good housewife and the seductive whore, respectively, in the usual scheme of the Hindi-proponent author.

At this point we can prospectively look to the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (Conference on Hindi Literature), founded in 1910, another organization dedicated to Hindi. This Allahabad-centered institution "formed a bridge between Hindi intellectuals and Congress politicians,"[44] and would profoundly affect the dissemination and definition of Hindi literature with its own examination program in Hindi and its publication series on canonical pre-modern and modern Hindi authors. The hashing out of what sort of Hindi should be ordained as the national language was done largely in the public conferences held by the Sammelan in the twenties and thirties.[45] The political project of making Hindi a national language was thus intertwined with the Sammelan and the NPS, and informed their literary and educational projects.

The linking of Hindi with Hindu partisanship is a legacy that still lives on. Indeed, many works of the early period of Hindi literature used Hindu epics for their subject matter (often for anti-colonial purposes), giving Hindi literature Sanskrit's imprimateur, and linking this literature with Hindu nationalism, which itself referenced and self-validated with Hindu epic and Puranic themes. Further, there is no denying that the Hindi movement was coeval with the violence of late nineteenth-century communalism. The Hindi movement has come to represent a North Indian imperialism and oppressively homogenizing cultural impulse, denying the multilingual and multicultural past in a "majoritarian drive for one national culture."[46] It was by and large successful: by 1950, Hindi was a national language of independent India, the Nagari script was in use in much of the educational system, and a literary canon for this Hindi was well established. These organizations of the Hindi movement also established canon quite effectively, and have to some extent preserved rare Hindi texts for posterity. Thus, to write in Hindi during the period of foment of the Hindi movement associations was ipso facto to be part of its politico-cultural movement and its set of political and cultural agendas, which our authors took extremely seriously.[47]

THE LINGUISTIC NOVELTY OF MODERN HINDI

Writing in modern Hindi, the "speech-style" of Khaṛī Bolī, and writing in Braj on "modern" subjects, were both essentially experimental endeavors

in the nineteenth century. In the former case, this involved the question of how to linguistically define this Hindi language, and differentiate it from Urdu. The linguistic basis of the situation is complex and has been much discussed already. Rather than repeat this complex history here, which others have broached and continue to research,[48] I will put forth a mere thumbnail sketch of the linguistic thinking on "Hindi," with a view toward the particular novelty writing in modern Hindi presented to the poet, addressing at length the characterizations of the linguistic situation of Frederic Pincott in his 1889 *Khaṛī Bolī ka padya: A Poetical Reader of Khaṛī Bolī*, a work of critical importance in Hindi poetic history.[49]

Linguist Colin Masica describes the relationship of Hindi and Urdu as "different literary styles based on the same linguistically-defined subdialect," which colloquially "are virtually identical" but "at formal and literary levels, however, vocabulary differences begin to loom much larger . . . to the point where the two languages/styles become mutually unintelligible."[50] The Hindi-Urdu distinction is therefore profoundly sociolinguistic, and is especially problematic to define because of the many and varied terms for Hindi/Hindavī[51] from the thirteenth century onwards.[52]

The most telescopic view of the linguistic history of Hindi is as follows: This language Hindi or Hindavī was a lingua franca based on the composite dialect of the Mughal capitals of Delhi and Agra of the sixteenth century, and it incorporated into its lexicon words from Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit sources in a New Indo-Aryan grammatical frame. A native tongue in the region of Meerut, near Delhi, it became the language of the bazaar across wide regions, and the language associated with Agarwāl traders.[53] Various names have been attached to this language, in attempts to capture its various uses and breadth of lexical range. The term "Urdu," literally the "language of camp," emerges in the late eighteenth century, specifically referencing the Muslim/Mughal usage of this local language.[54] Another term, "Hindustani," is found commonly from the nineteenth century, but now has fallen into disuse. This type of Hindi, which would be most likely written in the Urdu script, was used unselfconsciously with regard to etymological provenance. This "Hindustani," written in Nagari script, later became a point of great contention in the Hindi movement, as its proponents, like Gandhi himself, fought with those favoring a more Sanskritized, ergo more Hindu-identified Hindi, within the literary/political sphere of the Hindi Sāhitya Sammelan.[55] Now the lingua franca that was called Hindustani in the British era is found as the language of present-day mundane speech, evidenced in the bazaar and in entertainment media. The term "Khaṛī Bolī," identical at root to this lingua-franca concept of

Hindustani, arose among Hindi promoters of the nineteenth century, which term gradually came to represent a less Persianized and more Sanskrit-inclined lexicon.

In the end, we can summarize that in the nineteenth century, under pressure from a variety of sociohistorical influences, "Urdu" came to represent in the early 1800s a term for the local "Hindustani" with a Persian lexical bias, which bias would be epitomized in certain heavily Persianized Urdu poetry. "Hindi" on the other hand would represent a Hindu-identified version of Hindustani, in a Sanskritic script (Kaithī, Mahājani, or Devanagari), and often using a Sanskrit-derived, if not outright Sanskritized lexicon. During 1885–1925, the years under study here, many definitions of Hindi were flying about, but the distinction between Hindi and Urdu was made primarily on the basis of script, etymology, or sociological import of the content. Those who strove to be Hindi poets did so with a Hindu-identified stance; writing in Hindi meant not only a certain choice of script, but also a certain degree of distance from the genres and tropes of Urdu, the "other," yet intimately close, register of educated speech and thought.[56]

The linguistic perplexities and sheer novelty of writing poetry in modern spoken-style Khaṛī Bolī Hindi for the late nineteenth-century poet can be elucidated from a text published in 1889 by Fredric Pincott, *Khaṛī Bolī ka padya: A Poetical Reader of Khaṛī Bolī*. An editor at W. H. Allen, Fredric Pincott was a self-taught scholar of Indian languages, and member of the Royal Asiatic Society.[57] This volume was edited by Pincott, who wrote its lengthy introduction, but the text itself was one compiled by Ayodhyā Prasād Khatrī (1857–1904), of Muzaffarpur, a teacher and collector's agent in Ballia, who is remembered by early literary historians as a man for whom "the promotion of Khaṛī Bolī became his life's purpose," who "would always discuss Khaṛī Bolī with every writer he met,"[58] and in order to disprove the naysayers who alleged that Khaṛī Bolī was unfit for verse composition, he personally collected handwritten examples of Khaṛī Bolī poetry in a notebook.[59] He had published a grammar in 1877, and a book entitled *Khaṛī Bolī Āndolan* (The Khaṛī Bolī Movement) in 1888. The volume published in London and edited by Pincott was comprised of a lengthy introduction, and collated specimens of Khaṛī Bolī poetry from the eminent authors of the day, apparently culled from periodical and book publications, and presumably Khattrī's abovementioned notebook.

Pincott's introduction explained in no uncertain terms the experimental quality of writing proper poetry in this former "uncourtly idiom of the vulgar":

> Concurrently with the evolution of the Urdu language,[60] the non-Islamitic form of Hindi (which is technically known as *Thenth* Hindi, "pure Hindi," or *Khaṛī Bolī*, "correct speech") has gradually developed into a flexible and expressive language, the vesture of an extensive and scholarly literature, now rapidly expanding. The progress of *Khaṛī Bolī* has, hitherto, not been so marked as that of Urdu, because it has had to rely on its natural strength. . . . It has lacked the fostering hand of Government patronage, and has been generally neglected even by the natives themselves, as they esteem it the uncourtly idiom of the vulgar. During the last twenty years, however, it has steadily forced itself more and more into attention, as its flexibility, terseness, strength, vigour and richness have become more clearly recognized by scholars.[61]

The athleticism of Pincott's rhetoric—flexibility, terseness, strength, vigour, as it "steadily forced itself . . . into attention"—belies the atmosphere of competition with Urdu and the Muslims it purportedly represented, and perhaps also with the "tradition" represented by Braj.

The work outlines the particular challenges facing those defining a modern literary "Hindi" in 1889. In his preface Pincott outlined five "kinds of language in the North-West of India": (1) the "Hindustani of literature and official life," (2) a "poetic form of Urdu," (3) the "cultivated Khaṛī Bolī of literature generally," (4) "the poetic, or Braj, form of Hindi," and (5) "colloquial forms of speech," noting that the first two usually take the Urdu script, the third and fourth the Nagari-type script, and the latter either, but generally a Nagari-type script. The editors of this volume of verse further parsed Khaṛī Bolī into "*ṭheṭh* Hindi" (the "*thenth*" Hindi Pincott refers to), and two other categories classified with the English word "style": the "munshi-style" (*munśī-sthāil*),[62] and the "pandit-style" (*paṇḍit-sthāil*). In this couplet, then, we can see an exemplification of the aspirations and ironies of writing Hindi poetry in the late nineteenth century.

Pincott explains that Khatrī seeks

> to induce his countrymen to abandon the use of the archaic Braj dialect in their poetic effusions, and to persuade those who favour Urdu to use Nagari. . . . In fact, he proposes a compromise: one party is asked to abandon a cherished dialect of their language, and the other party to give up a customary method of writing it.[63]

This program, Pincott opines, would "remove the greatest obstacle to the intellectual development of Northern India. The absurdity of talking and writing prose in one language, and poetry in what is virtually another language, is beginning to make itself felt." After comparing the Braj/Khaṛī Bolī situation to writing English poetry in the Dorset dialect, and prose in the London dialect, Pincott finds that the use of Braj as a medium of poetry forms an "anomaly" that is "inconvenient," and therefore "Babu Ayodhya Prasad is endeavouring to confer a substantial boon on his countrymen, by inducing them to clothe all their ideas in one common form of speech, written in one common character."[64]

The use of Braj for poetry was symptomatic of a larger problem, according to Pincott—a problem of intellect created by a bad verbal logistics that would separate speech and poetry. "Inconvenience," "anomaly," and so forth are in the eye of the beholder; the linking of the persistence of poetic Braj to issues of cultural failure, so to speak, characterizes his position. In the words Pincott used to characterize the position of Khatrī (who remains voiceless in this preface), the "spread of ennobling ideas" and "purification of the mental and moral aspirations of Hindustan generally" can effect "the unification and modernization of the poetic medium of the country," and this in turn would unite Indians together.[65] To support his point that this unifying language of speech-style Nagari creates modernized or at least "better" poetry, Pincott states that the subject matter of the poems of the volume indicate progress: "[they] are excellent in tone, and they manifest a love of nature, a reverence for sacred things, and a desire for the best interests of humanity, the whole of which affords good evidence of the progress India is now making." These traits alone made the volume commendable for its efforts to "raise the character of Indian literature."[66] Underlying these comments is an unmistakable judgment, and back-handed reference to the erotic sentiment or other "Oriental unreality." Pincott's attitude was typical of those who supported the cause of Khaṛī Bolī; for them, linguistic change in poetry contained an implicit moral agenda toward "progress" in content as well as form.

Despite the enumeration of types, kinds, and styles, and the valuation of "tradition" as worn-out and possibly harmful, which characterize this cultural moment, still Hindi poetry mixed the old and the new, and "Urdu" with "Hindi." As an example, we can look at the beginning of the section for the latter pandit-style category of Khaṛī Bolī. The compiler Khatri added a Braj *dohā* couplet, presumably his own, indicating his advocacy for this pandit-style, and punning such that he connected established custom to vice, and innovation to virtue: "The carriage goes