

## Reflecting in the Vernacular: Translation and Transmission in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century North India

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### Abstract:

In early-modern north India, knowledge systems developed simultaneously in multiple ‘classical’ and ‘vernacular’ languages. This article examines the processes of multilingual knowledge transmission through an analysis of a Brajhasha (Classical Hindi) music treatise, the *Sangitadarpana* (‘Mirror of Music’) of Harivallabha (c.1653). Harivallabha was translating a recent Sanskrit work of the same name: an old-fashioned treatise that nonetheless proved extremely influential in Persian and other Sanskrit works, as well as in miniature painting. This article examines the implications of the vernacular rendering of the *Sangitadarpana* and Harivallabha’s seminal influence on the musicological intellectual culture that followed in his wake. Drawing on other translations and treatises in other forms of Hindi and Bengali, the article also considers the limits of Brajhasha’s circulation, and the wider implications of using a vernacular language for reading, listening, visual, and performance practices.

### Keywords:

Translation; early modern India; musicology; Hindi literature.

How did literature travel across the multilingual landscape of early-modern north India? Writers, readers, and communicators of texts had varying degrees of access to different languages: highly local and domestic forms of speech, vernaculars tailored for work places and literary arenas (their varieties often flattened under the label *bhasha*, “vernacular language”), and different strains of elite language, especially Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic. Of course, to be multilingual does not necessarily mean having the same proficiency in every language: in particular, people might be able to understand something they have heard or read, but not be able to compose their own works, or even speak confidently in that same language.<sup>1</sup> In this differentially multilingual context, a text can pass between languages, but can also be translated in multiple styles and forms within one language too.

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Beyond translation by rewording, changing the script was a standard procedure for communicating texts to different audiences. On the page, transliteration creates the optical illusion of profound transformation, when the change is perhaps more nuanced: alphabets carry their own cultural connotations, which inform the way a text is read without altering the words themselves. Conversely, two manuscripts that appear to represent the same text in the same script may have been intended for different reading practices, ultimately producing quite different texts in the moment of performance and reception. When a verse appears as an inscription over an ornate miniature painting, it is ultimately very different from when the same words appear in a singer's handbook, marked with notations and other prescriptions for musical performance. These functional copies gesture to other kinds of unmarked, oral mediation: not only were performers "able to modify inflections and replace words that were too local while keeping to the metrical scheme,"<sup>2</sup> they could also interrupt their enactment or recital of a text with their own (improvised or formal) explanations and elaborative digressions.

George Steiner argued that some form of translation is a constant in communication, that "to understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate."<sup>3</sup> This is a key consideration when we examine a multilingual literary culture: it is inadequate to think of literary translations as reified objects, contained within the dialogue of a source and a target language. Matthew Reynolds observes that "what literary translation captures is not simply in the source text but is brought into being by the continuous process of reading-and-making-sense-and-translating. Translators, no more than readers, do not simply 'read things in' to their sources; but neither do they simply 'read off' from them."<sup>4</sup>

In a multilingual environment, translation within or between languages provided poets, readers, and listening audiences with opportunities to reconfigure and repurpose texts. In particular, reconfiguration through Brajbhasha, an early-modern prestige vernacular associated with aesthetic pleasure, amplified the beauty-oriented properties and sonic

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<sup>1</sup> Guha, "*Mārgī, Deśī and Yāvanī*," 133.

<sup>2</sup> Orsini, "How to do multilingual literary history?," 229.

<sup>3</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, xii.

<sup>4</sup> Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation*, 29.

textures of texts, and marked them as tools for self-cultivation, and ethical and erotic refinement.<sup>5</sup>

This article examines the practices of translation, transliteration, and transmission in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century northern India, through the example of a Sanskrit work on music, the *Sangitadarpana* (“Mirror of Music”), which was repurposed in Brajhasha (Classical Hindi) and other vernacular languages.<sup>6</sup> Musicological texts were flexible forms of literature: they appealed to different communities of readers and listeners, from professional musicians to courtly patron-connoisseurs; they could be read as works of poetry, or as digests of technical knowledge; and they could be transmuted into different media.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes, the *Sangitadarpana* appears as a digest of highly technical data, while elsewhere it appears as a work of poetry. These variations indicate the creative potential of transmission and translation: beyond literary considerations, this text was the basis for paintings, songs, and melodic compositions, which became part of the story of the original text’s circulation.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond an intellectual exercise, translation is a material practice.<sup>9</sup> Examining the different material forms the *Sangitadarpana* has taken, and retracing the editorial decisions behind each copy, underlines the malleability and versatility of the manuscript, and how, as an interactive object, each text or painting lent itself to different modes of exposition. Since musicology itself is an exercise in translation via inscription—giving literary and tangible form to the ephemeral experience of sound—texts about music were always intermediate and intermedial, even before they were rendered into different languages or non-verbal signs.

The literary appreciation of the *Sangitadarpana* was mediated by its translators. Translating into a vernacular was a self-conscious enterprise, and Hindi dialects carried specific literary connotations that could nuance a poetic composition.<sup>10</sup> In terms of material practices, translation and transference occurred primarily through manuscript and scribal culture, but also through paintings, recitations, conversations, and songs. This involved

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<sup>5</sup> C.f. multilingual pedagogical ideologies in early modern England, in which vernacular romances provided stylistic and moral paradigms. Boro, “Multilingualism”.

<sup>6</sup> On translation into Brajhasha, see Cort, “Making it Vernacular,”; Busch, *Poetry of Kings*.

<sup>7</sup> C.f. Jakobson’s definition of “intersemiotic translation or transmutation” as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.” Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” 233.

<sup>8</sup> C.f. Orsini and Schofield, *Tellings and Texts*.

<sup>9</sup> Reid, “The Enchantments of Circe”.

<sup>10</sup> Busch, *Poetry of Kings*; Pollock, *The Language of the Gods*; Phukan, “‘Through throats where many rivers meet’”.

paper, music, and paint, brought into interaction by circulating scribes, musicians, officials and their peripatetic courts, and pilgrims.

### **The Sanskrit *Sangitadarpana***

Vernacular writings on music proliferated in north India over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These texts drew upon a tradition of scholastic musicology known as *sangita-shastra* in Sanskrit, or *'ilm-i-musiqi* in Persian.<sup>11</sup> New treatises were in conversation with their predecessors: some were very traditional, and systematically recalled established theory, while others were more radical and cutting edge. Treatises explored different aspects of music, from the metaphysical relations between sound, the body, and the emotions, to more practical considerations, such as flaws and virtues in singing, or the composition of melodies. These works were composed and read for different reasons, and variations in language shed light on the different circles involved in their production. In very general terms, works in Sanskrit and Brajhasha usually positioned themselves in elite settings, appealing to a courtly appreciation for aesthetics, and the fashioning of the king as a connoisseur, and a critical enjoyer of music and beauty. Works in Indo-Persian indicate a similar discourse of connoisseurship, in conversation with Sufi understandings of experience, and the mores of the *mehfil*, a refined social setting for musical and poetic enjoyment.<sup>12</sup> While musical lore was indisputably an elite intellectual domain, it was not the exclusive preserve of royal courts or Mughal aristocratic houses. Merchants and businessmen also patronised and consumed these works, and there is also a lingering question over the extent to which practicing musicians and singers themselves read and used these texts.

From a technical, musicological perspective, the Sanskrit *Sangitadarpana* was a conservative and relatively unexciting work.<sup>13</sup> The author, Damodara, systematised earlier authorities and clarified three different systems (or “opinions”, *mata*) for the organization of *raga*. *Ragas* and *raginis* are the fundamental units of composition in north Indian classical music: they provide the “grammar” for structuring a melody, and each has its own name,

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<sup>11</sup> Nijenhuis, *Musicological Literature*; Nijenhuis and Delvoye, “Sanskrit and Indo-Persian Literature on Music”; Brown, “Hindustani music,” 27-43.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, “If music be the food of love”; Brown, “The Social Liminality of Musicians”.

<sup>13</sup> Musicologists have maintained that Damodara was derivative, compared to some of his more experimental peers, such as Pundarikavithala. Nijenhuis, *Musicological Literature*, 22-3.

literary and emotional connotations, appropriate timing, and other associations.<sup>14</sup>

Damodara's systematisation emphasised the Hanuman *mata* in particular, which became an especially influential model. Damodara proved popular primarily because of his poetic visualisations (*dhyanas*) of the *ragas*, which were becoming increasingly fashionable in the early sixteenth century.<sup>15</sup> The chapter on *raga* seems to have been the most copied and circulated portion of the treatise, and was especially influential in *ragamala* ("raga-garland") painting.<sup>16</sup> However, the work did not circulate in its original language alone: tracing the transmission and translation of Damodara's *raga* visualisations reveals how vernacular languages were crucial in making the *Sangitadarpana* so significant.

The Sanskrit original was most likely written in the first decades of the seventeenth century, though it is unclear precisely where or when. Damodara was the son of one Laksmidhara Bhatta, who may, possibly, have been the poet and grammarian of that name in the employ of the Aravidu dynast Tirumala Raya (1569-72) at Vijayanagar.<sup>17</sup> The tone of his work, however, suggests that he positioned himself in a northern intellectual arena: over the sixteenth century, southern musicologists were becoming increasingly invested in *mela* systems, and were less concerned with the consolidation of *raga matas*.<sup>18</sup> It has also been suggested that Damodara was attached to Jahangir's court (1605-1627), though it is unclear what evidence supports this claim.<sup>19</sup>

Damodara simplified one of the most influential Sanskrit treatises, the *Sangitaratnakara* (1200-1250), digesting its complexities with the help of a commentary (*Kalanidhi*, 1450 by Kallinatha,<sup>20</sup>) and other musicological texts, including the *Catvarimsacchataraganirupana* and the *Sangitadamodara*.<sup>21</sup> Without being able to date

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<sup>14</sup> Widdess, *The Rāgas of Early Indian Music*; Bor, *The Raga Guide*; Leante, "The Lotus and the King".

<sup>15</sup> Miner, "Raga in the Early Sixteenth Century".

<sup>16</sup> Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*; Gangoly, *Rāgas and Rāginīs*.

<sup>17</sup> Laksmidhara wrote the Prakrit grammar *Sadbhashacandrika*; he was sometimes thought of as the author of the *Sangitadarpana*, as in one nineteenth-century manuscript (Bodleian Library, MS Mill 47). He is said to have written a work called the *Svaramanjari*. Sriramamurti, *Contribution of Andhra*, 122-3; Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty*, 516-7; Krishnamachariar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature*, 866. The identity of Laksmidhara Bhatta is discussed in Katz, "The musicological portions," Vol. II, 66. Katz suggests the *Sangitadarpana* was written somewhat earlier than 1625, the approximate date given by Nijenhuis.

<sup>18</sup> Musicological texts proliferated in south India over the sixteenth century, see Nijenhuis, *Musicological Literature*; Diwakar, *Karnataka through the Ages*, 655-60; Aiyangar, *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, 190-3, 269.

<sup>19</sup> Krishnamachariar, *A History of Classical Sanskrit*, 866. Other Sanskrit musicologists are thought to have worked for the Mughal Emperors, including Pundarikavithala.

<sup>20</sup> Composed under the Yadava king Immadi Devarāya (r.1446-65). Nijenhuis, *Musicological Literature*, 16; Diwakar, *Karnataka*, 659.

<sup>21</sup> Bake, *Bydrage*, 2; Nijenhuis, *Musicological Literature*, 19-20, 28.

Damodara accurately, we have to be cautious about saying which materials influenced him and which followed his example. His text has affinities to the 1609 *Ragavibodha*,<sup>22</sup> and has elements in common with an anonymous Sanskrit *Sangitamala* (oldest manuscript 1778).<sup>23</sup> Some of the illustrative *raga* verses in the *Sangitadarpana* are found on a number of paintings from northern India before 1600, which would suggest an earlier *ragamala* treatise, which Damodara incorporated into his own.<sup>24</sup>

Damodara's Sanskrit text circulated across the subcontinent in a variety of scripts, from *devanagari* to *telugu*,<sup>25</sup> but flourished particularly in the north. Damodara was cited as an authority by later Sanskrit music scholars, as in the *Anupasangitankusa* (c.1674-1709) of Bhavabhatta (working in Bikaner), but his ideas travelled extensively through translation. He was incorporated into Persian musicology through inclusion in the *Rag Darpan* of Faqirullah (1666), the *Tohfat-al Hind* (c.1675), and the *Shams al-Aswat* (1698). The *Sangitadarpana* was also translated into the vernaculars through several Hindi works, which will be the primary focus of this article: the verse *Sangitadarpana* of Harivallabha (c.1653); a later prose paraphrase, based on Harivallabha; a quite separate Hindi translation by an unknown author, which circulated in Central India in the early eighteenth century (Johnson Album 39, below); and a verse translation of the *raga dhyanas* by the poet Paidā Beg in his *Sabhavinoda* (c.1628-1649). Besides Hindi, Damodara's *Sangitadarpana* acquired a detailed prose commentary in Marathi, which appears alongside the Sanskrit in a seventeenth-century manuscript.<sup>26</sup> Although it does not appear that Damodara was translated into Bengali, I will argue that he was known to a limited extent to an early-modern Bengali readership.<sup>27</sup> Nineteenth-century Urdu musicologists also worked with the text, though it is unclear in which language they read it.<sup>28</sup> While this article cannot claim to provide an exhaustive index of the iterations of the *Sangitadarpana* through every language,<sup>29</sup> and focusses primarily on

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<sup>22</sup> Sarmadee, *Tarjumah-i Mān katūhal*.

<sup>23</sup> The *Sangitamala* probably influenced Hindi Text I in Ebeling's system, see Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, 136-42. *Sangitamala* discussed in Gangoly, *Rāgas*, 115-7.

<sup>24</sup> Text C in Ebeling's system.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Palm Leaf MS, Oriental Research Institute Mysore, P 2847.

<sup>26</sup> Kulkarni, *Sangita-darpana*.

<sup>27</sup> The Sanskrit text was published in Calcutta by S.M. Tagore in 1881. On Tagore's musicology see Williams, "Hindustani Music," 216-232; Williams, "Music, Lyrics, and the Bengali Book," 474-485.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Imam, *Ma'dan al-Mūsīqī*.

<sup>29</sup> Nijenhuis, *Musicological Literature*, 27. Nijenhuis suggests the text travelled in eastern India through the Oriya *Kalankuranibandha* (32), but Katz notes that the text cited was the *Sangitadamodara*, see Katz, "The musicological portions," Vol. II, 66.

the Brajhasha transmissions, the point is to stress the relevance of translation in the reception and consumption of a text, and to explore how a multilingual society discussed and disseminated ideas pertaining to esoteric knowledge systems, and an elite culture of connoisseurship.

### *Harivallabha's translation*

The Brajhasha translation of the *Sangitadarpana* was completed sometime prior to 1653, the year of the oldest dated manuscript; this suggests that Harivallabha and Damodara were quite possibly contemporaries. We know very little about Harivallabha himself.<sup>30</sup> At present, there are at least twelve known manuscripts of his text: some are of the translation alone as a treatise in its own right, while others present Harivallabha as a translator-cum-commentator,<sup>31</sup> accompanying the Sanskrit source text.<sup>32</sup> Each copy of this Brajhasha transmission reflects different forms of consumption and reading practices: Peter Burke has described the manuscript as an “interactive” medium, and rather than reifying Harivallabha as the sole architect of his translation, it is necessary to consider each scribe and editor as a co-author in the received text.<sup>33</sup>

Harivallabha's translation does not always correspond directly to the *Sangitadarpana*, since he supplemented his version with insights from other texts, including older vernacular treatises such as the *Manakutuhala* (c.1500). Although musicologists have noted that the *Sangitadarpana* was popular particularly because of how Damodara visualized the *ragas*, Harivallabha amplified and transformed these verses,<sup>34</sup> and we might view his compositional interventions as a key factor in the text's pervasive influence. Harivallabha's creative agency as a translator was criticised by the twentieth-century ethnomusicologist and Sanskrit scholar, Arnold Bake: “The uncouth form of the Hindi text, - written in a hardly intelligible, highly ungrammatical old Hindi, translating rather haphazardly, leaving out *çlokas* at random

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<sup>30</sup> Simon thought Harivallabha might be identical with Damodara, a view which occasionally appears in Sanskrit literary histories. See Simon, “Quellen zur indischen Musik”.

<sup>31</sup> On commentarial translation, see Patel, “Source, Exegesis, and Translation”.

<sup>32</sup> These manuscripts are held in the University of Pennsylvania (Ms. Indic 8, dated 1787); British Library (three copies: Add. 26540, dated 1653; IO San 2399; IO San 2410); Allahabad Museum (Bag. 223, No. 151); Pothikhana, Jaipur (two copies: Acc. 1730 and 3516); Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh (M.1045); Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; Asiatic Society of Bengal; Sarasvati Bhavan, Banaras (dated 1691); and one in the collection of the Nahar family (dated 1798), Calcutta (seen by Gangoly).

<sup>33</sup> Burke, “Cultures of Translation,” 34.

<sup>34</sup> Gangoly, *Rāgas*, 121.

it appears, with bad verses, - stands out in strong contrast with the very well styled and clear Sanskrit, using, almost without exception, well handled *çlokas*.<sup>35</sup> For Bake, Harivallabha failed where Damodara succeeded: both authors took liberties with their source texts (in Damodara's case, the *Sangitaratnakara*), but where Damodara was concise and illuminating, Harivallabha was clumsy and unintelligent.

Bake's critique might ring true for readers biased towards Sanskrit, but judging by their circulation, Harivallabha's translations were well received by a vernacular-oriented audience. Although Damodara is celebrated for his iconographic treatment of *raga*, the Sanskrit verses are succinct, providing an inventory of features. For example, Bhairav *raga*:

*gangādharaḥ śaśikalātilakas trinetraḥ  
sarpair vibhūṣitatanur gajakṛtivāsaḥ  
bhāsvat triśūlakara eṣa nṛmuṇḍadhārī  
śubhrāmbaro jayati bhairava ādirāgaḥ  
dha ni sa ga ma dha iti bhairavaḥ*

Ganges-bearer, head marked by the moon, three-eyed,  
body adorned by snakes, clad in an elephant's hide,  
radiant trident in his hand, bearing a human skull,  
in a white garment: Bhairava, first of *ragas*, conquers.  
*dha ni sa ga ma dha*. That is Bhairava.<sup>36</sup>

Harivallabha translated this into the Brajhasha *kavitta* meter, which gave him a larger number of syllables than were available in the Sanskrit, allowing him to expand on the description:

*sīsa jaṭāni meṅ gaṅga taraṅga trilocana caṅḍa lilāṭahi ūpara  
lāla visāla phaṇī śīra kī mani jyoti lasai kachu kuṅḍala dūpara  
hara rūpa kiyen kara śrūla layen harivallabha rījheṅ ḍamarūpara  
bhūṣana nāgani ke tana meṅ dhari bhairava rāga virājata bhūpara*

A gush of the Ganges in the dreadlocks upon his head,  
three-eyed, the moon over his brow,  
a cobra's hood, huge and red, is like the jewel of a headband,  
light sparkles from a pair of earrings  
Assuming the form of Hara, taking a trident in his hand,  
Harivallabha, delighting over his drum,  
wearing ornaments of snakes over his body:

<sup>35</sup> Bake, *Bydrage*, 2. Bake provides an example of Harivallabha "misinterpreting" his source text (4).

<sup>36</sup> Text and translation (adapted) from Bake, *Bydrage*, 44-45.

Bhairav *raga* is radiant upon the earth.<sup>37</sup>

Although Bhairav still bears a likeness to the god Shiva (Hara), Harivallabha has departed from his source text: the elephant hide and the human skull have both been erased from the description, and other elements have been glossed to suggest a bejewelled, radiant beauty. Damodara had also played with the suggestion of snakes as ornaments, but Harivallabha has focussed on the embossed, jewel-like surface of the cobra's hood (*phaṇī*) to suggest red precious stones crowning Bhairav, accessorised by earrings. The trident remains in place, but Harivallabha has added the *damaru* drum. Again, this underlines the artistry of Bhairav-Shiva, rather than focussing on the macabre skull necklace. The phrasing itself might even be an intertextual reference to a Hindi classic, the *Ramacaritmanasa* of Tulsidas (c.1574), which describes Shiva in similar terms:

...*kara śrūla* layeṅ harivallabha rījheṅ *ḍamarūpara* (Harivallabha)

*kara trīśūla aru ḍamaru virāja*  
*cale basahaṅ caḍhi bājahiṅ bājā* (Ramcaritmanas 1.92.3)<sup>38</sup>

the trident and the *damaru* are shining in his hands  
the instruments sound as he rides his bull

Therefore, instances where Bake thought Harivallabha's translations were "haphazard" might reflect the Hindi poet's creative license, injecting Brajbhasha sensibilities and literary references to his treatment of the Sanskrit text. From the outset, Harivallabha's decision to translate into a vernacular verse form meant that his composition would be judged by the priorities of the Brajbhasha genre. This impacted on the formal and sonic qualities of the translation: in addition to the final rhyme, Harivallabha used internal rhyme and assonance especially (*jaṭāni, lilāṭahi; gaṅga taraṅga, caṅda; trilocana caṅda*) to add texture to the description.

The sonic texture of the translation may have influenced how the translation was circulated and consumed. For example, one manuscript of Harivallabha's *Sangitadarpana* (preserved in Allahabad<sup>39</sup>) seems to have been copied with a view to oral performance. In the

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<sup>37</sup> Quotation from the manuscript held in the Allahabad Museum (henceforth Allahabad MS), microfilm consulted at the IGNCA, New Delhi: S.No. 758, Bag.No.223, MSS No.151. Here, f.21v.

<sup>38</sup> Classical Hindi text from Poddar, *Sriramacaritamansa*, 90.

<sup>39</sup> See Allahabad MS, above.

Bhairav example (and throughout the *ragamala* sequence), the final phrase and rhyme—*bhairava rāga virājata*—was added to the beginning of the verse, so that the complete description begins and ends with the same phrase. This duplication of the final clause echoes the arrangement of lyrical verses (*pad*) in song anthologies, where a short phrase acts as a sung refrain between lines in performance. In other words, the scribe’s copying and pasting this verse may suggest that his manuscript capitalised on the lyrical quality of the translation, formatting the music treatise for sung performance.

The manuscripts of Harivallabha’s translation are mostly undated, and it is difficult to determine where they were produced. What is clear, is that there were multiple modes of reading and using the text, and that in the second half of the eighteenth century the text received renewed interest outside of the Hindi heartlands, in Bengal.

A number of manuscripts of Harivallabha’s translation entered Bengali collections, including an illustrated copy from 1798, written for Babu Meghraj of Azimganj (d.1822), a businessman and notoriously extravagant patron of music.<sup>40</sup> A further three copies of passed through Bengal in the 1770s-80s, entered the collection of the East India Company officer Richard Johnson (1753-1807), and were later incorporated into the holdings of the British Library.<sup>41</sup> Each copy is a unique treatment.

One incomplete manuscript (IO San 2410, undated) presents the text of the early chapters of the *Sangitadarpana* in three registers: the Sanskrit of Damodara, the Brajhasha of Harivallabha, and a Hindi prose paraphrase of Harivallabha’s translation. Admittedly, the versified Brajhasha can be a little opaque in places, but the extent to which the translation was translated is surprising. For example:

*preṅampaśirasādevaupitāmahamaheśvarau saṅgītaśāstravittēyaḥ*  
*sāratoyammayocyāte*  
*dohā*  
*prathama karata kara jori kai namasakāra subhatrūya*  
*brahmā saṅkara varaju hai vara dātā budhitrūya*  
*dohā*  
*siṅdhu saṅgīta apāra hai sūjhau vāra na pāra*  
*tākauṅ hauṅ aba kahata hauṅ sāra ṣeṅci nirdhāra*  
*doū dohāṅna kau artha*

<sup>40</sup> Walsh, *A History of Murshidabad District*, 237. Gangoly saw the MS while it was in the possession of the Nahar family.

<sup>41</sup> Eaton, “Between Mimesis and Alterity”.

*vaha ju hai koṁ pothīna ko karaṇa vārau so namaskāra kahata hai brahmā aru  
mahādiva kauṁ kāraṇa vaṛau ju hai saṅgītaśāstra takau tattva ṣeṅci kai thoro karikai  
huṁ ab kahata hauṁ*<sup>42</sup>

[Sanskrit:]

Having bowed my head before Pitamaha and Maheshvara, I relate this brief treatise – the theory of *sangita*, in its different parts.<sup>43</sup>

[Harivallabha:]

First, I join my hands in salutation and auspiciousness to  
Brahma and Shankara, who are great, finest benefactors of erudition.  
The ocean of *sangita* cannot be crossed, comprehending it has no limit.  
Now I am speaking on that, drawing its essence into resolution.

[Prose paraphrase:]

Meaning of the two couplets:

What this is, is that whenever someone offers up a book they say a salutation to  
Brahma and Mahadev, for they are great, and (they say) now I am about to tell you  
the essence of the theory of *sangita*, which I've drawn out a little.

The prose Hindi is stripped down and unpoetic, the syntax reflecting conversational speech (*vah ju hai...*). Although the fundamental vocabulary has been retained there are also a number of transformations over the three registers: Shiva, for example, has a different name in each rendition (Maheshvara, Shankara, Mahadev). Damodara and Harivallabha both used the word *sāra* for “essence”, and Harivallabha went one step further, adding new words to the verse that provided internal rhymes with *sāra* (*apāra, vāra, pāra, nirdhāra*). The prose paraphrase, however, has discarded *sāra* for a synonym, *tattva*. The informality of the paraphrase is very different from the considered poetic of Harivallabha, and suggests a reader who required an extremely straightforward rendering of the music treatise. The explanation that books are started by saluting the deities in particular suggests that this added register was intended for a non-Indian reader.

This form of transmission presented the *Sangitadarpana* in three simultaneous renderings. The elaboration of the text was taken one step further in a very similar manuscript (IO San 2399, undated) of the *Sangitadarpana*'s chapters on *raga* and *tala*, again presented in three registers in the same format. The choice to preserve only these chapters in this particular manuscript is telling, indicating that some readers valued the text for its treatment of visualisations and rhythm, but were happy to discard the first, conservative

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<sup>42</sup> British Library, IO San 2410, f.1v.

<sup>43</sup> Translation adapted from Bake, *Bydrage*, 17.

chapter on *svara*. This manuscript is slightly more complete, and allows us to see how the paraphraser treated the *raga* visualisations. Again, Bhairav is presented in Sanskrit, in Harivallabha's Brajbhasha, and then in an extremely cursory paraphrase:<sup>44</sup>

*jaṭānimeṅ | gaṅga | tīni āṅṣi | lalāṭa caṅdramā | lālamani | bhujāṅgani kī kāṅni ke kuṅḍala meṅ sohati hai | mahādeva kau sau rūpa kiyai hai...*

in the dreadlocks. Ganges. three eyes. forehead moon. red gem. snakes glistening in the earrings. takes the form of Mahadev...

While Harivallabha's verses have been preserved in this copy, his name and identity were erased. Removing the *chap* signature created a metrical lacuna in the verse, which the scribe filled in with redundant words:

[Allahabad MS:]

*hara rūpa kiyen kara śrūla layen harivallabha rījheṅ ḍamarūpara*  
Assuming the form of Hara, taking a trident in his hand,  
Harivallabha, delighting over his drum,

[IO San 2399:]

*hara rūpa liyen kara sūla liyaiṅ ati rījhi rahe suvaṛe ḍavarūpara*  
Taking on the form of Hara, taking a trident in his hand,  
remaining so very greatly delighted over his drum,

This manuscript then takes the editing process one step further, transmuting Bhairav from poetic description into musical notation. After outlining the order of notes for Bhairav (*ma-pa-ni-sa-ga, ga-sa-ni-pa-ma*) the compiler adds:

*Jīvana Śāna kṛta mūrchanā oḍava hotu hai ga-ni varjita.*

Pentatonic *murchana* by Jivan Khan, *ga* and *ni* excluded:

1 2 1 1 2 2 2 1 1  
*sasa • ri • pamari • pamari...* [etc.]

It is possible that the Jivan Khan referred to here was one famous singer of that name, the son of Taj Khan Qawwal Dehlavi, brother to Jani and Ghulam Rasul, and uncle of Miyan Shori. Jivan is known for bringing the *khayal* genre from Delhi to Awadh with his brothers in the

<sup>44</sup> This cursory approach, itemizing the iconographic elements, is similar to the Marathi prose commentary, c.f. Kulkarni, *Sangita-darpana*. Itemized iconographies became relatively common in nineteenth-century handbooks and painted *ragamala* series.

second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>45</sup> If this was the same Jivan, then it can be said that this particular edition of the Sanskrit *Sangitadarpana* combined the text with one literary and one prosaic translation into Brajhasha, and an applied, performative commentary, provided by a living high class musician.

The addition of Jivan Khan's prescriptions for scales (*murchana*) was an innovative intervention in the text, but not one that appealed to every scribe. The Allahabad MS (above) appears to have been based on a version that also contained these *murchanas*: in this case, the scribe copied out "*Jīvana Ṣāna kṛta mūrchanā*" in the first instance,<sup>46</sup> but then the line stops abruptly, without even a *danda* stroke to punctuate the end of the phrase. The scribe then left the next one and a half lines of the page clear, then continued with the verses, omitting the notations altogether. This was Jivan Khan's only appearance in the Allahabad MS but there are similar, empty spaces throughout the *raga* chapter. It seems that the scribe hesitated about how to represent the notes and their superscript marks, so left the gaps to copy them out some other time; but then, ultimately, he never returned to fill them in with the missing prescriptions. Given that this was the same text which arranged the verses for *pad*-style recitation or singing, it appears that the scribe was deliberating over several different performative dimensions in the preparation of this manuscript.

It is unclear which parties commissioned or edited IO San 2399. It is part of a larger collection of musical treatises and song collections, compiled by Richard Johnson, who evidently took a serious interest in music, and is known to have commissioned certain Indian works himself.<sup>47</sup> Was the prosaic translation intended as a commentary for a non-Indian reader? If Johnson did not commission the text himself, it seems likely that these manuscripts were prepared for someone from his circle of acquaintance, be they European or Indian.

Johnson also collected *ragamala* paintings inscribed with Harivallabha's verses, in two sets: Johnson Album 36 (Murshidabad, c.1765) and Album 35 (1770-5).<sup>48</sup> Album 36 departed from the conventional layout of a *raga* painting, where the descriptive verse would sit above the image, and instead depicted a painted image of the scene on the verso, and then represented Harivallabha's verse line by line, in the bodies of eight birds perching on a tree

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<sup>45</sup> Schofield, "Words without Songs"; Khan *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 91-2; Imam "Melody through the Centuries," 17.

<sup>46</sup> Allahabad MS, f.21r.

<sup>47</sup> Schofield, "Words without Songs," 179-82.

<sup>48</sup> Album 36 is no. 85 in Ebeling's system; Album 35 is no.86. On Album 35 see Nijenhuis, "The Sanskrit 'dhyānas' of Johnson Album 35," 52-8.

on the recto. This experimental approach to the *Sangitadarpana* in 1760s Murshidabad crafted the *ragamala* as an object of visual and literary pleasure: the inscriptions over the tree and the birds' bodies, elegantly inscribed in both *nastaliq* and *devanagari*, gesture self-consciously to a cosmopolitan musical culture, that was shared across scripts and languages.

Harivallabha's Brajbhasha text circulated into other regions besides Bengal, including the Punjab. One manuscript was prepared in *gurumukhi* script in 1855, indicating the continuing relevance of the text to music connoisseurs in the nineteenth century, and Punjabi readers' ongoing interest in Brajbhasha compositions.<sup>49</sup> However, as yet it is unclear under what circumstances this manuscript was commissioned or read. It is also noteworthy that Harivallabha's treatise does not appear to have ever been published: Damodara's Sanskrit original was published several times from the late nineteenth century, as part of a revival of interest in Sanskrit musicological authorities, by which time interest in Brajbhasha scholastic literature was firmly in decline.<sup>50</sup>

By tracing the reception history of Harivallabha's translation we can make a few observations. Translating the Sanskrit verses into Brajbhasha allowed him to assimilate the musicological verses into the poetic imaginary of the vernacular world, which prioritised lyrical quality, sonic textures (assonance and internal rhyme etc.), and a fascination with ornamental beauty. When the Brajbhasha translation was circulated by itself, it could be arranged on the page in a way that lent itself to recitation or singing. However, in its different iterations, the translation also travelled co-dependently with the Sanskrit original, a prosaic paraphrase, musical notations, and miniature paintings. The number of applications of the text in Bengal (but also elsewhere, as in Punjab), suggests the reach of Brajbhasha, beyond a local dialect to an interregional language of sophistication. The editing and re-deployment of the text with mixed media, supplementing it with new data or deleting the original translator's signature, also suggests that translations were not sacrosanct texts, but malleable and open to adaptation. In practice, Harivallabha was a co-author, alongside editors and scribes—who changed the formatting for different modes of consumption, or the

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<sup>49</sup> The manuscript is currently held in the Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh. I am grateful to Radha Kapuria for bringing this text to my attention, and to Julie Vig for her help with transliteration. Another example of a Brajbhasha text on music circulating in the Punjab is Lachchiram's unpublished *Buddhiprakasadarpana* (Lahore, 1823), a *gurumukhi* manuscript in the British Library.

<sup>50</sup> The earliest printed edition of the Sanskrit *Sangitadarpana* was edited by S.M. Tagore and published in Calcutta in 1881.

script for different audiences, and added commentaries and glosses—as well as musicians and painters, whose notations and visual depictions “tradapted” the *Sangitadarpana* further.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Other Brajhasha “translators”***

Besides Harivallabha, there were several other Brajhasha poets whose translations of the *Sangitadarpana* appear on *ragamala* paintings. One of these poets also features in the collections of Richard Johnson, in Album 39,<sup>52</sup> which was also produced in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, probably in central India. The anonymous poet provided both the Sanskrit verse and a metrical translation, which was closer to Damodara than Harivallabha’s rendition (though in this case still discarded the elephant skin):

[Bhairav:]  
*śūla hātha gaṅgādhare trinayana ahi gaṅjavāla*  
*muṅḍa mālā mālā sita paṭa lasaiṅ jai bhairava śāśi bhāla*

Trident in his hand, Ganges bearer, three eyed, subduer of snakes  
Garland upon garland of skulls, his white clothing brilliant,  
hail, moon-browed Bhairav.

This translation was less appealing from a literary perspective than Harivallabha’s version and perhaps was understood as an explanation of the Sanskrit verse, which was copied alongside it over the painting.

Another translator was the poet Paidā Beg, whose *raga* verses appear on four known series of *ragamala* paintings.<sup>53</sup> These date from c.1640 to the early eighteenth century, and all seem to originate from Amber: at least one series was dedicated to Maharaja Jai Singh II (1699-1743), and Klaus Ebeling described Paidā’s text as definitively pertaining to Amber ateliers.<sup>54</sup> However, Ebeling was not aware that Paidā’s verses on the paintings had been extracted from a longer treatise, the *Sabhavinoda* (“Delight of the Court”), which was

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<sup>51</sup> C.f. Orsini, “How to do multilingual,” 234. I adapt Michel Garneau’s term, “tradaptions”, which indicates the close relationship between translation and adaptation. Burke, “Cultures of Translation”, 34. See also Bastin, “Adaptation,” 3-6. On scribal transmission in Brajhasha see Bangha, “Writing Devotion”.

<sup>52</sup> Text R in Ebeling’s system.

<sup>53</sup> Series 45-48 in Ebeling’s system. In addition to the paintings Ebeling catalogued, we can add a Malkauns (Brooklyn Museum, Ac. 84.263) and an Asavari (Ashomlean Museum, Ac. EA2013.104), both of which may provisionally be assigned to Series 48.

<sup>54</sup> Ebeling also asked whether these verses were actually translations of the Sanskrit *Sangitamala*, assuming the latter long predates its one extant manuscript (1778).

dedicated to Shah Jahan (r.1628-58).<sup>55</sup> In the genealogical portion of the treatise, Paidā informs us that his father and grandfather, Kosambhi Beg and Sher Beg, had been in Akbar's service, and claimed descent from Ahmad Khel of the Khwajakhizrin tribe (*jati*).<sup>56</sup> Manuscripts of the *Sabhavinoda* survive in royal Rajput collections, which were probably the source material for the Amber painters.

Paidā explicitly combined Hindavi with Persian texts (*milāya hindavī pārasī*) relating to music:<sup>57</sup>

*rāga dhyāya maiṅ kahata hauṅ sahaṅsakṛta taiṅ līna  
kīnī bhāṣā jorikaiṅ samujhai nara paravīna  
sura vidyā bahu kaṭhina hai tāmaiṅ bheda anega  
hanumana mata saṅgīta mathi kahatu pāyaṅdāvega  
rāga hindavī pārasī paida ikaṭhe kīna  
jo jo tāmaiṅ milata hai te sava kāḍe vīna  
kahaṅ milāyī putra je kīnyau manahiṅ vicāra  
nāda rūpa savataiṅ kaṭhani atihī agama apāra*

I speak of the visualisation of *raga*, taking from a thousand works,  
combining them in the vernacular, so the learned man might understand.  
The knowledge of sound is extremely complicated, so many mysteries therein;  
Paidā Beg discusses music, reflecting on it through the Hanuman system,  
I collected together *ragas*, those born in Hindavi and Persian,  
the *vīna* draws out all those that are combined therein.  
In my mind, I have thought of it like combining in a son,  
all the complex forms of sound, so unfathomable and impenetrable.

Paidā described his accomplishment through the striking metaphor of a son, the child of mixed parentage, that is Hindavi and Persian concepts of the *raga*: it is possible that Hindavi here implicitly refers to the Brajhasha translation by Harivallabha. The Persian sources referred to here were the musical works of Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), whom Paidā names several times in his text, though it is unclear precisely which titles he had in mind.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> There are manuscripts of the *Sabhavinoda* in the Pothikhana, Jaipur (Acc. 3444, copied in 1689) and in the Jodhpur branch of the Rajasthan Pracyavidya Pratisthan (Kr. 2936, Gr. 10119). Another nineteenth-century MS has been uploaded to Madan Mohan Gupta's online repository, indianmanuscripts.com/shabha-vinod [Accessed February 2017].

<sup>56</sup> Bahura, *Literary Heritage*, 492.

<sup>57</sup> Jinavijaya, *Rajasthanī hastalikhitagrantha-suci*, Vol. III, 207-8

<sup>58</sup> On Khusrau's musical writings, see Sarmadee et al., *Nūr-ratnākar*; and Sarmadee, *Amīr Khusrau's Prose Writings on Music*.

The *ragamala* sequence sits at the core of the *Sabhavinoda*, followed by a treatment of *tala* (rhythm). For comparison, Paida described Bhairav as:<sup>59</sup>

*Bhairūn śiva muṣa taiṅ bhayau | dha-nī-sa-ga sura soi |  
sarada prāta hī gāīyai | jāti ju auṅḍau hoi |*

*atha modaka chaṅda | |  
dhaivata sura graha takauṅ jāṅnauṅ |  
siva mūrati saṅgīta baṣāṅnauṅ |  
kaṅkana uraga aura sasi bhāla |  
surasari jaṭā garai ruṅḍa māla |  
seta basana naiṅa nipuni tīna |  
sidhi sarūpa mahāparabīna |*

Bhairav assumed the visage of Shiva, through the notes *dha, ni, sa, ga*.<sup>60</sup>  
Sung on autumn mornings, it is of the pentatonic variety.

Modak metre:

Know that *dhaivata* is the note in initial position (*graha*),

I shall describe this music in the form of Shiva:

Snake bracelets and moon-browed,

River of gods in his dreadlocks, garland of heads around his neck

White garment, three intelligent eyes

Epitome of perfections, the highly clever one.

Paida’s translation re-works the original visualisation, and key markers like the trident and drum are absent; he focussed on the idea of Shiva as intelligent and powerful (*sidhi sarūpa* – literally, the essential form of *sidhis*, powers acquired through ascetic discipline), which was new to the *ragadhyana*. Notably, there are shared elements between Paida’s translation and the earlier, anonymous text—including the *sasi bhāla* in a rhyming position with *m/ruṅḍa māla*—which might suggest influence in one or direction or another. He wrote in a metre he called *modak*, but his verses do not comply with the canonical prescription for *modak*, and it is possible that he was thinking of a musical metre by that name.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Text transcribed from the inscription on the Brooklyn Museum painting of Bhairav, Ac. 86.227.53. I compared this verse to the manuscript of the *Sabhavinoda* (f. 1v) in Madan Mohan Gupta’s online manuscript collection, dated VS1888 (1831CE). There were minor and less satisfactory variants, including “*seta badana*”, that is a “white body” rather than “white garment”: the scribe presumably assumed the *badana* would be more appropriate, since the god Śiva conventionally has a white body, but the *Sangitadarpana* visualization demands a white garment.

<sup>60</sup> In the Sanskrit, we have *dha-ni-sa-ga-ma-dha*. It appears the scribe omitted *ma* in error. See Bake, *Bydrage*, 44.

<sup>61</sup> Hiroko Nagasaki, personal communication, June 2016.

Other authors took inspiration from Harivallabha’s treatment, including Kavi Krishna, who wrote the *Ragakutuhala* (1796) for Bhim Simha (r.1793-?), ruler of Uniara.<sup>62</sup> Kavi Krishna described himself in this treatise as a Gaur Brahmin from Jainagar.<sup>63</sup> This poet was potentially also the author of the *Madhurya Lahari* (also 1796), although this has not been verified; the poet associated with that work is said to have been from Girjapur (now Chattisgarh).<sup>64</sup> Certain verses were directly influenced by Harivallabha, as seen when we compare the poets’ descriptions of Bhairav:

*pīta jaṭā sira gaṅga umaṅga tamāla viśāla mayaṅka virājai  
locana tīna lasai dukha mocana ānana kānana kuṅḍala rājai  
aṅga bhabhūta dharai ahi bhūṣaṅga sūla liye kara ḍavara bājai  
rūpa anūpa sadāśiva sūrati bhairava rāga mahāchabi chājai*<sup>65</sup>

the yellow dreadlocks on his head, the elation of the Ganges,  
a huge *tamala* tree, the moon is radiant,  
three eyes sparkle in his face, relief from suffering,  
an earring shimmers in his ears,  
he wears snakes like ornaments over his ashen body,  
takes the trident in his hand, the drum resounds,  
in the likeness of the incomparable form of Sadashiva,  
Bhairav *raga* is a brilliant beauty.

Traces of Harivallabha—words, phrases, and sonic textures—are indicated in the transliteration in bold. Kavi Krishna has digested and deconstructed Harivallabha’s translation, and crafted a new version of the verse from its fragments. The first line shares much in common with Harivallabha, in particular echoing his internal rhymes, but also paints a distinct picture of its own: the dreadlocks are now yellow, in contrast to a giant (*viśāla*, which Harivallabha introduced to describe the snake’s hood) dark-barked *tamala* tree, and offset by the radiant moon. The interplay of colours and lights becomes the defining feature of the verse, as Kavi Krishna imagines sparkling eyes, shimmering earrings, the embossed skins of snakes against the glowing ash over Bhairav’s body, which is called “*mahāchabi*,” suggesting beauty as brilliance or lustre.

<sup>62</sup> A manuscript of the *Ragakutuhala* is preserved in the Pothikhana, Jaipur (Acc. 3825(1), dated 1766). A lithograph copy was published in Sahai, *Ragaratnakara*. Portions were collated by Jagannath Prasad ‘Bhanu’ in his *Kavya Prabhakar* (1905).

<sup>63</sup> Jainagar refers, perhaps, to a settlement in Hazaribagh (now Jharkhand), or perhaps Jainagar in the Darbhanga-Madhubani district of Bihar.) Hazaribagh was suggested Singh, “*Rāgakutūhala*,” 425-6; c.f. Gangoly, *Rāgas*, 132.

<sup>64</sup> Suggested by Kunwar Brajendra Singh, drawing upon Misra et al., *Mishrabandhuvinoda*, 874-5.

<sup>65</sup> *Ragakutuhala* as cited in Sahai, *Ragaratnakara*, 9.

Should this verse be considered a translation, and if so, what would be the source text: Harivallabha's *Sangitadarpana*, or Damodara's, or an imagined "ur-poem" behind these different versions of Bhairav?<sup>66</sup> Reynolds suggests that a translation might be distinguished from other kinds of re-writing (including paraphrase and interpretation), when "you feel you are 'quoting' someone even though your words are different from what was actually said."<sup>67</sup> To someone who knew Harivallabha's work, Kavi Krishna was indeed quoting, but he was also rearticulating and innovatively reimagining the vignette. The ur-poem is perhaps a useful concept here, since Kavi Krishna did not explicitly claim to be translating either of these authors, but is redeploing the visualization they had described.

### Beauty in the Vernacular

These different Brajbhasha poets shared a fascination with beauty. As I have already indicated, the *ragadhyana* verses were amplified in translation through descriptions of lustre, radiance, brilliance, and jewellery. The activity of translation from Sanskrit or other Brajbhasha sources provided a laboratory for poets to elaborate ways to describe beauty and desire.<sup>68</sup> So far, these examples of Bhairav draw on the *Sangitadarpana*'s depiction of the Hanuman *mata* image, but another visualization from a different *mata* also circulated extensively on paintings produced in eighteenth-century Rajasthan, especially in courts connected to Amber. The source text which these paintings cited is unknown, though Ebeling suggests Malwa or Central India as a likely provenance.<sup>69</sup> According to this different system, Bhairav did not take the form of the ascetic Shiva, but an amorous prince, who is himself the likeness of Kamadeva, the god of lust. To take one example, a *caupai* verse on Bhairav in Johnson Album 33 (c.1760-70):<sup>70</sup>

*nirapa bhairu bhūṣana aṅga chājai*  
*kāmaruṣa kāmanī saṅga rājai*  
*karata kilola kāma rasa bhinai*  
*bhulā pasāri aṅgī gana dīnau*  
*vāḍau neha naina ṭaga lāgi*  
*ritī taraṅga aṅgana anurāgī*  
*cerī catara caura kara liyai*

<sup>66</sup> On the ur-poem in translation, see Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation*, 30-31.

<sup>67</sup> Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation*, 17.

<sup>68</sup> See Joshua Reid's comments on Cummings in Reid, "The Enchantments of Circe".

<sup>69</sup> Text J in Ebeling's system, *Ragamala Painting*, 94-6.

<sup>70</sup> See Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures*, 267ff., no. 517; Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, 190, no. 59. Album 33 is a composite set, containing 26 paintings from 1760s Jaipur (?), and 8 from Farrukhabad, c.1780.

*ati vicitra citavata cita diyē  
mahala suraṅga seja suṣa kāri  
aite ruci suṣa pāvata piya pyāri*

King Bhairav, ornaments beautiful upon his body,  
is radiant like Kamadeva with his loving ladies.  
Frolicking, steeped in the juice of desire,  
he could make a swarm of bees disperse in a daze.  
Affection surges in their eyes as they stare,  
passion comes in waves through their longing limbs.  
Maids bear parasols and flywhisks,  
So wonderful, gazing, fixated.  
In the bright palace, a bed. Taking delight.  
He obtains that taste of delight, sweet beloved.

Here Bhairav is the embodiment of masculine attractiveness: his desirability is refined and ornamental, marked by his jewellery (rather than his undecorated flesh) and his saturation in *rasa*, a word that gestures to both material unguents smeared over his skin and the affective principle in *rasa* poetics. His cultivated sex appeal is overwhelming: it blows the bees off course in their pursuit of nectar, and since “*alī*” means both bees and female companions, the suggestion is that the women are swarming around him, bewildered by lust. The painting in Album 33 depicts the royal Bhairav in the style of Krishna, sitting on a couch with one of the adoring women, who feeds him a delicacy while he gropes her breast.<sup>71</sup> The prepared bed is positioned suggestively above them, in an upper storey of the palace.

This brief example underlines two dimensions of how the *ragamala* genre circulated. Firstly, the verse above the painting has been very poorly transcribed; apart from some unusual spellings, only the first and last lines actually rhyme correctly: in the second couplet, “*bhinai*” should have been “*bhīnau*” to rhyme with “*dīnau*” (assuming that “*dīnau*” was correct). Reading them on the page, this series of failed rhymes looks unsatisfactory; however, reading the verse aloud, it would be easy to understand and correct the variant spellings. This gestures to the importance of orality: vocalizing the vernacular entailed an extempore redaction of the text, so much so that it was not considered problematic to write flawed verses on refined paintings trimmed with gold. “Proofreading” was not a priority.

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<sup>71</sup> This perhaps qualifies as “stabbing”, one of the four embraces prescribed for foreplay in the early stages of courtship: this embrace is initiated by the woman, who strategically “stabs” the man with her breast (*Kamasutra* 2.2.6-13). This would be appropriate in the context of the verse, since it focusses on women and bees losing their self-control around Bhairav. Doniger and Kakar, *Kamasutra*, 40.

Secondly, the verse exemplifies how the *ragamala* genre proliferated partly because of its ability to articulate and connect valued knowledge systems relating to gendered aesthetics and sexual practices: *raga* poetry digested theories of music, poetics, comportment, and erotics. The texts were objects of pleasure and enjoyment, but were also instructive: they provided their audiences with models of masculinity, and expressed the ideals of seduction and love in a musical-literary-visual format.<sup>72</sup>

### **Bengali reflections on the Mirror of Music**

The Sanskrit *Sangitadarpana* was also known in Bengali to a limited extent. One digraphic manuscript of the Sanskrit text was written simultaneously in the *devanagari* and *bangla* scripts.<sup>73</sup> Repeating the text in two scripts possibly suggests that the scribe envisaged a reader who was familiar with Sanskrit but not with its predominant script, but nonetheless wanted to have the option to see the *bangla*-mediated text in the *devanagari* form. Alternatively, and perhaps more plausibly, this text was intended to circulate among different varieties of readers: northern Indians familiar with *devanagari* as well as Bengalis (or eastern Indians) familiar with *bangla*. The transliteration approach to circulating texts continued through to the nineteenth century, even into the age of print. The pioneering Bengali music treatise the *Sangitataranga*, composed by Radhamohan Sen Das in Calcutta and printed in *bangla* in 1818, was later copied out as a *devanagari* manuscript.<sup>74</sup>

There is also evidence that the Sanskrit text was discussed by people who did not have access to a written copy. Narahari Cakravarti was an early eighteenth-century Bengali theologian and scholar who wrote in Sanskrit and Bengali, particularly hagiographical works relating to the founding saints of his sect, the Gaudiya Sampraday. Narahari spent most of his life outside of Bengal, working in the pilgrimage town of Vrindavan, the Braj heartland. He was extremely well-read: his compositions cite over a dozen Sanskrit musicological sources.<sup>75</sup> He generally quoted significant portions of his predecessors in the original Sanskrit, and then provided his own thoughts in Bengali. Narahari recalled only one short phrase from the

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<sup>72</sup> C.f. the proliferation of polyglot sentimental romances in Tudor England, see Boro, "Multilingualism".

<sup>73</sup> Sarasvati Bhavan (Varanasi) No. 45518, incomplete and undated. See entry in Jha and Upadhyaya, *Sampurnanandasanskritavishvavidyalayastha-Sarasvatibhavanapustakalaye*, Vol. XII, 154.

<sup>74</sup> Scindia Oriental Institute, Ujjain, Acc. 346 and 347. On the *Sangitataranga*, see Williams, "Music, Lyrics, and the Bengali Book", 468-471.

<sup>75</sup> See Prajñanananda, *Sangitasara-Samgraha*, 22-3.

*Sangitadarpana* in two of his works (c.1700?). The phrase (*ānaddhe mardalaṃ śreṣṭha iti*, “the *mardala* drum is made thus”) appears in the *Bhaktiratnakara*, and in the *Gitacandrodaya* is cited in Sanskrit and then explained in Bengali:<sup>76</sup>

*Saṅgītadarpaṇe*  
*ānaddhe mardalaṃ śreṣṭha iti.*

*mardale mṛdaṅga kahi bheda kichu nay*  
*kāṣṭha āṛ mṛtikāte nirmāṇ e hay*  
*nirmāṇer kriyā bahuśāstre subidita*  
*sarvavādyā śobhā pāy mardala-sahita*

They say *mardala* and *mridanga* – but there is no difference  
It is made from wood and clay  
The process of making it is well-known from many treatises  
All instruments are beautiful when accompanied by the *mardala*

This was a non-technical statement and did not contribute much to his work; its inclusion alongside fuller citations from other treatises lent a sense of rounded scholarship, and harmony between the different Sanskrit authorities. Since this was the only phrase from the *Sangitadarpana*, it seems likely that Narahari had either seen the phrase cited in another source text, or had heard it—perhaps in conversation with another musicologist—but did not have access to a copy from which to quote a more substantial passage. Even his commentary on the verse is an independent departure, discussing the manufacture of the drum, which is not mentioned in the citation itself. This suggests that the text was known but not available to the Bengali musicologist in Vrindavan.

Narahari considered the question of language directly in the *Gitacandrodaya*:

*tāhe kavi prabhura caritra manohara*  
*śāstramate gadāyapadāye varṇe nirantara*  
*vividha prakāra gīta karaha varṇana*  
*saṅskṛta nānādeśabhāṣā-vilakṣaṇa*  
*jaiche chandaśāstre chandanāma bahu hañya*  
*taiche gīta nāma se saṅgītaśāstre kañya*

In this work the poet ceaselessly describes the delightful disposition of the Lord in prose and verse and in the categories of *shastra*. There are various ways to describe song, in Sanskrit, and the many different languages of the land. Just as in the study of the moon, the moon has many names,

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<sup>76</sup> *Gitacandrodaya* vv.197-8 in Cakravarti et al., *Vaisnava-sangitashastra*, 97.

So are there several names for song, in the study of music.

And again, towards his conclusion:

*je deśe je bhāṣā sei deśe se sundara  
se se bhāṣāte kāvya race kavīśvara*

The language in one country is beautiful in that country  
He who composes poetry in that language is the poet-god!<sup>77</sup>

These self-conscious meditations on language are insightfully relativist: the poet-god of one nation might be unknown in the next *desh*. In *shastra*, different views (of the moon or a song) exist, whatever the language. Narahari seemed to place Sanskrit and vernacular literature on an even footing, and acknowledged all their deficiencies as evidence of the ineffable quality of the object of study. While he cited works in their original Sanskrit, often his most personal insights and enlightening commentaries were in Bengali. That said, his approach was more conservative in another work, the *Sangitasarasangraha*: here, he compiled quotations from authoritative Sanskrit works into a new compendium of musical scholarship,<sup>78</sup> and underlined the purity and propriety of Sanskrit as opposed to regional or Prakrit languages (*deshi-bhasha, apabhramsa-bhasha*).<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusions

How far did this early-modern conversation on the intermediate aesthetics of music, text, and image, continue into the nineteenth century and the colonial period? Some Brajbhasha music treatises were eventually printed, such as the *Ragakutuhala* (1796, lithographed in 1867) and the *Sangitasara* (1799, published in 1910). However, despite its influence in the eighteenth century, it appears that Harivallabha's *Sangitadarpana* was never published, although Damodara's original Sanskrit compendium appeared in print in 1881 (above). By the 1880s, Indian musicologists were either monumentalizing Sanskrit works as the classics of *sangita-shastra*, or writing their own vernacular studies: the earlier generations of Brajbhasha scholarship were for the most part ignored and forgotten.

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<sup>77</sup> Cakravarti et al., *Vaisnava-sangitashastra*, 53-4, 83.

<sup>78</sup> For a summative discussion of the text's contents see Prajñanananda *Sangitasara-samgraha*, 23-41.

<sup>79</sup> Prajñanananda *Sangitasara-samgraha*, 37.

That said, the simultaneity of print and manuscript cultures encouraged older practices of reading, editorial, and copying to continue. As mentioned above, the Bengali *Sangitataranga* was written for publication in 1818, but then one reader copied out the text by hand, switching over from the printed *bangla* script to *devanagari*. At the same time, the culture of writing manuscript pocketbooks for connoisseurs, who needed quick reference tools to identify the melodic structures and iconographies of *ragas*, continued too. For example, one nineteenth-century *Ragamalakosha* provided schematic accounts of each *raga*, outlining the notes of the scale in a table and then listing the key features of the *raga*'s visualization.<sup>80</sup> These handily sized pocketbooks testify to the persistence of the culture of erudite listeners, who were expected to be familiar with the poetry and visuals of music, as well as the compositional structure of music. These forms of curating and circulating musical connoisseurship were elements in a larger landscape of vernacular musicological production that spoke to the opportunities and challenges of the age of print, language politics, and social transformation that is beyond the scope of this essay.<sup>81</sup>

As for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, examining the vernacular life of the *Sangitadarpana* in north India reveals the multiple modes of transmission that could be brought to bear on a Sanskrit text prior to the colonial period. Damodara's Sanskrit work— itself constructed from earlier authorities—travelled through transliteration and digraphic manuscripts. Although the ability to write Sanskrit in many scripts was part of its cosmopolitan appeal, presenting the same text twice, in two scripts, on the same page assumed multiple readers in a differentially multilingual setting, with their own points of access to the language.

The Sanskrit work also travelled through translation into a new language, as with Harivallabha's translation, which opened the text to new literary possibilities and cultural connotations, embedded in the target language. Harivallabha redeployed Dāmodara's *Sangitadarpana*: to "vernacularize" was not simply to render the Sanskrit into the *bhasha* linguistically, but also to install it in a distinctive imaginary and cultural universe with its own sensibilities and aesthetic priorities. Brajbhasha was far from confined to the Hindi

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<sup>80</sup> *Ragamalakosha*, unpublished nineteenth-century MS, consulted at Sam Fogg, London.

<sup>81</sup> For the musicological landscape in Bengali over the nineteenth century, see Williams, "Music, Lyrics, and the Bengali Book".

heartlands, but was considered a language of beauty and social cultivation across the subcontinent.

The *Sangitadarpana* was also transmitted in bilingual manuscripts, or in others which provided a paraphrase translation of the translation. When a third rendering was considered necessary, the boundaries between translation, paraphrase, and commentary—as understood in European tradition—present obstacles. Manuscripts were malleable media, where editors and scribes performed the work of translation as well as copying, and rather than reifying either Damodara or Harivallabha, perhaps it is more relevant to see them as co-authors in every copy, alongside the manuscript editors. Translators were not invisible, but they could be erased, as when Harivallabha’s signature was systematically deleted from his verses. Although vernacular intellectuals did not seem to develop a critical literature and theory on translation in the early modern period—compared to, say, seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Japan—authors were conscious of a particular practice at work when they redeployed texts in different languages.<sup>82</sup> The poet Paidā, for example, saw his own Brajbhasha work as the offspring of the fertile marriage between Persian and Hindavi.

Finally, the translation and transmutation of literature were material practices, beyond the redeployment or refashioning of text. Linguistic changes were paired with other material transformations, marked by painting, musical notation, and singing. Translation had different meanings and possibilities according to genre: since these were works of musicology, even the source text was itself a meditation on the arrangement of sound, translating a sonic entity into Sanskrit prescriptions. This sense of a proto-source, the “ur-poem”, permitted painters, musicians, and manuscript compilers to translate the non-text behind the text of the *Sangitadarpana* into new media.

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<sup>82</sup> Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan*.

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