

Religion W4205: LOVE, TRANSLATED: HINDU BHAKTI

Jack Hawley. Fall, 2015. 4 credits. Tuesdays 4:10-6:00, Barnard 407.
Office hours: Thursdays 5-7, 219a Milbank, and by appointment.
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Catalogue description

Hindu poetry of radical religious participation—bhakti—in translation, both Sanskrit (the Bhagavad Gita) and vernacular. How does such poetry/song translate across linguistic divisions within India and into English? Knowledge of Indian languages is welcome but not required. Multiple translations of a single text or poet bring to light the choices translators have made.

Course Rationale

Great swaths of Columbia's core curriculum—certainly the entire Asian component—rest on acts of translation, but just how was this banquet prepared? To begin to answer that question in part, and as a contribution to Barnard's Center for Translation Studies, this course focuses on a range of influential Hindu texts in the realm of bhakti (devotion, participation, love of God) as they have been rendered into English. Students conversant with the source languages will be able to track the translators' choices and approaches firsthand, but that is hardly a prerequisite. Others—including in many cases the instructor—will get at such questions by comparing a range of translations that have been made into English and other European languages they may know.

Translation internal to India is also at issue, where the following sets of questions arise. What is involved in rendering Sanskrit into a vernacular language (as in the case of the *Bhagavad Gita* in the Gita Press edition for Hindi or, from the other side, Surdas in relation to the *Bhagavata Purana*)? How do various bhakti poets effectively—or even explicitly—translate from one vernacular language into another? What translation networks are hidden behind such acts? How does the musical medium in which these poems are typically experienced influence the sense of what “translation” means for a bhakti poem? If a set of poems has been illustrated, is that too an act of translation? Finally, is there a line that separates translation from commentary, and if so, where does it fall?

Course Requirements

(a) *Reading and class participation.* Students are expected to attend all class sessions, and to participate vigorously in class discussion on the basis of a thoughtful reading (and sometimes seeing and hearing) of the assigned materials.

(b) *Weekly reading responses.* Short weekly postings in response to our common readings must be made to Courseworks in weeks 2-11. These are due at 5:00 p.m. each Monday

on the discussion board as MSWord attachments—at least 300 words, no specific maximum. Please check spelling and syntax, paginate, and double-space. That’s a total of ten. You may drop one of these, if you like, for a total of nine. In weeks 12 and 13, when we are discussing each other’s papers, no written work need be submitted—aside from your paper, of course. But I’ll be listening for the care with which you have read others’ work.

(c) *Seminar project proposal.* A project proposal 5 pages in length, plus a draft bibliography, is due by midnight on Friday, October 23 (that is, the midnight that leads into Saturday). The purpose here is to forecast in some detail what your seminar project will be, and to do so in a way that makes clear how it relates to what you have learned by studying translations we have considered so far including, necessarily, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Please come to talk with me as ideas for your seminar paper begin to percolate—or have trouble percolating; and in no case later than October 9.

(d) *Seminar projects.* The course culminates in a seminar paper (15 pages or so), which can be a consideration of any issue relevant to the course—historical, literary, performance—or art-oriented or comparative. Translation projects are also welcome, provided that they include an analysis of the writer’s own translation process. These papers are due on November 25 (at midnight), posted to the discussion board of Courseworks. An oral presentation, anticipating seminar discussion, follows in the last two weeks of the course.

Evaluation I will provide regular feedback to students’ responses week by week, grading on a scale from 1-10. I’ll make notes to myself about your contributions to the discussion, too. At the end of week 4, I’ll send you a note with an estimate of your collective grade up to that point—a letter grade. I’m hoping that will give a good indication of how the weekly numbers translate out into a letter grade. If you’d like an update on this later in the term, please let me know. 50% of the course grade; I’ll also be taking into account your work in launching the discussion one week.

The seminar project proposal and translation analysis due October 23: 10%.

Term paper: 30%

Term project oral presentation and your response to others’ papers: 10%.

Late work Except in case of serious medical or family emergencies, late work will be downgraded one-half letter grade per day.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will engage with each of the questions raised under the heading of “Course Rationale,” seeing what is involved in the act of translation from Indian languages to those of Europe, especially English. Our primary attention will be on the present and recent past, but especially in the case of the *Bhagavad Gita* we will take a longer view.

2. Students will evaluate some of the most celebrated translations of Hindu bhakti with respect to their historical and social context and their literary style. They will also learn to assess the social and literary contexts of the originals, asking in the course of that whether the “original” is in fact original.

3. Students will encounter and evaluate some of the most best-known translators of Hindu texts, coming to their own conclusions about what makes them stand out—or not stand out—and what makes them different from one another. They will be encouraged to explore a range of translations not on the syllabus itself.

4. As anticipated in the GER in Literature, students will emerge from this course able to:

- Recognize a range of rhetorical strategies employed in translating Indic texts and analyze their success as representations of the original and contributions to literature in the “target language”;
- Describe the contexts and distinctive features of the various literary traditions from which these Indic texts are drawn;
- Articulate their own distinctive approach to the task of translating a bhakti text into English or other Indian language.

5. Students will emerge from the course being able to evaluate the consequences of translators’ assumptions about who their readers will be, especially as regards the matter of whether Hindus or others—or a combination of both—are imagined as the audience for translated Hindu texts. Students will take positions on whether the hurting—or enhancing—of “religious sensibilities” (a term that makes its way into Indian civil law) is a proper concern for literary translators of bhakti texts.

Course Readings--Texts

The following books are required reading for the course, and are available for purchase at BookCulture. Copies are also available on reserve at the Barnard College Library.

Richard H. Davis, *The Bhagavad Gita—A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

Barbara Stoler Miller, tr., *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (New York: Bantam, 1986).

Laurie L. Patton, tr., *The Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

A. K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva* (London: Penguin, 1973).

Archana Venkatesan, *The Secret Garland: Antal's Tiruppavai and Nacciyar Tirumoli* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, *God on the Hill: Temple Poems from Tirupati* [by Annamayya] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Arvind Mehrotra, *Songs of Kabir* (New York: New York Review Books, 2011).

Robert Bly and Jane Hirschfield, *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

John Stratton Hawley, *The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Course Readings—General Resources

Sheldon Pollock, ed., *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

Andrew Schelling, ed., *The Oxford Anthology of Bhakti Literature* (Delhi: Oxford, 2011).

Arundhathi Subramaniam, ed., *Eating God: A Book of Bhakti Poetry* (Delhi: Penguin, 2014).

Ulrike Stark, “Translation, Book History, and the Afterlife of a Text: Growse’s *The Rámáyana of Tulsi Dás*,” in Maya Burger and Picola Pozza, eds., *India in Translation through Hindi Literature: A Plurality of Voices* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 155-180.

Lawrence Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004 [1987]).

J. S. Hawley, *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Time and Ours* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012 [2005]).

Academic Integrity

Approved by the student body in 1912, the Barnard College Honor Code states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by refraining from every form of dishonesty in our academic life. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any papers or books not authorized by the instructor in examinations, or to present oral work or written work which is not entirely our own, unless otherwise approved by the instructor. We consider it dishonest to remove without authorization, alter, or deface library and other academic materials. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

The complexities of technology and of our cognition sometimes make it difficult to determine what constitutes plagiarism (e.g., Did I come up with that idea myself or did I read it somewhere? Was that sentence something I cut and pasted from the internet and intended to reformulate later but never got around to?). Please feel free to consult me if you encounter ambiguous situations in the course of your work.

I gratefully acknowledge that I have plagiarized the paragraphs appearing immediately above from my colleague Beth Berkowitz, who composed them as a part of the syllabus for her course *Introduction to Talmud Text Study* (Spring, 2014).

Course Syllabus

Key: [blank] Mandatory, available at Book Culture or through CLIO online.
* Mandatory, on Courseworks: E-reserves or Files & Resources > Class Files.
** Optional. Partially available on Courseworks: E-reserves or Class Files.

Week 1: 9/8 Introduction: What is bhakti and what is translation?

* J. S. Hawley, Introduction, *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 1-14.

* Sheldon Pollock, "Philology, Literature, Translation," in Enrica Garzilli, ed., *Translating, Translations, Translators from India to the West* (Cambridge: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, 1996), pp. 111-129.

I. Sanskrit: The Bhagavad Gita as Global Text

Week 2: 9/15 Two influential translations (Miller, Patton)

Launch: Chelsea

Barbara Stoler Miller, tr., *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (New York: Bantam, 1986).

Laurie L. Patton, tr., *The Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

Give close attention to a comparison of the introductions and teachings/discourses 1-2, 11, and 18.

** Richard H. Davis, *The Bhagavad Gita—A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), introduction and chapters 1-2, pp. 1-71.

** The Gita Press edition, in Sanskrit with English translation, is available at:

http://www.gitapress.org/download_eng_pdf.htm;

http://www.gitapress.org/books/gita/455/455_Gita_Roman.pdf.

Week 3: 9/22 Translating the Gita from 1785 to the present

Launch: Chris

Common reading:

Charles Wilkins, *The Bhagvat-Geeta Or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon in Eighteen Lectures*, revised and improved by G. P. C. (Calcutta: Bengal Superior Press, 1845 [1785]):

<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044019032143;view=1up;seq=3>.

A Kindle edition of the 1875 version also exists:

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Bhagavad-Gita-Translation-ebook/dp/B00ACX08Z2>

* Edwin Arnold, tr., *The Song Celestial or Bhagavad-Gîtâ* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1904 [London, 1885]), dedication, preface, books 1-2, 11.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2388/2388-h/2388-h.htm>.

* A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, tr., *The Bhagavad Gita as It Is* (New York: Macmillan, 1968). Now advertised “with bonus DVD” at: <http://www.asitis.com/1/1.html>.

Also, locate one additional translation (or translation of a translation) that interests you and bring it with you—in whatever form is appropriate or possible—to class.

Supplementary resources:

** W. M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, *Bhagavadgîtânuvâda: A Study in Transcultural Translation* (Ranchi: Satya Bharati Publication, 1983).

** Aiah Rachel Wieder, ed., with Edwin Arnold, *The Song of Krishna: The Illustrated Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Abrams, 2010). Produced with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

** Lars Martin Fosse, *The Bhagavad Gita: The Original Sanskrit and an English Translation* (Woodstock, NY: YogaVidya, 2007). Note that this recent translation is in prose.

II. The Dravidian South: A Bhakti Sampler

Week 4: 9/29 Kannada: The Virasaivas

Launch: Gabby

A. K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva* (London: Penguin, 1973), especially. pp. 11-90, 111-142 (on Basavanna and Mahadeviakka).

* K. V. Zvelebil, *The Lord of the Meeting Rivers: Devotional Poems of Basavaṇṇa* (Delhi: Motil Banarsidass and Paris: UNESCO, 1984), pp. 1-49: scan for comparisons.

Sherry Simon, "A. K. Ramanujan: What Happened in the Library," in Judy Wakabayashi, ed., *Decentering Translation Studies: India and Beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009), pp. 161-174. <http://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/7748556?counter=1>.

* Vinay Dharwadker, "A. K. Ramanujan's Theory and Practice of Translation," in Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, eds., *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 114-140.

** "Varieties of *Bhakti*," in Vinay Dharwadker et al., eds., *The Collected Essays of A. K. Ramanujan* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 324-331.

** A. K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning: Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammālvār* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), Afterword, pp. 103-169.

** Julia Leslie, "Understanding Basava: History, Hagiography, and a Modern Kannada Drama," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61:2 (1998), pp. 228-261.

Week 5: 10/6 Tamil: Antal

Special guest: Shiv Subramaniam

Archana Venkatesan, *The Secret Garland: Antal's Tiruppavai and Nacciyar Tirumoli* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 3-146 (the *Tiruppavai*).

* Vidya Dehejia, *Antal and Her Path of Love: Poems of a Woman Saint from South India* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 43-71.

* A. L. Becker, "Silence Across Languages," in *Beyond Translation: Essays toward a Modern Philology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 282-294.

** Archana Venkatesan, "A Different Kind of Āṅṅāḷ Story: The *Divyasūricaritam* of Garuḍavāhana Paṇḍita," *Journal of Hindu Studies* 6:3(2013), pp. 243-296.

Week 6: 10/13 Telugu: Annamayya

Launch: Doha

Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, *God on the Hill: Temple Poems from Tirupati* [by Annamayya] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), entire (138 pp.).

* William J. Jackson, *Songs of Three Great South Indian Saints* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 36-68.

** Adapa Ramakrishna Rao, *Annamacharya* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1989).

** A. K. Ramanujan, Velcheru Narayana Rao, and David Shulman, *When God Is a Customer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). [Three copies are in the Columbia library system, including one that does not circulate, in the South Asia Reading Room.]

III. The North: Marathi and Hindi

Week 7: 10/20 Kabir

Special guest: Purushottam Agrawal

Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh, *The Bījak of Kabir* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002 [1983]), śabdās to #75 (pp. 42-67) and then pp. 79-100 (comprising all the ramainis and some of the sākḥīs). You may leave the appendices aside, but the introduction is required reading (pp. 3-37).

Arvind Mehrotra, *Songs of Kabir* (New York: New York Review Books, 2011). Read the introduction and fifteen poems of your own choosing.

Shabnam Virmani, filmmaker, *Chalo Hamara Des (Come to my Country)*, at <http://www.kabirproject.org/the%20films/chalo%20hamara%20des>

* Linda Hess, “Translator of Poetry and Theorist of Translation: Can They Inhabit the Same Body?,” paper delivered to the Association for Asian Studies, Philadelphia, March 27, 2010.

* Purushottam Agrawal, “‘Something Will Ring...’: Translating Kabir and his ‘Life.’” in Maya Burger and Nicola Pozza, eds., *India in Translation through Hindi Literature: A Plurality of Voices* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 181-194.

** Laetitia Zecchini, “Contemporary *Bhakti* Recastings: Recovering a Demotic Tradition, Challenging Nativism, Fashioning Modernism in Indian Poetry,” *Interventions* 16:2(2014), 257-276. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1369801X.2013.798128>.

** Kali Mohan Ghose and Ezra Pound, tr., “Certain Poems of Kabir.” *The Modern Review* 13:6 (1913), pp. 611-613.

** Linda Hess, *Singing Emptiness: Kumar Gandharva Performs the Poetry of Kabir* (London: Seagull Press, 2009).

** Linda Hess, *Bodies of Song: Kabir Oral Traditions and Performative Worlds in North India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

** Robert Bly, *Kabir: Ecstatic Poems* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), including an afterword by J. S. Hawley, “Kabir and the Transcendental Bly.”

** Andrew Schelling, ed., *The Oxford Anthology of Bhakti Literature* (Delhi: Oxford, 2011), pp. 106-115, 123-128 (translations by Ezra Pound and Robert Bly).

** Tony K. Stewart, "In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving Muslim-Hindu Encounter through Translation Theory," *History of Religions* 40:3 (2001), pp. 260-287. Also: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3176699>.

** Francesca Orsini, "How to do Multilingual History? Lessons from Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century North India," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 49:2 (2012), pp. 225-246. <http://ier.sagepub.com/>.

NB: Project proposals are due on the Courseworks discussion board by midnight, October 23, as MSWord attachments, double-spaced and paginated.

Week 8: 10/27 Marathi: Tukaram

Launch: Yazan

* Dilip Chitre, tr., *Says Tuka: Selected Poetry of Tukaram* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1991), introduction, pp. 1-112, 179-206.

* Arvind Mehrotra, ed., *Arun Kulatkar: Collected Poems in English* (Highgreen, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2010), pp. 304-326.

* Gail Omvedt and Bharat Patankar, trs., *The Revolutionary Abhangs of Tukaram* [in manuscript]. Browse.

** Manuscripts relevant to Tukaram in the British Library's "Endangered Archives" program (<http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP023>): [EAP023/1/1/249: Tukarama Gatha Abhang 77-996](http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP023), [EAP023/1/1/267: Abhangas of Tukaram](http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP023), [EAP023/1/1/27: Abhanga-Pade Ekanath Tukarami \[1931\]](http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP023), [EAP023/1/1/9: Bhaktalilamrita \(tukaram Charitra\) \[Sake 1768\]](http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP023).

** Gandhi's translations of Tukaram while in the Yerawada jail in Pune in the early 1930s: http://tukaram.com/english/biography/more/bio_1.htm.

University Holiday: 11/3

Week 9: 11/10 Mirabai

Launch: Eliana

Robert Bly and Jane Hirschfield, *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), with an afterword by J. S. Hawley.

*Andrew Schelling, tr., "Mirabai," in Schelling, ed., *The Oxford Anthology of Bhakti Literature* (Delhi: Oxford, 2011), pp. 137-148.

* J. S. Hawley, "Devotional Poetry of Medieval North India," in Barbara Stoler Miller, ed., *Masterpieces of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe), pp. 78-93.

Also, locate an additional translation of Mirabai, compare it to those above, and bring it to class to share your insights with others.

**A. J. Alston, *The Devotional Poems of Mīrābāī* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1980). This volume is especially helpful in providing a relatively literal translation of Paraśurām Caturvedī's widely used *Mīrābāī kī Padāvalī* (Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1976), which I believe stands behind much of what we read in the Bly/Hirshfield and Schelling translations. This is the only Hindi entry in the bibliography of the book from which Schelling excerpts in his anthology. Bly and Hirschfield commit themselves to no original.

Week 10: 11/17 Surdas

Launch: Zaina

John Stratton Hawley, *The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), introduction, chapters 1-2, 4, 7-8, and relevant notes.

* Rupert Snell and Aruna Kharod, *Sur Sorahi: Sixteen Padas from the Sursagar* (Austin: Hindi-Urdu Flagship, University of Texas, 2014). Accessible online at: <http://hindiurduflagship.org/resources/learning-teaching/sur-sorahi/>.

* J. S. Hawley, "A Raft on Sur's Ocean: In Memory of Aditya Behl," paper delivered to the Association for Asian Studies, Philadelphia, March 27, 2010.

* Krishna P. Bahadur, *The Poems of Suradasa* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1999), pp. 1-14, 100-107 (*vinaya*), 213-214 (the poem analyzed in *The Memory of Love*, pp. 31-40), and 241-245 (by which time in the book most translations are given in prose rather than poetry).

** K. C. Sharma, K.C. Yadav, and Pushpendra Sharma, *Suradasa: A Critical Study of His Life and Work* (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1997), chapter 4, "The Poet," pp. 65-154: browse only, focusing on some 10-12 pages.

** Brajghosa originals for the poems translated in *The Memory of Love*, comprising the critical edition prepared by Kenneth E. Bryant, are posted on Courseworks as "puddles" with numbers corresponding to those that appear in *The Memory of Love*. They can also be found—in a different format—in Kenneth E. Bryant and John Stratton Hawley, *Sur's Ocean: Poems from the Early Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Week 11: 11/24 No class: Meetings of the American Academy of Religion.

NB: Your papers are due on Wednesday, November 25, at midnight as MSWord attachments, double-spaced and paginated.

IV. Student Presentations

Week 12: 12/1 Presentations

Reading assignment: all papers in the first group. No postings are expected, but come ready to discuss the papers. If you are presenting, prepare an introduction of 7-10 minutes, highlighting issues important for discussion.

Week 13: 12/8 Presentations

Reading assignment: all papers in the second group. No postings are expected, but come ready to discuss the papers. If you are presenting, prepare an introduction of 7-10 minutes, highlighting issues important for discussion.

NB: Dinner at my house, at 7:00. It's 380 Riverside Drive, 3H, with the entrance being on 110th St. The home number is 212 749 9882, if you need it.