

Joy, peace, bliss, or ecstasy?

Women and men translators of the Sikh prayer *Anand* in a classroom

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Abstract

Anand is one of the most popular prayers used in Sikh worship. This article compares twelve English translations, authored by men (1909 to 2005), of the opening stanza of *Anand*, with two renderings by women translators (1981 and 1995), and discusses their suitability as study materials in a teaching environment where neither the instructor nor the students are conversant with the language of the original text and its religious tradition. Drawing on Derrida's reflections on translation as necessity-cum-impossibility and Spivak's notion of 'politics of translation', we study the appropriateness of the translations for contemporary readers, here teachers and learners. By creating a study template and demonstrating that all examined translations are deeply embedded in their historical milieus and strongly influenced by translators' backgrounds and subjective choices, thus often archaic and dated, we argue for the use of modern translations in the classroom. We further assert that due to its gendered lens and thoughtful avoidance of Judeo-Christian vocabulary, hence also the conceptual framework of these religious systems, the fairly recent rendition (1995) by one of the woman translators (Kaur Singh) seems to be the most promising choice for a classroom reading.

Keywords

Guru Granth Sahib, *Anand*, women translators, feminist translation, pedagogical translations

1. Approaching sacred texts through translations – including by women

Derrida's essay "Des Tours de Babel" discusses translation as a necessity-cum-impossibility (1985, p. 170). The author's reflections revolve around the biblical account of the tower of Babel, its metaphorical imagery of 'confusion of languages' and God's admonition that translation is both necessary and doomed to failure. No similar tale explaining the origins and multiplicity of languages is known to religious traditions indigenous to South Asia. But the area's linguistic diversity, the continuing presence of the pan-Indian *linguae francae*, and the ever-changing dynamics of power resulted in intense mediations between languages. The British rule left an enduring linguistic heritage, with English as the *lingua franca* of the Indian state and a medium of communication among regional languages, and between India and the world.

In this study, we examine the interplay of impossibilities and necessities in translating the sacred texts of Sikhism into English and focus on the use, within a higher education setting, of translations by men and women translators. The choice of a translation suitable for students who are not native speakers of English is of paramount importance and, as Kaur Singh (2000, p. 75) pointed out, a modern, possibly feminist re-translation – or one which takes women's concerns into account – is a must.

In what follows, we present close readings of a series of English translations of a stanza from *Anand*, which is also the subject of Maria Puri's contribution in this special issue. *Anand*, a composition by Amar Das (1479-1574), the third Sikh guru, forms an integral part of Sikh liturgy. It is found in the Guru Granth Sahib (henceforth the GGS), known also as the Ādi Granth (henceforth the AG), a sacred book considered by Sikhs as their living guru and "the focal point of all Sikh rituals and ceremonies" (Kaur Singh, 2000, p. 70).

We compare two translations of *Anand* by women, Baljit Kaur Tulsi (1981) and Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh (1995), with several English translations by men, presented here in a chronological order. One of our objectives is to assess how gender-specific differences, if any, might be of use for teaching. The choice of translations for pedagogical purposes is often dictated by the availability of the text and its academic grounding (reliable authorship, presence of a critical apparatus, prestige of the publishing house). Its 'readability', too, plays a paramount role in a non-native English environment, while factors such as the poetic quality of the translation, its sensitivity to the source language or articulation of religious concepts (including through the lens of gender) are often considered secondary.

We argue that English translations informed by gender sensitive reading and the use of vocabulary not rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition might provide an additional dimension to a classroom discussion and, as Kaur Singh (2000) suggests, bring to the fore the originality and gender inclusiveness encoded in the Sikh religious message. Regrettably, university courses rarely provide sufficient time and space to compare different renditions of a given text or open avenues for critical discussions on "patriarchal intervention and the colonial experience" (Kaur Singh, 2000, p. 75), and other forms of epistemic violence.

2. Sikh texts in translation: historical considerations

An informed selection of a sacred text in translation for teaching purposes clearly requires some knowledge of the translation history of that particular scripture. Prior to the British annexation of the Punjab (1849), there were few attempts on the part of Westerners to learn about Sikhs or their beliefs. The first Western translation-like paraphrase of a Sikh sacred text, the *Japji*, can be found in Ward's "Account of the Shikhs" (2009 [1817], vol. 2, pp. 282-289). Its high degree of fidelity to the original makes it of interest to students of religion and of translation.

Closer engagement of the East India Company with the Punjab's Sikhs post-1849, further accelerated by the Mutiny-generated (1857) shift to direct rule under the British crown (1858), prompted official interest in Sikh religion and scriptures, with a view of facilitating governance over the possibly unruly native subjects. Accordingly, in 1869, "the task of translating the AG was [...] given by the India Office, with what were to be unexpectedly significant consequences, to Dr Ernst ('Ernest') Trumpp" (Shackle, 2008, p. 258). What is only hinted at by Shackle is Trumpp's overbearing missionary persona, overwhelmingly Christian worldview and his arrogant authoritarianism, borne out in his Preface to *The Ādi Granth or the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs* (1877, [1989]). A product and prisoner of his habitus, Trumpp decided to offer the Occidental reader only the 'better' parts of the text. Even making allowances for a different era, Trumpp's stance smacked of "blatant orientalism" (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 34). Besides setting up a Judeo-Christian framework and terminology for future translations of the text into English (Kaur Singh, 2007, 2017), it inadvertently served as a catalyst for the Sikh reformist movement. Unsurprisingly, the next colonial translation of the GGS, undertaken by M. A. Macauliffe with the specific view of "making reparations to the Sikhs for the insults that [Trumpp] offered to their Gurus and their religion" (Macauliffe, 1909, p. vii, our addition), found favor with Sikh religious authorities and Sikh audience; even more so, as Macauliffe had consulted widely with Sikh scholars and community elders, revising his translation extensively over the years (pp. v-xxxiv). The book was published in London in 1909 as *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings, and Authors* and recorded, "for the first time [...] the interpretation of the sacred texts, as orally communicated by *gianis* [Sikh religious scholars] from generation to generation." (Harbans Singh, 1970, p. 144, our addition). Looking at it from today's perspective, a contemporary translator and academic, Linda Hess, calls Macauliffe's rendition "an old and very inadequate translation" (see Notes in Hess & Singh, 2002, p. 171).

Although several English renderings by Sikh intellectuals of selected hymns from the GGS appeared in print from early on (cf. Puran Singh, 1921; Teja Singh, 1920, 1926, 1938 [1945]), including in the form of stand-alone Sikh missionary tracts showcasing different compositions among them *Anand* (cf. Sardul Singh Caveeshar, 1920, Sher Singh, 1937), there were no publications of the whole scripture until long after the Independence (1947). Of those, the earliest was authored by Gopal Singh (1960), soon followed by Manmohan Singh's translation (its different volumes appeared between 1962 and 1969). The last, backed by the authority of the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee (Supreme Gurudwara Management Committee), attained the status of definitive, official version. For the first time, the entire original text of the GGS was set next to its English translation (for autoethnographic reflections on the personal predicaments generated by the reading of *gurbāṇī* text in a non-sacred, academic setting, see Kaur Singh, 2019, pp. 38-39).

Gurbachan Singh Talib's translation (1987) again carried only the English text and targeted a broad English speaking readership. Of special interest is the translation by Pritham Singh Chahal (1993), largely adapted from Manmohan Singh's version. Available in a number of formats for public and private use, it provided the original *gurbāṇī*, its Roman transliteration and the English translation. The introduction of transliteration, common now in certain editions of Sikh prayer books, was an attempt to address the community's growing disengagement with the *gurmukhī* script – especially by the younger generation outside the Punjabi-language educational system, and the diaspora. However, even today "the status of the original Gurbani as a liturgical language is not challenged and other vernaculars are never used for the central liturgies, except in white Sikh (3HO) communities" (Nijhawan, 2007, p. 6)¹. In this respect

¹ 3HO Sikhs – Healthy Happy Holy Organization – are predominantly White American followers of Yogi Harbanchan Singh.

the Sikh approach to translation of the holy text resembles the Jewish tradition, where “the translations [were] intended to supplement, not supplant; complement, not replace, the original” (Greenspoon, 2005, p. 61).

While all translations of the complete GGS mentioned above were undertaken almost exclusively by religious scholars, there is one rendering (2004), described by its author as a ‘transcreation’, that came from the pen of the writer and translator, Kartar Singh Duggal. More poetic than the scholarly translations, it resembles the lyrical renderings of the Sikh hymns by Puran Singh (1921), Sher Singh (1937) or Khushwant Singh (2003) and, like them, could be of interest not only to students of religion but of literature as well. Surprising as it may sound, women were totally absent from the field of the GGS translation, the first women authored English renderings – by Tulsi and Kaur Singh – of compositions from the sacred texts appearing only towards the end of the twentieth century. In their translations, both women strongly asserted their Sikh background and their right to give voice to their interpretations, but also their professional objectives and personal sense of the aesthetic: Tulsi’s work was thus informed by her poetic oeuvre and possibly anachronistic idiolect; Kaur Singh’s by her academic, feminist background and modern literary style.

3. Is there a place for colonial translations by men in a classroom setting?

Till the last quarter of the 20th century, translations of the GGS were exclusively the work of men, and it makes sense to envisage them in terms of the translators’ background: on the one hand, scholars (e.g., Trumpp, Macauliffe, Gopal Singh, Manmohan Singh, Gurcharan Singh Talib), and on the other, poets and writers (Puran Singh, Khushwant Singh, Kartar Singh Duggal). However, a closer look at different renditions of *Anand*, both within the complete as well as the partial translations of the GGS, revealed a plethora of interesting details best addressed within a chronological template to keep track of influences and trends. For example, the translations by Tulsi (1981, 1990) and Kaur Singh (1995/2001/2019), which stood apart by virtue of being authored by women and because of their distinct literary style, were in conspicuous dialogue with previous translations by men. Similarly, all the male translations conversed among themselves, though, unsurprisingly, the scholars seemed to totally ignore the poetic renderings produced by the creative writers, which they tended to consider amateurish and incompetent while, in turn, the creative writers, clearly dissatisfied with the bland offerings of the scholars, penned their versions keeping firmly in mind the objective of steering clear of what looked to them as obvious translatorial failings of the scholars.

While the starting point for the scholars was to refute Trumpp’s disparaging comments and to better the arguments advanced by Macauliffe, ultimately it was the fidelity to the original that was foremost in their minds, even at the expense of grammar or intelligibility. Search for beautiful-sounding language seemed to them secondary; they were, after all, mainly addressing readers like themselves (believers already familiar with the holy texts), who expected an accurate explanatory translation into English, unencumbered by poetic flourishes often found in the earlier Sikh missionary tracts or the later renderings of the creative writers, including Tulsi’s. It was only with the advent of a new generation of scholars, mostly academics teaching in the West who felt that the translations should be in contemporary idiom and speak also to non-Sikhs, that a different type of translation approach emerged. This group of translations includes partial renderings of the GGS by McLeod (1984), Kaur Singh (1995/2001/2019), and Shackle and Mandair (2005). All these scholars include *Anand* (GGS 917-922) in their selections.

Below, we provide twelve chronologically arranged translations of the first stanza of *Anand* authored by men. Together with renderings by Tulsi and Kaur Singh, the two women whose translations are discussed extensively in this volume by Puri, the corpus under study adds up

to fourteen. It has been assembled in order to provide a comprehensive model to foreground in the classroom what Spivak (1993) calls ‘the politics of translation’ – which encompass such aspects of translatorial practice as difference in approach exhibited by native and non-native speakers; colonial and postcolonial divide; personal intimacy with the text vis-à-vis scholarly detachment; translator’s habitus in Bourdieu’s (2013, pp. 72-95) understanding of the term; etc. – and arrive at a text most suitable for a teaching environment. As we reveal in what follows, the translations differ not only in the choices of key words or salient features, but also in diction and literary style. In the original stanza (given below in transliteration) and the examples that follow, we have highlighted in bold certain crucial words which are important in understanding the challenges and ensuing choices of the individual translators, and which need to be emphasised in discussions on the texts in pedagogical settings so that the students come to see the translated text not as the perfect reflection of the original but only one of the many possible versions.

Original (GGS 917)

anandu bhaiā merī māe / **satigurū** mai pāiā //
satguru ta pāiā **sahaja** setī / matī vajīā vādhāiā //
rāga ratana parvāra parīā / **sabadu** gāvaṇa āiā //
sabdō ta gāvahu harī kerā / manī jinī vasāiā //
kahai nānaka **anandu** hoā / **satigurū** mai pāiā // 1 //

Trumpp’s (1877) selections from Sikh scripture did not include *Anand*. However, general clues of how Trumpp might have rendered the word *anand* in English had he decided to translate the composition can be found in the texts he did translate. Brief scrutiny shows that the two uses of the word *anand* in Nanak’s *Japji*, which predates Amar Das’s *Anand*, have been rendered respectively as ‘joys’ and ‘joyful’ (cf. Trumpp, 1877, p. 13 and p. 14; GGS 7, GGS 8); compositions by Amar Das included in Trumpp’s volume yielded ‘joy’ (cf. Trumpp, 1877, p. 44, two instances; GGS 29), then again ‘joy’ and ‘happy’ (cf. Trumpp, 1877, p. 53; GGS 36). The renditions seemed to emphasize the quotidian over the mystical and the revelatory in human experience of the One, probably as more in tune with the Protestant ethics or sensibilities of the translator.

The trend was replicated by Macauliffe (1909), who authored the earliest English version of *Anand* and set out its key terms *anand*, *sati guru*, *sahaja*, *sabadu*, *harī* for the first time, establishing benchmarks to be followed, flouted, or elaborated upon. Interestingly, he left two words untranslated, *guru* and *rāg*, which he must have considered familiar enough to his English speaking audience.

Example 1: Macauliffe

Joy, my mother, that I have found the **True Guru**!
I have **easily** found the **True Guru**, and the music of gratulation is in my heart.
The excellent Rags and the race of the female singers of heaven have come to sing
hymns.
They who have fixed **God** in their hearts sing His praises.
Saith Nanak, I feel **joy** that I have obtained the **True Guru**. (1909, Vol. 2, p. 117)

Chronologically, the next translation is found in Puran Singh’s volume of poetry *The sisters of the spinning wheel* (1921), which includes selections from the GGS.

Example 2: Puran Singh

Peace!
My Mother! I have found **Peace** in my **Lord**!

He gives it to me;
Spontaneous music of triumph of soul and joy of life swells up in me;
 In the temple of my heart is the concourse of celestials!
 O celestials! Raise in me **songs** of the Praise of **Him**,
 Who having made in me His Dwelling, makes me a palace of music and joy.
Peace I have found in my **Lord!** (1921, p. 124)

Puran Singh's book was introduced to the anglophone public by Ernest and Grace Rhys, and published, like Trumpp's and Macauliffe's *magnum opuses*, from the heart of the empire, London. The authors of the introduction purposefully juxtaposed it with Macauliffe's work, inviting the reader to compare Singh's poetic renderings with Macauliffe's "careful scholarly translations" (Rhys, 1921, p. vi), promising "the comparison most interesting" (p. v). They saw in Puran Singh a Sikh version of Rabindranath Tagore, of the Noble prize fame, with "something of the same gift" (p. vi); their views were shared by contemporary reviews and scholarship (cf. Anand, 1933, pp. 86-101; O'Loughlin, 1935, pp. 86-91). Although today Puran Singh is best remembered for his Punjabi writings, as "translator of the scriptures," he was, in Shackle's opinion, "one of the first Sikhs with the gifts necessary to transmit the spirit of the religion to a Western audience" (2017, p. 85). According to Shackle, "[f]ew of his successors have been touched with his poetic imagination, and few have matched his linguistic and literary gifts" (p. 85); his mystical writings in verse and prose, and his English renderings of the GGS impacted generations of writers, including Tulsi. It might be instructive to compare in a classroom Tulsi's translation (example 9), published much later, in the independent India, with the colonial renderings of Macauliffe, Puran Singh and Sher Singh (examples 1, 2, 3), with which it shows surprisingly strong affinities.

A closer study reveals that Tulsi, herself a poet writing in Punjabi, was not only familiar with Puran Singh's work but also greatly influenced by his poetic oeuvre (both Punjabi and English), finding him a kindred spirit. Her GGS renditions spring out of a similar sense of spiritual wonder, best voiced by way of poetry. Though in *Anand* she might have opted for 'bliss' where Puran Singh, as the only one of the fourteen translators quoted here, proposed 'peace,' both his and her translations strongly reflect their subjective spiritual journeys (for Tulsi's life and detailed analysis of her translation, see Puri in the present volume). Whereas Tulsi's 'bliss' points to the presence of strong emotion(s) (happiness, ecstasy), Puran Singh's 'peace' suggests a withdrawal from emotion/s and an evolved self, possibly even Buddhist influence at the level of verbalising mystic experience.

While Tulsi was more strictly anchored in the Sikh tradition, Puran Singh, though born and brought up as a Sikh, came under the influence of Buddhism during his stay in Japan. Thereafter, he became the follower of the Hindu mystic, Rama Tirtha (1873-1906), returning to Sikhism later in life. In view of Puran Singh's mysticism and spiritual trajectory, it is only natural that attaining *anand* would have been to him, a one-time tonsured Buddhist monk, equivalent to attaining 'peace'; more so when the term be read in conjunction with the expression *sahaja seti*, variously rendered, as attested by the quoted examples, as 'easily', 'with ease', 'without effort', '[by way of] spontaneous [...] swell', 'all-too-spontaneously', 'with poised mind'; but also, 'following the gentle path of *sahaj*', 'in the state of *Sahaj* [poise]'. The translators were clearly grappling to convey the 'ease' with which *anand* might be attained by trying to bring out in English the undertext of spiritual quest and spontaneity of mystical communion. Besides, *sahaj* hints at a more nuanced, broader context with links to earlier metaphysical traditions, both Buddhist and Hindu (Kvaerene, 1975; Olivelle, 1997), where, as narrated by one modern practitioner, "the ecstasy (*ānanda* [Sanskrit]) that he feels in those moments in which he 'melts into' God-consciousness can be called 'peace' (*śānti*)" (DeNapoli, 2018, p. 10).

The now largely forgotten translation by Sher Singh, similar in style to Puran Singh's, appeared in 1937 as Tract No. 11 of The Bengal Sikh Missionary Association, Calcutta. Interestingly, as explained in the Preface, the original *gurbanī* verses are given, "for the convenience of the readers" (Man, 1937, p. 6), in Roman transliteration, clearly targeting readers unfamiliar with the *gurmukhī* script. Moreover, the actual translation is preceded by an Introduction (Sher Singh, 1937, pp. 7-39) where the author explains: "I have divided Introduction into two parts: the first which is easy, so easy that even school children may read it with pleasure, and the second which is difficult, divinely difficult, which is mastered only when the above Lamp is lit" (p. 3). Thus, the setting out of the meanings of *Anand* in such an elaborate, well thought-out format whereby the translation is preceded by a lengthy exposition brings to mind Tulsi's publications. In Tulsi's words, "[t]o make it more vivid, more vital and more intense, the dissertation [preceding translation] has been given in the form of dialogue" (Tulsi, 1981, p. 15). Sher Singh's English rendering and its paratexts are thus mirrored in Tulsi's (including her very un-Indian sounding turn of phrase, 'the nine muses'), making one wonder whether it would not be fruitful to examine her translation work in the light of the tract literature of her formative period. Interestingly, Sher Singh seems to be the first of our translators to introduce 'bliss' for *anand* though to establish whether this use is unique in this period would require further study.

Example 3: Sher Singh

Bliss, bliss, O my mother, there is bliss;
I have found **the True One** —
I found the Great one **spontaneously**
And lo! my heart singest songs of union!
The heavenly Muses and their offspring
Come to chant the Excellent Music — the Word-divine,
The strains of Symphony welled up in me,
And my heart is suffused with is suffused with love — incarnadine!
There is, O Nanak, there is,
Ecstatic joy and holy rapture,
I found **Him**, Him at last
Who is the truest Master! (1937, p. 40)

Each of the three examples presented above, is strongly marked by the translator's habitus (Simeoni, 1998) or his sociography (Guzman, 2013), a fact that may be used in teaching to foreground the translated text's links to the milieu in which it was produced. The differences within this corpus, and the subsequent as well, appear at first to be less the product of a gender divide and more of the personal backgrounds and worldviews of the translators in question. However, this statement appears flawed when the twelve translations by men are juxtaposed with the two translations by women, Tulsi's and Kaur's. While Tulsi's rendering, viewed alone, might overtly carry no marks of her gender, the very fact of her being probably the first published woman translator of the GGS, forces one to accord her work a second look. Book covers of Tulsi's publications boldly carry her name, that too appended by academic credentials, making a loud statement in a male dominated field of the GGS translation. As to Tulsi's linguistic choices and style, they bring to mind Ostriker's words describing women poets as "the thieves of language" (1985, pp. 315-316), a notion already discussed by Puri.

4. Do postcolonial translations by women suit better the contemporary teaching environment?

The post-Independence (1947) translations, especially of the complete GGS, were carried out in new locations marked by the Partition-enforced geographical shift to the East and tied to new academic centres of independent India. They deliberately attempted to move beyond the colonial, distancing themselves from the earlier translations of the Western scholars, but also from Sikh missionary tract literature in English. The Sikh scholars, who were no longer satisfied with fragmented renderings of key liturgical or theological writings, aimed now to bring out a monumental translation of the complete sacred text. In this way, by producing the most visible icon of identity for consumption in the pan-national public domain, they hoped to make the community, deeply scarred by the horrors of Partition and deprived of access to holy places now in Pakistan, whole once again.

Dissatisfaction with Macauliffe's mundane 'joy' (and, probably, Puran Singh's overly subjective 'peace'), led Gopal Singh, the first Sikh translator of the whole GGS (1960), to replace it with 'ecstasy' in order to convey the state in which the human being 'melts into' One Being and thus mark the sensation attending the event as something beyond mere joyfulness.

Example 4: Gopal Singh

I am in **Ecstasy**, O mother, for, I have Attained to my **Lord**.
Attained have I to my **Lord**, **all-too-spontaneously**, and, within my Mind, Rings the Music of Bliss.
(As if) through all the bejewelled *Rāgas* and their *families*, the fairies have come to Sing the **Lord's Word**.
Sing ye the **Lord's Word**, all those who have Enshrined it in the Mind.
Says Nanak: "I am in **Ecstasy**, for, I have Attained to my **Lord**." (1960, Vol. 3, p. 875)

Besides Gopal Singh path-breaking translation, the same year saw the publication of the UNESCO's *Selections from the sacred writings of the Sikhs* (1960). Reminiscent of Trumpp's or Macauliffe's authoritarian undertakings by way of offering to the global audience a sanitized English version of the Sikh sacred text, it was overtly authored by Sikh scholars but refined by a native English speaker and significantly tempered by the editorial interventions of several leading authorities in the field of religious studies. The project was entrusted to Sahitya Akademi (Indian Academy of Letters) and a committee of scholars led by Dr S. Radhakrishnan, a well-known philosopher and the then Vice-president of India. Besides Radhakrishnan's Introduction, the volume included a foreword by Arnold Toynbee.

Example 5: Trilochan Singh et al.

Rejoice with me, O mother,
That I have found **the True Guru**,
The True Guru have I found without penance,
And songs of rejoicings are in my heart.
The excellent Ragas and the race of the heavenly Muses
Have come to sing **hymns** to the Lord;
Those in whose hearts the **Lord** indwelleth,
Sing the **Song** of praise to Him.
Saith Nanak: My heart is full of **joy**
That I have found **the True Guru**. (2000, p. 126)

In this particular translation, extremely readable but low on our list of texts to be used in classroom, *anand* is rendered in the first line as a verb, greatly distorting the original and taking

all mystical experience out of it by shifting the focus from the attainment of a sublime state to quotidian rejoicing; *sabad* is rendered as ‘hymn’ or ‘song’, and *sahaj* as ‘without penance’, probably in view of global sensibilities coloured by Christian overtones; ‘True Guru’ is singled out as ‘**the** True Guru.’ Speaking of *Japji*, another composition found in this volume, Kaur Singh calls the whole undertaking a “malestream translation” and writes: “When we read the version of the Sikh *mulmantra* [opening verses of *Japji*] produced by the intellectual elites from east and west, we receive an entirely different meaning and sensibility” (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 38, our addition). This is a statement which can also be applied to the *Anand* stanzas or other GGS compositions. Possibly unsatisfied with the outcome, Khushwant Singh subsequently produced a more poetic translation of the hymns under his own name (Singh, 2003).

Manmohan Singh’s translation, which appeared in the 1965 volume, reverted to Macauliffe’s ‘joy,’ retained Macauliffe’s ‘True Guru’ but changed his ‘God’ to the probably less theistic ‘Lord.’

Example 6: Manmohan Singh

Joy has welled up, O my mother, for I have obtained my **True Guru**.
The **True Guru** I have found **with ease** and within my mind resound the music of bliss.
The gem like measures and their families, have come to hymn the Guru’s **word**.
They who enshrine the **Lord** in their mind, sing the **Gurbani** of the Lord.
Says Nanak, **joy** has ensued and I have attained the **True Guru**. ([1965] 2006, Vol. 6, p. 2991)

McLeod’s 1984 rendering, targeting primarily a Western audience, gets lavish praise from Shackle as “[having] the great advantage of being the work of a native English speaker capable of properly reproducing English rhyming patterns” (Shackle, 2005, p. 37), privileging once again linguistic skills of a non-Indian English language practitioner. The text reads well on its own but the use of words such as ‘soul’, ‘glory’, ‘songs of gladness’, by sacrificing the particular for the universal, makes it close to the generic Christian prayer.

Example 7: McLeod

When the **Guru** comes, O mother, **joyous bliss** is mine; || Boundless blessing, mystic rapture, rise within my soul. || Surging music, strings of glory, fill my heart with joy; || Breaking forth in **songs** of gladness, praise to **God** within. || Comes the **Guru**, I have found him; **joyous bliss** is mine. (1984, p. 100)

Talib’s translation, which comes next, is still widely used despite being overly literal and not easy to read due to convoluted syntax. Like McLeod’s, it has ‘bliss’ (without a modifying adjective); it also chooses to substitute ‘True Guru’ by an uneasy sitting (in Indian context) ‘holy Preceptor’. Moreover, following Gopal Singh and Manmohan Singh, probably to distance itself from Hindu idiom, it uses ‘Lord’ for *harī*.

Example 8: Talib

Mother mine! **Bliss** have I obtained,
By the **holy Preceptor**’s touch.
With poised mind **holy Preceptor** have I found;
The mind in jubilation revels:
Fairy songsters of the jewel music have descended the holy **Word** to sing.
Sing you all the **Lord’s Word** who in the self have lodged it:
Saith Nanak: **Bliss** have I found by the holy **Preceptor**’s touch. ([1987] 2003, Vol. 3, p. 1878)

The two translations by women, i.e., Tulsi (1990) and Kaur Singh (1995), discussed by Puri in this volume, follow chronologically that of Talib but, as Puri reveals, Tulsi's renderings show most affinity with those of Puran Singh or Sher Singh, while Kaur Singh's showcase not only their author's scholarship but also her feminist worldview.

Example 9: Tulsi

O mother! I have attained **Divine Bliss**. Enlightenment of the eternal **Lord!**
 With the revealment of Truth, the force of evil vanished. My Inner self echoed with
 blissful, devotional and sacred songs.
All the nine muses felt inspired to sing the Divine word, in melodious strain, in
 harmonious course.
 Let all sing the Divine Word in chorus, who have attained the Lords.
 Nanak, **Divine Bliss**, Delightful spirit, Enlightenment of the Eternal Lord, has been
 attained. (1990, p. 25)

Kaur Singh's rendering, totally different in style to Tulsi's, appeared five years later, in 1995. It is characterised by beautiful simplicity of language and amazing fidelity to the original. Having this work in mind and reiterating some earlier translations, including the *Anand* stanza, McLeod writes: "The only translator who hitherto has used gender-free language is Kaur Singh. My earlier shortcomings in earlier works are acknowledged" (McLeod, 2010, p. 313). References and bibliographical details reveal Kaur Singh's deep familiarity with virtually all preceding translations, which she examines through a feminist lens (Kaur Singh 2007, 2017). She does mention that she did not use Macauliffe's version while working on her own for the simple unavailability of the cumbersome six-volume edition at her USA college in the pre-internet era (Kaur Singh, 2017, p. 35).

Example 10: Kaur Singh

My mother, I am in **bliss**, for I have found my **True Guru**,
 The **True Guru** I found so **easily**,
 my mind rings with felicitations.
Jewel-like melodies with their families and fairies from afar
 have come to sing the Word within me.
 Those with minds that house the **Divine**,
 they sing the sacred Word.
 Nanak says, I am in **bliss** for I have found my **True Guru**. (2019 [1995], pp. 133-134)

Contemporary poetic translations such as Khushwant Singh's (2003) and Kartar Singh Duggal's (2004) take more liberties with the original, unwittingly (or maybe not) emulating Puran Singh and Sher Singh. Moreover, their tone is deeply personal and intimate, like that of the original. While both Khushwant Singh and Kartar Singh Duggal prefer to retain *sahaj* untranslated, with Duggal glossing it as 'poise', in his usual iconoclastic mode Khushwant Singh imagines *parī/s* as 'fairy-like houris', introducing a slightly oriental/Islamicate element, *houris/s*, into the chaste Sikh discourse. Nor does he shy away from using the possibly sectarian 'Hari' where other translators, with the exception of Kaur Singh, have preferred the more nondenominational 'Lord' or 'God.' True to her feminist worldview, Kaur Singh opts for the genderless 'Divine.'

Example 11: Khushwant Singh

Mother, my heart is full of **joy**
 For I have found my **true guru**;
 I found the **true guru** following the gentle path of *sahaj*
 My heart resounds with cries of felicitation
 Jewel-like ragas and their families of fairy-like houris

Have come to sing **hymns** of praise;
 They within whom **Hari** resides, divine **hymns** sing
 Says Nanak, I have attained **bliss** because the **true guru** I did find. (2003, p. 158)

As mentioned earlier, Duggal's is the only translation of the complete GGS by a person not from within the academia, and one needs to keep in mind the fact that such a venture requires of the writer-turned-translator a much greater consistency in the matter of terms and expressions than were he merely translating a stand-alone *shabad* [hymn].

Example 12: Duggal

Mother dear! I am in **bliss**,
 I've imbibed my **True Guru**.
 The **True Guru** I've imbibed in the state of *Sahaj*,* [*poise]
 My mind is in jubilation true.
 The master musicians and the fairies of their families
 Have descended to present the **Shabad** as a crew.
 He who has blessed me with the **Word**, I adore my Beau.
 Says Nanak, I am in **bliss**
 I've imbibed my **True Guru**. (2004, Vol. 3, pp. 2071-2072, gloss by Duggal)

The collaborative translation by Shackle and Mandair employs, like Kaur Singh's version, simple language which is easily accessible to modern global readers, and clearly avoids most of the pitfalls of the earlier renderings. Shackle confesses to his preference for "working in a two-person team as the best way to stay alert to serious error of accuracy or judgement" (Shackle & Mandair, 2005, p. 37). While chastising other diasporic renderings "as stiffly close to the style of the Indian English translations" (p. 37), he praises Kaur Singh for breaking the "restrictive mould" and calls her work "the first translation by a woman and the first consciously to attempt to produce a gender-neutral version suitable for a diaspora" (2005, p. 37). Shackle was involved in reading Kaur Singh's draft (p. 37) as one of the five male reviewers of her work prior to publication (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 38), and admits to having "disagreed fundamentally about many issues, including the linguistic bending away from the masculine" (Shackle, 2005, p. 37). The difference is evident when one compares his own co-authored translation with Kaur Singh's, with which it clearly competes for Western or even global readership and classroom presence.

Example 13: Shackle and Mandair

O mother, what **bliss** I can feel, I have found my **true guru**.
Without effort I've found him, my mind rings with songs of rejoicing,
 With their consorts, rich ragas have come to sing **hymns**.
 Sing a **hymn** to the **Lord** who is housed in your hearts.
 What **bliss** I can feel, Nanak says, I have found my **true guru**. (2005, p. 92)

The English translation available online at srigranth.org, probably first port of call for today's readers, including students and teachers, makes use of all earlier English iterations and follows a four-fold format: each line is first given in *gurmukhī*, then in *devanagarī* (a script used to write Sanskrit and Hindi), the Roman transliteration and, finally, the English rendering. The format, by linking words in the text with a dictionary and by providing further links to the same words found elsewhere in the text, allows for easy search of specific words and their meanings throughout the whole GGS. But, as Kaur Singh points out, like most of the other translations, which espouse "patriarchal gender paradigms" and "Jewish and Christian vocabulary and worldview", "[t]he website srigranth.org uses the terms 'God' 5,195 times, 'Lord' 7,500 times,

and ‘Soul’ 1,315 times! And so very often there is literally nothing in the original to correspond with them!” (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 37). In the stanza discussed in this study, this is evidenced by the occurrence of ‘Word’ and ‘Lord’, besides the incongruous sounding ‘celestial harmonies’, with all that this image might entail to a student of religion.

Example 14: srigranth.org

I am in **ecstasy**, O my mother, for I have found my **True Guru**.
I have found the **True Guru**, with **intuitive ease**, and my mind vibrates with the music of bliss.
The jewelled melodies and their related celestial harmonies have come to sing the Word of the **Shabad**.
The **Lord** dwells within the minds of those who sing the **Shabad**.
Says Nanak, I am in **ecstasy**, for I have found my **True Guru**. (GGS 917)

All fourteen versions of the stanza presented above form a large enough corpus to provide us with a historical perspective of Sikh sacred texts and identify certain trends that would have played a crucial role in the manner those texts were selected and translated. The framework showcasing the *Anand* stanza could be used for employing other text/s as long as the historical frame is inclusive enough. Our study however brought home certain important factors, namely, the subjective nature of translation choices and the very personal nature of the end product – the translated and published text. In our view all these factors could be used creatively in classroom to draw students to engage with sacred texts in novel ways while highlighting the long absence of women translators in Sikh tradition and the amazing work by women, both in the field of translation as well as the exegesis, emerging of late.

5. Conclusions: the translators’ struggle and pedagogical suitability of contemporary, women-authored translations

In the Preface to *The sisters of the spinning wheel*, Puran Singh describes his translatorial venture in these words: “In moments of this joy and under the cool shades of ‘Guru Granth,’ I have tried to write down [...] a portion of the sweetness with which His Grace filled me at times” (Puran Singh, 1921, p. xxxix). Yet, unsatisfied with the results, he adds, “I only publish these fragments in the joy of my total failure at an attempted rendering of a few pieces from ‘Guru Granth’ into English” (p. xl). Tulsi simply states that “[t]he rendering, the exegesis and the commentary has been done to bring out the signification and the connotation cupped in the divine verses. Effort has been made to remain true to the original message” (Tulsi, 1981, p. 15). Undoubtedly, it is ‘the message’, hidden in the “conceptual density of the discourse” (Wendland, 2004, p. 169) that needs to be teased out and transported into another linguistic medium and literary garb, a dilemma felt most acutely by creative writers, deeply in need of sharing their visceral understanding of the Ineffable with their audience.

This creative struggle is probably best articulated by Attar Singh, a literary scholar with an in-depth knowledge of the GGS. In his analysis of Puran Singh’s translations, he observes that “these translations offer an interesting study of the problems besetting transference of the products of a particular cultural ethos into a very different and foreign tongue” (Attar Singh, 1969, p. 16) and sums up such a translation project in words evoking Derridean impossibility: “The total devotional atmosphere surrounding the word-patterns gets dissipated and they unexpectedly emerge earthen, sensuous and, one may even say, profane.” He notices as well certain salient traits inherently present in poetic renderings of sacred texts, here, of Puran Singh’s hymns by Guru Nanak, but his observations are also applicable to Tulsi’s rendition of *Anand* or to other poetic translations produced under similar conditions: “[...] interesting

feature of these translations is that there is invariably an expansion of meaning. Guru Nanak's compositions are remarkable for their terse and pithy expression. The clusters of condensed meanings forming around different words and images cannot be satisfactorily rendered into another language except by expanding them" (p. 16).

In her discussions on the existing translations, Kaur Singh, possibly unfamiliar with Tulsi's English renderings of *gurbānī*, addresses herself mainly to the work of male translators, both Sikh and non-Sikh, and, following Spivak (1993, p. 183), highlights the need for an intimate relationship with the original (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 34). Of the translatorial ventures of the latter group of academics, she writes, "for whatever reasons then, be it their personal proclivities, religious ideologies, or academic methods, non-Sikh scholars have been unable to surrender themselves completely to 'the special call' of the Sikh text" (p. 35). Eschewing all translations coming "from the pens of male elites", she argues, possibly from her own experience as an invested reader and translator, but also an academic teaching Sikh texts, that "the touch of the translator must not be heavy-handed – that would wall in the meaning – but, rather, delicate and tender so that the original shines forth with its endless possibilities" (p. 47). Kaur Singh's open, gender neutral approach reflects both her personal worldview and the global trend among female translators to reclaim their authority by re-reading and re-translating source texts in a conscious and nuanced manner. As this approach was not yet available to Tulsi in her time, her decision to author and publish the first woman-authored translation of GGS was in itself a daring act of subversion.

Whereas early translations such as Trumpp's, Macauliffe's, or even Puran Singh's, sought to introduce the yet unknown religion and its scripture to the West, later translations by Sikh intellectuals such as Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Sher Singh and other writers of the Sikh missionary tracts often followed reformist agendas. The post-Independence period saw the re-grouping of the Sikh scholarship. Scholars like Gopal Singh, Manmohan Singh, Talib and others devoted themselves to producing complete English translations of the GGS meant for the Sikh community, be it in India or abroad, though they hoped their English renderings might be of interest to other readers as well. The translations by McLeod or Shackle and Mandair, but also Kaur Singh, targeted predominantly non-Sikh students of religion as well as the general reader. The poetic translations authored by Puran Singh, Sher Singh, Baljit Kaur Tulsi, Khushwant Singh or Kartar Singh Duggal form a category of their own, not least because of their highly literary, personal style. The ecstatic utterings in the poetic mode remain, however, the sole prerogative of the two most spiritual-minded of the discussed translators, Puran Singh and Baljit Kaur Tulsi. Neither of them shies from attributing their translatorial impulses to their mystical experience of the divine. There is also a very intimate and personal dimension to all the translations by Kaur Singh, further reinforced by the modern idiom and close adherence to the spirit of the original, although without the poetic stylistics of the sacred text. Kaur Singh's volume, which was recently re-published by Penguin Classics (2019; earlier editions 1995, 2001) and is also available as an e-book, is set to become the most-read and most easily accessible globally, making it the first choice for modern classroom, even more so when accompanied by her texts on translation in the contexts of Sikh scriptures (cf. Kaur Singh, 2007; Kaur Singh, 2017; Kaur Singh, 2019, pp. 38-46).

Our survey of fourteen different translations of *Anand*, none of them meant for liturgical use, revealed a variety of purposes and target audiences, while simultaneously betraying strong influence of the respective translators' habitus. All of them appear to have been guided by personal predilections and wider social context, with the two women translators, however, breaking the 'restrictive mould' and making their mark in more than one way. Kaur Singh, who eschews 'expansion of meaning' in favour of verbal simplicity, sees the translation of Sikh

scriptures, including her own contribution, to be an on-going process. She not only believes that “translations must continue on, and they must be carried out by both men and women”, but also subscribes to the opinion that they “must be renewed every generation” (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 47), an astute comment resonating strongly with current trends in the translation of sacred texts meant for modern readers (cf. Long, 2005; Şerban, 2005), including those in classroom.

The choice of texts for a religious studies classroom within a higher education setting is daunting if the instructor and the students are not conversant with the language of the originals and have to rely on translations. In our experience, such selection depends on several factors such as the personal preferences of the teacher, the availability of translations, and the goals of the course. For instance, when teaching the literary traditions of the Indian subcontinent the professor might be well advised to opt for poetic renditions which highlight the aesthetic value of religious texts. On the other hand, in courses on the religious traditions of South Asia one may opt for more academic or literal translations containing annotations and commentaries, explanatory footnotes, and prefaces, i.e., paratexts that provide further information. Obviously, a teacher would rather not choose archaic translations that make the text more difficult to read and, consequently, even more remote, adding an extra layer of difficulty to verses that are already challenging on account of their religious content. In fact, Kaur Singh’s renditions can be instructively used in courses on feminism in South Asia as an illustration of the recontextualization of sacred texts’ translations that ‘write-back’ to the colonial and the patriarchal by focalising gender, post-colonial and contemporary sensitivity.

In the present study of English renderings of the opening verses of *Anand* we have argued that the Derridean impossibility and necessity of translation may be circumvented, within a teaching environment, through a thoughtful choice of the versions to be read in the classroom. The chronological arrangement of the translated stanza showcased in section four allowed us to analyse the material both from the diachronic and synchronic perspective. Having foregrounded certain differences (and similarities) in the presented translations which we attributed to historical factors and subjective choices of the translators, we then focused our attention on the text(s) most suitable for classroom use, taking into account variables such as level at which the course is offered, time allotted to the particular text, pedagogical goal of the given engagement, personal interests of the students or instructors, thus coming up with a number of possible configurations in which texts might be read and discussed, with strong preference for lucid, modern renderings like Kaur Singh’s.

Hypothetically, the ideal though for the most part utopian option would be to introduce students to several renderings of the text, giving them the opportunity to reflect on the reasons behind different translation choices. As argued by Kaur Singh (2000, p. 75), opting for translations that are archaic, veiled in Judeo-Christian imagery and its conceptual framework, and insensitive to the reforming and promoting gender equality spirit of the original Sikh faith, “managed to make the rich and inclusive literature of the Sikhs so foreign and alien” right at the onset; however, an attentive choice of an English rendering in the classroom and beyond has the potential to reverse that course.

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