Mythical and historical time in the author portraits of the Persian puranic translator Anandghan ‘Khwush’: fl. 1790–1795

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Mythical and Historical Time in the Author Portraits of the Persian Puranic Translator Anandghan 'Khwush' (*fl.* 1790–1795)

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Abstract

Between the years 1790 and 1795, the Persian-educated Brahmin Anandghan 'Khwush' translated the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa*, *Gayāmāhātmya*, and *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* from Sanskrit into Persian. In addition to these translations, Khwush also composed a Persian *maṯnavī* in two volumes and produced a *dīvān*, i.e., a collection of his poetry. All of these manuscripts—fifteen in total, currently held at the British Library—include a frontispiece illustration, and at least seven of them portray Khwush himself in various mythical settings. In this article, I examine the author portraits of Anandghan Khwush as paratexts and thus focus on their relationship to the texts they accompany. These portraits, as I show, transport the author to a mythical time and place to offer a fuller image of his persona, not only as a translator but also as a Vaiṣṇava devotee. Furthermore, these author portraits present Khwush as an eyewitness to central mythical events, and thus serve to establish his status as a reliable translator and enhance the authoritativeness of his vision of the past. Anandghan Khwush's author portraits, I argue, offer a distinct understanding of which moments are worthy of visual commemoration, as well as a unique sense of the relationship between past and present.

Keywords: Purana; Persian; translation; author portrait; eighteenth century

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Introduction

This article explores the relationship between author portraits and the texts to which they are attached.[1] Drawing on Gerard Genette's study of paratextuality, it discusses author portraits as paratexts and seeks to understand the functions author portraits serve and the visual language they use in establishing their position vis-à-vis texts and other paratexts, such as prefaces.[2] Specifically, this research looks at the author portraits contained in the massive literary oeuvre of the Banaras-based brahman Anandghan 'Khwush' (*fl.* 1790–1795). Khwush, educated in Sanskrit and Persian, was commissioned by the British Resident of Banaras to translate three Sanskrit works into Persian for him: the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa*, *Gayāmāhātmya*, and *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*. Khwush also composed original Persian poetry in a range of poetic forms. These works—translations and original poetry—survive in fifteen volumes, all of which contain (or originally contained) frontispiece illustrations. Seven of the surviving illustrations portray Khwush himself alongside some of the legendary protagonists of the stories he translated and the poems he composed, including Rāma, Hanumān, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Skanda, and Kṛṣṇa.

The discussion opens with an overview of the history of Sanskrit-Persian translations from the Mughal and colonial periods, highlighting the limitations of the widely used construct of a "translation movement" in early modern South Asia. It also explores how English literary culture in the eighteenth century influenced British expectations and opinions of Persian translations of Sanskrit texts. The focus then shifts to Khwush's religious, professional, and intellectual circles in Banaras and beyond. A brief history of the practice of attaching author portraits to literary works provides the context for a detailed analysis of the author portraits in two manuscripts of the Persian translation of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, entitled *Razmnama* and commissioned by Emperor Akbar

1 All transliterations from Persian and Arabic follow IJMES. Attention is given to *majhūl* letters, common in Indo-Persian pronunciation. Transliteration from Sanskrit follows IAST. All translations are mine, unless stated otherwise. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement no. 101054849 (PURANA). For their helpful comments and suggestions, my sincere gratitude goes to Peter Bisschop, Elizabeth Cecil, Sanne Dokter-Mersch, and Olli-Pekka Littunen. I further wish to thank Ursula Sims-Williams and Supriya Gandhi for their assistance in tracking down the manuscripts and illustrations discussed in this research. Exploring the University of Chicago *Razmnama* manuscript discussed here together with Yael Rice and Persis Berlekamp in 2017 and then again in 2023 has motivated me to further pursue such text and image analysis. Finally, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their generous suggestions and corrections.

2 Genette (1997) discusses only textual paratexts, such as titles, prefaces, and other verbal utterances. He does not address other visual or material paratexts, such as author portraits. In this analysis, I am inspired by Enenkel's (2012) study of several author portraits of Petrarch as paratexts.

in the 1580s. I argue that these group portraits, depicting the members of the translation team in moments of exchange, are presented as celebrations of the Mughal court's cosmopolitanism and religious openness at a concrete historical moment.

This analysis serves as a foundation for the final section of this article. Unlike the *Razmnama* author portraits, Anandghan Khwush's portraits transport the author to a mythical time and place to offer a multifaceted image of his persona—not only as a translator, but also as a devotee. This dual image is further supported by the prefaces Khwush attached to his translations, where he discusses the circumstances under which he was commissioned to produce translations, but also cites divine inspiration to explain his literary undertakings in devotional terms. Situating Khwush in a mythical time in the portraits, as an eyewitness to central events described in his translations, establishes his authority as a reliable translator and bridges the gap between the mythical time of puranic composition and the historical time of translation.

Persian Translations of Sanskrit Literature: From Mughal to Colonial Rule

The ever-increasing engagement of Persian authors with Sanskrit literature, history, and sciences between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries is well known and well documented. Many translation projects have been noted in descriptive lists (e.g., Mujtabai 1978; Shukla 1988), and some—like the Persian translations of the *Mahābhārata*, *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, and *Pañcākhyāna*—have been the focus of more critical analysis in recent years (Alam 2016; Truschke 2016; Nair 2020; Kotler 2022; d'Hubert 2023; Kotler 2024; Smolin 2024). Unsurprisingly, much scholarly attention has been given to the many translation projects undertaken at the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), who is famous for having promoted such enterprises from the 1570s onward, and to translations produced for prince Dara Shukoh (d. 1659) to satisfy his interest in the comparative study of religions.

These translation activities at the Mughal court between 1570s and 1650s are sometimes described in scholarship as the causal beginning of a larger "translation movement" that continued beyond the confines of the court. Syed Ali Akbar Rizvi, for example, argued that "the Sanskrit translations of Akbar's reign provided a new intellectual outlet for the energies of later Persian scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Rizvi 1975, 217).[3] The term "Mughal translation movement" is thus widely used in contemporary scholarship without being sufficiently critiqued nor with the

3 Similarly, Audrey Truschke has suggested that early seventeenth-century Persian translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which were produced outside of the court, responded to the Akbari Persian *Ramayan* from the 1580s and attempted to speak to Mughal imperial concerns. See Truschke 2016, 214–217.

notion of "movement" being properly discussed.[4] A movement, if we could even use the term in a premodern, pre-print context, suggests a group of people working together, with a shared, well-considered goal to effect change, often in society, politics, or art. A movement implies a people's agenda, not something imposed from above by a patron, and it assumes an awareness on the individual's part that they are a part of something bigger.[5] The drastically different backgrounds, concerns, and goals of the authors who produced Persian translations from Sanskrit between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, then, are obscured by the term "movement."

The strong association between Persian and Islam in scholarship on early modern South Asia has often led researchers to examine Sanskrit-Persian translations primarily as sites of religious encounters between Hinduism and Islam. Persian, however, was not used exclusively by Muslims. After Akbar had declared Persian the language of administration at all levels in the late sixteenth century, Persian education expanded significantly and began drawing large groups of Hindus who were looking to establish a career in the empire's service (Alam 2003). By the end of the seventeenth century, more and more *kāyasth*s, *khatrī*s, and brahmans were joining madrasas to acquire an education in Persian language and literature. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these Persianized Hindus became some of the most prolific Persian authors in South Asia, and the biggest audience for Persian literature on Hinduism (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2004; Gandhi 2020).

During the second half of the eighteenth century, a new audience for literature on Hinduism written in Persian emerged in South Asia, namely, British officers and other European Orientalists who were keenly interested in knowledge about Hindu law, practices, belief systems, and pilgrimage (Ernst 2003). It is not that those British readers were looking for Perso-Islamic interpretations of Hindu texts; it is just that most of them could not read Sanskrit and had to rely on the Persian language, which they had learned from very early on to communicate with local Persianate rulers. The reliance on Persian was thus a necessity and not a choice. The British did not believe any Persian translation of any Sanskrit work could represent the original meanings faithfully and objectively.[6] Sir William Jones discusses these old Persian translations on several occasions, stating "that a man, who knows the

4 Recent references to a "translation movement" in the Mughal context can be found in Ernst 2003, 173; Haider 2011, 122; Nair 2014, 393; Truschke 2016, 101.

5 In the modern period, translation movements have often been instrumental in broader resistance and activist movements against colonialism, censorship, and political oppression. See Tymoczko 2010, 1–22.

6 Clair Gallien (2021) has recently discussed the ways in which British Orientalists downplayed the role of vernacular languages, Persian included, in enabling them access to Sanskrit literature, and how the British search for linguistic and religious origins marginalized Persian in Orientalist scholarly endeavors. Brian A. Hatcher (2005, 687), too, defines the work of William Jones as an attempt to "out-pandit the pandits."

Hindus only from Persian books, does not know the Hindus" and "that an European, who follows the muddy rivulets of Muselman writers on India, instead of drinking from the pure fountain of Hindu Learning, will be in perpetual danger of misleading himself and others."[7] His opinions of Persian interpreters and translators who assisted the British in courts were not any better. In 1785 he wrote that he was almost "tempted to learn Sanskrit, that I may check on the pandits in the court," and complained that "it was of the utmost importance that the stream of Hindu law should be pure: for we are entirely at the devotion of the native lawyers, through our ignorance of Sanskrit."[8]

Such Persian translations of Sanskrit texts were not to be trusted, not only because of the religious bias colonial officers held against Muslims and the Persian language; they were also considered unacceptable according to the translation standards of domestication and transparency that ruled English literary culture at the time. By the late eighteenth century, the discourse of fluency in translation had become prevalent in English translation, and translators as well as critics measured English translations against this idea (Venuti 2008, 35–82). The influential and oft-quoted *Essay on the Principles of Translation* by Alexander Fraser Tytler (1791) sums up the main ideas by which English translations were evaluated at the time: 1) the translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work; 2) the style and manner of writing should be of the same character as the original; and 3) the translation should have all the ease of an original composition (Robinson 2002, 209).

The British thus resented the fact that they had to rely on Persian translations, with their own conventions and literary standards, to access Sanskritic knowledge on Hinduism. As will become clear in the following pages, the Persian translators who were hired by British officials seem to have been aware of this sensibility, and thus fashioned their translations, to the best of their ability, in line with the literary expectations of their patrons. Persian translations produced for British patrons, then, are characterized by very plain language, written in an almost colloquial register, with minimal religiously charged terminology, as if to fashion Persian as a neutral, nonsectarian, transparent language through which the meanings of the original texts could be reflected with as little obstruction as possible.

Anandghan Khwush's Work and Networks

The first few years of the 1790s were a busy time for Anandghan Khwush. After moving from Shahjahanabad to Banaras in 1789, he was able to gain employment as

7 Quoted in Gallien 2021, 233.

8 Quoted in Cohn 1996, 29.

a professor of Sanskrit at the newly founded Banaras Sanskrit College.[9] During his tenure there, between 1790 and 1795, Khwush was commissioned by the then-British Resident of Banaras, Jonathan Duncan, to translate the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa*, *Gayāmāhātmya*, and *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* from Sanskrit into Persian. The *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* ("Book of Kāśī") is an influential medieval Sanskrit text dedicated to the glorification and sanctification of Kāśī, or Banaras. It attributes itself to the much larger *Skandapurāṇa*, and came to be known as a subsection of it.[10] The *Gayāmāhātmya*, or "Glory of Gayā" similarly narrates mythical stories related to the ancient city of Gayā to establish its sacredness, and is considered to be a part of the larger *Vāyupurāṇa*. *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* ("Spiritual *Rāmāyaṇa*") is a Sanskrit allegorical retelling of the Sanskrit epic that brings together Advaita Vedāntic metaphysics and Rāma devotionalism.[11]

Translating all these texts was a massive enterprise: while Khwush's Persian *Gayāmāhātmya* is only 56 folios long, his *Kāśīkhaṇḍa*, entitled *Bahr al-Najat* ("Sea of Liberation") in Persian, consists of five volumes, with an average of 200 folios each; his *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* consists of seven volumes (of which only six survive), ranging in length from 50 to 140 folios. Besides these translations, during the same years Khwush also composed a Persian-language collection of anecdotes in rhyming couplets in two 60-folio volumes, entitled *Masnavi-yi Kajkulah* ("Couplets of the Haughty Beloved");[12] he additionally produced a 184-folio *dīvān*, also entitled *Kajkulah*, collecting hundreds of his *ghazals* and his stanzaic poetry, such as *mukhammasāt* and *musaddasāt*.[13] Both his *dīvān* and his *maṣnavī* are dedicated to Kṛṣṇa, his most beloved object of devotion. This is made clear by the author portraits attached to all three volumes (fig. 1) as well

9 The college was founded in 1791 by Jonathan Duncan, an East India Company officer who served as the Resident in Banaras between 1787 and 1795 before moving on to serve as the Governor of Bombay. He managed the affairs of the Bombay Presidency until his death in 1811. See Narain 1959, 169–177; Fleming 2020, 195. Anandghan's move from Shahjahanabad is mentioned by him in multiple prefaces to his translations, as well as in the autobiographical note he includes in his *maṣnavī*. See *Masnavi-yi Kajkulah*, f. 10v. Anandghan's ties with the Banaras Sanskrit College are mentioned in the preface of an 1804 English translation of Anandghan's *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*, written by the British officer Charles Boddam, who first became acquainted with Anandghan in 1794. See Boddam 1804, f. 4r.

10 The original *Skandapurāṇa*, of which the earliest known manuscript is dated to the early ninth century, is not divided into *khaṇḍa*s. Later compositions such as the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* attributed themselves to a longer *Skandapurāṇa*, but they were not a part of the earlier text. See Adriaensen et al. 1998.

11 The *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* is dated roughly to the late fifteenth century. For an overview of the scholarship on the text, as well as a study of certain episodes from it, see Allen 2011.

12 *Kajkulāh* literally means "having a slanted hat." It is lexicalized in early modern dictionaries, such as *Burhan-i Qatiʿ* and *Farhang-i Anandraj*, as referring to a self-involved, arrogant beloved, which serves as a common theme in Persian poetry. See Dihkhuda 1994.

13 These are two stanzaic forms of Persian poetry. The *mukhammas* is made of stanzas consisting of five lines, while the *musaddas* is made of stanzas consisting of six lines of poetry.

Figure 1. Anandghan Khwush kneels before Kṛṣṇa in the frontispiece illustration accompanying his *dīvān*. Kṛṣṇa holds his hand in *vitarka mudrā*, representing teaching or transmission of knowledge. Khwush holds a pen and writes in what seems to be Persian script, from right to left. From the archive of the British Library, *Divan-i Kajkulah*, IO Islamic 2963, f. 1r.

as by the hundreds of verses he dedicates to intimately express his love for Kṛṣṇa. In the *dīvān*'s opening *qaṣīda*, for example, he writes:

> *fadā bar kajkulah jānam namīdānam digar kas rā*
> *ghulam ān shāh-i shāhānam namīdānam digar kas rā*
> [. . .]
> *zi pāya mulk u malkūtān shudam az faẓl-i ān hanez*
> *ba khāk-i darash darbānam namīdānam digar kas rā*
> [. . .]

ba ātish ʿishq-i ān dilbar zi roz chand ay nāṣiḥ
zi sar tā pāy biryānam namīdānam digar kas rā
[. . .]
ba ān yak kajkulah dāram maḥabbat khūb u khwush yārān
namīdānam namīdānam namīdānam digar kas rā
(*Divan-i Kajkulah*, ff. 1r–2r)

I devote my soul to the beloved; I don't know anyone else
I am the slave of that king of kings; I don't know anyone else
From the lowest points of kingdoms and empires I've come this far through his grace
I am a porter at his doorstep; I don't know anyone else
Oh friend, for days I've been roasting completely, from head to toe
In the fire of my love for that beloved; I don't know anyone else
I enjoy fine love and good friends with that singular beloved
I do not, simply do not, know anyone else

Elsewhere, Khwush writes:

but-parastī rā ba-ʿishq-i khwud ishārat dāda ast
z-ān sabab zunnār u qashqa dosh u sar dārīm mā
qaum-i mā zunnār dārad but-parastī kār-i mā
ʿishq-i mā bar kajkulah ān rāh bar dārīm mā
(*Divan-i Kajkulah*, f. 10r)

We express our idol worship through our love for him
We thus wear the thread on our shoulders and the mark on our heads
We are brahmans and our job is idol-worshipping
Our love is directed at the haughty beloved

The prefaces Khwush composed for every volume of his translations praise Jonathan Duncan in a series of couplets reminiscent of earlier Persian practices of praise offered to a ruler or a patron. After mentioning Duncan's Mughal titles (*amīn al-mulk mumtāz al-daulat*), he glorifies him, among other things, as the "best among the learned Europeans" (*zubda-yi dānāyān-i farang*) and as the one "whose skill is taking down forts without a fight" (*tadbīrash qalʿa-gīr be-jang*) (*Bahr al-Najat*, vol. 1, f. 2v).

Khwush and Duncan were not the only two people involved in the production of these translations. All fifteen volumes of Khwush's work—translations as well as poetry—were copied by the same scribe, one Bholanatha, who seems to have been closely associated with the duo. In addition to his consistent, informative colophons, the scribe also signs every volume with a couple of contemplative verses about his fate. Slightly variating in each volume, he writes, for example, in the second volume of *Bahr al-Najat*:

duʿā dāram ṭamʿaz z̲āt-i ān kas
bikhwānad har ki īn nuskha muʿaẓẓam
nivishta bimānad siyah bar safed
navīsanda rā nīst fardā umed (*Bahr al-Najat*, vol. 2, f. 206r)

I pray that anyone who reads this great book
will wish the best upon this soul of mine
What's written will forever last, black on white
The writer, though, has no hopes for tomorrow[14]

In the *Gaya Mahatam*, he expresses similar ideas in different words:

salām mā ḥarīfān-i jahān rā
ki dunyā rā namībīnam baqāʾe
nivishtam nuskha bahr-i yādgārī
ki mānad az man makhzūn ba jāʾe
bikhwānad har ki īn nathr-i[15] *muʿaẓẓam*
kunad dar kār-i īn miskīn duʿāʾe (*Gaya Mahatam*, f. 56r)

Goodbye, my fellow men in this world
I don't see any permanency here
I wrote the book as a keepsake
that will be left of me in this place
May anyone who reads this great prose
Pray for this wretched one

It is hard to tell much more about Khwush's professional circles or about other people he was associated with. He had one more close acquaintance, though, in the British orientalist circles around Banaras. Charles Boddam (d. 1811), an East India Company employee who in 1793 was appointed magistrate in Saran District, Bihar, was a conversation partner of Khwush's. Boddam first met Khwush in 1794. He writes about his relationship with him as follows:

> On the year 1794 I became acquainted with Anand ghan, with whom I frequently conversed, and he, perceiving that I wished to obtain an insight into taste and literature, gave me a copy of his translation of the Ramayan, which he had lately finished. Being much pleased with this work I attempted to render it in English during the hours of leisure from my official associations. (Boddam 1804, f. 5v)

14 This last line is a stock phrase found at the end of many manuscripts from the eighteenth century onward.

15 The word appearing in the manuscript is *nasr*, but it does not make much sense in this context. The word *naṯr*, i.e., prose composition, is a better fit here. It is pronounced the same as *nasr*, and so it is possible the absentminded scribe made a spelling mistake here.

This passage is taken from Boddam's preface to his 1804 English translation of Khwush's Persian translation of the *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*. It is quite possible that he was further familiar with the other translations by Khwush, as he specifically mentions *purāṇa*s among the list of sources he consulted for the notes and explanations he added to his English translation (the other sources being "the researches of the asiatick society [. . .] and partly from communications made to me by learned pandits in this part of the country") (Boddam 1804, f. 5r).

Boddam's manuscript is of particular importance here not only because it sheds light on Khwush's circles, but also because it is heavily illustrated, and includes a portrait of Anandghan (fig. 2). Depicted as if walking through a plain-looking landscape, in this portrait Anandghan Khwush holds a walking stick and a book in what looks like green leather binding, characteristic of Islamic or Persian books. He wears a yellow *dhoti* and a pink shawl with red flowers as ornaments on the white fringes. He has one long beaded necklace on as well as two shorter ones. His sacred white Brahman thread is easily detectable. On his arms, chest, neck, and temples one can see white marks. Together with the V-shaped *tilaka* on his forehead, it becomes clear that these are all *ūrdhvapuṇḍra*, or the special Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* that indicates one's affiliation with Viṣṇu. On his head he wears a distinctive reddish cap with a floral pattern.

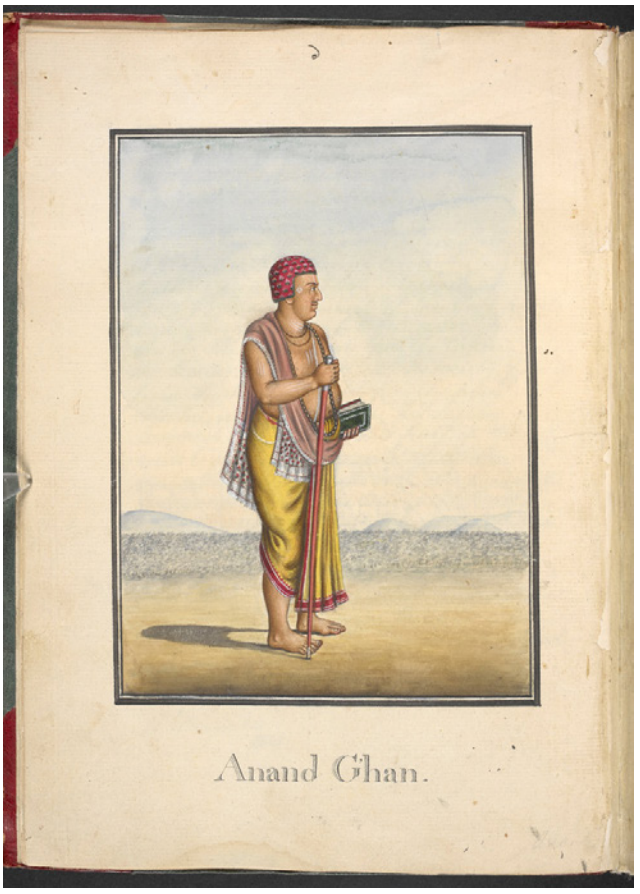

Figure 2. A portrait of Anandghan Khwush, included in Charles Boddam's 1804 English translation of Khwush's Persian translation of the Sanskrit *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*. From the archive of the British Library, MSS Eur C116/1 f. 6v.

This portrait bears striking similarities, in terms of the man's physical appearance, to one figure recurring in many of the frontispieces that accompany the Persian manuscripts of Khwush's that belonged to Duncan. The fact that the portrait in Boddam's manuscript includes an inscription bearing Anandghan's name allows us to determine without any doubt that it is Khwush who is depicted in various settings in the frontispiece illustrations opening the Persian manuscripts. Before moving on to analyzing Anandghan's depiction in those frontispieces, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of portraiture in South Asia and the functions of author portraits. Author portraits serve a range of purposes and are styled in different ways depending on the historical and cultural contexts in which books were produced, and delineating these differences will allow us to better situate Anandghan's portraits in art-historical and cultural terms.

Author Portraits in South Asia

Author portraits were not particularly widespread in early modern South Asia.[16] Sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century illustrated manuscripts of the Sanskrit epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, for example, sometimes contain depictions of their respective legendary composers, Vyāsa and Vālmīki. These figures, however, play roles in the narratives themselves, and thus, when depicted, it is always as part of the scenes in which they feature.[17] Around the same time, Kṛṣṇaite poets like Sūrdās or Jayadeva began popping up in illustrated manuscripts of their own devotional poetry, depicted in a fashion similar to that of Anandghan's portrait in figure 1 above, alongside their objects of devotion, i.e., Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.[18]

In Mughal manuscripts, authors are not often commemorated in visual language. Following earlier changes in Timurid manuscripts, recently discussed by Emine Fetvacı (2018), in which the author portrait gave way to portraits of patrons, royal patrons such

16 Early modern South Asian portraiture in general, however, has been the center of several recent publications. See Crill and Jariwala 2010; Branfoot 2018; Mumtaz 2023; Rice 2023.

17 Vālmīki in particular is often depicted in various scenes in *Rāmāyaṇa* manuscripts. In an early eighteenth-century manuscript from Udaipur (British Library, add. 15295, *f.* 2), for example, he is seen seated with Nārada in an illustration accompanying the early episodes of the *Bālakaṇḍa*. In the 1594 Persian *Rāmāyan* manuscript produced for Akbar's mother, Hamida Banu Begum, Vālmīki is depicted alongside Lava and Kuśa when they visit Rāma's court. See Seyller, Sardar, and Truschke 2020.

18 Jayadeva's author portrait can be found, for example, in an eighteenth-century manuscript written in Oriya script (British Library, Or. 13502, *f.* 2v). Sūrdās is depicted, for example, in an early eighteenth-century Mewari manuscript (Los Angeles County Museum, M.71.1.11). See Hawley 2009, 11.

as Akbar are sometimes depicted in frontispiece illustrations (fig. 3).[19] For a moment in the early seventeenth century, however, illustrated colophons, which derive from the author portraits of early Islamic manuscripts, became somewhat popular in Mughal manuscripts.[20] A 1602/3 manuscript of the *dīvān* of fourteenth-century poet Amir Hasan Dihlavi, for example, includes such an illustrated colophon, depicting the scribe at work, and next to him, a young boy who is burnishing paper (Beach and Welch 1978, 34–5). In 1610, an illustrated colophon was added to an older manuscript of the *Khamsa* by the thirteenth-century poet Nizami. The illustration depicts Daulat, the painter who was commissioned for the work by the Mughal emperor Jahangir himself, and the already-deceased scribe of the manuscript, ʿAbd al-Rahim ʿAnbarin Qalam (Rice 2023, 51–53).

Later in the nineteenth century, members of scribal groups in South Asia were depicted in colonial ethnographic paintings, too. Albums produced for British patrons, like Colonel James Skinner's 1825 *Tashrih al-Aqwam* ("An Exposition of Castes"); the Fraser Album, collected by William Fraser between 1815 and 1819; or the 1844 Delhi Book, commissioned by Sir Thomas Metcalfe, all include portraits of various members of the scribal castes. In these paintings, however, the scribes are not usually identified by name or in relation to a specific textual undertaking. They wear their traditional clothing and markers that would indicate their caste, and they are usually surrounded by the tools of their trade, such as pens, brushes, papers, inkstands, scrolls, etc. Quite differently from earlier Mughal-era portraits of scribes or portraits of Kṛṣṇaite poets, in these "company-style" paintings, scribes and painters are depicted like a frozen object in a museum, to satisfy the British patrons' desire to document and record contemporary India (Losty 2019, 17–20). In other words, establishing the relationship between an author and their work in visual terms was not a common practice in South Asia.

One famous and illuminating exception, though, can be found in *Razmnama* manuscripts, i.e., the Persian translation of the *Mahābhārata*, commissioned by the Mughal emperor Akbar and produced by a group of Sanskrit and Persian literati between 1582 and 1586. This translation was the flagship project undertaken at Akbar's court, and it was envisioned as a key element in Akbar's political self-fashioning: the most preeminent historians and authors at the court took part in its production, and the imperial

19 The patron's creative involvement in a literary production was quite common among Persianate rulers, most notably the Mughal emperor Akbar (d. 1605). Akbar was involved, for example, in the *Razmnama* translation project, as the Mughal-era historian Badaʾuni (d. 1615) tells us. In the early 1580s, Akbar presided over the learned gathering of translators for several nights, and Badaʾuni famously complained that during those sessions Akbar often wrongly suspected that he was trying to make interpolations (Rizvi 1975, 210–211). Akbar was also involved in Abu al-Fazl's composition of *Iyar-i Danish* (1588), and in Mustafa Khaliqdad's Persian translation of *Pañcākhyāna* (*c.* 1590). See Ruymbeke 2018; Kotler 2024.

20 On early Islamic author portraits, see Hoffman 1993.

Figure 3. A portrait of the Mughal emperor Akbar, sitting on his throne and talking to his vizier, Abu al-Fazl (on the left). Taken from a *Razmnama* manuscript, *c.* 1719–1748. Akbar commissioned the work and Abu al-Fazl penned a long preface for the book once the translation had been completed. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Special Collections, Codex Ms. 341, f. 10v.

copies made for Akbar and his milieu were illustrated by the best artists of the time (Truschke 2016). The unique translation process that involved a group of translators working in collaboration was commemorated in a group author portrait in one of the earliest surviving *Razmnama* manuscripts, dated 1598/99 (fig. 4).

This is the second-oldest known illustrated copy of the *Razmnama*. This manuscript, unlike the first *Razmnama* manuscript produced for Akbar—which is housed in the City Palace Museum in Jaipur, India, and has remained mostly off-limits—is better known to scholars, as pages from it were dispersed and are currently held in many

Figure 4. A group author portrait of Akbar's translation bureau. A *Razmnama* manuscript, dated 1598/99. Lewis M18. Courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department.

public and private collections in North America, Europe, and India.[21] As Yael Rice (2010) notes, this group author portrait presents a clear division between two distinct groups: at the top, there are four Muslim scholars who sit on a detailed floral carpet,

21 Of the 176 paintings contained in the first, now inaccessible, Akbari *Razmnama* manuscript, 147 are reproduced in Hendley 1884. Studies of the paintings included in the 1598/99 manuscript can be found, for example, in Meredith-Owens and Pinder-Wilson 1956; Das 1984; Seyller 1985.

and at the bottom, five Hindu brahmans sit on a floor with a checkered pattern. The two groups' costumes and appearances are largely indistinguishable, as they both wear the typical Mughal robe and a turban. Some of the Muslim figures have a beard, and some of them hold prayer beads. The men's foreheads in the lower part of the painting are adorned with *tilaka*, to identify them as Hindus. The main element that distinguishes between the two groups is the manuscripts they are depicted using in this scene; the Muslim group in the upper part of the painting is surrounded by codices, which is the standard format used for depicting Islamic manuscripts, while the figures at the bottom hold a scroll with Devanagari script.

Other, later *Razmnama* manuscripts also include such group author portrait. One early eighteenth-century *Razmnama* manuscript, potentially commissioned by the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah (*r.* 1719–1748) and currently held at the University of Chicago Special Collections, for example, contains a similar depiction of Akbar's translation bureau (fig. 5).

The painting's title, mentioned in the list of illustrations that accompanies every *parvan* in the manuscript, is "the group of experts on languages from all groups of society, hosted by Abu al-Fazl for the purpose of translating the *Mahabharat*" (*Mahabharat*, f. 1v). In the painting, eleven men are depicted sitting together and holding books. Their hand gestures suggest a conversation, albeit a somewhat more rigid one than the discussion depicted in the 1598/99 manuscript. Each figure is identified in both Persian and Devanagari. At the very top, wearing a pink garment, is Abu al-Fazl. Moving clockwise from him are two unnamed Persian scholars who are labeled as "learned" and "preserver" (*fāżil wa ḥāfiẓ*, or in Devanagari: *maulavī* and *hāphez*). Below them sit a Deccani man (in Devanagari: *dakṣaṇibrāhmaṇa*) and a Rajput man (in Devanagari: *mārvāḍi*). Facing them are a Kashmiri man, a Gujarati man, a Jain ascetic (identified in Persian as *srewara* and in Devanagari as *śevaḍa*), a European man (*firangī*), and two brahmans (*zunnār-dārān*; in Devanagari the inscription is only partially legible, but it might be that these two are identified as brahmans of Banaras, *brāhmaṇakāśivāle*).

Both group author portraits aim to capture a concrete historical time and to celebrate the erudition, effort, and multiculturalism that characterized the *Mahābhārata*'s Persian translation. But while this eighteenth-century group author portrait attempts to be more specific and detailed in the identification of the people who were historically involved in the translation project at Akbar's court in his capital Fatehpur Sikri, it seems to conflate two different enterprises that took place at the Mughal court. One is the *Mahābhārata* translation project, which involved figures like Naqib Khan and ʿAbd al-Qadir Badaʾuni, two prominent historians; Mulla Sheri, a Persian poet; and Sultan Thanisari, a fiscal administrator. On the Sanskrit side, the people involved were several brahmans, named Deva Miśra, Madhusūdana Miśra, Śatāvadhāna, Caturbhuja, and Shaykh Bhāvan (Truschke 2016, 104). Abu al-Fazl, celebrated in this eighteenth-century manuscript as the lead figure in the translation effort, was not in fact part of the translation group. Only after the completion of the translation was he asked by

Figure 5. A group author portrait of Akbar's translation bureau. A *Razmnama* manuscript, c. 1719–1748. Codex Ms. 341, f. 10r. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Special Collections.

Akbar to compose a preface to be attached to the *Razmnama*. Similarly, there is no historical evidence suggesting that any Jain ascetic was involved in the *Razmnama* project, nor was any European a part of it.

The presence of these figures in the portrait suggests that the painter conflated the *Razmnama* project with Akbar's well-known *Ibādatkhāna*, or House of Religious

Debates. The *Ibādatkhāna* was an institution established by Akbar in the 1570s to foster religious debates, initially between Shiʿa and Sunni Muslims, but later expanded to include religious scholars of different affiliations. As Abu al-Fazl explains in his *Akbarnama*, the official history of Akbar's reign, the group of scholars consisted of a "Sufi, philosopher, orator, jurist, Sunni, Shia, Brahman, Jati, Sevra [Jain monks], Charbak, Nazarene, Jew, Sabi (Sabian), Zoroastrian, and others" (Rezavi 2008, 200). A few Jesuit missionaries are known to have participated in the discussions, too.[22] It seems, then, that while the eighteenth-century illustrator wished to be historically precise in identifying the members of the translation group, he ended up confusing two different enterprises, probably due to the strong reputation of Akbar's court as a cosmopolitan court where people of different faiths and origins explored their religious curiosity.[23]

Against these Mughal attempts to visually establish the relationship between authors, patrons, and their textual production in concrete historical terms and to celebrate the moment of composition as a time of erudition and cosmopolitanism, the following sections of this study will explore the author portraits of Anandghan Khwush and the ways in which they are positioned vis-à-vis the textual contents of his works.

Anandghan Khwush's Figure as a Translator

To establish a clear image of Khwush as a translator, let us briefly consider his translation practices and the literary ideals that are reflected in his writing. The following discussion is based on the opening passages from his *Bahr al-Najat* (*Kāśīkhaṇḍa*). The opening pages of the first volume of *Bahr al-Najat*, immediately after Khwush's long preface, provide some illuminating examples of Khwush's approach to translation. From the way he tackles the transposition of the opening Sanskrit verses and the beginning of the story, it becomes clear that Khwush strived to produce a highly informational text, incorporating many additional explanations to elucidate puranic lore and Sanskrit terms. The language is plain, and only the occasional Persian verse adorns the text. Khwush closes every *adhyāya* with a couplet in praise of Kāśī, and scatters a few more verses here and there. It seems that most of these verses were composed by him in praise

22 On the continuous presence of Catholics at the Mughal court from Akbar's time onward, see Alam and Subrahmanyam 2009.

23 It is possible that the painter worked with an early sixteenth-century illustrated *Akbarnama* manuscript currently held at the Chester Beatty Library (MS 3, f.263v). Not only does the *Akbarnama* list all the participants of the *Ibādatkhāna*, just like this eighteenth-century group author portrait, but the manuscript also contains an illustration of the debates that took place there. The inclusion of Abu al-Fazl and two Jesuit priests, as well as the attention given to the books and scrolls that were used by the attendees, might suggest that this illustration served as a model for the portrait under discussion here.

of gods and places.[24] The many metatextual additions make it clear that Khwush knew the text's audience (i.e., Jonathan Duncan) was not familiar with puranic lore, and probably did not expect a stylistically elevated composition in accordance with Persianate standards of literature. The text begins with a *maṅgalācaraṇa* verse dedicated to Gaṇeśa. In Sanskrit, the puranic poet praises Gaṇeśa in the following words:

> *taṃ manmahe maheśānaṃ maheśānapriyārbhakam |*
> *gaṇeśānaṃ karigaṇeśānānanam anāmayam ||* (*Kāśīkhaṇḍa* 1.1)[25]
>
> We pay respects to that great lord Gaṇeśa, Śiva's dear young boy
> whose face is that of the lord of an elephant herd, who is free from disease

Khwush does not translate this verse in a literal, straightforward manner, nor does he attempt to praise Gaṇeśa in his own words; rather, he distances himself from the text, adds narrative context, and provides metatextual explanations regarding the verse's various elements:

> Among the *avatār*s, the twenty-second *avatār*—Sri Bed Biyas Bhagavan—teaches this *Kashi Khand* to Sut in the *Iskandh Puran*, which consists of eighty-one thousand [verses]. First, Sri Bed Biyas Bhagavan Jiv performs *namashkār*, i.e., prostration, for Sri Ganesh Jiv, because no obstacle has impeded the completion of this great book. What is Sri Ganesh Jiv like? He removes all obstacles. If someone does not first perform *namashkār* for him, defects will infiltrate his affairs and his desires will not be achieved. Moreover, Ganesh Jiv is the fortunate and beloved son of Mahadev. His face is like the face of an elephant, he is the lord of all the gods, and he is free from all disease, sorrow, and misery. However, he removes the pain and sorrow of the entire world. Biyas says: "I thus perform *namashkār* from my heart and soul for Sri Ganesh" (*Bahr al-Najat*, vol. 1, ff. 4v–4r).

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24 On a few occasions, with respect to Kāśī, Khwush quotes the famous anonymous verse that was inscribed on the wall of Shah Jahan's private audience chamber: "If there is a paradise on earth / it is here, it is here, it is here" (*agar firdaws bar rū-yi zamīn ast / hamīn ast hamīn ast hamīn ast*). Sunil Sharma (2017, 107) explains that in the context of the Mughal empire, this "triple reiteration of the phrase 'it is here' emphasized the present moment and place, and this became a mantra for several poets who traveled to and described different corners of the empire."

25 Sanskrit verses are taken from the Nag Publishers edition (1982). While we do not know which *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* manuscript or recension Khwush worked with, his translation—consisting of one hundred chapters, like the Sanskrit text published by Nag Publishers—follows the same internal division quite closely. It is possible that some of the metatextual information Khwush included in his translation was derived from another recension of the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* or from commentaries on the text. This can only be ascertained through a close comparative study of Khwush's translation and the extant *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* manuscripts.

After a couple more auspicious verses in praise of Kāśī and Śiva, Khwush concludes his opening pages with more explanatory notes. The fourth verse in the Sanskrit text succinctly states:

> *aṣṭādaśapurāṇānām karttā satyavatīsutaḥ* |
> *sūtāgre kathayāmāsa kathāṃ pāpāpanodinīm* || (*Kāśīkhaṇḍa* 1.4)
>
> Satyavatī's son, the maker of the eighteen *purāṇa*s,
> narrated to Sūta the story that takes away all sins

Khwush sees here another opportunity to express his knowledge and insert additional information that could be helpful to his reader. He writes:

> This is how the *mangala charan*, i.e., the preface, ends. Now Sri Biyas Bhagavan teaches the *kathā*, i.e., the story *Kashi Khanḍ* to Sut. In this manner Sri Biyas Bhagavan elucidated the eighteen *pūrāṇ*s in his blessed language. His mother's name is Satvati and his father, who is a sage, is named Parasar. This *kathā*, *Kashi Khanḍ*, removes all sins big and small, and erases all sorrow and pain. The names of the eighteen *pūrāṇ*s are as follows: first, *Bramha Puran*; second, *Padam Puran*; third, *Bishan Puran*; fourth, *Shiv Puran*; [. . .] These are the eighteen *pūrāṇ*s, and their elucidator and compiler is Sri Biyas Bhagavan (*Bahr al-Najat*, vol. 1, f. 5r–6v).

It thus becomes clear that even when Khwush deviates from the Sanskrit text, it is very much for the purpose of making the text more accessible and easier to understand for his uninitiated readers. These practices are very much in line with what was expected from translation (*tarjuma*) in premodern Persian literature. The layers of meaning embedded in the Persian terms that indicate what we would call 'translation' support this. With the English word 'translation', i.e., carrying across, it is expected that the thing being carried across between languages will remain unchanged in the process of transmission (Chesterman 1997). Translation's underlying metaphor, however, of carrying something across, cannot provide the conceptual basis for a general theory of translation, since it is not applicable to all cultures and literatures. The Persian terms used to discuss translation do not connote the same translation values. The word *tarjuma* (originally derived from Arabic) suggests textual proliferation rather than textual replication, to borrow the distinction from Karen Emmerich (2017), and it is usually glossed in dictionaries with words like *tafsīr*, *bayān*, or *sharḥ*—interpretation, explanation, and elaboration, respectively (Dihkhuda 1994). Complete equivalence or faithfulness, therefore, is not expected in *tarjuma*. The practice of *tarjuma* consisted of various forms of meaning-making and was not meant to slavishly transfer meanings (Fani 2022).

Elsewhere in the text, too, Khwush stays close to the Sanskrit, and renders in full long lists of names of places, flora and fauna, gods, and more. Not only are informative passages rendered in full, but also descriptive ones. It seems that rarely is a Sanskrit

verse left out in his translation. The second *adhyāya*, for example, begins in Sanskrit with a couple of verses describing the sunrise. The puranic poet thus writes:

> *sūrya ātmāsya jagatas tasthuṣas tamasoripuḥ* |
> *udiyāyodayagirau śuciprasṛmaraiḥ karaiḥ* ||
> *saṃvardhayan satāṃ dharmān tyakkurvaṃs tāmasīṃ sthitim* |
> *padminīṃ bodhayaṃs tviṣṭāṃ rātrau mukulitānanām* || (*Kāśīkhaṇḍa* 2.1–2)
>
> The sun, the enemy of darkness, the soul of all this that is mobile and immobile,
> rose up on the Udaya Mountain, spreading its bright rays.
> It nourished the good conduct of the righteous, dispelled the state of darkness,
> and opened up its beloved lotus, who was half-shut at night, into full bloom.

Khwush, albeit slightly less poetic in his rendering, provides the exact same image in Persian:

> When Bindhyachal Mountain waited for the sun to rise, when it would become the last and true dawn, then the great luminary of the sun rose from the east and illuminated all the world and its beings. It dispelled all darkness and shed light on Udayachal Mountain with its rays. The people of the world were busy with good affairs. The lotus flower, whose bud was closed at night, saw the sun and completely bloomed again (*Bahr al-Najat*, vol. 1, 12r–13v).

The passages translated above clearly show that Khwush was particularly committed to rendering the Sanskrit text in a full and accurate manner. His approach was strictly informational and hardly any attempt has been made to elevate the text stylistically or to mold it in accordance with existing literary genres in Persian. What Khwush produced, then, was an expository text, one that would not be offensive to the literary expectations of British readership.

Anandghan Khwush's Author Portraits as Paratexts

Given all that has been discussed thus far, one might expect to find Anandghan Khwush celebrated in his author portraits for his professionalism, erudition, or even for his esteem among the British of Banaras. These could have been signaled visually by positioning Anandghan in proximity to his patron, in front of students, or holding writing tools such as scrolls, paper, and pens. Such depictions would have complemented the authority, learning, and meticulousness that are projected through Khwush's translations. As the portraits in figures 6, 7, and 8 make clear, however, this is not the case at all. In these three portraits, the painter plants Anandghan in a

Figure 6. The frontispiece illustration accompanying the fourth volume of Khwush's Persian *Kāśīkhaṇḍa*. A man and a woman, probably the sage Agastya and his wife, worship the six-headed Skanda, while Khwush stands behind them, holding a lotus. The lotus might serve here to indicate Khwush's fealty to Viṣṇu. From the archive of the British Library, *Bahr al-Najat* IO Islamic 671, f. 1r.

mythical setting, in scenes from the stories contained in his translations.[26] Khwush is depicted similarly in all portraits, which further correspond to the portrait of his included in Charles Boddam's text, discussed above.

26 Of the five volumes of *Bahr al-Najat* (*Kāśīkhaṇḍa*), two still have frontispiece illustrations. It seems that the other three volumes had such illustrations, too, but they have been cut out. The two surviving portraits are identical. All six surviving volumes of Khwush's *Tarjuma-yi Ramayan* have frontispiece illustrations, but only two of them include a portrait of Anandghan. The others depict scenes from Rāma's story.

Figure 7. The frontispiece illustration accompanying the second volume of Khwush's Persian *Tarjuma-yi Ramayan*. A monkey, perhaps Hanumān, is paying his respects to Rāma and Sītā, who are surrounded by Rāma's three brothers. Khwush stands behind Hanumān, to the left, with cupped hands, revering the divine couple. From the archive of the British Library, *Tarjuma-yi Ramayan* IO Islamic 3041, f. 1r.

In contrast to his neutral rendition of the texts themselves—where Khwush makes sure to remain somewhat distant from the stories, translating them accurately and objectively—the frontispiece illustrations pull him back into the stories and place him close to the protagonists. These depictions thus establish Khwush's relationship to his translations in visual terms in two distinct ways: first, the portraits provide a multifaceted image of Khwush's persona. He is not only an employee of Duncan, adhering to his patron's requirements and expectations; he is also a devotee who sees translation as

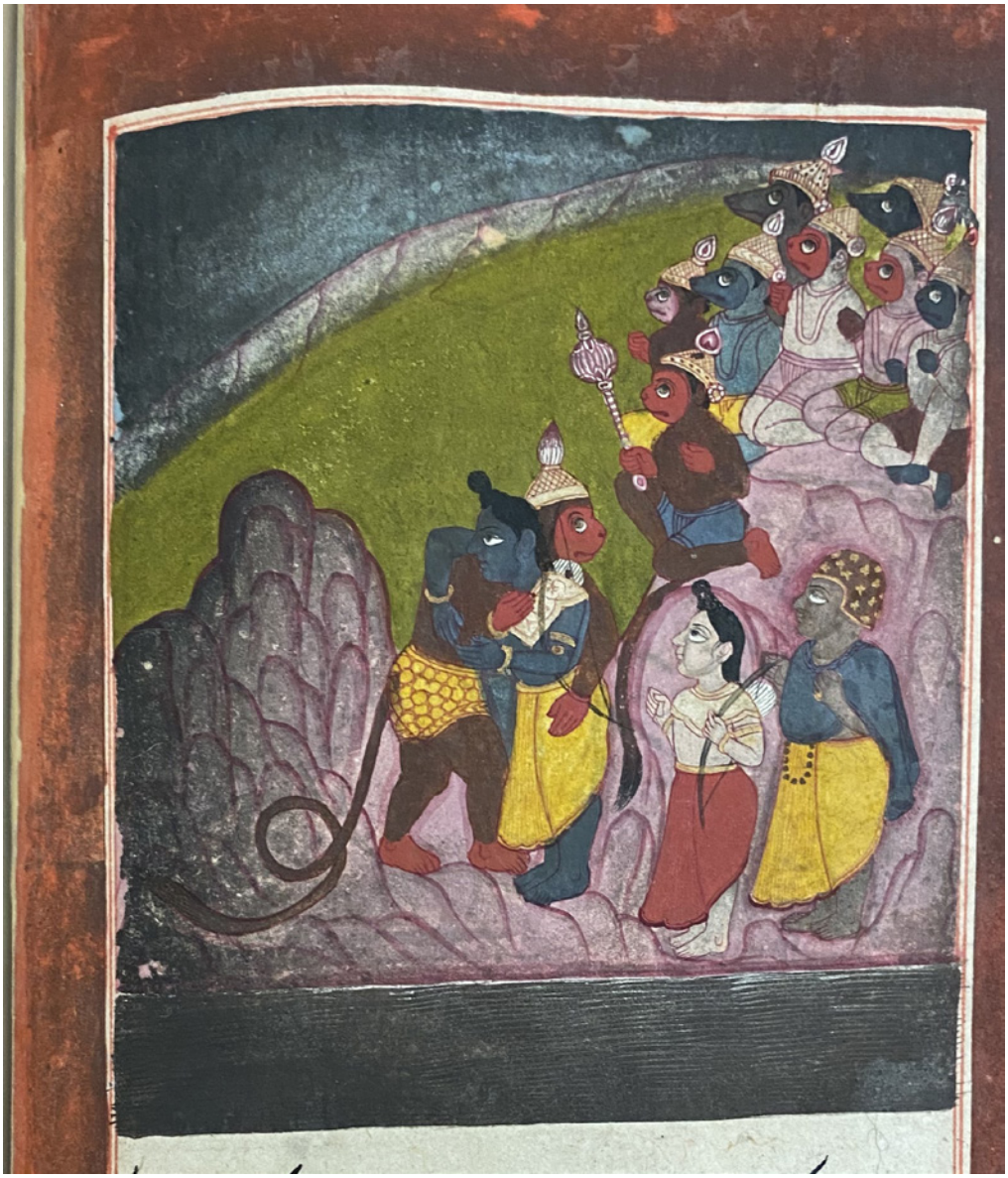

Figure 8. The frontispiece illustration accompanying the sixth volume of Khwush's Persian *Tarjuma-yi Ramayan*. Rāma is hugging Hanumān, while Lakṣmaṇa and the army of monkeys are watching. Khwush stands behind Lakṣmaṇa, to the right, looking on as the two embrace each other. From the archive of the British Library, *Tarjuma-yi Ramayan* IO Islamic 3027, f. 1r.

a calling or a way to worship his chosen gods. In that sense, these portraits illuminate an entirely different aspect of Khwush's figure and remind the reader of Khwush's background and perhaps even his personal motivations in producing such translations for his British patron.[27] The illustrations thus correspond to some of Khwush's

27 In this sense, these author portraits are similar to Khwush's depictions in the portraits attached to his original poetry, in which he is seen worshipping Kṛṣṇa. See above, fig. 1.

statements from the prefaces he composed for his translations. As mentioned above, in the case of *Bahr al-Najat*, he pays his respects to his patron and glorifies him as the best among the learned Europeans of his time, but he further includes sentences and verses of praise for the Hindu gods and Banaras.

After some opening verses dedicated to an all-compassionate nameless *nirguṇa* God, Khwush turns to venerate Viṣṇu and Śiva: "[. . .] with an honest heart and complete faith I offer thousands of prostrations and venerations (*hazār hazār sijda wa kuror kuror pranām*) to Sri Bishan Bhagavan Jiv and Sri Mahadev Jiv" (*Bahr al-Najat*, vol. 1, f. 1r–2v). Then, he composes a long sequence of verses to celebrate the liberation-giving qualities of Banaras:

biyā ay khwush bigū aḥvāl-i kāshī
zi guftan īn hamīsha khwush tu bāshī
[. . .]
najātgāh-i kāshī khwush makān ast
sukūnat gāh-i īn rūḥāniyān ast
[. . .]
sukūnat gāh-i shankar khāṣ-i kāshī
dar īn maʾman hamīsha khwush tu bāshī
[. . .]
biyābad har kasī īnjā vafāt
shavad vāṣil ba ḥaq yābad najāt (*Bahr al-Najat*, vol. 1, f. 3v–3r)

Come, Khwush, narrate the history of Kashi
  In so doing, you'll always be happy
Kashi, the place of salvation, is a good place
  It is the dwelling place of all holy men
It is the abode of Shankar, who belongs in Kashi
  In this refuge you'll always be safe
Anyone who dies here
  Will be united with god and attain liberation

Khwush then turns to cite divine inspiration as the real cause of this literary undertaking:

chu īn man īnjā kardam ba kāshī
ṣadā az ghayb shud khwush kwhush tu bāshī
bikūn tū zūd khwush vaṣfam bayāne
ʿaṭā kardam ba tū shīrīn zabāne
turā dādam hidāyat sukhan guftan
durr-i shahwār dar silk baftan
tu kāshī khanḍ rā dar fārsī kun
jihat dānishvarān tū ḥaq-rasī kun
chu az kāshī ṣadā īn gosh kardam
ba kāshī khanḍ guftan gosh kardam

kunam sijda hazārān az dil u jān
ba shankar nīz dīgar bishn bhagavān
kunam āghāz īn nāma garāmī
ki dar hizhda pūrān īn hast nāmī (*Bahr al-Najat*, vol. 1, f. 4v)

When I was in Kashi
A veiled voice said: "Khwush, you are good!
Quickly, praise me well
I gave you your sweet speech
I guided you in composing poetry
I strung precious pearls on your thread
Write the *Kashi Khand* in Persian
Do justice for all learned men!"
When I heard this voice emerging from Kashi
I listened to a narration of the *Kashi Khand*
I bow down a thousand times with all my heart
Before Shankar and Bishan Bhagavan
I shall begin this precious book
That is well known among the eighteen *pūrāns*[28]

The translations were indeed commissioned by Jonathan Duncan, but Khwush also wishes to let the readers know he had his own motivation and reasons to take the job. The preface mentions divine inspiration and strong feelings about Banaras, and the author portraits complement this image.

A second, and perhaps even more important, aspect of the way in which the relationship between the author and his work is established visually is the fact that Khwush is also depicted as an eyewitness to mythical events. By transporting Khwush in time and placing him as an eyewitness to mythical events, the painter makes a point about Khwush's sources of authority. Portraying Khwush in a more concrete historical time, similarly to the group author portraits attached to the *Razmnama* manuscripts discussed above, would have celebrated Khwush's esteem and status, but installing him as an eyewitness to the events of which he writes allows Khwush to be perceived as a reliable narrator who is not dependent on potentially interrupted lines of transmission. Thus, what might first seem like a contrasting relationship between text and paratexts turns out to be a complementary relationship, where the paratexts in fact confer

28 Citing veiled voices as the real inspiration behind literary undertakings is a common trope in Vaiṣṇava devotional compositions in Persian. Similar scenes are described, for example, in Amanat Ray's Persian rendition of the tenth *skanda* of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, entitled *Jilva-yi zāt* (1733), or in Amar Singh's Persian *Ramayan*, entitled *Amar Prakash* (1705). For a recent analysis of *Jilva-yi zāt*, see Pellò 2018.

authority and prestige on the text through recourse to visual and poetic language that draws from puranic lore.[29]

Conclusions

Anandghan Khwush's portraits are unique in the landscape of South Asian portraiture. They are different from the portraits attached to his original poetry or the author portraits of other Kṛṣṇaite poets in which they are celebrated as devotees who sing the praises of Kṛṣṇa; they are different from the author portraits of legendary composers who take part in their stories and thus do not serve as paratexts; and they are different from Mughal-era author portraits or illustrated colophons that celebrate the skill of the authors or scribes and commemorate a concrete historical moment of cosmopolitanism. Anandghan's portraits are also quite different from later ethnographic portraits of scribes and authors in South Asia commissioned by British officials.

In his epic and puranic translations, Anandghan Khwush is not depicted in the concrete historical moment of the texts' composition, but neither is he portrayed as entirely disconnected from his work. The painter's choice to place Khwush in proximity to the mythical events narrated in his compositions tells us something not only about the relationship between the author and his work, but also about the perceptions of time and history held by the people who were involved in this textual production (Khwush, Duncan, Bholanatha, and the unnamed painter). In this literary triangle of Hindu scribes, British patrons, and Persian literary culture, what emerges is a distinct understanding of which moments are worthy of visual commemoration, as well as a unique sense of the relationship between past and present. Anandghan and the puranic past reciprocally confer authority and prestige on one another: being an eyewitness to the mythical events described allows Khwush to claim trustworthy status as a reliable translator, while at the same time presenting an authoritative vision of the past.

Finally, it is worth acknowledging the amount and quality of information about Anandghan Khwush that can be gathered from his surviving work. While such information is unprecedented in the history of the textual transmission of *purāṇa*s in Sanskrit, later translations of puranic literature from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, into Tamil for example—much like the Persian ones—provide ample information about the translators and their intellectual milieu (Buchholz 2023). Sanskrit puranic composers are notorious

29 The manuscripts discussed in this study do not provide any information regarding the painter responsible for the author portraits. It seems safe to assume, however, that all of them were painted by the same hand, and it is likely that the unnamed painter worked closely with Khwush in planning the themes for the portraits. The consistency with which Khwush is depicted throughout the manuscripts and the similarity in the chosen themes suggests that Khwush had a say in how he was to be immortalized in the portraits.

for their efforts to disguise their historicity and minimalize the effect of their personal circumstances on their texts (Bakker 2019). Khwush and his milieu, however, did whatever was in their power to provide as much information as possible, visually and textually, on the historical circumstances of this enterprise, Khwush's personal background, his sectarian affiliation, and his understanding of his task. The difference between the kind of information we have regarding puranic composers and puranic translators, then, points to the different perceptions of the time in which composition and translation took place. While *purāṇa*s are understood to have been composed in mythical time, translations take place in historical time. Khwush's author portraits, and their role vis-à-vis the prefaces and the texts, thus attempt to bridge this gap and place him in mythical and historical times at once. Khwush's work thus illuminates a crucial stage in the textual transmission of *purāṇa*s in the days of early colonial rule in South Asia.

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