

Brief Plot Outline of the Representative Indo-Sufi Masnav's

Cândāyan: Completed in 1379, composed by Daud, *Cândāyan* is, according to McGregor, "---the first major work of Hindi literature which stands in clear view, free of uncertainties as to date, authenticity and place of origin (McGregor 1984:26). Mahar Sahdev's queen Phulārān^ gives birth to a beautiful daughter Cāndā. When Cāndā is but four years old, she is married off and sent to live in her father-in-law's household. However, twelve years pass after Cāndā's marriage but her husband Bāvan is incapable of consummating the marriage. Finally, Cāndā returns back to Govar to live with her parents at age seventeen. Here, at a festive occasion, brave Lorik and Cāndā see each other and fall in love at first sight. Lorik's devoted wife, Mainā, is very hurt when she learns of her husband's affair with Cāndā. During a chance encounter between the two women a physical struggle occurs. Shortly after this incident, Lorik, who is forced to make a choice between the two women, elopes with Cāndā across the Ganges. After a long journey and many adventures, Lorik returns home to live with Mainā along with Cāndā. Once again, there is a conflict between Mainā and Cāndā but Lorik successfully resolves it.

M@gávat^ was composed in 1500 by Kutuban who lived in Jaunpur. Prince Rājkuwar caught a glimpse of a very unusual female deer, *m@g^*, on one of his hunting expeditions. Before he could get to it, the deer vanished. The prince became completely obsessed with the deer. Through many seasons, he remained committed to finding the deer. One day, the prince by chance arrived at a pond where seven nymphs were bathing. He recognized *M@gávat^* as one of the seven *apsarās*. But before the prince could go closer, the nymphs flew away. Nevertheless, the prince found out that if he stole the very clothes which *M@gávat^* had left by the side of the pool, she will not be able to get away. In this way, Rājkuwar got a chance to talk to *M@gávat^*. He convinces her of his love and soon the prince and *M@gávat^* were united in matrimony.

One day when the prince went away to visit his father, *M@gávat^* looked for her original clothes and found them. Wearing these, she took off to her father's kingdom in order to test the sincerity of Rājkuwar's devotion for her. Upon his return, when Rājkuwar learned that *M@gávat^* had

left him, he was deeply distressed. After a number of dangerous expeditions, in one of which he rescued a damsel Rāpmīnī from a demon, Rajkuwar found Mṛgavatī. On the way back to his kingdom, he brought Rāpmīnī also back to his palace also. Once when Rajkuwar was hunting, he fell from an elephant and died. His queens committed sati at his funeral.

Padmāvatī is by far the most famous Indo-Sufi *masnav*. It was composed by Malik Muhammad Jayasī in 1540. Ratansen, the ruler of Chittore, buys a very accomplished parrot who tells him of the incomparable beauty, Padmāvatī, the princess of Sīphala. Ratansen leaves his kingdom, becomes a yogi and after enduring many difficulties, ultimately finds and marries Padmāvatī. In the absence of Ratansen, his wife Nāgamatī suffers the pangs of separation. However, Ratansen returns to Chittore along with Padmāvatī.

Alauddīn Khiljī learns of Padmāvatī's beauty from a disgruntled Brahmin who was previously associated with Ratansen's court. In the hopes of getting Padmāvatī, Alauddīn decides to attack Chittore. However, in the meanwhile, Ratansen is killed in another battle. Both Nāgamatī and Padmāvatī immolate themselves on their husband Ratansen's funeral pyre. Ultimately, Chittore falls to Alauddīn, but Padmāvatī does not.

Madhumālatī was composed by Manjhan in 1545. Prince Manohar, when he was asleep, was taken by the nymphs to princess Madhumālatī to see if the two would make a suitable couple. Leaving them asleep side by side, the nymphs went to play. In the meanwhile, Manohar and Madhumālatī woke up and began to speak to each other. They fell in love. Upon their return, the nymphs were remorseful at what had happened and took the prince back to his palace. Manohar burned in the fire of love in separation. He became a yogi and set out in search of Madhumālatī. After facing many dreadful and hopeless situations Manohar finally found Madhumālatī. They got married and she came to live with him at his palace.

Brief plot outline of the non-Sufi *premkhyāns*:

Īholā Mārā rā d'ḥā is widely considered to be the oldest of the non-Sufi *premkhyāns*.³ Kushal Lābhās version of the story was recomposed in 1560.⁴ Prince Īholā and princess Māravā? were married to each other in their childhood under unusual circumstances. Both continued to live with their own parents. When Īholā became a youth, he

married another princess. When Mārava?^ became a young woman, she saw her husband ĩholā in a dream. Now she wished to be with her husband. Many messages were sent to invite ĩholā to come and get his bride, but to no avail. However, when Mārava?^ sent a message describing to ĩhola, her own longing and suffering in ĩholā's absence, he too experienced feelings of love for Mārava?^. He set out to bring her home. After the *gaunā*, consummation, ceremony and festivities ĩholā brought his bride back to his palace.

Mainā-sat was composed by Sadhan in approximately 1567.⁵ Like *Cāndāyan*, it is inspired by the folk-tale of Loriki. Mainā was a chaste woman. Her husband eloped with another woman. In her husband's absence, the prince of that city sends a woman, Ratnā, to plead with Mainā to win Mainā's favors for himself. Ratnā tries to convince Mainā that she should forsake her loyalty and devotion for Lorik because he was not true to her. Mainā, however, in a *bārahmāsā*, describes her own suffering and repeats her vow of loyalty to her husband Lorik to her last breath. As Mainā pledged her sincerity for Lorik, she realized the true identity of Ratnā. Recognizing her to be a pimping bawd, Mainā had Ratnā's head shaved and had her parade through the city streets (Pandey 1982:135).

Mādhavānal Kāmakandlā: The love story of the courtesan Kāmakandalā and the Brahmin Mādhavānal has been inspired by a Sanskrit composition of the same name. *Mādhavānal Kāmakandlā* is also known as *Mādhavānala-Ākhyānaṃ* or *Mādhavānala Nāṭakaṃ*. It was composed by poet Ānandādhār in approximately 1300.⁶ Since then this work has inspired many non-Sufi as well as Sufi narrative compositions.⁷

In most recensions of this love story, the plot develops along the following lines. Mādhava and Kāmakandalā are incarnations of Kāmadeva and Rati, god and goddess of beauty and love. Mādhava, the handsome and accomplished Brahmin, is a courtier of King Govinda Candra of Pu?pāvat^ city. The young women of Pu?pāvat^ are totally in love with the handsome Mādhava. Consequently, King Govinda banishes Mādhava from Pu?pāvat^. Mādhava finds a position at king Kāmasena's court where Mādhava and the royal courtesan Kāmakandalā see each other and fall in love. When Kāmasena learns of their affair, he also orders Mādhava to leave town. In great distress, Mādhava proceeds to Ujjayani, the capital of king Vikramāditya, in the hopes of getting some help. After testing Mādhava, Vikramāditya is convinced of his love for Kāmakandalā. He declares war on Kāmasena.

Kámakandalá also undergoes tests to prove that her devotion for Mádhava is steadfast. Finally, the two lovers are united by Vikramáditya.⁸ Mádhava and Kámakandalá get married.

Nala-Damayant[^] kathá was inspired by the story of Rájá Nala and his wife Damayant[^] in Mahábhárata, in the Nalopákhya^{na} of the Vana-parva. Later compositions such as Ír[^]har[?]a^s Nai[?]adh[^]ya- caritam composed in Sanskrit⁹ and Faizi^s Nal-Daman composed in Persian¹⁰ were also inspired by the Nalopákhya^{na}.

Narapati Vyas of Ujjain composed Nala-Damayant[^] kathá in approximately 1575. Except for the introduction of a few new episodes, the story-line basically follows the story in the Mahábhárata.¹¹ Rájá Nala heard of the beauty of Damayant[^] and fell in love with her. He went to her svaya^uvara. Damayant[^] had also fallen in love with Nala and selected him to be her husband. Later, in gambling Nala forfeited his entire kingdom to his brother. He had to live in the forest with his wife Damayant[^]. One day, Nala abandoned Damayant[^] when she was asleep. Upon waking up in the woods, when Damayant[^] did not find Nala, she was terrified. Hearing her cries, a hunter approached her and tried to compromise her chastity but he was not successful. Damayant[^] experienced terrible hardships and sufferings while she looked for Nala. Nala who was very knowledgeable in appraising horses, lived in disguise and took up a job as a chariot driver. Ultimately the two lovers are united at a ~~second~~ svaya^uvara.¹²

Chronological Account of the Indo-Sufi Masnavis

<u>Name of the Author</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>date</u>
Mulla Daud	<i>Cāndāyan</i>	1379
Shaikh Kutuban	<i>M@gāvat^</i>	1503
Malik Muhammad Jayasi	<i>Padmāvat</i>	1540
Manjhan	<i>Madhumālat^</i>	1545
Shaikh Usman	<i>Citrāval^</i>	1613
Kavi Jan	<i>(12+ masnav^s)</i>	
Shaikh Nabi	<i>Gyānd^p</i>	1618
Hussain Ali	<i>Puhupāvat^</i>	1725
Qasim Shah	<i>Haṃsa-jawāhar</i>	1736
Shaikh Nisar	<i>Y^suf ZulaiKhā</i>	1790
Shah Najaf Ali Saloni	<i>Akharāvat^</i>	1809
Khwaja Ahmad	<i>N^rjahān</i>	1905
Nasir	<i>Prem Darpan</i>	1917

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Sufi Elements in the Medieval Hindi Love Poetry

The ultimate triumph of love in the face of adverse circumstances as their defining characteristic, the medieval Hindi love narratives composed in Awadhi, the eastern most dialect of Hindi flourished. Most scholars of Hindi literature agree that *Cāndāyan* (1379), *Mṛgāvatī* (1503), *Padmāvatī* (1540) and *Madhumālatī* (1545), may be considered the representative compositions of the Indo-Sufi love narratives and *Īolā mār' rā d'hā*, *Mainā-sat*, *Mādhavānāl Kāmakandalā* and *Nalā-Damayantī kathā* may represent the genre of *premakhyāns*.² Before beginning to discuss the specific characteristics of these works it may be interesting to briefly examine the plot outline of a representative work of the *premakhyān* and the Indo-Sufi love narrative.

Cāndāyan: completed in 1379, composed by Daud, is according to McGregor, "---the first major work of Hindi literature which stands in clear view, free of uncertainties as to date, authenticity and place of origin (McGregor 1984:26). Since *Cāndāyan* is the pioneer work of the Indo-Sufi love narrative and has served as a model for the subsequent compositions of this genre, let us consider it as the representative work of its genre.

Mahar Sahdev's queen *Phulārānī* gives birth to a beautiful daughter *Cāndā*. When *Cāndā* is but four years old, she is married off and sent to live in her father-in-law's household. However, twelve years pass after *Cāndā*'s marriage but her husband *Bāvan* is incapable of consummating the marriage. Finally, *Cāndā* returns back to Govar to live with her parents at age seventeen. Here, at a festive occasion, brave *Lorik* and *Cāndā* see each other and fall in love at first sight. *Lorik*'s devoted wife, *Mainā*, is very hurt when she learns of her husband's affair with *Cāndā*. During a chance encounter between the two women a physical struggle

occurs. Shortly after this incident, Lorik, who is forced to make a choice between the two women, elopes with Cándá across the Ganges. After a long journey and many adventures, Lorik returns home to live with Mainá along with Cándá. Once again, there is a conflict between Mainá and Cándá but Lorik successfully resolves it.

Although *Īholá Mār* rá d`há is widely considered to be the oldest of the non-Sufi *premakhyāns*.³ (Kushal Lābhās version of the story was recomposed in 1560), let us consider the *Nala-Damayant^ kathā*, inspired by the story of Rājā Nala and his wife Damayant^ in *Mahābhārata*, in the *Nalopākhyāna* of the *Vana-parva*, as the representative work of the *premakhyān* genre because later compositions such as *Īr`har?as Nal?adh^ya- caritam* composed in Sanskrit⁹ and *Faiziās Nal-Daman* composed in Persian¹⁰ were also inspired by the *Nalopākhyāna*.

Narapati Vyas of Ujjain composed *Nala-Damayant^ kathā* in approximately 1575. Except for the introduction of a few new episodes, the story-line basically follows the story in the *Mahābhārata*.¹¹ Rājā Nala heard of the beauty of Damayant^ and fell in love with her. He went to her *svayaṃvara*. Damayant^ had also fallen in love with Nala and selected him to be her husband. Later, in gambling Nala forfeited his entire kingdom to his brother. He had to live in the forest with his wife Damayant^. One day, Nala abandoned Damayant^ when she was asleep. Upon waking up in the woods, when Damayant^ did not find Nala, she was terrified. Hearing her cries, a hunter approached her and tried to compromise her chastity but he was not successful. Damayant^ experienced terrible hardships and sufferings while she looked for Nala. Nala who was very knowledgeable in appraising horses, lived in disguise and took up a job as a chariot driver. Ultimately the two lovers are united at a *second svayaṃvara*. (Actually there was no second *svayaṃvara*, Buck 1982:135-6 for details).

The following are some observations on the Love narratives composed in the medieval Hindi. The Indo-Sufi narratives, and the *premakhyān* traditions, along with vernacular compositions similar in nature, share many common features. For example, both the genres, the Indic Sufi narratives and the *premakhyānas*, often turn to a common pool of literature and folktales for inspiration. Within the body of the text, a picture, a dream or a description of the beloved acts as the agent which plants the seeds of love in the lovers' hearts; in most cases, the guru or the spiritual preceptor plays a significant role;

the hero and the heroine often have a friend or confidante to help them through the crucial situations. The friend is often instrumental in sending messages, etc.

However, in the *premakhyān* tradition, the narrative focuses on the chastity of the heroine. In terms of her physical purity, when faced with temptation, the heroine's singular devotion for her spouse, and her self-restraint is tested over and over again. Her suffering exceeds the suffering of the hero by far. In all four of the *premakhyāns* mentioned above, the heroine suffers through unspeakable hardships in the absence of her husband. In *Mainā-sat*, *Mādhavānal Kāmakandlā* and *Nala-Damayantī Kathā* the heroines are tempted to have physical relations with men other than their lawfully wedded husbands. This situation, when a woman is tested for her fidelity and loyalty to her husband, is called *sat'tva par'kṣā*, the test of chastity.¹³ However, in each case the heroine appreciates that her physical chastity and purity is the only means to demonstrate that her devotion belongs to her husband exclusively. The purity of the heroine's physical body is therefore a very powerful symbol for her emotional and spiritual commitment to her husband. Occurrences of this nature establish that in the *premakhyān* tradition, a significant identifying characteristic is the physical purity of a woman; it equates to her spiritual power. Eventually, the heroines of all of the *premakhyāns* are united their spouses and the story ends on a happy note.

The above values are not observed in the literary tradition of the Indo-Sufi love narratives. The suffering and commitment of the hero is accentuated, as opposed to the heroine. The sincerity of the hero is submitted to numerous strenuous tests. For example, compared to the sufferings of Cāndā, Padmāvatī, Mṛgāvatī and Madhumālatī, the difficulties which Lorik endures and the risks he takes in order to be with Cāndā, the pain which Rajkuwar bears in Mṛgāvatī's absence, the perils through which Ratansen passes to meet Padmāvatī, and the circumstances Manohar goes through to get to Madhumālatī, are far more trying and of much longer duration. In short, in the Sufi narrative tradition the story focuses on the pain the hero suffers due to his separation, *viraha*, from the beloved. In the Indo-Sufi love narrative tradition, the description of the hero's *viraha* plays the same role as the description of the heroine's *sat'tva* plays in the *premakhyān* tradition in providing the proof of commitment to the spouse.

In the Indo-Sufi tradition, the heroine is often portrayed as being uncompassionate and at times deliberately inconsiderate of the condition of the suffering hero. The hero of the *masnav*[^] has to prove his sincerity and commitment by going through long ordeals. In *Cândāyan*, when Lorik tries to scale the palace balcony by throwing a scaling hook, Cândia deliberately disengages the device. Similarly, in *M@gávat*[^], the heroine abandons the hero to test his devotion for her, and in *Padmávat*[^], even when Ratansen gives up everything in quest of Padmávat[^] and finally arrives at Siphala, Padmavati still thinks that he is immature.

Contrary to the above, in the *premakhyán* tradition, the hero demonstrates indifference for the heroine's suffering. In *Íholá Már" rá d"há*, many messages are sent to Íholá to come and get Már" but he does not respond. Similarly, Lorik, the hero of Maina-sat, and Raja Nala, leave their wives in completely impossible situations.

Unlike the *premakhyán* tradition, in the Indo-Sufi narrative tradition, it is not necessary for the hero and the heroine to be man and wife. Lorik and Ratansen are married men before they fall in love with Cândia and Padmávat[^] respectively. In *Cândāyan*, Cândia is married to Bawan but does not show unconditional commitment to him. In addition, usually, the heroine of the Indo-Sufi narrative tradition is already a married woman as well. Thus unlike the *premakhyán* tradition the heroine's body is not a symbol for her spirit.

Additionally, because reincarnation is not a common theme in the Sufi literary tradition, there are fewer references to the incidents of a previous birth. For example, in the *Mádhavānal Kámakandlā premakhyán* the circumstances of the previous birth play a pivotal role. Contrary to the Sufi narratives, most *premakhyáns* have a happy ending. Love triumphs over adverse circumstances and misfortune is averted due to the colossal strength of the heroine's character and her spiritual power. The heroine is united with her husband and they live happily ever after. When Íholá comes to fetch Márava?[^] it spells the end of her misfortunes and sufferings. *Mádhavānal Kámakandlā premakhyán* ends in the marriage of Mádhava and Kámakandalá. When Damayant[^] sees Nala, they finally find each other and the episode ends on a blissful note.

This feature is not consistently observed in the Indo-Sufi narrative tradition. . The story never ends when the

hero and the heroine are united. In fact, the story goes on to show the hero living with both, his wife, and his beloved, as well. Sometimes the story ends with the death of the hero. In some Sufi narratives, when the hero is killed, the heroines immolate themselves on their spouses' funeral pyre. For example, in *Padmāvat*, the hero Ratansen is killed in battle. Both *Padmāvat* and *Nāgmat* commit *sat*. Similarly, Rajkuwar, the hero of *Mṛgāvat* dies in a hunting accident. His spouses also throw themselves on his funeral pyre.

The most significant difference between the *premkhyān* and the *æSufiæ* narratives, however, is that a Sufi love narrative is an allegorical romance. This simply means that the story can be interpreted on two different levels, secular and spiritual. On the secular level, the scenario is not very different from the *premkhyān* in the sense that both serve similar purposes. For example, the reader can derive entertainment, pleasure, information, and lesson from the narratives of both traditions. Nevertheless, most *premkhyāns* cannot consistently be interpreted as being allegorical in nature, whereas in the Sufi narratives there is a one-to-one relation between the characters and elements of the story.

On the spiritual level, the hero of the *masnav* represents the human soul. The wife of the hero in the Indo-Sufi *masnav* often represents his worldly life. At a certain moment in his life, he gets a glimpse of the heroine. The heroine is the symbol of the Eternal Beloved. The hero falls in love with the beloved and experiences the pain of separation. He must find the beloved but does not know how. He needs a teacher to guide him. Only a teacher who has already attained the *æstate of knowingæ* can show him the appropriate path. Only by giving up the luxuries of this world, by practicing austerities in the forest, by passing through the tests of difficulties, does the hero ultimately fulfill his spiritual goals. The hero's sufferings are likened to the spiritual stations a Sufi seeker must experience before he can reach the ultimate destination of his mystic journey.

The composer often provides a key at the end of the composition, of the corresponding characters and Sufi outlook they symbolize. In *Cāndāyan* *Cāndā* represents the spiritual aspect of *Lorikæ's* existence. Therefore *Lorikæ's* quest for *Cāndā*, and his home-coming to *Mainā*, who represents his worldly, day to day existence, are both equally significant and inseparable. The physical beauty of

the heroine is merely an instrument for leading the hero to the Eternal Beauty. It is not an end in itself. The lover sees God's beauty reflected in the heroine. The *nakh-shikh* var?a? of the beloved's beauty has a spiritual purpose.¹⁴ According to Rizvi:

"The *nakh-shikh* of the *Chanda'in* made a deep impact on later writers of Hindi *masnawis* and were reproduced chiefly because of the great prestige of its author as a mystic. *Chanda'in* beauty is described allegorically as a piece of unreachable fruit. The Persian translation of *Chanda'in* indicates the extent to which the text could be reconciled with Persian ideas of mysticism. The analogy is subtle: Mystics get a glimpse of the Supreme but God Himself is beyond their reach (Rizvi 1986:365-6). Because the heroine represents the Universal Soul, the Sufi narratives describe the splendor of the cities, palaces and apartment of the beloved.¹⁵

On the issue of nomenclature, a number of scholars of Hindi literature have coined different terminologies or headings under which the bulk of the Indo-Sufi narrative genre could be classified. For example, Ramchandra Shukla calls this genre *premagāthā*¹⁶, 'love-stories'; Sharan and Rastogi call it *laukika sāhita*¹⁷ 'worldly literature'; Tripathi calls it *madhya kāl'na sāhitya*¹⁸ 'medieval literature' and Parmeshvarilal Gupta calls it *premakhyān*¹⁹ 'love narratives'.

Recently, some scholars have suggested that due to the features unique to this genre, the Indo-Sufi literature must be not be discussed under the general category of the 'medieval Hindi literature' or simply *premakhyān* or *premagāthā*. Among scholars advocating a distinct and separate identity of the Indo-Sufi love narratives, the writings of Dwivedi, Pandey, Batra, and Yash Gulati deserve special recognition. Arguing for the necessity to recognize the Sufi compositions belonging to a distinctively different genre, Yash Gulati says that traditionally, the historians of the Hindi literature have divided the literature composed in the age of devotional literature, *bhakti kāl*, into two sub-categories, *sagu?a* (with attributes), and *nirgu?a* (without attributes) *bhakti kāvya*.

In this way early historians of the Hindi literature either attempted to include the Indo Sufi narratives within the umbrella title of the *Premākhyān* tradition, or

pronounce that Indo-Sufi literary narratives are inferior, on the following grounds. (Gulati 1979:11).

- a. Most of the composers of the Sufi love-stories were Hindu. The question that they would wish to familiarize the general public with the Sufi practices and belief does not arise.
- b. The goal of the Muslim poets was to gain fame and to entertain. Their compositions had nothing to do with religion.
- c. Instead of the Sufi teachings, in this so called "Sufi literature", Indian rather than Sufi philosophy finds expression.
- d. There is no spiritual aspect to these so called "Sufi" love-stories. The text of the "Sufi" stories can not be interpreted as the stations in the mystic journey of a Sufi seeker.
- e. Even if the key to the symbols are provided at the end of a *prem-kathā*, as for instance in Jayasi's *Padmāvat*, the works can be interpreted in terms of Indian philosophy.²⁰ f. Most of these so called "Sufi" stories draw inspiration from the Indic sources.
- g. The stories definitely demonstrate respect for all Hindu deities.
- h. The style of love expressed in them is Indian. The language, the prosody, and the style, all bear the evidence that these "Sufi" *premkhyāns* are nothing other than Hindi *prem gāthās* (Gulati 1979:13).²¹

Discussing *Cāndāyan*, in the context of the discussion of the rise of New traditions in literature and religion in the 13th century, McGregor writes,

"---it illustrates at once the continuation of ancient literary traditions, the evolution of new traditions in religion and literature and the presence of a truly popular element underlying poetry of more formal characters". This statement is generally true of most medieval Indo-Sufi allegorical poems.²²

Gulati goes on to say that although it is true that a large number of the poets who composed Hindi love narratives in the medieval period were Hindu, nevertheless, it is highly improbable that all the composers shared the same goals and objectives. The hero of *fholā mār*" does

not see the divine beauty reflected in his beloved. In *Mainā-sat*, Lorik is a completely different character than we see him in *Daudās Cāndāyan*. According to Dviwedi, in *Padmāvat*, Jayasi never let go of a single opportunity to point out the hidden meaning of what is obvious and transparent. He always sings the praises of the Unseen. Similarly, Chandrabali Pandey says that the *kaṭvaks* of the Indo-Sufi *masnav*'s are packed with spirituality (Gulati 1979: 17-18). Therefore, the fact that the *æSufiæ* narratives are essentially allegorical romances lends them a unique identity, quite distinct from the identity of the Indic *premakhyān* genre.

It could be argued that because in many Indo-Sufi narratives, the hero and the heroine meet at a temple, the hero often becomes a jogi and is described in terms of those who followed the Nāth and Siddha paths, the constant respectful mention of the Hindu gods and goddesses, description of Hindu festivals and holy places, adopting the Indic prosody and borrowing from the Indic literary and folk tradition may have largely contributed to the confusion that the Indo-Sufi literature is the same as the Hindi *premakhyān*.

Modern scholars such as Asani (our own Dr. Ali Asani), have pointed out a need for the re-examination of the medieval love narratives composed in the Indic literature. I agree with him in his reasoning that even the recent nomenclature of Indo Sufi *masnav*'s is too broad in terms that it does not explicitly address significant issues. According to Asani, some of the crucial issues not clarified in the above term- Indo-Sufi *masnav*'s are as follows: The term gives the reader no clue as to whether the *masnav*'s compositions which were composed in India in the Persian language and meter, such as the *masnav*'s of Amir Khusrau (d.1326), are included within the genre. Additionally, should the poetic works based on the local folk romances which were composed in the vernacular languages, such as Punjabi, Bengali and Sindhi, and interpreted in the mystic terms, for example, *H̄r-Rānjhā* and *Sassi-Punnuh* also be classified as literatures belonging to the Indo-Sufi *masnav*'s genre? If the response is in the affirmative then how can the vast differences in terms of prosody, and rhyme scheme between the above two literatures be reconciled?²¹

If the terminology is altered from *æIndo-Sufi masnav*'s to *æHindi Sufi masnav*'s to separate the narratives composed in Avadhi from those composed in Bengali, Sindhi

and Punjabi languages then should the Bengali, Sindhi and Punjabi compositions continue to remain under the *premakhyān* classification or should these be studied as a single unit of non-Hindi Indo-Sufi *masnav*[^] compositions or should a different criteria be coined to fit the *masnav*[^] of each individual language in which the narrative in question is composed?ææ

Regarding the question of the identity of the æSufiæ narratives composed in Avadhi, I agree with Asani and Gulatiæ argument. I have attempted to explain that the features of the Indo-Sufi *masnav*[^] literature are sufficiently different from the *premakhyān* genre. The Indo-Sufi *masnav*[^] narratives deserve a separate classification, re-examination, and re-evaluation within the medieval Hindi literature as opposed to being considered a part and parcel of the *madhya yug*[^]*n* *premakhyān* genre. The matter of recognizing the Indo-Sufi *masnav*[^] is not a mere terminological quibble, rather it is central to the proper understanding of the Sufi nature of medieval Indo-Sufi love narratives in its religious, historical, and cultural context.

Encl:

2 Handouts and copy of a page of the *Cāndāyan* manuscript from the John Ryland Museum of the University of Manchester, U.K.