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Nikky-Guninder Kaur SINGH

M. A. Macauliffe and the Angst of the Translator

ABSTRACT: 'Had I known earlier the difficulties I should have to encounter, I should certainly never have undertaken a translation of this description', wrote Macauliffe (1898, 365). Even though he had carefully studied the text, familiarized himself with its source language(s), and was fluent in the target language, translating the Guru Granth into English proved to be an arduous task for the Irishman. His angst is indeed intriguing. Heidegger said, 'Tell me what you think of translation, and I will tell you who you are', so the concern voiced by our translator offers clues into his personal sensibilities and intellectual legacy. Using Amrtya Sen's 'exoticist', 'magisterial', and 'curatorial' typology (2005), we discover here a western approach antithetical to orientalism. My paper explores the synergy between Macauliffe's existential response and his non-orientalist translation of the Japji, the opening hymn of the Guru Granth.

KEYWORDS: Macauliffe, Sikh, Guru Granth, Japji, translation, orientalism, exoticist, magisterial, curatorial

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'Had I known earlier the difficulties I should have to encounter, I should certainly never have undertaken a translation of this description', wrote Macauliffe (1898, 365). Even though he had carefully studied the text, familiarized himself with its source languages and was fluent in the target language, translating the Guru Granth into English proved to be an arduous task for the Irishman. His angst is indeed intriguing. Heidegger said, 'Tell me what you think of translation, and I will tell you who you are' (1996, 63),[1] so the concern voiced by our translator offers clues into his personal sensibilities and intellectual legacy. For this centennial celebration, I want to explore the synergy between Macauliffe's existential response and his distinctive translation of the Japji, the opening hymn of the Guru Granth.

I think my fascination with the topic goes way back: as a child I heard that this 'White' man was reciting the Japji shortly before he died.[2] Over the years, I have been engaged in bringing Punjabi texts into English, so I am naturally drawn to Macauliffe's role as a translator. His anxiety is something I personally empathize with. But I also feel that in its tensions and intricacies lie some valuable insights that have relevance for contemporary scholars. In an age when Victorians believed that Asians were primitive pagans who had to be civilized we find a Macauliffe with a very different mindset. Modern scholars have their own prejudices. We believe that everybody in the 19th century was a Victorian bigot. An analysis of Macauliffe's concerns proves that our stereotypes are wrong too.

Across the globe, postcolonial critics are vigorously probing the fictional ideology of orientalism and its continued impact on colonized people. In 1978 Professor Edward Said famously exposed this western style of thought grounded in an ontological and epistemological distinction between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them') (Said, 1978, 2-3). In a more recent and geographically specific study, Professor Amartya Sen unfurls the contradictory and ambiguous attitudes coiled in the orientalist approach to India. In this 'western invention' for 'dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient', Sen detects three undercurrents: the 'exoticist', the 'magisterial', and the 'curatorial' (Sen 2005). The Nobel prize-winner economist rightly points out that a heterogeneous India with nearly 110 million Muslims has been seen as a 'mainly Hindu country'; the Western

1 From 'A Remark Concerning Translation'.

2 I am very grateful to Professor Brian Bocking for giving me the opportunity to explore an area that has been a part of my subconscious. I was delighted to be a part of a historic event as well: the first full-fledged conference on Sikhism in Ireland, and as far as I know the first on Macauliffe anywhere on the international stage. Professor Tadgh Foley renewed the interest in Macauliffe throughout Ireland – and beyond; Foley's research (in this issue) offers an important sketch of the elusive author. Thanks also to University College Cork, to Dr. Jasbir Singh Puri, Mr. G.S. Chadha, and others members of the Irish-Sikh community for their support. It is wonderful to see the academy and the community coming together.

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focus on Indian spirituality has overlooked the abundance of other intellectual activities in the areas of geometry, numbers, sexuality, aesthetics, and sports like backgammon. As his essay brings home the terrible neglect of Sikhism in the western study of India's intellectual traditions, it makes one appreciate Macauliffe's monumental six-volume work all the more.

Except for the German missionary Ernst Trumpp, no Westerner had explored the Guru Granth, the core of Sikh metaphysics, ethics, and ceremonies. Charles Wilkins (the first English translator of the Bhagavad Gita) records his meaningful visit at the Sikh shrine in Patna in 1781. He explains the philosophical principles of the 'great book of folio size' from which the hymns that he heard were read: 'there is but One God, Omnipotent and Omnipresent, filling all space and pervading all matter ... commands universal toleration, ... and inculcates the practice of all the virtues, but particularly universal philanthropy...'. Being familiar with Sanskrit and Persian, Wilkins was able to follow much of the original Sikh text. He was also fascinated with its reader: 'I never saw a countenance so expressible of infelt joy'. Before leaving the precincts, Wilkins expressed the hope that he would someday translate Sikh sacred verse, but unfortunately it did not concretize (Singh G. 1962, 71-75).[3] The other great translator of Indic texts was the German scholar Max Müller who produced the Sacred Books of the East; however, his fifty volumes glaringly omit the sacred book of the Sikhs. Trumpp's translation of segments from the Guru Granth was published in 1877, but as we will see shortly, it generated a very negative response. Macauliffe produced the first substantial translation of the Guru Granth, which has been extensively used by the community and scholars. Yet, in spite of his enduring contribution, the translator is barely remembered. I regret to admit this happens to be my first Macauliffe foray. I am certain the 2013 'Representing Sikhism' conference at UCC and this special issue of papers from the conference will generate many more conferences and publications. For my analysis, I will apply the typology offered by Sen. His threefold classification of 'exoticist', 'magisterial', and 'curatorial' forms a useful apparatus to enter Macauliffe's psychological space.

1. The Exoticist

According to Amartya Sen, the exoticist concentrates on the 'wondrous aspects': '[t]he focus here is on what is different, what is strange in the country that, as Hegel put it, "has existed for millennia in the imagination

[3] For more details on Wilkins' visit to the Tenth Guru's birthplace, see Singh N.-G. K. 2011, 124-5.

of the Europeans"' (Sen 2005, 170). Sen registers a very interesting array of westerns — from the Greek Alexander listening to the gymnosophists' lectures to contemporary devotees of Sri Rajneesh (Sen 2005, 178). The exotic attitude is marked by fragility and transience — 'both the boom and the bust are thrust upon the victim. Sen gives the example of poet Rabindranath Tagore — how he was first adored by the West and later denounced (Sen 2005, 179).

Such an approach does not apply to the Sikh case. Rather than some fabulous imaginings about the Sikhs, Macauliffe in his work and travels met with utter ignorance and confusion. His six-volume work opens with: 'I bring from the East what is practically an unknown religion … The Sikhs are distinguished throughout the world as a great military people but there is little known even to professional scholars regarding their religion ...'[4] He found the general public confused about whether Sikhs were 'Hindus, idolaters or Muhammadans'. There was no 'outburst of fascinated wonder' amongst Macauliffe's peers! He takes up the project as a way of introducing an unknown tradition, which understandably would have been a formidable task.

His challenge is compounded by the fact that he had multiplex audiences in mind. As he elaborates in his preface, he was doing it for the Colonial officers and administrators (Macauliffe 1963, vii), as well as for the general public in English speaking 'countries' — Europe, the Americas, Australia and even India. Furthermore, he intended it for scholars in diverse disciplines, including historians as well as theologians: 'It is hoped that it will throw some light on the state of society in the Middle Ages and that it will also be useful for the student of comparative theology' (1963, xxiii). Macauliffe also had followers of the faith in mind: 'I thought it would be useful to … [the] large number of Sikhs who understand the English language, but who have no time for the study of the compositions of the Gurus…' (1963, vii).

The translator simultaneously was worried about future generations losing their primary language. The British conquest of the Punjab and the ensuing colonial policies, migrations, and urbanization brought about a linguistic shift. A gold medallist in modern continental languages and scholarship in classics, Macauliffe was quick to observe the loss of scriptural vocabulary and language:

> [T]he vernacular itself is rapidly altering and diverging more and more from the general language of the Granth Sahib. Words which men still in the prime of life were accustomed to use in their

[4] Quotations in this article are from Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors* in six volumes (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co. Oxford University reprint, 1963). The work was first published in 1909. Quotations are from Vol. 1 unless otherwise indicated.

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> boyhood have now become obsolete, and new vocables have taken their place (Macauliffe 1963, viii).

Macauliffe's undertaking therefore went beyond just his own English rendering; he aspired to produce a translation as a way of sustaining the original for perpetuity. Modern globalization is having a very negative impact on the source language. Phrases that were popular just two decades ago (like *vaat pucchana* from the Japji, literally meaning 'to care for') are fast disappearing. Today again we need to take Macauliffe's concern seriously.

His audience actually was expected to be even larger than English readers, for once the Guru Granth was translated into English, there was the plan to reproduce it in the spoken Punjabi, so it would reach 'every Sikh household in the country'. This objective voiced by Army chief Herbert Kitchener during his presidential remarks at Macauliffe's lecture (Macauliffe 1903b, 357) received a loud and prolonged applause. The objective does not come from Macauliffe's lips, though he cites Kitchener in his preface to *The Sikh Religion* as well. My reading is that Kitchener was not too concerned about the English translation. Why would the West need a Sikh text? Its Punjabi translation however was useful: by learning the ethical standards of their Gurus, Sikhs would become loyal to the Crown. No wonder Kitchener received such an enthusiastic response.

With such diverse audiences in mind, I wonder how Macauliffe ever got started with his project! To allay his anxiety he seems to have tapped into a soothing analogy from the Sikh tradition itself: just like oil spreads over water, he envisions Sikh scripture reaching the world (Macauliffe 1963, viii). Rather than an 'exoticist' concentrating on wondrous aspects – getting stuck on aspects different and strange – Macauliffe was motivated to bring the virtually unknown teachings of the Sikh Gurus fluidly across cultures. In his fervent attempt to familiarize the 'unknown', he did not apply any critical lenses. He admits his intention was 'to write this work from an orthodox Sikh point of view, without any criticism or expression of opinion of his own'(1963, xvi).

2. *The Magisterial*

Amartya Sen explains the second category as an exercise of imperial power. India is seen 'as a subject territory from the point of view of its British governors. This outlook assimilates a sense of superiority and guardianhood needed to deal with a country that James Mill defined as 'that great scene of British action' (Sen 2005, 170).

The Punjab was annexed by the British after the Anglo-Sikh wars in 1849. Macauliffe is writing in the late 19th/early 20th century. A 'magisterial' perspective is hard to dissociate. In fact the lecture Macauliffe gives in the summer of 1903 is explicitly titled 'The Sikh Religion and its Advantages to

the State' (Macauliffe 1903a).[5] He does not champion the independence of the Sikhs from the Raj; surprisingly for an Irishman, no Sikh revolutionaries (a Maharaja Duleep Singh for instance) loom on his mental canvas. He stands between his White peers and their Sikh subjects, certainly not an easy or comfortable position. But rather than reinforce superior-inferior hegemonic structures, Macauliffe establishes affinities between the Sikhs and the British. His attitude is diametrically opposed to the magisterial stance of a Rudyard Kipling. For instance Kipling composed his 'White Man's Burden' in 1899 and addressed it to the USA; Macauliffe delivered his lecture in 1903 and addressed it to the British officers in India. There is barely any time gap between them, but their ideology and sentiments are entirely different. Macauliffe tries to convince the White Masters that their Sikh subjects are not sullen but joyous, not half devil and half child but extremely advanced; the British won't be getting their blame or hate, but rather their loyalty and faith; the colonial administrators don't need to play the Mosaic role of bringing people from darkness to light; their enlightened Gurus had done it for the Sikhs.

In fact Macauliffe in his lectures and writings tries to reverse the magisterial attitude and praxis. Soon after the annexation of the Punjab, Urdu (a Persianized form of the common language based on the Khari Boli dialect of Delhi) was declared as the official language. Chief commissioner John Lawrence referred to Punjabi as a barbarous dialect which if let alone, would gradually disappear (Allender 2006, 94). Likewise, his long-standing colleague, Judicial commissioner Robert Montgomery, asserted that the Sikh language of Punjabi, and its written Gurmukhi was 'degenerating' (Allender 2006, 93). Lurking in their dislike was their fear of the courageous Khalsa army created by the Sikh emperor Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the political power of its Gurmukhi script, for even after their victory in the Anglo-Sikh wars, the British felt insecure. From the colonial stance, Punjabi language had the potential of reigniting Sikh political aspirations, and so it had to be put down. Macauliffe on the other hand was deeply invested in it. For a whole millennium, people of the province had been cross-ethnically bound together by the various Punjabi dialects. The new rulers were anxious about their strength and solidarity, and incited divisions of religion, ethnicity, and nation. Language played a crucial role in their identity politics; spoken collectively by the people, Punjabi became exclusively associated with the Sikhs, Urdu with the Muslims, and Hindi with the Hindus.

[5] Macauliffe delivered two lectures at Simla on July 16, 1903: 'The Sikh Religion and its advantages to the State' and 'How the Sikhs became a Militant Race' (Macauliffe 1903a, 1903b). The published versions in *Journal of the United Service Institution* Vol. XXXII No.153, Oct 1903 give the date as 6 July, but the *Times of India* 18 July 1903 p.9 carries a report of the lectures delivered at Simla on 16 July.

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In this scenario, Macauliffe urges the colonial state to reverse its policy and reinstitute Punjabi as the official or optional official language of the province instead of 'alien Urdu'. He boldly writes, 'it remains to be seen whether any Lieutenant-Governor will take the trouble or have the courage to make Punjabi an alternative language for the Punjab. Punjabi is the mother tongue of all natives of the Punjab – be they Sikhs, Hindus, or Muhammadans. If it were recognized as an official or optional official language, the exalted ethical instruction of the Granth Sahib would be open to all classes of His Majesty's subjects in the Punjab'(Macauliffe 1963, 24). The sentiments of the Irishman are antithetical to the imperial policy of 'divide and rule'. Macauliffe understood Punjabi as the force to unite the ethnically and religiously diverse people of the province, but more importantly for the translator of Sikh scripture, Punjabi was the medium to familiarize the masses with the moral contents of the Guru Granth.

In contrast to the orientalist emphasis on differences, Macauliffe accentuates the commonalities between the Sikhs and the Westerners. He focuses on the scriptural message of the singular Divine to highlight its applicability for humanity at large. Since he had completed his translation by the time he was delivering the 1903 lectures, he was fluent with the scriptural contents. In his writings and lectures, he extols Sikh monotheism. Again and again he champions the Sikh vision of the unity of God — the Eternal, the Omnipotent, the Incomprehensible, the Self Existent… Likewise he highlights the egalitarian message of the sacred text. He repeatedly cites the Gurus condemning hegemonies of caste and class and integrating the spiritual with the secular in everyday life. Verses from Guru Nanak's hymns are given to illustrate that caste is useless and that external categories of name and status are 'nonsense'. Consumed with his desire to show the religious and ethical similarities between the British and Sikhs, Macauliffe ends up making disparaging comments about 'other' Punjabis — Hindus and Muslims.

His emphasis on the scriptural critique of gender injustice has particular resonance for contemporary society. The Sikh Gurus were concerned about the equality of women and their authentic subjectivity. In a sexist medieval Indian society, they tried to create a window of opportunity so that married, unmarried, or widows could participate equally in religious and secular spheres. The customs of *sati* (female immolation on the funeral pyre of the husband) *purdah*, (veil circumscribing her world to the private domain), and female infanticide prohibited by the Gurus receive considerable attention in Macauliffe's work. He regards Sikh scripture as a progressive resource that the British could utilize. About their policies against *sati* he says, 'When Lord William Bentinck resolved to abolish it he would have been highly gratified and strengthened in his purpose, had he known that the practice was forbidden in the Granth Sahib' (Macauliffe 1903a, 313). Similarly, in their fight against female infanticide,

John Lawrence and his colleagues could have drawn upon the injunctions of the Sikh Gurus: 'their efforts were based on moral grounds, but of course the written injunctions on the subject were not known to Europeans … There are several passages in the Adi Granth in which the slayers of daughters are enumerated amongst most heinous criminals …' (1903a, 316). Macauliffe also gives several examples of the Gurus condemning the oppressive custom of *purdah* (1903a, 313).

He not only leaves us with the sense that that the Sikh Gurus were ahead of the British in their concern for women's issues, but he also promotes the value of scripture in contesting oppression and injustice. Real social change cannot be imposed from above but must come from within the tradition itself. Female foeticides, purdah, and many others forms of female injustice are today commonly practised, and scripture can provide us with the ammunition to combat them (Singh, N-G. K. 2009). Advocates of social justice can draw upon the empowering literary resources of the Guru Granth. We must also pay attention to Macauliffe's critique of the patronizing morality of his British colleagues — which is being blatantly replayed in contemporary global politics. The fight against the veil of Afghani women by Western champions as part of the idea that Muslim women need 'rescuing' shows the same 'magisterial' structures and workings in operation (Abu-Lughod 2013).

Macauliffe continuously builds parallels between Sikh and western religion and philosophy. In his lecture on 'How the Sikhs Became a Militant Race' he compares the fifth Guru's compilation of the verses of his predecessors into the Guru Granth with Pisistratus' compilation of a definitive version for the Homeric epics. Immediately thereafter he creates another Greek analogy, for the Guru he states, 'was accused like Socrates of old of deposing the deities of his country and substituting for them a new Divinity' (Macauliffe 1903b, 333). Keeping his self-claimed 'orthodox' premise, Macauliffe provides some far-fetched prophecies too! Without historical documentation, he narrates how Guru Gobind Singh predicted that the English would come from afar and be joined by his Khalsa Sikhs so they would rule together in the east as well as in the west. Such imaginings — and there are several in his writings and lectures — divulge his desire for an alliance between the Sikhs and the British. In various ways Macauliffe reiterates Sikh theology, ethics, history, and myths to establish their common bond. His central thesis is that

> Sikhism prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concremation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to the sacred rivers and tanks of the Hindus; and it inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty, and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest Christians. It would be difficult to point

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> to a more comprehensive ethical code (Macauliffe 1903a, 326).

Clearly, Macauliffe's intention is to familiarise his British colleagues with Sikh values – which he keeps reiterating were no different from those cherished by the 'holiest Christians'. The above passage from his 1903 lecture is replicated in his preface to *The Sikh Religion* (1963, xxiiii), except for the change from 'holiest Christians' to 'holiest citizens of any country'.[6] Macauliffe's modified phrase underscores the universal validity of Sikh ethics, including the existential symbiosis of the sacred and the secular.

If uniting the imperialists with their Sikh subjects was not anxiety-provoking enough for our translator, the gap between Sikh praxis and its scriptural ideals exacerbated Macauliffe's trepidation. With a sense of urgency he relays both the best of the tradition and its lapsed condition. The translation project he took up was therefore not simply an academic venture; rather he meant it to be a transformative process with practical consequences. As a result, it would become much more emotionally demanding. Macauliffe regretfully notes that Sikhs were not keeping their Khalsa format (the five *k-s*, the external items of their faith): 'The Sikhs who now present themselves for enlistment in our army, generally appear with shaven hair' (Macauliffe 1903a, 326). He is troubled that they do not follow the precepts of their religion but, to the contrary, observe rituals and go on pilgrimages discarded by their Gurus. Trying to catch the attention of the government, he reports Sikhs falling prey to microbes of cholera and bubonic plague. He feared, Sikhism too, like Buddhism, would disappear from the Indian religious landscape. Terribly worried about the dwindling Sikh population he says: 'I have seen it stated that the last census shows an increase of the Sikh population. The increase is only in the figures, not in the population' (Macauliffe 1902a, 326). He desperately solicits the patronage and assistance of the State: 'unless support comes to it from some quarter its future is in serious jeopardy' (1902a, 326).

Macauliffe's concern and nervousness are only met with nonchalance and self-assurance. Lieut. Governor C.M. Rivas who presided at his first 16 July lecture session belittles Macauliffe for his 'unnecessary pessimistic view of the matter' (Macauliffe 1903a, 327-9). Though Rivas admits that some Sikh families had 'practically renounced Sikhism', so long as the Sikh community had leaders like 'the Chief of Nabha', he did not think there was 'much cause for anxiety'. The imperious Rivas even reverses Macauliffe's observation, categorically stating that Sikhism was not waning in popularity: 'The figures in the census of 1901 show that during the last decade the Sikh population of the Punjab has increased

[6] It seems he combined here another sentence from his lecture, 'The Holy Writings of the Sikhs': 'Indeed there are several passages of the Sikhs, which inculcate the teaching of truth to every one regardless of caste or creed…' (Macauliffe 1898, 364).

numerically'. Rivas chides Macauliffe in public: 'He has impugned the accuracy of these figures, but I doubt if he has sufficient reason for doing so'. And at the end of his address admits, 'I apologize for my somewhat discursive remarks. I was induced to make them by hearing Mr. Macauliffe's despondent views as to the present condition of the Sikhs' (Macauliffe 1903a, 327-9).

In the second of Macauliffe's presentations on 16 July 1903, Herbert Kitchener presided at the lecture entitled 'How the Sikhs Became a Militant Race' (Macauliffe 1903b). Kitchener of Khartoum keeps his cool but basically echoes Rivas's patronizing tone, his optimism about the increase in Sikh demography, and the generous support extended by the British Raj to their Sikh subjects. While Macauliffe regards the Guru Granth as the prime agency for the promotion of Sikhism, Rivas and Kitchener base its success on military service alone. If Sikhism declined it was only 'because there was not the same demand for military service for 20-25 years after the mutiny' proclaims Rivas (Macauliffe 1903a, 328). The Western confidence in the growth of Sikhism is grounded entirely on army statistics, and so Kitchener proudly goes on calculating their success — 'in 1887 we had only three Sikh regiments, we now have 6….' (Macauliffe 1903b, 357). For the representatives of the Raj any increase in the army recruitment was a sign of great revival of Sikhism.

While Macauliffe apprehensively appeals for British patronage and assistance to the Sikhs, both Rivas and Kitchener confidently enumerate a list of generosities showered by the Government. They catalogue the 'liberal assignment' given to the Akal Bunga at Amritsar,[7] the 'liberal distribution of land' on the Jhelum and Chenab Canals granted to the pensioned Sikh soldiers, the 'wonderful opportunities'given to loyal Sikhs beyond the Indian peninsula, and so on and on. They also bring in the case of the Khalsa College (the first Sikh educational institution established in Amritsar in 1892) only to blame 'rival factions amongst Sikhs' for not benefiting from the generous endowment offered by the Punjab Government. The support Macauliffe requested for his own translation is dismissed on the grounds that it would be an act of partiality on the part of the British Government. In response to Macauliffe's pleas, we hear a eulogy on the justice, goodness, and benevolence of the White Masters.

His British colleagues were driven to exploit the loyalty and courage of their subjects. They recruited Sikhs in disproportionately large numbers to serve in the Army. The caste names that Sikhs had learnt to discard were reintroduced as many of them were registered in the army under the old system of family name, and the occupational boundaries they had rejected also came into play as the colonialists created 'traditional agriculturists', 'martial races', and 'trading castes' (Oldenburg 2002, 154). Sikh regiments

[7] The building which houses the *Akal Takht* or Sikh throne of authority in the *Harmandir Sahib* (Golden Temple).

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were separated from the other 'martial races' of the Pathans, Gorkhas, and Rajputs, and they were separated from the more 'peaceful' Bengalis who were denounced as 'effeminate' by the British. Sikh troops were required to go through the Amrit initiation and wear the five external markers of the Khalsa. Both military discipline and religious discipline were instilled amongst the Sikh regiments, and were equally monitored by their commanding officers. Such imperial mechanisms have resulted in scholarly postulations that modern Sikh identity is a direct consequence of the Raj. Bernard Cohn for instance stresses the role of the British in making the turban 'a salient feature of Sikh self-identity' (Cohn 1996, 107). However, Macauliffe's lamentations on Sikhs 'appearing with shaven hair' goes to prove that Sikh identity was constructed way before the British annexed the Punjab. His sentiments strongly remind us of pre-colonial Sikh historiography. The colonial state did not create Sikh self-identity; it exploited Sikh loyalty and Khalsa symbols. With its patriotism and paternalism, it generated a vigorous 'manliness' — attaching a new patriarchal discourse to the 'brotherhood of the Khalsa'.

As Macauliffe's 1903 lectures demonstrate, his Western colleagues staunchly continued to hold on to the binary opposition between *us* and *them.* Much as he strived for their collaboration, they reinscribed the asymmetries of power. The 'Orientalist' stereotypes blatantly emerge in Kitchener's comment:

> Such men – simple in their religion, free in not observing caste prejudices, manly in their warlike creed, and in being true sons of the soil, not always quick of understanding but brave, strong, and true – are priceless value to the Empire, and long may the Sikhs follow the injunctions, 'to fight for him whose salt thou hast eaten' (Macauliffe 1903b, 356).

The discursive strategy of imperial discourse is fully in operation here. The Sikhs are stereotyped as naïve, hyper-masculine, not always quick of understanding – to buttress the rationality, adulthood, and ingenuity of their Western Masters. All that Rivas and Kitchener care about is that Sikhs be ready to give up their life; for them Sikhs are mere commodities to be exploited for the upkeep and expansion of the Empire. Is this the response Macauliffe expected from the presiders of his lectures? His enchantment with Sikhism to be met with such disenchantment? One wonders what Macauliffe must be feeling. Humiliation? Frustration? Anger? His compelling lectures on mutual understanding and empathy fell on 'magisterial' ears – deaf to the beauties and universality of the Guru Granth. Would their deafness in turn have incited him to praise and defend Sikhism all the more loudly?

3. The Curatorial

Macauliffe's literary legacy fits in the 'curatorial' category described by Amartya Sen. Free from preconceptions, this approach engages in noting, classifying, and exhibiting diverse aspects of a culture. Sen includes Al Biruni, Voltaire, Warren Hastings, Charles Wilkins, Thomas Colebrooke, and William Jones in this class.

As we noted, Macauliffe focuses on the Guru Granth, the centre of Sikh thought and life. There is a general consensus that he took up its English translation to rectify the harm done by its first Western translator, the German missionary Ernst Trumpp. Under the auspices of the Crown, Trumpp translated and published segments of the Guru Granth in 1877. Trumpp was a fine linguist but with his pedantic attitude and derogatory remarks on the sacred text, he deeply offended the Sikh community. Macauliffe in his preface acknowledges that one of his main goals was 'to make some reparation to the Sikhs' for the odium theologicum introduced by Trumpp. The need to respect and repair the sentiments of the community must have factored into our translator's anxiety.

But to view his work solely as an antidote to Trumpp's denies Macauliffe his motivational power. Had it not been for some intrinsic attraction for the Sikh text, his angst I don't think would have been as complex. Macauliffe went to India as a young ICS officer in 1862, and as we know his interest in Sikhism did not begin till 1880. According to Barrier 'the rationale for Macauliffe's burst of interest in the Sikhs in 1880 is not clear' (Barrier 1978, 173). It is actually fairly obvious when we realize that Macauliffe went to attend the Divali festival at Amritsar that year, and in preparation read several hymns from the Guru Granth. In his own words,

> Having once begun them, I was tempted by the sublimity of their style and the high standard of ethics which they inculcated to continue. I accordingly devoted my spare time for several years to their study, and I generally kept a gyani or professional interpreter of the Granth Sahib in my employ (Macauliffe 1898, 361).

As he launched into the study of Sikh scripture Macauliffe came across Trumpp's translation, which he found to be 'inaccurate and unidiomatic'. Around this time, the Sikh intelligentsia also approached him to render their scripture into English. Macauliffe then resigned his job as a divisional judge and devoted himself full fledged into translating the Guru Granth. He takes up the project neither as a British official nor as a missionary. He was initially drawn by the literary style and content of the text, which later got reinforced by external circumstances. S.C. Mittal in his critical study of British historians on India acknowledges that Macauliffe 'developed a fondness for the Sikh religion and philosophy' (Mittal 1995, 311).

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Macauliffe appreciated the fact that he was invited to take up the project by the Sikhs. He shares his enthusiasm with his peers:

> I, a Christian and foreigner, have been requested by representative Sikh societies to resign the Civil Service and translate their sacred books into English. No Muhammadan would ask a Christian to translate the Quran…. Nor would the Brahmans ask Europeans for assistance in rendering the Vedas and Shastars into English ... (Macauliffe 1903a, 325).

The trust that he gained from the Sikh community was sure to carry a sense of responsibility and commitment that intensified the translator's tension. In his preface he notes that he promised he would present the 'Sikh point of view'. Keeping such a promise during such an extensive project must have surely produced tremendous psychological conflict.

Several other factors would have compounded it. To begin with, the textual source is a phenomenon in itself. Since it is the historical and spiritual body of the ten Sikh Gurus, the Guru Granth is unique in the history of religions. Just before the tenth Sikh Guru passed away (in 1708), he declared the scripture as the guru eternal. Now the Hebrew Bible, the Vedas, the New Testament, the holy Quran, are absolutely significant in their respective traditions, yet they do not embody the Jewish Prophets, or the Rishis, or the Evangelists or the Prophet Muhammad. In the Sikh instance, Guru Gobind Singh ended the personal Guruship that had come to him from the founder Guru Nanak (1469-1539), and passed his historical and spiritual legacy on to the sacred Book. The Granth has acquired the status of a juristic person recognised even by the Supreme Court of India McLeod 2005, 2). The Guru Granth is the Sovereign who presides at all Sikh ceremonies, rituals, and rites of passage. A Westerner was going to translate this *body* of the Gurus? Some Sikhs objected to translating the sacred Word into another tongue. Though Macauliffe (1963, viii) comments on the openness of the Gurus and anticipates their joy to have their voice translated into a language spoken by many peoples, he must have been concerned about those negative reactions. To avoid offending the Sikh community in any way, he did not publish the translation on its own. He completed it in 1903, but then started to work on the biographies of the Gurus, Bhagats, and Sufis, and therefore the translation was published six years later, interspersed with additional materials. Just to evade any kind of confusion with the status of the primary source, his work is entitled *The Sikh Religion, Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors.*

The translator faced financial problems as well, for some of the assistance promised to him did not come through. The British government was apprehensive that his translation would generate controversy and did not want to be identified with it (Mittal 1995, 312-3). The Government's reaction sent a wave amongst the Sikhs, with the result that some of them

started to withdraw their support. Mittal (1995, 315) notes that the Prince of Nabha (we heard him being praised by Kitchener) initially supported Macauliffe and deputed the famous Sikh scholar Bhai Kahn Singh to examine Macauliffe's translation, but later refused to provide support 'without the permission of the government'. Mittal continues to recount the many obstacles raised in Macauliffe's translation work by the Government of India, the Punjab Government, the Sikh chiefs, and the representatives of Sikh institutions.

Along with these dynamics, the text posed linguistic difficulties. The Guru Granth contains the voices? of holy men spanning many regions and centuries in a plurality of languages — Persian, medieval Prakrit, Hindi, Marathi, old Punjabi, Multani, and 'even Gujarati' observes Macauliffe (1898, 363). We hear him confess that the Granth Sahib is perhaps the most difficult book in the world. There were no dictionaries, no lexicons, and no grammar at that time either, to help out our translator with its numerous languages and dialects.

Because of his trepidation about accurately conveying the vision and message of the Gurus, Macauliffe began to depend excessively on the Sikhs — both traditional exegetes (Gyanis) and English-knowing scholars. Many of the Gyanis were tough personalities to deal with. Some of them refused to share their sacred knowledge with a European. Some did not want the sentences of the sacred scripture broken. Some as we noted above simply did not want the text translated into English. Most barely knew any English and rarely agreed in their interpretations. Choosing between rival and contradictory versions would have been taxing. Macauliffe also sought the advice of English speaking Sikh scholars and circulated among them scripts of the different portions of the Guru Granth he was translating.

Ironically, his anxiety to achieve the perfect English equivalent is being misunderstood by postcolonial writers. Mandair is one of the few scholars who have seriously studied Macauliffe. From Mandair's perspective, Macauliffe comes across as rather arrogant:

> According to Macauliffe, those who specifically possess the power to locate the meaning of the foreign idiom within English only include himself and other 'such eminent scholars who have permanently settled in England and who can write English *like Englishmen*' (Mandair 2009, 200) (emphasis mine).

Macauliffe's words have been taken out of context, for he is here criticizing Trumpp whose translation he found to be 'inaccurate and unidiomatic'. Instead, as identified in his footnote, Macauliffe is admiring the German Max Müller and the Hungarian Dr Leitner (Macauliffe 1898, 364) for being able to write 'English like Englishmen'. His is actually quite a reasonable claim that a translator needs to be fluent in the target language. Not everybody who knows foreign languages (like Trumpp) can smoothly

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move between two universes of discourse. Had Macauliffe believed he (Macauliffe) possessed 'the power to locate the meaning…' I doubt he would have gone through the trouble of studying with the Sikh exegetes and scholars, or sending out his work for such painstaking reviews. In fact in the very next page cited by Mandair, Macauliffe mandates, 'It is necessary for a translator to reside in India, and place himself at the feet of the best gyanis…' (Macauliffe 1898, 365). In his preface to *The Sikh Religion*, he details at length: 'I submitted every line of my work to the most searching criticism of learned Sikhs ... I also published invitations in Sikh newspapers to all whom it might concern to visit me, inspect, and if necessary correct my translation' (1963, ix). As scholars, we can relate with the anxiety-provoking review process Macauliffe would be going through. Apprehensive rather than supercilious, Macauliffe ended up revising his translation seven times.

His labour bore fruit! Even if we were to focus on his translation of the Japji alone, his accuracy and fluency shine through. This inaugural hymn of the Guru Granth is a complex text, and the way Macauliffe understood the original and conveyed it in English is indeed impressive. As Heidegger reminds us, 'All translating must be an interpreting … translating does not only move between two different languages, but there is a translating within one and the same language' (Heidegger 1996, 62). In both modalities, Macauliffe's 'translation' is highly successful. By being in the Punjab and studying with Sikh exegetes and scholars, he was able to interpret the Guru Granth — 'and everything that stands in its service' (borrowing Heidegger's words) — from its lived dimension. At home in the target language, he subsequently was able to convey his scrupulous interpretation of the original into English that is for the most part quite lucid and accessible. In his preface Macauliffe mentions that he tried to avoid 'startling expressions' and 'archaisms' — 'though deemed necessary by poets and though they contribute to ornateness of style'. This was a wise decision on his part because the language of the Guru Granth spurns elitism; it expresses the passion for the Divine in everyday vernacular overflowing with elemental beauty and force. High-fluted archaisms and ornateness only stifle the original. It is good that he does not opt for any artificial rhyming scheme either.

Striking in Macauliffe's translation is his attempt to accurately convey Guru Nanak's emphasis on the singularity of the Divine. The Guru experienced the infinite One (numeral 1 or Ikk/One), configured in his preamble to the Japji as '*Ikk Oan Kar* — One Being Is'. The 1,430 portfolio pages of the Guru Granth are a poetic embracing of this quintessential Sikh principle. At the outset of the Japji, Guru Nanak asserts '*adi sachu jugadi sach, hai bhi sach nanak hosie bhi sach*', which Macauliffe translates:

> The True One was in the beginning; the True One was in the primal age.

The True One is now also, O Nanak; the True One also shall be.

His English rendering is exact, and there is even a lovely innate rhythm to it. In this instance the literary critic and translator Walter Benjamin's popular perspective in 'The Task of the Translator' rings true: 'Languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express' (Benjamin 1969, 72). Macauliffe is not submitting to archaisms and there is no effort to produce new or startling expressions. In the same literary momentum he translates '*nanak sachai ki sachi kar* — Nanak, true is the work of the True One' (stanza 31). In these versions he fulfils Benjamin's directive: 'A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully' (Benjamin 1969, 79).

If we look at Trumpp's opening, it starts out with 'OM!' The singular Ontological Divine that is foundational to the Sikh religion has disappeared. Guru Nanak's revelatory experience of the One Being (*Ikk Oan Kar*) finds no space in Trumpp's translation. Instead, the Sikh Guru's unique experience is substituted with the conventional OM. Trumpp's translation embarks the reader on an entirely different 'ontotheological' track than Macauliffe's. I would therefore once again disagree with Mandair that 'Macauliffe's response to Trumpp's odium theologicum is imbricated in the same ontotheological framework as Trumpp's' (Mandair 2005, 268) and that Macauliffe remains 'within the very space of cultural translation that Trumpp had opened'(Mandair 2005, 264). I laud Mandair for his overall excellent study, but in light of the actual translations by the two Westerners, his claim is not realistic. Even before colonialism, Sikhs had a full awareness of their distinct theological worldview. Guru Nanak's theological experience of Being — at once transcendent and within each and every bit of the multiverse — was reiterated by his successor Gurus and Bhai Gurdas (the first Sikh theologian). We hear its articulation in the English language from Charles Wilkins a good century earlier than Trumpp. If anything, Macauliffe continues in the 'space of cultural translation' opened by Wilkins. As we may recall from his narrative, Wilkins immediately grasped the ontological, theological, and aesthetic flow of the original verse. His focus on 'there is but One God, Omnipotent and Omnipresent …' and his admiration of the reader's joyous face, resonate strongly in Macauliffe's work. For the Irishman the source material he was translating was the 'most spiritually lofty and ethically most comprehensive'. Diametrically different, Trumpp in his introduction describes the Guru Granth as the 'most shallow and empty book that exists' (Trumpp 1978, cxxii). Macauliffe and Trumpp are two translators coming from two different horizons. Mandair does not sound as though he is critiquing Macauliffe's interpretations – it comes

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across as an attack on the right of any westerner to read any text in a non-western language.

Just like the beginning of the Japji, Macauliffe's translation of the finale is also noteworthy. Towards the end of the hymn Guru Nanak enumerates a spiritual journey through five *khands*. With its maps and charts drafted entirely on the longitudes and latitudes of planet earth, the journey launches readers and reciters through an existential intensification of morality, knowledge, beauty, action, and truth (the five *khands* are *Dharam, Gyan, Saram, Karam and Sach).* Two of them — Saram and Karam — have posed difficulties for translators. Most expositions of the realm of *Saram* begin by stating how 'unclear' 'cryptic' or 'disputed' the term *saram* is. There are three possible origins for the word: the Sanskrit *sharma*, meaning effort; the Sanskrit *sharman* meaning joy or bliss; and the Persian *sharm* meaning shame, with connotations of humility and surrender. The renowned scholar Hew McLeod discusses their polemics effectively, and opts for the term 'effort' in his translation (McLeod 1968, 222-3). In the same vein, G. S. Talib (1977) utilizes 'spiritual endeavour in his translation, but Gopal Singh (1978) goes for the Persian 'surrender'. Macauliffe (1963, 216) in his notes firmly states, '*Sharm* here is not the Persian *sharm*, shame nor the Sanskrit *sharam*, toil. It is the Sanskrit *sharman*, happiness'. For an understanding of the term, I have personally relied on the original Japji verse '*saram khand ki bani roop'*, and translated it as the 'realm of beauty' ('the realm of beauty is beauty itself'). I am pleasantly surprised that it is akin to Macauliffe's version, 'Beauty is the attribute of the realm of happiness'.[8] The Irishman aptly relays the resonant joy of the third Japji realm.

Likewise, exegetes and translators have contested the meaning of the fourth term *karam*. Mcleod (1968, 223) notes that the majority opinion derives *karam* from the Persian word meaning grace. Sikh exegete Kartar Singh (1977, 10) interprets *karam* as divine grace through which one achieves *kapra,* literally cloth or garment — the garment of 'God's love'. Gopal Singh and G.S. Talib both render it as the 'realm of grace', which I did too in my previous work. On the other hand, Macauliffe discerns *karam* as the equivalent of the Sanskrit *karma*, and translates *karam khand* as the 'realm of action'. Sikh scholars Teja Singh and Khushwant Singh retain this view (McLeod 1968, 222-3; see also Macauliffe 1963, 216; Singh T. 1930, 14, 40; Singh K. 1950, 22). McLeod however strongly argues against it, and translates *karam khand* as the Realm of Fulfilment.[9] Revisiting my own translation from 17 years ago, I realize how I had succumbed to the

[8] I did my book of translations (Singh, N-G. K. 1993) during my year at University College Cork. Since I flew cross the Atlantic, I did not carry Macauliffe's heavy volumes!
[9] Here *karam* still retains the Sanskrit meaning of *karma* but with an emphasis upon fulfilment, the reaping of the rewards of previous action. According to McLeod, if *saram khand* is to be regarded as the Realm of Effort and *karam khand* as the Realm of Action, there is scarcely any difference between the third and the fourth stages.

authority of mainstream scholars, for I translated '*karam*' by the Christian term 'grace'. I give credit to Macauliffe because his translation 'realm of action' is in tune with Guru Nanak's metaphysics. It is a fitting designation for the realm that is 'full of force' (*karam khand ki bani jor*) and is filled with 'mighty warriors and heroes' (*tithai jodh mahabal sur*).

Importantly, Macauliffe fully retains the female figures present in the Japji. In this fourth realm Guru Nanak depicts Sita, the ancient Indian paradigm of female power, in the plural: '*sito sita*'. His usage of '*sita*-s' not only increases the figures numerically, it also takes away the distant 'goddess' stature of Lord Rama's wife, and makes women like Sita accessible and realistic members of society. The Japji verse '*tithai sito sita mahima mahi*' is correctly reproduced by Macauliffe: 'There are many Sitas in the midst of greatness'. In light of other translators who have either dismissed this Hindu mythological figure or deleted her completely, it is remarkable that Macauliffe retains her. For instance, G.S. Talib shrugs her aside: 'It would be superfluous to dilate on the symbolic character of Sita as representative of all that is noblest and purest in human nature' (Talib 1977, 135). Others congeal the lively Sita and her companions into solid ice (deriving the term *sita* from *sheeta*, meaning 'cold')![10] In fact, Trumpp (1978, 13) follows this hermeneutic axis, for in his English adaptation: 'There Sita is cool (happy) in greatness'. Still other writers reduce the life-blooded woman to the process of 'stitching'. In his popular text published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Professor Kartar Singh explains Guru Nanak's usage of *sito-sita* as 'perfectly stitched' — '*puran taur te seeta hoia*' (Singh, K. 1996, 72). Sita, and women like Sita, are misappropriated into a man 'stitched' in devotion. To top it all, the Unesco translation (Singh, T. et al. 1960) elides *her* completely from the text! This collaborative work was produced in 1960 by leading Sikh theologians and scholars including Dr. Trilochan Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkishen Singh, and Khushwant Singh. Revised for its literary style by George S. Fraser, introduced by Dr. Radhakrishnan, and with a foreword by Arnold Toynbee, it is a highly popular and respected volume. But, it contains no mention of Sita or her companions in the realm of action. These women are aborted from the texts – just like female foetuses are being aborted in contemporary society!

Likewise, Macauliffe duly acknowledges other female figures present in the Japji. In stanza 5 he translates: '*gur isar gur gorahkh barma gur parbati mai* — The Guru is Shiv, the Guru is Vishnu; the Guru is Parbati,

[10] The term 'Sita' is taken by some exegetes in the sense of *seetal* (cold). For example, Gyani Harbans Singh (Singh, H. 1963, 230). Even in his commentary, *Japuji: The Immortal Prayer-Chant*, G.S. Talib (1977, 135) includes the possibility of its meaning 'cold'. He writes: '*Sito Sita* in the line may be either Sita by herself — that is few other like Sita attain to that realm. Or *sito* may be an epithet, meaning cool (*Shital*) of great poise, one who has subdued all passion'. For a balanced discussion of this verse, see Singh, A. 1970, 236-238.

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Laskhmi and Sarasvati'. Often translators hastily overlook these three vibrant goddesses of life and creativity (Parvati), wealth (Laxmi), and knowledge (Sarasvati) respectively. In Trumpp's version the female trinity is reduced to 'mother parbati'. Similarly in the Unesco volume we simply find 'mother goddess'. Gopal Singh has an interesting take on the sentence: 'And He's Parvati and Laxmi, the mother'. Since they are ancillary to the dominant 'He' projected at the outset, the figures of Parvati and Laxmi and their feminine force are lost in Gopal Singh's adaptation.

Macauliffe gained his knowledge of the Japji from Sikh scholars and exegetes, and they were the ones to endorse his work. That his translation retains the female figures goes to prove the openness of Sikh scholars from a century or more ago. In fact their late 19th/early 20th century views happen to be more progressive than those from the mid/late 20th century, which disregard or diminish the feminine in their translations. Macauliffe's work calls for a self-critique among Sikh scholars. I want to reiterate that Guru Nanak did not worship any goddess. The Sikh Gurus loudly prohibit Sikhs from worshipping any deity in chants, images, or idols. In the first stanza of the Japji, Guru Nanak categorically denounces any form of idolatry. That would be a way of divorcing the external from the internal, the ideal from the real. In his Japji hymn, Parvati, Laxmi, Sarasvati, Sita, and women like them, are the continuum of the female from whom we are created, and which is reproduced in our sisters, our daughters, our wives, our friends. Without being deified, the female figures are cherished as strong, compassionate, intelligent, and creative personalities. Their comprehensive imagery has the potential to broaden mental landscapes and affect daily attitudes and actions. Inversely, by excising the female mythological figures from the Japji translations, readers fail to utilize Guru Nanak's progressive message. So insularity, exclusivism, and sexism are perpetuated.

And this brings me to my problem with Macauliffe's translation: his consistent usage of the term 'God' and the male pronoun for the Divine One! I cannot hold Macauliffe entirely responsible for it though. In this case, the problem lies in the modality of 'translating within one and the same language'. The divine One at the core of the Guru Granth has been understood and interpreted — during precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial times — solely in male terms, and those androcentric interpretations made their way into Macauliffe's work. Guru Nanak envisioned the Divine as numeral *Ikk* (one) — beyond gender, cause, time, and space, and simultaneously, inclusive of all genders, space, time, and relations. However, interpreters and translators have exclusively understood and expressed that One in male terminology. To insert a 'she' in place of the 'he' in translations would be sheer anathema. The one-sided translations go against Guru Nanak's perception. An androcentric 'he', with sheer male pronouns distorts the Guru's original language of plenitude and destroys the multiple possibilities inherent in 'the One'.

Macauliffe follows the norm. From the beginning of his Japji translation, a male figure takes over, diminishing the infinite vastness of Guru Nanak's imaginary. In the usual patriarchal mode, Macauliffe converts the simple term *japu* (recite) into 'repeat his name'; *hukmi* (by order) to 'His Order'; '*keta tan suhalio roop*' (What power and beauty of form) to 'What power and beautiful form are Thine, O God!' and '*sach khand vasai nrinkar*' (in the realm of truth dwells the formless One) into 'God dwelleth in the true realm'. Open-ended expressions are given male personifications. Even in sentences where Guru Nanak does not specify any figure, Macauliffe is quick to insert a 'male God'. The Japji verse *nanak hukmi avai jai* (Nanak by order we come and go), literally, *hukmi* (by order) *avai* (come) *jai* (go), Macauliffe translates: 'Nanak, man suffereth transmigration by God's order' (stanza 20). In these samples (and in several other verses as well) we find him going against his own literary principles and resorting to archaic structures.

Macauliffe's use of the term 'soul' is also problematic. The term 'ji' means living beings. His translation of *hukmi* (by *hukam) hovan* (become*) ji* (living beings) — 'By his order souls are infused into them', takes away the sensuous palpability of living beings. He transforms the concrete *ji* into an ambiguous 'them' and injects the immaterial 'soul' laden with Jewish-Christian connotations. Imposing the mind-body dualism, the tiny word shifts the reader's focus from here and now to an afterlife and heaven out there. As feminist scholars have warned us, this bipartite framework devalues our bodies, our life on earth, and the female gender.

I am curious about his choice of a few other terms. Macauliffe is good with most Punjabi words, so why would he change a delicate 'ant' (*kiri*) into a 'worm'? Guru Nanak praises: '*kiri tul na hovani je tisu manahi na visari* — none can match an ant whose heart does not forget' (stanza 23). Macauliffe's 'worm' just does not do the job! There is also something odd about the way he translates the Punjabi *santokh* (literally contentment) into 'patience' (16), but *dhiraj (*which is literally 'patience') into 'resignation'. In the final stanza of the Japji (no. 38), it is with patience (*dhiraj*) — not resignation — that the goldsmith (*suniar)* uses his hammer, anvil, bellows and anvil, and forges the divine name on the crucible of love ('resignation' lacks the positive energy inherent in the virtue of 'patience'). Another oddity is his translation of the Punjabi term *surati* as 'knowledge' (stanza 36). *Surati* denotes the state of awareness; it is not 'knowledge' as he calls it.

For the most part Macauliffe's translation is praiseworthy. It is the result of great devotion, sensitivity, and hard work. To cite the eminent Sikh scholar Professor Harbans Singh,

> Historically, his translation is very important: it, for the first time, recorded the interpretation of the sacred texts, as orally communicated by *gianis* from generation to generation. It, thus,

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> preserves a valuable tradition and has become a key to the understanding of the Sikh Scriptures (Singh, H. 1970, 144).

The Sikh community was delighted with its publication. Macauliffe was invited by the custodians of the Golden Temple to lecture on his work, and three complete readings (*akhand paths*) of the Guru Granth were held in celebration of his scholarly success.

There is however a rather harsh critic of his work, and that is Mahatma Gandhi. In 'My Jail Experiences XI' (1924) Gandhi recounts that he read *The Sikh Religion* while serving his term at the Yarvada Jail. A brief comment is made on Macauliffe's monumental work:

> Macauliffe's is a life-story of the Gurus giving copious extracts from their compositions. It is a sumptuously printed publication. It loses its value because of its fulsome praise of the English rule and the author's emphasis on Sikhism as a separate religion having nothing in common with Hinduism (Gandhi 1958-1995, Vol. 25: 155).

An admirer of religious poetry, the Mahatma hastily dismisses Sikh scriptural verses as 'copious extracts from their [Gurus] compositions'. In the preceding segment he mentions his reading of *Supersensual Life* by Jacob Boehme, and in this instance, he copiously copies from it some of the 'striking passages'. With the desire to share his other favourite passages, Gandhi sumptuously quotes from a variety of texts. That nothing would strike his fancy from the Gurus' spiritual lyrics is disheartening. I wonder too what text the Mahatma was reading where he came across the Irishman's 'fulsome praise of the English rule'? To come to think of it, the authors Gandhi quotes (in the immediately preceding segment) are from Tom Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* and J. Brierley's *Ourselves and the Universe* — but none translated by Macauliffe from Sikh sacred literature. Gandhi's predilection indicates his own subliminal praise for the English writers.

His criticism of Macauliffe's 'emphasis on Sikhism as a separate religion' is valid. Macauliffe was writing in a milieu when the politics of identity fuelled by the British had taken its effect. In response to the prevailing Arya Samaj rhetoric that the Sikh religion was a branch of Hinduism, the Sikh community started to articulate a distinct identity. In 1898 Bhai Kahn Singh, the leading Sikh scholar and chief minister of Nabha, published *Ham Hindu Nahin* ('We are not Hindus'). Through a dialogue between a Hindu and a Sikh, the author explains the differences between their scripture, society, rituals, and belief systems. Macauliffe was very close to Bhai Kahn Singh: he went to Nabha to study Sikh history and literature with him. Later, for the publication of the translation, Bhai Kahn Singh accompanied him to England; Macauliffe eventually willed the

royalty of the work to Bhai Kahn Singh.[11] His mentor's influence on Macauliffe is inevitable.

In order to demonstrate the independent origins of Sikhism Macauliffe does go overboard in his negative remarks on the surrounding traditions. He refers to Hinduism as a 'boa constrictor' stifling the nascent Sikh religion in its folds — a repeat of the case of Buddhism (Macauliffe 1963, lvii). Such exaggerated analogies emerge from his fear of the decline in Sikh population and go to contest the prevailing assumptions that 'Sikhs are Hindu'. Not only the Arya Samaj ideologues but also Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, would refute the autonomous socio-religious reality of the Sikhs. According to Gandhi, the Sikh Gurus were all Hindus (Gandhi 1958-1995, Vol. 28: 263) and 'The Granth saheb of the Sikhs is actually based on the Hindu scriptures' (Vol. 88: 280). From Gandhi's perspective the Vedas are the ocean which contain the various Indian religions. Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism have no boundaries as they flow and fuse into each other in the oceanic womb of Hinduism (Vol. 90: 177). The 'oceanic womb of Hinduism' for one, a 'boa constrictor' for the other; with such a polar stance, it is natural that Gandhi would react so negatively to Macauliffe's emphasis on the Sikhs as a separate entity from Hinduism.

Nevertheless, Macauliffe's translation does not shy away from conveying the diverse elements from the vast 'Hindu' world (or of the Islamic) embraced by the Sikh Gurus. Without any exclusions of language, caste, class, religion, sex, or species, every part and particle of this multiverse comprised Guru Nanak's revelation. Macauliffe's translation of the Japji, as we witnessed, faithfully relays the Sanskrit based vocabulary, and reproduces the Hindu mythic paradigms — be they Sita, Laxmi, Sarasvati or Parvati. The Gurus respected difference and diversity, and they wanted to familiarize their readers with the rich variety of myths, ethical structures, eschatological views, and metaphysical principles prevalent in medieval India. For the Sikh Gurus, the 'other' could not merely be tolerated; the 'other' had to be engaged with, understood, and appreciated. That was the reason why the Sikh canon incorporates the voice of the Hindu bhagats and the Muslim saints.

When we look at his translation beyond the Japji, Macauliffe gives substantial space to the 'Hindu' bhagats. In fact his sixth volume is entirely devoted to the Hindu and Muslim saints – Jaidev, Namdev, Trilochan, Parmanand, Sadhna, Beni, Ramanand, Dhanna, Pipa, Sain, Kabir, Surdas, Ravidas, Shaikh Farid and Bhikan. He even has a chapter on the female medieval saint Mira Bai, 'the Queen of Chitor' whose composition appears in one of the early manuscripts, but is not a part of the canon (Macauliffe 1963, Vol. 6, 342-356). In the spirit of the Guru Granth, Macauliffe respectfully includes the saints from the mutually exclusive categories

[11] **See** Foley's article in this issue.

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'Hindu' and 'Muslim'. He illuminates the Sikh Gurus' inclusivism and their engagement with different ethnicities, societal classes, and religious ideologies. The various saints bring in a kaleidoscope of images, allusions, and symbols and enrich the sacred text. Significantly for the translator, this pluralistic perspective was distinctively 'Sikh', originating with the founder Guru Nanak. And so it had to be acknowledged and celebrated. Gandhi's claim that that the 'Gurus were all Hindus' or that the Guru Granth is 'based on the Hindu scriptures' is a complete rejection of the Sikh religion and its dynamic history. Anxious about Sikhism being relegated to Hinduism (or to Islam or to a syncretism of the two), Macauliffe went out of his way to emphasise Sikhism as a separate religion.

Conclusion

Seeing through the lens of Amartya Sen's 'exoticist', 'magisterial', and 'curatorial' typology, I find Macauliffe's attitude towards Sikhism antithetical to 'orientalism'. He is so driven to forge kinship between the Sikhs and the West that I am tempted to call him an 'occidentalist'. For sure the Irishman does not promote Sikh independence, but when he took up the translation of the Guru Granth he immersed himself into the Sikh world. This affinity with the Sikhs created many emotional tensions for him, and simultaneously generated problems with his Western peers and the workings of the British Raj. This analysis has made me question my previous critiques of English translations. Just because he uses the terms 'God' or 'soul' or reproduces an androcentric perspective, I cannot stereotype Macauliffe as a *colonial* translator.

In fact he has misgivings about his work. Macauliffe remains dissatisfied about his accuracy in communicating the ideas or 'epithets of the Creator' in the Sikh imaginary. As he admits, he is not too sure if he succeeded:

> I cannot claim complete success: The ideas of the Gurus and particularly their epithets of the Creator cannot always be translated … Somewhat analogous words and expressions may often be found, but they do not convey precisely the meanings intended by the Sikh sacred writers (Macauliffe 1963, xxx-xxxi).

Macauliffe fully discerned the numinous horizon of the Sikh sacred verse, what Heidegger would regard as 'the inner privilege' of a work. He appears to be wrestling with the Heideggerian principle that 'there is no such thing as translation if we mean that a word from one language could, or even should, be made to substitute as the equivalent of a word from another language' (Heidegger 1996, 62). Macauliffe tried to convey the sublime spirit of the Gurus' Word as accurately as he could into English, but he

clearly does not claim his work to be definitive. He leaves his translation open to other possibilities. To cite Heidegger again, 'the peak of poetic or thoughtful work of language must not be worn down through translations, nor the entire mountain range levelled out into the flatlands of superficiality…. Translation must set us upon the path of ascent toward the peak' (1996, 62). Indeed, Macauliffe awakens readers to the spiritual heights envisioned by Guru Nanak. The Irishman was amazingly successful for what he accomplished, and for his challenge to future scholars to continue the never-ending task of improving the translation of sacred texts.

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