

## 14. The Metrical Style of Tulsīdās

**Abstract.** Tulsīdās, the sixteenth-century author of *Rāmacaritamānasa*, is a towering figure in the history of the Hindi literature. His works demonstrate a great diversity of metrical styles derived from other regions, dialects, and religious traditions—not only contemporary Hindu bhaktas and Sant poets of Brajbhāṣā, but Muslim poets too. His prosodic versatility is evident from his proficient use of syllabic metre derived from Sanskrit, mora metres derived from Prakrit, Apabhraṃśa, and Hindi, and the musical *tāla* metre from local folk songs. Besides that, his verse was easy to recite, due to his tendency to limit metrical irregularity and employ his favourite metrical rhythms (that is the 3/3/2 or the 4/4 mora groupings). This paper investigates the rhythmic function of metres in Tulsīdās’s works, attempting to elucidate their key characteristics and discussing how the poet used them to establish his unique style.

**Keywords.** Tulsīdās, *Rāmacaritamānasa*, Hindi metre, Phonological rhythm, Abdurrahīm ‘Khānkhānā’.

Tulsīdās (Tulasīdāsa, sixteenth to seventeenth century), the author of the *Rāmacaritamānasa* (*Rāmcāritmānas*), is a towering figure in the millennium-long history of Hindi literature of North India. His contributions are traditionally not limited to literature. Rather, they include the establishment of the devotion to Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and the popularization of the worship of Hanumān, two practices that continue to exist to this day. Given the vast range of academic study on Tulsīdās’s works, it is surprising that his literary style, especially his metre, has not drawn much attention.<sup>1</sup> Even though metrical analysis involves technical matters, which may appear trivial to understanding Tulsīdās’s works, this paper claims that metrical diversity is in fact one of their characteristic features.

---

<sup>1</sup> In this respect, the detailed analysis of the *baravai chanda* of Tulsīdās and Rahīm conducted by Rupert Snell (1994), pp. 373–405 is an exception. Gaurīśaṅkara Miśra ‘Dvijendra’'s list (2016 [1975]), pp. 244–292, of every name of metre Tulsīdās used provides detailed information.

## Metre in the works of Tulsīdās

Mātāprasāda Gupta, an authority on Tulsīdās in the twentieth century, admired his six major works as the jewels of Hindi literature: the *Rāmacaritamānasa*, *Dohāvalī*, *Kavitāvalī*, *Gītāvalī*, *Kṛṣṇa Gītāvalī*, and *Vinaya Patrikā*.<sup>2</sup> Besides, there are six minor works including the *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa*, *Pārvatī Maṅgala*, *Jānakī Maṅgala*, *Rāmalalā Nahachū*, *Rāmājñā Praśna*, and *Vairāgya Sandīpanī*. Most scholars recognize these twelve works as authentic compositions of Tulsīdās.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these authoritative compositions, a few works such as the popular *Hanumān Cālīsā*, used for daily recitation, are also generally attributed to Tulsīdās.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to determine the authenticity of Tulsīdās's works, as is frequently the case in bhakti literature, but nevertheless it is not our main concern here. The metrical analysis presented in this chapter uses the Kāśīrāja edition of the *Rāmacaritamānasa*<sup>5</sup> and the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā edition<sup>6</sup> of the other eleven works. Tables 14.1 and 14.2 present the moraic forms used by Tulsīdās in his works.

These tables indicate that Tulsīdās used many forms not only of *mātrā chanda*, which is a purely moraic metre with end rhymes, but also *varṇa chanda*, a rigid syllable-counting metre with a fixed order of feet, and *tāla chanda*, which is a musical metre.<sup>7</sup> While other poets of bhakti literature tend to prefer certain metres, Tulsīdās is unique in his use of an unusually rich variety of metrical forms appropriate to the theme of the work.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, the following questions are posed: Why did he use so many metres? Which metre was most characteristic of his work? I will return to these questions later.

---

2 Gupta (1967), p. 9.

3 Lutgendorf (2007), p. 93, called this a broad consensus on the extent of the corpus, one at which modern scholarship has likewise arrived. However, the canonization of these twelve works may have been influenced by the commentaries and *kathā* tradition of the renowned Rāmāyaṇī in the late nineteenth century (Lutgendorf (1991), pp. 137–157).

4 The popularity of *Hanumān Cālīsā* is immense and Tulsīdās is revered as its author these days. Lutgendorf (2007) has examined the boom of Hanumān-related literature, including the *Hanumān Cālīsā*, in detail.

5 Miśra (1962).

6 Śukla (1923).

7 Keśavdās (Keśavadāsa), poet of Orchha and contemporary of Tulsīdās, also used many metrical forms but did so to create a work illustrating various metres.

8 Poets such as Sūrdās used many kinds of metrical forms belonging to the category *pada*. The *pada* is not the name of single metre but of long stanzas in which there are various metrical forms. And if we consider each of them as an independent metre, their works also show considerable variety. Tulsīdās, however, used a still yet wider variety of metres depending on the theme of the work, in addition to the *pada* in which he composed three works. Even if we treat the entire *pada* as one metrical style, Tulsīdās' works show an unparalleled repertoire of metres.

## 14. The Metrical Style of Tulsidās

**TABLE 14.1** Metrical forms of major works (\* = ‘syllabic metre’; † = ‘musical metre’; [no mark] = ‘moraic metre’; E. R. = ‘end rhyme’; m = ‘mora’ (*mātrā*)).

|  |                             |  |
|--|-----------------------------|--|
| <i>Rāmācaritamānasa</i>  | Regular stanza              | 4 <i>caupāī</i> (16m. quatrain) + 1 <i>dohā</i> (13m. + 11m. couplet)  |
|  | Specially used moraic forms | <p>Chap. 1 <i>harigītikā</i> (16 + 12 = 28m. quatrain. E. R. ∪-),<br/> <i>tribhaṅgī</i> (10 + 8 + 8 + 6 = 32m. quatrain. E. R. -),<br/> <i>durmilā</i> (10 + 8 + 14 = 32m. quatrain. E. R. --),<br/> <i>daṇḍakalā</i> (10 + 8 + 14 = 32m. quatrain. E. R. ∪∪-),<br/> <i>cavapaiyā</i> (10 + 8 + 12 = 30m. quatrain. E. R. -)</p> <hr/> <p>Chap. 2 <i>harigītikā</i></p> <hr/> <p>Chap. 3 *<i>pramāṇikā</i> (∪-∪ -∪- ∪-∪- quatrain),<br/> <i>harigītikā</i><br/> <i>tomara</i> (12m. quatrain. E. R. --)</p> <hr/> <p>Chap. 4 <i>harigītikā</i></p> <hr/> <p>Chap. 5 <i>harigītikā</i></p> <hr/> <p>Chap. 6 <i>harigītikā</i><br/> <i>tomara</i><br/> *<i>toṭaka</i> (∪∪- ∪∪- ∪∪- ∪∪- quatrain)</p> <hr/> <p>Chap. 7 <i>harigītikā</i><br/> *<i>bhujāṅgaprayāta</i> (∪-- ∪-- ∪-- ∪-- quatrain),<br/> *<i>toṭaka</i></p> |
| <i>Dohāvalī</i>  |                             | 573 <i>dohā</i> (or <i>soraṭhā</i> )   |
| <i>Kavitāvalī</i>  |                             | 325 stanzas (* <i>savaiyā</i> <sup>a</sup> ((∪∪- or -∪∪) × ca. 8), * <i>kabitta/ghanākṣarī</i> (16 + 15 = 31 syllables. E. R. -), <i>chappaya (rolā</i> (11 + 13 = 24m. quatrain) + <i>ullālā</i> (26 or 28 m. couplet)), <i>jhūlanā</i> (10 + 10 + 10 + 7m. quatrain)   |
| <i>Gītāvalī</i>  |                             | 328 †padas   |
| <i>Kṛṣṇa Gītāvalī</i>  |                             | 61 †padas  |
| <i>Vinaya Patrikā</i>  |                             | 279 †padas   |
| <p><sup>a</sup> There are some variations of the <i>savaiyā</i> and <i>mattagayanda</i> ((- ∪∪) + - -), especially noted in some printed texts. <i>Savaiyā</i> as well as <i>kavitta</i> are syllabic metre, but they are not traditional Sanskrit metrical forms. See details in Nagasaki (2012), p. 122.</p> |                             |  |

Source: Author.

TABLE 14.2 Metrical forms of minor works.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Baravai Rāmāyaṇa</i>  | 69 <i>baravai</i> (11m. + 7m. couplet)   |
| <i>Pārvatī Maṅgala</i>   | 16 stanzas (4–8 <i>haṃsagati</i> (12m. + 9m.) + 1 <i>harigītikā</i> )  |
| <i>Jānakī Maṅgala</i>  | 24 stanzas (4 <i>haṃsagati</i> + 1 <i>harigītikā</i> )   |
| <i>Rāmalalā Nahachū</i>  | 20 <i>sohara</i> <sup>a</sup> (8m. + 8m. + 6m. quatrain)   |
| <i>Rāmājñā Praśna</i>  | 343 <i>dohā</i> (7 stanzas in 7 <i>sarga</i> : every stanza is called <i>dohā</i> , contains 7 <i>dohā</i> ) |
| <i>Vairāgya Sandīpanī</i>  | 62 verses ( <i>dohā</i> , <i>soraṭhā</i> , <i>caupāī</i> )   |
| <sup>a</sup> The quatrain <i>sohara</i> is called <i>rāsa</i> by Hindi prosodist J. P. Bhānu in his <i>Kāvya Prabhā-kara</i> . |  |

Source: Author.

His works can be grouped into two categories based on the number of metrical forms; the first includes works composed in mixed metrical forms and the second in single metrical form. For example, while the *Rāmacaritamānasa* mostly consists of stanzas of four *caupāīs* plus one *dohā*, it also contains stanzas in various other metres and so belongs to the first category. On the other hand, the *Dohāvalī* and *Rāmājñā Praśna* are collections of *dohās* only, and belong to the second category.

Eight works belong to the first category: the *Rāmacaritamānasa*, *Kavitāvalī*, *Gītāvalī*, *Kṛṣṇa Gītāvalī*, *Vinaya Patrikā*, *Pārvatī Maṅgala*, *Jānakī Maṅgala*, and *Vairāgya Sandīpanī*. The *Rāmacaritamānasa* and *Vairāgya Sandīpanī* are in the *caupāī–dohā* style; *Pārvatī Maṅgala* and *Jānakī Maṅgala* are in the *haṃsagati–harigītikā* style; *Gītāvalī*, *Kṛṣṇa Gītāvalī*, and *Vinaya Patrikā* are collections of pada songs;<sup>9</sup> and *Kavitāvalī* is a *Rāmāyaṇa* in *kavitta* (*ghānakṣarī*)–*savaiyā* and some other metres. The other four works fall under the second category: the *Dohāvalī* and *Rāmājñā Praśna* are collections of *dohās*; the *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa* consists of *baravais*; and the *Rāmalalā Nahachū* contains only *soharas*.

The *Rāmacaritamānasa* is the longest work by Tulsīdās and indicates remarkable variation in the number of metres, whereas his other works in mixed metrical forms are composed of a limited number of metres.

9 Miśra (2016 [1975]), pp. 256–258, claimed that there are forty-one different metrical forms occurring in the pada of the *Vinaya Patrikā*, *Kavitāvalī*, and *Kṛṣṇa Kavitāvalī*, although his classification distinguishes too small a level of detail. Miśra (2016 [1975]), pp. 287–289, attributed Tulsīdās’s hypermetrical or hypometrical pada to *saṅgīta*, but a further analysis of their metrical structure based on the music might be necessary. Cf. Snell’s study of the padas of Hita Harivaṃśa.

## 14. The Metrical Style of Tulsidās

### Metrical style of the *Rāmacaritamānasa*

The *Rāmacaritamānasa*, which is composed of about 1,073 stanzas,<sup>10</sup> comprises seven chapters. The standard stanza is composed of four *caupāis* plus one *dohā* or *soraṭhā*.<sup>11</sup> Four-quatrain *caupāi* of sixteen moras each serve for the narrative while a *dohā* couplet of twenty-four moras each concludes the stanza. Each chapter begins with a Sanskrit *śloka* dedicated to the gods, and chapter seven, the last chapter, ends with verses in language and metre that are canonical Sanskrit. The word *śloka* is especially noted before the Sanskrit verses in some printed editions; it means Sanskrit metre in general, unlike Sanskrit *śloka*, which refers to a strophe of four pada ‘feet’ with eight syllables in each stanza. Individual metres that fall under the category of *śloka* are presented in Table 14.4.

<sup>10</sup> The number of stanzas varies depending on the edition: 1,073 stanzas in the Kāśīrāja edition; 1,068 stanzas in the Nāgarī Pracārīnī Sabhā edition by Śukla; 1,074 stanzas in the Gita Press and Mātāprasāda Gupta editions.

<sup>11</sup> Some scholars distinguish hypermetrical or hypometrical metres from the standard forms and give independent names, but this author regards them as variation of the standard forms. Focusing on the deviation from standard stanzas, the following irregularities were found:

**TABLE 14.3** Irregular stanzas in each chapter based on the Kāśīrāja edition

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> (36/361) | 7 lines: 5, 9 lines: 6, 10 lines: 6, 11 lines: 4, 12 lines: 5, 13 lines: 5, 14 lines: 3, 15 lines: 1  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> (7/325)  | 7 lines: 4, 9 lines: 2, 16 lines: 1   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> (19/46)  | 9 lines: 2, 10 lines: 4, 11 lines: 1, 12 lines: 3, 13 lines: 1, 16 lines: 1, 17 lines: 1, 18 lines: 2, 20 lines: 1, 24 lines: 1, 26 lines: 1, 27 lines: 1 |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> (14/30)  | 9 lines: 2, 10 lines: 5, 11 lines: 1, 12 lines: 2, 13 lines: 2, 14 lines: 1, 29 lines: 1  |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> (23/60)  | 9 lines: 14, 10 lines: 6, 11 lines: 1, 12 lines: 2  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> (41/121) | 9 lines: 7, 10 lines: 19, 11 lines: 3, 12 lines: 3, 13 lines: 3, 14 lines: 3, 16 lines: 2   |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> (38/130) | 7 lines: 1, 9 lines: 10, 10 lines: 14, 16 lines: 10, 19 lines: 2, 37 lines: 1   |

Source: Author.

According to this list, the ratio of the irregular stanzas is about 17 per cent. In other words, 83 per cent of the stanzas in the *Rāmacaritamānasa* consist of four *caupāis* plus one *dohā* or *soraṭhā*.

**TABLE 14.4** Metrical forms under the category of *śloka* in the *Rāmacaritamānasa* (s = ‘syllable’).

|                         |          |                             |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| <i>anuṣṭubh</i>         | 8s. × 4  | 8 syllables × 4             |
| <i>śārdūlavikrīḍita</i> | 19s. × 4 | --- 000 000 000 000 000 -   |
| <i>vasantatilakā</i>    | 14s. × 4 | --0 000 000 000 --          |
| <i>indravajrā</i>       | 11s. × 4 | --0 --0 000 --              |
| <i>mālinī</i>           | 15s. × 4 | 000 000 --- 000 000         |
| <i>sragdharā</i>        | 21s. × 4 | --- 000 000 000 000 000 000 |
| <i>rathodhatā</i>       | 11s. × 4 | --0 000 000 000             |
| <i>pañcacāmara</i>      | 16s. × 4 | 000 000 000 000 000 -       |

Source: Author.

These Sanskrit *śloka* are composed in syllabic metre. Syllabic metre, called *varṇa chanda*, derives from Sanskrit literature. On the other hand, moraic metre, or *mātrā chanda*, derives from Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa literature. These two are the major categories in Hindi poetics, but moraic metre is much more common in Hindi literature. This tendency is observed in the *Rāmacaritamānasa* as well. The effect of solemnity, one of the characteristics of syllabic metres, might be the main reason why Tulsīdās adopted the *śloka* at the beginning of each chapter of the *Rāmacaritamānasa*. He prayed for a successful start in those *ślokas*, along with the concluding *śloka* of chapter seven with which he declared the holiness of the *Rāmacaritamānasa*.<sup>12</sup>

Special metrical forms provide variation in the monotonous repetition of the *caupāī-dohā* rhythm (Table 14.1). Some editions give them the name *chanda* (metre), but this term covers verses other than *caupāī*, *dohā*, *soraṭhā*, and *śloka*. Among these special metrical forms, *harigītikā*, *cavapaiyā*, *daṇḍakalā*, and *durmilā* are defined as moraic metres. On the other hand, *tomara*, which is defined as a moraic metre in Hindi prosody, is explained as a syllabic metre in the *Prākṛtapaṅgalam*.<sup>13</sup> Of the *chanda* metres, three forms, *toṭaka*, *pramāṇikā*, and *bhujaṅgaprayāta*, are based on Sanskrit syllable counting.

12 Besides the *ślokas* at the beginning of each chapter, the syllabic metre is adopted mainly for the devotional songs within the chapters. For example, in chapter seven there are *ślokas* placed in stanza 108 dedicated to the god Śiva and in stanza 122 requesting readers to recite the name of the god Rāma.

13 The definitions of *tomara* verse: twelve moras and end rhyme --0 in the Hindi poetics; 00 0 0 0 0 0 0 in the *Prākṛtapaṅgalam*.

#### 14. The Metrical Style of Tulsīdās

The question is whether the *caupāī–dohā* style of Tulsīdās is original. Some scholars, such as Rāmacandra Śukla, have noted a similarity in style between the *Rāmacaritamānasa* and the Sufī romances, for example the *Padmavāt* by Malik Muhammad Jāyīsī.<sup>14</sup> The remarkable resemblance between them may be due to the fact that Tulsīdās and Sufī poets lived in the same region, Avadh, and shared the language and literary form of the Avadhi epic.<sup>15</sup> However, another possibility is worth noting. The stanza *kaḍavaka* of the Jain *Rāmāyaṇa* in Apabhraṃśa literature, which shows four verse forms (*paddhaḍikā*) with sixteen moras in each foot followed by a *ghattā*, *gāthā*, or *ullālā*, seems to be taken over by the four *caupāī* plus one *dohā* in the *Rāmacaritamānasa*.<sup>16</sup> This possibility suggests that Tulsīdās borrowed the *caupāī–dohā* style directly from that of Jain *Rāmāyaṇa* of the eighth century. We cannot claim with certainty that Tulsīdās was familiar with the Sufī or Jain literature, but it is possible that the characteristic style of his magnum opus, the *Rāmacaritamānasa*, was borrowed from Jain or Sufī literature, despite the fact that Tulsīdās was skilled at using many other metrical styles.

In addition to the *caupāī–dohā* style, other works by Tulsīdās also show a remarkable similarity in metrical style with works by other bhakti poets. It is a view commonly held by Indian readers that ‘Tulsidas is a professional poet who shared a lot of cultural habitus with others in the same field including the Sufī poets,’<sup>17</sup> and the legend about the interactions between Tulsīdās and his contemporary poets, which cannot be proven on historical grounds, might reflect that view. In this regard, we quote that the description in the *Mūla Gosāīm Carita*, the hagiography of Tulsīdās, emphasizes the communication and correspondences between the Krishnaite bhaktas and Tulsīdās. For example, Sūrdās (Sūradāsa) taught Tulsīdās the pada (*dohā* 29–30); Tulsīdās and Mīrābāī sent *kavitta–savaiyā* to each other (*dohā* 31–32); and Tulsīdās and Abdurrahīm ‘*Khānkhānā*’ (1556–1626), commonly known as Rahīm, sent *baravai* (*dohā* 93). Even though these legends lack credibility for contemporary historiography, they reflect the fact that the pada style of the *Gītāvalī*, *Kṛṣṇa Gītāvalī*, and *Vinaya Patrikā*, and the *kavitta–savaiyā* style of the *Kavitāvalī*, may be related to the Western tradition of Krishnaite poetry

---

14 Śukla (1990 [1929]), pp. 40–41, claimed that Sufī poets also adopted the *caupāī–dohā* style from the *Satyavatīkathā* composed by Īśvardās (Īśvaradāsa, sixteenth century). He wanted to attribute the origin of the literary style of Sufī poets to a previous Hindu tradition. However, it is not confirmed that Sufī poets followed the style of only one composition, such as the *Satyavatīkathā*.

15 De Bruijn (2010) describes several intertextual overlaps between the *Padmavāt* and the *Rāmacaritamānasa* and remarks Tulsī’s choice of the format of the Avadhi epics as the genre historically developed by the Sufī poets.

16 See details in Nagasaki (2012), p. 115.

17 De Bruijn (2010), p. 133.

in Brajbhāṣā.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the *baravai* metre in the *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa* might be related to Brajbhāṣā literature patronized by the Mughal court. One exception to these shared styles is the *hamsagati-harigītikā* style of the *Pārvaī Maṅgala* and *Jānakī Maṅgala*. The *hamsagati* is an original Hindi moraic metre first mentioned in *Chandohṛdaya Prakāśa*, a seventeenth-century work of poetics by Bhūṣaṇa, and the *harigītikā* is referred to in the *Prākṛita-Paiṅgalam* (fourteenth century); however, the stanza of *hamsagati-harigītikā* is not common in Hindi bhakti literature. Thus it is possible that this is a special style of Tulsīdās's or that other works in this metre have not survived.

If Tulsīdās borrowed metrical styles from the works of other poets, it raises a further question: what then is the characteristic of Tulsīdās's own metre? To answer this question, we must analyze the metrical rhythms that Tulsīdās particularly preferred. Let us first look at the second category, namely works in single metrical form.

## The favoured metrical form and rhythm of Tulsīdās

The popular *Dohāvalī* and *Rāmājñā Praśna* are collections of *dohās*, and the *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa* is a collection of *baravais*. Both *dohās* and *baravais* are couplets in moraic metre. Each features rhymes in the last two syllables but whereas each line of a *dohā* comprises 13 + 11 moras, each line of a *baravai* comprises 12 + 7 moras. The *dohā* is derived from Apabhraṃśa moraic metre and is popular among Hindi poets. On the other hand, the *baravai*, a moraic metre of presumably Hindi origin,<sup>19</sup> has not been much used by Hindi poets except Rahīm and Tulsīdās.<sup>20</sup> (The

---

18 Dvivedī (1994 [1952]), p. 150, states that *savaiyā-kavitta* style first appeared in Braj literature. Bangha (2004), pp. 33–34, points out the use of *kavitta*, *savaiyā*, and *chappaya* styles among court poets such as Gang (Gaṅga) and Kalyan (Kalyāṇa).

19 The *baravai*, a variation of *dohā*, is a couplet, each line comprises 12 + 7 moras and ends in the rhythm ∪-∪. Since it is not mentioned in Sanskrit, Prakrit, or Apabhraṃśa metrics, the *baravai* is considered to be the creation of Hindi poets, and allegedly Rahīm was the first to use it. The *baravai* may be a new-born metrical form composed of an odd pada of the *upadohā* (or *dohārā*) + the *dhruva*. This pada is composed of twelve moras, and the *dhruva*, an old metre of Prakrit, is composed of seven. According to Śivanandana Praśāda (1964), p. 399, this explanation of the origin of the *baravai* is supported by the fact that some Hindi metricians, for example Bhikhārīdās, called it not *baravai* but *dhruva*. According to Snell (1994), pp. 374–375, the name *barvā* applied to a raga in *kāfī thāt*, and the connection between *barvā* and the ragas, *darpaṇ* and *ṭhumrī*, are referred to in musicological texts—but the exact relationship between *barvā* and *baravai* metre is unclear.

20 Among the unique poets who used *baravai*, Dvivedī (1994), p. 143, categorized Nūr Muhammad. His style appears to be similar to the *caupāī-dohā* style, but interestingly, he used not *dohā* but *baravai* following *caupāīs* in his stanza.

#### 14. The Metrical Style of Tulsīdās

*baravai* metre used by the two poets is discussed below). The reason for the lack of popularity of the *baravai* may be its impracticality; that is, the *baravai* is a couplet with only thirty-eight moras, the smallest in Hindi metre, and thus it may be too short for poets to express their thoughts. The *dohā* is also short, but forty-eight moras is sufficient length for a complete, self-standing couplet. We could, with Schomer, call it an ideal metrical form; she stated, ‘the *dohā* is concise as well as easy to remember.’<sup>21</sup> Despite the difference in the number of moras, the *baravai* is categorized as a variety of the *dohā*. While Tulsīdās used many types of metrical forms in his works, he composed three collections of poems, the *Dohāvalī*, *Rāmājñā Praśna*, and *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa* only in the *dohā* and its variety *baravai*. This suggests that the *dohā* may be Tulsīdās’s preferred favorite moraic metre.

But what are the unique characteristics of Tulsīdās’s *dohā*? The *dohā* is traditionally classified as a *muktaka* (independent verse), meaning it is in itself complete. Many Sant poets of bhakti literature preferred to use the *dohā* as a *muktaka* for their sermons. In contrast, the *dohā* of Tulsīdās has two functions, for example as *muktaka* and as the summarization of the stanza. The latter function is found in the *dohās* in the *Dohāvalī*, many of which are gathered from the *Rāmacaritamānasa*. The former function is closely associated with the sermons of the Sant poets, whereas the latter may be associated with the Jain *Rāmāyaṇa* of the Apabhraṃśa literature or the Sufi romance. The traditional moraic pattern of the *dohā*, as defined in the *Prākṛta-Paiṅgalam*, is 6+4+3, with 6+4+1 moras in each line. Many Hindi prosodists follow this definition. However, the syllabic arrangement of Tulsīdās’s *dohās* is unique, differing from the *dohās* in the traditional grouping of moras. The following is a *dohā* quoted from the *Dohāvalī*:

*bād<sup>h</sup>aka saba saba ke b<sup>h</sup>ae, sād<sup>h</sup>aka b<sup>h</sup>ae na koi*  
 ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ , ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘  
*tulasī rāma kṛpālu tē b<sup>h</sup>alo hoi so hoi*  
 ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘ ˘˘

Rough paths of life are full of pits, support indeed is hard to find,  
 Tulsī, welfare one gets on earth when Gracious Rama is so inclined.  
 (*Dohāvalī* 100, trans. Bahadur (1997), p. 13)

The following scansion indicates how the traditional mora grouping of the *Prākṛta-Paiṅgalam* (6+4+3, 6+4+1) applies to the first hemistich of the *dohā* but does not to the second because a long syllable stretches over the 6th and 7th *mātrā* ‘mora’ positions (Table 14.5).

21 Schomer (1987), p. 63.

TABLE 14.5 The *dohā* by Tulsīdās according to the traditional mora grouping.

| Odd pada                       |                |                        | Even pada  |         |      |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|--|---------|------|
| <i>bād<sup>h</sup>aka saba</i> | <i>saba ke</i> | <i>b<sup>h</sup>ae</i> | <i>sād<sup>h</sup>aka b<sup>h</sup>ae na koi</i> |         |      |
| - ∪ ∪ ∪                        | ∪ ∪ -          | ∪ -                    | - ∪ ∪ ∪  | ∪ - ∪ ∪ | - ∪  |
| 6                              | 4              | 3                      | 4  | 12      | 1 21 |

  

|                  |                |              |                             |              |          |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|----------|
| <i>tulasī rā</i> | <i>ma kṛpā</i> | <i>lu tē</i> | <i>b<sup>h</sup>alo hoi</i> | <i>so ho</i> | <i>i</i> |
| ∪ ∪ - -          | ∪ ∪ -          | ∪ -          | ∪ - ∪ ∪                     | - -          | ∪        |
| 6                | 4              | 3            | 6                           | 4            | 1        |

Source: Author.

To solve this problem, we need to assume a mora grouping such as the following:

*bād<sup>h</sup>aka/ saba saba/ ke b<sup>h</sup>a/ e,/ sād<sup>h</sup>aka/ b<sup>h</sup>ae na/ koi*  
 4 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 4 / 4 / 3  
*tulasī/ rāma kṛ/ pālu/ tē/ b<sup>h</sup>alo/ hoi/ so/ hoi*  
 4/ 4 / 3 / 2 / 3 / 3 / 2 / 3

While the traditional mora grouping is 6/4/3, 6/4/1, I analyze this mora grouping as 3/3/2 or 4/4 plus 3 followed by two more moras in the odd pada. Here we should recall the 3/3/2 versus 4/4 theory of Kenneth Bryant. Bryant clearly indicated how this theory can be applied to the pada of Sūrdās.<sup>22</sup> While, according to Bryant, this mora grouping can be applied even in the middle of lines of Sūrdās’s verses, it always occurs in the beginning of each pada in Tulsīdās’s *dohās*. However, surprisingly, the Hindi prosodist Jagannātha Prasāda ‘Bhānu’ already gave the 3/3/2 versus 4/4 mora interpretation in his definition of the *dohā* a century ago. In his definition, there are two mora groupings at the beginning of a pada, that is 3/3/2 and 4/4 (Table 14.6).

TABLE 14.6 The mora grouping of *dohā* by ‘Bhānu’.

|           |        |                                  |
|-----------|--------|----------------------------------|
| odd pada  | 13m. = | 3(∪ _ or ∪ ∪ or ∪ ∪ ∪)+3+2+3+2   |
|           | 13m. = | 4(∪ ∪ _ or _ _ or ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪)+4+3+2 |
| even pada | 11m. = | 3+3+2+3(∪ ∪)                     |
|           | 11m. = | 4+4+3(∪ ∪)                       |

Source: Author.

<sup>22</sup> Bryant (1992).

#### 14. The Metrical Style of Tulsīdās

Perhaps, the most interesting point is his emphasis on the principle that three moras should be followed by three moras, and four moras by four moras. In this manner, the mora grouping based on Bhānu's definition or Bryant's '4/4 vs. 3/3/2 theory' both perfectly solves the problem of the second pada of the first line and agrees with the word boundary of the second line.

As is the case with the *dohā*, this mora grouping can be applied to the *baravai* composed by Tulsīdās. Bhānu did not describe any rule on the moraic makeup of the *baravai*, but we can find a regularity that is similar to that of the *dohā*. The following is a *baravai* composed by Tulsīdās.

*kesa/ mukuta/ sak<sup>h</sup>i/ marakata/, manimaya/ hota.*  
 - ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ / , ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ / - ∪  
 3/ 3 / 2 / 4 / , 4 / 3  
*hā<sup>h</sup>a/ leta/ puni/ mukutā/, karata/ udota.*  
 - ∪ / - ∪ / ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ - / , ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ / - ∪  
 3 / 3 / 2 / 4 / , 4 / 3

The pearls in her hair, friend, are like emerald gems;  
 when she takes them in her hand they glow again. (*Baravai Rāmāyaṇa* 1,  
 trans. Snell (1994), p. 398)

Remarkably, the repetition of 3/3 moras is found in the beginning of the lines in this example, as in the case of the *dohā*. If we assume that Bhānu's principle of the *dohā* applies to the *baravai* as well, the moraic arrangement of the *baravai* would be 8 (3+3+2 or 4+4)+4, 4+3. This hypothesis supports the theory mentioned above that the *baravai* is a variation of the *dohā*.

However, this mora grouping may not necessarily be applied to the *baravai* of Rahīm, the allegedly first Hindi poet to use the *baravai* in composition.<sup>23</sup> Let us now look at a *baravai* by Rahīm:

*aucaka āi jobanavāṃ, mohi dukha dīna*  
 - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ , ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ - ∪  
*chūṭigo saṅga goiavāṃ nahi bhala kīna. (Nāyikā Bheda 10, Rahīma*  
*granthāvalī)*  
 ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ , ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ - ∪

A youth suddenly came and made me sad.  
 He interrupted my company with girlfriends; he did not do any good.

<sup>23</sup> The *Mūla Gosāṃ Carita* describes Rahīm sending some *baravai* couplets to Tulsīdās; then Tulsīdās supposedly imitated them and began composing the *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa*.

In this *baravai*, both lines start with four syllables, but there is no clear group of four syllables following them. Particularly in the second line, it is even less clear, because the *go* of *chuṭigo* ॐ- is a long syllable while that of *saṅga go* ॐ ॐ is short. For Rahīm, a Persian poet, the phenomenon that *o* could be both scanned as short and long might be natural since Persian-Arabic prosody applied to Dakkhanī Urdu metre and Brajhbhāṣā allows such scansion. In addition, according to the word boundary, the rhythmic pattern of this *baravai* of Rahīm is |ॐॐ| ॐ| ॐॐॐ| ॐ ॐ ॐ| - ॐ| (4 + 3 + 5, 4 + 3). However, if we do not consider word boundaries, the rhythmic unit of this *baravai* can also be considered to be based on the group of four moras, that is, the beginning of the first line (ॐॐ| ॐॐ|ॐॐ-) versus that of the second (ॐॐ| ॐॐ|ॐॐ-). In the *baravai* of Tulsīdās, the word boundary coincides with 4/4 vs. 3/3/2 syllables, whereas that of Rahīm does not. Even if Rahīm intentionally made the word boundary straddle the syllables, the *baravais* of Tulsīdās are simpler in rhythm and easier to recite.

Furthermore, a similar rhythm can be found in the *sohara* as well. I indicate the *sohara* used in Tulsīdās's *Rāmālalā Nahachū*.<sup>24</sup> This is the only work composed in a single metre, not *dohā*, but *sohara*. The *sohara* is widely known as the flexible metre of folk songs sung upon the birth of a son. The following is an example of *sohara* in the *Rāmālalā Nahachū*:

*koṭīha bājana bājahī dasaratha ke grha ho.*  
 ॐॐ ॐॐ/ ॐॐ ॐॐॐ /- ॐॐ-  
 4 4 / 4 4 / 6

*devaloka saba dekhahī ānāda ati hiya ho.*  
 ॐॐॐ ॐॐ/ ॐॐ ॐॐ/ॐॐॐ-  
 3 3 2/ 4 4 / 6

*nagara sōhāvana lāgata barani na jātai ho.*  
 ॐॐॐ ॐॐॐ/ ॐॐ ॐॐॐ ॐ/ ॐॐ-  
 3 3 2/ 4 4 / 6

*kausalyā ke haraṣa na hṛdaya samātai ho. (Rāmālalā Nahachū 2)*  
 - - - -/ॐॐॐ ॐ ॐॐॐ ॐ/ॐॐ-  
 4 4 / 4 4 / 6

Millions of instrumentals are being played in the palace of king Daśaratha.  
 Having seen it, all gods are rejoiced in their hearts.  
 It cannot be described how delighted the town has become.  
 The delight of Queen Kausalyā cannot be held in her heart.

24 Stasik (1999) considers that a new critical edition of Tulsīdās's *Rām-lalā-nahachū* is necessary because there are two versions of the text: the popular printed version containing twenty *sohara* stanzas and an old manuscript found by Mātāprasāda Gupta consisting of twenty-six *sohara* stanzas. I use the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā edition based on the popular version. I believe the difference will not affect our argument.

## 14. The Metrical Style of Tulsīdās

Moraic scansion indicates that this *sohara* contains twenty-two moras in each line. Many types of *sohara gītas* collected by Rāmanareśa Tripāthī in his *Grāma Sāhitya*<sup>25</sup> indicate a wide range of variations, but Tulsīdās composed the *Rāmalalā Nahachū* in a quite rigid *sohara*; that is, every *sohara* contains four lines, each line comprising 8 + 8 + 6 moras and rhyming ∪∪- at the end. Bhānu gives this type of *sohara* a special name, *rāsa*. Although the *sohara* has no relation to a *dohā*, we can find two ways of dividing an eight-mora passage even in this case, that is, into a 3/3/2 or a 4/4 grouping. Tripāthī says that the *soharas* of Tulsīdās are strict in terms of the number of moras as well as end rhyme, which is not required in *soharas* sung by ladies in local festivals.<sup>26</sup> We can conclude that the 3/3/2 or the 4/4 mora grouping is the favourite rhythm of Tulsīdās.

## Conclusion

Based on this evidence, we are now well placed to answer why Tulsīdās used so many metrical forms. Rāmacandra Śukla, the Hindi scholar of Tulsīdās, indicated that five types of metrical styles are found in Tulsīdās's compositions: (1) *Chappaya* of the Rāsau literature, (2) *Gīta* of Vidyāpati and Sūrdās, (3) *Kavitta-Savaiyā* of Gaṅg (Gaṅga), (4) *Dohā* of Kabīr (Kabīra), and (5) *Caupāi-dohā* of Īśvardās (Īśvaradāsa).<sup>27</sup> We may add to this list the Sanskrit verses in the *Rāmacaritamānasa* and folk song of the *sohara* already discussed. Among these, the *chappaya* of the Rāsau style is less used. But it is remarkable that almost all the metrical styles that existed in Tulsīdās's day he used. Śukla extolled the versatility shown in his works and this recognition is shared by both the public and the academic community. The advantage of his works is their flexibility or the lack in them of unique metrical components. I cannot identify the specific features of the metrical style of Tulsīdās—yet his rhythmical sense is remarkable. Even though sometimes longer by one syllable than that found in the work of others, the two rhythms 4/4 and 3/3/2 at the beginning and the end rhyme, make his verses easy to recite and remember. Besides the ease of recitation, we can indicate another subtle characteristic; although many types of metrical irregularity exist, such as hypermetrical or hypometrical verses, they are limited in number. In other words, they break the monotony in the rhythm unexpectedly but pleasantly. Grace, neatness, and moderate flexibility could be named as characteristics of Tulsīdās's metre and this view, reached by an analysis of his metre, does confirm the general perception of his works.

25 Tripāthī (1951), pp. 78–223.

26 Ibid., pp. 78–79.

27 Śukla (1990), pp. 73–75.

Future research must consider why he adopted so many metrical styles from other regions, dialects, and religious traditions. One possibility is that the diversity in metrical styles we attribute to him is not what he intended; these may have just represented rhythmic variations for him. We can also consider that this goes deeper: it may reflect his desire to be recognized among the Brahminical literary circle. He quickly gained popular fame through the *Rāmacaritamānasa*, but legends state that pandits in Banaras frowned upon his use of modern language, and Tulsīdās himself admits his language to be *grāmya* (uncultivated).<sup>28</sup> However, he also composed Sanskrit hymns in the *Rāmacaritamānasa* and used many other metres of the *varṇa chanda*, *mātrā chanda*, and *tāla chanda* of Braj-bhāṣā, Avadhī, and Sanskrit origins, thereby demonstrating his dexterity. We may interpret that he considered himself to be one of the most skilled poets, as he states in his *Dohāvalī*: ‘Even in Sanskrit, the language of god, or in *bhākhā*, that of the people, skilled poets can describe the fame of Śiva and Viṣṇu [equally well].’<sup>29</sup>

## References

- Bahadur, S.P. (trans.). 1997. *Dohāvalī: An Anthology of Verses on Dharma and Morality*. New Delhi: Munshiral Manoharlal.
- Bangha, Imre. 2004. ‘Dynamics of Textual Transmission in Premodern India: The *Kavitavali* of Tulsidas,’ *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24 (2): 33–44.
- Beṇīmadvahadāsa. n.d. *Mūla Gosāi-Carita*. Gorakhpur: Gita Press.
- Bryant, Kenneth B. 1992. ‘Three-three-two versus four-by-four: metrical frames for the *padas* of Sūrdās,’ in Ronald S. McGregor (ed.), *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research, 1985-1988*, pp. 209–224. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.
- De Bruijn, Thomas. 2010. ‘Dialogism in a Medieval Genre: The Case of the Avadhī Epics,’ in Francesca Orsini (ed.), *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture*, pp. 121–142. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan.
- Dvivedī, Hazārīprasāda. 1994 [1952]. *Hindī sāhitya kā ādikāla*. New Delhi: Vāṇī Prakāśana.
- Gupta, Mātāprasāda (ed.). 1949. *Tulasī-Granthāvalī*. 2 Vols. Allahabad: Hindustan Academy.
- . 1967. *Tulasī-Saṅgraha*. Prayāg: Hindī Sāhitya Sammelana.

<sup>28</sup> *Rāmacaritamānasa* I.10. d.2.

<sup>29</sup> *hari hara jasa sura nara girahū baranahiṃ sukabi samāja*. (*Dohāvalī* 197)

#### 14. The Metrical Style of Tulsīdās

- Lutgendorf, Philip. 1991. *The Life of a Text: Performing the Rāmcaritmānas of Tulsidas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2007. *Hanuman's Tale: The Messages of a Divine Monkey*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McGregor, Ronald S. 1984. *Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Miśra, Gaurīśaṅkara 'Dvijendra.' 2016 [1975]. *Hindī sāhitya kā chandovivecana*. Patna: Bihār Hindī Grantha Akademi.
- Miśra, Vidyānivāsa. 1985. *Rahīma granthāvalī*. New Delhi: Vāṇī Prakāśana.
- Miśra, Viśvanāthaprasāda (ed.). 1962. *Rāmācaritamānasa*. Vārāṇasī: Kāśīrāja Saṃskaraṇa.
- Nagasaki, Hiroko. 2012. 'Hindi Metre: Origins and Development,' in Hiroko Nagasaki (ed.), *Indian and Persian Prosody and Recitation*, pp. 107–129. Delhi: Saujanya Publications.
- Poddāra, Hanumānprasāda. 2003 [1939]. *Śrīrāmācaritamānas Mūla Guṭkā*. Gorakhpur: Gita Press.
- Prasāda, Jagannātha 'Bhānu.' 1894. *Chandaḥ prabhākara*. Bilāsapura: Jagannātha Press.
- . 1971 [1909]. *Kāvyaḥprabhākara*. Vārāṇasī: Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā.
- Prasāda, Śivanandana. 1964. *Mātrika chandoḥ kā vikāsa*. Patnā: Bihār Rāṣṭra-bhāṣā Pariṣad.
- Schomer, Karine. 1987. 'The Dohās: a Vehicle of Sant Teachings,' in K. Schomer and W.H. McLeod (eds), *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, pp. 61–90. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Sinha, Maheshwari 'Mahesh.' 1964. *The Historical Development of Mediaeval Hindi Prosody (Rāmānanda-Keśava, 1400-1600 A.D.)*. Bhalgalpur: Bhalgalpur University Publication.
- Snell, Rupert. 1991. *The Eighty-four Hymns of Hita Harivaṃśa: An Edition of the Caurāsī Pada*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- . 1994. "Barvai' Metre in Tulsīdās and Rahīm,' in A.W. Entwistle and F. Mallison (eds), *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature*, pp. 373–405. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Stasik, Danuta. 1999. 'Text and Context: Two Versions of Tulsīdās's *Rām-lalā-nahachū*,' in A.W. Entwistle and C. Salomon (eds), *Studies in Early Modern Indo-Aryan Languages, Literature and Culture*, pp. 379–391. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Śukla, Rāmācandra et al. (eds). 1923. *Tulasī granthāvalī*. Vol. 2 and 4. Kāśī: Nāgarīpracāriṇī Sabhā.
- . 1990 [1929]. *Hindī sāhitya kā itihāsa*. Vārāṇasī: Nāgarīpracāriṇī Sabhā.
- Tripāthī, Rāmānareṣa. 1951. *Grāma sāhitya*. Vol. 1. Prayāg: Hindī Mandira.

*Hiroko Nagasaki*

- Varmā, Rāmakumāra (ed.). 1967. *Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa kṛta Baravai Rāmāyaṇa*. Prayāg: Hindī Sāhitya Sammelana.
- Vyāsa, Bholāśankara. 1959–1962. *Prākṛtapaiṅgalam*. 2 Vols. Vārāṇasī: Prākṛta Grantha Pariṣad.