

Anandakichenin very reliably sets forth Kulacēkara Ālvār's words in each verse, giving us what we need, in the Tamil and English, to trace his themes over the song's eleven verses.

A signal feature of this volume is a translation of the full commentary of Periyavācāṅṅai (c.1128–1322), the master commentator who was the only premodern commentator to elucidate the whole of the Divya Prabandham. While Anandakichenin does not write her own commentary on the songs, she makes it possible for readers to learn from the commentarial tradition that has preserved these songs for a millennium and more. Thus, regarding the same fourth song, we are given Periyavācāṅṅai's gloss on every word, as well as his magnificent theological introduction, which places these meditations on Tiruveṅkaṭam in the context of the Ālvār's slow journey of purification, meditation, and dawning clear vision, all for the sake of his desire simply to be with the Lord. In addition, regarding every verse she also footnotes the views of major twentieth-century commentators such as P. B. Anangarachariar, T. Uttamūr Viraraghavacarya, and Puttūr S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar. In a most welcome enrichment of the volume, she refers also to the 2008 oral discourses on the *Perumāḷ Tirumoli* by the respected modern teacher Velukkudi Krishnan. As is most appropriate to a Śrīvaiṣṇava text, a long and living tradition is allowed to come alive around each verse.

It is perhaps inevitable then that we are faced with many complicated pages with many notes, in a book over 600 pages. With the Tamil, the commentary, and the notes, the eleven verses of song four take up nearly forty pages. As a result, the verses themselves get a bit lost along the way, and there is a risk of losing sight of Kulacēkara Ālvār's intent and vision. It would have been good to include also an unadorned translation of the verses first, before the annotated version with the Tamil, notes, and commentary.

This very fine volume sets a new high bar for scholarly work on the ālvārs, and it will stand as a reliable reference work for decades to come. Nevertheless, as Anandakichenin would surely agree, it is just a beginning and not an end to our study of Kulacēkara Ālvār. In an exemplary fashion, she paves the way for the further work that must follow, regarding him and then too regarding the other ālvārs as well.

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*Surdas: Sur's Ocean, Poems from the Early Tradition.* Edited by KENNETH E. BRYANT; translated by JOHN STRATTON HAWLEY. Murty Classical Library of India, vol. 5; Cambridge, Mass.: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015. Pp. xlviii + 1010. \$35.

*Into Sūr's Ocean: Poetry, Context, and Commentary.* Translated with commentary by JOHN STRATTON HAWLEY. Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 83; Cambridge, Mass.: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016. Pp. xvii + 1029. \$95.

It is not just a matter of apposite translation that the titles of both of these volumes—each weighing in at more than a thousand pages—contain the word “ocean.” Their subject is the copious body of sixteenth-century lyric poetry in the premodern Hindi dialect of *Braj bhāṣā* attributed to the legendary poet-saint Sūrdās (“servant of the sun,” or “Sūr” for short, as both he and the authors generally style him). This corpus came, by the mid-seventeenth century, to be called *Sūrsāgar*—literally, “Sūr's ocean”—and proliferating manuscripts with this title swelled, like a body of water fed by ever-growing streams, to include thousands of *pads* or songs—nearly ten thousand by the close of the nineteenth century (*Sur's Ocean*; hereafter *SO*, p. xii). Bryant and Hawley have chosen to present, through critically edited text, elegant and indeed lapidary translation, and copious commentary, only a fraction of such compendia, albeit one drawn (as they convincingly argue) from near its headwaters. Yet although they offer a mere (!) 433 poems, culled principally from seven early manuscripts dated to within a half century of the poet's probable demise in the second half of the sixteenth century (they consulted, for comparison, a score of others of slightly later provenance), their labors and achievements, as reflected

throughout these two volumes, can deservedly be called “oceanic.” If this is not the whole of the *Sūrsāgar* as present-day Kṛṣṇa devotees conceive of it, it is certainly as magisterial and painstaking a reconstruction of “the early Sūr tradition” as we are ever likely to see. Surveying the breadth and depth of these volumes, my initial response was simply one of awe, and having now taken a long and satisfying plunge into them (though I cannot claim to have fully explored every one of their 433 estuaries), *adbhuta* remains the dominant *rasa* in my mind/heart (*man*)—although (to shift metaphors) most of the other principal “flavors” in the smorgasbord of Indian aesthetic categories are amply served up here as well.

Given that (almost exactly) the same translations appear in both books, why are there two of them? The volume in the Murty Classical Library of India series (hereafter “MCLI”), which was the first to appear, pairs, in that series’ usual format, each translation by Hawley on the right-facing page with the Devanāgarī text of the corresponding *pad* from the critical edition established by Bryant on the left-facing page; marginal numbers facilitate moving back and forth between them, for those readers equipped to do so (and MCLI books all appear in handsome but low-cost Indian editions). Likewise keeping with MCLI principles, the “Introduction” by both authors is brief (a mere forty-one pages), though it manages to concisely summarize most of the key arguments that I will outline shortly in relation to the second, denser volume. A notable one is stated succinctly by Bryant, the fastidious critical editor of the collection, who nonetheless deftly deconstructs the possibility of ever recovering an “original” *Sūrsāgar*: “. . . we are not seeking an urtext here—we do not believe any such text existed,” and who attributes the spread of variant manuscripts to “a steadily evolving and proliferating oral tradition” reflecting “not the careless errors of scribes, but the exuberant and imaginative improvisations of singers” (*SO* pp. xlv, xxvii). The pairs of text-and-translation that follow, comprising the bulk of the book (757 pages), are accompanied, at its end, by two sets of “Notes to the Text.” The first and longer set (182 pages) offers Bryant’s detailed listing, for every poem, of the manuscripts he consulted (a key is provided on pp. xlv–xlviii) and of the numerous variations in length, line order, and wording that they display. It is a coded guide map to his attempt at constructing a critical edition—one that was both arduous and often speculative, given the variations within the “same” poems in multiple manuscripts as well as the fact that no two early anthologies show more than a thirty-to-forty percent overlap in contents (*SO* pp. xxiv–xxx). MCLI series format (and this book much exceeded its preferred length) does not allow for more detailed commentary on the countless editorial decisions Bryant must have made, however. Nor does it accommodate more than the briefest endnotes on Hawley’s translations—only forty-five pages—that concisely identify a few important mythological and philosophical allusions in some (but not all) of the poems. Given the highly allusive and even deliberately enigmatic style of many of the compositions attributed to Sūr—a style that Hawley has endeavored to convey in very readable but by no means always transparent English free verse—a serious student of the Sūr tradition is going to need more help in understanding how the critical edition was assembled, what the poems mean, and why the translator chose to render them as he did.

That is where *Into Sūr’s Ocean* (hereafter *ISO*) comes in as indispensable companion volume to the MCLI book—albeit, alas, available only in an expensive US hardcover edition. The work of Hawley alone, though largely based on Bryant’s critical edition, it includes a 135-page introduction—a small book in itself, with copious footnotes and several diagrams and illustrations—that comprehensively discusses the text, its sources, and its legacy, the historicity and hagiography of its reputed author, and the poetics of the *pad* format that dominates his oeuvre. Given that a number of Hawley’s many publications over more than three decades have been devoted to or have prominently featured the Sūr tradition (for example, *Krishna, The Butter Thief*, 1983; *Sur Das: Poet, Singer, Saint*, 1984, reissued in expanded form in 2018; *Songs of the Saints of India*, 1988; *Three Bhakti Voices*, 2005; and *The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna*, 2009), readers familiar with his work will find many of the arguments that he and other scholars of Sūr (writing in both English and Hindi as well as in several European languages) have long advanced, presented once again here, at times with modifications or corrections, in the kind of comprehensive and even exhaustive summary of previous scholarship that one expects in a magnum opus. Thus Hawley argues, contra popular legend and sectarian claims, that the historical author/singer who gave his name to the burgeoning Sūr tradition probably was not blind

from birth, though he may have suffered from failing eyesight in his old age (*ISO* pp. 42–51); that he was unlikely to have been initiated by the prominent bhakti teacher Vallabha into his *Puṣṭimārg* sect (“path of fulfillment”), whose followers have long claimed him and insisted that their guru’s influence decisively shaped his poetry (*ISO* pp. 28–32); and (related to this last argument) that he did not focus almost exclusively (by Vallabha’s dictate) on songs adoring the infant pastimes and adolescent amours of Kṛṣṇa in the rustic cowherd community of Braj. Rather, Hawley explains, the early manuscript tradition comprises a corpus that is considerably more varied in subject matter—including, for example, elegant poems in praise of Rām and other avatars of Viṣṇu, and a not inconsequential collection of poems of “petition” or *vinay*, in which Sūr adopts a more plaintive and at times even complaining stance toward his Lord, or approaches Him through similes and names more commonly associated with the “formless” *nirguṇ* bhakti of *sant* poets like Kabīr or Nānak (*ISO* pp. 12–18). Finally, it is Hawley’s view that this variegated corpus, as read in the oldest (and smallest) anthologies, reveals a distinctive poetic voice and craft that is indeed suggestive of the work of a great individual artist, and that is less often to be found in the later (and thicker) strata of the *Sūrsāgar* (*ISO* pp. 40–42, 57–75). Hawley also takes up at some length the subject of the musical milieu in which the *paḍ*s must originally have been performed (a topic briefly but engagingly introduced by Bryant in the MCLI volume; *SO* pp. xxiv–xxxviii), displaying impressive musicological knowledge in approaching the tantalizing yet ultimately unrecoverable sixteenth-century world of *rāgas* and *tālas* that must have profoundly influenced the structure as well as the reception and transmission of these texts (*ISO* pp. 87–99).

The poems in these volumes are grouped into eight thematic sets, following an order found in several of the early manuscripts; these sets are given section titles in the MCLI volume (thus, “Krishna Growing Up,” consisting of 58 poems; “The Pangs and Politics of Love,” 117 poems—the largest set, comprising roughly a quarter of the anthology; “The Bee Messenger,” 81 poems, and so forth), and though these titles are missing from *ISO*, it retains the same grouping and numbering of poems. This makes it easy, if one has both volumes, to reference the Devanagari texts and their notes in *SO*. What makes *ISO* invaluable, however, is Hawley’s commentary on each of the 433 poems. Each is a masterful mini-essay (some running to four or five dense pages) offering a wealth of insightful analysis of such themes as the poet’s awareness of earlier literature (especially the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*), the mythological episodes and cultural practices alluded to, the etymologies of key words, the history of a poem’s reception and interpretation by singers, audiences, and other scholars, and the existence of both variant manuscript readings and possible alternative renderings of individual verses—here Hawley often notes his collaborator’s editorial decisions as well as candidly revealing his own strategies and challenges as translator. There is also discussion of untranslatable wordplay and alliteration, and the kind of fine-grained analysis of poetic craft that Bryant pioneered, with reference to the bhakti poetry of Sūr, in his first book, *Poems to the Child-God* (1978). Add to this innumerable explanations of flora, fauna, agricultural practices, calendrical cycles, rituals, foods and sweets (see, for example, the extraordinary exegesis of number 373, an unusually long poem in which Rām’s battle with the demons of Lanka is likened to a multicourse banquet), folk customs, and even military weapons and practices that Hawley’s commentaries provide, and the *Sūrsāgar*, far from being simply a beautiful and devout exploration of a fairly limited range of themes, blossoms into a virtual encyclopedia of North Indian history and culture. I should add that not only are Hawley’s translations elegant and accurate, but his prose is admirably and consistently lucid, even when he is expounding on obscure or complex mythological or philosophical allusions or invoking literary and translation theorists.

If Hawley’s celebratory appreciation—indeed, his heartfelt *love*—for this poetry is patently evident throughout, it does not hamper his critical analysis; notably, he offers some trenchant observations on a number of poems that he considers “weak” (for example, number 216, which he finds “formulaic from the original cliché forward,” or number 404, which he dryly dismisses as “unencumbered by any great display of poetic virtuosity”; *ISO* pp. 520, 867). Such poems give evidence, in his view, “that collections of Sūr’s poetry were contaminated by inauthentic compositions quite early on” (*ISO* p. 876). The majority of poems in the critical edition, however, are shown to be free of these flaws, and Hawley is especially adept at analyzing the ingenious “puzzle poems” that Sūr (or someone like him) delighted in challenging his audience to figure out (see, for example, numbers 66, 67, and 133), as well

as the characteristic twist or surprise—sometimes, indeed, a theological epiphany—that he built into the denouement of nearly every poem, often via the penultimate or final “signature line.” Hawley also regularly displays, in these analyses, tour-de-force sleuthing, as when in poem 289—one of the “Bee Messenger” series in which the *viraha*-tormented gopis both long for and, not infrequently, revile their absconding lover—he convincingly traces a sarcastic allusion to Kṛṣṇa’s blue color all the way back to the *Pañcatantra* tale of a jackal who, after falling into a dyer’s vat of indigo, attempted to brazenly lord it over the other animals in the forest (*ISO* p. 637).

Awe-inspiring as it is, *Into Sūr’s Ocean* has minor flaws of its own. Assiduous copyediting, such as the MCLI books enjoy through their generous endowment, has fallen by the wayside at most academic presses, and no one seems to have noticed certain typos, particularly in the introductory section (such as hyphens inserted in words that are not line-breaks: “acknowl-edges,” “elabo-rates,” even “Krish-na”—all on p. 41; or, in one translated poem, the confusing substitution of “peaks” for “speaks,” p. 59). There are also rare instances when Hawley’s translation does not match Bryant’s *Braj bhāṣā* text in *SO*, as in poem 424, line 4; there is an explanation for this, to be sure, but it is absent from the bilingual edition and can only be found in the commentary on p. 908 of *ISO*. But if even Homer is said to sometimes nod—and Sūrdas to slip in a second-rate poem—the small glitches noted here cannot significantly mar Bryant and Hawley’s monumental achievement. The “sun” of Sūr rises out of these two “oceans” with a brilliance and clarity that is, in English, nowhere else to be seen.

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*A Yogācāra Buddhist Theory of Metaphor.* By ROY TZOHAR. Oxford: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. Pp. xvi + 296. \$99 (cloth).

“Put simply,” Roy Tzohar writes in the introduction to this provocative book, “according to the Buddhists, at the root of human suffering lies a deep discord between how we ordinarily conceive reality and how it truly is” (p. 1). Because of its innate tendency to reify the fluidity of events in experience, language and the conceptual schemes it articulates help to foster a false view of the self and its world. In this sense, language “is the metaphorical workshop in which entities are forged and, once produced, are erroneously believed to be real” (*ibid.*). To escape the grip of such erroneous beliefs is the ultimate, soteriological goal of all Buddhist thought and practice, a goal facilitated, in part, through the deployment of various forms of salvific discourse. In this respect, however, as Tzohar points out, language contributes both to the solution and to the problem: “Buddhist philosophical texts present a palpable tension that arises from the inherently paradoxical need to argue against words by using words, to devalue language through language” (*ibid.*). Tzohar rightly construes the need to resolve or contain this tension as a central task of Indian Buddhist thought. How this task is approached by early Indian Yogācāra philosophers—and in particular, by the sixth-century Yogācāra philosopher Sthiramati—is the principal subject of this meticulously researched study.

As interpreted by Tzohar, Sthiramati’s remedy is grounded in a “pan-figurative” theory of meaning unique in the scope of its claim that all language use—both in Buddhist treatises and in quotidian affairs—is metaphorical. The essential features of this claim are set forth in Sthiramati’s commentary to the first verse of Vasubandhu’s *Triṃśikā*: “The metaphor (*upacāra*) of ‘things’ (*dharmāḥ*) and of ‘self’ in its various forms, which is set in motion, that is to say in the world and in treatises, that is [with reference to] the transformation of consciousness” (p. 157). By “self” and “things” we are meant to understand all subjective and objective phenomena; none of which exist in the way they appear, namely, as substantive entities. Sthiramati’s claim that entities only exist metaphorically relies on “a formulaic śāstric definition of metaphor, according to which a word is used figuratively when it indicates ‘something that is not there,’ or in more formal terms, when a word’s primary reference is absent from the locus of reference” (p. 160)—as, for example, if a muscular, slow-witted person (the locus of