

# Dynamics of Textual Transmission in Premodern India: The *Kavitavali* of Tulsidas

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Large literary masterpieces often secure fame for their authors but at the same time shorter compositions by them may enjoy similar popularity. Shakespeare's sonnets are as much read as any of his great plays. Brevity, making the poem more accessible for immediate appreciation, disciplined metrical form, and a hint of a more personal voice largely contributed to the success of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, collected by his friends and published in 1609 towards the end of his literary career.

The textual legacy of Tulsidas (1532?–1623?), a contemporary of Shakespeare, whose standing in Hindi literature matches that of the English author, presents a similar phenomenon. His *Kavitavali*, a series of some 350 loosely connected quatrains in stricter meters and with a more individual approach than found in the author's other works, was compiled probably around the 1610s. Tulsi's favorite themes are collected here, and although arranged into seven cantos (*kandas*) according to the *Ramayana* tradition, it does not always follow the linear epic structure.

The collection has enjoyed immense popularity. Initially it was transmitted in handwritten books, and although no autograph copy survives, about sixty copied manuscripts have been traced in the past hundred years. Several hundreds, however, must have been prepared over the centuries. Since its first printed edition in 1815 the *Kavitavali* has been published about 120 times; the Gita Press alone, its most popular publisher, had issued 632,500 copies by 2001 according to the flyleaf of the edition. Apart from Tulsi's *Ramcaritmanas*, only his *Vinay Patrika*, a compilation of devotional *padas* (songs with refrain set to a certain rhythm, *tala*, and in a dominating mood, *raga*), and *Hanumanbabuk*, have sold more copies. (The latter, however, was originally part of the *Kavitavali*.)<sup>1</sup>

## The *Kabitt* Form

The force that keeps the distinct parts of the collection together is not that of a linear narrative but rather

the poetic form: the entire *Kavitavali* is written in *kabitts* (quatrains). The early *bhakti* poets conveyed their message most effectively in *padas*, which normally have a loose moraic meter suitable for emotional expression through singing. The *Kavitavali* is a devotional work written not in *padas* but in the *kabitt* form. The importance of the form can be judged by the fact that in many manuscripts and early editions this collection is called *Kabitt-Ramayan* (*Ramayana* in Quatrains), using the word *kabitt* in its broad sense of "self-contained poem." This sense includes the four-line syllabic *kavitt* (often called *ghanaksari* after the name of its most widely used subgroup), which relies on sequences of stressed and unstressed syllables, the anapestic or dactylic *savaiya*, and the rare moraic *jhulna* and *chappay*; the latter are broken into six lines in modern editions. While the syllabic *kavitts* were especially suited to *dhruvpad* singing, to which their emergence can be linked, the *savaiyas* were meant to be recited or written down. With their somewhat strict meter *kabitts* had a closer link with the written and courtly than with the oral world. Tradition holds that the *Kabitt-Ramayan* is Tulsi's effort to present the Rama story in a courtly style.<sup>2</sup>

While *padas*, written in various dialects, were the main form of devotional singing, *kabitts* were products of Brajghosa. Although their early usage was linked to Krishna literature and they never ceased to be vehicles of devotional messages, along with the couplet *doha* they became the major meters in court poetry. The quatrain form, especially the syllabic *kavitt*, survived into twentieth-century Hindi poetry.

*Kabitts* are a somewhat more recent form than *padas*, which date to the beginnings of devotional Hindi literature. Although some *chappays* and *savaiyas* are attributed to Hit Harivamsh (?1502–52),<sup>3</sup> the *kabitt* forms did not become popular until the late sixteenth century. Both poets at Akbar's court, such as Rahim, Tansen, and Gang,<sup>4</sup> and Krishna devotees in Vrindaban, such as Kalyan, Biharinidas, and Gadadhar Bhatt,<sup>5</sup> used this

form. While for most of them the main literary activity was in other meters, Gang and Kalyan wrote chiefly in *kavitt*, *savaiya*, and *chappay*, and the mixing of these three forms was imitated by poets of the following two centuries. It was also at that time that Narottamdas (b. 1545?) wrote a *Sudamacarit* entirely in *kabitt*,<sup>6</sup> and *kabitts* were further popularized by influential poets such as Raskhan and Tulsidas. The adoption of this form by Kesavdas in his *Kavipriya* and *Rasikpriya* set an example, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries *kabitts* were the most important vehicles of mannerist literature, often detached from a devotional message although making ample use of Krishna mythology.

### The Transmission

While the old manuscripts, composed with a varying degree of textual corruption, show a complex interrelationship, all modern redactions and commentaries of Tulsī's minor works, including the edited Gita Press volumes as well as the huge number of critical studies, directly or indirectly rely on the texts of their exemplar, the *Tulsī-granthavali* published in 1923.<sup>7</sup> This is, however, not a critical edition: the editors do not indicate the source for the text of an individual composition and give variants only occasionally. Only the *Ramcaritmanas* has a critical edition based on a consistent collation of the most important manuscripts,<sup>8</sup> and since the still authoritative book of Mataprasad Gupta on Tulsidas,<sup>9</sup> first published in 1942, only a few scholars have touched textual problems.

No history of the transmission of the *Kavitavali* has so far been undertaken. The material collected for a forthcoming critical edition by the Tulsidas Textual Study Group, a group of students and academics in Budapest, Oxford and Miercurea Ciuc in Romania, however, can serve as a basis for studying its spread.<sup>10</sup> With a large number of manuscripts lost and with the available material only partially processed, the reconstruction of the history of the text is only fragmentary. This paper will present only some ideas and problems contributing to the better understanding of the dynamics of textual transmission of a widely read premodern text.

In the case of devotional literature, the popularity of the poet can expand a collection of a few hundred independent poems into thousands during a phase of oral transmission. For example, from the inflated corpus that we have at our disposal we cannot determine what poets like Kabir, Surdas, or Mira Bai wrote. We expect that the Tulsī corpus, which was no less popular, was also prone to being expanded. While at least one instance of *amplification* can be documented, it did not occur on a scale similar to Kabir or Surdas.<sup>11</sup>

As far as the *Kavitavali* is concerned, the use of the *kabitt* form connected with the written tradition, the almost uniform sequence of poems, as well as the na-

ture and the relatively small number of the variant readings show that the extant texts stem from written versions and no phase of oral transmission was involved, although oral tradition must have influenced it. (Even today many people know several of Tulsī's quatrains by heart.) The transmitted text must be very close to that of the first edition(s) prepared in all probability by the poet himself. During the period of written transmission the text has either been corrupted by mistakes or changed tendentiously by its scribes.

Apart from the collector tendency towards expanding a literary corpus we can observe another that is more difficult to detect in the case of oral transmission: a "purist tendency" to purge the corpus of metrically or aesthetically weak poems or of variations on the same theme conceived as redundancy. This phenomenon, called *athetisation* in textual criticism, can also shed light on some aspects of scribal manipulation. The authenticity of the poems was questioned by some scribes and, following them, by the early editors in cases of sectarian appropriation, stylistic weakness, incompleteness, or suspected *samasyapurti*, the widespread poetic practice of writing a new poem on a given phrase or line. (In other words, if two poems contained the same line or phrase, one of them became suspicious.) India is a country of infinite sectarian debates and Tulsidas is considered one of its most prominent religious poets. One would therefore expect that theological problems had the most prominent effect on scribal argumentation, the force working behind deliberate changes in the transmitted text, documented through omitted, inserted, or changed poems. However, questions relating to style seem to have played a role at least as important as those relating to theology.

### The Range of Poems

The arrangement of the first six *kandas* of the collection follows the Rama story, providing us with glimpses at some of its most enchanting points, while the *Uttara-kanda* discards the linear structure and comprises poems celebrating Rama's name, virtues, or grace, descriptions of the dark Kali age, of places of pilgrimage, of the *gopis'* love for Krishna, or descriptions of Shiva, prayers for release from calamities such as the pestilence in Benares, and so forth. Several poems expound Rama's grace with reference to Tulsī himself. Even the first part of the *Kavitavali* is not strictly linear but rather like a series of miniature illustrations to an epic tale with which everyone is familiar. F. R. Allchin, the English translator, rightly observes,

In some cases we may feel that the episodes were ones—such as the encounter with the boatman—for which Tulsī felt particular affection, in others that they were ones which he felt, after the completion of the *Rama-carita-manasa*, might be rendered more ef-

fectively in these meters. An example of the latter kind is the burning of Lanka which *Rama-carita-manasa* passes over in four short verses but which *Kavitavali* expands to greater size (VI.3-25). But in the second half we can have no such clues to the composition . . . There are numerous traditions which associate verses in this part with special occasions, mainly in the latter days of Tulsi's life.<sup>12</sup>

Some passages can indeed be accepted as references to Tulsi's life and to his circumstances rather than as literary topoi. Tulsi's childhood story is widely known in present-day north India and popularized by influential media. For example, the *Amar Citra Katha* comic books' Tulsi biography rely heavily on a few poems from the *Kavitavali*.

The poems sometimes show a style full of figures of sound and sense of which any poet of the mannerist era, the *ritikal*, could be proud. The selection of the poetic meter also suits the themes. The *kavitt* form with its reliance on sequences of stressed and indifferent syllables is especially suitable for conveying a sense of violence, heroism, or fear. The whole of the *Sundarakanda*, with its description of the burning of Lanka, and the major part of the *Lankakanda* is written in *kavitts*. The array of emotions evoked in the collection is, however, wider and ranges from the fearful to the erotic or to the humorous.

### The Structure

The structure of the *Kavitavali* is uniform in the modern editions, where it is a collection of 325 independent quatrains. We can refer to this as the vulgate text, within which the only variation is that the *Tulsi-granthavali* gives an extra *savaiya* in a footnote but immediately rejects it as inauthentic. The collection is structured according to the seven *kandas* of the Ramayana but the distribution of the poems is rather uneven. There are altogether 142 quatrains in the first six *kandas*, with only one poem in the *Aramyakanda* and one in the *Kiskindhakanda*; 183, more than half of the total, are in the *Uttarakanda*. Certain editions give the 44 *kabitts* of the *Hanumanbabuk* as an appendix to the *Kavitavali*.

The oldest available manuscript, from 1691,<sup>13</sup> comprises only the *Uttarakanda* together with the *Hanumanbabuk*, which shows that at an early time the quatrains that did not relate directly to the Rama story were in independent circulation.<sup>14</sup> There is, however, no manuscript evidence for the independent existence of the story portion, that is, of the first six *kandas*. Therefore, the present form of the *Kavitavali* is probably not the result of putting together two collections of quatrains, one with the Rama story and the other the independent poems that became the *Uttarakanda*. On the contrary, the *Uttarakanda* was an original part of the *Kavitavali* that some time in the seventeenth century came into inde-

pendent circulation. A similar distinction can be observed in the case of the *padas* of Tulsi's *Gitavali* and *Vinay Patrika*. Those in the former compilation retell the Rama story and those of the *Vinay Patrika* are sort of "personal prayers." According to Mataprasad Gupta, this is the result of a later editorial process and the original collection(s) of the *padas* did not have such a clear distinction.<sup>15</sup> The independent *Uttarakanda* in the case of the *Kavitavali* indicates an attempt to impose a similar distinction. This separation, however, did not take root and no later manuscripts consist of only this portion.

There was, however, another separation here. Although somewhat mixed up with the last quatrains of the *Uttarakanda*, the poems related to Hanuman acquired an independent existence at some time. The earliest dated independent *Hanumanbabuk* manuscript is from 1744 (VS 1803).<sup>16</sup> The emergence of the *Babuk* as an independent collection may be attributable to the growing cult of Hanuman.<sup>17</sup>

### The Two Recensions

Already in 1941 Mataprasad Gupta observed that the text of the collection differs largely in some manuscripts and expressed the need for a critical edition. For this purpose I collected copies of thirty-three complete or fragmentary manuscripts from Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, the United Kingdom, and the United States. References to about thirty more have been found, but some of them have disappeared and some are kept locked by their custodians. (The twenty-four substantially long manuscripts available to us at the time of the computerized statistical analysis and examined in this paper are listed in Appendix A.)

An examination of the number of poems in the manuscripts available in complete form shows a variation of about ninety poems. On the basis of this we can distribute the manuscripts into two groups of similar sizes. The first group comprises those that reach *Uttarakanda* 180 and normally include the *Hanumanbabuk*, and the second group those ones that reach at most *Uttarakanda* 161 and do not include the *Hanumanbabuk*. We call the former the Longer Recension and the latter the Shorter Recension.

The sequence of poems in the manuscripts of the two recensions shows further peculiarities that justify their grouping together. Six poems in the middle of the *Uttarakanda* (vv. 7.91–6) are missing from all representatives of the Shorter Recension but are present in all of the Longer one. In a similar way three or four more poems of the modern published version up to v. 7.161 are missing from the Shorter Recension,<sup>18</sup> but five "apocrypha" (i.e., poems missing from the vulgate) are present in almost all manuscripts of this recension and one (after v. 2.21) in three of them.<sup>19</sup> In this way the archetype

of the Shorter Recension contains 288 to 290 quatrains. Manuscripts of the Longer Recension contain all *kabitts* that found their way into the modern published versions, as well as eleven or thirteen apocrypha, out of which three always and another three occasionally correspond to the apocrypha of the Shorter Recension.<sup>20</sup> Seven of them are found only in manuscripts of the Longer Recension.<sup>21</sup> In this way the archetype of the Longer Recension contains 382 or 380 *kabitts*.

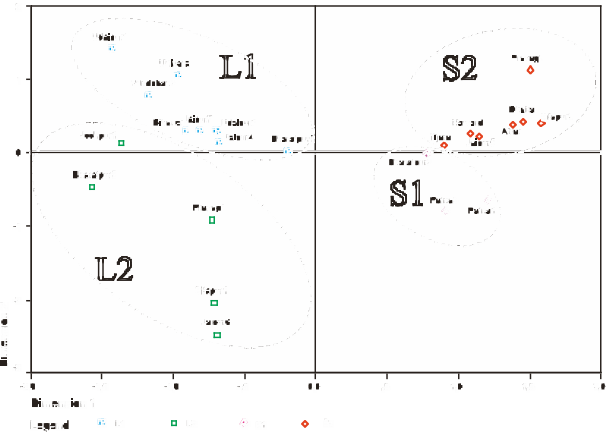
Most manuscripts of the Longer Recension contain the *Hanumanbabuk*, which some time before 1744 became an independent collection, and the popularity of which today overshadows even that of the *Kavitavali*. Within the Longer Recension (L) two slightly different groups can be further differentiated that I will call L<sup>1</sup> and L<sup>2</sup>. In the group L<sup>2</sup>, which contains some of the oldest dated manuscripts, the first six poems of the *Babuk* are intermixed with the last *kabitts* of the vulgate *Kavitavali*. In the evidently more recent L<sup>1</sup> group, the forty-four quatrains of the *Babuk* are already grouped together.<sup>22</sup>

The distribution of the manuscripts into two recensions is further supported by an examination of the variant readings. Since our earliest manuscript dates to about seventy years after the poet's death, it is probable that the text had already undergone several changes by the time it was copied. On the whole, however, the manuscripts show a relatively small number of variant readings. By far most of them arose from non-standardized orthography and from scribal errors, such as confusing similar-looking characters. The major variants, considerably fewer in number, include synonyms such as *priti* (love) instead of *neha* (affection) or *tapa* (heat) instead of *daha* (burning), confusion over difficult readings, correction of metrical licenses such as omitting the word *jaga* (world) from the beginning of a line in a dactylic *savaiya*, and the replacement of some compromise words. For example, in a quatrain making fun of ascetics longing for women, in the phrase *bindhi ke basi udasi tapi bratadhari maha* (executors of great vows, indifferent ascetics, dwelling in the Vindhya mountains) the expression *bindhi ke basi* (dwellers of the Vindhya mountains) was changed into *puri ke basi*, saving the face of the ascetics but creating the muddled meaning "executors of great vows, indifferent city-dwellers."

Manuscripts belonging to the same recension are also likely to share the same major variants. On the basis of the non-orthographic variants from fifteen poems in different parts of the twenty-four substantially long manuscripts, a cluster analysis on a computer distributes the manuscripts into two groups with two subgroups each. On the two-dimensional distance model in Figure 1, manuscripts that share more variants are closer to each other. (The manuscripts are labeled according to the place of their copying or, when that is not known,

according to the place where they were found.<sup>23</sup> The eccentric Patna2 manuscript is omitted.)

Figure 1: Euclidean distance model  
(prepared by Dániel Balogh)



The distribution of the manuscripts is far from random; rather, they tend to converge into two major galaxies, which correspond to the two recensions. The group on the left represents the Longer Recension, the one on the right the Shorter Recension. There are variants within a recension, too, but their weight is usually less than that of the variants that define the two recensions. This shows that the authority of either recension was not questioned apart from some stray eccentric manuscripts. It can also be observed that manuscripts of the Longer Recension come mainly from Rajasthan, while those of the shorter one are chiefly from the central and eastern Hindi areas. Clearly, the manuscripts were circulated widely in north India. That is why, for example, our Dhaka manuscript is now found in Vrindaban. The regional distribution of the recensions, however, suggests that manuscript circulation on a large scale was within a limited region: people in Rajasthan were more likely to copy another manuscript from Rajasthan, while people in the east would rather copy a book from their area.

As has been seen the Longer Recension can further be divided into L<sup>1</sup> and L<sup>2</sup> groups on the basis of the sequence of the last poems (177 to 183) in the vulgate *Uttarakanda*. These two groups show further structural differences. The L<sup>1</sup> cluster as well as the eccentric Udaipur1 includes two apocryphal quatrains after the single poem of the *Aranyakanda*, and two others after v. 148 of the *Uttarakanda*. Those of the L<sup>2</sup> cluster do not, although some of them include one. This division is also present in the textual variants, since in our graph manuscripts belonging to the L<sup>1</sup> cluster are in the upper part of the group and those belonging to the L<sup>2</sup> one are in the lower part. (The eccentricity of Udaipur1 on the basis of textual variants is apparent on the graph, and it

can also be observed that it really belongs to the L<sup>1</sup> cluster and not to L<sup>2</sup>.) On the basis of similar structural peculiarities, the Shorter Recension also can be divided into two groups. The S<sup>1</sup> manuscripts tend to include the apocryphal 2.21+ quatrain while the S<sup>2</sup> ones omit it. (The + sign indicates an “apocryphal” poem following the one from the vulgate indicated by number.) Our S<sup>1</sup> manuscripts (Bharatpur2, Patna1, Patna3) are in the lower part of the diagram, while the S<sup>2</sup> ones are in the upper. An examination of the sequence of poems divides the L<sup>2</sup>, S<sup>1</sup>, and S<sup>2</sup> clusters into further versions and sub-versions. This, however, is not reflected clearly in the distribution of the textual variants.

On the basis of twenty sample places already processed, it can be observed that either the variant readings of the two recensions show insignificant differences (e.g., *soca* versus *soka*) or those of the Longer Recension are better but sometimes more difficult. Variants within the Shorter Recension tend to be more simplistic or nonsensical. For example, v. 89 in the *Uttarakanda* is about Rama’s name, which is more powerful than Rama himself. In the first line it is illustrated by the case of the poet Valmiki:

*rama bhaya mara japate bigari sudhari kabi-kokila hu ki*

[Having abandoned Rama, simply by repeating the word *mara*, “it is dead,” even the corrupted fate of the poet-cuckoo came right.]

The third line refers to Draupadi’s calling on God’s name when Duryodhana tried to strip her naked,

*nama pratapa bade kusamaja bajai rabi pati padubadhu ki*

[Through the great power of the name the honor of the Pandavas’ wife was saved openly in a wicked assembly.]

This is, however, the reading only of the Longer Recension. The Shorter reads *rama* instead of *nama* (name), not only producing *pumarukti dosa*, the error of repeating the same word in the same sense, but also creating contradiction with the first line emphasizing the greatness of God’s name.

It is a generally accepted philological rule that a more difficult but still meaningful reading, the *lectio difficilior*, tends to be more authentic than a simpler one, which is normally the result of the scribe’s not understanding the complexity of the text. The more sensible nature of the more difficult reading is illustrated by the third line in v. 100 in the *Uttarakanda*, in a reference to Rama’s taking the side of a dog against a Brahman mendicant. Since Brahmins cannot be punished physically, Rama cleverly made him the abbot of an extremely corrupt monastery, a position the dog had held in his previous life.

*sabiba sujana jana svana hu ko paksa kiyo*

[The clever lord knowingly took the side even of the dog.]

Again, this is the reading only of the Longer Recension. The shorter one reads *jinha* (who) instead of *jana*

(knowingly), destroying the internal rhyming and taking away one shade of the meaning, the emphasis on Rama’s cleverness.

The Shorter Recension seems to also show less diversity in its variants, which suggests that its text was edited after the longer one by an editor less sophisticated than Tulsi. Another case of a better *lectio difficilior* can be observed in the first line of the apocryphal v. 2.11+, which is a description of Sita’s languor:

*sukebi gaye ratanadbara manjula kanja se locana caru cucvai*

[The jewels of her lips went dry and her lovely eyes, which are like charming lotuses, are dropping tears.]

Here the Longer Recension has more difficult readings than the somewhat clumsily rhyming versions of the shorter one. The readings of the Shorter Recension also do not show as much variation among different manuscripts as those of the longer one, where the scribes were at odds. The scribes of the Longer Recension seem to have felt uncomfortable with the word *cucvai*, a present singular third-person form of the verb *cucana* (to drip, to ooze) slightly distorted for the sake of rhyme. The fourteen manuscripts of this recension I consulted have nine variant readings to it, either breaking the rhyme or with further distortions. The Shorter Recension simplifies the case and puts *citai* (she looks up) resulting in the flaw of repeating the same word in the same sense, since *citai* also figures in the third line. Nevertheless, nine out of eleven manuscripts give this reading. The two rhymes that follow in the same verse are similarly problematic and present several variants.

It is not only the textual variants shared within a recension that point to the authority of the editor. No *kabitt* of Tulsi is found in the other collections of his works, although the syllabic line-pattern of the *kavitt* was frequently used in the *padas* of his *Gitavali* and *Vinay Patrika*. In these collections, however, there are no quatrains and the songs with the *kavitt*-type lines have a refrain and five or more lines. I was not able to find any *kabitt* claimed to be Tulsi’s but not present in the *Kavitavali*. This fact suggests that towards the end of his life Tulsi himself, or maybe someone else with an authority to respect his text, collected all the *kabitts* not present in earlier collections and edited them.

This inference is further supported by the content of the poems themselves. The last twenty-two poems of the Longer Recension refer to astrological events and an epidemic (*mahamari*) in Benares, indicating a mid-1610s date for this section.<sup>24</sup> Many of these twenty-two quatrains as well as the *Hanumanbabuk* note that their poet is highly respected, and others refer to old age and suffering from diseases. A celebration of recovery would have been a good opportunity to show the working of God’s grace, as the poet did in the case of his childhood deprivations. The lack of any reference to recovery in any work suggests that the *Kavitavali*, together with the *Ha-*

*numanbahuk*, is among the poet's last works.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, tradition holds that the *Kavitavali* contains Tulsi's last poem, a quatrain (v. 7.180) about glimpsing a kite (*kesemkari*), an auspicious bird at the time of setting out for a journey.<sup>26</sup> The style of these last twenty-two poems is so consistent with that of the previous quatrains that no one has ever questioned their authenticity. The most obvious explanation for the emergence of the two recensions is therefore that the Shorter Recension is based on an earlier version of the *Kavitavali* prepared before the poet's illness.

Tulsi edited his works several times, as Mataprasad Gupta has demonstrated in the case of the *Gitavali* and the *Vinay Patrika* as well as the *Manas*. The *Gitavali*, a retelling of the Rama story in *padas*, and the *Vinay Patrika*, a collection of devotional songs, developed from two collections called in manuscript colophons *Padavali Ramayan* and *Ramgitavali* respectively, of which Gupta saw two related manuscripts written apparently by the same hand in VS 1666 (AD 1609).<sup>27</sup> The interrelationship of the two is illustrated by the fact that five songs of the *Ramgitavali* related to the Rama story but not present in the *Padavali Ramayan* found their way into the *Gitavali*. Gupta also observes that five *padas* relating to the same theme, i.e., the dialogue between Trijata and Sita, are in different places in the *Padavali Ramayan* but grouped together in the *Gitavali*. From the absence of other *Padavali Ramayan* and *Ramgitavali* manuscripts Gupta inferred that Tulsi himself had edited the texts and these edited versions spread.

On examining the *Manas*, Gupta found that its first version might have been the second half of the *Balakanda* (from v. 184, that is, without the initial frame of the story) and the *Ayodhyakanda*. This section shows unity in form (eight *ardhalis* in each *caupai*) and theme: the speaker is the poet himself and the story is linear, starting with the causes of Rama's birth. In a verse from the *Uttarakanda*, Tulsi claims that his work contains 500 *caupais*. This may refer exactly to this original core of 506 *caupais*. The second version contained *Balakanda* 36–183 and the remaining *kandas* with Yajnavalkya, Shiva, and Bhusundi as speakers. In a third and last phase Tulsi prepared the high-soaring introductory part (*Balakanda* 1–35) and finished the poem.<sup>28</sup> A close look at Tulsi's other works shows that he not only reedited his earlier works but also kept developing his ideas. Pre-occupations of an earlier work can recur in later poems in a more refined way as was for example the case with some ideas present in the *Ramcaritmanas*, which returned in the *Gitavali*.<sup>29</sup>

It would be easy to assume that the two recensions of the *Kavitavali* are two editions, but as we are going to see, the situation is more complicated. The study of transmission is made more difficult and more interesting by the process of contamination resulting in the fact that

some manuscripts are not copies of one single source but rather composite versions. In a few manuscripts a second hand executed corrections on the basis of a third manuscript. In the case of the *Kavitavali*, the most spectacular example of contamination is the Tijara manuscript, which in its form before the corrections shows similarities with a cluster within the S<sup>2</sup> group of the Shorter Recension containing the Alvar, the Harvard, and the Jaipur5 manuscripts. A second hand, however, added to its wide margins all the poems that were missing from the Shorter but present in the L<sup>1</sup> group of the Longer Recension, and whenever possible changed its readings to be similar to those of the Longer Recension.

### The "Problematic" Poems and Scribal Argumentation: The Collector and the Purist Tendencies

As discussed above, the Longer Recension in all probability came into being by adding twenty-two more poems together with the *Hanumanbahuk*, all written in Tulsi's last years, to an original *Uttarakanda* that ended at v. 7.161. This theory, however, does not explain how the corrupted readings became authoritative in the Shorter Recension and how the Longer Recension came to include some twenty other poems at different points of the collection. While the authenticity of the twenty-two poems after *Uttarakanda* 161 cannot be questioned and they are rightly included in modern editions, the cases of another twenty-two, namely the nine poems omitted from the Shorter Recension and the thirteen apocrypha omitted from the vulgate and at least two manuscripts, should be examined individually.

The chart in Appendix B gives the details of the suspected poems. Let us first look at four individual cases that illustrate different types of omission. The easiest one is the omission of *Uttarakanda* 113 from among several similar sounding *chappays* full of the exclamation *jaya jaya* "Victory! Victory!" which is clearly a scribal error called homoeoarcta 'loss of lines between two lines that begin similarly' in textual criticism and no conscious argumentation is involved. The omission, however, was carried over in six inspected manuscripts of the Shorter Recension.

#### *Amplification: the "Collector Tendency"*

The two apocryphal poems that are included after *Uttarakanda* 148 show a different picture. At that point the section praising various places of pilgrimage (vv. 7.138–48) ends, and at v. 7.149 poems to or about Shiva start. These two apocryphal poems are out of context here. The first one is about how to reach the attributeless *niranjan* (stainless) God, the second about the vanity of sacrifice without devotion to Rama. This second *savaiya* mentioning "the woman, who is pleasing to the body," which might be embarrassing, has a phrase in

the last line that already occurs in two earlier poems. It suggests *samasyapurti*, a popular form of poetic contest in which the poet is given a *samasya* (problem), a last line, a phrase, or a rhyme, and is asked to write a poem on it. In this case the last line starts with the words *ete taje to kaba tulasi jo pai...* (What is the point in abandoning all this, Tulsi, if...), which is similar to the last line of vv. 7.43 and 7.44, (*aise bbae*) to *kaba tulasi jo pai...* (“What is the point in this, Tulsi, if...”). The “problem” may have been *to kaba tulasi jo pai* (What is the point, Tulsi, if). The *samasya* determines the form and the style of the poem, and it may not have been difficult for someone to write a *savaiya* similar to Tulsi's.

The case of the first *savaiya* is even more interesting. It propagates the *nirgun* (attributeless) aspect of God instead of the *sagun* (that with attributes) adopted by Tulsi. Nor is the fully developed metaphor, the *sanga rupaka*, a figure that Tulsi was much in favor of using. In all probability the verse is by Tursidas (Tulsidas) of Sherpur in Rajasthan, the leading poet of the Niranjani sect. Tursidas may have been active in the second half of the seventeenth century and worshipped the attributeless untainted (*niranjan*) deity.<sup>30</sup>

*kanana ki patuki kari kai guru ki batiya suni dudha duhavai;*

*ya ghata ki matuki kari kai taba sadhu ki samgati javana lavai;*

*dhiraja kbambha dhare tulasi tabam anguna tina ko jari bahavai;*

*jnana rai lai mathai mana takra ko tau navanita niranjana pavai. (v. 7.148+)*

[Making a vessel of your ear, listen to the guru's words and get the milk;

Then making an earthen pot of this body take the coagulator, the company of sadhus;

Grabbing there the pole of steadfastness—says Tulsi—let the three defects burn and flow away;

Taking the staff of wisdom, churn the soul's buttermilk, and then get the fresh butter, the Untainted One.] (trans. Mária Négyesi and Imre Bangha)

Poem 7.148+ originated from Rajasthan, but it traveled all around the Hindi belt and even the purist Short Recension did not find it suspicious. Its insertion into most manuscripts supports the idea that the theological content of the poem was of relatively little importance, although for the reasons mentioned above, this is a poem that one would expect the scribes to leave out. It is present in almost all manuscripts except the bulk of the oldest L<sup>2</sup> group, where only two of the seven handwritten books give it. This suggests that this poem was not present in the earliest versions of the collection but became unanimously accepted later. (It should, however, be mentioned that its omission from Prayag1, however, is not due to scribal argumentation, since this manu-

script is eccentric at this point with the omission of a block of seven poems, vv. 7.149–55).

Two manuscripts come to our help: one of the oldest dated ones, Prayag2 (1772), and another one written in Dhaka in 1830. Both of them include these two poems and end at this point with a proper colophon, thus forming the shortest “complete” text of the *Kavitavali*. It is tempting to speculate that Prayag2 and Dhaka without these extras represent the earliest version of the collection, to which the closing sections were later added. The other manuscripts ending at v. 7.148 include these two poems, while other scribes instead attached to the collection the closing sections (vv. 7.149–83) together with the *Hanumanbahuk*. The breach, however, seems to have been soon healed and most manuscripts available today include both the apocrypha and then the closing section. The quick healing of the breach is indicative of a strong collector tendency in textual transmission.

It should be mentioned while speaking about the collector tendency that not only poems were collected but also contexts. Although many quatrains have been contextualized over the centuries, we do not have much clue as to when. There is, however, an early instance of contextualization that can be dated. It is a variant of *savaiya* 128 from the *Uttarakanda*, which figures on a Mewar miniature painting from around 1725–30. The quatrain is introduced as Tulsi's reply to Emperor Akbar, who asked him why Hindus worshipped stones. The poem and the painting evoke the story of the Manlion incarnation of Vishnu who became manifest from a stone pillar to save his devotee and to kill the skeptical and cruel king Hiranyakashipu.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Athetisation: the “Purist Tendency”*

The case of the embarrassing apocryphal v. 2.11+ about Sita's languor shows a different picture:

*sukhi gaye ratanadhara manjula kanja se locana caru cucvai;*

*karunanidhi kanta turanta kahyau kita duri mahabana bhuri jo svai;*

*sarasiruha locana nira hi dekhi citai raghunayaka siya pai hvai;*

*abhim bana bhamini bujhati hau taji kosalaraja puri dina dvai.*

[The jewels of her lips went dry and her lovely eyes, which are like charming lotuses, dropped tears.

Suddenly she asked her beloved, the Treasury of Compassion, “How far is the Great Forest, which is so huge?”

Observing tears in her lotus-eyes the Lord of the Raghus looked at Sita (compassionately).

Oh, passionate woman, we have left the city of Koshala's king only two days ago and you already ask for the forest?]

The poem is awkward because Rama's answer can be taken as impolite and suggests his irritation with Sita. It is omitted from three manuscripts of the L<sup>2</sup> cluster and surprisingly from one of the Shorter Recension as well. It is, however, present in the rigorous Sitapur1. Its text is sometimes obscure and, as has been discussed above, the rhymes of the Longer Recension fit better into the overall context but are more difficult to understand than those of the shorter one.

Shall this poem be discarded as inauthentic, not suiting the generally noble approach of Rama and of Tulsi? Or, on the contrary, can anything similar be found in Tulsi's other works? From an examination of the songs of the *Gitavali*, a clear relationship can be detected between the text of its songs and the quatrains of the *Kavitavali*. Tulsi often recycled the same themes, even using the same phrases in his quatrains. The following one and a quarter song from the *Gitavali*, for example, are recycled in *Ayodhyakanda* 11 and 12.

"Tell me how far is the forest grove

Where we set forth, oh son of Koshala's Lord," asks Sita in distress,

"Oh, Lord of my Life, you go barefoot to a foreign land having abandoned and broken connection with all pleasure.

Stop for a while under a tree, let me fan you and sweep away the dust from your feet."

When the Lord of Tulsidas heard the words of his beloved, his lotus-eyes filled with water.

"Where is the forest now!? Listen, oh beautiful woman!" Then the Lord of the Raghur looked at her full of love.

(*Gitavali*, v. 2.13)

Rama looks at Sita again and again.

Knowing that she was thirsty, Lakshmana went to fetch some water...

(*Gitavali*, v. 2.14)

When from the city came forth Raghuvira's lady she set but two paces on the road with courage, On her forehead glistened drops of perspiration and her sweet lips went dry.

Then she enquired, "How much further must we go now?

when can we put up a little shelter made of leaves?"

Seeing his wife thus sadly discomforted,

from her husband's eyes most beautiful tears flowed forth.

(*Kavitavali*, v. 2.11, trans. F. R. Allchin)

"Lakshmana has gone for water, he's just a boy,

dear,

Let us stand in the shade an hour to await him,

I will wipe your sweat and fan you,

and wash those feet scorched by the burning sand..."

(*Kavitavali*, v. 2.12, trans. F. R. Allchin)

While the middle section of *Gitavali* v. 2.13 has equivalents in *Kavitavali* v. 2.11, the beginning and the end rather reflect the idea of our apocryphal quatrain above, with some irritation in Rama's words. Therefore this *kabitt* should be considered a weak but authentic product of the great poet. It is quite understandable that some scribes and the modern editors felt uneasy about including it among the works of Tulsidas.

It can also be considered that Tulsi did not always produce work of the highest quality. One of his earliest and weakest works, the *Ramlala Nabachhu* (Rama's Nail Paring) puts Rama's wedding in Ayodhya rather than in Mithila, showing that even the greatest poet is not free from contradictions. Scholars are at odds in discarding this short composition as inauthentic, since Tulsi's name figures in it already in a manuscript dated from 1608 (VS 1665).

#### *Arguments for Omission*

The table in Appendix B lists the suspected poems and the possible reasons for their omission, whether authentic or not. A poem becomes suspect for various possible reasons. Arguments relating to syntax, metrics, and structure figure more often than the contents of the poems. Although the reason given by me for suspicion is arbitrary, there is an obvious indication that no theological reasoning was involved in the argumentation, since the scribes did not suspect even the clearly apocryphal v. 7.148+.

We can further observe that many of the suspicious poems show some kind of metrical, stylistic, or structural weakness in the eyes of the copying scribes. It is difficult to imagine how these poems found their way into a popular collection if they were not there originally, and in most of the cases we can presume omission rather than insertion.

The concept of weakness, however, is relative, since it seems that Tulsi's poetic licenses were regarded as flaws only by later generations. Similarly, in the case of Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa*, later editors changed verses that contained the Sanskrit word *aha* (he/she says) in the past sense even though Kalidasa repeatedly made use of this device in his *Kumarasambhava*.<sup>32</sup> A major poetic license Tulsi took was the freedom to add or omit one or two syllables in the beginning of a line in a *savaiya*. Five out of the twenty-two apocryphal poems have such unmetrical lines, which occur in several other places as well.<sup>33</sup>



Four suspect cases are due to a supposed *samasyapurti* or variation. It is however, not necessary to assume that another poet wrote a quatrain on the same line. It may have been the original poet himself, and a similar process was not questioned in several other cases within the *Kavitavali*.<sup>34</sup>

Yet another argument for omission is structural looseness or obscurity. A later editor, or perhaps Tulsi himself, may have discarded the poems that he found aesthetically weak. The case of a *kavitt* from the *Hanumanbabuk* strongly suggests that it was a later editor who discarded the “lame” poems. The third line of the vulgate of *Hanumanbabuk* v. 40 is present only in the manuscripts of the L<sup>1</sup> group; an entirely different reading is given in the L<sup>2</sup> manuscripts, and the whole poem is omitted from the extremely “purist” Sitapur1. What picture does the oldest (Prayag1) manuscript present? It has only three lines and the suspicious third line is missing. There is, however, some deliberate lacuna at the end to indicate a missing line. We may suspect that incomplete poems were originally also part of the collection, especially when we take into consideration that we are dealing with Tulsi’s last poems and the dying poet may not have been able to revise and complete them all. Later copyists, however, did not accept the fact that the poet-saint may have written unfinished quatrains and either completed *Hanumanbabuk* v. 40 or simply omitted it. Here the idea that the poet-saint must have produced only perfect poems was at work. The case of the apocryphal v. 7.106++ is similar. The second line is missing from Prayag1 and there is some empty space at the end. The quatrain is omitted from Sitapur1 and from many other manuscripts including those of the Shorter Recension.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

The relatively small number of variant readings and the more or less unquestioned structure of the collection suggest that the *Kavitavali* goes back to a written source and that there has never been a period of oral transmission as there has in the case of Kabir, Mira Bai, or Surdas. The use of the quatrain form also hints at a written tradition. The fact that early *kabitts* appear at least as much in a courtly context as in *bhakti* poetry indicates that the form was perhaps more aristocratic than the song, *pada*, used almost exclusively for devotional purposes.

On the basis of our previous observations we can attempt to reconstruct some phases of the textual history, although this may hardly be more than speculation. As has been mentioned, the Shorter Recension includes neither Tulsi’s last poems nor several apocrypha, while most manuscripts of the Longer Recension contain both. We have also seen that the readings of the Longer Recension are often more difficult but better. In all

probability several “suspicious” poems were present in the collection but were discarded later by the editor of the Shorter Recension. It may well be the case that somebody observed the fact that apocrypha, such as the one about the indescribable, untainted God by Tursidas, were creeping into the collection. Making use of a version up to *Uttarakanda* 148 or 161 he purged the text of many poems and maybe also inserted some quatrains both at the end and in the *Kiskindhakanda* to fill the gap created by the small number of poems in this canto.

The emergence of the Shorter Recension did not suppress the tradition initiated by the Longer Recension, and both had their sometimes independent, sometimes intertwining histories and came to include other apocryphal quatrains. Naturally there was contamination between the two recensions resulting in occasional purging of the Longer Recension, as may be the case with the Sitapur1 and Hoshiarpur1 manuscripts, or inclusion of omitted poems into the shorter one, as in the Tijara manuscript.

The two recensions also determined the publication history of this work. The first published edition of the *Kavitavali* from Calcutta in 1815<sup>36</sup> was based on the Shorter Recension, the later Benares and Lucknow versions, such as the one edited by Durga Misra in 1858, on the Longer Recension.<sup>37</sup> The modern vulgate text is a composite version of the two that gradually developed during the nineteenth century.

We have seen that the two standardized recensions were copied for more than two centuries. Several poems were added to them and some others, even though in all probability written by Tulsi, were omitted. While in the case of Kabir or Surdas collections the collector tendency was overwhelming and resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of poems, in the *Kavitavali* the written tradition did not permit many outside quatrains to be included, and the purging tendency of a purist editor kept the number of poems down. Most of the poems excluded from about half of the manuscripts show poetic failings rather than ideological digression, indicating that the elimination of aesthetic or structural deficiencies was a more important editorial preoccupation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than faithfulness to the received text. In contrast to the more pedestrian purist selection, the weaknesses shown both in the earliest extant manuscript and in the suspected poems present a brighter and more human poet with flaws and imperfections.

## Appendix A: Manuscript Sources

The manuscripts examined in this paper and their date of copying

Alvar	1877
Harvard	
Tijara	1891
Jaipur5	1899
Bharatpur2	
Patna1	1894

Sitapur2 1893  
 Patna3 1985?  
 Dhaka 1944  
 Prayag2 1829  
 Patna2 1933  
 Bharatpur3  
 Jodhpur1 1847  
 Bikaner 1919  
 Jaipur4 1858  
 Jaipur7  
 Udaipur2  
 Bharatpur1 1888  
 Vrindaban2 1897  
 Udaipur1  
 Uniyara 1912  
 Prayag1 1749  
 Sitapur1 1890  
 Jaipur6

### Appendix B: The Apocrypha and the Poems Omitted from the Shorter Recension

Poem	Theme	Possible Reason for Omission	Omitted from	Present in
2.3	Kaushalya complains to Sumitra.	Complaint against Kaikeyi (?).	S+Sitapur1, Hoshiarpur 1	L
2.4	Sumitra's answer: "No happiness is without sorrow."	Complaint against Kaikeyi (?).	S+Sitapur1, Hoshiarpur 1	L
2.11+	Sita's languor and Rama's reproachful words.	Obscure rhymes and unmetrical first line. Rama is presented as less noble.	Alvar, Bharatpur3, Jaipur3, Jaipur6	(L)+S
2.21+	Sita explains that Rama is her husband.	It is rude to point directly to one's own husband.	S2+Jaipur3, Bharatpur3, Jaipur6	(L)+S1
3.1+	The whole <i>kanda</i> retold in only four lines. Similar digest as in the case of Parashuram in 1.22. or the first six poems of the <i>Uttarakanda</i> .	No devotion expressed. Apocryphal, written to fill the gap (?).	Bharatpur3, Jaipur6, Sitapur1	(L)+S
4.1++	The greatness of Rama's name illustrated on Candraprabha and Sampati.	Obscure and loose. Apocryphal, written to fill the gap (?).	Bharatpur3, Hoshiarpur1, Jaipur6, Sitapur1,	(L)+S
7.44	"What is all wealth worth without love for Rama?" A variation on 7.43 and 7.148 ++.	<i>Samasyapurti</i> to 7.43	S+Sitapur1, Hoshiarpur 1	L
7.91	"I do not have Rama in my heart, only my tongue declares it."	Obscure and hypermetrical last line.	S	L
7.92	"Tulsi is yours, o Rama!"	Two unmetrical lines. Obscure syntax.	S	L
7.93	Rama's grace is gratuitous.	Hypermetrical third line.	S	L
7.94	"People are haughty but Tulsi is yours, o Rama."	Loose structure.	S	L
7.95	Rama is a great giver but he accepted the gift of	Hypermetrical third line. Too much Persian in the	S	L

	the lowly.	last line (?).		
7.96	Everyone works for the fire of the stomach.	Obscure second line.	S	L
7.106+	Different opinions about Tulsi's caste. A variation on 7.106 and 7.108.	Weak last line.	S+Hoshiarpur1, Sitapur1	L
7.106++	Whatever Tulsi has is because of Rama. (The line with signature may be a later addition since it is absent from Prayag1.)	Originally incomplete (?).	S+Hoshiarpur1, Jodhpur1, Sitapur1	L
7.109+	A reproach to men giving up the singing of Rama's name.	Broken rhythm.	S+Jodhpur1, Prayag1, Sitapur1	L
7.113	Praise of Rama. One among several <i>chappays</i> starting with "jaya jaya."	Omitted by mistake.	Alvar, Bikaner, Harvard, Prayag2, Sitapur2, Tijara	L+(S)
7.127+	Salvation is possible by Rama.	?	S+Hoshiarpur1, Sitapur1	L
7.127++	Salvation is possible by Rama, who is the way of the Vedas and of the Agamas.	?	S+ Sitapur1, Hoshiarpur 1	L
7.141+	The virtues of the river Mandakini.	Confusing mathematics in the last line. (Alternative line introduced in some manuscripts.)	S+ Bharatpur3, Hoshiarpur 1, Sitapur1	L
7.148+	How to get the fresh butter, the untainted ( <i>niranjan</i> ) God.	Out of context. (Probably by the Niranjani Tursi Das.)	Bharatpur3, Hoshiarpur 1, Prayag1, Sitapur1	S+(L)
7.148++	What if one renounces the world but does not love Rama? A variation on 7.43 and 7.44.	Out of context. <i>Samasyapurti</i> . Mentions "woman, who is pleasing to the body" (?).	Bharatpur3, Jodhpur1, Prayag1, Sitapur1, Varanasi2	S+(L)
7.158+	Description of Shiva. A variation on the last line and the rhymes of 7.158.	<i>Samasyapurti</i> .	S+ Hoshiarpur 1, Sitapur1	L

The letters L and S stand for the Longer and Shorter Recensions respectively. When in parenthesis they refer to only a part of the recension.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>As we are going to see, in the recension to which three (Prayag1, Pratapgarh, Jodhpur1) of our four pre-nineteenth-century complete manuscripts belong, the *Babuk* follows the *Uttarakanda*. The quatrains of the *Hanumanbabuk* in printed editions are sometimes presented as an appendix to the *Kavitavali*, but more often as a short independent collection.

<sup>2</sup>Personal communication of Prof. Govind Sharma (March 2003)

<sup>3</sup>Ronald Stuart McGregor, *Hindi Literature from Its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 89.

<sup>4</sup>McGregor, *Hindi Literature*, 120.

<sup>5</sup>McGregor, *Hindi Literature*, 92, 93, and 95.

<sup>6</sup>McGregor, *Hindi Literature*, 91, 100.

<sup>7</sup>*Tulsi-granthavali II: Manasetar ekadas granth*, ed. Ramcandra Shukla and Bhagavandin and Brajratnadas, 2nd ed. (Benares: Nagaripracarini Sabha, 1974).

<sup>8</sup>Tulsidas, *Ramcaritmanas*, ed. Vishvanath Prasad Mishra, (Benares: Kashiraj, 1962).

<sup>9</sup>Mataprasad Gupta, *Tulsidas: Ek samalocnatmak adhyayan*, 6th ed. (Allahabad: Lokbharti, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> At present the Tulsidas Textual Study Group is working on developing the edition into a project of the Society for South Asian Studies (British Academy). The publication is expected around 2007.

<sup>11</sup>Only one case of insertion can be documented with certainty. The presence of an “apocryphal” *Niranjani* poem, discussed below, may be due to an effort of sectarian appropriation. The fact, however, that it was an isolated case suggests that simply the popularity of the poem helped its ascension to the *Kavitavali*-corpus.

<sup>12</sup>F. R. Allchin, introduction to *Kavitavali*, by Tulsidas, trans. F. R. Allchin (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), 65. Some people consider Tulsi’s witnessing the burning of Benares some time after the completion of the *Manas* as a motive behind writing the long description of the burning of Lanka (personal communication of Prof. Siyaram Tiwari, November 1996).

<sup>13</sup>Manuscript nr. 3–9 / 5264 at Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Allahabad.

<sup>14</sup>The first eighteen folios of the manuscript are missing and fol. 19 starts with the end of v. 7.55. A calculation shows that there was no space for the entire *Kavitavali* in it. There are about 380 syllables on one folio, and the some 5,500 syllables of the *Uttarakanda* up to 7.55 would occupy about fourteen and a half folios.

<sup>15</sup>Gupta, *Tulsidas*, 212–19.

<sup>16</sup>Nagaripracarini Sabha, Benares, Ms Nr. 2970.

<sup>17</sup>About the growth of the cult see Philip Lutgendorf, *Hanuman* (forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup>Poems 2.3-4 and 7.44 are missing in all cases; in addition, poem 7.113 is missing from six manuscripts.

<sup>19</sup>Poems 2.11+, 3.1+, 3.1++, 7.148+, 7.148++. (The + sign indicates an apocryphal poem following the one from the vulgate indicated by number; the double + sign indicates the second of two sequential apocryphal poems.)

<sup>20</sup>Poems 2.11+, 3.1+, 3.1++, 7.148+, 7.148++. (The + sign indicates an apocryphal poem following the one from the vulgate indicated by number; the double + sign indicates the second of two sequential apocryphal poems.)

<sup>21</sup>Poems 7.106+, 7.106++, 7.109+, 7.127+, 7.127++, 7.141++, and 7.158+. There are also four poems that are omitted from two manuscripts and three apocrypha that figure in one or two, but these are not relevant to our investiga-

tion, since they represent relatively isolated cases and the manuscripts involved are more or less recent ones.

<sup>22</sup> $L^2 = 176-180$ , *Babuk* 1–6, 181–3, *Babuk* 7–44;  $L^1 = 176$ , 181–3, 177–180, *Babuk* 1–44. In the  $L^2$  group *Hanumanbabuk* is thus interrupted by the three last poems of the *Uttarakanda*, but in  $L^1$  those referring to Hanuman are uninterrupted and the three poems are put after 176. We should also note at this point that 7.180 is believed to be Tulsi’s last poem. In fact, it is the last poem before the *Babuk* in most of the manuscripts, although not in modern editions. Its theme of departure may have predestined it to be the last in the collection.

<sup>23</sup>For full details of the manuscripts, see the critical edition in progress.

<sup>24</sup>The *Rudrabisi*, or “Twenty years of Rudra” (7.170 and poem nr. 240 in another work, the *Dohavali*) refers either to 1566–85 (according to Kannu Pillai, *Indian Ephemeris*) or to 1598–1618 (according to Sudhakar Dvivedi). See Gupta, *Tulsidas*, 183. The *Min ki sanicari*, or “Saturn in Pisces” (7.177) took place from March 1583 (Caitra Sukla 5 VS 1640) till May-June 1585 (Jyestha VS 1642) and again from March 1612 (Caitra Sukla 2 VS 1669) till May-June 1614 (Jyestha VS 1671), according to Sudhakar Dvivedi. See Gupta, *Tulsidas*, 186 and 504–8. There were three major epidemics during Tulsi’s lifetime. The famines of 1555–6 and of 1595–8 are supposed to have been followed by pestilence, and a new disease, bubonic plague, appeared in 1616. See Vincent A. Smith, *Akbar the Great Mogul, 1542–1605* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 397–8; and Jahangir, *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir*, vol. 1, trans. Alexander Rogers and Henry Beveridge (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1909), 330, 442.

<sup>25</sup>Tulsi’s most influential biographer, Mataprasad Gupta, considered the *Kavitavali*, together with the *Hanumanbabuk*, as dating from the period 1610–23 (Gupta, *Tulsidas*, 251–4). Several scholars, including the English translator F. R. Allchin, followed his ideas (introduction to *Kavitavali*, 63–6). Shyam-sundar Das and Pitambardatt Barthwal, however, relying on the *Mul gosaim-carit* (claimed to have been preserved in a manuscript from 1791), argue that the *Barvai Ramayan*, the *Hanumanbabuk*, the *Vairagya-sandipani*, and the *Ramayana-prauna* are Tulsi’s last works (see Gupta, *Tulsidas*, 69) while Madanlal Sharma and Gitarani Sharma consider the *Vinay Patrika* to be his swan song although they do not provide any argument for this supposition (*Kavitavali: bhakti darsan aur kavya* [Delhi: Ramesh, 1990], 56).

<sup>26</sup>Allchin, introduction to *Kavitavali*, 66.

<sup>27</sup>The *Padavali Ramayan* manuscript was incomplete, containing only thirty-five *padas* of the *Sundarakanda* and nineteen of the *Uttarakanda*. The order of *padas* is different in the beginning of each *kanda*. The *Ramgitavali* manuscript was complete, though with some serious lacunae, containing 158 *padas* in an order largely different from that of the *Vinay Patrika*. Gupta, *Tulsidas*, 212–19.

<sup>28</sup>The *Padavali Ramayan* manuscript was incomplete, containing only thirty-five *padas* of the *Sundarakanda* and nineteen of the *Uttarakanda*. The order of *padas* is different in the beginning of each *kanda*. The *Ramgitavali* manuscript was complete, though with some serious lacunae, containing 158 *padas* in an order largely different from that of the *Vinay Patrika*.

Gupta, *Tulsidas*, 212–19.

<sup>29</sup>Gupta, *Tulsidas*, 237–41.

<sup>30</sup>McGregor, *Hindi Literature*, 140. My attribution is merely hypothetical based on the use of the term *niranjan* and on the strong propagation of the attributeless god. Although the *nirgun* aspect of God is occasionally present in Tulsī's works, its propagation even in the most prominent places such as *Manas* 1,108.4–109.1 or 1,116.1 is much milder than in Tursidas. Unfortunately Tursidas's poetry has never been edited and the only monograph I was able to find, oddly enough, does not seem to know about any *savaiya* in its survey of the poetic forms the Niranjani poet used. See Satyanarayan Misra, *Santakavi Tursidas Niranjani sabhita aura siddhanta* (Kanpur: Sahitya Niketan, 1974), 134–8.

<sup>31</sup>Andrew Topsfield, *Court Painting at Udaipur: Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar* (Zurich: Artibus Asiae, 2001), Illustration 125 (on p. 150), prepared under Maharana Sangram Singh and probably commissioned by Pancoli Kishan Das. The introductory lines and the *savaiya* are as follows:

“*sriramji / patsajinem bhagata tulasidasaji nava betham thakam  
puchyo / so hinduam re patharahem kyom pujem bem / jini uparem  
tulasidasaji kabitta kahyo he*

*karhi kara bamna karapam nigahi pitu kala karala bilokana  
bhage / ramma kaham saba thamma he ham suni ha ka tiham nara-  
kehari jage / beri bidara bhaye kirapala kabe pebalada hi kem  
anuragem / prita pratita barhi turasi taba tem saba pahamna pujana  
lage /*”

<sup>32</sup>Dominic Goodall, “*Bhute ‘aba’ iti pramadat: Firm Evidence for the Direction of Change Where Certain Verses of the Raghuvamsha Are Variousy Transmitted,*” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländ Gesellschaft* 151:1 (2001): 103–24.

<sup>33</sup>Vv. 1.20, 2.5, 2.7, 6.5, 6.13, 6.33, 7.1, 7.12, 7.34, 7.43, 7.47, 7.49, 7.51, 7.52, 7.88, 7.103, 7.106, 7.132, 7.147, 7.153, 7.154.

<sup>34</sup>Vv. 1.2 and 1.6, 1.3 and 1.4, 2.1 and 2.2, 7.40 and 7.41, 7.43 and 7.44, 7.112–7.114 share the same last line. Partial similarity can be observed in the cases of 5.11 and 5.12 (only the last word is shared), 6.1 and 6.2 (parallel construction). The last word is similar in 6.44 and 45, in 7.75 and 83, and in 7.88–7.90.

<sup>35</sup>This is, however, not an overall model, and the cases of omission are more complex. Prayag1 omits one or more lines in three more cases in the *Uttarakanda* (107 111, 123), when all later manuscripts give the vulgate reading. The apocryphal *savaiya* 7.141+ is missing from the handwritten books of the Shorter Recension. The fourth line is absent in the Jodhpur1 and in Udaipur1 manuscripts, while in Jaipur4 the last line of the poem is erased and a new first line is added. The same structure with the same four lines is followed in three more manuscripts (Jaipur7, Tijara [marginalia], Uniyara). Lines can also be omitted on purpose, as was done with the embarrassing last line of v. 2.11+ in two manuscripts (Vrindaban1 and Patna2).

<sup>36</sup>Tulsidas, *Kavitta Ramayana*, ed. Baburam Sarasvat (Khidirpur: Sanskrit Press, 1815).

<sup>37</sup>Tulsidas, *Kavitta Ramayana*, ed. Durga Misra (Benares: Divakar Chapekhana, 1858). The editor mentions that the text is based on the manuscript of Pandit Raghunathdas Gosvami.