

Mīrā Bāī or Miroslava?

Translating songs of Mīrā Bāī into European Languages

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The aim of this paper is to discuss specific problems that a translator is confronted with when attempting to translate Mīrā Bāī's poetry into European languages, in particular into Czech. This kind of translation poses challenges to the translator in several fields, such as semantics and cultural background, but also prosody and stylistics.

Regarding the first type of problems, the paper is going to ponder upon translation of words which have no equivalent out of their cultural context, or their semantic fields overlap with those of their potential counterparts only partially, such as *sant*, *tīrtha* or *karma*. It will try to find a solution to cases or references to culture-specific ideas and narratives, such as the story of Nṛsiṃha, Kṛṣṇa playing with *gopīs*, prolonging Draupadī's *sāṛī*, etc. A specific chapter concerns terms that suggest potential translations that are inseparably connected with Christian theology and therefore evoke wrong associations, such as “God”, “soul” or “sin”. Another difficulty is caused by the simplified knowledge of “Indian culture” in Europe, e.g., that Mīrā Bāī's Girdhar Nāgar, Manmohan etc. do not evoke the idea of Kṛṣṇa known to the European audience.

Regarding the second sphere of problems, the first question is to what extent to preserve the prosodical structure of the original songs, e.g., the grammatical rhymes which result from the syntactic structure of Hindi which positions the verb at the end of the sentence. This question is related to the problem of stylistics, in particular the tendency of poets – translators towards abandoning the simple form of Mīrā Bāī's songs in favour of more refined and sophisticated poetical forms. All these topics will be thoroughly discussed and will hopefully instigate the audience to suggest their solution to the above-mentioned problems.