Murty Classical Library of India
Guide for Translators
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I. General Aims and Scope

The Murty Classical Library of India (MCLI) publishes bilingual editions of the major works of South Asian literature. For the purposes of this series, “South Asia” comprises Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; the chronological endpoint of MCLI is approximately 1800 CE. The series is currently publishing only belles lettres, broadly conceived, but will eventually expand into philosophy and other realms of learning.

MCLI books provide original-language texts in authoritative editions with accurate and faithful English translations on facing pages. The audience we aim to reach includes general readers, undergraduate and graduate students, and professional scholars both within and outside South Asian studies. All three audiences must be kept in mind when considering questions of translation style, annotation, and the introduction.

The following “Guide for Translators” strives to provide essential information about MCLI style. It does not aim to be exhaustive; it should be supplemented where necessary by the *Chicago Manual of Style* (16th ed.).

II. The Edition

Each edition of the MCLI will have an introduction, a text in the original language with a facing English translation, explanatory footnotes, text-critical and exegetical endnotes, an optional glossary, a bibliography, and an index.

A. The Introduction

The introduction will typically range between 4000 and 8000 words. Its primary purpose is to open up the work to the non-specialist reader; it is not the place to carry on specialized scholarly discussions. One should provide the reader with the most important facts concerning the life and works of each author treated in the volume, the date and context of each work translated, a summary of the volume’s contents (an extended synopsis is not desired), and a brief assessment of sources, models, significance, and influence. When other Indic texts are referred to, they should be followed by English translations of the title without italics or quotation marks, e.g.: *Buddhacarita* (Life of the Buddha). The principle here, that many readers will be unfamiliar with Indian languages, should be kept in mind throughout the introduction. This is especially the case when using Indic terminology; generally the translation should be given first, then the Indic original, e.g., selfless love (*prema*), and not *prema* (selfless love), unless the Indic word is to be left untranslated in the book, in which case the second option is to be followed.

For a multivolume work, a general introduction will appear in volume 1, individual book
introductions in the succeeding volumes preceded by an abbreviated (3-5 page) version of the general introduction.

In most cases you will want to provide necessary information about your sources for the Indic text you are translating, in a final section of the introduction, e.g., “Note on the Text.” Translators who wish to discuss their principles of translation should do so briefly at the end of this section, and hence provide a “Note on the Text and Translation.” (In multivolume works a “Note on the Text” will appear in volume 1; translators of subsequent volumes may if they desire add a “Note on Translation.”)

Notes to the introduction will be endnotes, and will immediately follow the introduction. The format for references is as follows:

Jones 1993

Smith 1984: 223–255 [n.b. full style for page ranges and en-dash]

The same format will be used in the textual and exegetical endnotes. All references are to be in endnotes; there should be no references in the body of the text.

Acknowledgements should be kept to a minimum, and should follow the introduction in a separate section. If there is a dedication, it should be included here.

B. Text, translation, and annotation

i. The Text

Contributors may offer new editions, but are not required to do so. Reprinted texts should be the best available, revised where necessary. Before making use of an existing edition, translators must consult the General Editor concerning the copyright status of the edition or editions they wish to use. MCLI will make every effort to secure the approval and cooperation of the institutes and publishers whose texts we wish to reproduce or adapt.

In cases where translators have not created an electronic text themselves or do not have access to an already-available e-text, MCLI will prepare one for them from a scanned or photocopied original supplied by the translator. Please note that MCLI does not expect or desire camera-ready copy. MCLI compositors will convert the e-text for publication.

MCLI frowns upon the use of Western punctuation in editing Indic texts. Exclamation points, semi-colons, dashes and the like are to be avoided. Question marks should be used in only the rarest of instances (such as complex Persian prose, where the text itself is unclear and the translator is effectively making an editorial judgment). If the modern scholarly tradition in question has consecrated the use of commas—as for instance in Hindi, to mark caesura, or in complex Sanskrit art prose to separate clauses—such punctuation will be permitted. (For texts
printed in Roman script, such as Pali, periods will be used in place of *dandas.*

For poetical works, verse numbers should be placed at the end of the stanza, in keeping with traditional practice.

All variants are given in endnote annotation (see discussion below). A lacuna in a verse should be surrounded by brackets with a number of hyphens corresponding to the number of missing syllables: *mā niśāda [-------------]*samāḥ. For a plausible conjecture, use <-------->. For irremediably corrupt passages, use a dagger on both sides of the passage: †mā niśāda†. Material that is considered spurious should be enclosed in square brackets, [ ...]. A brief endnote will be necessary in all these cases.

When short poems or other excerpts are being taken from a long work (say, ghazals from a *divan*), the poems should be through-numbered in the translation. A concordance must be appended to the translation showing the actual numbering in the main source.

**ii. The Translation**

It is expected that the translations will be new, and prepared in a register that is both idiomatic and enduring, given that MCLI books remain in print in perpetuity. For the same reason, prose rather than verse translation is typically preferred, though versified translations may also be acceptable. Translators are requested to discuss their choice of form and share examples of their translation with their regional subeditor at an early stage of their work.

MCLI books are not meant to be “ponies,” so translators should strive for fidelity as distinct from literalness. The English should serve as an accurate guide to the original while reading naturally and capturing as far as possible the style, flavor, and character of the facing text.

*We do not permit square brackets for supplied words in the translation* (except for supplied stage directions in drama). Material that is “understood” should be added into the translation; where there is real complexity, you may add an exegetical endnote (see below). For unfamiliar terms or names, an explanatory footnote may be used. The format of the explanatory footnote is as follows (*, †, etc., are to be used as reference marker; this is the last setting on MS Word “Footnote -> Options -> Number Format”)

Text: *Bhava*

Footnote: *Shiva.*

In many cases, however, such explanations can naturally—and often preferably—be incorporated into the translation itself (e.g., instead of footnoting Purandara, one can write, “Indra, breaker of cities”). Explanatory footnotes must be kept to an absolute minimum, and can occupy in total no more than three or four lines of type per page. All footnotes, including one-
word identifications, should be punctuated with a period.

Where it would be found necessary to repeat an identification footnote in the course of a
text, the translator should consider adding a glossary. There should be only a single glossary, so
identifications of flora, fauna, and the like, should be included in the glossary of names, if one is
to be provided. (In the case of a multivolume work, the glossary should be emended to conform
to the needs of the particular volume.)

There will be times where the original offers a verse or passage that cannot be translated
effectively into English. There will also be cases where the translator believes the verse is either
irremediably corrupt or for some other reason should not be translated in the body of the work.
Such passages should be relegated to the textual endnotes (see below), where tentative
translations can be offered.

For (1) works translated as poetry or as prose-poetry, each verse should be numbered. For
(2) narrative works that are in verse in the original, we prefer that translations follow a natural
flow of English, and hence advise that individual Indic verses be grouped into English paragraphs
(with every fifth verse numbered in the left-hand margin, though paragraphs do NOT of course
need to be restricted to five-verse segments) rather than to translate numbered verse by numbered
verse. Hence we prefer the following:

10   So he spoke, and Rama replied with a word of assent. After reverently circling the sage, he and Saumitri prepared to set forth. Large-eyed Sita then gave the brothers their splendid pairs of quivers, their bows, and gleaming swords….
15   Strapping on their splendid quivers and taking up their twanging bows, Rama and Lakshmana left the ashram to begin their journey.

to this:

10. So he spoke, and Rama replied with a word of assent. After reverently circling the sage, he and Saumitri prepared to set forth.
11. Large-eyed Sita then gave the brothers their splendid pairs of quivers, their bows, and gleaming swords….
15. Strapping on their splendid quivers and taking up their twanging bows, Rama and Lakshmana left the ashram to begin their journey.

Note that in an extended quotation over a number of verses, inverted commas (“ … ”) should appear only at the start of the quotation and at the end, and not at the beginning of each new verse.
that continues the quotation.

For (3) works that are in prose in the original, all paragraphs should be numbered sequentially, at the end of the paragraph of the Indic text, at the beginning of the paragraph of the translation.

### iii. Annotation

All-text critical and other textual annotation, and all longer exegetical remarks will be placed in the endnotes. These will be divided between “Notes to the Text” and “Notes to the Translation.” Indicate a textual endnote by means of an Indic numeral added to the edited text, and an exegetical endnote by means of an Arabic numeral added to the translated text. Start numeration afresh with each new poem or chapter (depending on the nature of the work).

“Notes to the Text” comprise the report of variants and discussion of textual problems, and should be as succinct and to the point as possible. MCLI books cannot include a full critical apparatus. The history of the text should be summarily described in the general introduction (in “Note on the Text”), and text-critical endnotes should be confined to recording variants and offering conjectures that significantly affect the translation or interpretation, omitting simple or well-established corrections as well as readings of purely text-critical significance. English (not Latin or an Indic language) is to be used for any editorial comments in a text-critical endnote, full words when they are short, such as “adds,” “lacks,” or when longer, abbreviations, such as “conj.” (“conjecture”); the variants themselves will be given in Indic script (citations of text in other parts of the text-critical endnotes will also be give in Indic script). The form of the text-critical endnote will thus be as follows:

1. Where the reading adopted remains that of the base text but significant variants are offered:

   **Text:**
   रामो

   **Endnote:**
   1. रामो ] रामा N; रहीम M

2. Where the reading adopted is not that of the base text:

   **Text:**
   रहीम

   **Endnote:**
   1. रहीम ] M; रामो A; रामा N
In all cases the lemma must be given. As previously observed, the marker itself will be in the Indic script, and in numerals (not “ka,” “kha,” etc.).

“Notes to the Translation” are not intended to serve as a commentary but are to be used to explain the translation to the general reader: to supply essential historical or cultural information, for example, or to identify rhetorical or other textual features that cannot be conveyed in the translation, and if necessary to make a scholarly point explaining the choice of translation. Endnotes are not the place to carry on scholarly arguments, or to go into grammatical, text-critical, or interpretative detail unless absolutely necessary (That said, when reference is made to traditional commentators, the commentator should be specified, and not referred to in a general way, e.g., “Commentators explain….”). Annotation should not constitute more than ten percent of the work.

**Endnote callouts should never be attached to a heading of any sort** (a number in the case of numbered poems, the name of the speaker, etc.). Instead, place the callout at the end of the first complete sentence following the heading.

When people, places, or things are mentioned more than once or twice in the text, a glossary (see below) can be used to reduce the need for repeated notes.

All Indic words cited in the “Notes to the Translation” (except for proper names, see below) will be in italicized Roman font (*not* Indic font) with the necessary diacritics.

Endnote reference numbers should never be attached to headings or to numbers (e.g., in the case of numbered poems). Either headnotes or notes after the first sentence should be used instead.

**C. Glossary**

For a book that has a large number of names, it is most helpful to provide a glossary, which will come after the text/translation and before the index (dramas will have a cast of characters prefacing the play). The glossary should record names/epithets/places/realia that are important for the work and likely to be unfamiliar to the common reader. Names/epithets/etc. that are adequately explained by the narrative itself should not be included (hence, e.g., no Ram, Sita, Ravana, “Ten-Headed,” in a Ramayana story). Nor should items that appear only once be included (there should be a footnote or an endnote, depending on complexity). In short, the glossary is the place for the reader to look up the frequently occurring but otherwise unfamiliar word,

You may include, if you wish and if it is pertinent, etymologies/translations of the names, e.g.,
Ajatashatru (ajātaśatru, literally “whose conqueror has not been born”): Yudhishthira

You may also add diacritics to this glossary (as in the example just given), to assist in pronunciation. (See above on the inclusion of flora, fauna, and the like.)

MCLI books will not include an index of first lines.

D. List of Abbreviations

A list of abbreviations for mss. or texts used in the apparatus should precede the bibliography.

E. Bibliography

The bibliography should be divided into two sections, called “Editions and Translations” and “Other Sources.” The first section should include all previous major editions of the text and English translations, in separate sections, listing the books in chronological order, oldest to newest. “Other sources” should include whatever other primary works and translations have been consulted, along with the most important secondary literature on the work as well as the materials cited in the introduction and endnotes. (Note that only materials actually cited should be included.)

Bibliographical citations should conform to the following examples:

Book:


Article in Journal:

Article in Book:

Edition for which no Editor is known:
When a publication date is originally given in Vikrama Saṃvat, Hijra, and other such notation, it should be preserved in the bibliography, and supplemented by the common-era date.

For materials published in South Asia, follow standard bibliographic practices: where books have English title pages in addition to the Indic, reproduce precisely the English-language information with respect to place-names as well as transliteration of author names; where printed books have only Indic title pages, romanize author names and place names without diacritics, but use diacritics for book titles. For example,


F. Index
An index of proper names (personal names, place names, and where appropriate significant things) will be generated in-house.

G. Miscellaneous
Maps are permitted in MCLI, but only if they are absolutely essential to following the translation. The same applies to genealogical or other charts.

III. Style
A. Orthography
The orthography of our volumes follows American English. This applies to both spelling and punctuation. Therefore, use double quotation marks, end punctuation inside quotation marks, leave no space around dashes, and add the final comma in a series (thus: x, y, and z, and not x, y and z). Please set your spell-checker to “American English.”

We follow the Chicago Manual of Style in aiming toward a spare, “down” style in matters of capitalization. We therefore do not capitalize common English nouns such as king, queen, god, demon, etc. We also prefer “king of the gods,” “god of love,” rather than “King of the Gods,” “God of Love,” etc., unless lower-case usage would produce a real ambiguity. An initial capital for “king, princess, goddess” etc. appears only when the title prefaces a name, e.g.: “Queen Gandhari,” (contrast “the queen wept,” “king of Sinhala”). In direct address use capitalization, e.g.: “Your Highness.”

It is acceptable to employ commonly used Indic words in the translation, introduction, and notes. Thus, Brahman [sic], Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, karma, samsara (not sansara), Veda, yoga, lakh, crore, etc. Note that these are not italicized. When in doubt on this (and all other spelling and usage questions) consult Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary.
For Indic proper names, including the names of persons, places, doctrines, and the like, no diacritics will be used, whether in the introduction, the translation, or the footnotes or endnotes. Instead use quasi-phonetic forms (wherever possible adopt the Merriam-Webster spelling if there is one—although we require, as above, Vaishya and Shudra, contra Webster’s Vaisya and Sudra) and, if not, the spelling with the widest familiarity, difficult thought it may be to determine this with any precision in every case). Thus sh (for ś) as in Shiva; sh (for ś) as in Vishnu; ch (for c) as in Chola (also, write chh for ch; cch both for cc and cch; thus, e.g. Chohara becomes Chhohara; Uccāṭīnī becomes Ucchatini; Kaccha remains Kaccha); ri (for ṛ) as in Krishna; Kashi (not Kasi, though this may be a common southern pronunciation). Also, omit macrons, thus Azīmuddīn (not, Azīmuddīn).

Wherever possible, precise English equivalents should be sought for Indic flora, fauna, and the like. Words for which no straightforward and idiomatic English translation is available, however, must be properly transliterated with requisite diacritics, in which case they are italicized (e.g.: kuśa grass, bakula tree). The first occurrence of such words in the translation may be accompanied by an explanatory note. In some cases, where an Indic term is used repeatedly and diacritics/italics would be jarring—say gandharva or apsaras in a play of Kalidasa—the term should be discussed in the introduction and/or annotation, and used as if it were an English term, without diacritics/italics. Note that English endings (e.g., the plural marker “-s”) will be italicized, e.g., śāstras (not śāstr, śāstra-s, etc.). All Indic literary genres should be given in lower case, with diacritics/italics (e.g., purāṇa, śāstra, mahākāvyya, ghazal, dāstān, qawwālī); anglicized adjectives should not (puranic, shastric, etc.) Qua letters should be in italics, with ’s as plural (e.g., “two kṣa’s crown the verse”).

Titles of Indic texts should carry the appropriate diacritics. One exception: Ramayana and Mahabharata, when used in reference to a tradition, carry no diacritics and no italics (similarly Veda, Upanishads, Qur’an). By contrast we write Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, etc.

Compounds should be given without hyphens, thus Mārkandeyapurāṇa (not Mārkandeya-purāṇa or Mārkandeya Purāṇa, etc.); pūrvakavipraśamsā (not pūrva-kavi-praśamsā), etc. When such a term is used in the introduction, always provide an English gloss on first occurrence, thus: Mārkandeyapurāṇa (Ancient Lore of Markandeya); pūrvakavipraśamsā (praise poems on earlier poets).

Indic place-names present a special challenge. In general, when identifying premodern toponyms in the introduction and annotations, translators should make use of the approved contemporary name (e.g., Avadh, rather than Awadh or Oudh; Thiruvananthapuram, rather than Tiruvananantapuram or Trivandrum; Mahrauli rather than Mehrauli); colonial-era usage is to be
avoided. Helpful sources, which must still be used with caution, are the U.S. Board on Geographic Names site at http://geonames.usgs.gov/ (this includes older name forms and clearly states the approved contemporary name); and http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/tgn/). In the translation, generally speaking, one should reproduce the toponym that is used in the text (thus, Ganga, and never Ganges; but Jumna, rather than Yamuna, in most northern vernacular and Persian texts). If there is a risk of grave confusion, one should gloss the toponym in a note, and consider adding it to the glossary.

**B. Transliteration**

Transliteration should be made according to prevailing scholarly standards (save for proper names and the like, as observed above). Consistency must be maintained across the volume. (Whether, to take a Hindi example, one chooses to write Dasharath or Dashrath will depend on context, metrical or non-metrical, see next. At all events, one version should be chosen for the introduction and annotations, and used consistently.)

For Hindi, note that anusvār is to be transliterated as ṃ, whereas anunāsik is to be transliterated by a tilde (´). When quoting from the original of a poetic text, syllable-final -a-, often mute in the spoken language, must be represented.

For Persian, we have chosen a modified Steingass system, but in a few instances we will not follow Steingass to simplify things, e.g., we will have dīwān-i khālisa instead of dīwānī khālisa, “Azimuddin” or “Azim al-Din” instead of “Azim ud-din.” For Urdu, we will follow a modified Library of Congress system.

When transliterating Indic names and terms, it is preferable to use the stem-form rather than the nominative, in accordance with general Western practice. Thus Kritavarman (not Kritavarma), Amshumat (not Amshuman), apsaras (not apsarā), Kesarin (not Kesari), Malyavat (not Malyavan). Deviation is possible if another form of the word is in common use, e.g. Hanuman (not Hanumat).

Where other questions of orthography arise, please consult the regional subeditor.

**C. Names of languages**

We refer to the languages as Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha [sic], Braj Bhasha, and Persian; but Bangla, Kannada, Sinhala, Panjabi [sic], etc. Language names are abbreviated as per Turner’s Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages (except for Sanskrit, which is Skt., not Sk.)

**D. Dates**
All dates should be given in the Common Era. Where essential, Indic dating systems (Vikrama Saṃvat; Śaka Saṃvat, Hijra, etc.) may be added in parenthesis. Thus: 1157 C.E. (VS 1100); also B.C.E (Before the Common Era). (See also under “Bibliography.”)

E. Abbreviations
For “verse” and “verses” when used before numerals we use v. and vv. respectively, and lettered rather than numbered verse quarters (where applicable), thus v. 18a, v. 22ab, vv. 35–38. Use p. and pp. for page(s), ms. and mss. for manuscript(s), and c. (instead of ca.) for “circa” in dates. Please refrain from using the abbreviations f. and ff.; specific pages or passages should be cited. And write “compare” or “see,” and not “cf.”

F. Indic Book Titles
Capitalize the first word in title and use lower case on everything else except proper names. Thus Hindī sāhitya kā itihās (rather than Hindī Sāhitya kā Itihās).

IV. Preparing and submitting the manuscript
Use a standard word-processing program, preferably Microsoft Word. Create a separate computer file for each section of the work and give it both a sequential number and name that identifies its content (e.g. “01-Introduction,” “02-Note on the Text and Translation,” etc.). The Indic text should be submitted, when possible, in a Unicode Open Type compatible Indic font (not Roman). If the Indic text will not be in a Unicode Indic font, we will need to know that in advance, as it will take time to convert and proofread the converted text. Should other questions arise regarding the submission of the original-language text, please consult the regional subeditor for guidelines.

It is essential to use a Unicode Open Type compatible font for all the rest of the ms., introduction, translations, footnotes, and endnotes). Use Unicode diacritics when required (do not, for example, use the underline function for an ṛ).

Set the text-editor to check spelling for “U.S. English.”

In general, avoid trying to do any visual styling to your documents. The final manuscript submitted to the General Editor should be complete, double-spaced throughout, including block quotes, and assembled and paginated continuously in the following order:

• Title page, with Indic author’s name in the appropriate Indic script. (In the case of anonymous works, the work’s title, in romanization, without diacritics, will be added in the title, e.g., Therigatha: Poems of the First Buddhist Women)
• Table of Contents (including where appropriate the chapter names of the translated text)
• Introduction (including section on acknowledgments, and dedication if used) and endnotes following the introduction
• Note on the Text [or, Note on the Text and Translation]
• Original-language text, with Indic numerals indicating textual endnotes restarting with each new section
• English translation, with special symbols (*, †, etc., indicating identification footnotes, restarting on each page, and Arabic numerals indicating endnotes, restarting with each new section
• List of abbreviations
• Notes to the Text
• Notes to the Translation
• Concordance (if used)
• Glossary (if used)
• Bibliography, consisting of:
  Editions and Translations
  Other Sources