BRAJ IN BRIEF

An introduction to literary Braj Bhāṣā

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For readers who know Modern Standard Hindi or ‘MSH’, the grammar of Braj Bhasha presents no great problems, and the great poetic wealth of this language lies close at hand. Sometimes Braj and MSH coincide completely: in one Braj poem, for example, the 16th-century poet Sūrdās has Krishna say endearingly ये मेरे ब्रज लोग, while a century later, Banārasīdās has a cunning sannyasi advertise his wares with the enticing words एक मंत्र है मेरे पास. Elsewhere, it is true, wide differences between Braj and MSH do emerge, but these are less often in syntax (the relationship between words) than in morphology (the form of the words themselves). The purpose of this introduction to Braj grammar – which varies from poet to poet – is to help readers to build on their existing knowledge of MSH to achieve a confident understanding of original Braj texts.

Look for a moment at this (rather contrived) sentence in MSH prose:

राजिम सोपाल इस पड़ोस की गिलय होली था।

And now compare it with this possible rendering in Braj prose in a style that reflects the language to be encountered in this introduction:

मेरो मीत गुपाल या परोस की गलियन माँह होली खेलत है।

There are ten differences in the eleven words, leaving only the possessive की identical in both versions:

मेरो has the Braj masculine singular ending in -au, a word-ending which happens to be very rare in MSH and hence stands out as a characteristic of the Braj masculine singular paradigm. It is of course the equivalent of MSH का.

मीत is the vernacular derivative (or ‘tadbhava’, defined below) of Sanskritic मित्र; MSH nearly always prefers the latter ‘tatsama’ form, while Braj is happy with either.

गुपाल (for गोपाल) shows a vowel ‘lightening’ in an unstressed syllable; that is to say, spelling conventions may follow pronunciation rather than etymology. Braj poets, working in tightly defined metrical frameworks, are glad to have such choices.

या – this Braj oblique pronoun looks very different from its MSH equivalent इस.

परोस – a ‘simplification’ of the retroflex /ṛ/ (MSH पड़ोस) is commonplace in Braj.
गिलयन shows how the Braj oblique plural is written with a nasal consonant (-न, sometimes -नि or -नु) rather than the nazalised vowel typical of MSH as in गिलयन.

माहि – this Braj postposition is one of many equivalents to the MSH में (itself also commonly used in Braj), all deriving from the Sanskrit locative में.

होरी – a common sound-change between ल and र in a final syllable is seen in होरी < होरी.

खेलत – this participle is equivalent to MSH खेलता.

हली – an auxiliary verb, parallel to MSH था. It again shows the -au ending characteristic of the masculine singular in Braj.

Despite these differences, the overall syntax of the sentence remains unchanged. That being said, it is also true that the conventions of verse construction and poetic diction can seem puzzling at first: poetic word order often differs from that of prose or speech, and many helpful ‘signpost’ words such as conjunctions and auxiliary verbs are creatively omitted in the cause of word economy, or to yield the ambiguity on which poetry thrives. It is therefore important that our first proper encounter with Braj should be with real poetry rather than fabricated prose.

With this in mind we will take a stroll through the language as found in the poetry of Vṛṇḍ, a court poet who tutored Aurangzeb’s grandson Azim-us-Shan in the art of composition three centuries ago, in 1704. In the company of our Mughal class-fellow we will gain an overview of how the language works, and will also encounter some of the tropes, techniques and ideas that distinguish this poetry from other kinds of language use. The couplets quoted here are from a text entitled नींत सतसई ‘Seven Hundred Verses on Polity’; my source is Janârdan Rāv Celer (ed.), Vṛṇḍ granthāvalī, Agra 1971.

**A TOUR OF BRAJ GRAMMAR WITH THE POET Vṛṇḍ**

Let’s begin our tour by asking our guide how easy will it be to learn the essentials of Braj, and to enjoy its poetry. Will we have to work hard? Vṛṇḍ’s reply –

कम ही तै सब मिलत हैं, चिन कम मिलाे न काहि।
नींदी अंगरी दी जम्मी कवी ही निजज़े नाँहि।।

*By effort alone, everything comes; without effort it comes to no one:
With straight fingers, congealed ghee will not be extracted at all.*

Vṛṇḍ is quite right of course: achieving anything worthwhile does take some effort! But read his couplet a couple of times and you will quickly pull at least some of its poetic ghee from the pot.
To feel the rhythm of the poem, bear two things in mind. Firstly, every syllable should be fully pronounced (including the short vowels at the ends of words: *srama hi taī saba milata hai*...). Secondly, a line in this *dohā* metre (defined below) has a brief rhythmic pause soon after the halfway mark: in this poem it comes after हृ in the first line and after जयौ in the second; more about this anon. But now, here is the meaning of the poem in MSH:

कम से ही सब कुछ मिलता है; कम के बिना किसी को [कुछ] नहीं मिलता;
सीधी उगली से जमा हुआ ची किसी भी तरह नहीं मिलता।

The major differences between Braj and MSH encountered here are explained below:

कम This word for ‘labour, effort’ reflects Sanskrit कम. Although Sanskritic loanwords are common in Braj, their form is often simplified – you could say ‘sweetened’ or ‘domesticated’ – by local vernacular pronunciation.

जयौ The functions of MSH जा are carried in Braj by two distinct words, ज and ज; we will see their different functions later. Don’t be surprised to see spelling variations such as ज/ज and ज/ज, as Braj orthography is not standardised; nasalization also comes and goes according to scribal whim, and such variations usually have no grammatical significance.

मिलत = MSH मिलता (an imperfective participle). The short final syllable -त covers both singular and plural (MSH मिलता / मिलते); the feminine equivalent would normally be मिलत, again with a *short* final vowel.

मिले This third-person verb, ending –ai or –e regardless of number, has two functions: it is a present tense (often equivalent in sense to मिलत), and it can also be a subjunctive (Hindi मिले). So it is called ‘subjunctive-present’.

का = MSH का, though the sense here may be closer to किसी को.

अगुरौ = MSH अगुरौ, उगली. As we have seen, a sound-change between ल and र is quite common in the last syllable of Braj words; another example follows in the penultimate word of this couplet.

जम्यौ = MSH जमा, ‘congealed, set’. There are two things to notice here. Firstly, as we have already seen, the masculine singular ending in Braj is –au rather than –ā. Then, by contrasting जम्यौ with MSH जमा we find that the Braj participle has picked up a य before the masculine ending. This is because the Braj verb stem is not जम as in MSH, but जमि, ending with a short –i; the stem jamī- followed by the ending -au yields ‘jamiau’, spelt जयौ. Similarly, Braj कहौ, सुनौ, देखौ, दिखौ, आयौ, गयौ are equivalent to MSH कहा, सुना, देखा, दिखा, आया, गया. And the joker in the pack: Braj भयौ is equivalent to MSH भावा. (Both भयौ and है derive from Sanskrit भवति, and are ultimately cognate with the English verb ‘be’.)
The phrase ‘नकरता’ means ‘in any way at all’, MSH नहीं.

निकरें Put together what we noticed just now about the ल / र sound-change and the –ai verb ending, and you’ll see that this is equivalent to MSH नकरता.

नाहि Easily recognisable as MSH नहीं; in Braj, either syllable in the negative particle can be either long or short, and either syllable can be nasalized or unnasalized – another gift to poets whose verses have to fit strict metrical formulae! In dohā 14 below we see yet another spelling – नाहि.

THE DOHĀ FORM

The dohā metre used by Vṛnd in the Niti satsai is the most popular couplet metre in pre-modern Hindi. Conveniently for us, these particular dohās are independent poems: each couplet can be regarded as a self-contained unit of meaning. Notice how a dohā couplet is punctuated: the first line ends in a single daṇḍa, and the second with double daṇḍas, or a pair of double daṇḍas bracketing a stanza number. There is an AA rhyme.

The dohā has a simple but rather precise metrical pattern, measured by mātrās – ‘beats’, comparable to the beats used in music. A short vowel (अ इ उ ऊ ऋ ऌ ए ऐ ओ औ) has one mātra, while a long vowel (आ ई ऊ ऋ ए ऐ ओ औ) has two: theoretically, it takes twice as long to pronounce as a short vowel. A short vowel before a conjunct consonant (e.g. the first vowel in अत or वद) counts as a long syllable: feel the difference in length, or weight, between the opening syllables in the words बचा and बचा respectively, and you will see why. Western annotation marks short syllables as ˘, long as ¯. Thus बचा would be scanned ˘ ˘ , while बचा would be scanned ¯ ¯ . In Indian prosody, ‘short’ syllables are called ‘light’ (लघु), while ‘long’ ones are called ‘heavy’ (गुरु).

A dohā line consists of rhythmic ‘feet’ with the mātra composition 6+4+3, 6+4+1. The comma represents a more substantial rhythmic break or pause, often marked by a comma in modern editions: this pause is called ‘caesura’ in English < Latin, and यत in Hindi < Sanskrit. Now let us look at the first quarter-verse of our first dohā:

6 / 4 / 3

सम ही तै सब मिल त है

Notice two things about the rhythmic feet. (a) With certain restrictions too technical to bother us now, they can be made up of any combination of long and short syllables that yields the requisite number of mātrās: thus a 6-mātra foot could consist of three long syllables, or six short, or any combination of the two in any sequence. (b) The feet do not necessarily coincide with individual words or groups of words: thus the 4-mātra foot
above consists of सब मिल- (˘ ˘ ˘ ˘), with the -न that completes the word मिलत falling into the next foot, -न है (˘ ˘).

If all this metrical detail wearies you, ignore it and move on. I will at some point add recordings of the couplets included here.

In gnomic genres of the kind found in Vṛnd’s Nīti Satsai, the first line postulates an abstract thought, and the second confirms it with a concrete illustration: thus in dohā 1, the first line talks in abstract terms about the necessity of ‘effort’, while the second gets its fingers sticky with a specific image. Reciters of such poems often repeat the first line before proceeding to the second. Knowing that much of the relish in such couplets comes from the matching of concrete image to abstract concept, they voice the repeated first line in a rising tone, implying ‘Are you with me? Got that?’ before delivering the second line, capping the rhyme of the first and rounding out the idea.

With Vṛnd’s continuing help, we will now work methodically through a sequence of grammar points. My commentary will concentrate on the grammatical point under review and won’t explain the whole poem; don’t worry if you don’t understand every detail of each couplet. The translations given here are as close as possible, forfeiting poetic subtlety for the sake of clarity in the literal meaning.

GENERAL PRESENT

We start with present-tense verbs. Whereas the MSH present tense uses participles like कहता, Braj has कहत, with a very different rhythmic balance, the /a/ vowel after kh being fully sounded; dekhata. This participle may be followed by the auxiliary है, as in MSH; but often it isn’t, because space is at a premium in poetry, and short is beautiful! Remember that the past-tense auxiliary हुआ is equivalent to MSH था (Braj आया हुआ = MSH आया था).

Vṛnd shows us a present-tense auxiliary है below, in the second line:

अरु जोबन की गरब कबूटे करिये नौहि ।
देखत ही मिट जात है, ज्यों बादर की छाँहि ॥ ॥

Never be proud of wealth and youthfulness – it disappears in a trice, like a cloud’s shadow.

The second line begins देखत ही मिट जात है (MSH देखते ही मिट जाता है) ‘dissolves as you watch’, i.e. ‘disappears before your very eyes’. The word अरु is MSH और; कबूटे is MSH कबी; and remember that की is MSH की, reconfirming the masculine singular ending in -au. In बादर we see the ल / र sound-change again (MSH having बादल). The Braj and MSH word ज्यों ‘like’ appears very frequently in the second line of a dohā, where it introduces the terms of the illustrative simile.
Now Vṛnd gives us a new couplet guiding us towards feminine participles.

पटिति बढ़िति संपतित सुमसति गति अरहट की जोय।
रीति घटिता भरति हे भरी सु रीति होय॥ ॥

Wealth and wit [both] fall and rise – note the motion of the Persian wheel: the empty vessel fills; filled, it becomes empty [again].

Feminine participles may end in a short –i vowel (बोल्ति, देखति, आर्ति etc.), but the scribes are not always consistent: the -i ending is so short in pronunciation as to be virtually inaudible, and is often dropped from the orthography (allowing बोलति to be reduced to बोलत); the result, of course, is indistinguishable from the masculine.

In this couplet, the feminine participles पटिति बढ़िति (‘fall, rise’) are playfully set alongside three feminine nouns – not verbs! – that also have this same –ti ending: संपति ‘wealth’, सुमसति ‘intelligence, good attitude, wit’, गति ‘state, condition’. Such playful usages are typical of Braj poetic construction; while not necessarily ‘meaning’ anything in a literal or translatable sense, they bring an organic cohesion to a phrase, suggesting parallels and connectivities between ideas.

In the couplet above, Vṛnd illustrates the concept of fluctuating fortunes with the graphic image of the camel-powered Persian wheel (अरहट), an irrigation device with a continuous chain of connected buckets (पटिका, here resonating nicely with पटिति) which are filled and emptied as they turn in perpetual sequence. The hypnotically repeated chant of all those –ti endings imitates the endlessly clunking motion of the Persian wheel: life goes round and round, buckets are filled and emptied, fortune comes and goes.

Braj has a wide range of words for ‘to see’ or ‘to look’. One of them has the stem जोइ- which is here used as an imperative (a ‘command’) in the spelling जोय.

SUBJUNCTIVE-PRESENT

We saw an example of the ‘subjunctive present’ in मिलें earlier. Think of it as a subjunctive verb (like MSH मिले, मोले and मिलूं, मोलूं etc.), but with the extra capacity of being used as a present tense. The third-person uses -ai and -e spellings rather indiscriminately. Remember that nazalization is also a little erratic, and is not quite the consistent marker of plurality that it is in MSH, which as you know distinguishes singular subjunctive योले from plural योले.

In the subjunctive-present, verb stems such as आइ- ‘come’, जाइ- ‘go’, पाइ- ‘find, attain’ etc. often have the shortened third-person form आय, जाय, पाय (instead of आमे, जामे, पामे).

Three examples of the subjunctive-present appear in the second line of the next couplet: मारे ‘kills’, ज्याबे ‘gives life’ and उपजे ‘is produced’:
Though they be kindred, [people’s] natures are various:
poison kills, nectar revives, [though] they’re born in the same place.

In this couplet, Vṛnd uses three kinds of vocabulary that feature widely in all varieties of Hindi, and we'll pause here to look at these categories.

1. ‘tatsama’ words: Sanskrit loanwords which are literally ‘that-same’, i.e. ‘the same (sama) as that (tat)’ – i.e. ones that appear in their original unchanged Sanskrit forms. The examples here are (a) सहोदर ‘sibling’; (b) प्रकृति ‘nature’; and (c) सुधा ‘nectar’.

2. ‘semi-tatsama’ or ardha-tatsama words: Sanskrit loanwords that have been slightly modified in their vernacular dress – in effect they are still Sanskrit words, but their pronunciation reflects a vernacular touch. Thus बिस ‘poison’ has become बस, जद ‘although’ has become जदः.

3. ‘tadbhava’ words: words which are ‘that-become’, i.e. ‘derived (bhava) from that (tad)’, i.e. from Sanskrit origins, but which have been shaped and eroded by the passage of time, undergoing various stages of transition and transformation. Certain predictable patterns of sound change determine these developments, which can be traced through Prakrit into the medieval and modern languages. Thus ठौर ‘place’ comes from Sanskrit स्थावर — even if isn’t immediately obvious from the vernacular spelling! The word ठौर is common in Braj, less so in MSH (which has lost many fine and expressive words from its earlier periods, while gaining new ones through loans from various languages, including Sanskrit, Persian & Arabic, Portuguese, and English). Another example is अरहट in our earlier couplet: it comes from Sanskrit अर्घट, itself related to पटिक, a tatsama word used in that same couplet. Vṛnd may not have been aware of the connection, but the science of philology confirms it. Notice how the aspiration in घ has survived as ह in अरहट, whereas the consonantal ग quality has been eroded away. Another example of the
same process is in the verb कह़े- ‘to say’, which derives from the Sanskrit root कथ (also seen in tatsama कथा ‘recitation, story’).

Coming back to the verbs, you may wonder what the difference is between the two present tenses we’ve seen: the करत type and the करे type. The answer is that they’re often interchangeable, with little functional difference between them, though as we’ve seen, the latter often suggest a subjunctive sense (like its MSH cousin, करे). Keep an eye out for both forms and try to get a sense of their modern MSH equivalents in each example.

**SOUND-CHANGE OF ल TO र**

We have already seen several examples of a sound-change ल to र, and later we will come to further examples such as the nicely alliterative कारी रात for ‘dark night’. Note that this sound-change is mostly restricted to the end of a word. Can you spot another example in our next couplet below?

[Only] he who understands a certain matter should voice opinions about it; an astrologer understands not disease, [nor] a doctor the planets’ movement.

The sound-change lurks confusingly in चार, meaning not ‘four’ but चाल ‘motion, movement’; its use is encouraged here by the rhyme requirement. The word for ‘planet’ is घन, and घन का चाल means घन का चाल ‘the motion of the planets’. In this couplet, Vṛnd says that if you don’t know what you’re talking about, keep quiet. The beautiful construction of this couplet deserves close reading. Vṛnd stresses the opposition between two radically kinds of knowledge – medical and astrological – by setting the relevant phrases back-to-back: रोग न जाने जोतिसी बैंच घन का चार has object before subject, बैंच घन को चार has subject before object. The two different specialists, जोतिसी and बैंच, are thus made to be neighbours in the word-order of the line. This back-to-back effect is called ‘chiasmus’, and to get a similar effect in English translation we would have to recast the line like this:

*disease is not understood by astrologer: doctor (understands not) the planets’ movement*

Notice finally how the single verb phrase न जाने does duty for both the astrologer and the doctor – a sharing effect called ‘zeugma’. Through literary devices of this kind the poet is able to pack a great deal of meaning and inference into a very small space, and this art lies at the very heart of poetic composition.
MASCULINE SINGULAR ENDINGS IN -AU

We’ve seen several examples of the masculine –au ending that equates to MSH –ā (e.g. Braj कौ = MSH का, Braj गयौ = MSH गया), and no further explanation is needed. In the next couplet Vrnd shows us -au endings in आपनौ (MSH अपना), and in the nouns उरौ ‘brightness’ and अधौरौ (or अधौरी) ‘darkness’ (MSH उर्ला and अधौरा respectively):

सब देखे पै आपनौ दोष न देखे कोइ।
करौ उजेरी दीप पै तरे अधौरी होइ॥ ६ ॥

A person sees all, but sees not his own fault;
The lamp gives light, but below there’s darkness.

In the very opposite of a zeugma, the poet here deliberately repeats the word देखे (देखे...न देखे) to stress the contrast between seeing and not-seeing.

भाषा VERSUS भाखा

There is also a phonetics-and-script issue in the couplet above. Although most MSH-speakers pronounce प as very similar or identical to ज (making ‘भाषा’ rhyme with आशा), in Braj प tends to be pronounced ख, and in fact spellings such as भाखा were the norm in ‘old’ Hindi. Many Braj scribes used प for both प and ख, yielding spellings such as राघो (= राखो, मSH रखा) and देखो (= देखौ, मSH देखा), and not using ख at all. Thus in the couplet above, the phrase दोष न देखे may have been read as दोख न देखे and may have been written as दोष न देखे, the repeated consonant stressing the irony of the failure to ‘find a fault’ in oneself.

OBLIQUE PLURALS

In an earlier couplet we saw an oblique plural ending in the example वहन (MSH वहोः). Other examples from elsewhere are: लोगन (MSH लोगोः), दिनन (MSH दिनोः) and भक्तन (MSH भक्तोः). Can you spot another in this next couplet?

यों सेवा राजान की दीनी कठिन बताय।
यों चूँच व्याली बदन सिंह मिलन के भाय।॥ ७ ॥

The service of kings is said to be as dangerous as kissing a serpent’s mouth, or encountering a lion.

It’s in राजान (MSH राजाओः), one of no less than five words ending -न in this couplet. The verse begins with यों ‘thus’, and ends के भाय, in which भाय is MSH भाव, here giving the sense ‘in the manner of, as’. Interestingly, the serpent here is specifically female (व्याली rather than the more common व्याल, व्याल) – deadlier than the male, perhaps, or is the longer
word preferred *metri causa*, ‘for metrical purposes’? As is usual in Braj texts, the word बदन reflects Sanskrit वदन ‘mouth’ rather than Persian बदन ‘body’ as in MSH and Urdu.

One particular oblique plural form needs special mention: बड़ौं, oblique plural of बड़हँ.

रढ़े समीप बड़ौं के होत बड़हँ हित मेव।
सबही जानत बड़हँ हैं वृक्ष बराबर बेल।”

One should stay close to the great: there’s much benefit in bonds.
Everyone knows that vines grow equally with the tree.

**COMPOUND VERBS**

Compound verbs are of course very common in MSH – think of expressions such as लिखना, सोचना and खा जाना. The following couplet includes करर सके (MSH कर सकता/सके) and धोय न सक्यो (MSH धो न सका). See couplet 4 above for the reference to the ocean as ‘father of the moon’.

कोऊ दूर न करर सके बिधि के उलटे अंक।
उद्धि पिता तु चंद्र को धोय न सक्यो कलंक।”

Nobody can remove the adverse marks of fate;
The ocean is its father, yet the moon could not cleanse its stain.

In our next couplet, the verb रिसाय वजन ‘fumes in anger’, and the compound verb बिच जाय means ‘escapes, survives’ (with an -i stem in बिच of course):

बड़े बड़े सौं रिस करें छोटें सौं न रिसाय।
तसै कठोर तीरे पवन कोमल तु बिच जाय।”

The great feel anger with the great: they don’t rage against the small.
The wind breaks a hard tree: soft grass survives.

My translation might well have included conjunctions (rather than colons) in both lines, giving the verse a slightly more explicit sense: ‘great people fume at their peers *but* not against their inferiors, just as hurricanes snap great trees *but* do not damage grass’. Braj poets often leave conjunctions such as ‘but’ or ‘and’ unstated, leaving the functions of such words to be inferred by verse structure alone: either the first line of the couplet contrasts with the second, or the first half-line within an individual line contrasts with its second half-line. The creative omission of conjunctions, in literary terms an ‘asyndeton’, is a powerful weapon in the poet’s rhetorical armoury: though small in themselves, such effects contribute to the ambiguity or multivalency of meaning that lie at the heart of poetry. The lexical choices made by the translator nearly always damage
these effects, making the translated text a narrower and less subtly ‘layered’ thing than the original.

Part of a poet’s work is to achieve a sense of integration in the poem: to integrate sense and sound. Though one hardly notices it without looking closely, the couplet we’ve just read neatly sets two ‘t’ nouns (तर and तृण) in opposition to each other, matching them with paired but opposite ‘k’ adjectives (कठोर, कोमल); but the switch in order from ‘noun + adjective’ to ‘adjective + noun’ also cleverly suggests the very different fate of tree and grass respectively. Further, the word order is contrived in such a way as to sit कठोर and तोर alongside each other, with internal rhyme. Such carefully contrived manipulations of phrasing are part and parcel of poetry of this kind – perhaps of all poetry worthy of the name.

A final point about compound verbs. In Braj, the two verbs in a compound often become inverted: लिखि दिवो (MSH लिखि दिवा) might appear as दिवी लिखि without any change to the meaning. This is especially common in rhymes, as it supplies extra rhyme possibilities for the grateful poet. Another such inversion appears in उठत...जाग (MSH जाग उठती है) in the following couplet, which describes the ‘burning pain’ (तपन) of a woman suffering from the anguish of love in separation – an affliction which reaches epidemic proportions in Braj poetry generally:

बिरह तपन पिय बातः उठत चौगुनी जागि।
जल के सींचे बढ़त है ज्यों संतोख की आगि।॥ ११ ॥

The anguish of lovesickness flares fourfold with the lover’s airy words as the fire of love/oil increases when sprinkled with water.

The couplet plays on two different meanings of बात as ‘talk’ (from Sanskrit वाच) and as ‘wind, breeze’ (from Sanskrit वात), a play feebly reflected by ‘airy words’ in my translation. The lover’s words are a breeze that whips up the flame of the beloved’s feelings. Meanwhile संतोख (Sanskrit संतोख) is both ‘love’ and highly combustible ‘oil’ – as used in a lamp, for example. Throwing water onto an oil fire makes it flare up violently. A third pun involves the word चौगुनी ‘fourfold’, built on गुन (Sanskrit गुण) whose numerous meanings include ‘thread, lamp-wick’. So the poem is thick with puns and allusions. The second line begins with an adverbial phrase, जल के सींचे ‘through sprinkling with water’, using the -e form of a participle from सींचि- ‘to sprinkle, irrigate’; but जल के may also be read as जलके ‘burning’, adding another flame to the fire of the poem.

Staying with fire but returning to the matter of inverted compound verbs, look for such a verb in this next verse:
सब सहायक सबव के, कोऊ न निबल सहाय।  
पवन जगावत आग की दीपहि देत बुझाय। ॥ १२ ॥

All are helpers of the strong, nobody is a help to the weak: wind rouses the fire but douses the lamp.

The inversion comes in दीपहि देत बुझाय, which is equivalent to MSH दीप को बुझा देता (ी). The word सब (saba + emphatic suffix -i) is equivalent to MSH सभी; and कोऊ is MSH कोई भी (a suffixed उ or ऊ gives this emphasis).

As inverted compound verbs are so common, here’s a further example:

मैंना देत बनाय सब हिय को हेत अहेत।  
जैसे निरमल आरबी भली बुरी कहि देत। ॥ १३ ॥

The eyes reveal everything of the heart’s love or lack of it,  
Just as a spotless mirror reveals good and bad.

The compound verb देत बनाय (MSH बना देते) is inverted, whereas कहि देत (MSH कह देती है) is in its natural or neutral order.

VERB STEMS

In MSH, the ‘stem’ of the verb has the form जा, बता, सन, कर etc.; but the Braj verb stem usually ends in -i, yielding जाइ, बताइ, सनन, करि. In Yrd’s next couplet, बोिल उठ ‘cries out’ and निच निच उठ ‘breaks into a dance’ both exemplify this:

मन भावन के भिवन के सुख को नाहिं छोर।  
बोिल उठ निच निच उठ भीर मुनत यन घोर। ॥ १४ ॥

The joy of meeting one’s heart’s beloved has no limit;  
Hearing the clouds’ rumble, the peacock cries out and breaks into a dance.

For peacocks, the monsoon is the mating season, and is announced by the welcome sound of thunder (घन घोर); the peacocks celebrate at the prospect of uniting with their मन-भावन, ‘heart’s delight’. The word की in the first line is an alternative spelling for possessive का (MSH का).

Verb stems ending -āi (like बसाई, जगाई) can also be written -āya (बसाय, जगाय) with identical meaning.
What can be done with someone who deliberately does foolish things?
Who can awaken someone who stays asleep even when awake?

The phrase को सक जगाय is MSH जोन जगा सकते / सके, with the two parts of the compound verb (जगाय and सक) inverted as explained earlier. जगाय is the stem form of the verb (=MSH जगा from जगाना) and is an alternative for the spelling जगा।

The -i ending of the verb stem may easily be reduced to an -a ending (identical to the MSH form). In the following couplet, the rhyme-words विचार and पसार may look like nouns but are in fact the absolutes of verbs meaning ‘to consider’ and ‘to spread, extend’.

पीछे कारज कीजिए पहिले पट्टूंच विचार।
कैसे पावत उच्च फल बाबन बाँह पसार।। १५ ॥

Act later, having first considered your reach;
How would a dwarf get a high fruit by stretching his arms?

The repeated -r rhythm in the final quarter of the couplet, बाबन बाँह पसार, subtly suggests the repeated reaching-up of the unfortunate dwarf as he tries to reach the fruit beyond his grasp.

ABSOLUTIVES

‘Absolutives’ give a ‘having done, after doing’ sense. In MSH they feature one of two options: a stem form as in जा, कर, बच, देख, सुन, extended form, as in जाकर /जाए, करके, बचकर / बचे, देखकर / देखे, सुनकर / सुने। Braj has equivalent patterns, with the option that the stem may have an -i ending, making जा, कर, बच, देख, सुन. The following couplet neatly exemplifies both: the stem दौर (MSH दौड़, दौड़कर) and the extended विचारकर (MSH विचारकर):

अपनी पट्टूंच विचारकर करतब किरये दौर।
तेते पाव पमारिये जेती लाँबी सीर।। १६ ॥

Hurry to do what is to be done after considering your capacity;
stretch out your legs according to the length of your quilt.

The correlative-relative construction तेते...जेती is equivalent to MSH उतने...जितनी (such constructions are introduced more fully below).
INFinitives & Verbal nouns

In MSH, the infinitive verb has a -nā ending (देखन, कहन!), which changes to -ne in the oblique (as in देखन में, या कहन की बात). The equivalent infinitive in Braj ends simply -na, which is invariable: देखन, कहन.

बात कहन की रीति में है अन्तर अधिकार।
एक बचन तौर पर है।

There's great distinction in the way of saying things:
through one word anger increases, through one word it goes.

Vṛṇd is in playful mood again when he seems to imply a (false) parallel between two different forms: कहन is an infinitive verb of the kind just described, but बचन is a noun, similar in form to the infinitive but of course otherwise quite unrelated. बचन means 'word' – in MSH it appears in its tatsama form वचन, often meaning 'promise'.

In addition to this -na form, Braj often uses a gerund or 'verbal noun' with the ending -ibau (or -ibo): जाइबौ 'going', सनबौ 'hearing'. Like the -au ending of masculine nouns and adjectives, this -au changes to -e in the oblique: जाइं 'in going' and so on. Leaving Vṛṇd to one side for a moment, let's hear from no less a person than Akbar, the Mughal emperor himself. In a deeply touching poem, he laments the passing of three of his favourite courtiers – 'Pithal' (Prithviraj), the famous singer Tansen, and especially his beloved minister, the famous wit Birbal:

पीथल सू मजलिम गई तानसेन सू राग।
हंसबो रमबो बोलबो गया बीरवर साथ।।

With Pithal went the soirée; with Tansen, music;
Laughing, strolling, talking all went with Birbal's company.

We heard earlier that serving kings is dangerous, which is perhaps why nobody dared to 'kiss the serpent' and remind Akbar that dohās are supposed to rhyme! (Should the rhyme-words be रंग / संग ?) Nevertheless it's a fine verse, with many subtleties. Akbar favours Birbal above the others by associating him with three favourite (but now lost) pastimes in comparison to the single ones given for Pithal and Tansen respectively, and furthermore he groups these three activities in a discrete list that occupies a full quarter-verse, thereby underlining their scope and comprehensiveness. Pithal and Tansen are associated with specific artistic activities, whereas the 'laughing, strolling and talking' associated with Birbal are organic parts of everyday life, and hence even more prone to being missed. The verb रम- is particularly hard to translate: it covers 'pleasurable

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strolling’ and ‘taking enjoyment’, with a very laid-back sense of just ‘hanging out’ or other more actively sensual pleasures. The subtle switch from नी ‘with’ in the first line to साथ ‘with, in company of’ in the second adds further to the sense of loss, suggesting an animate connection between Birbal and the qualities associated with him: when he departed this life, they went off in company with him, hand in hand. Birbal must have been excellent company, as the famous ‘Akbar-Birbal’ stories imply. A mere thirteen words encapsulate all this meaning.

Given the Mughal context, the couplet has probably been transmitted through the Persian script (perhaps even in Akbar’s own hand, as he was not entirely illiterate), which would not distinguish हंसबो रमबो बोलबो from the more conventional Nagari spellings of हंसियो रमियो बोलियो, (or for that matter हंसियो रमियो बोलियो) or the postposition नी from the more usual Braj spellings सो / सी / सो / सी (MSH ने १). In the late medieval period, use of the Persian script was not restricted to Persian and Urdu; but the significant part it has played in the transmission of Braj texts tends to be overlooked today, with ‘Hindi’ and ‘Urdu’ separated into discrete camps.

PERFECTIVE VERBS

In the perfective (the simple past, as in ‘went’, ‘did’ etc.) Braj uses the so-called ‘ergative’ ने construction that is so taxing to novice learners of Hindi. In Braj poetry, the ने postposition itself is often absent, but its structure lives on, with agreement between verb and logical object following the usual rule, as in मैं राम ने कहानी गई. You will hardly need reminding that this usage applies with transitive verbs only – not with intransitives like जा- ‘to go’. The second line of our next couplet features intransitive गई (agreeing with गई in Akbar’s dohā above). The last quarter of the couplet is wonderfully concise: राम गई सीता is a truly laconic summary of the Rāmāyaṇa narrative!

The masculine perfective usually has forms like देखि, दुनि (MSH देखा, दुना): this is formed from the stem as in देखि and the ending -au, with the -i of the stem represented by
the semi-vowel /y/ — say ‘dekhi-au’ and you will hear the /y/ appearing automatically in
your pronunciation.

नहि इलाज देखि मुनि जासें मिटत मुभाव।
मसु पुट कोटिक देत तउ विष न तजत विषमाव। ॥ २१ ॥

[I've] never seen or heard of a means whereby inherent character is removed:
[one] adds countless drops of honey, yet venom doesn't forsake its venomousness.

The verb कर- ‘to do’ is irregular in Braj (and in MSH too, what with its क्रिया and क्र
participles and its कीजिए imperative etc.). In Braj the usual perfective participle from
cर- is क्रयौ (i.e. karyau, which could theoretically be written कर्या, though Braj scribes
don't often use the flying reph in participles). Alternative participles are कीन, कीनी, कीन,
कीनी and कीनो, and it’s this last form that we find in the final couplet of Vṛnd’s Satasaι,
tactfully fulsome in its praise of the poet’s imperial patron Azim-us-Shan:

अति उदार रिसबार जग साह अजीमुस्मान।
सतमौहा मुलि बुन्‍द कीनो अति सनमान। ॥ २२ ॥

Most liberal, and delighting in the world, is Shah Azim-ush-Shan;
hearing the Satasa he showed Vṛnd great honour.

Notice that the postposition को (MSH का) is nasalized. Although this is not a consistent
feature, it does help distinguish this sense from the unnasalized possessive को (MSH का).

FUTURE TENSE

Looking to the future, we find much more variety in Braj than in MSH’s single set of
बोल्गा, बोल्
forms. Braj has predictable equivalents of these (बोल्गी, बोल्गी) but also
boasts a set of –h– forms yielding first-person बोलँहो, third-person बोलँहे, etc. Our next
couplet has the third-person future form करँहे, equivalent to MSH करेगा –

अति हठ मत कर हठ बढ़े वात न करिघे कोय।
ज्यों ज्यों भीमै कामरी त्यों त्यों भारी होय। ॥ २३ ॥

Don’t practise extreme obstinacy! If obstinacy grows, nobody will speak [with you];
The more a blanket is soaked, the heavier it becomes.

The soaked blanket stands as a metaphor for human patience: it can absorb or
accommodate a certain amount of a failing such as obstinacy — but only so much, and no
more. Notice how the interplay of retroflex and dental consonants in अति हठ मत...हठ...बात
brings musicality to the verse. The second line uses an effective if commonplace
parallelism, using the structure of the line to position relative (ज्यों ज्यों) and correlative
(यौं यूँ) clauses in the two half-lines, separated by a comma-like caesura. We will return to the matter of relative-correlatives later. Meanwhile, Vṛnd's next couplet gives us a third-person future in आइँ ‘will come’:

कठिन कला तू आइँ करत करत अभ्यास।
नट ज्यों चालत बरस पर साधे बरस छमास।॥ २४ ॥

Even a difficult skill will come with repeated practice – as an acrobat performing on a rope learns it in a year or a six-month.

A word to note here is ही, ‘even’ or ‘also’, equivalent to MSH भी. And a word of warning about the orthography of future-tense words such as आइँ – typesetters are so accustomed to setting the MSH present-tense verb हो as a separate word that they often mistakenly set a Braj future verb like आइँ as two words and print ‘आइँ’! Hmmm: Vṛnd should write a dohā about it.

The dohā above gives further examples of Vṛnd's skill in achieving phonetic cohesion. The first line is sewn together with क alliteration, and the keyword बरस in the second line not only echoes करत करत in the first, but also anticipates पर and बरस in the phrasing that follows.

Here is one more example of the future:

फेर न लैँहै कपट सों जो कीजे व्यौपार।
जैसे हाँडी काठ की चढ़े न हूँजी बार।॥ २५ ॥

If an enterprise is done with deceit, it won’t work again, as a pot made of wood cannot be lifted [to the fire] a second time.

The verb लैँहै is the future of हो- , equivalent to MSH होगा; कीजे is an abbreviated form of कीजिए, a Braj passive, and it is to this form that we turn next.

PASSIVES
It is not only in the future tense that Braj has more variety than MSH: the passive also has two distinctive forms. Firstly, it shares with MSH the formula of ‘perfective participle plus जा’ (the so-called periphrastic passive), as in मुनि जात ‘is heard’ (MSH मुना जाता है). The second type of passive ends -ie, i-ie, -iyai or -iyata, as in सनिए / सनि, सनिये, सनियत ‘is seen’, लिखिए / लिखिये, लिखियत ‘is written’. Spellings vary! The MSH word चाहिए / चाहिये, which of course means ‘is wanted’, is a unique survival of this old passive form in MSH. In this next couplet, look out for a passive of the verb उतार- ‘to take off’:
Though it’s worthy, no one respects [a thing] out of context:
the necklace is removed from the breast when it’s sleeping-time.

The necklace (हार) is valuable (गुनी), being a thing of quality (गुन, गुण); it is also गुनी in
the sense that it has a ‘thread’ (गुन, गुण) running through it. Despite its high status or
value, it is taken off (passive उतारीय = MSH उतारा जाता है) when it is not the right time
(अवसर) for wearing jewellery, i.e. at bed-time (सयन समय).

The -ie /-iai ending of the passive is familiar to us as an āp imperative in MSH (सुनिए, सोनिए),
and it can have this function in Braj too. In many contexts the passive and
imperative senses overlap, so that either could be used in translation. For example, in the
next couplet नेए is translated ‘serve’ (imperative mood), but could equally well be
translated as either ‘is/are served’ or ‘should be served’ (both passive):

Serve a king, guru, wife and sister from middle-distance in the world:
there’s disaster from [being] very close; no result if you stay remote.

Notice how the little list of personnel in the first quarter-verse, नृप गुरु तिय बिहिन, is
given an internal cohesion by a shared quality of short vowels: this shared phonetic
quality suggests that all the members of the little group are united by a common feature.

THE SUFFIXES -वारौ AND -हार

Like many poets in Sanskritic languages, Vrnd is addicted to the punning potential of गुन
(Sanskrit गुण), a word that is often hard to translate adequately, as we found just now. In
the following, गुन appears within the word गनवारौ, in which the -वारौ suffix is equivalent to
MSH -वाला. The resulting sense is ‘having qualities’, i.e. being well-made, but also
something with a ‘string attached’ (गुनजत, तत्साम गुणयजत):

He who has qualities gains wealth — no one gains without qualities;
one could draw water from hell [itself] if one had a well-made / roped bucket.

At a pinch, the English expression ‘well-made’ might just work for both meanings,
since a ‘well-made bucket’ could be interpreted as ‘a bucket made for a well’, i.e. equipped
with a rope; but English readers would not be as accustomed to such punning as their Braj cousins, and would miss the point!

Notice again how a chiasmus juxtaposes लङ्का with लङ्का, the repeat straddling the caesura: this deliberate phrasing marks a stark contrast between the two parallel statements, ‘gains / gains not’.

Similar in use to -हार is the suffix -हार; this is seen in the formulaic MSH word होनहार ‘about to be’, i.e. ‘promising, up-and-coming’ (as in होनहार लङ्का), but in Braj it is also found with a wider range of verbs:

जानहार सो जाय अरु होनहार हूँ जाय।
रावन मैं लंका गयी बसे विमीण पाय।। २९।।

That which is to go, goes; and that which is to be comes about:
Ravan lost Lanka; Vibhishan gained it and settled there.

Rāma gave the defeated Rāvaṇ’s kingdom of Lanka to Rāvaṇ’s brother Vibhīṣaṇ (a devout Vaishnava); both Rāvaṇ’s loss of Lanka and Vibhīṣaṇ’s gaining of it were fated events, which is the point of the poem. Note that the pious Vibhīṣaṇ qualifies for an honorific plural (in the perfective verb बना). Remember that the odd-looking word हृद is the stem form of the verb हो- ‘to be’ (equivalent to MSH हो).

The -हार suffix appears below attached to the stem मथन- in मथनहार, a ‘churner’:

गहत तत्व ग्यानी पूरुष बात बिचारी बिचारी।
मथनहार तजस छाछ काँ माखन लेत निकार।। ३०।।

A wise man considers a matter deeply and grasps its principle; abandoning the buttermilk, the churner extracts the butter.

As if reviewing earlier lessons, Vṛnd shows us several old friends here: -i stems in बिचारी, तजस and निकार; imperfective participles in गहत (compare MSH प्रग्रहण करता to grasp, grab or grip) and लेत; a clearly nasalized काँ; and both an inverted compound verb and a ल / र sound-change in लेत निकार (MSH निकाल लेता है).

LEXICAL CHOICES AND WORD DERIVATIONS
These short notes cannot go into the complexities of word derivation and etymology, but it’s worth pointing out one or two important processes. Braj has access to the full range of Sanskritic and vernacular vocabulary, and poets can choose between a wide array of forms and spellings including tatsama and tadbhava forms and many points in between. In the couplet नैना देत बलाय सब (१३) we saw the tadbhava word ह्यिय for ‘heart’; but elsewhere Vṛnd prefers हृदय, the tatsama version of this same word:
S/he whose heart is hard is impervious to soft words,  
Just as Kamdev’s arrows can in no way pierce stone.

(The relative-correlative जाको...तिहि...equates to MSH जिसका...उसे; the adverbial phrase क्यों टू किए...means ‘however it’s done, no matter how one tries.’) The middle syllable of the Sanskrit word मदन ‘Kāmdev, Cupid’ has been through a process of phonetic ‘weakening’, first becoming a semi-vowel (वचन) in Prakrit, then further reduced in the Braj spelling मैन (मैन in our example, the vowel nasality having been picked up from the nasal environment of म and न). A similar process leads from वचन to बन (‘word, speech’), the rhyme-word of line 1. Elsewhere, the word मदन ‘house, building’ (which already has a semi-vowel as its middle syllable) is spelt मौन in Braj; and one can see this process at work in some Hindi-speakers’ pronunciations of, for example, the English word ‘government’ as गौर;ट, in which the English ‘v’ and its adjacent vowels are simplified to ‘au’. Only ‘a person whose heart is hard’ can be impervious to the fascination of these processes, which can be scientifically tracked and documented in such a way as to be able to predict how a sound will change over time; this is the academic science of philology. See the note on dictionaries below (especially Turner).

The syntax of Vṛnd’s ‘heart-of-stone’ dohā does not quite coincide with its metrical construction in the first line: the caesura supplies a rhythmic break after तिहि (MSH उसे), but in terms of syntax तिहि belongs with the second half of the line, as part of the phrase तिहि लगने न कोमल बन. Notice also how the position of लगने at the beginning of the second quarter-verse gives it emphasis — the ‘soft words’ striking at the ‘heart of stone’, but to no avail. Such features are sometimes exploited very artfully by poets intent on particular meanings.

The couplet below — about foolishness — contains a couple of ‘false friends’, i.e words that have an apparent but deceptive similarity to others: कहा means ‘what?’ (MSH क्या) and has nothing to do with MSH कहना, while को means ‘who?’ (MSH जोन) and has nothing to do with the को that marks an object as in MSH हमको. Vṛnd’s next offering again uses को in a rhetorical question, in which ‘who?’ implies ‘nobody!’

Who gives joy, who sorrow? It is karma that shakes us:  
The flag twists and untwists itself in the power of the wind.
RELATIVE-CORRELATIVES

In dohā 17 we saw a relative-correlative construction using तेने...जितनी, equivalent to MSH उतने...जितनी; and in dohā 30, we saw जाको ... तिहि, equivalent to MSH जिसका ... उसको. Such constructions abound in Vṛndā's couplets, and for that matter in the dohā genre generally. In its habitual observations on human behaviour, the genre often finds itself dealing with comparisons, oppositions, and equivalences, and these often give rise to balanced expressions on the lines of 'if A, then B', or 'just as A is, so is B', or 'what a difference between A and B!', or perhaps 'where A is found, B is not far away'. Such binary equations lend themselves well to relative-correlative constructions; structurally they may be split either across the two halves of the line (hinged at the caesura) or across the two lines of the couplet itself.

As a person feels towards something, so he declares it to be:

some call [the moon] 'hare-marked' or 'nectar-maker',
some say it’s ‘the blemished one’.

The lunar patch that we call ‘the man on the moon’ is seen variously as a hare and a blemish, but the moon is also the source of nectar or ambrosia: so the choice of epithets for the moon depends on the sentiments of the observer – beauty (or its opposite) being in the eye of the beholder. The construction uses two parallel sets of relative constructions: जासी म भाव सो तैसो ठानत ताहि (MSH जिसमें ... उसमें) and जैसो म (MSH जैसा ... जैसा). Another example of such parallel sets comes in this next couplet:

Where a person’s self-interest is served, that thing pleases him:

to a thief, the moonlight is not as dear as a dark night.

These constructions are very awkward to translate literally! Think of it like this:

According to one’s capacity, so he casts light:

how could a lamp destroy darkness like the sun?
And here, in the second line, we find जेतो ... तेवरी (MSH जितना ... उतना):

जेतो मिहरो जल चढ़े तेती बढ़े सरोज।

With the rising of the master, the servant rises in rank and splendour; the deeper the water grows, [just] so much grows the lotus.

This last image has a sting in the tail: the lotus stem grows according to the depth of the water, so that its flower floats on the surface; but when the water recedes, the lotus is left high and dry. (The connection is made clear by the vocabulary choices: सरोज ‘lotus’ means ‘pond-born’, confirming its watery habitat.) As financial advisers dutifully remind us, investments can go down as well as up; and the employee’s long-term security depends on the enduring status of his master. To a poet such as Vṛnd, dependant on the whimsical fortunes of a royal patron, such contexts must have seemed very real.

Notice the neat chiasmus across the caesura: बढ़े / बढ़े. The former is a non-finite participle (‘on the rising of the master...’), whereas the latter is a finite verb (‘the servant rises’).

Space is at a premium in the dohā, and brevity is everything: so relative-correlative constructions are not always equipped with a full set of pronouns. In the next dohā the relative pronoun जो is dropped ([जो] बुरी करें), while English manages well without a correlative pronoun (“those who do evil, [they] are evil”):

बुरी करें तेई बुरे नाहि बुरे कोउ और।

They who do evil are evil, someone else is not evil; he who trades is a trader, he who thieves is a thief.
SOME IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES FROM MODERN STANDARD HINDI

It’s time now to bring together a few common words and usages where Braj forms are quite different from their MSH equivalents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRAJ</th>
<th>MSH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>अरू</td>
<td>और (conjunction only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>कत</td>
<td>क्यों</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>कहा</td>
<td>क्या</td>
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<tr>
<td>कहूँ</td>
<td>कहीं</td>
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<tr>
<td>का</td>
<td>क्या: किस</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>कित</td>
<td>किरह, कहीं</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>किसि</td>
<td>किस</td>
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<tr>
<td>को</td>
<td>कौन</td>
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<tr>
<td>को</td>
<td>का</td>
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<tr>
<td>जनि</td>
<td>मत, न</td>
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<td>जा</td>
<td>जिस</td>
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<tr>
<td>जो</td>
<td>जो: अगर</td>
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<tr>
<td>ता</td>
<td>उस</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>तउँ, तऊ</td>
<td>तो भी</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>तैं</td>
<td>से ('from; through')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>पे, पे</td>
<td>पर</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>भयो, भयो</td>
<td>हुआ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>लों</td>
<td>तक, जैसे</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>सों</td>
<td>से ('with; to')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>हूँ</td>
<td>भी</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>हूँ भी</td>
<td>में (nominative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Braj pronunciation of cerebral च would approximate to the sound of ख, leading to two tendencies in Braj orthography. The first was to substitute ख for च, writing (and saying) भाखा for भाषा; the second, by contrast, was to substitute च for ख, writing (but not saying) टेत for खेत, देखी for देखी.
AND FINALLY ...

The Satsai genre was named ‘seven hundred’ because this is the number of couplets that it contains (सतसई derives from Sanskrit सतजाति through the Prakrit सतजाई). In fact the number is only an approximate formula, and an individual Satsai often has more verses than its literal ‘seven centuries’; the edition of Vṛnd’s text used here has 714 couplets. In the tradition of composing verse tributes to an admired poet, and in gratitude to Vṛnd for being such a helpful tutor, I conclude by adding a couplet of my own:

जाके हिय मस्ष्टि लालसा रस चाखन की होय
सो इहि माखा कूप तै घट कांड इक दोय।

He in whose heart may lie a desire to taste nectar should draw a bucket or two from this ‘vernacular’ well.

A NOTE ON DICTIONARIES

Although it is hard to find a single dictionary for reading Braj, the following are all extremely useful. Some of them are available online under the Chicago University ‘Digital Dictionaries of South Asia’ project — URLs noted accordingly.


Premnārāyan Šaṇḍan, Brajbhāṣā Sūrkoś. 2 vols. Lucknow, Lucknow University, 1974. This dictionary in fact ranges more widely than the poetry of the eponymous Sūrdās; and it includes a Hindi-medium Braj grammar in the appendix. Not easy to track down, but very useful if you can find it.