The History of the Third Vow Project

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Phaniśvarṇāth 'Renu' was from north Bihar. He lived from 1921 to 1977. His complete works, in five volumes, were published by Rajkamal Prakashan in Delhi in 1995, edited by Bhārat Yāyāvar. Renu was a major author and political activist. He was identified with the Regional (aṅcalik) Movement of Hindi Literature. Perhaps his most famous novel is his first, Mailā aṅcal, published in 1954. The short story “Tisăr qasam urf márā gaye Gulfām” was published in 1956. In 1966, in Bombay, Śankar Sailendra produced a film based on that short story. The director was Basu Bhattacharya. Raj Kapoor played Hiraman, and Waheeda Rahman played Hirabai. The screenplay was written by Nabendu Ghosh. During the filming, Renu was asked to come to Bombay. He wrote a number of short pieces on his experience in Bombay's film world of that time, but only a few of them are available today. In the Renu racanāvālū, see volume four, pages 108–127.

In 1980 the Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, published educational materials in three volumes to accompany videotapes of the films Sarā akāś, Garam havā, and Tisăr qasam. The materials accompanying those tapes were authored by Bruce Pray, David Magier, and Satendra Khanna. They consisted of a transcription of each film, a glossary of each transcription, and a critical volume. Many of us in the Hindi teaching “world” in North America used those tapes and useful accompanying materials. They are no longer published by that Center, nor are they available elsewhere, as far as we are aware.

In the fall of 1996 I attended a workshop at the Penn Language Center, University of Pennsylvania, on the use of film in teaching Hindi. It was organized by Harold Schiffmann. To a large extent, what I learned there is what we have tried to realize in this project.

With the financial help of the University of Virginia’s Arts and Sciences Center for Instructional Technology, under the Direction of Rachel Saury, I hired Harsh Prakash, from Nagpur, who was then a graduate student in the School of Architecture. He scoured the world for the best software to use to process Hindi. After much consideration, we decided to use iLEAP, a multilingual Indian language wordprocessor produced by the CDAC consortium in India. He, and later Divya Avasthi, a fourth-year student from Delhi majoring in economics in the College of the University of Virginia, typed in the transcription of the film, the glossary of the film, and the text of the short story on which the film is based. Divya Avasthi also produced a serial glossary for the short story and digitized that. She was later helped by Neil Agarwal, a

1 Also the editor of a collection of reminiscences of Renu, Renu kā jīvan, Delhi: Vāṇī Prakāśan, 2002.
Computer Science major at the University of Virginia. Furthermore, Divya Avasthi and I typed in the two English translations of the story, one by Kathryn Hansen, currently teaching Hindi at the University of Texas (Austin), and one by Usha Nilsson, of the University of Wisconsin (Madison). Once everything was digitized – the videotape, the transcript, the glossary of the transcript, the story, the glossary of the story, and the two translations – Michael Tuite, Director of the University of Virginia’s Digital Media Lab, used his genius to put a short prototype of this up on the web for in-house use only. Michael Tuite also slightly enhanced the digitized version of the film for better viewing on the computer screen.

In 2001 the project was submitted by Rachel Saury and me to the University of Virginia’s Technology Transfer Initiative Fellowship Committee for funding. That submission being successful, we were fortunate to have a budget, the resources of the Digital Media Lab, and the counsel and advice of Anne Ingram, Michael Tuite, and of our fellow Fellows. It was during this year that the project was able to make significant progress. A number of student workers helped on this project during the years 2002–2004, and we are grateful to all of them: Arshiya Singh, Saurabh Sancheti, Siddharth Bhargava, and Bhavani Arabandi, the last of whom has been the sole worker on this project for the past six months to a year and has put in full time work on it.

The program on which this project runs is SourceCat, programmed by Anne Ingram. Without her program and constant advice throughout the life of this project, we would have gotten nowhere.

From the inception of the project we have been concerned with copyright issues. Permission to use the English translations of the story were readily and graciously given by the two translators Kathryn Hansen and Usha Nilsson. We are very grateful for their cooperation. To use the original short story we have received permission, for a fee, from Reṇu’s son Padmapārāg Rāy ‘Venu’, the copyright holder of Rajkamal Prakashan’s Reṇu racanāvali. The Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, gave us its permission to use their transcript and glossary.

That only leaves, then, permission to use the film, which I had purchased in videotape form from Berkeley’s Center. (The University of Virginia’s library also has a videotape of this film, purchased before I came to the University.) First, I contacted the Director of the Center, Steven M. Poulos. He wrote by email that no one involved in that project had any connection any longer with the University of California. I then contacted David Magier and Satendra Khanna, who had both worked on that project. Both were unsuccessful in locating the film’s copyright holder. Through the auspices of the Hindi poet and writer Uday Prakash I have found out that the copyright holder of the film is Shankar Shailendra’s son Shailey Shailendra. I have written him and am waiting for his response.

Furthermore, this site resides on a secure server at the University of Virginia, and it is password protected. It is not for the general use of the public. It is for educational use only.

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2The Third Vow and Other Stories, Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1986.
3Hindi Stories: a dual language reader for area and advanced students, Madison, Wisconsin: South Asia Language and Area Center, 1975.