

PĀLĪ, DHANYĀ AND CĀRUKESĪ

(Three of the earliest mentioned Kṛṣṇa's sweethearts)

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In the later Kṛṣṇa-bhakti tradition, we increasingly come across the names of *gopis* like Viśākhā, Lalitā, Candrāvalī and several more, some of whom were also Kṛṣṇa's favourites besides Rādhā. In the late puranic literature represented by the considerably later sections of the works like the *Padma-purāṇa*, and the *Garga-saṁhitā*, the name-list has been considerably extended. The problem is to locate and date the beginning of the tradition of naming Rādhā's companions who occasionally and intermittently shared Kṛṣṇa's loving attention, and as such started figuring in the erotic and religious poetry. Abandoning for the moment Viśākhā and Candrāvalī, who also seem to be among the names to appear early in literature, I present here the information I could gather about three *gopis*, each of whom figures in poetry as Rādhā's rival. The sources are not later (some may be even earlier) than the 9th-10th century A. D. The names of the three *gopis* were Pālī, Dhanyā and Cārukeśī. Different poets have described Kṛṣṇa as enjoying in the company of one of them, in temporary disregard of Rādhā.

Pālī, Pālikā/Pālītā, Pālitaḥ

The earliest milkmaid known from the poetic tradition as Rādhā's rival for Kṛṣṇa's love is variously called Pālī, Pālikā/Pālītā (Pk. Pāliyā) or Pālitaḥ. From the references or citations made by four writers we gather that several poetic works in Apabhraṁśa, Prakrit and Sanskrit, assignable roughly to the period between the eighth and tenth century A. D., contained episodes involving Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and Pālī.

The sources of this information are discussed below :

1. Govinda's Apabhraṁśa poem on Kṛṣṇa-carita (Not later than the latter half of the 9th century A. D.).

Several verses from this lost work are cited by Svayambhū (latter half of the 9th cent.) in his *Svayambhūcchandas* (SC.). The citation given under SC. IV 11 as an illustration of the Bahurūpā variety of the Apabhraṁśa metre called Mātrā is as follows :—

देइ पाली थणहं पम्भारें
तोडेप्पिणु णलिणिल्लु, हरि-विओअ-सतावें तत्ती ।
फलु अणोहिं पावि(य)उ, करउ दइउ जं किपि रुच्चइ ॥

‘Pālī, burning with pain due to separation from Hari, plucks a lotus leaf and places it on the slope of her breasts. The poor fool (?) got her due ! Let the fate (now) do whatever it chases to.’

Like Velankar, I also earlier interpreted *Pālī* as *gopālikā* i. e. a *gopī* in general. But in the light of the occurrences noted below, I now take it to be a personal name. We must note that another verse from the same poem (SC. IV 10.2) describes Rādhā as Hari’s most favourite Gopī and several other verses of Govinda (SC. IV 9.1., 9.3, 9.4) depict the mood of a love-lorn girl.¹

2. Bhejjala’s *Rādhā-vipralambha* (prior to the 11th cent. A. D.).

Rāsakāṅka was one of the types of *uparūpakas* described, discussed or referred to by several Sanskrit dramaturgists and other writers. Bhoja and Abhinavagupta knew of an actual instance of *Rāsakāṅka*, namely the *Rādhā-vipralambha*, composed by Bhejjala.² They refer to a few incidents and characters in that dramatic work and also give a few citations from it. Besides Kṛṣṇa as the hero, Candrāyana as the Vidūṣaka and Rādhā as the heroine, the play had one more female character named Pālitakā, who was one of Kṛṣṇa’s paramours and Rādhā’s rival. Kṛṣṇa is depicted as once favouring Pālitakā on a moon-lit night, which makes the pining Rādhā go out in search of Kṛṣṇa.³ Abhinavagupta, too, mentions Pālitakā.

Jayavallabha’s anthology of Prakrit *subhāṣitas* has sixteen verses in its section on Kṛṣṇa (vv. 590-605), which are pertinent to our purpose, because there are several references to ‘Kṛṣṇa’s other sweethearts besides Rādhā, The very first verse in that section is as follows :

“कुसलं राहे.” “सुहृदो त्वि कंस” “कंसो कहि !” “कहि राहा !”

इय बालियाइ भणिण विलक्खहसिरं हरिं नमह.

(*Vajjāllaga* 590).

Patwardhan thus translates it :

‘Oh Rādhā, is it all right, with you ?

‘O Kāmsa, are you happy ?’ ‘Where is Kāmsa ?’

‘Where is Rādhā (either) ?’ When the young damsel had said thus, Hari (Kṛṣṇa) smiled with embarrassment. Pay your homage to him !’

The text reads बालियाइ (Sk. बालिकया) in the second line of the verse, and Ratneśvara’s Sanskrit commentary explains the word as कयाचन and काचन गोपबालिका.

I think, however, the बालियाइ was not the original, genuine reading. Through scribal error or misunderstanding the original पालियाइ was changed to बालियाइ. In that case this becomes a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and his particular paramour named Pālikā, and not between Kṛṣṇa and some unspecified Gopī.

This view finds support from the Sanskrit version or translation of the above Gāthā cited in Bhoja’s *Sarasvatikanṭhābharaṇa* (SK.), discussed hereunder.

4. While treating the figure of sound called Vākovākya, Bhoja has cited in SK. the following verse as an illustration of Naimittiki Vaiyātyokti, which is one of the several sub-varieties of the Vākovākya :

कुशलं राघे ? सुखितो सि कंस ? कंसः क्व नु ? क्व नु सा राधा ? ।
इति पारी-प्रतिवचनैर्विलक्ष-हासौ हरिर्जयति ॥

(Under सरस्वतीकण्ठाभरण, 2, 132)

All the editions of SK. read पारी in the second line. But पारी 'milking pot' cannot fit here. Obviously it is a corruption of पाली. Accordingly the बालियाए in the above-cited *Vajjālagga* verse is to be emended as पालियाए.

In this context it is also significant that the verse राघामोहन मन्दिरादुपगतश्चन्द्रावली-मूचिवान् etc. which is found in some of the Northern mss. of Bilvamaṅgala's *Kṛṣṇakarmāmṛta* and which is just an elaboration of the *Vajjālagga* verse, has Candrāvalī (instead of Pāli), and not a certain (nameless) *gopī* as one of the interlocutors.

5. An anonymous verse cited by Bhoja in the *Śṛṅgārāprakāśa* (first half of the 11th cent. A. D.)

As an illustration of the type of Nāyaka who is Dhīralalita, Sādhāraṇa, Śaṭha and Uttama, Bhoja has cited in the *Śṛṅgārāprakāśa* the following verse :

निर्मग्नेन मयाऽम्भसि स्मस्मरात् पाली समालिङ्गिता
केनालीकमिदं तवाधकथितं राघे मुधा ताम्यसि ।
इत्युत्सवन्-परम्परासु शयनै श्रुत्वा गिरं शाङ्गिणः
सव्याजं शिथिलीकृतः कमलया कण्ठग्रहः पातु वः ॥

(ŚP., p. 600)

“Who give you today the false report that while diving in water, I fired by passion, gave an embrace to Pāli? Rādhā, you are unnecessarily distressed” :—Hearing in the bed these words uttered by Śārṅgin in sleep, Kamalā meaningfully loosened her clasp on his neck. May that protect you’.

In this instance too the rivalry between Rādhā and Pāli is clearly explicit.

Dhanyā, Dhanikā

1. In three of the four verses in the Kaṇha-vajjā (Kṛṣṇa-paryāya) of the *Vajjālagga* which relate to Kṛṣṇa's sweetheart called Viśākhā,⁴ the word *visāhiyā*, a diminutive form of *visāhā* (Sk. *Viśākhā*) is used with *double intenfre*. One of these verses is as follows :

किसिओ-सि कीस केसव ? कि न कओ धन्न-संगहो मूढ ? ।
कत्तो मण-परिओसो विसाहियं भुंजमाणस्स ? ॥

(*Vajjālagga*, 600)

‘Oh Keśava, why have you become emaciated ? O fool, why did you not store food-grains? How can one get mental satisfaction, feeding himself (just) on whatever he obtains ? (or, on what is highly poisonous ?)’. Alternatively, ‘O fool, why did you not stick to Dhanyā ? Is it ever possible for one enjoying himself in the company of Viśākhā to get real satisfaction ?’ Pk. *dhanna* (Sk. *dhanyā*) is understood by Patwardhan as ‘beautiful women’. But like Viśākhā, Dhanyā here is the personal name of a particular *gopī* who once enjoyed Kṛṣṇa’s favour. This interpretation finds support from two verses cited in the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*.

2. The following verse is cited twice in the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*. Once it is cited as an illustration of Samākhyābhidhanikī Vyapekṣā wherein the signification of a designation is brought out by means of a sentence. At another place it is cited as an illustration of a designation that is construed meaningfully to convey the relationship of love :

सच्चं घण्णा घण्णा, जा तइया केसवेण गिरि-धरणे ।

गुरु-भार-वावडेण वि, उज्जुअ-अच्छं चिरं दिट्ठा ॥

Śṛṅgāraprakāśa, pp. 269, 888

‘Dhanyā is indeed *dhanyā* (blessed), who was looked at directly and lingeringly by Keśava, even when he was weighed down with a heavy load due to holding the mountain (i. e. Govardhana) aloft’.

3. The following verse is cited by Bhoja as an illustration of the type of Nāyaka who is Dhīralalita, Sādhāraṇa and Madhyama.

दूरे गोकुलनाथ गौकुलमितस्संचार-शून्या दिश-

स्त्यक्त्वा मां धनिकादयो पि हि गता भारतिखेदालसाः ।

विस्तीर्णा वनराजिकेयमपरा जाता पुरो निर्गमात्

खिन्नाऽस्मि प्रतिपालयेत्यभिहितो गोप्या हरिः पातु वः ॥

(ŚP., p. 611)

‘Oh Lord of Gokula, Gokula is far away from here. Dhanikā and other (companions), feeling exhausted and languid under their load have gone away already, leaving me alone. This vast woodland has become strange to me (as it were), before I can get out of it (?) and I am (extremely) tired. Please protect me. May Hari, addressed thus by the Gopī, protect you’.

Here Dhanikā is the name of one of the *gopīs*. It is quite close to *Dhanṇā* (Sk. *Dhanyā*) of the *Vajjālagga* verse.

Cārukeśī

As an illustration of the Dhīroddhatāsādhāraṇa-dhṛṣṭa type of hero, Bhoja has cited in ŚP. the following verse.

“शौरे कस्माद् विघटसै दशनपदमिदं चारुकेश्याहितं ते”
 चारुत्वं कीदृगस्य श्रित-पशु-वपुषा केशिना निर्मितस्य ?” ।
 “नैवं धृष्ट ब्रवीमि ब्रजयुवतिमहं” “बाढमेष ब्रजामी—”
 त्वेवं गोप्याज्वताद् वः क्ष(कं ?)पट-धरण-प्रीणितः कैटभारिः ॥

(ŚP. p. 602)

‘O Śauri, why do you display this tooth-mark impressed on you (i.e. on your lip) by Cārukeśi (Cārukeśi-āhitam)’ ?

‘How can it be beautiful (cāru), produced as it is by Keśin (keśi), who had assumed the bodily form of a beast ?’

‘You brazenly unfaithful ! I don’t mean that. I am talking of the milkmaid (vraja.yuvatim)’.

‘Very well, here I am wooing (vrajāmi) a young girl’.

May the enemy of Kaiṭabha, thus resorting to chicanery, and delighted by the milkmaid (?) protect you’.

The Gopī of this dialogue is possibly Rādhā, who creates a scene with Kṛṣṇa, who has just returned after spending a night with Cārukeśi. Kṛṣṇa tries to save himself by resorting to Śleṣa on the words Cārukeśyāhitam and vrajayuvatim used by Rādhā. We can compare with this the Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta verse (rādhā-mohan-mandirād etc.) referred to above.

A closely similar repessee between Kṛṣṇa and one of his sweethearts is instanced by the verse vāsaḥ samprati keśava kvabhavato etc. cited on p. 607 cf ŚP.).

References

- Bhoja : *Sarasvatikanṭhābharaṇa*, ed. K. Mishra, 1976. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, ed. G. R. Josyer, 1955.
 Bilvamaṅgala : *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta*, ed. F. Wilson, 1975.
 Jayavallabha : *Vajjālagga*, ed. M. V. PatTardhan, 1969.
 V. Raghavan : *Bhoja’s Śṛṅgaraprakāśa*, 1963.
 Svayambhū : *Svayambhūcchanda*, ed. by H. D. Velankar, 1962.

Footnotes

1. I have slightly emended Velankar’s text orthographically, and my translation differs from his in several points.
2. See V. Raghavan, *Bhojas Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, (1963), pp. 567, 887-891, where the references and citations are noted and their implications are fully brought out. G. R. Josyer’s edition of the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* silently omits the Prakrit passage given by Raghavan.

3. An anonymous verse given in Jayavallabha's *Vajjālagga* (possibly about the 10th cent. A. D.).
3. Raghavan, *ibid.*, p. 890 : कृतापराधमपि चन्द्रातपहृता प्रियममभिससार राधा, यत्र पालितका गता ।
(= *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, text, p. 491, ll. 4-5).
4. These are the earliest known verses referring to Viśākhā, who is known in the Kṛṣṇa-carita tradition as one of the *gopīs*, which are mentioned as Kṛṣṇa's favourites and Rādhāś friends and rivals.
The Pātāla-khaṇḍa of the *Padma-purāṇa* (ch. 70, vv. 4-7) gives the following list (which includes Dhanyā) of the light main beloveds of Kṛṣṇa : Rādhikā, Lalitā, Syāmalā, Dhanyā, Haripriyā Viśākhā, Podmā and Candrāvati