PĀLĪ, DHANYĀ AND ČĀRUKEŚĪ

(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, Candrāvali 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-samhitā, 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 Candrāvali, 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 Čārukeśī. Different poets have described Kṛṣṇa as enjoying in the company of one of them, in temporary disregard of Rādhā.

Pālī, Pālikā/Pālitā, Pālitakā

The earliest milkmaid known from the poetic tradition as Rādhā’s rival for Kṛṣṇa’s love is variously called Pālī, Pālikā/Pālitā (P. Pāliyā) or Pālitakā. From the references or citations made by four writers we gather that several poetic works in Apabhraṃṣa, 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 Apabhraṃṣa 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 Svayambhūcchedandas (SC.). The citation given under SC. IV 11 as an illustration of the Bahurūpā variety of the Apabhraṃṣa metre called Mātrā is as follows:—

देव पाली श्रण्ण परमोऽरेषं
तोडेपिण्यु पलिङ्गदत्रु, हरि-विलोक्य-सलावः ततः।
फलु अण्तोऽहं पावि(न)उ, करुद ददु जे किंपि रुच्चः॥
'Pāli, 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 chooses to.'

Like Velankar, I also earlier interpreted Pāli as gopālikā i.e. a gopi 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 Gopi 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.).

Rāṣakāṅka was one of the types of uparupakas described, discussed or referred to by several Sanskrit dramaturgists and other writers. Bhoja and Abhinavagupta knew of an actual instance of Rāṣakāṅka, 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, Candrāyaṇa 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: " "सुहिली ति कंसः" "कंसो काहि!" "काहि राहा!"

इय बालियाइ भणिए विलक्षाहृतिरं हरि नमह.

(Vajjallaga 590).

Patwardhan thus translates it:

‘Oh Rādhā, is it all right, with you?
‘O Kaṁsa, are you happy?’ ‘Where is Kaṁsa?’

‘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. बालिक्या) in the second line of the verse, and Ratneśvara’s Sanskrit commentary explains the word as कामाचन and काचन गोपालिका.

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 Gopi.

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

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

कुशलं राधे छुटितो सि कंस ? कंस: कब नु ? कब नु सा राशा ? ।
इति पारी-प्रतिवचनलिखिक-हस्ति हरिजीभुति ॥

(Under सरस्वतीकण्ठभारण, 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 राधामोहन मन्दिरांदुत्तमतमालो-मूलिब्वादु etc. which is found in some of the Northern mss. of Bilvamaṅgala’s Kṛṣṇakarṇāṃrī 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 Śīṅgāraprakāśa (first half of the 11th cent. A. D.)

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

निर्मलेन मयामभस समयमरात पाली समालिष्ठता
केनालीकसिदं तवाकोकतं राधे मृगा तामवति ।
इत्युत्तम-परस्परा-हकुमे भूले विरं शालिन्यं:
सब्याज शिलितकृत: कमलया कषट्रह: पातु व: ॥

(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 Śārūgin 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 viśāhiyā, a diminutive form of viśāhā (Sk. Viśākhā) is used with double intensific. One of these verses is as follows:

किसिमो-सि कोष कंस से त कि न कमो धन-संगमो गौद ? ।
कलो मण-परिलो विसाहियं शुजमाणतस ? ॥

(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 gopi 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 Samākhya-bhidhanikī 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:

सच्च धण्या धण्या, जा तद्या केसवेण गिरि-बरणे।
पुर-भार-वाहवेण वि, उन्जुआ-चच्छ चिरं दिद्धाः।
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 Dhiralalita, Sādhāraṇa and Madhyama.

दूरे गोकुलनाथ गौकुलितसंज्ञार-शूर्या दिश-स्वकृत्वां मान विनिकाद्वयो विं प्रह्लाद भारातिलिखिताः।
विस्तीर्णं वनराजितेमपरा ज्ञाता पूरी निर्माता विन्दुक्तिम विद्वेद्यचिह्नतिम गोप्य वरं विह वतु मः।
(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 Gopi, protect you'.

Here Dhanikā is the name of one of the gopis. It is quite close to Dhaṇṇā (Sk. Dhanyā) of the Vaijñālagga verse.

Cārueṣi

As an illustration of the Dhirooddhatāsādhāraṇa-dhṛṣṭa type of hero, Bhoja has cited in ŚP. the following verse.
“शारी रक्तमाद्र दिनभारसनिं व चारकेश्वाहितं ते”
वाहनलं कीडुँगस्य धिितमशेषायुभया केवलिता नरिवितस्य?
“नैवेद्य पुष्पवैशी म्रजयुष्टिज्ञाति” “बाह्यने व्रजामी—”
लिख्यं गोर्याज्यातार्क: व: श(के) पत: पर्याप्त्यिणितं केत्तान्ति:।

(ŚP. p. 602)

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

‘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 Kaitabha, thus resorting to chicanery, and delighted by the milkmaid (?) protect you’.

The Gopi 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 Ślesa on the words Cārukeśvāhitam and vrajayuvatim used by Rādhā. We can compare with this the Kṛṣṇakarṇamṛtāa verse (rādhā-mohan-mandirād etc.) referred to above.

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

References


V. Raghavan : Bhoja’s Śrīṅgaraprakāśa, 1963.


Footnotes

1. I have slightly emended Velankar’s text orthographically, and my translation differs from his in several points.

2. See V. Raghavan, Bhojas Śrīṅgāraprakāśa, (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 Śrīṅgāraprakāśa 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: कुताप्राध्रिष्ठिपति जन्मातपहरता प्रियवमविस्तारराधा, यत्र पालितका गता।

(=Śṛṅgāraprakāśa, text, p. 491, 11. 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 Rādhā’s 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, Śyāmalā, Dhanyā, Haripriyā Viśākhā, Podmā and Candravati.