Courtly and Religious communities as Centres of Literary Activity in Eighteenth-Century India: Anandghan’s Contacts with the princely court of Kishangarh-Rupnagar and with the Maṭh of the Nimbārka Sampradāy in Salemabad

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August 4, 2006

Some of the most fascinating works of old Hindi poetry originate from the princely states of Rajasthan, which because of its long tradition of patronage was one of the most important regions for literature during the Mughal era. Reconstructing the literary life of specific courts in Rajasthan is, however, a challenging task. In spite of the large amount of academic research on the history and culture of the region, material about the literary life of individual courts is uneven. A lot of research has been done on great court poets like Bihari or Matiram but far from being acquainted with the major authors of all the courts, today we are not even in a position to say which languages were used for literature in a particular court at a certain period. Many centres are famous for patronising Braj, Sanskrit or Urdu poets but were all these languages present in each court? Did they have specific roles or hierarchy? In what measure did literature in one language influence the other?

Hindi high literature of the eighteenth century was chiefly the literature of patronage. Literary activity was, therefore, centred on individuals or institutions that were able to patronise it. The secular centres were mainly the royal and princely courts, while the religious centres were the monasteries1 of the various sects. It will be interesting to ascertain to what extent political and other interaction between these two types of centre influenced literature. We are going to see in the example of an individual poet that there was a subtle interplay between different languages and also between courts and monasteries. There was, however, a line that could not be transgressed and the finest poet of his time, Anandghan, who violated this convention, had to pay a high price.

∗I am indebted to Prof. Govind Sharma for his help in interpreting the Braj texts, to Śrījī Mahārāj in Salemabad for his hospitality as well as to Mr. Peter Diggle for his comments.

1I am using the word monastery in a broad sense to denote any institution (maṭh, pīṭh, āśram etc.) where ascetics live together.
In my Hindi book सान्हेक को मारांग I argued that Anandghan had lived in the Nimbārki monastery in Salemabad and was in all probability in contact with the princely court of Kishangarh-Rupnagar. In this paper I am going to consider the cultural atmosphere of these centres of learning within the Kishangarh state and discuss Anadghan’s relationship with them.

Kishangarh-Rupnagar

The princely state of Kishangarh was founded in 1609 by Maharaja Kiśan Singh Rāthor (r. 1609–1615), the younger son of Udaipur Singh of Jodhpur who had been sent to the Mughal court and made friends with prince Salim, the later Jahangīr (r. 1605–1627). His grandson Rūp Singh (r. 1643–1658) founded the town of Rupnagar in 1648 and moved his court there. The golden period of the state was during the reigns of Mān Singh (r. 1658–1706) and his successor, Rāj Singh (r. 1706–1748). Mān Singh’s family had also marital bonds with Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707). Both he and his son were frequent visitors to Delhi, which must have left a definite mark on their cultural tastes.

Rāj Singh’s son, Sāvant Singh ‘Nāgaridas’ was made yuvārāj ‘prince regent’, successor to the throne already in 1725. The state was too small and barren to take part in the many struggles that characterised the eighteenth century. It also had immunity from the payment of tribute to the Mughals and to the Marathas alike. So this peaceful atmosphere allowed Nāgaridas to be involved more in his aesthetic pursuits than in the affairs of the state. This must be one of the principal reasons why after the death of Rāj Singh, Nāgaridas’s younger brother Bahādur Singh was successful in taking power in Kishangarh. Sāvant Singh did not return to Kishangarh until 1757 when he abdicated in favour of his son, Sādār Singh (r. 1757–1767) and the state was divided: Sādār Singh ruled the north of the country from Rupnagar and Bahādur Singh the south from Kishangarh. The state was united again when Sādār Singh died without offspring. Since the time of Bahādur Singh the capital has become Kishangarh again.

2Names that have a long established spelling in English will be spelt according to it (thus Singh instead of Simha). The inherent a in Hindi words will not be dropped in Braj quotations or in names with a prominent Sanskrit component. Thus the name Nāgaridas will be written as Nāgaridas and Pārurām as Pārurām etc. It may also be retained after clusters of consonants as in Nandadas.

3Sharma (1990:83).

4According to Celer (1973:9) Mān Singh gave his daughter, Cārumati, in marriage to Aurangzeb. Haidar (1995:26) also examines this question that embarrassed later Hindu chroniclers. According to her Cārumati was not the daughter but the elder sister of Mān Singh and she was married to Maharāṇa Rāj Singh of Udaipur while a younger sister was married to Aurangzeb’s son Prince Mu’azzam.


6Malleson (1875:89).
Contact with the Mughals

The name of Kishangarh has acquired world-fame because of the Kishangarh school of painting. Like most Rajasthani court painting this school combines indigenous elements with the achievements of the Mughal miniature. This combination was facilitated by the contacts of the Kishangarh court with the Mughals in Delhi. These contacts were both political and cultural. The Kishangarh rulers, like the other maharajas, not only visited the imperial capital frequently but also invited artists from Delhi to their courts.

One of the two most famous painters, Bhavânidas, came to Kishangarh in 1719 straight from the Mughal capital. The other one, Nihal Cand, also had connections with Delhi, since his great-grandfather, a minister under Maharaja Mân Singh (1658–1706), came from there. Some other painters, like Amar Cand, were trained in Delhi. It was, however, not only the painters who were responsible for the spread of the Mughal taste. As has been mentioned members of the ruling family used to visit the Mughal court and their ideas were influenced by its culture. As Navina Haidar wrote:

In the forty years of his reign, Raj Singh spent a considerable amount of time at Delhi, as did his son, Savant Singh. As with many of the Rajput princes from the early seventeenth century onwards, the time spent in Delhi by Raj Singh and Savant Singh must have had a strong effect on their artistic sensibilities, as they would probably have seen Mughal paintings in the reigns of Farrukh Siyar and Muhammad Shah, both of whom were active patrons. Certain stylistic and thematic developments at the Delhi court were thus reflected at Kishangarh...

Apart from the Delhi artists and the regular visits to the Mughal court the use of Persian as one of the languages of diplomacy and administration in Rajasthan also helped to infiltrate Mughal culture into the Kishangarh court. Even some works in Persian were composed at such courts as Jaipur and Jodhpur. For example, in 1728 Maharaja Savâî Jai Singh and his team of astrologers compiled for the Mughal ruler Muhammad Šah (r. 1719–1748) the Ži j-i-Jadîd-i-Muhammad Šâh, one of the most important astronomical works of their times. The Jodhpur epistolographer Munshi Madhû Râm (died 1732) wrote in 1708 the İn sâ'i Mâdhâ Râm, a guide-book for the instruction of young students.

At the same time the presence of Muslim musicians might also have contributed to the complexity of the court culture. A famous miniature of the Kishangarh court from around 1760–66 shows among several courtiers the

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7Randhawa and Randhawa 1980. (The authors refer to Faiyaz Ali Khan but do not give a precise reference.)
13Published in Dickinson and Khandalavala (1959:38–9).
Delhi musicians Ustad Yar Muhammad and Ustad Nur Muhammad together with singers Amin Khan, Kiisanram and Pokhraj. Mir Muhammad Umair, a dignity from the Ajmer dargah, is also portrayed. Probably several Muslim religious authorities were present in the state and influenced the development of ideas. Rupnagar, for example, was also the seat of a Sufi saint known as Malang Sah in the eighteenth century. According to legend the rulers used to ask his advice before military enterprises.14

There were courts where Persian poetry was appreciated15, and Braj authors like Nagari das experimented also with Urdu, or rather Rekhta (language) interspersed (with Persian and Arabic words)16, as it was called at that time. Themes of Persian poetry like that of the love of Laila and Majnun also appeared both in painting17 and in poetry.18 The courts, however, did not follow entirely what was seen in the imperial centre. Rajasthani court culture is a mixture of both Muslim and local Hindu elements. In spite of the works mentioned above it seems that comparatively little genuine Persian literature was produced in the courts of Rajasthan. The dominant literary languages were Braj, Rajasthani and Sanskrit.19

Poets at the court

Works on Kishangarh miniatures do not fail to mention that the most important connoisseur patron, Nagari das, was also a renowned poet. In fact, though he tried his hand at painting20, it is rather poetry that constituted his artistic production. It is also clear that he was not the only poet in Kishangarh-Rupnagar. In fact poetry as well as music and dance played a prominent role in the life of the courts of contemporary Rajasthan.

The high position that poetry enjoyed can be glimpsed from the fact that in many courts poets were heavily rewarded21 and that poetry was part of the daily routine of the rulers. The 19th century poet Navin for example put into verse what he received for the composition of his Raagataanga.

रीढ़ चन्द्र महराज वर गुन निधि मृति काम।
दीने अब निः मोज में साज बाज भव्य भाम॥ 26॥

16Nagari das's Rekhta is Urdu with some Braj features. His works in Rekhta are the collection of songs called Rekhta (Gupta 1965 I: 498-512) and the Isk-caman (Gupta 1965 II:48–52) written in dohas.
19For a survey of Rajasthani Court literature in these languages in the 18th century see Kathuria (1987:196–215).
21Some documents of payment of land and money to Vrind are published in Celer (1973:337–40).
The excellent and intelligent king, who is a treasury of virtues and the (living) form of the God of Love, was pleased and in his delight gave me materials, riches and abode. He gave clothes, gave ornaments and gave big elephants. He gave villages when he heard the Raṅgataraṅga (written) for his name.

Similarly, it can be supposed that with small variations daily routine must have been the same in all the courts in the neighbouring Rajput states. The Pratāp prakās, a work about Maharaja Pratāp Singh of Jaipur (r. 1778–1803), describes the daily routine of the Prince. Although it has a tendency to idealise, this description shows how important a place arts occupied in the life of the ruler and hence in the court. According to the Pratāp prakās,

The minstrels (bandījan) start singing in praise of the family at four gharī at night. The king, having heard it, rises in the period shortly before dawn (brahmāmuhūrtta). He meditates on his guru and after having a durśan of a cow and performing chāyadān-ceremony places his foot on the earth. Then he sits on a stool studded with jewels and washes his mouth. The petitioners submit their appeals and the artistes give performance to the devotional songs composed by him in Vibhāsa and Bhairavi (rāginīs). He then attends to his daily morning duties. Arrangements for his bath are made. . . Having taken his bath, he attends to the Pancāyaṭan worship with Vedic hymns. . . Then he distributes the regular daily gifts among Brahmins and pandits (nityādān). . . [He dresses himself] and starts for Śrī Govindadev’s temple. Chiefs from different places, his kinsmen, tāzīm and khascauki nobles (sardārs), scholars (pandits), poets (kabīsvar) and bards (bhāt and cāran) stand in rows to pay respect and offer blessings to the king who sets out seated in a hand-cart. . . [Then he visits the department of elephants where an elephant fight is arranged and visits the royal stables and retires to his palace where he takes rest, has lunch and then he gives a public audience where] he attends to state business and petitions submitted by representatives of different states. He then turns to the artists (gunjājan). The scholars have their discussions on the six schools of philosophy, the poets recite their enological poems (kabisevar jas parhai), the bards recite the glory of the family (bhāt, cāran biruda parhai), the musicians (kalavat) perform the six rāgas and thirty rāginīs. [After the public audience he retires again for three hours and then practices archery, takes a bath; changes his dress, plays chess and attends a performance of dance.] The artists (gunjājan) come and after salutation they set their instruments. . . and the dancers (nāṭa) begin

22Quoted in Nagendra (1964:411)
to show their feats. . . Thus having pleased the king with their performances they receive heavy rewards. The programme ends about midnight.\(^{23}\)

This passage may give a picture of the life in the court with different groups of artist such as bandijan, kabishar, bhāt, cāraṇ, gauṣijan and nāṭvā. Its idealising tendency, however, does not let us show the complexity of poetry enjoyed at the court. As the editor of the text noted the Pratāp prakās does not mention certain important aspects of Pratāp Singh such as he himself being an excellent poet and a pioneer in Rekhtā poetry.\(^{24}\) From this passage it seems that poetry either served as a vehicle of religious thought or of praise of the family or simply as text for the songs. The same idealising tendency may account for the fact that the text does not seem to give any place to non political secular poetry, namely riti-poetry that was the most popular literature at that time.

One of our main interests in this article is the poetic atmosphere in Kishangarh-Rupnagar. How much of it can be reconstructed? Apart from Nāgaridās who were the major poets?

Some of the most famous poets of the court belonged to the family of the ruler. This certainly testifies to the deep interest in poetry of the rulers but also suggests that members of the royal family received better recognition and probably more material support for spreading their manuscripts than others. Already Maharaja Rūp Singh has some stray devotional pads to his credit.\(^{25}\) Haidar claims that Mān Singh wrote Sampradāy Kalpadrum, a work on the genealogy of the gurus of the Puṣṭimārga.\(^{26}\) His successor, Rāj Singh is the author of longer works such as Subahuvilās and Rukminī vivāh caritra as well as of some stray pads.\(^{27}\) He married twice and his second wife, Bāṅkāvati (Brajdāsi) produced a complete Braj translation of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which is today called the Brajāsī Bhāgavata. As late as 1734 Queen Bāṅkāvati had a daughter who was called Sundar Kumvāri. Princess Sundar Kumvāri, author of twelve poetic works on bhakti themes\(^{28}\), was a poetess whose style, according to Kiśorīlāl Gupta\(^{29}\), is close to that of Anandghan and of Nāgaridās. The overwhelming majority of her poetic output consists in longer poems on bhakti themes, but she also wrote some muktaks, independent quatrains, that can be interpreted as expressions of both mundane and divine love. The following savaiyās are

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\(^{23}\)Based on passages from Bahura (1983 [Hindi section]:5–12) and on their translation by Bahura (1983 [English section]:3–7).

\(^{24}\)Bahura (1983 [English section]:15).

\(^{25}\)Two songs are quoted in Gupta (1965 I:28-29). Haidar (1995:24) also quoted and translated a pad, which she had taken from Brajvallabhaśaraṇ (1966:10).

\(^{26}\)Haidar (1995:12). However, her reference to Gupta (1965 I:30) is incorrect.

\(^{27}\)Gupta (1965 I:29–30). Brajvallabhaśaraṇ (1966:17), seems to know about more works and gives the list as Sukh Samīp, Bāhuvilās, Rukminī haran, Rāpançāk kathā varṣaṇ and Vīśṇubāṇa. He also mentions a manuscript of Rājaśī ḍhajī kī vāni in the Sarasvatī Bhanḍār of Kishangarh which contains 176 folios (note 3).

\(^{28}\)For a list of her works see Brajvallabhaśaraṇ (1966:17) and Gupta (1965 I:30). Her earliest dated composition was from 1760 and the last work from 1803. Her works have been edited by Brajvallabhaśaraṇ (1983–84).

\(^{29}\)Gupta (1965 I:30).
cries of an abandoned beloved, which in their passionate description of feelings, instead of the outer signs of the sentiments, as was customary, remind one of Anandghan’s poems.

"You have made me drink the liquor of your sweetness and brought intense longing into my covetous eyes. Like a miracle with the taste of happiness you aroused my desire and confidence and increased my joy. You tantalized me, bewildered me and disappeared; alas, even a moment passes like an aeon. I have learnt the customs of the cruel ones but face to face with delight there is no remorse."^{31}

"My ears are affected as soon as my mind startles that somebody has taken his name. My breath keeps clutching at confidence out of hope when I remember that trust in love. Again and again you pleased me with contentment and pleasure but now by giving dryness it is as if you have smashed and abandoned your affection. Either one bears it or not but one wants to talk about that treacherous one."^{32}

She also tried her hand at writing in Rekhta. The choice of this style also brings the poem closer to the sentiments of one-sided love as expressed in Persian and Urdu ghazals,
Having drunk your cup, oh Krishna, alas, my eyes became intoxicated; its exhilaration spread in my each and every pore.

Having subjugated my mind you have splendidly bound it with the strap of your tresses. In my unconsciousness I did not know that my sweetheart would thus beguile me.

By your behaving this way and that way unbearable disaster befell me; Oh, because of this theft of heart I have to live this doomsday.

Nothing remains to say now, I have to forbear the advice of all — It is my eyes that earned this turn of affection for the worse.

Thousands of poems were also written by Nāgaridās both in Kishangarh and in Vrindaban and his beloved, Bāni Thāni, wrote bhakti-poetry under the pen-name 'Rasik Bihārī'. The following song is about Holī, the festival of colours in the month of Phalgun. The reference of the first line to the grove palace evokes the atmosphere of Kishangarh art.

Today it is the merriment of the festival of colours in the grove palace:
In (this) sport of Phalgun the bridegroom and the bride are tying the (marriage) knot.
Delighted, the women throw red powder and sing mocking songs on both sides.
The bridegroom is the beautiful connoisseur Krishna and the bride is the young Radha.

It is important to note that the poets belonging to the royal family wrote overwhelmingly on devotional themes and produced very little overtly secular poetry. Just as in the miniatures of Nihal Cand, the most celebrated of the Kishangarh painters, secular activities and sentiments were rather projected into the divine plays of Radha and Krishna.

34Bihārīśāraṇ (1930:598) and Brajvallabhaśāraṇ (1983–84 II:94).
35Or ‘It is pity, oh Krishna, to have drunk the cup of your intoxicating eyes (since)...’
36Or ‘would forget me’.
37His earliest dated work is his Manorath majari from 1723.
Comparatively little is known about other poets who lived in the court in the 18th century.\(^{39}\) The most famous of them was Vṛnd\(^{40}\) (1643–1723), who before settling in Kishangarh lived in the court of Aurangzeb as a tutor or guardian of the emperor’s grandson, prince Azim-uss-Sān. Maharaja Mān Singh seems to have been so much moved by his poetry that he gave him gifts already in Delhi. The poet was finally brought to Kishangarh by Rāj Singh who in return of his support to Bāhādur Sāh in the succession war in 1707 was permitted to take Vṛnd to his court.\(^{41}\) Since that time the poet’s family has become attached to the court of Kishangarh. His son, Vallabh, was in the service of Maharaja Rāj Singh and his grandson, Sanehirām, served Maharaja Bāhādur Singh.\(^{42}\) Vṛnd’s most famous work, the Nīti-satsāī (1704), is not on bhakti themes but on morals. Just as most court poets of his time he wrote chiefly about secular themes.

Another well-known poet is Haricarandās Tripāṭhi (also known as Hari Kavi)\(^{43}\) who lived under the patronage of Bāhādur Singh. His works are not only independent compositions like Subhā-prakās (1757), Kavivallabh and Rāmāyansār but also commentaries on the most celebrated works of the rātikāl: on Bihārī’s Satsāī (1777), on Jasvant Singh’s Bhāṣabhūṣan and on Kesavdās’s Kavipriyā (c. 1778).

The case of ‘Uncle’ Hit Vṛndāvandās illustrates the point that princely courts gave shelter to poets who had strong sectarian affiliation and because of inimical circumstances had to leave their monasteries. Vṛndāvandās was a poet of the Rādhāvallabhā sect, who in 1757, at the time of the massacre in Braj, fled to Farrukhabad\(^{44}\) and then to Bharatpur to the shelter of Maharaja Sūraj Mal (1757–1763)\(^{45}\), later he spent the years 1774–78 in Kishangarh in the court of Bāhādur Singh.\(^{46}\)

Apart from Vṛnd and Haricaranandās Dickinson and Khandalavala\(^{47}\) mentioned the names of Hirālā\(^{48}\), Munshi Kanhirām\(^{49}\), Pannālā\(^{50}\), Vaṣṇav Vijay-

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\(^{39}\) Dickinson and Khandalavala (1959:7); see also Gupta (1965:35).

\(^{40}\) On Vṛṇḍ see Celer (1971) and Celer (1973). He is also quoted by Nāgarādās in manuscript ‘ya’ of his Chaṭṭak kabitta. Gupta (1965:7).


\(^{42}\) Celer (1973:12) and Dīksit (1993:3–5).


\(^{44}\) Harkalā Belī 4 quoted in Bangha (1997:236).


\(^{47}\) Dickinson and Khandalavala (1959:7).

\(^{48}\) Hirālā Sanādhyā is quoted in Śrīnād-Bhāgavat-parāyan-nidhi-prakās 17 and 30. He is different from Hirālā Kāyastha (son of Hemrāj) who lived a century earlier and wrote his Rukminīmāṅgal in 1647.

\(^{49}\) Quoted in Śrīnād-Bhāgavat-parāyan-nidhi-prakās 31.

\(^{50}\) Probably identical with Kalha Pannā quoted in Śrīnād-Bhāgavat-parāyan-nidhi-prakās 29 and 16.
and Dāhvī Vijayrām who were present in Nāgaridās’s court although no source was given for this list. With the exception of stray verses by Munshi Kanhirān found in some manuscripts or quoted by Nāgaridās elsewhere, very little seems to be known about the literary activities of the rest. The best available source about them is a poetic compilation mentioning all these names along with those of Rasik Bihārī (Bāni Thāni), Haricarandās, Purohit Brajīlāl and Bhaṭṭa Brajīnāth. This work is the Śrīmad-Bhāgavat-parāyaṇ-nidhi-prakās compiled and partly written by Nāgaridās in 1742. It contains poems by the above mentioned poets in praise of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Bāni Thāni was present in the court at that time. Brajīnāth Bhaṭṭa, the teacher, vidyāguru, of Bāṅkavatī, Nāgaridās’s step-mother, as well as Haricarandās, who was reported to be in the court of Bahādur Singh in later years, might well have been there in 1742. From their presence we can suppose that the rest were also in the court at that time. This seems to be corroborated by the prose passages between the poems of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavat-parāyaṇ-nidhi-prakās suggesting that the verses were composed for a religious gathering. These lesser known authors, however, were not professional court poets; otherwise there would have been further literary traces. They were probably employed in the court as priests or scribes as their names suggest.

The literary ideals

The literary atmosphere in the court of Kishangarh partly corresponded to what is seen on the Kishangarh miniatures. The Kishangarh-school of painting infused the achievements of Mughal art into the already popular Krishna-bhakti themes. We can observe a development from the overtly secular approach of earlier art as illustrated in Bhavāndās’s miniatures and Vṛnd’s poetry towards an art dressed in religious ideas in Nāgaridās and Nihal Cand. While Bhavāndās and Vṛnd came from Delhi, Nāgaridās and Nihal Cand were born in Kishangarh. In this second phase bhakti gained prominence over overtly secular themes like hunting, court scenes etc.

Two most popular themes of the later phase—the celebration of the feminine ideal and the representation of the love-games of Radha and Krishna in sophisticated royal surroundings—can be abundantly observed also in the poetry.

ipation 18, 32, 33 and 34 as well as in manuscript ‘ya’ of Cūṭak kahitta (GUPTA 1965:7).

52Quoted in manuscript ‘ya’ of Cūṭak kahitta (GUPTA 1965:7) and in Śrīmad-Bhāgavat-parāyaṇ-nidhi-prakās 14, 15 and 28. The kahittas of Vijayrām (?) are also quoted in a manuscript dated from VS1814 (1757AD) [Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur 14437(3)3].

53Cf.Miśra and Miśra (1913:1020).

54Kanhirām’s song Kīra uṭhi bolgo ika . . . is quoted in Pad muktāvalī 142.
Her fine veil of dukula is swinging: she lowers her curved eyes that touch her ears.

My mind, transfixed with her red lips oozing beauty, languished on her eyebrows.

In her gentle smile is Krishna’s (and Någaråda’s) joy and her face is a simile of desires.

As if the God of Love held two lamps for the thread of darkness of her black teeth.\(^{56}\)

The description of the divine couple also gives an excellent occasion to celebrate nature.

Rising and rising the wind moves the creepers and the scent of the blossoms is wafted again and again.

Exhilarated the cuckoos on the trees sing; in the grove Kåma serves the dwelling-place with a plenitude of beauty.

(Någaråda says how) the dark Krishna and Radha shine with joy on a bed; they watch through the branches of the trees if no companion is around.

The two capture the mind and embrace each other with joy—in their limbs the God of Love has grown and in their pleasure love.

How did these two aspects gain prominence in Kishangarh at that time? There were three types of major forces working behind the increased emphasis on the feminine: religious, literary and personal. The religious force is the rise of Radha, Krishna’s beloved, to the status of an independent goddess. She was different from all Hindu goddesses in that for long she had not had a role independent from Krishna. In painting it is not until the eighteenth century that a strong iconographical development of Radha can be seen in India. At

\(^{55}\)Gupta (1965 II:123).

\(^{56}\)The image behind this line is that black antimony was applied to the teeth while gold dots decorated the two front teeth.

\(^{57}\)Gupta (1965 II:93).
Kishangarh the Radha image started to be painted not only as Krishna’s consort but also as a subject in its own right. Among the bhakti sects, however, it was not the Puṣṭimārga, as suggested by some scholars that put Radha in such a high position. Although the Puṣṭimārga recognises Radha as Krishna’s Śakti, divine energy, and thus entitles her to worship in her own right, Vallabhan devotees rather worship Krishna alone or with Radha in a subordinate position.

The emergence of Radha in Kishangarh cannot be examined without taking into the picture the tenets of the other influential sect within the state, the Nimbārka Sampradāy. Since the 16th century Radha has been awarded a prominent place in this sect as one of the four major elements of its theology, Radha, Krishna, Vrindaban and the sakhi, Radha’s female companions. The human being aspires to the position of sakhi and delights in witnessing and serving the love-games of the ever newly wed divine couple. The fact that the devotee perceives himself or herself as a companion of Radha rather than as a male companion of Krishna, a sakha, indicates that in this school Radha has become the focus of attention.

In eighteenth-century Braj literature, however, Radha was given a prominent place sometimes inextricably connected to the secular presentation of woman categorised under different behavioural patterns in love. This genre was called nāyikā-bheda, ‘categories of heroine’. Another popular literary theme was the nakh-śikh-varnan, the description of a heroine from tip to toe.

Experts on the Kishangarh painting do not fail to mention that the most outstanding patron, Nāgarīdās, drew his inspiration not only from religious ideas of the Radha-Krishna theme, but also from his mundane affection to a living woman known as Bānī Thani. Bānī Thani, originally named as Viṣṇupriyā, had been purchased as a slave by Rāj Singh in 1727, at the age of 10. She was taken into the employ of Queen Bānīkāwatī in 1731 where she became an accomplished poet and singer. She also spent some time in Delhi with the queen. Nāgarīdās became enamoured of her probably around 1739 when she returned from Delhi and she became the prince’s mistress. In fact it was Bānī Thani and not his wife who accompanied Nāgarīdās into his self-imposed retirement in Braj. Some scholars went so far as to conjecture that she also provided inspiration for the invention of Kishangarh facial formula. Although this hypothesis can be seriously questioned it must be accepted that Nāgarīdās’s

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58 About the emergence of the Radha-image in miniature painting see Haidar (forthcoming).
60 Only 3 of the eleven chief Vallabhan deity-images have consorts and even these three have Radha in a subordinate position. Cf. Vaudeville (1982:329 note 26).
61 About the development of the theology of Radha in the Nimbārka school see Clémétin-Ojha (1990: 327–76).
62 Khan (1986:9) suggests this name on the basis of bābī-documents.
secular love and the literary ideals current in Kishangarh cannot be detached from each other.

As far as the other thematic peculiarity of the Kishangarh school, the love games of Radha and Krishna, is concerned, Dickinson and Khandalavala wrote in the context of the Kishangarh miniatures:

Their theme takes life and substance from the most consecrated of all themes, the shining of the feminine ideal recreated in the amours of Radha and Krishna. These, as it were, form a passionate breviary of the customs of lovers in the eternal kingdom of love. Quarrels and sweet reconciliations, momentary desertion followed by abject submission, wounded pride and then unutterable longing. Running through the idyllic themes of the pastorale of a cowherd and his maid, the true devotee identifies himself with Radha only to realise that pride, vanity, waywardness are of no avail to win the love of the almighty. Only an absolute devotion can reveal to the devotee the way of the grace of God. It is true, the feminine element predominates in the paintings; it is an art consecrated to beauty... and yet if one withdraws the mystical element hovering alike over silent forest groves and marble palaces, there is left only the lover and his lass. For the divine bridegroom and his bride have vanished from our ken.67

This ‘mystical element’ or rather the bhakti themes in Kishangarh, however, were more than a pretext for depicting secular themes. In poetry for example an essential part of Nāgaridāś’s œuvre is preoccupied with the individual’s search for the divinity. In fact it was during the time of his active patronage that bhakti themes gained prominence in the Kishangarh paintings.68 It was also at that time that the royal family built a temple in Braj known as Nāgari Kunj, which is still in the custody of the Nimbārka sect.69 According to the Nimbarkī scholar Brajvallabhśaraṇ one of the main impulses for the construction of this temple may have been the poetess-queen Bāmkāvati.70 The emergence of bhakti themes in miniatures and in poetry after the more secular approach of the Delhi artists is an interesting feature in the Kishangarh court. Already Navina Haidar noted that within a Rajasthani context, Kishangarh was unusual in developing a full blown bhakti idiom as late as the mid-eighteenth century.71 Factors like self assertion on a spiritual ground against a weakening Delhi power, the increasing contact with Braj or an energetic pious queen’s getting more prominence after the death of the first queen, Čaturkumūrī in 1719 may account for this development.

Some scholars have tried to show that Nāgaridāś derived the driving force

70Brajvallabhśaraṇ (1 966:15).
of his art and patronage from his affiliation to the Vallabh Sampradāya.\textsuperscript{72} The question of the inspiration for his poetry and patronage is, however, far more complex. Nāgarīdās may well have been initiated into the Vallabh Sampradāya because the sect has been associated with the royal court since the time of Rūp Singh (r. 1629–43) till the present day. Rūp Singh symbolically dedicated his state to Śrī Kalyān Rāy, the deity of the Puṣṭimārga at Kishangarh.\textsuperscript{73} However the religious interests of a princely state in Rajasthan in the eighteenth century are unlikely to be extended only towards one sect. In neighbouring Jaipur for example there were three protective deities belonging to different sects\textsuperscript{74} and other sects like the Puṣṭimārga or the Nimbārkīs who did not have an important deity in the capital were not necessarily less influential than the others.\textsuperscript{75} Similarly in Kishangarh royal patronage seems to have been extended to the Nimbārkīs after the time of Kīsan Singh.\textsuperscript{76}

Nāgarīdās’s poetry was not limited to sectarian tenets and he seems to be influenced more by later bhakti poetry that emphasises the love plays of Radha and Krishna than by the Vallabh school. This attitude would also be encouraged by the Nimbārkīs who had their headquarters in the vicinity of Kishangarh, in Salemabad, and where at that time lived one of the most respected religious authorities of Rajasthan, Vṛṇḍāvan-dev, the guru of Queen Bāmkāvātī.

Nāgarīdās’s liberal religious approach is well illustrated in the \textit{maṅgalācāran} of the \textit{Pad prabodh mālā}:

\begin{quote}
मेरे यथै वर्त्याम।
श्री हरिश्चंद्र ॥ ध्याम गदाधर प्रमाणं नंददास॥
श्री हरिदास विहारिनिदास बिहुल विपुल सुजान।
रामदास नाम दामोदर अति भगवान सिद्धि भगवान॥
वनभूषंदास दास मेहा पुत्रुणि श्रीभद्र चतुर बिहारी।
श्रीदाम राजक रामक बालभ अरु भृकुटि रस रीति उचारी॥
तुलसीदास मोराव माधव अरु उभे नागरीदास।
असकर नरसिंह बूढवन राव माधुरी मुख राम॥
कृष्णदाम गूढ गोविन्द अरु कृंन छूँन स्वामि अनुभवा।
कृष्ण पुराण मेरें इनके पद ही शोभा ए वक्रा॥
तति इनके पद अरु मुद्दे को नामा मत विभार।
मुख साम्ज सिंह को हेरें पद छाड़ि अमृत फल सार॥
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{72}Dickinson and Khandalavala (1959:18–19); Gupta (1965:37–57); Randhawa and Randhawa (1960:10); Haidar (1996:12). Brajvallabhśarān (1966) tried to present Nāgarīdās as a follower of the Nimbārika sect but his ideas were refused by Khan (1974:9–16).

\textsuperscript{73}Haidar (1995:5–6) based on Khan (1986:35).

\textsuperscript{74}Jamvālmātī, the domestic deity of the royal family, was taken over from the Mīnās, Govindadev belonged to the Gauḍī sect and Sītārām to the Rāmānanda sect. See Clémentin-Ojha (1999:25–27).

\textsuperscript{75}Clémentin-Ojha (1999:76, 86–94).

\textsuperscript{76}As claimed by Brajvallabhśarān (1966:9) though he did not quote any source material for this assertion.
These are the authors of the Vedas for me:
Śrī Harivamśa and (Harirāma) Vyas, Gadādhar (Bhaṭṭ), Paramānanda(dās),
Nandadās;
Śrī Hariḍās, Bihārinidās, the intelligent Bitṭhal Bipul;
Rāmdās, Nabhā(ā)śa(ś), Dāmodar (‘Sevāk’), (Ananya) Alī Bhagavān,
Sakhi Bhagavān;
Caturbhujdās, Mehā Dās then Sribhaṭṭa (and) the clever Bihārī;
Pritam Rasik, Rasik Vallsabh and Dhruv(dās) proclaimed the correct
usage of the rasa.
Tulsidās, Mīrā (Bāi), Madhavā(śa) and both Nāgaridās,78
Āskaran, Narsi (Mehtā), Vṛndāvan(ā)śa(ś)? (and) Madhavā śa(ś) are
interested in the joy of the rāṣa-dance.
Krṣṇadas, Sūr(ā)śa, Govinda(śa)śa and Kumbahn(ā), the loving
Chītśvāmī
For me their songs are the Vedas and the Parāṇas, I am the listener,
they the speaker;
Who will abandon their songs and meaning79 and listen to diverse
opinions and deviations?
Why should we look at the root texts or at the feet of (accomplished)
siddhas giving up the essence of the fruits of immortality?
Their songs are on my tongue, in my ears and I remain unpolluted
in my heart.
Nāgaridās (says:) the dust of their feet80 should be the ornament of
my forehead.

This list gives an idea of which devotee-poets’ works Nāgaridās was
acquainted with. He recognised devotees with different sectarian affiliation to
be his masters. There are bhaktas from among the Astachāp, ‘the eight seals’,
of Vallabhaśārya’s Puṣṭimārga (Paramānandadās, Nandadās, Caturbhujdās,81
Krṣṇadas, Sūrdās, Govindasvāmī, Kumbhāndās, and Chītśvāmī). Apart from
them Āskaran ‘Kachvāhā’ Maharaṇa Kiśan Singh’s uncle82 and the Gujarati
Narsi Mehtā were also considered to be Puṣṭimārga. There are devotees from
Caitanya’s Gauḍiy Sampradāya (Gadādhar Bhāṭṭa and Madhavdās ‘Jagannāthī’),
the Hariḍāsī Sampradāya (Śvāmī Hariḍās, Bihārinidās, Bitṭhal Bipul, Sribhaṭṭi

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77 Gupta (1965 I:1).
78 Gupta (1965 I:14) argues that one of the two Nāgaridās is identical with Nāgardev, a
religious leader in Śvāmī Hariḍās’s lineage, and the second with ‘Nehī’ Nāgaridās, a follower
of Hīt Hariyānta. This may also be a reference to two brothers who were the pupils of
79 There is a double meaning here with the words pad ‘foot, song’, artha ‘meaning, aim’ and
with padarthā ‘gem’.
80 There is a conventional pun here with the double meaning of pad ‘foot’ and ‘song’.
81 Apart from the Caturbhujdās of the Astachāp there is also a famous Rādhāvallabhī poet
of this name: Caturbhujdās ‘Muridhar’. It is not clear which of them Nāgaridās refers to.
and Nāgarīdās), the Rādhāvallabhī Sampradāya of Hit Harivāṃśa (Harivāṃśa, Harirūm Vyas, Dāmodar ‘Sevā’, Rasikdās (?), ‘Nehi’ Nāgarīdās (?) and Dhruvdās).

Some poets without sectarian affiliation (Mīrā Bāi) are also mentioned as well as non Krishna bhaktas (Nābhādās and Tulsīdās).

Salemabad

Many of the Rajasthan states had influential deities and hence influential religious centres within their precincts. Nāthdvāra in the Mewar state for example is the home of the principal Puṣṭimārgī deity, Srīnāthji and Jaipur gave shelter to Govindadev of the Gauḍī sect. The principal religious centre within the Kishangarh state was the monastery of Salemabad, the centre of the Nimbārka Saṃpradāya in Rajasthan and the seat of its leader, Srījī Mahāraj. In the past centuries the Nimbārka Sampradāya has been considered to be one of the four orthodox Vaishnava schools (catūḥ saṃpradāya). The sect states that it was started by Nimbārka-Śāryārya, who in his Vedāntaparījātasaaurabhā advocated the ṇhedaḥbhedā ‘difference and nondifference’ theory about the relationship between the individual soul and the absolute. Today, however, it is not the writings of Nimbārka but Harivyāsdev’s Mahāvānī that Nimbārkīs hold in highest esteem. The Mahāvānī depicts the love games of Radha and Krishna and in its approach is clearly influenced by the concepts of Śvamī Haridās and Hit Harivāṃśa. Nimbārki tradition puts the text back to the 16th century.

The seat at Salemabad was established in the 17th century by Paraśurāmdev one of Harivyāsdev’s twelve disciples. The mahānt, superior, of the seat is the spiritual leader of a community of ascetics and laics. Since the establishment of the Salemabad seat many of its superiors had literary activities. The most famous of them was the same Paraśurāmdev, whose Hindi Paraśurāṁsāgar is close to nirgūna poetry proclaiming the ‘attributeless’ God to be immanent in every being and emphasising the power of his name.

परसराम नेता को उभय मिलाप अनूपः।
जो देखे निज रूप को सो देखे हरि रूप॥ ५३॥
उसो दर्पण पावक पड़े परसराम हरि रूपः।
परसराम हरि नाम ते प्रगटे हरि निज रूप॥ ५४॥

The meeting of the mirror and the eye is extraordinary.
The one who sees his own form sees also the form of God.
As fire falls into the mirror when the sunshine touches it.
By the name of Hari, Paraśurām, God’s own form becomes manifest.

In the eighteenth century the ascetic branch of the Haridāśi Sampradāya became associated with the Nimbārkīs. This event took place due to Savāi Jai Singh’s regulatory endeavours in the field of religion. Jai Singh, Maharaja of Jaipur (r. 1699–1743), made an effort to ensure that only those sects get

83Bhārtīśāras (1930:78).
royal recognition that can trace back their origin to one of the classical Hindu sects. The ascetic branch of the Haridasi Sampradaya took refuge in the older, prestigious Nimbarka sect. The Haridasis in turn enlivened it with their popular approach to the love-games of the divine couple Radha and Krishna. Acarya Vrundavandev's Gitamrit Ganga is an excellent expression of devotion towards the divine couple.

Today the dear Krishna riots in pleasure sitting in an ornamented upper room.
As her lover is watching her face the beloved one smilingly takes him into her embrace.
She gives and then takes kisses and ashamed she separates herself for a moment.
Then Vrindaban's Lord embraces her rejoicingly—displays his art of love.

The Nimbarka sect was not confined to Salemabad. During Anandghan's time, it had shrines in places like Mathura, Vrindaban, Jaipur and Rupnagar served by members of the sect. In Vrindaban for example it had a small temple at Banasi Baat, the Banyan tree on the bank of the Yamuna under which Krishna is said to have played his flute. The seat in Rupnagar was the place of religious discussions between Nimbarkis and Vallabhanis and Vrundavandev also stayed in the town for some time.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the sect had excellent contacts with the court of Jaipur. The town had a high number of Nimbarkis and even Vrundavandev the mahant of Salemabad (1697–1740) used to spend a part of the year there. It was at his times that serious royal patronage was given to his sect since documentation about it in the royal archives date back as early as 1719. The centre in Salemabad received the revenues of some villages within the Jaipur state. Patronage was not extended because of an important Nimbarki temple in Jaipur but because of the superior’s good contacts with the palace and especially with the women’s quarters. Today only one Nimbarki temple is known within the palace precincts, the Sriji kori, which was established in

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84 Srisarveswar (1952–53:45).
85 An alternative translation is ‘giving a kiss she is ashamed to take it back and she separates herself for a moment’.
87This must be the ‘Gopal Dwara’ mentioned by Brajvallabhsaran (1966:10).
89Brajvallabhsaran (1966:14).
1791 by the mother of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh (1778–1803) for an image known as Gopijanavallabh. However there may have been Nimbarka sites in the town already at the time of Vrindavandevacarya. Those years, according to Brajvallabhśaran, a Benares paṇḍit, Jayramdēś Śēṣ, and ācārya Brajnand were in charge of these sites. The mahant was surrounded by several servants and had his horses, elephants and arms since he also controlled some groups of ascetic warriors (nāgas). When he was staying in Jaipur he conducted a lavish life with great feasts. The grandest of them was in the early nineteenth century when 90 000 people were fed by the regent Bhaṭṭiyānī in a feast organised for her guru, Nimbārkāśaran, for a guru-pūrṇima festival.

In the early eighteenth century the prestige that the leader of the sect enjoyed was partly due to Vrindavandevacarya’s contacts with the princely courts. A Sanskrit poem in his praise is attributed to Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh. Queen Bāṅkāvatī ‘Brajāśī’ and princess Sundar Kumvāri of Kishangarh were among his disciples. Nāgarīdēś must also have been in close contact with the ācārya residing within the territory of his state.

At the same time the rulers of the states wanted to have a voice not only in the tenets of the sect but also in its decisions about filling up posts in the hierarchy. On Vrindavandevacarya’s death for example Sawai Jai Singh and some other maharajas filled the post of ācārya with Jayramdēś Śēṣ. However, after Jai Singh’s death three years later, Śēṣ was removed and a new ācārya, Govindaḍēv, was declared by the ascetics.

If we can postulate that secular aspects of poetry written by religious personalities in monasteries are due to interaction with centres of secular literature then we can state that the interaction with the princely courts did not leave Vrindavandev’s poetry untouched since it also has secular traits. Although all the poems of the Gitāmr Gaṅgā are classified under one or another līlā, ‘divine game’ of Radha or Krishna, if they are examined independently from this context, they will show an affinity to the refined mundane love poetry of the time:

\[
\text{तो मुख बन्द कियोऽ अगविद ये मो दूस रोस मे परे ही रहें री।}
\text{देखन को अति आतुर हे तु इसें ऊ भक्त रे के भोर कहे री।}
\text{ये सब ग्रह भस्म ही ही बय मोह नियो फोरे तील मुह गहे री।}
\text{वृद्धवन प्रभु रोके रहे नहीं भाय परे जव तीहि लहे री।} \tag{40} \tag{44}
\]

\text{Is your face moon or lotus my eyes remain uncertain; They are very eager to see it so shall they also be [called] partridge or black bee? As though all my love were in their hands; they roam bedazzled taking their ways;}

\footnotesize{\text{191 Brahvalabhśāraṇ (1943:2) and Brahvalabhśāraṇ (1966:18). Unfortunately no source for this information is mentioned.}}

\footnotesize{\text{92 Clémentin-Ojha (1999:88).}}

\footnotesize{\text{93 Published in Śrīsvaraśvar (1952–53:ca).}}

\footnotesize{\text{94 Śrīsvaraśvar (1952–53:23).}}
Vrindaban’s Lord, they cannot be restrained; they start to run as soon as they catch you.

This complex approach, however was given up by later ācāryas who again wrote poetry clearly about bhakti themes.\textsuperscript{95}

Ānandghan

Ānanadghan’s poetry in princely courts

Even though it is after all the literary outcome that decides a poet’s place in the imaginary ‘literary hierarchy’ of an era, there are many instances when factors outside literature—fashion, patronage, politics etc.—influence reputation. The history of Ānanadghan’s standing is a striking example of this since his early fame in literature seems to have faded away when his name was denigrated. This was so much so that the traces of his sectarian and court affiliation were lost in oblivion or maybe consciously erased. Ānanadghan was one of the finest Hindi poets of the eighteenth century but until recently he has not been counted among the celebrated authors of Indian literature. There are even Hindi literary histories with his name missing.\textsuperscript{96}

In Ānanadghan’s case one encounters a strange situation. While on the one hand disrepute was attached to his name, on the other hand his poetry was enjoyed both in courts and religious centres. Ānanadghan wrote two types of poetry. In the later part of his life when he was an ascetic he produced bhakti poetry abundantly. The high number of manuscripts of song-collections that include his poems shows that his religious songs were popular in the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries. It is, however, clear that Ānanadghan was even more celebrated for his quatrains with a secular tinge although it seems that they were often presented as bhakti poetry. His quatrains enjoyed popularity, and the best poets in the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries were deeply influenced by his quatrains. It was his quatrains that were popular in princely courts and several rulers were well acquainted with them.

Maharaja Madho Singh (1750–1767) of Jaipur, for example, is said to have praised his songs when he met the poet in the temple of Govindadev in 1757.\textsuperscript{97} Nāgaridās included some of Ānanadghan’s devotional poems into his Pad-muktāvali. There are Ānanadghan-manuscripts written in Bharatpur for Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1777–1805) and in Jaipur for Maharaja Sāvāi Pratāp Singh ‘Brajnidhi’ (1778–1803).\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{95} For specimens of the poetry of the later mahants see the relevant chapters in Bihārīsaraṇ 1930. Govindśarāndev’s poetry is also published in Brajvallabhśarāṇ 1970.

\textsuperscript{96} E.g. Keay, F. E. History of Hindi Literature.

\textsuperscript{97} Śyāmundsardās (1937:173) based on the letter of Jaylāl.

\textsuperscript{98} For a description of the Bharatpur manuscript see Šukla (1950:269–79). At the end of manuscript 3469 in the Pothikhana of Jaipur the following couplet is found:

bāṇī ānandaghana dai ṇṛpa pratāpā ke āṭha—
pāũ brajanidhi darasa nita bhajana sunāũ sāṭha——
Indeed, Prince Javán Singh ‘Brajrāj’ of Udaipur was so much moved by Anandghan’s quatrains that he asked his court poet, Dayānīdhi to write a cycle of eight poems, an asṭaka, based on a phrase from Anandghan.

One day, having heard from me (several) poems on separation, the crest-jewel of the accomplished ones, Prince Javán Singh insisted that a cycle of eight poems should be composed on the quatrain ‘when will you come and rain down from the cloud of bliss?’

Prince Javán Singh was referring to the following quatrain by Anandghan:

### One Day, Having Heard from Me (Several) Poems, Prince Javán SinghAsked a Cycle of Eight Poems

- **Mūchār śirgīmālī bī ḍūjār jāvān mīng**
  
  - **एक दिन विरह कविता मो यो मुनि मुनि।**
  
  - **आय कब आनंद को बन वरसाध्या या कविता ये अटक बने या कहि पृमि पृसि।**

*One day, having heard from me (several) poems on separation, the crest-jewel of the accomplished ones, Prince Javán Singh insisted that a cycle of eight poems should be composed on the quatrain ‘when will you come and rain down from the cloud of bliss?’*

The availability of Anandghan’s quatrains in princely courts shows that he was able to write poetry that was enjoyed at court. Although the possibility of some secular poetry reaching the monasteries cannot be denied, it is more probable that Anandghan was well acquainted with court atmosphere and therefore he was able to produce literature that was enjoyed in princely courts. From this point of view the question of his association to a court needs special attention. The available legends suggest that a movement from a court to an ashram.

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99 Bansal and Bansal (forthcoming:10). The *asṭaka* is on pp. 123–127.

100 *Sujāṁhit* 24. Published in *Miśra* (1952:9–10).
has been associated with his figure. An investigation into Ånandghan’s contacts with monasteries and courts can also shed light on the interaction between these two centres of patronage.

The legend and the search for the historical figure

Ånandghan died in the year of the battle of Plassey, in 1757. His century is a more convenient era for research in Hindi literature than the previous ones from which we tend to have only legends about poets. In our case Ånandghan’s silence about his own life is somewhat counterbalanced by having three manuscripts from his lifetime and some contemporary references to him. Although scholars like Viśvānāth Prasād Miśra and Manoharlal Gaů made efforts to trace the historical figure, they were not able to offer a view detached from nineteenth century legends connecting the poet with the Mughal court in Delhi. The only scholar who mentioned Ånandghan’s connection with Salemabad and Kishangarh was Brajvallabhiśāraṇ Vedantācārya from Salemabad.101

Today, however, it is not Brajvallabhiśāraṇ’s idea that prevails. Ånandghan’s quatrains are included in Hindi high school textbooks and usually his legend is taught along with them. Most people familiar with Hindi literature find Ånandghan’s story set in the Mughal court very useful for understanding his poetry. According to this legend the poet was the chief scribe, Mir Munshi, of Muhammad Šāh of Delhi. He was so much in love with a courtesan whom he called Sujān that he made a vow that he would sing only to her and to no one else. When his enemies at court learnt about this, they plotted against him and told the emperor, who was known as Raṅgle ‘pleasure-loving’, about Ånandghan’s skill in singing. He was then summoned but declined to sing. Then the conspirators suggested ordering the courtesan to ask the Mir Munshi to do so. Then the scribe sang, but he turned towards his beloved and not the emperor. Although the song delighted everyone, the sultan was infuriated by the munshi’s disrespect and ordered him to quit the court. When the poet asked Sujān to accompany him, she refused. Nevertheless, Ånandghan did not cease writing poems to his beloved, and until his death he used to address Sujān in them. In his exile he went to Vrindaban, became an ascetic of the Nimbāra Saṃpradāya, and the word sajān in his works came to mean Krishna himself or Radha and Krishna jointly. According to the legend quoted by Rāmcandra Šukla, he wrote his last quatrain to Sujān when he was mortally wounded.102

101Brajvallabhiśāraṇ (1956:287) and Brajvallabhiśāraṇ (1966:13).
102Šukla (1942:366).
Fallen into the noose of hoping for an end to many days (of waiting),
he is now full of real haste to get up and go.
I kept giving the message that the ‘one who delights the heart’ is coming
and I kept catching at him holding him back with respectful attendance.
But now, disillusioned from trusting in the lying words, in the end
he cannot be kept back from the Cloud of Bliss.
Setting out, my life has reached the (door) of my lips; he wants to
go and take the message of Sujān.

Ānandghan’s story described by Rāmcandra Sukla, as it is, is a mixture of
legendary and real elements. This ‘last’ poem for example is already found in
a manuscript from 1727. The legend, however, refers to the poet-bhakta as
someone who died in Braj. This fact is attested by ‘Uncle’ Vṛndāvandāś who
in his poem Harikalābelī deplored Ānandghan’s death in the massacre of Braj
in 1757. At the end of the poem Marlika-mod, Ānandghan seems to have
given the date and place of composition as VS 1798 (1741 AD) Vṛndāban.
Therefore it can be said that Ānandghan spent his last years in Braj.

One of his works called Paramahamsa Vaṁśāvalī describes the lineage of his
gurus in the Nimbārka Sampradāy. From the praise poured on Vṛndāvandevacārya, it can be inferred that he took initiation from him. A further sign of
Ānandghan’s affiliation to the Nimbarkis is that the most complete manuscript
of his works is preserved in the Nimbārka Sampradāy.

Although Viśvānāth Prastūr Mīśra argued that the poet took initiation in
Vṛndāban and Vṛndāvandev may have visited Vṛndāban several times, there
is no reason to exclude the possibility that Ānandghan took his initiation from
him elsewhere, most probably in Salemabad, and lived his early religious life
outside Vṛndāban.

Two out of the three manuscripts dated from Ānandghan’s lifetime were
written near Salemabad, in Rūpnnagar, the then capital of the Kishangarh State.
Ānandghan’s earliest dated manuscript is from here and was written by the circle
of a certain Svetāmbar Hemrāj. The two other manuscripts largely rely on this
one. The peculiarity of this manuscript is that it tries to get rid of the suspicious
word Sujān, the alleged name of the poet’s beloved, and tries to substitute it
with names that show either a clear bhakti context like Radha or Krishna, or

103 Sujānhit 54. Published in Mīśra (1952:18–19).
104 Pothikhana, Jaipur, Khāsmohar Collection Ms Nr. 2437 (4) poem Nr. 40.
105 About the Harikalā Belī and Ānandghan’s death see Bangha (1997:231–41).
106 It is only given like that in Mīśra’s edition. In Śukla (1950:269-279) these line are reported
to follow the colophon and thus not being part of the poem.
107 Mīśra (1952 ‘Prastūt granthāvalī’3), (1952 ‘Vāṃsuvaḥ’72). At the time of the edition
the manuscript was in the Śrīji ki bañji kuñj, the Nimbārki centre in Vṛndāban, today it is in
Salemabad.
with names that have a secular connotation like su priya ‘that/good beloved’ etc. These changes seem to be the result of an awkward effort to protect the poet’s name.\textsuperscript{108} The quatrains lose their soul, their multiple layers of meaning, by these changes. It becomes difficult to explain these changes, if one argues that it is not the poet’s fame that was involved somehow in them. We can, therefore, state with almost certainty that Ānandghan was personally known in Rupnagar and probably lived in that area.

There are some indications that Ānandghan and Nāgaridās were closely acquainted with each other. A picture shows Ānandghan and Nāgaridās together with Brajānand sitting in front of Vyṇḍāvandev. There is mention of this picture already at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time the picture was kept in the royal archives of Kishangarh as attested by the court poet Jaylāl, who was an advocate of Nāgaridās’s contact with the Vallabh Sampradāya. After the death of Vyṇḍāvandev there would have been no need to forge a similar picture in the Kishangarh court showing Nāgaridās’s contact with the Nimbārkīs. The Vallabhan affiliation of the royal family seemed to be more prominent. Therefore there is not any reason to question the originality of this picture. The court poet Jaylāl told of Nāgaridās’s journey to Kishangarh in 1757 together with Ānandghan. According to Jaylāl, Ānandghan did not go as far as Kishangarh but returned from Jaipur and consequently was killed in the massacre of Braj.\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{Ānandghan’s quatrains}

Ānandghan’s poetic oeuvre can be divided into two main groups. The first is relatively simple religious poetry, namely some one thousand songs (\textit{pads}) and thirty-odd long poems in praise of Radha, Krishna or Braj. These poems fit well into the flow of devotional poetry that had been written in North India since the 16th century. The other group is his quatrains (\textit{kabittas}), the overwhelming majority of which is not overtly devotional. Here devotional quatrains alternate with poems that are secular or that can be read in either way. It was Ānandghan’s \textit{kabittas} that earned him fame and they also seem to be instrumental in his bad reputation. The poet was condemned because one reading of his poetry was that he was using the name of his mundane beloved, the Muslim dancer Sujān, to denote the divinity. Other Hindu poets like Nāgaridās were cautious not to identify the beloved overtly with God. In his \textit{Ik–caman}, another example of Rekhtā poetry, where he speaks about love with Islamic imagery and vocabulary, Nāgaridās’s interpretation is different from that of the Sufi mystics since he considers lover, God and the beloved to be three different entities while in sufism \textit{Khudā}, God, and \textit{mahbūb}, the beloved, are the same.\textsuperscript{110}

\begin{quote}
\textit{अधिक पीर हमें दिल लगे चम्मे के तीर।}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{108}Bangha (1999:49–58).
\textsuperscript{109}Śyāmsundardās (1937:173) based on the letter of Jaylāl.
The lover's heart is always tormented struck by the arrow of the glance;
(But) God made the beloved to be continuously hard and unfeeling.

The larger part of Ánandghan’s quatrains can be read as relating also to secular love, as was done by the scribe who tried to change the word for the beloved, suján into expressions like ju syāma to make sure that it is not read as mundane. However, when the quatrain was too overtly mundane, then suján was changed into su pyāri and the like to make sure that this ‘secular’ poem does not have any religious reference. It never happened in Hindi literature before Ánandghan that the human beloved was identified with the absolute as Ánandghan’s double usage of the word sujān suggests. This twofold reading of the poems was peculiar rather to Persian and then to Urdu. I quote a quatrain to illustrate this:

Her very charming fair face shines (and) her ear-touching intoxicated eyes are bright;
In her smiling speech flowers of grace are showered on her breast;
On her temple a fickle lock of hair is gambolling, (as does) the well-made double pearl-necklace on her beautiful neck;
A wave of lustre emerges from her every limb; it seems as if beauty (itself) is now pouring down on the earth.

In quatrains like this the description could be either that of Radha or of Ánandghan’s mundane beloved.

Today critics link Ánandghan’s approach to the Sufi theory that his excessive mundane love led to love divine. They also try to show that his kabittas draw on Persian poetry in their preference for idiomatic usage and for strong contrast (virodh). Moreover, love brought to such an extreme that someone dies with the name of the beloved who has long abandoned him, is rather Persian than Indian. Indian aesthetic theories do not even know about completely unrequited love. Scholars take refuge in the Sufi ideology to demonstrate the deepest bhakti in Ánandghan and draw a parallel between him and Raskhān who also reached Vaishnava bhakti through his mundane love.

However, if we forget about the nineteenth-century legend quoted above it is more difficult to interpret his poetry. It seems that his contemporary critics

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111 Gupta (1965 II:49).
took just the opposite of the modern view: it is degrading to the divine to be
called by the name of a human being let alone that of a Muslim courtesan.

It is however not so easy to detect direct Persian influence in Anandghan.
Many of the features that one is tempted to consider alien to traditional Hindu
literature, are in fact present in Sanskrit. As is the case with drinking alcohol:

\begin{quote}
\text{The eyes become drunk looking at the beauty when the gazelle-eyed one is drunk with alcohol.}
\text{Soaked in a ‘cloud of bliss’ she laughs, shines, bending she staggers and feels dizzy, (then) becomes startled and alert.}
\text{She opens and closes her eyelids, dozes off and wakes up, she can’t restrain herself, babbles and talks nonsense.}
\text{Utmost delight by the wonder of the beautiful Sujan, the shame left alone loses its strength.}
\end{quote}

Scenes of drunkenness, if not common, were not alien to Sanskrit literature. It is enough to think of the drunken women in the beginning of Harṣa’s Ratnāvalī. Or to quote another example from the Pānagōṣṭhipaddhāti chapter of the Sūktimuktāvalī:

\begin{quote}
\text{‘De-de-dear, give me the nectar of your lips yourself;}
\text{le-le-leave quickly the golden vessel’}
\end{quote}

Whatever may be the origin of such ideas, it is difficult to interpret similar poems in a bhakti context. The secularisation of religious themes as observed in Vṛṇḍāvandev and Nāgarīdās prepared the ground for Anandghan’s poetry, and probably it was also responsible for the change in Hindi Poetry in which it became more open to absorb Persian influences. One aspect of Anandghan’s secular kabitās can certainly derive from that of his guru, Vṛṇḍāvandevācārya, who already wrote poetry that taken out of its bhakti context can be interpreted as mundane. Anandghan went further: he not only wrote ambivalent quatrains

\begin{footnote}
\text{Pānagōṣṭhipaddhāti 3. Published in Vyas (1991:266). I am indebted to Dr Harunaga Isaacson for drawing my attention to this poem.}
\end{footnote}
but in many of them the mundane aspect overshadowed every Vaishnava aspiration.

According to the legend and to an early source Anandghan belonged to the kāyastha (scribe) cast and therefore was probably well acquainted with Persian, the language of administration. It is not unlikely that directly or indirectly his poetry was influenced by the ideals of Persian or Urdu ghazals. It can be supposed that to be receptive to such ideals was not learnt in a Hindu religious community but rather in a royal or princely court, where both Hindu and Muslim ideas were more naturally mixed in the culture. The popularity of Anandghan’s kabittas in princely courts also indicates that he was acquainted with the taste cultivated there. We do not possess enough evidence to tell whether he lived originally in Delhi as legend says or whether he was connected to a court later, when he was already an ascetic.

It is clear that Anandghan was not a court poet in Kishangarh since his name is missing from the Persian or Rajasthani bahīs (records of payments, commissions, dates and places of work) in Kishangarh114, where the name of poets like Vṛnd is several times present.115 No poem of Anandghan praises any mundane patron as was usual for court poets. If this acquaintance with court poetry does not originate from an initial life in a royal or princely court then it can be said that it was of a type similar to that of Vṛndāvandev since the ascetics of one of the most influential monastery in Rajasthan had to keep the connection with the courts. While Anandghan’s connection with Salemabad seems to be very probable, the type of his relationship with Kishangarh-Rupnagar needs further investigation.

The debate about Anandghan’s poetry

Anandghan’s approach to Sujān as both human and divine infuriated some religious circles. We can glimpse the views of the opponents in the lines of certain bharau Chand (mocking verses)116, which according to Gaur, were probably composed before 1755 AD117 but with all probability in circles that knew Anandghan well.

काव्य आनंदगण महा हरामजादा हो। यु ब्रज की कथा में आयो परंतु अपज्ञ बको घर है। ताको बनन।

The kāyastha Anandghan was a great rogue. Although he came to the district of Braj, his bad reputation remains. (This is) his description:

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114 Personal communication of Faiyaz Ali Khan in March 1997.
115 For payments to Vṛnd see Celer (1973:337–340).
117 Gaur (1958:7–8). Unfortunately Gaur did not give any justification for this date. The poems were taken from a book called Jas kabitta. In a personal communication in 1996 he said that Jas kabitta was in the Yājñik-collection of the Nāgarīpracārīṇi Sabhā in Benares; however I was not able to find it there. Bhavānīśaṅkar Yājñik was a priest at the Gokulnāth temple in Gokul, which suggests that the manuscript came from Braj.
He beats the tambourine, sings like a Dām or a Dhārā, pleases a Muslim and then gets false fame;

He is the servant of the prostitute Muslim Sujān; he leaves the name of Rām and worships her abode of desire.

Such verses mock not only Ānandghan’s physical contact with Muslims but also suggest literary interaction. In other words the person and his poetry were considered alien to orthodox Vaishnavism. It should be mentioned that this example of inter-communal distrust is not an isolated case in Vaishnava context. The author of Raskhān’s vārtā in the Do so bāvan vaisṇavān ki vārtā distances himself from Raskhān’s Muslim background by mocking at it.

The blame on Ānandghan was so strong that not even his beautiful composition, the Kṛpākand, ‘The Root of Grace’, on divine grace as opposed to the rituals as advocated by the earlier Nimbārki ācāryas redeemed him. Eventually he had to give up not only writing complex poetry but had to abandon the quatrain form since it was so closely associated with Sujān, the dancer. He began to write simple bhakti poetry in a conventional style.

My tongue is entangled in Gopāl’s virtues;
(and) disentangled from the various bonds of false poems (and) traps of twaddle.

We have noted above that some of Sundar Kumvārī's quatrain bear close resemblance to those of Ānandghan. It is interesting to observe that three of them (including one quoted above, pūjai māhā, and two others with the word ‘sujān’ in them) that seem to be the closest to Ānandghan are missing from the manuscript that served as the basis of Brajvallabha’saran.’s edition although they are present in the Nimbārka mādhurī. Considering the amount of change Ānandghan’s anthologies underwent because of the ambiguous usage of Sujān, it may not be a coincidence in this case either.

Probably it was also his bad reputation that made him decide to take up a new home in Vrindaban. His quatrains continued to be both blamed and

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118The word pūjai is an obscene pun with a secondary meaning of ‘he fills’.
119For a more detailed discussion of these mocking verses see Bangha (1999:44–46, 115).
121Cf. dohā 30 of the Siddhānta Sukh in the Yugal Śatak referred to in Clémentin-Ojha (1990:371)
122Padīvañk 687. Misra (1952:493–4)
123Nrs. 29–25 in Bihārīṣāraṇ (1930:600)
popular. Nevertheless, there were people who wanted to reach ‘the original Ānandghan’ and get rid of the changes that were introduced by scribes like Svetāmbar Hemrāj. One of them was Brajnāth, who with all probability is identical with the Sanskrit poet Brajnāth Bhaṭṭa a courtier and friend of Savāī Jai Singh (r. 1697–1743) of Jaipur. In his Sanskrit Padyataramaṇgini, Brajnāth Bhaṭṭa praises both Savāī Jai Singh and Savāī Madho Singh (r. 1750–1767) but not Savāī Īśvarī Singh (r. 1743–1750). During the reign of Īśvarī Singh Brajnāth lived in Rupnagar in the Kishangarh state of his disciple, the poetess-queen Bāṅkāvati who mentioned him as her vidyāguru at the end of her Brāj translation of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

It was in Rupnagar in 1748 that he composed his Brāj work on aesthetics, the Sāhitya-sār. Brajnāth also prepared a new collection of Ānandghan’s quatrains that did not show Ānandghan as a religious poet but as a ‘great lover (who is) skilled in Brājbhāṣā’. He even discarded most of Ānandghan’s openly religious quatrains and inserted eight poems at the beginning and the end of his collection explaining that Ānandghan was misunderstood:

As it angers the eyes of the people when an ass relishes the great taste of the grape,
As it perturbs the heart when a eunuch, staring at the beauty of a girl’s body, approaches her,
As it pleases no one when the short-sighted praise the secrets of a wonderful painting,
So it disturbs the intelligent ones when the stupid expound Ānandghan’s words.

According to Brajnāth, Ānandghan should be read as a nehī mahā brajabhāṣa-prabina, ‘a great lover (who is) skilled in Brājbhāṣā’ and this should be done ‘with a cautious mind’. The blame attached to Ānandghan was so strong that expounding his poems cost Brajnāth his prestige:

According to Bangha (1999:121–8).
125 Šāsthi 1996.
127 A manuscript of this unpublished work can be found at the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute in Jodhpur (Nr 2264).
I have taken these kabittas with a lot of trouble losing my honour, 
prestige (and) character.

Nobody knows my suffering; ‘Take’ they say ‘(and) write them down 
secretly for me, too’.

What shall I do, where shall I go now? I have spent my days and 
nights immersed (in it).

What is the use of being a scholar for one whose eyes have been 
wounded by love?

The censure of Anandghan may be the reason why neither Salemabad nor 
Rupnagar claimed the poet with pride in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries 
and his connection with the Rajasthan state was lost in oblivion.

Conclusion

As has been seen both the court of Kishangarh-Rupnagar and the monastery 
at Salemabad were home to both secular and religious poetry to a varying 
extent. Although Kishangarh-Rupnagar court culture was open to Mughal and 
Muslim influences there was a movement from a secular approach towards a 
more religious one at the time of Queen Bāmkāvatī and Prince Sāvant Singh. 
At the same time secular poetry was not alien to the Nimbārki monastery at 
Salemabad either. In the first half of the eighteenth century the Nimbārka 
sect was influential not only in courts like Jaipur but through a pious queen 
also in Rupnagar. It should be the Nimbārkis rather than the Vallabha sect 
that influenced the development of a feminine ideal in the court through their 
increased emphasis on the divine figure of Radha.

The culture of Rupnagar and Salemabad were dynamic cultures experiment-
ating with novel approaches and generating literary debates. The best example 
of these debates is the one about Anandghan’s quatrains. The most outstanding 
quatrains of this poet are found at the meeting point of the cultures of the 
courtly and of the religious communities and can be read as expressing love 
both for a worldly beloved and for the divinity. The overt identification of the 
mundane beloved with the divinity was, however, too much for certain religious 
circles and they rejected Anandghan’s twofold approach as a Muslim idea. To 
protect Anandghan’s fame Hemrāj of Rupnagar and his circle mutilated the 
text of his poems in order to reject the doublefold interpretation. The scholar 
Brajnāth, who in all probability is identical with Brajnāth Bhaṭṭi of Jaipur, tried 
to rescue Anandghan’s quatrains on the basis of their literary merit. Although 
he ‘lost his honour’ in the process, his approach prevailed and till the present 
day people read Anandghan’s quatrains through his eyes being moved by the 
love expressed in them both in its divine and mundane aspects.

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