

**Wājid ‘Alī Shāh Plays Krishna’s Stolen Flute: The Multiplicity of Voices in the King of
Awadh’s Dramatic Work**

Genoveva Castro

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Reading Committee:

Heidi Pauwels, Chair

Richard Salomon

Michael Shapiro

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Genoveva Castro

University of Washington

Abstract

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Genoveva Castro

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Professor Heidi Pauwels

Department of Asian Languages and Literature

This dissertation is a study of an instance of cultural exchange between Hindus and Muslims in the context of 19th century theater in South Asia. Specifically, it investigates Hindu-Muslim assimilation in the artistic production at the court of the last king of Awadh. Through an analysis of text and performance traditions present at the court the narrative of Hindi-Urdu drama at the beginning of the modern period is reframed.

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh (1822-1887) was the king of Awadh on the eve of the colonial takeover. He ruled from 1847 to 1856, and subsequently moved to Calcutta after the British assumed control of the kingdom. He was not only a ruler during a turning point of Indian history, but also a poet and dramatist. His literary work was often a reflection of his interest in dance and music, as well as of the multifaceted milieu in which he lived. Thus, although Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was a Muslim, he wrote two versions of a dance-drama entitled *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah* based on a Hindu theme that was popular in Vaishnava circles. This dissertation presents an annotated

translation of the two versions of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* occurring in *Banī* (1877), the first such translations into English.

Framed within the historical and cultural context, the literary work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh is analyzed here, considering a diversity of influences in comparison to several contemporary plays. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s dance-dramas are contrasted with the contemporary *Indar sabhā*, a commercial play by the Muslim poet Amānat. Specifically, this juxtaposition reveals the common folk song and courtesan performance borrowings of the court-based dance-dramas and the *Indar sabhā*. But the difference rests on the heavier influence of Urdu poetry and Persian narrative of the *Indar sabhā* on the one hand and the Krishnaite idiom of the *qiṣṣah* on the other.

Further insight is obtained by a subsequent comparison with a Braj devotional play by Lalit Kiśorī, also a contemporary playwright. A translation and edition of the unpublished play by Lalit Kiśorī is provided along with a contrastive examination with the *qiṣṣah*. The previous inspection exposes the same theme of the stolen flute of Krishna in the court and the temple setting which signals the influence of Braj devotional theater in the work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh.

Moreover, the relation between the court and the temple calls for an integrated narrative of Hindi and Urdu theater, instead of a treatment of Hindi and Urdu literary cultures as two separate exclusive categories. Finally, the theme of the stolen flute is traced in Vaishnava literature in Sanskrit and Braj over the centuries to reinforce Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s adaptation of a literary tradition. This dissertation concludes that cultural productions at the court were not fixed according to a religious identity or particular language, but rather constitute an example of a Hindu-Muslim encounter.

Note on translation and transliteration

All translations are mine unless otherwise stated in the footnotes. I have read a number of English translations from South Asian languages that have helped me with me with my own translations. Whenever this is the case I have acknowledge the sources. This dissertation uses sources in Urdu, Hindi, Braj bhāshā and Sanskrit and there is no simple solution for transliterating all these languages on the same page. I mostly follow the conventions of John Platts’s *Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English* for all the words written in *nasta’līq* and the conventions of McGregor’s *The Oxford Hindi English Dictionary* for words written in *devanāgarī*. To avoid the overlap between the transliteration systems I transliterated ص “ṣ” and ش/ش as “sh”, ڙ as “ri” and ڙ/ڙ as “r̄”. The diacritics were dropped for names of places and for the name Krishna and Vaishnava. All foreign words are italicized with the exception of proper names.

ا a, ب b, پ p, ت t,

ٹ t̄, ٺ ṭ, ج j, چ c,

ح h, خ kh, د d, ڌ ḍ,

ذ z, ر r, ڙ r̄, ز z,

ڙ zh, س s, ش sh, ص ṣ,

ض z̄, ط t̄, ظ z̄, ع ‘,

غ gh, ق q, ک k, گ g,

ل l, م m, ن n,

و w, ū, o, au

ھ ھ h

ی y, i, e, ے ī, ai.

izāfat-e

क k, ख kh, ग g, घ gh, ङ ṅ,

च c, छ ch, ज j, झ jh, ञ ñ,

ट *t*, ठ *th*, ड *d*, ढ *d*, ण *n*,

त *ta*, थ *th*, द *d*, ध *dh*, न *n*

प *p*, फ *ph*, ब *b*, भ *bh*, म *m*

य *y*, र *r*, ल *l*, व *v*, श *ś*, ष *sh*, स *s*, ह *h* अं *m*

List of Figures

- Figure 1 Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s lineage.
- Figure 2 The ascension to the throne from ‘*Ishq nāmāh*’.
- Figure 3 *Raqs rahas dhārī* from ‘*Ishq nāmāh*’.
- Figure 4 Portrait of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh.
- Figure 5 Early 20th century *rāsdhārī* notebook.
- Figure 6 Early 20th century *rāsdhārī* notebook II.
- Figure 7 Figure 7 *Ras kalikā* manuscript.
- Figure 8 Shāh Kundanlāl and Shān Phundanlāl.
- Figure 9 Lalit Kīśorī.
- Figure 10 Detail.
- Figure 11 Ceiling Shāh jī temple.
- Figure 12 Wājid Alī’ Shāh dressed as a *gopī*.
- Figure 13 Svāmī Śrī Fateh Krishna Śarmā.
- Figure 14 Krishna and Madhumangala.
- Figure 15 Madhumangala and the *gopīs*.
- Figure 16 Madhumangala being dressed as a *gopī*.
- Figure 17 The theft of the flute.
- Figure 18 Krishna trying to recover his flute.
- Figure 19 Rādhā and Krishna being worshipped.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Note on translation and transliteration	5
List of Figures.....	7
Acknowledgments	10
Introduction.....	12
CHAPTER 1 Visions of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, his life and his world.....	21
The History of Awadh and the life of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh	21
The literary work of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh	32
Perceptions of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh: Views on the government	39
Perceptions of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh: Views on patronage.....	43
CHAPTER 2 Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s dramatic work and the <i>Indar sabhā</i>.....	49
The Rādhā Krishna performance in Lucknow	49
The performance of the Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah.....	55
Indar sabhā by Amānat.....	58
Staging the Indar sabhā	64
The plot of Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah and Indar sabhā	66
The structure of the dance dramas.....	66
CHAPTER 3 Annotated translation of the <i>rahas</i> entitled <i>Rādhā and Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah</i>..	78
Text and translation.....	79

The first qiṣṣah regarding the circumstances of the declaration and display of love between Rādhā and Kanhaiyā.....	80
Second qiṣṣah of Rādhā and Kanhaiyā	103
CHAPTER 4 The Braj rās līlā tradition and Wājid ‘Alī Shāh.....	115
The Braj rās līlā performance tradition	116
Lalit Kiśorī: a rās līlā playwright from the 19 th century.....	121
The script of the Vaṃśī naṭ līlā	124
Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s perspective of his rahas and Hindu devotional drama	133
Vaṃśī naṭ līlā and the Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah	135
CHAPTER 5 The story of the theft of the flute in Vaishnava literature	148
Devotional texts in Sanskrit in the 16 th century	149
Rūpa Gosvāmī.....	150
Padyāvalī.....	152
Krishnadāsa Kavirāj	153
Kavikarṇapūra	156
Caṇḍīdās	158
The theft of the flute in Braj bhāshā.....	160
Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s adaptation	168
Conclusion	177
Appendix I: <i>Rahas</i> text	182
Appendix II: <i>Rās līlā</i> text	198
BIBLIOGRAPHY	206

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Introduction

The movie *Jaanisaar* (2015) depicts the interaction in Awadh between Hindus, Muslims and British officers in 1876. In a memorable scene, a member of the aristocracy recites a poem about Krishna's childhood and remarks: "The poet was Muslim, and yet he composed such magnificent verses on Krishna." His companion replies: "Hindu poets do the same, they praise the Prophet in a way that is unmatched by their Muslim counterparts." The director and screenwriter of *Jaanisaar*, Muzzafar 'Alī, presents a narrative in which Hindus and Muslims coexisted peacefully sharing their cultures, while the British are portrayed as promoting strategic divisions amongst the two communities. Along the same lines, another scene shows a Hindu king participating in a Muharram procession and asserting: "The religion of the people is the religion of the ruler. Hindus commemorate Muharram and Muslims celebrate Dīvālī. This has been the tradition. Nawāb Wājīd 'Alī Shāh participated in *rās līla* and he himself played the role of Krishna." This is one of several references in the film to Wājīd 'Alī Shāh (1822-1887), the legendary last ruler of Awadh, who lost his kingdom at the hands of the British government in 1856. He has been a controversial historical character whose responsibility in the Colonial takeover has been actively debated, leading to perceptions of Wājīd 'Alī Shāh as an incompetent king. Nevertheless, in *Jaanisaar* he is remembered as a tolerant king who was deeply engaged in the performing arts. This is a reflection of the fact that, in the popular imagination, he remains a figure who transcended Hindu-Muslim boundaries.

The movie's premise is accurate in that Wājīd 'Alī Shāh was a Shī'a Muslim who was indeed inspired by Hindu devotional theater. The king wrote and directed a dance-drama on the theme of Rādhā and Krishna, entitled *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah*. The current dissertation explores the ways in which Hindu culture is assimilated in *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah*, by comparing this

dance-drama to a *rās līlā* play from the same period and to a contemporary Lucknowi drama. The theme of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* is traced in time and across languages. The play is also translated, and examined within its cultural and historical context.

In this manner, this dissertation on the dramatic work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh addresses the broader issue of whether cultural production at the Lucknow court and the court in exile in Calcutta can be taken as an example of Hindu-Muslim assimilation. I argue in favor of such a correspondence and then examine how such cultural production influences our understanding of Hindi-Urdu drama and, more generally, of the development of modern Indian theater. What are the ways in which the narrative of intercultural dialogue can be framed? Does this imply a reevaluation of the assessment of Hindu and Muslim as two distinct cultures or does this suggest fluid boundaries between two groups with elements of shared cultural heritage?

I have translated and annotated two versions of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. The translation is based on the text of a lithograph of the play written in *nast‘alīq* and published in 1877 at the press of the king in Calcutta. This text was compared with a *devanāgarī* edition published in 1987. Although Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh authored several plays, the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* is the only extant script. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh calls this text “*rahas*”, which I translate alternately as “dance-drama” or “play”, even though the *rahas* is not divided in acts or scenes like Sanskrit theater or later modern theatrical texts. I provide more specifics about the term *rahas* in Chapter 3.

I consider several frameworks of analysis in this work. The first relates to the fact that the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* combines Hindu and Muslim literary traditions and has a variety of registers from Persianised Urdu to Braj bhāshā. The “hybridity” of the dramatic work by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh is one of its salient features. I borrow from Bakhtin the notion that in a literary work

there can be a dialogue of diverse social speeches and multiplicity of voices artistically organized (1981, 262). The differentiated speech of everyday language can be carefully reworked in literature (300). I explore in the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* the dialogue between literary works and the juxtaposition of genres and different registers.

Secondly, I emphasize the connections between categories of performance that have been previously understood as exclusive. The history of Indian theater is often characterized in terms of genres and periods; this framework becomes problematic since the result is an image of profoundly fragmented theater (Solomon 2009, 27). I investigate the interplay of courtly and religious modes of expression, as the dance-drama by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh reveals the interaction of diverse social settings.

Another framework recognizes that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s work occupies an awkward position between “modernity” and “tradition.” Modernity in Indian theater has been associated with the creation of new theatrical models influenced by European prototypes, including social and political themes, venues of performance, architecture of theaters, commercialization of tickets and a shift from the role of actor-manager to that of a director (Bhatia 2009, xvi-xvii). European performances must have influenced Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh, but it is not entirely obvious how. In addressing the question of modernity with respect to Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s work, it is first worthwhile considering whether Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh created a new theatrical model as he adapted and transformed existing performance and literary traditions. If we can make this case, then we can subsequently evaluate whether this departure overlaps with the above definition of modernity in theater.

Additionally, I consider the fact that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was not only a playwright and director, but also a sponsor of formal training in music and dance of the performers who participated in his artistic enterprises. Partha Chatterjee states that the cultivation of the arts

adopting new forms and preserving the indigenous genres became the agenda for late 19th century cultural nationalists in India. He stresses that the role of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in the narrative of Indian national modern culture needs to be rediscovered (2012, 220). Therefore, in the spirit of this call for further investigation, this project evaluates the role of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in Indian drama.

In addressing the questions and frameworks posed above, I embark on a series of comparative projects and discussions, outlined in the following paragraphs. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s performances made a lasting impression on theater and literature. I examine the autobiographical writings of the king and the text of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* to reconstruct the Rādhā-Krishna spectacles at the court. I also look for connections with the drama *Indar sabhā* (1853) by the contemporary Lucknowi author Amānat since this text reimagines the spectacles of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh (Taj 2007, 92; Hansen 1998, 7). The similarities between both authors help to understand the theatrical setting in the mid-19th century.

The dramatic work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh is considered the root of Urdu theater (Lal 2004, 50; Qureshi 1987; Marek 1984, 120; Taj 2007, 31; Trivedi 2010, 117), but I argue that the language labels also contribute to frame “Hindi” and “Urdu” theaters as if they were completely independent. The notion of “the roots” or the beginning of theater can also be problematized. The *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* is based on the story of the stolen flute, a popular theme in the Vaishnava temples. I look for the influence of the *rās līlā* in the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* and rethink the idea of linguistic boundaries.

The *rās līlā* has been researched by several scholars (Hawley 1981; Hein 1972; Mason 2009; Thielemann 1998; Swann 1990), but there are no available scripts before the 20th century. The *rās līlā* is an old performance tradition that has existed for centuries, but we cannot assume that it has been staged in the same fashion over a long period of time. This dissertation helps

historicize the tradition by including the text and translation of a previously unpublished and untranslated *rās līlā* play from a manuscript written in 1878. The author of the *rās līlā* play was a contemporary of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and a comparison of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* and the *rās līlā* drama presents a broader picture of theater in the 19th century.

Finally, I explore other dramatic texts and poetic works in Sanskrit and Braj bhāshā that have the same theme of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah*. The objective is to consider how the common theme of the stolen flute has been adapted in different contexts, periods and languages and whether Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh re-appropriated the tradition by using elements of devotional poetry and drama, transferring them to a secular stage.

Beyond its contribution to the study of North Indian drama through researching the interaction between languages, texts and traditions, this study also contributes to a more general question of interest to several academic disciplines, namely regarding the nature of pre-modern Hindu-Muslim interactions. One approach suggests that Muslims and Hindus are two different civilizations and that the historical record shows this antagonism has always existed. Marc Gaborieau, for example, holds such a view:

The deepest sentiments of opposition, on which both the Hindu and the Muslim communities found their identity, are traceable throughout the nine centuries of Indo-Muslim history: from the first testimony of Al-Beruni at the end of the 11th century to the famous Pakistan resolution in March 1940 and the address pronounced by Jinnah on that occasion (1985, 8).

According to this approach, the two communities are not just opposed in terms of religion, there is also a cultural divide and an idiom of hostility that has become deeply engrained. Established rituals of provocation are brought about through the key symbols of each religious group. The destruction of temples and mosques, sacred books and cow-killings are recurring flash

points in this struggle. The image of South Asia as a region of tolerance is dismissed as political propaganda. Conflict is overemphasized and convergences of these two groups are overlooked.

A different view accuses colonial historiography of exclusively considering the role of religion in Indian politics, disregarding all the other factors. The historian Gyanendra Pandey advocates such a view as he argues that colonial observers overgeneralized the strife between Hindus and Muslims in time and space and used this struggle as a justification for their rule (1990, 45). Muslims were represented as a single blood-thirsty invader and numerous castes, sects and Hindu communities were collapsed into the category of Hindus (1995, 380). Pandey believes that colonial rule has played a major role in the construction of the antagonistic identities between Muslims and Hindus.

Recent scholarship has questioned the exclusive categories of Hindu and Muslim, and searched for alternative models emphasizing specific moments of exchange.¹ Margrit Pernau, for example, highlights the multiplicity of social identities and the fact that they are not stable or fixed. She claims that historically in South Asia, Islam and Hinduism have not opposed each other as massive blocks with uniform and unequivocal identities (2005, 169). Rather, there is a fluidity of identities. This approach is very relevant for the project at hand.

The language used to describe the interaction between two cultures signals particular models. The term “syncretism” has been critically evaluated by several scholars such as Tony Stewart, for example. He concludes that the term carries an assumption that the two cultures were absolutely pure and that if they blended, either one culture completely interiorized the other or the two

¹ On this topic (see Dalmia and Faruqi 2014; Flood 2009; Gabbay 2010; Orsini 2010; Patel and Leonard 2011).

cultures produce a “cultural” son. That model presupposes essentialized, dehistoricized and monolithic entities (2001, 271-72). In order to avoid these pitfalls, in this project the terms “dialogue” or “dialogic” are preferred to denote a dynamic process in various directions. Therefore, I made conceptual choices that were deemed most suitable for analyzing an author whose work mirrored a plurality of traditions.

Wājid ‘Alī Shāh has been the subject of numerous academic studies. In English, Gaurishwar Bhatnagar’s *Awadh under Wājid ‘Alī Shāh* (1968) remains a landmark study as it concentrates on the political and administrative aspects of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s government with careful attention to historical details using sources in English, Urdu, and Persian. Mirza Ali Azhar’s *King Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh* (1982) focuses on the political and administrative interaction between the East India Company and the king, exploring the private life of the ruler, his last days in Calcutta, and the cultural background of Awadh. Most recently, *The Last King in India: Wajid Ali Shah* (2014) by Rosie Llewellyn-Jones looks deeply into the personal life of the king and his relation with the British. This biography extensively considers the life of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh in Calcutta, integrating the memoirs of the king and the archive of his British contemporaries.

Urdu research focuses on the work of the king as an artist, poet and patron. Mas‘ūd Ḥasan Rizvī’s *Urdū Dramā Aur Istej* “Urdu Drama and Stage” (1957) is a landmark in the study of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s dramatic work, putting him at the forefront of the beginning of Urdu drama. The book contains the script of one play and many references to the personal writings of the king; some of Rizvī’s claims are contested by Aslam Qureshi in *Wajid Ali Shah’s Theatrical Genius* (1987). Qureshi considers the theatrical work of the king and helpfully summarizes the major debates in Urdu criticism about the dramas of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh in English. Kaukab Qadr Sajjād ‘Alī Mīrzā’s *Wājid ‘Alī Shāh Kī Adabī Aur Saqāfatī Khidmāt* “Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s Literary and Cultural

Contributions” (1995) is a detailed study of all the literary works of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh; it has no equivalent in English. *Wajid Ali Shah: The Tragic King* by Ranbir Singh (2002) examines the role of the king as a patron and an artist.

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh also figures importantly in some broader studies of culture and drama, such as Katherine Hansen’s *Grounds for Play: The Nauṭānī Theater of North India* (1992) in which there are specific references to Lucknow and court theater during the pre-modern period. Other articles by Hansen also address this topic (1998, 2000). *The Court of Indar and the Rebirth of North Indian Drama* (2007) by Afroz Taj includes a chapter on folk theater and the dramatic work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. *The Making of the Awadh Culture* (2010) by Madhu Trivedi has valuable sections on drama and dance with references to Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and contemporary sources in Urdu and Persian. The doctoral dissertation *In Search of the Tawa’if in History: Courtesans, Nautch Girls and Celebrity Entertainers in India 1720s-1920s* (2008) by Shweta Sachdeva examines the history of the *tawā’if* including Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s harem. Most recently, Margaret Walker’s *India’s Kathak Dance in Historical Perspective* (2014) researches the development of *kathak* drawing attention to the 19th century and the contributions of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh to dance treatises. Allyn Miner’s *Sitar and Sarod in the 18th and 19th centuries* (1993) provides information about musicians at the court of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in the 19th century Awadh. Richard Williams’ doctoral dissertation *Hindustani Music between Awadh and Bengal c.1758-1905* (2014) investigates the musical scene comprising the performances at the court of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in Lucknow and the interaction with the local musicians during his exile of the king in Calcutta.

My dissertation complements these studies by focusing on the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah*. In Chapter 1 the life and work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh is contextualized and different perceptions of the king are examined on the basis of textual sources, including the king’s own works. There are two

sides to his character: that of the ruler (which is usually evaluated negatively) and that of the creative artist. The ways in which Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh understood his own historical circumstances and the nature of his artistic pursuits are explored. Chapter 2 focuses on the role of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh as one of the earliest exponents of modern Hindi-Urdu drama. It investigates the theatrical performances of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s plays and compares them with Amānat’s *Indar sabhā*, often said to be “the first Urdu play.” Chapter 3 concentrates on one of his works that exemplifies his adoption of Hindu themes: it contains the annotated translation of the two versions of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah*, which have never before been translated. Chapter 4 researches the dialogue between devotional and secular theater, particularly the influence of the Braj bhāshā *rās līlā* tradition in the dramatic work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. It includes the never before published text and translation of the *rās līlā* play *Vamśī naṭ līlā* by the devotional poet Lalit Kīśorī. Chapter 5 further explores the Indian influences on Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh by tracing the theme of the stolen flute in plays and poetry in Sanskrit and Braj bhāshā exposing Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s engagement with tradition. In the conclusion, I will argue that the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* was not bound by a rigid religious or linguistic standard.

CHAPTER 1 Visions of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, his life and his world

Wājid ‘Alī Shāh played an important role experimenting with dance, music and performance. He was a king, poet, dramatist and musician. He did not rule for a long time (1847-56); on losing his kingdom, he moved to Bengal where he maintained a flourishing court in exile. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh led a colorful life full of controversy. Far from being ordinary, he was a complex figure who has been blamed by some and celebrated by others for his actions. He has been accused of indulging in pleasure while disregarding his responsibility as a ruler. At the same time, he has been praised for his artistic sensibility and strong involvement in the performing arts. This chapter situates Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s life in a historical context, and provides an overview of his literary contributions. Furthermore, the different ways in which the king has been portrayed are discussed. The voice of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh is also incorporated through quoting autobiographical passages.

The History of Awadh and the life of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh

Wājid ‘Alī Shāh belonged to a Muslim Shī‘a family that was originally from Khorasan in what today is Iran. The ancestors of Wājid ‘Alī migrated to India in the 18th century and were in the service of the Mughal emperor. They were first appointed as *subahdārs* or “governors” of the province of Awadh (1722), but eventually became the dynastic sovereigns of an independent princely state (1819). These rulers were famous for their prosperity and patronage of a variety of artistic projects (Markel 2010, 17-18; Trivedi 2010, 1; Llewellyn-Jones 2006, 11). These sovereigns were known as the *Nawābs* of Awadh were in power from 1722 to 1856.

There were two major political changes during the 18th and 19th centuries that played an important role in the history of Awadh: the gradual disintegration of the Mughal Empire and the rising political control of the East India Company (Fisher 1987). On one hand, several states like Awadh were empowered as a result of the collapse of the Mughal Empire. On the other hand, the

East India Company became an important political player in the late 18th century and its power was embodied in the figure of the Governor-General of India. A new political office was created in Awadh and other states, under the title of “Residency”, to represent the East India Company at the regional level.

Gradually, the East India Company became more influential in the political matters of Awadh and had a stronger military presence. In 1764, the Mughal emperor was joined by the *Nawābs* of Awadh and Bengal in a battle against the Company. The outcome was the military victory of the British which forced the state of Awadh to grant economic concessions to the rising European power. The Residents became very involved in the administration of state. In the late 18th century the British pushed hard for territorial cessions and finally a treaty was negotiated in 1801 (Fisher 1993, 176). As a result of the treaty part of the territory of the kingdom of Awadh was lost and the army was significantly reduced while the involvement of Company increased. The *Nawābs* of Awadh, sidelined from politics, concentrated their energy and wealth on patronizing the arts and the building of a beautiful city. (Fisher, 1987, 92). Eventually, in 1856, the last *Nawāb* was declared an obstacle for the administration of the East India Company, the princely state of Awadh was annexed, and dynastic rule came to an end.

When Wājid ‘Alī Shāh was born, on July 30th in 1822, it was not evident that he would be a king since he was not in the line of succession. The great uncle of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, Ghāzī al-Dīn Ḥaidar, was the ruler at the time (r. 1814-1827) and was succeeded by his son, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1827-1837). However, after Ḥaidar’s death, the succession became problematic. Farīdūn Bakht was entitled to the throne, as the son of the king, but the East India Company supported instead Muḥammad ‘Alī Shāh, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s grandfather (Figure 1).

Muḥammad ‘Alī Shāh (r. 1837-1842) became the king agreeing to give large sums of money and even more administrative power to the Company (Fisher 1987, 168). After his death, his son Amjad ‘Alī Shāh (r.1842-1847) was enthroned and he declared Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh the heir apparent, despite the fact that the eldest son was Muṣṭafā ‘Alī. The justification was that Muṣṭafā ‘Alī’s mother was a slave (Bhatnagar 1968, 92). The rulers of Awadh starting with Ghāzī al-Dīn Ḥaidar had coronation ceremonies that included elements from Mughal, Shī‘a and European traditions (Fisher 1987, 129). Upon the death of Amjad ‘Alī Shāh in 1847, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was crowned the new monarch at the age of 25.

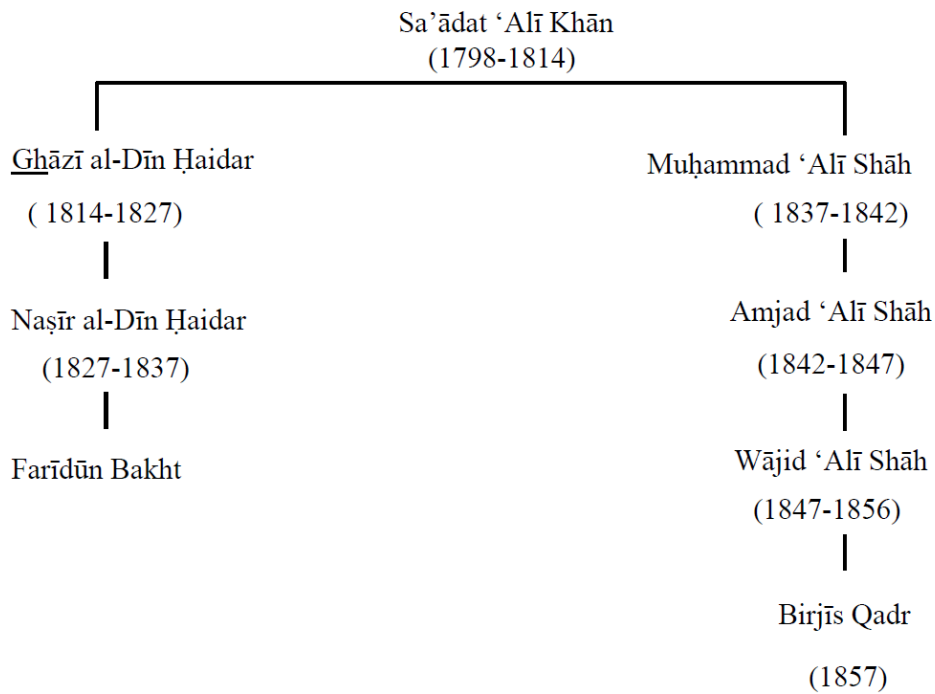


Figure 1 Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s lineage (from Fisher 1987, 249)

In his autobiographical work *‘Ishq nāmāh* (1846-49), Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh described his ascension to the throne in the following way:

I went to the upper floor of the house and said the prayers of gratitude and the Mujtahid-ul 'Asar² placed the crown upon my head. I requested the ascension to the throne, and all the officers of state and clerks present offered gifts. This was accompanied by gun salutes. I remained seated on the throne for a few moments. Because I was the very epitome of pain and sorrow and my tears could not be held back for even a moment, I went to the residence behind the *bārādarī* to rest. As that night I did not have the company of the *parīs*³ and mistresses, with the aid of Muḥammad Mo'atamad Khān I ordered a token on behalf of each *parī* and each *begam*, and making a necklace out of them, wore it around my neck. On the second day, I distinguished the special court favorites and other people with swords, robes of honor, and appropriate titles (Siddīqī 1998, 124).

An illustration of the event figures in a royal manuscript of the text (Figure 2). The painting shows all the British officers that were present; it reflects the constant intervention of the Company and the multiplicity of cultures that were mixed at the court. The Company assumed an important role in the political control of the state during those years with the goal of taking over Awadh.

There are many sources about Wājid 'Alī Shāh's rule due to the official British presence and their intentions of annexation. There were three formal residents in Lucknow during 1847-56: Archibald Richmond, William Henry Sleeman and James Outram. They reported to the successive Governor-Generals of India, who were Henry Hardinge and Lord Dalhousie during this period. The Residency constantly reported in great detail about the activities of the king. Joseph Fayerer worked at the Residency in Lucknow and in his book *Recollections of My Life*, he reflects about the interaction with the court:

Former kings had been in the habit of returning these visits [to the Residents], but Wajid Ali never left his own palace. He was very fat and short winded, though but thirty-two years of age. Our visits were only occasional, and there had never been a time in which the communications between the Residency and the Court were so restricted. The fact was that things had not been going well, and it was felt that the time was approaching when the often threatened interference of the British Government was imminent. It became more evident as time went on that things were not progressing satisfactorily (Fayerer 1900, 90-1).

² The chief judge of the High Court of Awadh.

³ This is a reference to the performer females whom he took in temporary marriage.

In 1856 Awadh was annexed and the rule of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh came to an end. The mother and younger brother of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh embarked on a trip to London in an attempt to recover the kingdom. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh was not able to accompany them due to his bad health. John William Kaye, a contemporary British officer in India, describes the complaints of the *Nawābī* family as follows:

Yet men and, redder shame still, feeble Zenana-bred women had brought this charge against the strong government of the British, before the Kingdom of Oudh was marked for extinction; and now again the same complaint of supplemental cruelties and indignities, more galling than the one great wrong itself, went up for Wajid Ali, or was uttered in his name. It was charged against us that our officers had turned the stately palaces of Lakhnao into stalls and kennels, that delicate women, the daughters or the companions of kings, had been sent adrift, homeless and helpless, that treasure houses had been violently broken open and despoiled, that the private property of the royal family had been sent to the hammer, and that other vile things had been done to the King’s people, but far more disgraceful to our own (Kaye 1907, 297).

Wājid ‘Alī Shāh left Lucknow and lived in exile in Calcutta where he mourned the lost kingdom. His mother, brother and young niece sadly died in Europe without achieving the goal of their journey (Llewellyn-Jones 2014, 46). In his autobiographical text *Huzun-e Akhtar* or the “*Lamentation of Akhtar*” (1857-8) Wājid ‘Alī Shāh narrates the events that led to the annexation:

bas ab tark-e tamhīd kar ae javān
sunā ibtidā se to yeh dāstān

Well now, put aside your conjecture, O young man,
Narrate this story from the beginning.

yeh wājid ‘alī ibn-e amjad ‘alī
sunātā hai ab dāstān ranj kī

This Wājid ‘Alī, son of Amjad Alī,
Tells now the story of grief.

ki jab das baras sulṭanat ko hue
jo tāl ‘e the bedār sone lage

That when ten years of the rule had passed,
The fates that were once watchful began to sleep,

huā hukam janaral gavernar yeh yār
karo sulṭanat ko khalā ek bār

This was the order of the Governor General, friend,
“Clear out the kingdom at once.”

jo the mulk mainṅ baiṭhte sah karor
uskī yeh thī badshāhī yeh zor

The three “crores” who sat in the kingdom,
This was their dominion, their power.

jaḡā kash kā shāh –e awadh nām hai
hukūmat kā ākhir yeh anjām hai

The name of the oppressed one is the king of Awadh
In the end, this was the fate of (my) rule.

jo woh lāṭ dalhozi us waqt the
mazāmīn unhoṅ ne ye khaṭ meṅ likhe

That Lord Dalhousie, who was there at the time,
He wrote these contents in the letter

ra ‘āyā bahut tum se nārāz hai
tumhārī riyāsat hai badnām shai

The subjects are very angry with you,
Your kingdom is a defamed one.

ra ‘āyā na dekhenge hargiz tabāh
faqaṭ nām ke tum raho badshāh

We will not see the subjects ruined at any cost,
You will remain king solely in name.

mahinah har ek māh ek lakh kā
milegā tumhīn kuch nahīn shak zarā

Month by month, one lakh
You will receive, without the slightest doubt.

rezīdanṭ jarnel oṭram jo the

gornar kā khaṭ mujh ko woh de gaye

General Otram, who was the Resident,
Gave me the Governor's letter.

*huā ghar meñ kuhrām sunkar yeh bāt
woh din do pahar ho gayī sārī rāt*

There was lamentation at home upon hearing this,
That day (from) midday (through) the entire night.

*woh lāye the us tarah kī sāth fauj
ki jis tarah daryā kī āī hai mauj*

He brought with him an army in the same way
As waves come with the sea.

*yahān juz iṭā 'at na thā dil meñ sharr
na thī aise din kī to hargiz khabar*

Besides obedience, there was no evil in my heart,
There was no sign whatsoever that such a day would come.

*yeh bandha bahut un dinoñ thā 'alī
kahā dil ne kyā socūñ uskī sabīl*

This humble servant was much indisposed in those days,
The heart said "What do I think is the way forward?"

*'alī naqī khān mere the wazīr
wohī mere har hāl meñ the mushīr*

'Alī Naqī Khān was my vizier,
He was the counselor in all affairs.

*mere dil meñ ātā thā har dam khayāl
jo honā thā woh ho cukā kyā malāl*

In my heart the notion would always arise:
Whatever was to be has happened, why grieve?

*karo muhar tum rāzī-nāma pe ab
gayī sultanat to gayī besabab*

Put a stamp now on the agreement
The kingdom is gone, though gone without justification.

*magar sāre ghar ne na chorā mujhe
dubāyā darāyā jhinjhorā mujhe*

But all the house did not leave me (in peace):
They drowned, scared, hounded me.

*ra'āyā yeh sab kahtī thī wāh wāh
kiyā ham ko us bādshah ne tabāh*

All the subjects would say “Wonderful, wonderful!
That king ruined us!”

*yeh jāe jo faryād ko khūb hai
yeh nā-ḥaq jo rāzī ho ma'yūb hai (Khān 1981, 117-18)*

Let him go about whom there is much to complain, it is fine.
This unjust one who accepts is wrong.

Wājid 'Alī Shāh portrays himself as a victim of the circumstances and claimed he had no choice but to give up his kingdom. He did not think he was responsible for the annexation, but he acknowledged that he was perceived as a bad king by his subjects and the British government. He was a king in name only. In contrast, the British discussed the fact that he would keep the kingly title and the way in which the situation with the “monarchs retired from business” should be handled. A short article entitled “The Oude Question” was published after the annexation:

...it is not advisable to perpetuate or to prolong the tenure of the royal title as past experience has abundantly demonstrated the inconvenience of allowing an empty nominal or titular sovereignty to descend from generation to generation in the case of these “monarchs retired from business”. Such titles are believed to foster humiliating recollections, and to engender delusive hopes. The kingly title will accordingly die a natural death with the present titular sovereign, Wajid Ali Shah; at all events no promise has been made to the contrary. The royal descendants will enjoy a certain stipend, as the twelve lacs of rupees settled on the ex-King will descend as a hereditary grant. The young princes are to be educated to become useful citizens... (*Hampshire Advertiser*, February 14, 1857).

Wājid 'Alī Shāh had a big family as he married a large number of women. Shī'a doctrine distinguishes between permanent (*nikāḥ*) and temporal (*mut'ah*) marriage. A Shī'a Muslim man is

allowed to have as many *mut‘ah* wives as he desires. The children of the temporary marriage are considered legitimate (Haeri 1989, 2). Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s first *nikāh* wife was Khās Maḥal; she belonged to a noble family and the marriage took place in 1837.⁴ The second *nikāh* wife was Akhtar Maḥal, daughter of the minister ‘Alī Naqī Khān; she married the king in 1851. In addition, the king married many women under the contract of *mut‘ah*; during his entire life he married approximately 375 women (Llewellyn-Jones 2014, 127-32). The *mut‘ah* wives came from a variety of backgrounds; many were performers who participated in the king’s artistic enterprises. The *‘Ishq nāmāh* is a useful source to learn about the backgrounds of the multiple wives of the king.

Eventually the royal family and their interest in the former kingdom became a problem. Shortly after Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh arrived in Calcutta, the uprising of 1857 broke out. The rebellion spread to Lucknow and the Residency became a battle ground. One of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s *mut‘ah* wives, Ḥaṣrat Maḥal,⁵ actively participated in the revolt. Her son Birjīs Qadr was declared the new king. Although Birjīs Qadr was just a boy, still he was a symbol of the ruling dynasty. Eventually, Ḥaṣrat Maḥal and Birjīs Qadr escaped from Lucknow and lived in Kathmandu. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was accused of partaking in these events and as a result he was arrested and remained imprisoned in Fort William for two years. It was during this time in jail that he wrote *Ḥuzun-e Akhtar*. In this text he also speaks about his reaction to the accusations:

*siktar jo the lāṭ ke peshkār
woh kahne lage mujh se e shahryār*

The secretary who was deputy to the Lord

⁴ Khās Maḥal is also remembered as a poet who composed *ghazal*, *maṣnawī* and *ṭhumrī* (Santha 1980, 218). For more information, (see Williams 2014, 176-206).

⁵ She has become a legendary figure (see Sinha 2014 and Sa‘īd 2006; novels about her Devsare 1973; Kānta 2008 and Mourad 2010 and her letters in Mīrzā 2004).

Began to tell me, “Oh king,

*ki cale mere sāth yeh hukm hai
na kijē sivā us ke ab koi she*

Come with me, this is an order,
Do not do anything other than that.”

*kahā main ne kyā vajah farmāie
qaṣūr āp bande kā batlāie*

I said, “Please inform me what is the cause
Pray tell the fault of your humble servant.”

*kahā hukm sarkār hai yeh huā
ki kuch shabah sarkār ko ā gayā*

He said, “It is a government order, this happened
That something similar (i.e. a similar order) came down to the government.”

*jo thā eḍmonston sikrtar kā nām
main karne lagā un se rokar kalām*

I began to cry and argue with
the secretary whose name was Edmonstone.

*ki merā to hargiz nahīn hai qaṣūr
main jhagroñ se rahtā huñ dūr dūr*

“There was no fault of mine at all,
I stay very far away from fights.

*mufaṣṣil to batlāie is kā hāl
mujhe ranj hai is sukhan se kamāl*

Tell me clearly the state of this;
I am deeply distressed by these words.

*ki mujh se ilāhī huī kyā khaṭā
hue lāṭ ṣāhib jo mujh par khafā*

What mistake, o God, have I committed
That the Lord Sahib is displeased with me?”

*unhoñ ne kahā itnā m‘alūm hai
ki gheroñ kī shirkat kī kuch dhūm hai*

He said, “I know this much,
That there is a report of an alliance with others.”

main khāne lagā roke qasmeñ shadīd
ki yeh iftirā o ham se hai ba’īd (Khān 1981, 123)

I began to cry and swear profusely
That this slander falls far from me.

The former king was finally released and lived in his house in Matya Burj in the neighborhood of Garden Reach for the rest of his life. He received a large monthly stipend from the British government; he was one of the highest pensioners in India (Llewellyn-Jones 2014, 156). The Lukhnowī writer and chronicler ‘Abd ul- Halīm Sharar (1860-1926) lived in Matya Burj as a courtier and described the extravagances that took place at the house. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh had a private zoo with birds, monkeys, snakes, giraffes, leopards amongst many other animals. The residence had several buildings where the *mut’ah* wives, children and courtiers lived. Poetry recitation, storytelling and artistic spectacles were also staged in this location (Sharar 1965, 72-87). In Matya Burj Wājid ‘Alī Shāh reproduced as much as he could of the luxurious life of the ruling class. He died on 21st September 1887; the following obituary was published in a British newspaper:

The corpse lay in state till the funeral in the Sultanat Khana where the Begums and women of the harem, the children, and numerous relatives attended to mourn over the body, which was wrapped in several sheets of fine linen on which the Koran had been written in red Arabic characters. This is reported to have been brought especially from Bagdad. The funeral took place at about 10 o’clock in the evening. Opposite the palace large groups of Mohammedans collected in a token of respect. Two companies of a native regiment were present at the interment, which took place at the Imambarah. The funeral procession consisted chiefly of the late king’s retainers, dressed in blue as a batch of mourning, and expressing lamentation by the beating of hands and shrill utterances of woe. The bier was born aloft under a green canopy supported at the four corners by the spears. Wajid Ali Shah who was born in 1822 leaves behind him two queens, a large number of concubines, and over three dozen putative children, of whom 20 are alleged to be sons. The members of his harem are numbered by hundreds. Garden Reach where the king lived, was at the time the pleasantest and most fashionable suburb of Calcutta; but the residence of the king with the attendance of a large colony of quasi-military retainers, rendered the neighborhood intolerable for Europeans. The king’s personal life is thus

described. With the domain of his palace he ruled with absolute sway his 7,000 retainers. He was strenuously wedded to all the insignia and outward pomp of Oriental sovereign power. He held Court and received regal honours, created titled nobles from the lowest ranks, and he occupied at different times different buildings as a sort of make believe change of residence. He possessed a splendid menagerie, and his favorite outdoor pursuit was to watch the feeding of animals. He was highly accomplished as a scientific musician, a poet of considerable ability and an expert dancer. The king cherished a rancorous dislike of Europeans and rigidly abstained from all intercourse with the Viceregal Court and Calcutta society. He died heavily indebted, and it is to be hoped that the creditors will be held to have the first claim for the consideration of the Government (*Whistable Times and Harne Bay Herald*, October 1st 1877).

This piece provides further insight about the British perspective on the king and his intricate relation with the Colonial government. The excesses and his artistic sensibility were two important sides of his life that were discussed on the occasion of his death. In all the sources considered, the contrast in the tone of writing by the British and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh is remarkable. For the British, the choices in lifestyle of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh attracted quite a bit of attention, but there was an appreciation of his abilities as well.

The literary work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh

In this section, I provided an introduction to the works of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh framing his contributions in the literary and artistic scene of Awadh. During their rule, the *Nawābs* of Awadh actively cultivated the arts at their court: there was great interest in poetry, dance, music, decorative arts, painting, and architecture. Concurrently, as a result of internal political struggles and invasions of the Mughal Empire many artists were force to leave Delhi. As a result, writers of Urdu and Persian migrated to Lucknow where they created a lively environment for the production and performance of poetry, with court patronage (Naim and Petievich 1997, 166-7). Subsequently, Lucknow became one of the most important cities for the development of Urdu literature.

There were specific genres that were prominent in Awadh; one of them was the *marṣiya*, or “elegy” about the death of the Prophet’s grandsons, Ḥusain and Ḥasan in the battle of Karbala,

a critical event for Shī‘a Muslims. The recitation of *marṣiya* during the month of Muharram reflected the Shī‘a legacy and development of Urdu language in Awadh (Trivedi 2010, 55). Thus, the *Nawābs* clearly emphasized their Shī‘a identity in contrast to the Sunnī identity of the Mughals (Fisher 1987, 128). Rituals associated with the commemoration of the martyrs of the battle of Karbala were popular in Lucknow since the time of Āṣaf al-Daulāh, and could possibly be considered the origin of Urdu theater (Marek 1984, 118).

In the realm of narrative literary production there were other relevant genres. *Maṣṇawī*, a narrative poem with rhyming couplets, was a favorite form. A variety of themes were explored from religious to supernatural, satire, social issues and popular pastimes (Trivedi 2010, 83). Also *qiṣṣah*, a fantastic tale and *dāstān*, a longer heroic romance with kings, demons and fairies were popular in Awadh (Naim and Petievich 1997, 170). The *dāstāns* were traditionally performed by a story-teller, though later on, they were published (Pritchett 1991, 8-21). *Maṣṇawī*, *qiṣṣah* and *dāstān* became the sources for theatrical performance.

The musicians and dancers of Delhi also performed in Awadh, which inherited the Mughal Empire’s performance practices. There was also a strong European presence and, as a result, Lucknow became a center for musical exchanges (Manuel 2010, 247). Āṣaf al-Daulāh and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1827-1837), particularly, were great patrons of singers and dancers (Trivedi 2010, 110). The patronage brought many artists together and in due course a distinct Lucknowi style emerged.

Born into this literary and cultural milieu, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh became a prolific writer and authored more than 40 books in Urdu, Persian and Early Hindi. He tried his hand at the main forms of Urdu poetry *marṣiya*, *maṣṇawī*, *ghazal*, *qit‘a* and *rubā‘ī*. He also explored musical genres such as *ṭhumrī*, *drupad* and *dādrā*, amongst many others. He composed musical plays and wrote about

music, dance, religious history and personal events. This is an outline of the literary work of the king; it does not include all the writings of the author.

I mainly follow the information in Kaukab Qadr Sajjād ‘Alī Mīrzā’s *Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh kī Adabī aur Saqāfatī Khidmāt* “*Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s Literary and Cultural Contributions*” (1995). Mīrzā studied most of the extant work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and lists the details of 42 works. He also states which books were lithographed in the royal press in Lucknow and Calcutta.⁶ I have also consulted *Sources on Awadh from 1722 to 1856* (2004) by Hamid Afad Qureshi which contains the location, dates and basic facts about many of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s writings. There are variations on the dates of texts; discrepancies may be related to the fact that some works were written over several years and dates of composition differ from the printing year. The dates of the literary works in this overview are taken from Mīrzā (1995).

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s oeuvre is multilingual and extensive, and in some cases, it is hard to label the language. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh wrote with the *takhalluṣ* or “penname” of *Akhtar* which means “star” in Persian, also under the name of *Akhtar Piyā*. He translated his own work from Persian to Urdu; some of these books retain the same title in both languages. He also translated the work of others from Persian into Urdu. An attendant of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh at his library in Calcutta stated that the king translated Persian prose into Urdu poetry easily “with such speed as if he was copying it” (Quoted in Azhar 1982, 375). Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh used different language registers in one text and recycled portions of one book in others. In his poetry collections there are overlaps and changes in reused materials, which add to the complexity of the study of this literary corpus.

⁶ For a table with this information (see Mīrzā 1995, 111-13).

There are several relevant texts that preserve the legacy of the king in the realm of music, dance, and the performing arts. The first one is *Şawt al-Mubāarak* written in Persian prose in 1851-2 (1267 AH)⁷ which deals with musicological concepts, instruments, dance and performance. *Nājo* 1869 (1285- 6 AH) and *Dulhan* 1873 (1289 AH) is a collection of songs in different registers of early Hindi by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh and other authors. The genres of the collections include *ṭhumrī*, *drupad*, *sāvan*, *dādra*, *khāyal*, amongst others. *Nājo* was published by Yogesh Prarvīn in a *devanāgarī* edition in 1989.

The book *Banī* was composed in 1875 (1291 AH), but it was not printed until 1877 in the royal press in Calcutta. The text has some overlap with *Şawt al-Mubāarak*, but includes additional material. The first two sections of *Banī* deal with the musicological concepts of *sur* and *tāl*. The third section illustrates a series of dance postures called *gats*. The fourth section explores *rahas*, a concept related to dance and drama.⁸ This section is divided in two: the first part contains the thirty-six choreographies created by the author that he called *rahas*. The second part contains two versions of a dance-drama also labeled *rahas*. The two versions of the *rahas* are the focus of this dissertation. The fifth section entitled *naql* or “anecdote” contains diverse materials. One part of this section names the poets whom Wājid ‘Alī Shāh knew, providing information about them and a list of forty-six works that he himself had written up to that date (1877, 241-243f; 1987, 143-44). This is interesting for our purpose as it gives us an idea of his works and even lists a few that are now lost. Other parts of *naql* are humorous succinct stories. The sixth section has insights about performances and performers in the house of the king in Calcutta. The text uses a range of linguistic

⁷ I am following the dates of Mīrzā which are given in the Islamic Hijrī calendar here between brackets. Since the publication dates do not have specific months and days, the Gregorian year is an approximation. The conversion is based on Gregorian year = 0.967*Hijrī+626.

⁸ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the term.

registers from Persianised Urdu to different kinds of early Hindi. Roshan Taqī and Krishna Mohan Saxenā edited the *Banī* in devanāgarī in 1987.

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh wrote three *dāstānī maṣnawīs*, narrative poems about fantastic characters, including fairies and princes: *Āfsānah-e ‘ishq* 1839-40 (1255 AH) *Daryā-e t’ashuq* 1840-1 (1256 AH) and *Baḥr-e ulfat* 1840-1 (1256 AH). An illustrated copy of *Daryā-e t’ashuq* is kept at the British Library; an electronic copy of the lithograph of the text without illustrations is available through Hathi Trust (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89115324253;view=1up;seq=6>). There is an illustrated manuscript of *Baḥr-e ulfat* in the British Library as well.

Several works of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh contain autobiographical information, but certain texts are mainly a retelling of the life events of the king. The *‘Ishq nāmah* 1846-49 (1263-65 AH) was first written in Persian prose. According to Mīrzā this text was not lithographed in the royal press and it remained in manuscript format (Mīrzā 1995, 111). *‘Ishq nāmah* has been edited and translated by scholars into Urdu and Hindi under different names: *Maḥal Khāna-i Shāhī* by Mīrzā Fidā ‘Alī (1934)⁹, *Parī Khāna* by Tahsin Khān Sarwanī (1958) and *Parī Khāna* by Shakīl Siddīqī (1998). Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh also translated the *‘Ishq nāmah* into Urdu, under the same title in 1849-50 (1266 AH), giving it a *maṣnawī* form with rhyming couplets. There is an illustrated version of this text preserved at the Windsor Castle.

Other autobiographical works include *Huzun-e Akhtar* 1858 (1274 AH) written in Urdu in the *maṣnawī* form; it describes the events related to the annexation of Awadh and the imprisonment of the king. It was written during the time that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was in jail. The text was edited by Nawal Kishore Press in 1921 and by Amjad ‘Alī Khān in 1981 with the title *Maṣnawī Huzun-e*

⁹ Qureshi (2004, 19) notes that the first edition of this translation was published in 1914 and there were 4 subsequent editions.

Akhtar: *Wājid ‘Alī Shāh kī āp bītī*. When he was still in prison, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh also narrated details about his personal life in *Baḥr-e Mukhtalif* 1858-9 (1275 AH), written in Urdu using different meters. Attributed to Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, although the authorship is not certain, is *Jawāb-e Blue Book*¹⁰ 1856-7 (1273 AH) (Bhatnagar 1968, 74). This text is a response in Urdu to the accusations of the British against the king.

The life of the prophet, religious elegies and theology were prominent in Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s writing. *Haibat-e Haiderī* 1848-9 (1265 AH) written in a *maṣnawī* form in Urdu deals with religious events concerning the prophet and holy wars. *Ṣaḥīfa-e Sulṭāniyah* 1869-70 (1286 AH), written in Persian is related to the *Qurān* as well as incidents of the life of the author. *Ṣibāt ul-Qulūb* 1883-7(1300-4 AH) contains a translation from Persian into Urdu by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh. The translated text is *Ḥayāt al-Qolūb*, a 17th century Shī‘a Persian work by Moḥammad Bāqer Majlesi. The author was an important Shī‘a theologian and the text dealt with pre-Islamic prophets, Muḥammad and the Twelve Imāms (Jahn 1968, 450). *Riyāz ul-Uqba* 1883 (1300 AH) has a collection of *marṣiyas* or “elegies” written by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh and this genre is also found in *Tosha-e Akhṛat* 1850-1882 (1267-99 AH). A selection of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s *marṣiyas* was edited by Sayyid Manẓar Ḥusain Kāẓmī along with a study of the king’s Urdu poetry and published under the title *Wājid ‘Alī Shāh: Unke Shā‘irī aur Marṣiye* in 1991-2.¹¹

There are many collections of the Urdu poetry of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh. Among them are: *Mulke Akhtar* 1854-78(1291-95 AH) has *ghazal*, *qit‘a* and *rubā‘ī*, *Qamar Mazmūn* 1859-1864 (1276-81 AH) *rubā‘ī*, *marṣiya* and *ghazal*. *Guldastah-e ‘Ashiqān* 1839-1843 (1255-59 AH) and *Divān-e*

¹⁰ It is not in the list of the books in *Banī*.

¹¹ For a list of 62 works by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh and its contents (see Kāẓmī 1991-2, 340-44).

Mubārak 1839-1856 (1255-73 AH) have collections of *ghazals*; *Kullīyāt-e Som* 1839-1856 (1255-73 AH), and *Kullīyāt-e Akhtarī* 1839-1861 (1255-78 AH) are compendia of several poetic works.

Wājid ‘Alī Shāh also explored metric and lexicon. He wrote two books about prosody; the first one is a treatise about meter in Urdu and is called *Irshād-e Khāqānī* 1851-53 (1267-9 AH). The second one, on the same subject, is in Persian and is named *Juhar-e Urūz*. It was composed in 1873-4 (1290 AH). Another interesting project that Wājid ‘Alī Shāh undertook was the compilation of a dictionary in Persian titled *Malāzul Kalmāt* 1880-1 (1297 AH). The dictionary included words in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Kashmiri, Sanskrit, Urdu, Panjabi, Bangla, and Braj (see Mīrzā 1995, 316-20).

There are numerous letters written by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh; these are a promising source to know about his life. *Tārīkh-e Mumtāz composed in 1856-9 (1272-76 AH)* contains Persian and Urdu letters along with poetry addressed to one of the king’s wives Mumtāz Jahān Begam. An illustrated version of this text is preserved at the British Library. The collection was published in 1952 by Muḥammad Baqar under the name *Tārīkh-e Mumtāz: Ākhirī Tājdār-e Awadh Wājid ‘Alī Shāh Ke Khuṭūṭ Apnī Begum Aklīl Maḥall Ke Nām*. The text *Tārīkh-e Nūr* 1856 (1272 AH) collects the Urdu letters written to Nūr-e Zamānī Begum and was published in 1972 by Kalimuddin Ahmed. *Tārīkh-e Ghizzāla* 1858-9 (1275 AH) collects letters of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh to Nawāb Malka Ghizzāla; these letters were sent from Calcutta to Lucknow. This woman was a protégé of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh¹². *Tārīkh-e Muzahhab* has the letters to Shedā Begum 1855-56 (1272-73 AH). Although Qureshi claims that *Tārīkh-e Mashghalah* is yet to be traced (2004, 46), this collection of letters was published by Muḥammad Ikrām Cughṭāī in 1985. These letters are addressed to another wife,

¹² Hamid Afaq Qureshi (2004, 46) mentions an edition of this collection of letters edited by Syed Wasi Bilgrami published in Agra in 1914.

Nawāb Ābādī Jān Begum. The first letter was written in 1856 (1272 AH) when he was in his house in Calcutta and the last one after Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was released from prison (Cughtāī 1985, 22). The wives of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh also wrote to him; the collection *Tārīkh-e Firāq* 1858-60 (1275-6 AH) has the letters from Nūrozī Begum and *Tārīkh-e Jamshīdī* 1858-60 (1275-76 AH) the letters from Jamshīd Begum. A collection of the letters of Awadh’s begums was edited by Intizzāmullāh Shihābī in 1948 under the title *Begamāt-e Avadh ke Khuṭūṭ*.

Perceptions of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh: Views on the government

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was accused of not caring for his government and being interested only in his own enjoyment. This is a way in which he was imagined in fiction and described in British official reports and newspaper writing. The faulty government of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and the laziness of the aristocracy of Lucknow has been immortalized in an influential short story by Premchand *Shatraj ke khilāḍī* published in 1924.¹³ The movie adaptation by Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Ray entitled *The chess players* (1977) has become a popular reference for the period and king in the last decades.¹⁴ The negative assessment of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was first endorsed by the foreign rule and prevailed amongst the local population.

The allusions to the excesses of the royalty can be found in the literature contemporaneous with Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. The Lucknowi author Amānat was a pious Muslim who wrote *marṣiya* and in other poetic religious genres, but he gained a large audience outside of the court after writing the play *Indar sabhā* (1853). This drama is a celebration of the court culture and the lavish spectacles of the king. However, on account of this departure from religious literature, Amānat felt that the work was improper and signed it under a different penname (Taj 2007, 433). While the

¹³ For a comparison of the Hindi and Urdu versions of the story (see Davis 2015).

¹⁴ For scholarship on the film (see Dube 2005; Pritchett 1986).

play clearly dwells on the performances, there are also passages which seem to criticize the ruling class, indicating an ambivalence on the part of the author. In the play, the king Indar has a court of female dancers in a fashion very similar to Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. One of the main characters, a prince named Gulfām, is from *Akhtar nagar*, “the city of *Akhtar*”. As *Akhtar* is the penname of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh, *Akhtar nagar* seems to allude to Lucknow (207). When prince Gulfām is asked what he does for a living, he responds:

maḥaloñ meñ rahtā hūñ ‘aish hai merā kām
shahzādah hūñ hind kā nām merā gulfām (Taj 2007, 302)

I live in palaces, luxurious living is my job
I am a prince of India and my name is Gulfām.

In addition to the perceptions of Amānat, the British also expressed their opinions about Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. The luxurious life of the king in Lucknow definitely stood out to those who were in contact with it. Harriet Tytler, wife of a British soldier, wrote a book about her experiences in India from 1828 to 1858. She was invited to have breakfast at *Qaişerbāgh*, the palace of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh; these were the impressions in her memoir:

The King and his family were gorgeously attired in karcob (cloth of gold) and jewels. Such strings of pearls, emeralds and diamonds we never have before seen. Some of the emeralds were the size of large marbles, but so badly cut that they only looked like bits of glass. The diamonds too, though immense, were cut into thin, flat ones and made no more show than pieces of crystal would have done. Nevertheless, these jewels are very costly and gorgeous. The pearls were simply splendid, both in size and color. The King had strings and strings of these from the neck to below the waist.

He never deigned to partake of a single particle of the food on the table. All he did was to chew pawn. The pawn bearer stood behind him, as did a number of other attendants... (Satin and Tytler 1986, 65).

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s excessive spending was associated with his corrupt government by the British. It was a source of criticism for those who were searching for excuses to overthrow the king. The argument was that the resources were being drained causing financial trouble. Nevertheless, there are different opinions on this issue. According to Bhatnagar, Wājīd ‘Alī

Shāh did not request loans from the Company and after the annexation he did not leave large debts behind. Bhatnagar states that the expenditure claimed by British officers was fictitious and cites documents in which debts were settled (1968, 84). Therefore, the economic maladministration is a matter of debate.

The British also expressed moral outrage about the number of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s wives as another excuse to disqualify him as a ruler. After the takeover of Awadh, a magazine article discussed the princely state and multiple spouses of the king. The complaint against the royal family concerned the expense of supporting such a large number of people:

It is impossible to determine the number of the King’s Begums. They have been variously estimated from one to four hundred, but the former estimate is perhaps not far wrong. Besides his permanent wives, his Majesty has many temporary wives by *mootah* who may be discarded after a given period, or bestowed, as a mark of honour upon a faithful servant. As all these ladies and their attendants have to be handsomely provided for, his Majesty’s connubial propensities add seriously to the expenses of the royal houses (sic?). And moreover as every one of these wives, whether by *beah* or *mootah*, has brothers, or cousins, or other relatives, it may be imagined how large a portion of the public revenue was uselessly dissipated (*Dublin University Magazine* 1857, 116).

Sleeman, the Resident of Lucknow, traveled through the kingdom and some of his observations were recorded in *A journey through the kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, later published in 1858 in London. Although he did not see Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in a positive light, he was not in favor of the annexation (Bhatnagar 1968, 87). He reported the activities of the king as “proof” of his irresponsibility as a monarch. In a letter to Dalhousie dated in 1849 he wrote:

The present King has, from the time he ascended the throne, manifested a determination to take no share whatever in the conduct of affairs; to spend the whole of his time among singers and eunuchs, and the women whom they provide for his amusement; and carefully to exclude from access, all who suffer from the maladministration of his servants, or who could and would tell him what was done by the one and suffered by the other... I find that the King’s brother is altogether incompetent for anything like business or responsibility. The minister has no single quality that a minister ought to have; and the King cannot be considered to be in a sound state of mind. (Sleeman 1858, lxviii-lxix).

Dalhousie enforced the “Doctrine of Lapse” by which a territory could be annexed if the king was considered unsuitable to rule. At the end, it was his decision to proceed with the annexation. Sleeman, Outram, and Richmond wrote reports that helped determine that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was not competent (Azhar 1982, 380). In May 1855 Dalhousie wrote about the affairs in Awadh:

General Outram, in pursuance of instructions with which he was furnished, has sent up a report on the condition of Oude. It seems impossible that the home authorities can any longer hesitate to overthrow this fortress of corruption and infamous misgovernment. I should not mind doing it as a parting coup. But I doubt the people at home having the pluck to sanction it, and I can’t find a pretext for doing it without sanction. The King won’t offend or quarrel with us, and will take any amount of kicking without being rebellious (Baird 1910, 344).

The “infamous misgovernment” of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh played a role in the validation of annexation, and prevailed in the construction of the historical figure later on. The playwright Bhāratendu Hariścandra (1850-1885) made several references to the Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in his play *Vishasya vishamaushadham* or “Poison is the remedy for poison” published in his magazine *Harishchandracandrikā* in 1876. This play is a *bhaṇa* or “monologue” about the local ruler of Baroda named Mālharav Gāyakvār. This king ascended the throne in Baroda in 1873, attempted to poison his brother and also the Resident in the kingdom (Dalmia 1997, 308-9). Mālharav Gāyakvār was arrested and he too became the epitome of the bad ruler. The main character of the monologue is the *purohit* of Gāyakvār and he states:

aur phir sukh bhī to hindustān meñ tīn hī ne kiyā, ek muhammad shāh ne dūsre vājid alī shāh ne tīsre mahārāj ne | muhammad shāh ke jamāne meñ nadir shāhī huī, vājid alī se lakhnāū hī chūṭā, ab dekhain in kī kaun gatī hai | iskā to yahī phal hai, par phir kaun is rang meñ nahīn hai baḍe baḍe rishi muni rājā mahārāj nae purāne sabhī to is peñse (phanse?) haiñ (Mīśra 1970, 196).

And in Hindustān just three people made merry. The first one was Muhammad Shāh, the second Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and the third, our Mahārāj [Mālharav Gāyakvār]. In the time of Muhammad Shāh, the issue of Nadir Shāh occurred; Lucknow was lost by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. Now let’s see what *his* fate will be. This is the consequence, but then again who

does not fall into this category: great sages, *munis*, kings, emperors, new and old all are trapped in this manner.

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and Mālharav Gāyakvār are mentioned along with Moḥammad Shāh, the Mughal emperor who was in power when Nādir Shāh invaded and sacked Delhi. The invasion exposed the disintegration of the empire. In the play Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh helped illustrate the ruler who is disengaged from his responsibility, exclusively seeking pleasure. This vision of the king that we saw in the contemporaneous *Indar sabhā*, is found again in the 1870s in *Vishasya vishamaushadham* and resonated in the early nineteenth century in *Shatranj ke khilāḍī*. The British discourse, strongly driven by political interests, played a central role in perpetuating this condemnation of the behavior of the king of Awadh.

Perceptions of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh: Views on patronage

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh is often portrayed as a king who lived in close proximity to performers. The description of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in the Hindi novel *Begum Hazrat Mahal* by Iqbal Bahadur Devasare (1973) presents a common perception of the last king of Awadh:

Here the appearance of the *Parīkhāna* of the heir apparent Mirzā Mohammad Wājīd ‘Alī Bahādur, prince of the kingdom of Awadh, stands apart from all the alleys and lanes of Lucknow. And indeed the scene should be extraordinary. After all, he *is* the prince of the kingdom of Awadh. The vision of his *Parīkhāna* is as if the retinue of Indra had come down to earth. At this moment every room of the *Parīkhāna* is resplendent with the light of the many-colored chandeliers. There is a gathering of *parīs* in a large, well decorated room. And the heir apparent planted himself in their midst (Devasare 1973, 52).

The ruler is envisioned surrounded by beautiful female dancers in a lavish setting. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and the female performers he sponsored were compared to Indra and his celestial dancers. The court of Lucknow has been depicted in this manner in literature since the composition of the play *Indar sabhā* by Amānat in 1853.

Wājid ‘Alī Shāh was interested in music and poetry from a young age. When he was the heir apparent, he decided to support the training in music and dance of a group of women that were called *parīs* or “fairies”. In the autobiographical text *‘Ishq nāmāh*, he states: “I designated a small residence for the instruction of the art of music. Great care was taken in its arrangement and decoration and this house, the envy of paradise, was given the name of *Parīkhāna*” (Siddīqī 1998, 54-55). In the famous *Parīkhāna* or “House of fairies” women studied with talented musicians. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh himself directed spectacles that involved these women. The performances were carried out at the court and as a result, there was a constant interaction of performers. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh described the instruction of the *parīs* as follows:

I never neglected to organize *jalsās*¹⁵ of great lavishness and pomp nor constantly seek to gather new singers. For this very reason the search was always on for experts in the art of music and instruments, so that the instruction of *parīs* might continue and they might become experts.

The two sisters Amman and Imāman said one day that some relatives of theirs had great mastery in these arts. Having heard this, I ordered the presence of these relatives of Amman and Imāman. Accordingly, I arranged a *maḥfil* as splendid as a full moon (the moon of the fourteenth night). Letting down the curtains of the tower of the *Khās Makān* myself, I sat down with the *sitār* along with Amman and Imāman and began to wait for the people to come. A little while later the people arrived. All together there were four people. One was Amman and Imāman’s father whose name was Natthū *Khān*. The second was the paternal uncle, whose name was *Ghulām Nabī*. The third was their brother-in-law Gahman Jān and the fourth one was the maternal uncle, *Ghulām Haider*. The four of them started playing the *sarod* as soon as they arrived and paid their respects. Here, from behind the curtain, I too was directing the sweet sound of the *sitār* towards the *maḥfil*. In that moment, such a state of concentration and self-forgetfulness had suddenly arisen that even the doors and walls, the moon and the stars seemed amazed. Words of praise danced upon the tongues of everyone present. The song of these people was so affecting that I placed my head upon the curtain.

After the performance of that day, Natthū *Khān* and Gahman Jān were appointed for the instruction of *Hūr parī* and *Sultān parī*. Besides them, many other experts in the arts of dance and song were appointed. *Sābit Alī* and *Chajju Khān*, two brothers in the troupe of musicians, were appointed for the instruction of the other *parīs*, and everyday joyous *jalsās* and lively *maḥfils* were organized (Siddīqī 1998, 53-4).

¹⁵ The word *jalsā* literally means “a gathering” (PD).

Imam Karam, a musician and courtier of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh, comments on the musical scene at the court in Lucknow in his text *Ma‘dan al-musīqī*: “I had the occasion to hear thousands of artists. Nawāb Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s great patronage of art afforded a unique opportunity for a vast number of artists, especially musicians, to gather in Lucknow” (Vidyarthi 1958, 25). According to Sharar, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s interest in art was against his family wishes: “As a heir apparent, because of his natural desires and contrary to his father’s designs, he was a patron of singers and musicians and learned to sing and play. His association with dissolute women, singers and dancers, continued to increase” (Harcourt and Hussain 1975, 62). The patronage of artists continued while the former king was in exile: “The best singers of India were enlisted into the king’s service and there was a larger concourse of musicians in Matiya Burj than anywhere else in India” (ibid, 71). Although Sharar was very young, he apparently witnessed the circulation of performers at the house of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in Calcutta. It is clear that the king’s attraction to music remained during his entire life.

In addition to performances of dance and music, the king was interested in poetry. He would also organize poetry gatherings that did not escape the attention of the British officials. Sleeman noticed the recitation of one of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s *maṣṇawīs* entitled *Haibat-e Haiderī*. He wrote about this event in a letter to Dalhousie in 1849:

I may mention that the King is now engaged in turning into verse a long prose history called Hydree. About ten days ago all the poets in Lucknow were assembled at the palace to hear his Majesty read his poem. They sat with him, listening to his poem and reading their own from nine at night till three in the morning. One of the poets, the eldest son of a late minister, Mohamid-od Dowla, Aga Meer, told me that the versification was exceedingly good for a King (Sleeman 1858, lxxiii).

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh directed several dance-dramas or “*rahas*” in Lucknow and Calcutta. The *Ishq nāmāh* records the details of a dance spectacle with the theme of Rādhā and Krishna in Lucknow, before Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was the king (Chapter 2). During the time Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was in power,

he was active in his spectacle productions. Rajab ‘Alī Beg ‘Surūr’ was a courtier of the king and a famous writer of prose, in his book *Fasāna-e ‘Ibrat*, he recalls the shows:

Hundreds of attendants had learned their duties through a great deal of instruction. There were uproarious *jalsās* of great pomp, going from morning till evening. The dance, from the very first beat of the unique *tāls*, included every (gesture of) intoxicated playfulness; the songs were of a new style. The instruments were unique, costing hundreds of thousands of rupees. (All) things that were there were extraordinary and superior. According to the saying, “Everyone says this, (only) God’s name is better than that.” Time after time, fortune favored men and women. Another *jalsā* was prepared, that was better than this, this was better than that, a treat of extraordinary taste was shared (Kārkovī 1977, 114).

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh directed three *rahas* or “dance-dramas” during his rule that were based on his *maṣṇawīs*: *Daryā-e t’ashuq*, *Āfsānah-e ‘ishq* and *Bahr-e ulfat*. There are no available scripts of the adaptations. The *maṣṇawī* *Daryā-e t’ashuq* tells the romance of the princess Ghizālā and the son of the minister, Mahrū. The staging of this story was witnessed by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s paternal uncle Iqtidār-ud Daulā who described the event in *Tarīkh-e Iqtidāriyah*:

[This play] was performed in 1267 Hijrī (1850), after a preparation of one year. Somewhere someone presented the story of Ghizālā Mahrukh, in service of the king. The king transformed it into verse and called it a *maṣṇawī*. Spending several lakhs of rupees, he prepared a *rahas* out of it. The description of the first day of the *jalsā* is as follows: the preparations of the *jalsā* took place in the Farḥat Manzil of Qaiṣerbāgh and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh sent for all the princes. They all came into the Farḥat Manzil and sat on chairs, and the king himself sat in front of everybody on a high chair... When the dance ended, an embroidered cushioned seat was brought out and put in place. One person, playing the king, came over and sat there. Then, all the women began to sing: “May the Life of the world (the king) congratulate with the *rahas*” ... On the second day, in the same manner, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh came over and sat down, and all the princes sat on their respective chairs... that entire night was spent in the *jalsā* and in the early morning the *rahas* ended (Quoted in Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 25).

The drama had more than a hundred female performers with lavish costumes and a large numbers of musicians including *sārāṅgī* players. The staging took place in several buildings: Farhat Manzil, Qaiser Manzil, Ma’shūq Manzil, amongst others in fourteen sessions over a

month and ten days (Qureshi 1987, 16-19; See also Hasan Rizvi and Ayesha Irfan 2010). All the specifics of this *rahas* were recorded with great detail by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s uncle.

In addition to the *rahas*, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh also organized gatherings during his birthday in the month of Sāvan in which he dressed as a *jogi*. In the *‘Ishq nāmāh*, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh elaborates on the particulars of this practice. He would smear his face and body with the ash of pearls and wore a pearl necklace as a mendicant. Fireworks were set off and begums dressed as *jogans* as well. The event was accompanied with music and dance that went on until midnight (Siddīqī 1998, 99-103). This spectacle is also a precedent of the assimilation of traditions at the Lucknowi court.

Conclusion

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s work reveals a learned and cultivated mind. He was involved in a variety of disciplines and artistic activities. He was considered a remarkable supporter of music, dance and poetry and also a creative artist. His writings emphasized his inclinations and projects. Nevertheless, he was by no means depicted in a single manner. He also bore the loss of his kingdom and heavy criticism regarding his life choices. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s artistic interests have been perceived in contradictory ways: they were a proof of his corruption, a reason for his downfall, but also an important legacy of his life and rule.

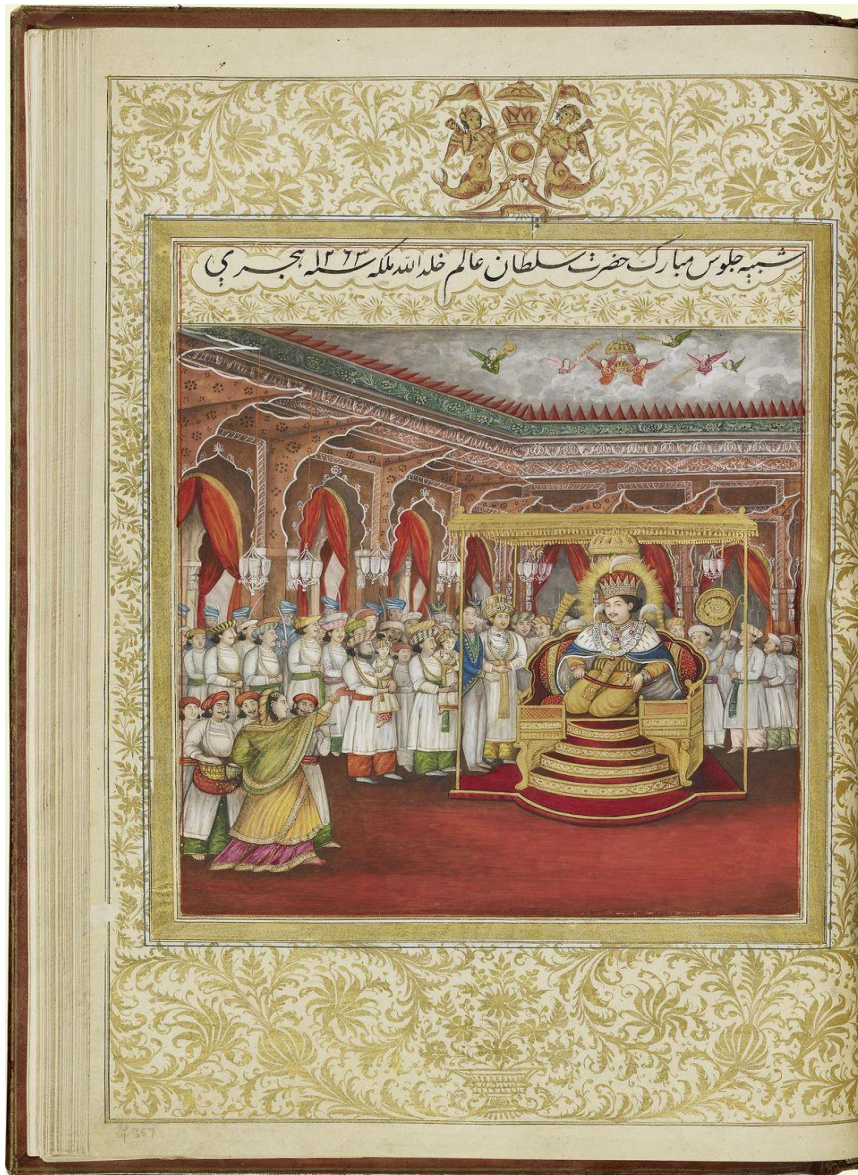


Figure 2 The ascension to the throne. *Ishq nāmah*, Windsor Castle. Royal Collection Trust. © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

CHAPTER 2 Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s dramatic work and the *Indar sabhā*

This chapter examines the theatrical development in 19th Lucknow by researching the interplay of the Indo Persianate court, the folk, the courtesan performance and commercial drama. In this context the Rādhā-Krishna spectacles held at the court of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh are explored and contrasted with the *Indar sabhā* by Amānat. Lucknow figures in an important manner in the historical narrative of theater. The *rahas* by the king and the *Indar sabhā* have been placed as the origins of Urdu drama (Lal 2004, 50; Marek 1984, 120; Trivedi 2010, 117). Nevertheless, an analysis of the work by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh reveals an inclusive theatrical culture that was not divided along linguistic or cultural lines. The hybrid essence of the *rahas* is shared by the play by Amānat calling into question the so called “beginning of Urdu theater.”

Through a close reading of *Indar sabhā* it has been argued that the play by Amānat mimicked the shows of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh (Taj 2007, 92; Hansen 1998, 7). In this chapter the precise nature of the court dramatic performances is investigated using textual and visual sources that have not been brought to bear on the question before. Two different phases of the shows of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh will be addressed: first a *rahas* performance that took place in Lucknow and second the production of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* in the court in exile in Calcutta. Finally, the comparison of the plays by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and Amānat shows a common trend in court and commercial theater. In the course of the discussion, I will give details of the performers, audiences of the plays and staging including the so-called *kathak* dance closely associated with the king.

The Rādhā Krishna performance in Lucknow

The earliest evidence for the staging of the *rahas* comes from Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh himself. He mentions directing a spectacle with the theme of Rādhā and Krishna in Lucknow in the

autobiographical ‘*Ishq nāmāh*’ in Persian and Urdu.¹⁶ The Persian text (1846-49) describes the show and the Urdu manuscript (1849-50) contains additionally a painting that illustrates the event (Figure 3). The exact date in which the performance took place is difficult to determine; it has been plausibly estimated as 1843-44 because one of the performers gave birth in 1845 and afterwards was veiled (Qureshi 1987, 10). The performance was called *rahas dhārī* and by reading the text and looking at the illustration it is evident that it included music, dance, and the impersonation of Rādhā and Krishna along with the *gopīs*. Some scholars surmise that the *rahas dhārī* was not a play, but just a dance performance (Qureshi 1987, 10-11). However, this can be refuted on the grounds that two *dohās* of the performance’s dialogue are quoted in the ‘*Ishq nāmāh*’ (Siddīqī 1998, 111). The two *dohās* also occur in the dialogue of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* that was written in *Banī* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 95). Therefore, it seems that the show in Lucknow was a dance-drama.

The illustration is an interesting source for the staging of this kind of show. It also sheds light on the performance and the audience. The heading of the painting has the names of performers and members of the audience:

Image of Prince Sikandar Hashmat Bahādur, Nawāb Dildār Sāhibā, Nawāb Shāhanshāh, Sāhibā, Nawāb Sārdar Sāhibā, Nawāb Safarāz Sāhibā and the dance of *rahas dhārī*, the image of the veiled¹⁷ Nawāb ‘Izat Mahal Sāhibā as a *gopī*, Nawāb Yāsmīn Mahal Sāhibā, Nawāb Dilrubā Mahal Sāhibā, Nawāb Hūr Mahal Sāhibā [also] in the role of *gopīs*, Nawāb Sultān Mahal Sāhibā in the role of Rādhā, the image of Nawāb Māhrūkh Begam Sāhibā in the role of Kanhaiyā, the image of Razī ud-Daulā, Ānīs ud-Daulā, Wahīd ud-Daulā and Najīb ud-Daulā.

In the illustration, the king and his brother (Prince Sikandar Hashmat Bahādur) are prominently depicted. Four women seated next to Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh must be Dildār, Shāhhenshā, Sārdar and

¹⁶ See the section on Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s literary work for more information about these texts in Chapter 1.

¹⁷ The word used is *mastūra* “chaste or veiled woman” (Platts 1960).

Safarāz. The one just next to the king is probably Safarāz judging by the similarity with her portrait from the same manuscript (See Markel 2010, 99 for the illustration). The other six women that are performing are ‘Izat, Yāsmīn, Dilrubā, Hūr, Sultān, and Māhrukh.

There is additional information about the performers in Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s ‘*Ishq nāmāh*. Dilrubā, previously called Cunnī, was a dancer and singer; she was able to stay in the court and later taught the other *parīs*:

One day, through the intervention of Akbar ud-Daulā, a *ṭawā’if* named Cunnī came to my *mahfil* for the purpose of a *muḡrā* (musical performance with dance). As soon as I saw her I fell head over heels in love with her. Then removing all of the jewelry from her body, she gave it to her benefactress and said that under no condition would she leave from there. (Siddīqī 1998, 58).

The king wrote about Hūr *parī*: “She is skillful in dance and song, was the daughter of Amīran Ḍomnī and became a prostitute.” (Siddīqī 1998, 59-60). The *ḍom* refers to a community of Muslim professional musicians (Miner 1993, 237). Some of the female performers were very young when they started working for the king. This is the account of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s first meeting with Sultān *parī*:

Two *ṭawā’ifs*, named Haidarī and Dilbar, were known throughout Lucknow as being without peer in the arts of dancing and music. Dilbar, who was Haidarī’s older sister, had the honor of being favored in my service. For this reason, she offered her younger sister into my service as a gift. Haidarī was eleven years old and she knew some dancing and singing. I received this offering of Dilbar and bestowed on her the title of Sultān *parī* (Siddīqī 1998, 48).

The inscription also identifies the musicians. Razī ud-Daulā was called originally Ghulam Razā Khān. He had defended Prince Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh from an attack and as a result he was rewarded for his fidelity as a bodyguard (Bhatnagar 1968, 7). After Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh became king, this musician was given a government office, a matter that caused dissatisfaction among the British

officials (34). He became one of the superintendents for the construction of Sikandarbāgh (232). Razī ud-Daulā instructed the *parīs* and was *dhārī*, a class associated with dancers and low social status (Miner 1993, 112). In his correspondence, the Resident of Lucknow W.H. Sleeman repeatedly mentioned Razī ud-Daulā; this is just one instance:

The King, as I shall show in my next official report, is utterly unfit to have anything to do with the administration, since he has never taken, or shown any disposition to take any heed of what is done or suffered in the country. My letters have made no impression whatever upon him. He spends all his time with the singers and the females they provide to amuse him, and is for seven and eight hours together in the house of the chief singer, Rajee-od Dowla—a fellow who was only lately beating a drum to a party of dancing-girls, on some four rupees a-month. These singers are all Domes, the lowest of the low castes of India, and they and the eunuchs are now the virtual sovereigns of the country, and must be so as long as the King retains any power. The minister depends entirely on them, and between them and a few others about the Court everything that the King has to dispose of is sold (Sleeman 1858, lx-lxi).

Razī ud-Daulā and several of his family members were influential in the court; his father Najīb ud-Daulā is also mentioned in the list of names in the illustration. Najīb ud-Daulā (originally named Natthū Khān) was a musician and held power and office in Rampur under Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān. He was commander of the Sikandarī platoon in Awadh (Bhatnagar 1968, 232). He taught music to the *parīs* and even Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh learned from him (Siddīqī 1998, 54). Wahīd ud-Daulā was Razī ud-Daulā’s cousin and the superintendent of the stable and, finally, Ānīs ud-Daulā was a *tabla* player and commander of the Bālakganj artillery (Bhatnagar 1968, 232-33). Later on Razī ud-Daulā along with his relatives was banished from the court because he deceived the king and in addition had a love affair with Safarāz who also attended the theatrical event (Sleeman 1858, 44-47). I will refer to this story later in the chapter.

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh also presents some information about this performance itself and explains the full setting:

The dialogue is written in Hindi *dohās*, such as

The peacock crown, the sash around the waist, the flute in [your] hands and the garland across [your] chest.

Believing in this [image], Bihārī Lāl always dwells in my heart!

The second dohā of Rādhā

Come beloved Mohan, let me cover your eyelids.

I would not have eyes for others and I won't let you either.

This *jalsā* is held only in the evening. When its supervision and arrangements had been taken care of, I then invited my younger brother Mirzā Sikandar Hashmat Bahādur [to the performance]. He happily accepted my invitation and came to Falak Sair and took part in the *jalsā*. On this occasion all the *parīs* put perfume on their clothes and henna on their hands. With *missi* upon their lips they sat coquettishly on chairs all around the throne. This *mahfil* of dance and song was superior on account of the presence of nothing but “wonderful, wonderful” upon the tongues of all who were present. My brother, blooming like a flower, was seated by my side. Candle sticks within glass lamps and lights of many colors were set here and there. All four sides of the throne were blanketed with flowers. For the women observing the *parda* a bamboo lattice- screen was set up. They were looking at the spectacle from the other side of the screen. This lively gathering finished after midnight (Siddiqī 1998, 110-111).

In the illustration all the *parīs* and Rādhā are wearing a *peshwāz*. This garment, a “long sleeved open front loose robe with a bodice and a skirt, was worn by Muslim aristocratic women in the early *nawābī* period” (Swarup, 2012, 48). The courtesans used to wear a *peshwāz* with a tight fitting bodice skirt which had a swirling effect while dancing (71). Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh wrote the following with regard to the costumes of the *parīs*:

I had made preparations for different kinds of clothes for the *parīs* and Khās Mahal (Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s first *nikāḥ* wife) took care of the arrangements. The truth is that she showed great enthusiasm and interest in this work. She would accomplish this job remarkably well. I used to spend several lakhs of rupees in such matters (Siddiqī 1998, 60).

In the painting, the four seated women are dressed up as fairies; they have wings made from a transparent fabric. Despite the claim that this spectacle did not blend devotional and *dāstān* traditions (Taj 2007, 26), it seems that this performance mixed Rādhā Krishna and Persianate elements.

The text has no information about the instruments, but in the picture it is possible to see a group of musicians performing the cymbals, *sāraṅgī* and a drum supported by straps. The musicians performed while standing, maybe in respect for their patrons (Manuel 1989, 65). The *sāraṅgī* was an important accompaniment for dance (Trivedi, 2010, 129); it became an indispensable instrument for theatrical representations (Bor 1986-7, 100). The music treatise *Mad'an al-musīqī* by Karam Imam (courtier of Wājīd 'Alī Shāh) lists the names of contemporary *sāraṅgī* players (Vidyarthi 1958, 24). The contemporary musical culture was incorporated into the *rahas*.

In the '*Ishq nāmāh* it is mentioned that behind the lattice windows a group of veiled women observed the show (they are also depicted in the painting). In the illustration the female performers sitting next to him and the women involved in the show contrast sharply with those observing *parda*. The female artists involved were important for the creative background of the performance: as the '*Ishq nāmāh* reveals, there was a constant flow of female performers into the court; the ages of these women varied as did their training.

In the illustration we can see an open stage with an intimate interaction between audience and performers; there was no fixed architectural device to enclose the show. As Kapur explains the open stage was used in traditional theaters in India. The physical locations of performances were not constructed and the space was suggested through words (2004, 95). In contrast, Europeans introduced the proscenium in India, setting the stage back, framing the performance and constructing locations for a larger audience (93-94). Thus this performance was not yet influenced by European architectural settings.

The performance of the Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah

While Rādhā-Krishna plays were performed early on, the actual script of *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* is included first in *Banī*. In the sixth section of the book, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh listed 22 groups of performers including their names. In the first five groups, the characters impersonated are also recorded (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 175-191). The names of these characters coincide with those of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah*. In the first group Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh mentions that this *rahas* with Rādhā, Kanhaiyā, the *parīs*, the *jogan*, the traveler, etcetera has been staged for 13 or 14 years (176). The *Banī* was lithographed in 1877, but it was written down in 1875 (112). Thus the performance of this particular *rahas* must have started around 1861 during the time Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh lived in Calcutta.

The performers of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s artistic projects were the king’s *mut‘ah* wives. Although many of these women stayed behind in Lucknow when Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was exiled to Calcutta, others followed him (Santha 1980, 228). There is some overlap in the names of performers from Lucknow and Calcutta. Sultān *parī*, who started serving the king at the age of eleven and played the role of Rādhā in Lucknow, impersonated the *jogan* in *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 176). Hūr played a *gopī* in Lucknow and also in Calcutta (117). Shāhanshāh and Dildār were in the audience in Lucknow and performed as a *gopīs* in Calcutta (179, 181). Marūkh played Kanhaiyā in Lucknow and had a non-specified role in the *qiṣṣah* (179). Haidarī, the sister of Sultān *parī*, played an unnamed character in Calcutta (179). Since these women were trained in dance and music they perhaps continued to participate in the *rahas* over the years.

The *Banī* provides a window into the dramas of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and the two versions of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* exemplify the entertainments of the court. Nevertheless, Wājīd

‘Alī Shāh laments that his current situation is not as good as it was before. In the *Banī* there is a contrast between the spectacles that the former king could afford to produce in Lucknow and those he could not arrange for anymore in Calcutta:

Of course, the gems and jewelry [mentioned for the performers] in the introduction could not be arranged for by the writer to the extent that he could complete it [successfully stage the performance]. During the time of ruling and authority the Lord had provided all and everything, and even now I have my hope set on His nature (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 112).

In Lucknow and Calcutta, the characters included Rādhā, Krishna, *sakhīs* and *parīs* and both shows were performed at night. The illustration of the Lucknow show even portrays the lights of different colors, torches and the dark sky. In the *Banī*, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh writes that once the *rahas* is over, if the audience desires, there can be dancing and singing all night (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 112). The spectacles in Lucknow and Calcutta had similarities potentially in the plot and in the staging.

The text of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* contains full details of the costumes of all the characters. *Ghurbat* and the traveler wear an *angarkhā* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 104), a typical costume of the *nawābī* period (Swarup 2012, 26). Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh appears in several portraits with garment (Figure 4). The *parīs* wear a *jāma-e husn* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 102) which is another costume fashioned by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh (Trivedi 2010, 30). The *dīv* on the other hand, was dressed all in black with pants, jacket, gloves and socks (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 102-3) depicting the way in which Europeans dressed. The *Banī* also describes embroidered wings for the *parīs*’ outfits (91), and indicates that Rādhā and the four *sakhīs* wear a *peshwāz* (102). The costumes are not random choices; they were a part of the aesthetics of the play and also reflected the fashion of the court and the dancing girls.

Dance played a central role in the dance-dramas of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and it was an intrinsic part of the plot. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s interest in dance is obvious in the *gat*¹⁸ and *rahas* sections of *Banī*. Karam Imam even mentions that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was a fine dancer (1958-59, 24). In the 20th century the word *kathak* was used to name a dance form that had its origins in north India. The history of this dance form has been projected into the legendary past based on the existence of the term *kathaka* in epic literature. There is no doubt that in north India there is an ancient tradition of dance and music which must however have changed dramatically over time in terms of style and also the contexts of performance. Lucknow was one of the important locations related to the history of *kathak*. This dance form has a very intricate history that incorporates folk and formalized court dances from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century (Chakravorty 2008, 28). Certain movements and postures in the Hindu performance tradition of *rās līlā* have striking similarities to those of *kathak* (Swann 1991, 198). There are claims that *rās līlā* evolved from *kathak* (Narayan 2004, 19) and the reverse (Swann 1991, 198). Regardless of the directionality of influences, it is clear that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was aware of the Hindu performance traditions and patronized dance at the court.

The development of *kathak* was very likely the product of a multicultural environment in which Hindu and Islamic dance tradition converged. The dance postures and choreographic progressions Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh described in *Banī* clearly correspond to some of today's *kathak* dance items (Walker 2014, 67). It is very likely that the dance that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh had in mind for his play was something similar to what we call *kathak* today. The stage instructions call for spins (*cakkar*) and rhythmic dance compositions (*tukṛā*, *torā*) that also have parallels with *kathak*. Nevertheless, the word *kathak* is not used anywhere in the script of his play nor in the *Banī*.

¹⁸ Each *gat* describes a dynamic figure that the body assumes in dance.

In the second version of *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh also incorporated Bengali dances. The text lists amongst the characters two *khemṭā* performers who wear *sārīs* and Bengali jewelry (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 105). The *khemṭā* dance has folk origins in Bengal and was popular in the 19th and 20th centuries (Purkayastha 2014, 25). The performance of *khemṭā* involved whirling and hip swaying and it is described as “having erotic overtones and suggestive movements” (Ramnarine 2001, 54). Bengali performance practices were also added to the dance-drama.

The image and description of the spectacle in Lucknow reveals the performers, musicians and setting of the show. The *Banī’s* description of the different groups of performers involved in Calcutta allows us to keep an account of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s artistic creativity. The text of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* provides the necessary information to reenact the dance-drama. Although the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* was written down after *Indar sabhā*, the information reviewed above shows that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was definitively interested in Hindu devotional performance, dance and drama before the Colonial take over.

Indar sabhā by Amānat

Syed Agha Hasan (1815-1859) ‘Amānat’ was a poet from Lucknow. Although he wrote *marṣiya*, *wāsokht* and *ghazal*, he became famous as a result of the success of his drama. *Indar sabhā* was published in 1853, two more editions of the play were published during the lifetime of Amānat in 1856 and 1858; and by 1870 there were more than thirty editions and multiple imitations of the play (Taj 2007, 68). It was one of the firsts printed texts in the 19th century to become a best seller (Hansen 1997, 97). The play was also an important piece of the repertoire of the emerging Parsi theater in the 19th and during the 20th centuries (Taj 2007, 188-9) and was adapted to film four

times (Rajadhyaksha 1996, 237). Clearly the text is extremely relevant in the history of Indian theater.

In discussions about the *Indar sabhā*, one controversial issue has been whether Amānat was a courtier of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh or not. Scholars have defended both sides of this debate. On the one hand, it is argued that Amānat was patronized by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (Schimmel 1975, 213-14; for a detailed discussion on the topic see Hansen 1998). On the other, the connection between the two is challenged by stating that there is no historical evidence to prove that Amānat was ever at the court of the king of Awadh (Qureshi 1987 39, 52-54; Taj 2007, 67). I have found that a book authored by Amānat was present in the royal library of Awadh. During the rule of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, an Austrian orientalist called Alloy Sprenger catalogued the library of the *Nawābs*. In the catalogue there is a reference to a text by Amānat that contained a poetic collection of *wāsokht*, the book was lithographed in Lucknow in 1846 (1263 AH) (Sprenger 2010, 600). This speaks of an awareness at the court of at least Amānat’s poetry.

The work of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh and Amānat has also been perceived as being influenced by European performances. Although there is no substantial evidence of European presence on the court performances, it has been suggested that there was a connection: “The courtiers and companions of Wajid Ali Shah were always devising means to afford amusement, diversion and fun to their gay master. One of the French companions mooted the idea of stage and presented the scheme of opera which was in the heyday of popularity in France. It was readily accepted as it could utilize the thousands of beautiful singers who thronged the court. Amanat was asked to write the play and give it an Indian garb” (Saksena 1927, 351). Although European performances must have had an impact in both authors, the consequences of the process are not evident.

The association of Amānat and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh is also a part of ‘Abd ul- Halīm Sharar’s narrative. In the chronicle about Lucknow, Sharar states that people liked the Krishna *rahas* of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh since amorous tales were in fashion at the time. This was, according to Sharar, the context that inspired Amānat to mix Muslim Persianized literature and Hindu mythology (Harcourt and Hussain 1975, 146). Sharar even formulated the idea that the foundation of Urdu drama laid in Lucknow, precisely in the work of these two authors (85). As Hansen underlines Sharar’s historical account has been very influential (Hansen 2001, 41). Sharar not only pushed forward a Lucknow centered history of Urdu drama, but also decided the starting point of the category.

Amānat wrote a commentary on *Indar sabhā*, entitled *Sharaḥ-e Indar sabhā*. The text is dated 1853-4, but it wasn’t published till the second edition of the play (1856). In the commentary Amānat expresses that he participated in the first staging of the *jalsā* and that this was a complicated process that took a year and a half (Taj 2007, 432). There is no mention of the court or the king in these observations about the preparation for the performance. In the commentary, he also explains how he came about writing the *Indar sabhā* and how it should be performed. Amānat defined himself as poet who under the suggestion of a friend wrote a *jalsā-e rahas* (432). Later in the text, he refers to his *Indar sabhā* several times just as a *jalsā* (432, 434). The contemporary *tazkirah* or “memoire” *Khush ma’rikah-e zebā* by Sa’ādat Khān ‘Nāṣir’ refers to *Indar sabhā* as a *maṣṇawī* along the lines of a *rahas* (*rahas kī taraḥ maṣṇawī*) and several times as a *rahas* (Khwājīh 1970, 231). The usage of the word “*rahas*” shows a parallel between the plays of Amānat and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh.

As Afroz Taj has discussed in his pathbreaking work on *Indar sabhā*, multiple sources inspired the main plot. Amongst the most important ones are the popular pan-Islamic romance

Dāstān-e amīr Ḥamzah, a famous Urdu *maṣṇawī* from the 18th century, *Siḥr ul-bayān* by Mīr Ḥasan, and the 19th century Urdu *maṣṇawī*, *Gulzār-e Nasīm* by Dayā Shankar Nasīm (Taj 2007, 115-17). Indar and his court of dancers appear in Hindu mythology, but in *Indar sabhā* the ladies are not *apsarās*, but Persian winged *parīs*. There is a mix of both literary traditions.

The characters of *Indar sabhā* are king Indar, Black *dīv*, Red *dīv*, four *parīs* called Phukrāj (topaz), Nīlam (blue), Lāl (ruby), Sabz (green) and the prince Gulfām. The king Indar comes into his court in Saṅgaldīp and claims that all night he wants to be in the midst of the *maḥfīl* (gathering for dance or music) and that he wants to see a *jalsā*. The king requests one of the *dīvs* to bring the *parīs* to perform *mujrās*. The *parīs* perform one by one, mainly *ghazals* and *ṭhumrīs*. During the performance of the *ṭhumrī* by Phukrāj *parī* she pays her respects to Indra, but at the end says: *duniyā mem raheñ ḥajrat akhtar* “May his Highness Akhtar remain in the world” (Taj 2007, 206-7). Indar here is directly identified with Wājid ‘Alī Shāh through his pen-name. Thus Amānat demonstrates his awareness of the king’s literary endeavors.

The last to perform is Sabz *parī*, but while she is singing and dancing Indar falls asleep. She goes to the garden and tells the Black *dīv* that on her way she saw a handsome prince in Akhtar *nagar* which is a reference to Lucknow (Taj 2007, 294). Sabz *Parī* confesses that she fell in love with the prince and kissed him while he was sleeping on the terrace of his palace. She requests Black *dīv* to fetch him and bring him to Saṅgaldīp. The prince Gulfām is brought in his sleep, and when he wakes up does not recognize the place. The *parī* admits being in love and tries to seduce Gulfām. The prince first rejects the *parī*, but later discloses his desire to see the dancers perform at the court of Indar. The prince Gulfām promises that he will love her forever if his wish is fulfilled. Sabz *parī* hesitates and explains that it would be dangerous for both of them if the king finds out. However, Gulfām insists and Sabz *parī* takes him along to the court.

During the dance performance, Gulfām is hiding behind a tree, but is caught by Red *dīv*. King Indar becomes very angry, imprisons Gulfām, cuts off the wings of Sabz *parī* and throws her out of the court. Sabz *parī* dresses as a *jogan* and wanders around in Paristān looking for her beloved Gulfām. She sings *ghazals* and *ṭhumrīs* while feeling the pain of separation. Black *dīv* hears Sabz *parī* singing and does not recognize her. He informs Indar about a beautiful singer and the king requests her presence. Indar is fascinated by Sabz *parī*'s song and he offers to give her whatever she wants. She reveals who she is and demands the liberation of her beloved Gulfām. At the end the prince and the *parī* get back together and the play closes with a joyful song of celebration.

It has been noted that the king of Awadh was represented in Amānat's play (Taj 2007, 92; Hansen 1998, 7). The court of Indar is analogous to the court of Wājīd 'Alī Shāh in several ways. Both kings patronized the training of dancers and held dance performances with their troupe of *parīs* for their entertainment. The female performers sang *ṭhumrīs* and *ghazals* and danced *kathak* in both contexts. These similarities are also added to the references to Wājīd 'Alī Shāh's penname. The resemblance between the court in Lucknow and the play is not accidental.

Possibly the main plot too was inspired by a real-life scandal. Sabz *parī* is a very outgoing female not afraid of expressing her sexual desire directly and she enters the court of Indar with another man. This character may have been modeled after a real life performer of Wājīd 'Alī Shāh's "House of Fairies;" her name was Safarāz *parī*. Wājīd 'Alī Shāh wrote about her:

She married a relative, had a legitimate marriage (*nikāḥ*) and started living the life of a virtuous woman. They say that one day she had a dream about me and she awoke in a state of fear. The arrow of my love struck her heart. She was around 27 years old. She had marks of chicken pox on the face, but nice eyes. Her size and stature were well balanced. (Siddīqī 1998, 60).

Safarāz divorced her husband, married Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and the king stated that: “In comparison to the other *parīs*, the love of this *parī* [Safarāz] affected me more” (ibid). Later Safarāz also divorced Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and had an affair with Razī ud-Daulā (Ghulam Razā Khan), the court musician. W.H. Sleeman wrote about this in his *Diary of a Tour through Oudhe*:

She had long been cohabiting with the chief singer Gholam Ruza and was known to be a very profligate woman. She is said to have given his majesty to understand that she would not consent to remain in the palace with him without the privilege of choosing her own lovers, a privilege that she freely enjoyed before she came into it and could not possible forego (Sleeman 1858, 47).

All of this occurred before *Indar sabhā* was written. Whether or not Sabz *parī* was inspired by Safarāz *parī*, the character would have resonated strongly with the reality of the “House of fairies.” During his life in Calcutta, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was concerned with controlling all of his secondary wives. There is a section in *Banī* called *Qānūn-e Akhtarī* which was intended to regulate the behavior of his retinue (Taqī and Saxenā 1987 197-203). One of the rules was that the wives were not allowed to interact with men who were not their relatives whether their master was present or not (Sachdeva 2008, 181). The incident with Safarāz shows that the temporary wives did have relations with other men and therefore the situation had to be controlled.

There is a legend about Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh performing the role of Indar in Amānat’s play. Nevertheless, there is no recorded evidence of such thing ever happening (Taj 2007, 92; Qureshi 1987, 40). Sharar made another assertion that is not corroborated by any source stating that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh played Krishna in his own *rahas* (1965, 71). This claim by Sharar may have given rise to the assumption that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was a part of the cast of *Indar sabhā*. Nevertheless, the portrayal of king Indar and one of the main characters, the Lucknowi prince Gulfām, is not very flattering. There are references to the laziness of monarchs and their single interest in enjoyment.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Chapter 1 for the reference.

It does not seem likely that the king Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh would perform a role that was a criticism of himself. Yet *Indar sabhā* is also a celebration of the colorful court culture of Lucknow and its music and dance.

Staging the Indar sabhā

Amānat did not write any stage instructions in *Indar sabhā*, but in his commentary *Sharah-e Indar sabhā*, he explained some of his ideas with regard to the staging of the play. *Indar sabhā*'s long staging history cannot be discussed here, but I will compare Amānat's commentary to the stage instructions of the plays of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. This is Amānat's description of the beginning of the performance:

When the entire *mahfil* is full of people and it is midnight, everyone is moved back in an orderly manner. The chairs are placed in the front. A stage²⁰ is set up. A delay by the *jalsā* performers is unacceptable. Every person, with eager eyes, waits hopefully with all their heart and soul. The musicians come to the *mahfil* and stand. Tuning the instruments, they enchant the senses of the audience (lit. those viewing from afar). A red curtain with golden thread like red twilight evenings is spread in the *mahfil*. King Indar positioning himself behind the curtain, intermittently jingles his ankle bells. The *sārangī* is tuned with the *cikārā*. The welcome song is sung.

When the welcome song is completed the curtain rises. A firework is released. King Indra wears a fine dress, a golden crown on his head, and a golden *dupattā* or a scarf tied on his waist. Two *dīvs*, to the right and left, with strange appearances, fearful faces, open mouths, very big teeth, flat noses, maces in hand, tight clothes upon their bodies, (are) in the *mahfil* with frightening looks; one is red and one black. The king is accompanied by them to the *mahfil*. He sings the *caubola* in his own manner. He demonstrates his way of dancing. He resounds the ankle bells in rhythm. Then he salutes the great personages at the *mahfil* and sits on his throne (Taj 2007, 434-36).²¹

There are several similarities with the *rahas* illustrated and described in the *'Ishq nāmāh*. Both performances take place at night. Amānat remarks that the musicians stand during the play, as customary, and mentions the *sārangī* as one of the instruments. It is clear that dance is a

²⁰ The word *takht* can also mean "throne".

²¹ The translation of Taj was a basis for this translation.

significant part of the performance. Amānat does not give details about the choreography, but in the passage quoted above and elsewhere, he states that the characters have to dance (Taj 2007, 438, 442, 494). Amānat and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s performances were meant for entertainment and mixed music and dance.

There are also important differences: in the commentary, Amānat indicates that a stage is set up. In the painting that depicts Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s spectacle there is no stage and the audience observes from different directions. In the stage instructions of the *rahas* there is no reference to a stage. Amānat advises the usage of a curtain at different times of the drama; this is another innovation. The *tazkirah Khush ma’rikah-e zebā* records a performance in Lucknow in which boys educated in dance and music were the actors and thousands of people gathered for the play. According to the text Amānat himself was sitting in the show (Khwājah 1970, 231). Hansen states that the roles of *Indar sabhā* were played by males until the 1870’s (1998, 13). The young male performers of *Indar sabhā* contrast with the females at the court of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh who played demons, Krishna and the clown.

There are also parallels in the aesthetic choices regarding costumes in both dramas. Amānat did not write a separate list of clothing, but he makes some comments on how the characters are dressed. The *dīvs* in *Indar sabhā* have fearful faces, open mouths, big teeth and flat noses. It is likely that they wore some kind of masks. In the *Banī*, the *dīv* has “a cardboard face of detestable aspect”.²² In the *Indar sabhā* the *parīs* too have embroidered wings that “are prepared by casting them as if in midflight” (Taj 2007, 438). The *parīs* wear a *peshwāz* as well and each one according to the color of her name. That this was the case also in Amānat’s play can be deduced from the way he describes Phukrāj (topaz) *parī*: “When the skirt of the *peshwāz* moves in the spins of the

²² See the list in Chapter 3.

toras, it is as if in the *mahfil* a bed of marigolds blooms” (438-440). Gulfām wears an *angarkhā* (466), a garment that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh liked and used in his *rahas*. Amānat integrated the fashion of the court into his play.

The plot of Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah and Indar sabhā

Since there is no script of the spectacle in Lucknow, the text of the *Indar sabhā* is compared to *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah*. The *qīṣṣah* is significantly shorter, simpler and the plot is minimal. The *Indar sabhā* expands the drama as much as possible through the performances of the *parīs*. Whereas the story of *Indar sabhā* is heavily influenced by the *dāstān* and *maṣṇawī* tradition, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s *qīṣṣah* draws upon Hindu mythology and less on Urdu and Persianate narratives.

Both dramas took the *parīs* and *dīvs* from the Urdu-Persian literature to the stage. The *qīṣṣah* has a real *jogan* and the *Indar sabhā*, a *parī* disguised as one. In both dramas there is a character voicing a strong desire to see a performance. In the *Indar sabhā*, Gulfām wants to see the dancers in Indar’s court and in the *qīṣṣah*, the *jogan* wishes to watch the dance of Rādhā and Krishna. Both dramas contain a play within the play and characters like Indar and Krishna become spectators of the dancers. The plot seems an excuse for dance and music performances. Some of the songs in *Indar sabhā* and some of the couplets in the *qīṣṣah* are vehicles for dance and music and are disconnected from the plot. The combination of genres and different language registers is present in both dramas and will be discussed next.

The structure of the dance dramas

Both *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah* and the *Indar sabhā* combine different genres. The plays were not divided in acts in the original publications and both portray a series of performances of music and dance linked by dialogue. This kind of structure contrasts with plays divided in acts, for example, the plays of Bhāratendu (Sharma 1989). Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and Amānat indicate the meters

and performative genres in the text, those are not later superimpositions. The overlap of genres between the two dramatists consists of *ṭhumrī*, *sāvan* songs, *holī* songs and *ghazal*.

The word *ṭhumrī* refers to a vocal genre in North Indian music. Each composition has two parts called *āstāī* and *antarā*. The *āstāī* is the first part and the melody stays in the lower half of the middle register. The *antarā* is the second and it tends to ascend to an upper register. The texts are often short, with a limited vocabulary primarily drawn from Braj bhāshā and with Krishnaite references (Du Perron 2007, 2). Most *ṭhumrī* texts talk about love, allude to the pain of separation or the playfulness of Krishna.

Ṭhumrī is associated with dance performance and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. The genre originated around the eighteenth century, but it flourished in the middle of the nineteenth century in Lucknow (Du Perron 2007, 2). Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was an important figure in the development of *ṭhumrī*, as an author as well as a patron. His compositions are recorded in *Banī* and *Nājo*. *Ṭhumrī* has changed over time; the earliest form is known as *bandish ṭhumrī* which was performed with *kathak* dance (Manuel 1989, 35). This kind of composition was rhythmic, strongly linked with the performance of courtesans in Lucknow accompanied by the music of *tablā* and *sāraṅgī* (Du Perron 2007, 49; Manuel 1989, 62). The later form of *ṭhumrī* is called *bol banāv*, and it was characterized by a slower tempo than *bandish*, shorter, less rhythmic, profound emotional expression through melodic improvisation and simpler texts (Manuel 1989, 25-26). This genre had a significant role in Lucknow performance culture in the 19th century.

The most important genre performed in *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* is *ṭhumrī*, perhaps this choice is related to the close connection to dance. The following *ṭhumrī* from the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* is sung by Krishna to Rādhā when she is upset because he lost the flute. The text gives the instruction that Krishna should interpret the song through mime. In the tradition established in

Lucknow, the singer would first interpret the *ṭhumrī* through gestures while seated, and later perform the dance to do a skillful interpretation of both (Manuel 1989, 65). In *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah* the text is short and concise:

āstāī: rādhā jī moh se bolo kyoñ na re
antarā: kyā moñ se kuch cūk paṛī morī rānī
hañs hañs ghūñghaṭ kholo kyoñ na re (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 97)

Refrain: Rādhā jī, why don't you talk to me?
Verse: Did I make some mistake unwittingly, my queen?
Just lift your veil and smile, why don't you?

During the time that Sabz paṛī is separated from Gulfām, she dresses as a *jogan*, roams in in Paristān and sings songs about her pain. Later in the play, the Black *dīv* is touched by her songs.

While longing for Gulfām, Sabz paṛī sings among others the following *ṭhumrī*:

kahāñ pāūñ kahāñ pāūñ yār re main
antarā: yār kī chāñv nazar nahīñ āvat ḍhūñḍat hūñ sañsār re main
kahāñ pāūñ
kā re karūñ kat heran jāūñ socat hūñ bār bār re main (Taj 2007, 368)

Where O where will I find the beloved?
Verse: The shadow of the beloved does not appear anywhere
I search in the world
Where will I find...?
“What should I do? Where should I go looking?” I think time and again.²³

Both *ṭhumrīs* are romantic and speak about the pain of the lover and are a vehicle for a dance. In general, *ṭhumrī* text was written from the perspective of a woman and in this sense it is different from the Urdu and Persian *ghazal* which laments the sorrow of separation from the point of view of a male (Manuel 1989, 7; Du Perron 2007, 21). Although in the *Indar sabhā* the *paṛī* is the one who sings the *ṭhumrī*, in the *rahas* Krishna conveys his sorrow, in a slight variation of the

²³ I benefited from all the translations by Taj of the selected passages.

convention. Yet both authors make the protagonists express themselves through the performance of *ṭhumrī*.

There are a number of folk songs related to particular times of the year; the ones related to the rain are very popular. The association of images with seasons has existed for a long time and it is part of the Prakrit-Sanskrit poetic tradition (Orsini 2010, 144). During the month of *sāvan* (July-August) the rain starts and the wind blows. Couples enjoy the weather and there are songs that describe the pain of those who are deprived of their beloveds. In *Indar sabhā*, Lāl *parī* is the third person to present a performance in the presence of the king Indar and after a couple of *ghazals* and a *ṭhumrī*, she sings a *sāvan* song that bears no connection with the main narrative of the drama:

bina piyā ghaṭā nahīm bhāve
rah rah dil rauṁda ho āve
bijarī kī camak tarpāve ḍarāve
bina piyā ghaṭā nahīm bhāve
antarā: ruta barakhā kī āī re guiyām
āja jīyā ko kal nahīm āve
morī or se yā din sajanī

koū usko samjhāve jāve
bina piyā ghaṭā nahīm bhāve
kāse kahūm is muṁh buṁdana māṁ
likha patiyām jo paṭhāve
pītam ko koū bharī barakhā meṁ
daī māṛī se milvāe lāve (Taj 2007, 264)

Without my beloved the clouds are not appealing
My heart is repeatedly trampled
Lightening flashes: I am afraid and tremble
Without the beloved the clouds are not appealing
The rainy season has come, friend!
Today my soul does not obtain peace
On my behalf this very day, dear one

Make him come around
Without my beloved the clouds are not appealing
Whom shall I ask, in the midst of these tears
To write letters that shall be sent
Someone, in the heavy rain,

Should bring my beloved to unite with me.

During *sāvan* the weather is pleasant and swings are a common entertainment. A variety of *sāvan* songs are sung while swinging and these are known as *sāvan-hiṇḍola* songs (Ranade 2006, 120). At the end of the second version of the *rahas* there is a brief *sāvan* song:

*āstāī: saiṇyā re jhakorā de gayo yah ritu sāvan bahār
sīs gūm gayo jhule pe aktar peṅg barhāe* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 112).

Refrain: Oh beloved! This beautiful *sāvan* season gave (us) a push.
I lost my head on the swing; Akhtar increased the swaying.

Both authors inserted folk elements that were not related to the plot of the play. In the *Indar sabhā* the *sāvan* portrays a heroine suffering from the pangs of separation during the rains, not satisfied with the cooler weather without her beloved and afraid of the lightening. In contrast, the tone of the *sāvan* in the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* is joyful, the lovers are together enjoying the pleasantries of the season and this item makes for a pleasant closure of the *rahas*. Despite these differences, Amānat and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh used the imagery of this kind of seasonal songs even if disconnected to the events of the drama.

Similarly, *holī* songs are connected to folk traditions and a particular part of the year (February-March). These songs are subcategories of *ṭhumrī* and describe Krishna teasing the girls in Braj, typically they portray Krishna sprinkling color on the *gopīs* (Manuel 1989, 24). The following song is sung by the second performer at the court of Indar, *Nīlam parī*:

*kānhā ko samjhāta na koī
amgiyā raṅga meṁ bhijoī
mori braj meṁ pata khoī
āja sakhī hama ghara māṁ jāke
pīta kī jāna ko roī
abīra gulāla chuṛāvāna khātira
muṁh aṁsuvāna se dhoī
badan maṭhī meṁ miloī* (Taj 2007, 238).

No one chides Krishna
My blouse is soaked in color
My honor is lost in Braj
Today, friend, I went home
I cried over the heart of my beloved
For the sake of removing the red *holī* powder
I washed my face with tears
And rubbed my body in dust.

In the *rahas* the *mākhānvālis* sing the first part of the *holī* song and when Krishna asks for butter, they sing the second part in response:

āstāī: ai deī main mākhana becana jāta
antarā: nā lo kānhā tum mākhan mora becūn akhtar hāth (Taqī and Saxonā 1987, 100).

Refrain: O my god, I'm on my way to sell butter.
Verse: Don't take my butter Kānhā! I should sell it to Akhtar.

The *holī* song in the *Indar sabhā* is not celebratory, it focuses on the pain of the protagonist and her feelings on losing her honor.²⁴ Although there are allusions to *holī*, Amānat perhaps had a different take on these kinds of songs. In the *rahas*, the song does not have a conventional *holī* imagery, but the misbehavior of Krishna is alluded to by the speaker. In the *rahas* the song is integrated into the story unlike the *Indar sabhā* in which there is no link to the plot. Even if Amānat and Wājid 'Alī Shāh framed the theme of *holī* differently they still harked back to this variety of folk songs.

The *ghazal* is a poetic form central to the Urdu literary tradition. It consists of *she'rs* or couplets in which each one presents an independent and complete thought. Each couplet can have a different mood or subject, but the link between all of them is the rhyming scheme and meter. The metrical system is derived from Persian and Arabic prosody. In the first couplet or *matla'* of the *ghazal* both lines have end rhyme and in the next ones just the second line maintains the same

²⁴ For the topic of sexual harassment in folk songs (see Pauwels 2010b).

ending: *aa, ba, ca*, etcetera. One of the conventions of the *ghazal* is that the beloved is cruel and indifferent and the lover is miserable. *Ghazals* were part of the courtesans' repertoire; they were extremely popular in Lucknow during the 19th century (Manuel 1991, 351). *Ghazals* were a vehicle to convey the emotions associated to unrequited love.

In the second version of the *rahas*, Rādhā is anxious on account of the theft of the flute and Krishna's suspected affairs with other women. The text here gives the instruction that Krishna should recite, sing, and mime the meaning of the *matla* ', after a pause he should dance. This kind of performance is analogous to the *thumrī*. The *ghazal*-like verses are just individual couplets; there are no sets of couplets from the same *ghazal*.

Krishna (matla'): *satāyā dil na kisī kā satāyā jāegā*
yah dil jo rūṭhegā kyoṅkar manāyā jāegā

rādhā jī: *ek dil ham ne diyā tu ne bo barbād kiyā*
ek tu ne diyā ham ne khudā ko yād kiyā (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 108)

Krishna (matla'): How long can they torment a tormented heart?
 How to bring around this heart which is offended

Rādhā jī: I gave you my heart and you destroyed it
 You gave me your heart and I thanked God.

In the *rahas* different kinds of couplets are juxtaposed in the same way that in the *Indar sabhā* the *mujrā* of each *parī* consists of a mix of genres. A *holī* song is followed by a *ghazal*, as it is the case in the *mujrā* of Pukrāj *parī*, for example. Amānat is closer to the older performance style of a single singer performing several songs for the patron, whereas Wājīd 'Alī Shāh has short dialogues between characters and genres. Wājīd 'Alī Shāh made choices that reflect a diverse poetic taste and perhaps this shows a composite performance culture even if the audience was limited. In the *rahas* there is a question and answer session between Rādhā and Krishna and a shift

in register takes place after each couplet from the *ghazal* like couplet to the esthetic universe of the *virahinī nāyika*:

rādhā: *majma' ghair meñ aisā sitam ijād kiyā*
qātīla bhūl ke ham ko kabhi yād kiyā

dohrā: *maiñ virahinī samjog na kou sāth*
*nārī chuvat bed ke phaphalā ho gae hāth*²⁵(Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 94)

Rādhā: In the assembly of strangers such tyranny was inflicted (upon me).
Oh murderer! Did you remember me, even by mistake?

Dohrā: I am bereft of companionship; no one is with me.
Touching the woman, the hands of the doctor were blistered.²⁶

In the *Indar sabhā* the *ghazal* is the most pervasive genre: there are 30 songs in *ghazal* form and some “hybrid” *ghazals* that are mixed with *sāvan* and *holī* songs (Taj 2007, 133). Unlike the *rahas*, *Indar sabhā* has extensive *ghazals* with many couplets. The high intensity of the emotions of the lover is similar in both plays. The next fragment is part of a *ghazal* sung by *Sabz parī* in her separation from *Gulfām*:

martā hūñ tere hajr meñ ai khabar le
ab jān se jātā hai yah bīmār khabar le

phirtā hūñ taṣawwur meñ tere ṣubaḥ tā shām
betāb hai yah tālib-e dīdār khabar le

bāzār-e vafā garam hai ai yusuf-e sāni
dīl bectā hai tera kharīdār khabar le (Taj 2007, 370)

I die when separated from you, oh beloved, take heed
This sick one is leaving life, take heed.

I wander thinking of you from morning till evening
The one desirous of seeing (you) is restless, take heed.

The market of fidelity is active, oh equal of Yusuf!
Your buyer is selling your heart, take heed.

²⁵ The author identifies this couplet as a *dohā*, but the first line does not conform to the meter.

²⁶ Perhaps from the heat provoked by her suffering.

The language of the songs in both dramas evokes different aesthetic universes: the Braj song with *gopīs* playing with Krishna, the cruel beloved of Urdu poetry or the female who suffers in separation. Amānat uses imagery from Hindu devotional poetry even if it is completely unrelated to the plot. Exploiting the Krishnaite idiom is justified in the *qiṣṣah* because of its setting in Braj, but Rādhā also speaks a couplet in Urdu.

All the passages quoted from the *Indar sabhā* are just fragments of longer texts. The *rahas* has a couplet, a succinct *ṭhumrī*, a *sāvan* of two lines whereas the *Indar sabhā* has an entire *ghazal*, a long *ṭhumrī* and an elaborated *sāvan* or a *sāvan-ghazal*. The *rahas* illustrates the assimilation of different genres in a nutshell. Perhaps the *rahas* expanded the short texts in performance. Both dramas have passages that have nothing to do with the plot, but are good for performance and variety. The difference is that the *ṭhumrī* is one of the most prominent genres in the text by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and the *ghazal* in Amānat’s. From at least the 1800s courtesan singer-dancers were the center of entertainment; *ṭhumrī* and *ghazal* were genres long cultivated by these performers (Qureshi 2006, 312-19). Amānat’s play imitated the single courtesan performing for her patron whereas Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s text transforms the model to a succinct dialogue between characters and genres.

Despite the fact that *Indar sabhā* and the *rahas* are considered the foundation of Urdu theater, the *Indar sabhā* has many sections with no Urdu at all and the *rahas* has very little Urdu in the dialogues. All the Persian vocabulary in the *rahas*, is mainly in the stage instructions. The actual dialogues in both plays have an accessible language and a variety of registers. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and Amānat seemed to be well acquainted with a multiplicity of traditions and modified the language accordingly.

The dramatic work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh does not seem radically different from *Indar sabhā*. It has been argued that the *Indar sabhā* addresses a more diverse audience than the pre-modern courtly drama (Hansen 2000, 98). Although the audience was limited in the spectacles at the court the performers came from many social and regional backgrounds. The development of drama was closely tied with the mixed repertoire of singers that included *thumrī*, *ghazal* and seasonal songs (Orsini 2014, 102). Both playwrights Amānat and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh drew on a performance tradition that was not defined by language or specific religious identity.

Conclusion

The performers of *Indar sabhā* took the model of the court further afield. *Indar sabhā* was definitely a landmark in the development of Indian theater and was performed for large audiences. The theatrical spectacles envisioned by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh played a role in the process. Instead of thinking of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* and *Indar sabhā* as the origins of Urdu theater, it is more relevant to analyze how they represent the exchange between different dramatic traditions perhaps including European ones.

The show in Lucknow illustrates how Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh experimented with performance traditions. Some of the people who were present in that spectacle apparently continued in other artistic projects, but others were banished from the court or stayed back after the exile of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. Instructors and performers changed, but the interest in the stories of Rādhā and Krishna remained. Despite the fact that the former king directed plays on other topics, he staged the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* for several years and decided to preserve information about the performances, performers and this script.

Multiple traditions were integrated into the dramas of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and Amānat. In the *rahas*, Urdu does not figure in an important way. Amānat was aware of the king’s entertainments

and may perhaps even been inspired by the gossip about the numerous women of the court. These two plays were not marked by religious or linguistic identity, but by their composite nature and the performance practices of their time. The authors tested the combination of folk and court traditions on the stage. There was a gradual evolution from courtesan spectacles to a more public performance. Women played all the roles and even impersonated males at the court. However, when the performances shifted away from the court to a public venue all the roles were taken up by males.

Figures



Figure 3 *Raqs rahas dhārī* from *'Ishq nāmah*. Windsor Castle. Royal Collection Trust. © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



Figure 4 Portrait of Wājid 'Alī Shāh. Sibtainabad Imbambara, Kolkata

CHAPTER 3 Annotated translation of the *rahas* entitled *Rādhā and Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah*

The only available *rahas* script authored by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh is the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah*. The text mixes features of the *rās līlā* and of the *dāstān*, narrating an episode of Krishna and Rādhā. Specifically, the *rahas* echoes the theme of the stolen flute, prevalent in the Vaishnava tradition. The *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* evinces Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s interest in dance, music and the performance culture of his time.

The word *rahas* was used to refer to performances that were at the intersection of theater and dance. It is a complex term that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh alternately used to denote choreographic progressions, and theatrical performances (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 81-90; 176-182). It has been argued by scholars that *rahas* is connected to the word *rās* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 79; Trivedi 2010, 104). The meaning of *rās* is related to the dance of Krishna and the *gopīs* and to a dramatic tradition in which the stories of the god are performed. Nevertheless, the word *rahas* came to mean a play with dance and song and not necessarily associated with the stories of Krishna (Qureshi 1987, 49). This is how it was used by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s contemporary, Amānat (Taj 2007, 430).

In *Banī*, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh comments on the performances he sustained in his house in Matiya Burj: *rahas*, music, dance, *marṣiyas*, *tamāshā* and *naql* (*Banī* 1987, 175-191). Additionally, he also sponsored the training of the performers (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 175-181). As evidence of the fact that he took great personal interest in every aspect of the presentation, at the beginning of the first section on *rahas* in *Banī*, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh described how the *rahas* choreographies should be staged:

The *sakhīs*²⁷ are dressed in their *peshwāz* etcetera and come in silence. They sing, accompanied by the musicians, the following text written by the author.

Refrain: Let's go, let's go *sakhī* ! Now let us perform a *rahas*,
Let us delight the mind of dear Akhtar (Wājid 'Alī Shāh)²⁸

When the pen-name of the author emerges from their lips, at once all the *sakhīs* stand; they form a line accompanying the *ustād* in the predetermined spot; during the *rahas*, it is necessary that they refrain from any kind of eating, drinking and noise, and that they do not leave the place of the dance until its conclusion, and that they play two pairs of small, joined cymbals. Before²⁹ every *rahas* the words written by the author are sung. After this, the song is completed on *sam*³⁰ with the short composition (*tukrā*) of the *pakhāvāj*. After finishing every *rahas* let it be intoned "Long live the soul of the world" or "Victory to the soul of the world"; and one short composition (*tukrā*) is offered to the right side, one to the left side and one to the center (Taqī and Saxenā, 1987, 81).

Text and translation

The translation of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah* is based on the *nasta'liq* lithograph of the *Banī* printed at the royal press in Matya Burj in 1877, which I have compared with the *Banī* in *devanāgarī* edited by Roshan Taqī and Mohan Saxenā, published in 1987. The differences are minimal. The discrepancies with the *devanāgarī* text are indicated in the footnotes. The first version of the *rahas*, without the costume list, was also published in *nasta'liq* by Mas'ūd Ḥasan Rizvī in *Urdū Dramā Aur Iṣṭej* and in *devanāgarī* with the costume list by Śivaprasāda Mīśra in *Satyahariścandra*. Mas'ūd Ḥasan Rizvī's edition contains a few notes that are mentioned in this translation whenever relevant.

The translation is very literal, glossing of words and difficult readings are specified in the footnotes. Word meanings are provided with a dictionary reference. In some cases, special glossaries or technical books were consulted to clarify the meaning of words and concepts; the

²⁷ The performers are called *sakhīs*

²⁸ Wājid 'Alī Shāh spelled his penname as Akhtar in the *Banī* instead of Akhtar.

²⁹ The word کمم appears in the text, it is not clear what it refers to. The word means "saffron or vermilion." Perhaps that *kumkum* powder should be applied before the *rahas*.

³⁰ The first beat of a cycle in Indian music, this beat is also the last one.

sources are always provided. Square brackets are used for words that help understanding the meaning, but are not in the original text.

The *rahas* has abundant stage instructions in the subjunctive mood, but in the translation I use present tense and participles to conform to the conventions in English printed plays. The stage instructions are in italics. In a couple of cases of word play in the original text, a translation of the sense of the passage was opted for rather than a literal translation. For example, in the first *rahas* where the original text plays upon the similarity of *murlī* “flute” and *murgī* “hen”, I chose to translate the two words as the rhyming pair “flute” and “coot.”

The first qiṣṣah³¹ regarding the circumstances of the declaration³² and display of love³³ between Rādhā and Kanhaiyā³⁴

*Two sakhīs wear a heavy jāma-e ḥusn³⁵, putting on embroidered wings.³⁶ One is called Purple parī, and the second is Saffron parī. One man is made up as a dīv or “demon” of detestable aspect;³⁷ his name is ‘Ifrīt. [A third] sakhī assumes the role of a jogan or “female devotee”; her name is Ṣaḥrā. One man acts the part of the servant to the jogan; his name is Ghurbat. After finishing the [introductory] *rahas* dance³⁸, all sakhīs sit down. The two parīs sit on chairs on one side and on the other the jogan holds court sitting on a chair.³⁹ The dīv stands in front of the parīs*

³¹ The word *qiṣṣah* refers originally to a narrative romantic or heroic originally from the Islamic world. See Pritchett 1985.

³² The word *izḥar* means “manifestation, revelation, disclosure, demonstration, publication, display, declaration” (Platts’ Dictionary is abbreviated as PD).

³³ The word *ta’shshuq* means “exhibiting or showing love, falling in love, being in love, love, affection” (PD).

³⁴ The text in *nasta’līq* has *pahlā qissah rādhā aur Kanhaiyā ke izḥar ḥālāt aur ta’shshuq meṅ*.

³⁵ It is a particular garment fashioned by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (Trivedi 2010, 30). The *jāma* is a robe, gown, long gown (PD). Rizvī also notes that this is a garment that was created by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (1957, 212).

³⁶ The meaning of *kārcob* is “embroidered”; with the suffix *ī* “cloth with silver and gold thread” (McGregor’s Dictionary is abbreviated as MD).

³⁷ The text in *nasta’līq* has *karīh* “hateful, odious, detestable”; *karīh-manzar* means “of detestable aspect” (PD). The *devanāgarī* text has *kriya-e-manzar*.

³⁸ The word *rahas* here is used in the sense of “dance”. Rizvī also supports this idea (1957, 2012). The term is discussed in Chapter 1.

³⁹ The word *ijlās* refers to “the act of sitting of a court, a court, *karnā* sitting in a court, to preside” (PD).

with arms folded, carrying a mace in his hand. Ghurbat stands in front of the jogan, with folded hands,⁴⁰ and on one side Rādhā and Kanhaiyā, wearing a crown, a nose ring and a forehead ornament,⁴¹ with the Bengali veil pulled over [her head] sit on chairs holding court.⁴² Rāmcīrā, attending on both of them, is present with folded hands. Four sakhīs, named Lalitā, Sakhā, Cīna and Laṛvā, wearing turban ornaments and feathers⁴³, assemble and stand apart [from the rest]. Four panihārins, or “water maids”, singing a ṭhumrī by the author fill water jars from a prop⁴⁴ well on stage. A man dresses up as a traveler with a bundle and stick in his hand. Four mākhanvālīs or “butter maids” churn butter while singing a horī⁴⁵ composed by the author. The jogan sits sadly.

Ghurbat (asking Ṣaḥrā): May you live for ages to come! May you remain happy! Jogan Sāhib, why are you morose? Why is your soul troubled?

Ṣaḥrā (answering Ghurbat): For twenty-four years I’ve been carrying [this] sorrow.

Ghurbat: What is this sorrow? If you want to, please tell me.

Ṣaḥrā: For twenty-four years I have been steeped⁴⁶ in the sorrow that I have not seen the dance of Rādhā and Kanhaiyā.

⁴⁰ The meaning of *dast-basta* is “with folded hands, in token of respect” (PD).

⁴¹ The word *bainā* means “an ornament (consisting of a small circular plate of gold with enamel work) worn by women on the forehead” (PD). The *devanāgarī* text has *vagairā* instead.

⁴² It says literally pulling the Bengali veil. *Banī* has a section with *gats* or “dance movements.” One of them is “the Bengali veil *gar*” in which the performer pulls the veil over the face partially and dances. This movement is illustrated (1987, 74).

⁴³ The word *of jiga, jega* means “an ornament worn on the turban (it consists of a band of velvet about six inches long and two broad beautifully embodied, and a gold plate set with precious stones on it” (PD). The word *kalghī* means “a gem spired ornament fixed in the turban, usually with the feathers of the humā of phoenix” (PD).

⁴⁴ The word *maṣṇū* means “created things; things artificially made; creations; works of art or skill” (PD). Text in *devanāgarī* has *masnavī*.

⁴⁵ A *hori* or *holī* song is about the spring season.

⁴⁶ The literal meaning of *mahaknā*- To exhale agreeable scent; to diffuse fragrance (PD).

Ghurbat: Is that all there is to your gloom? I'll go arrange⁴⁷ this for you.

Ghurbat leaves in search [of a solution]. He meets 'Ifrīt aside and says:

Ghurbat: May peace be upon you, Mister 'Ifrīt.

'Ifrīt: May peace be upon you as well, Usain,⁴⁸ peace be well, may all be well,⁴⁹ may there be raisins, may there be almonds,⁵⁰ Sir⁵¹ Ghurbat honorable⁵² lord⁵³ eminent⁵⁴ brave master.⁵⁵

Among the brave, Blowbag, sissy on the battlefield, alarm-f**er.⁵⁶

Then both embrace.

'Ifrīt (*cackling in this manner*): kāun-kāun, khel-khel-khel-khel.

Ghurbat (*speaking to 'Ifrīt*): Mister 'Ifrīt, we have been like brothers for a long time. I have to ask you a favor,⁵⁷ if possible.

'Ifrīt: What is the favor?

Ghurbat: There is a *jogan* who is sad.

'Ifrīt: What kind of sadness is it?

⁴⁷ The verb *tadbīr karnā* means “to arrange for” (PD).

⁴⁸ Mocking the name Ḥussein.

⁴⁹ The comic character comes up with some fancy rhyme words that sound like Arabic: *valām utatām val-kalām*.

⁵⁰ Again comedic prefixing of the Arabic definite pronoun *al* to *kishmish* “raisins” and *bādām* “almonds.”

⁵¹ The word *miyān* means “an address expressive of kindness, or respect” (PD).

⁵² The word *bahādur* means “brave, bold, valiant, courageous, and high-spirited. At the end of a name a title equivalent to 'Honourable' in English” (PD).

⁵³ The word *bahādurān* means “hero, chevalier, knight, horseman; a title of honor conferred by the Great Mogul and other Eastern potentates, bearing some resemblance to the European title of military knighthood” (PD).

⁵⁴ The word '*alī* means “eminent, noble” (PD).

⁵⁵ The meaning of *khan* is “master, owner; lord, prince, a title of Mohammadan nobles” (PD).

⁵⁶ The comedian is throwing in some insults *jang-nāmardī* and the inventive compound *ghabar-cod*, based on the better known *bahin-cod*.

⁵⁷ The word *amr* means “order, command, affair, business, transaction” (PD).

Ghurbat: Jogan Sāhib says that she is sad because she has not seen the dance of Rādhā and Kanhaiyā. I have promised to try [to help]. If you can, [help me] fulfill my promise.

‘Ifrīt: Ickity, pickity, ally gadaw,
Dicks, do, ally gamaw,
Okus, pokus, pelly gaw.⁵⁸

I swear on [my] children, that which can be done by me I shall never withhold. Behold, I will try.

At that very moment, ‘Ifrīt sets out taking Ghurbat along, and begins to say:

‘Ifrīt: Oh wonderful! Knife-brandishing, porter-brandishing⁵⁹ spear-brandishing,⁶⁰ ruin-brandishing,⁶¹ sword-brandishing, integrity-brandishing⁶² one come with me. And I have requested that the honorable Saffron *parī* and Purple *parī* be present.

‘Ifrīt and Ghurbat: There is a woman who became a *jogan* out of a longing to see the dance of Rādhā and Kanhaiyā, and she wants to see that dance.

Parīs: Bring the *jogan* here.

‘Ifrīt goes along with Ghurbat to meet the jogan.

Ghurbat (to *Ṣahrā*): Come Jogan Sāhib, the *parīs* have called for you.

The jogan appears in front of the parīs with ‘Ifrīt and Ghurbat.

⁵⁸ The text has a series of nonsense rhyming words: *tainatī mainnatī dum khabishī loṭakalāṭā*, etcetera.

⁵⁹ What follows is a series of nonsense words, all referring to skills of one type of another. The word *ḥammāl* means “a carrier of burdens, a porter” (PD).

⁶⁰ The meaning of *neza bāzī* is “throwing of the spear, jousting, tilting” (PD).

⁶¹ The word *kḥilāl* means “intervening space, interval, middle, imperfection, defect, flaw, damage, ruin; disorder” (PD).

⁶² The meaning of *rāst-bāzī* is “fidelity, integrity, uprightness, honesty, plain-dealing, fair play” (PD).

‘Ifrīt: Here is the *jogan*.

Parī: Bring her forward.

When the jogan comes, the two parīs stand up and embrace her.

Parīs (to *Ṣaḥrā*): What happened to you? Why did you become a *jogan*?

Ṣaḥrā: For twenty-four years, I have been obsessed with the notion that, by some means, I must see the dance of Rādhā and Kanhaiyā.

Parīs: Oh ‘Ifrīt! Show the dance of Rādhā and Kanhaiyā to the *jogan*.

‘Ifrīt- (*screaming*) Not “Hey ‘Ifrīt”?⁶³ (To Rādhā and Kanhaiyā and the *sakhīs*) dance the *hiṇḍolā*⁶⁴ dance.⁶⁵

At this time all the sakhīs stand in a row. Kanhaiyā holds one end of the dupaṭṭa and, in the middle of the row⁶⁶ Rādhā jī holds the other end. She keeps on singing the hiṇḍolā, moves her feet in counts of “one, two” according to rhythm.^{67 68}

⁶³ Using the contemptuous vocative particle. He seems to be pleased that the *parīs* address him with “*are*” instead of “*be*”.

⁶⁴ The meaning *hiṇḍolā* is “swing,” as well as the genre of “swinging-songs” of the rainy season.

⁶⁵ The *devanāgarī* text repeats two more times *nāco hiṇḍolā kā nāc* “dance the *hiṇḍolā* dance.

⁶⁶ The meaning *wasat* is “middle, center” and *ṣaff* means “a rank, a row, a line” (PD).

⁶⁷ The term *tāl* “is defined in terms of *matras* in repeating cycles of beats that expand to a stressed point call *sam* down to a release point called *khali*” (Menon 1995, 157-58).

⁶⁸ The *devanāgarī* text has here a passage that is not in the *nasta’līq* text: *sab saf ke pichle qadam aur pastī par rassī ko dilā kiyā kareñ. rahasvāliyāñ rūpak tāl aur tīn martabā se kam āndo-raft na kareñ aur yah sāvan faqir kā banayā huā gātī jāyeñ:*

āstāī- sāinyā re jhakarā de gayo yah ritu sāvan bahār

sīs gūm gayo jhule pe akhtar peñg barhāe

“When the whole row steps back, she follows and lets the rope [*dupaṭṭa*] loose. The *rahas* performers dance in *rūpak tāl* (seven beats divided in three) and should not do the cycle less than three times and they should sing this *sāvan* composed by the writer:

Refrain: Oh beloved! This beautiful *sāvan* season gave (us) a push.

I lost my head on the swing; Akhtar increased the swaying.”

All the sakhīs imitate⁶⁹ Rādhā jī. Kanhaiyā jī, stepping forward⁷⁰, stands opposite to Rādhā and pulls the dupaṭṭa tight. Then, stepping back, he lets it loose.

Refrain: Let the swing sway, Rādhā and Krishna, who is darker than dark.

The wind goes san na na, san na na, san na na.

First verse: Let all the *sakhīs* push the swing together,

singing⁷¹ ta na na na, ta na na na, ta na na na.

Second verse: Peacock crown is laid down⁷² by his side

The earrings [and] the anklets resound jha na na na, jha na na na, jha na na na.

After finishing the hiṇḍolā all the sakhīs say: May king Rāmcandra⁷³ be victorious.

Afterwards Rādhā and Kanhaiyā stand in front of each other, with half of the sakhīs standing on Kanhaiyā's side and the other half on Rādhā's. The savāl-javāb⁷⁴ "question and answer" session between Rādhā and Kanhaiyā begins, while the gestural expression of the meaning⁷⁵ [of the verses] continues. According to the [number of] feet in the verses,⁷⁶ after every Urdu couplet⁷⁷ and every dohā, they both spin towards the right.

⁶⁹ The meaning of *mutāba't* is "following, imitating, conforming one's self, (kī) *karnā* to follow, to imitate" (PD). The *devanāgarī* text has *muṭābiq*.

⁷⁰ The meaning of *pesh-qadamī-* is "stepping before or forwards, advancing."

⁷¹ The verb *tān lena* means "to give inflections to the voice (in singing)" (MD).

⁷² The words *radh rākh* are taken as *radda rakhnā (-kā)* "to lay down (in Persian *radh*)" (PD). The *devanāgarī* has *kar* "hand" but the text in *nasta'līq* has *kaṭ* "side". Alternatively, this may refer to Krishna, having tucked his crown under his arm (by his side) so that it wouldn't fall off.

⁷³ It is striking that they do not say "May Kanhaiyā be victorious."

⁷⁴ The meaning of *savāl-javāb* in music is "a call and response pattern between two musicians" (Neuman 1990, 275). Here it seems to be between Rādhā and Kanhaiyā.

⁷⁵ The term *arth bhāv* means "adhering faithfully to the literal meaning of the lyrics of a song in a *kathak* performance." (Narayana 2004, 51).

⁷⁶ The word *arkān* can mean "feet" in prosody and *baḥr* is "meter" (PD). The meaning is not entirely clear.

⁷⁷ The word *bait* means "couplet".

Rādhā (by the author):⁷⁸ In the assembly of strangers, such tyranny was inflicted (upon me).

Oh murderer! Once you forgot me, you never remembered.

Dohrā: “I am bereft of companionship; no one is with me

Touching the woman, the hands of the doctor were blistered.”⁷⁹

Kanhaiyā (by the author): My name is Kanhaiyā, I know you.

Rādhā, I respect you here more than life.

Dohrā: The *bindi* upon Rādhā jī’s body, Oh, bestows beauty;

it is like a bee enjoying the fragrance of a *ketaki* in bloom.⁸⁰

Rādhā (by the author): I have been driven crazy by your love, oh Krishna!

More than [my own] heart and soul, I recognize you here.

Dohrā: Come beloved Mohan, let me cover your eyelids.

I would not have eyes for others and I won’t let you either.

Kanhaiyā (by the author): In my love for you, oh Rādhā, I searched from jungle to jungle.

The *dīvs* and the *parīs* did not recognize me anywhere.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh writes *al muṣannif* “the author” before certain couplets. This seems to distinguish his verses from others that might come from other sources.

⁷⁹ Perhaps from the heat provoked by her suffering.

⁸⁰ Literally: “the bee takes fragrance.”

⁸¹ Perhaps he is so lost in his love that fantastic beings did not recognize him.

Dohrā: The peacock crown, the sash around the waist, the flute in [your] hands and the garland across [your] chest:

Believing in this [image], Bihārī Lāl always dwells in my heart!

Kanhaiyā: The door to reach Rādhā is as remote as the date tree [is tall]:

if you climb it you will taste the nectar of love, but if you fall, you'll break into pieces.

Dohrā: The master sitting by the lattice window accepted everyone's respectful greeting.

He remunerates each according to their service.⁸²

After the dohrās, Kanhaiyā distributes a money offering to all the viewers present.⁸³ They take the offering in their hands, touch it to their head and eyes, and kiss it.

Rādhā: Smoke rises by the bank of the river, I know something has happened.

May the one who is being cremated not be the one for whose sake I took up asceticism.

Her face is like the moon and golden bracelets upon her wrists

My heart knows, so does everyone else whom I'm waiting for.

Open the dressing O healer! Do not disturb the stubborn wound

If you wish to share my pain, my [pain] of separation.⁸⁴

⁸² Or everyone's courtesy is answered in kind.

⁸³ The word *zar* means "gold" and *cākarī* means "service" (PD).

⁸⁴ The meaning of this couplet and the previous one is not entirely clear. I thank Jameel Ahmed for his help in the translation.

You are the creator of both worlds, you are the goal of my journey⁸⁵

just as the crow directs the boat towards the shore.

Kānā, you don't know how I have withered⁸⁶ because of your separation
while the creeper I sowed day by day flourishes.⁸⁷

Oh crows! Eat all my body; peck away at every piece of meat,
But don't eat my two eyes because I hope to meet my beloved.⁸⁸

Mohan, flute player, look towards me.

I keep you in my eyes, [ineffaceable] like a line of *kājal*.

Kanhaiyā: Rādhā, why are you so far [away]? My house is unadorned by a beautiful woman⁸⁹,

Just as the leaves of the henna plant are unmarked⁹⁰ by redness [for which they are
valued].⁹¹

⁸⁵ Literally you are as my orbit.

⁸⁶ Literally became yellow.

⁸⁷ Presumably irrigated by the water of her tears.

⁸⁸ Attributed to Baba Farid in *Guru Granth Sahib* (91) (sggs 1382).

⁸⁹ The word *anganā* is taken as woman, but it could conceivably stand for *āngana* “courtyard” in which case one could read “why do you not adorn the courtyard of the house?” It might be a pun.

⁹⁰ Literally not inscribed.

⁹¹ This seems to refer to the fact that the henna leaves are green, so the redness characterizing henna is apparently absent from them. But the precise nature of the comparison is not totally clear. Perhaps the reference is to Rādhā's physical absence yet presence in Krishna's heart.

Rādhā: King of kings, supreme Lord, may you live many *yugas* and remain happy. Where did you leave that flute in which six *rāgas* and thirty-six *rāganiyas* [“minor *rāgas*”] would resound?

Play that flute.

Kanhaiyā: (*spreading his garment in supplication*) Queen sovereign over all kings, supreme lady, great queen, Kānhā bows his head [to you]. May you live for many *yugas* and be happy!
Oh Rām! The flute is lost.

Rādhā: Mahārāj, I know you well. You must have given it to Kubja.

Saying this Rādhā jī becomes angry and offended, and sits apart. At this time Kanhaiyā jī sings this ṭhumrī and mimes the meaning of the words. He falls at her feet and, with folded hands, he begins to placate her.

Refrain: My great queen, empress Rādhā.

Verse: Did I make some mistake,
causing you not to appreciate Akhtar’s⁹² worth?

Then, feeling helpless, Kanhaiyā jī calls his servant Rāmcīrā.

Rāmcīrā- At your service, King of kings, at your service (*Rāmcīrā presents himself*) supreme Lord, prime embodiment of Shiva, great master, tell me what happened?

Kanhaiyā: Rādhikā got angry; she thinks that I have given the flute to Kubja.

Rāmcīrā: Great Lord, then placate her.

Rāmcīrā requests this three times and makes a suggestion in the very same manner. The fourth time Rāmcīrā says:

⁹² Pen name of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. He uses the spelling Akhtar throughout instead of Akhtar.

Rāmcīrā: Maharāj, ask some *sakhī* to intercede and offer a defense on your behalf.

At this time Kanhaiyā jī calls out:

Kanhaiyā: Hey Lalitā!

Lalitā: Coming, my lord!

In rhythm (tāl) with laharās,⁹³ dancing on the count of one-two, one-two, she presents herself and sits down.

Kanhaiyā: Lalitā! My Rādhā refuses to accept my word. What should I do?

Lalitā: Beg her, entreat her,⁹⁴ fall at [her] feet, humble yourself before her,⁹⁵ beseech her, and then she will be placated.

Kanhaiyā: I have made many attempts, but she does not listen. But, as per your suggestion, I will try again.

Once again, Kanhaiyā tries to persuade [her]. He sings this ṭhumrī, and, in the aforementioned manner of great entreaty and exhortation⁹⁶, he portrays the meaning [of the lyrics of the ṭhumrī]⁹⁷:

Refrain: Rādhā jī, why don't you talk to me?

Verse: Did I make some mistake unwittingly, my queen?

Just lift your veil and smile, why don't you?

⁹³ The term *laharā* means “fixed composition set to the *tāl*” (Chib 2004, 153).

⁹⁴ The idiom *nāk ragaṇā* means “to flatter, to entreat” (Śarmā. 1989. *Mānaka Hindī muhāvarā kośa*).

⁹⁵ The meaning of *mūṛ ghisno* is probably “drag your head [in front of her]”.

⁹⁶ The meaning of *minnat samājat* is “entreaty and exhortation” (MD).

⁹⁷ For the meaning of *arth bhāv* see note 45.

In the same manner [as above], he complains four times to Rāmcīrā and, as per the [previous] suggestion, Rāmcīrā calls the three remaining sakhīs, maintaining the same rhythm. The sakhīs perform the above-mentioned⁹⁸ speech.⁹⁹ When it is the turn of the fourth sakhī to come, Kanhaiyā jī sings this ṭhumrī, and, as previously, starts weeping “Ah! Oh!” and assumes an anxious aspect.¹⁰⁰

Refrain: Rādhā is my very life [itself].

Verse: Should I fall at your feet Lalitā, or yours Sākhā, or yours Cīnā, or yours Larvā?

[For] without seeing her there is no peace [for me]!

While this verse is being sung, he begs each sakhī when her name comes up and falls at her feet.

All sakhīs stand up and Rādhā remains seated. They recite this rhythmically.

All *sakhīs*: de dī atā tā tā tā thaī dai dī atā tā tā tā thaī

Verse: thaī thaī thaī thaī dai dī atā tā tā tā thaī dai dī atā tā tā tā tā¹⁰¹

Kanhaiyā (*standing up and intoning rhythmically*):

Rādhā Rādhā Rādhā Rādhā

In the pathways of the forest Rādhā Rādhā, in the forest-dwelling Rādhā Rādhā.

⁹⁸ The meaning of *marqūma-bālā* is “above written, above-mentioned” (PD).

⁹⁹ The meaning of *kalma* is “speech” (PD) It is not clear what is the speech that the text refers to, perhaps the *sakhīs* should repeat the preceding speech by Lalitā.

¹⁰⁰ The word *zārī* means “weeping” (PD).

¹⁰¹ These are dance *bols* or mnemonic syllables for dance which mark steps.

He continues dancing and singing, maintaining the ṭukṛa-toṛa¹⁰² with his feet. Then Rāmcīrā suggests:

Rāmcīrā: Mahārāj, request Rādhā from the Giver (god) and perform penance, perhaps she may be won over.

Then Kanhaiyā jī squats down, and holding his nose with his right hand, stops his breathing.

Immediately, Rādhā gets up and clings to him in an embrace. The sakhīs perform the laḍḍu pūjā.

The method for the laḍḍu pūjā is as follows:

After Kanhaiyā jī inflates his cheeks, he makes such an expression with his eyes that his pupils don't move and he stands on his left foot. He places the heel of his right foot on the knee of his left leg. Four sakhīs, placing their right knee on the ground and their left foot on the floor for support, make a rounded shape with both their hands,¹⁰³ indicating the roundness of laḍḍus by means of the similar spherical shape of their hands; then holding them as if they were at a distance, they make their rounded hands dance in rhythm and keep moving them. While turning their hands¹⁰⁴, every time, in rhythm, they continue lightly beating and striking¹⁰⁵ Kanhaiyā jī's inflated cheeks with their fists. Continuing to make fists they keep striking [his cheeks] and sing these words:

[All sakhīs:] Take one, take one dear, take a laddu.

After the laḍḍu pūjā all sakhīs stand side by side and sing these dohrās:

First line: A woman is distraught; her world has been struck by a spear.

Second line: “Oh creator! Just give me wings that I may keep visiting my beloved.”

¹⁰² These words *ṭukṛa* and *toṛa* refer to “rhythmic patterns based on mnemonics of *tabla* and dance. The *ṭukṛa* is the simplest variety where the mnemonics are of the *tabla* and its emphasis is on a particular kind of pattern. The *toṛa* is analogous to the *toras* of *sitar* where clusters of sound patterns are presented in a given *raga* structure” (Narayan 2004, 59).

¹⁰³ The text in *nasta'liq* has *mudawwar* “to make round” (PD). The *devanāgarī* has *mudabbir* “to devise, plan; to follow behind” (PD).

¹⁰⁴ The word *gardish* means “going round, turning round”; *dastī* means “of the hand” (PD).

¹⁰⁵ The text in *nasta'liq* has *zarb* “beating, striking.” The *devanāgarī* has *jaśb* which does not appear in a dictionary. The word *tahokā* “a light blow or kick” (MD).

Third line: The *sakhīs* may console [her] [by saying] “Do not grieve ¹⁰⁶ without Uddhav.”¹⁰⁷ Let her understand that his wings have grown in¹⁰⁸ [he has gained the freedom to act].

Fourth line: And if one could meet the beloved merely with wings, wouldn’t her wings take the *cakvī* to the *cakvā*?¹⁰⁹

When the sakhīs have completed the four lines, they sit side by side, and Kanhaiyā jī stands and sings this dohrā:

First line: My flute is lost upon a sand-bank of Mathura and Vrindavan.

Second line: I can find it neither here nor there, nor can I find it in the fields.

Rādhā: Great king, I shall be happy only when you find the flute and bring it [to me].

Kanhaiyā: Fine, I will definitely find the flute and bring it [to you].

Immediately Kanhaiyā jī searches for the flute. He asks everyone as follows:

Kanhaiyā: Has anyone seen my flute?

Rāmcīrā: (Answering, in a playful manner)¹¹⁰ Has anyone seen my coot?¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ The text in *devanāgarī* reads *mat sok karo*, but text in *nasta’līq* has *mat soñc karo*. Here it is taken as *socnā* “to feel concern.”

¹⁰⁷ The word in *nasta’līq* *ūdho* and *ūdho* in *devanāgarī* is interpreted as Uddhav. This character is Krishna’s friend and he consoles the *gopīs* when Krishna goes to Mathura.

¹⁰⁸ The meaning of *par jamnā* is “the feathers to grow in, fig. to gain freedom of action” (MD).

¹⁰⁹ The word *cakvā* [*cakravāka*] means “a large orange brown duck, the Sheldrake, or a Brahminy duck supposed to be separated from its mate at night” (MD).

¹¹⁰ Here the text in *nasta’līq* has *az rāh farah* “by way of rejoicing” and the *devanāgarī* mistakenly transliterates *izahāre- enphugā*.

¹¹¹ Play on the similarity of *murlī* “flute” and *murgī* “chicken.”

Kanhaiyā: *Knocking him with his fist and grabbing him by the neck, he removes him from there and laughingly says:*

Kanhaiyā: Are we looking for a flute or a coot?

Rāmcīrā (*repeats [his taunt]*): Mahārāj, does your flute have two horns and one tail?

Again Kanhaiyā jī strikes him with his fist and drives him out by the neck.¹¹² Then they take up the inquiry¹¹³ and search¹¹⁴ for the flute. They repeat the previous speech.¹¹⁵ Then Rāmcīrā speaks:

Rāmcīrā: Has anyone seen our brute?¹¹⁶

Then Kanhaiyā carries out the previously mentioned action¹¹⁷. At the same time, the four panihārins or “water maidens” begin to fill [the pots] with water from the prop well while singing this ṭhumrī by the author.

Refrain: I roamed and searched all the paths and ways in Vrindavan, Oh Dark one!

Every jungle is desolate [because] no flute¹¹⁸ could be heard.

Verse: As [they] ventured on step by step, the locks of hair came loose

At the well her skirt was lifted

Grabbing her hand, the bangle came off

Oh Akhtar, leave the bank of the river.¹¹⁹

¹¹² This line is not in the *devanāgarī* edition.

¹¹³ The word *tafaḥḥuṣ* means “search, investigation, examination, scrutiny, inquiry” (PD).

¹¹⁴ The word *tajassus* means “searching carefully, examining, investigating.” (PD).

¹¹⁵ The meaning of *kalma-e avval* is “previous speech” (PD). This could refer to the exchange between Krishna and Rāmcīrā.

¹¹⁶ Perhaps again a play on the word for flute *bāñsī* misunderstood as *bhaiñs* “buffalo”.

¹¹⁷ The word *masbūq* means “preceding, first, foremost” (Lane, William. 1955. *Arabic-English lexicon*).

¹¹⁸ The text in *nasta’līq* has *kaisī* and the *devanāgarī* *vaisī*.

¹¹⁹ This is a typical folk song with the theme of the woman who goes to the well and is sexually assaulted. For a study of the topic see (Pauwels. 2010).

At this time, Kanhaiyā jī¹²⁰, feeling helpless, asks the traveler.

Kanhaiyā: Honorable Traveler! From where do you come?

Traveler: I come from Mathura-Vrindavan.

Kanhaiyā: Did you see my flute with anyone?

Traveler: Yes, I saw it. Those four *panihārins* are filling water [jars] at the well. Amongst them, the fair one, who is naughty and coquettish, took it. Ask her for it.

Kanhaiyā jī (*pleadingly and with folded hands begins to beseech the four panihārins.*): I will give you a *laḍḍu* [if] you give me my flute.

Panihārins: Go, go away. We don't have your flute.

Kanhaiyā jī supplicates and entreats each one. All four in turn lightly strike Kanhaiyā's cheeks with their fists and drive him away pushing him repeatedly. At the end they say:

Panihārins: King of kings, great king, supreme Lord, prime embodiment of Shiva, may you live for many *yugas* and be happy. Give us the freshest of butter and we shall give you [the flute].¹²¹

Kanhaiyā jī agrees to bring¹²² the butter and he sets off¹²³ in search¹²⁴ [of the butter] and the four panihārins keep singing this ṭhumrī at the well. During the question and answer series no noise is made and the musicians also stop playing their instruments.¹²⁵ Kanhaiyā jī goes to the mākhanvālis or “butter maids” searching for butter.

¹²⁰ The *devanāgarī* text has *ek musāfir kā dākhilā* “a traveler enters.”

¹²¹ *murlī* is not in text in *nasta'liq*.

¹²² In the *devanāgarī* text *lāne. lā dene* in the *nasta'liq* text.

¹²³ The word *rawān* means “going, passing, moving.” The *devanāgarī* has *ravān-davān*, but the *nasta'liq* text just has *ravān*.

¹²⁴ *Nasta'liq* has *tajassus* “searching” and *devanāgarī* has the nonsense word *tajassukh* (the graph for s and kh being frequently confused).

¹²⁵ This text and not in *devanāgarī* edition, it is just in the *nasta'liq*: *magar sawāl ō jawāb ke waqt ghul-shor na hu'a kare aur sāzandon ke sāzon kā bajnā bhī mauqūf ho jāyā kare.*

Kanhaiyā: May you live for many *yugas* and be happy. Give me a little bit of butter.

The mākhanvālis place a small pot¹²⁶ on a tray¹²⁷ and they continue churning yogurt with the churning stick. They sing this holī song composed by the author.

Refrain: O my god, I'm on my way to sell butter.

Verse: Don't take my butter Kānā,¹²⁸ I should sell it to Akhtar.

When Kanhaiyā jī asks for butter, the mākhanvālis sing the antarā of this holī in response.¹²⁹

Finally avoiding the gaze of the mākhanvālis, he steals a tray of butter,¹³⁰ and giving it to the panihārins, takes the flute from them and plays it. As soon as Rādhā jī hears the sound of the flute, she runs and embraces Kanhaiyā jī, and is heartily pleased.

Rādhā: May my lord be prosperous.¹³¹ Now my heart is happy. Seat yourself upon your throne and I will sing and dance a *ṭhumrī*¹³² for you.

At this time, joining the musicians, they sing this ṭhumrī and with all their hearts, mime the meaning of the lyrics.¹³³

Refrain: Oh the flute of the Dark one began to play!

Verse: On the bank of the river 'Akhtar' makes the flute play

¹²⁶ The word *maṭkī* means "small pot" (MD). It is described as round and thin also (Ambāprasāda Sumana. 1960. *Krishaka-Jīvana*)

¹²⁷ The word *sīnī* means "a salver, a plate, tray" (PD).

¹²⁸ The text in *nasta'liq* has *kānā* and the *devanāgarī* has *kānhā*.

¹²⁹ The text in *nasta'liq* has *mākhanvāliyān jabāb meñ usī holī kā antarā gā diyā karen*.

¹³⁰ Perhaps with several small pots on it.

¹³¹ The meaning of *bol-bālā* is "high speech; prosperity, success, prosperous" (PD).

¹³² The word *ṭhumrī* is not in the *devanāgarī*, but it is in the *nasta'liq*.

¹³³ For the meaning of *arth bhāv* see note 45. The text also says together with *mukh plās*, this words are not clear. Perhaps a technical term.

A sigh¹³⁴ escapes from their heart.

The story is finished. If [the audience] is willing to stay awake¹³⁵ then each sakhī, separately, can spend the night dancing and singing. But these stories and rahas are better and more spectacular¹³⁶ at night. During the day, they are not very impressive. For this reason, considering the character¹³⁷ of this story and these rahas, they should be performed at night. May Allāh grant prosperity.¹³⁸

Details of Kanhaiyā jī's costume

1. Short pants¹³⁹ with underwear¹⁴⁰
2. Skirt
3. Embroidered¹⁴¹ neck ornament¹⁴²
4. Embroidered crown

Totaling four items

Details of the costume and Rādhā's jewelry

1. Nose ring
2. Forehead ornament¹⁴³
3. Complete [set] of Hindu¹⁴⁴ jewelry

¹³⁴ The word *sānsarī* is diminutive for *saans*

¹³⁵ The meaning of *shab-bedārī* is “a vigil, sleeplessness” (PD).

¹³⁶ The word *muzaiyab* means “decorated” (PD).

¹³⁷ The word *kaiḥyat* means “quality, nature, character” (PD).

¹³⁸ The word *taufīq* means “divine guidance, grace or favor” (PD).

¹³⁹ The word *ghuṇnā* means “short drawers reaching to the knees” (PD).

¹⁴⁰ The word *jāṅghiya* means “short drawers or breeches reaching to the thighs or halfway down the thighs, or down to the knees” (PD).

¹⁴¹ The meaning of *kārcobī* is “embroidered; cloth with silver and gold thread” (PD).

¹⁴² The word *gulū-band* means “a collar; a scarf for the neck, a neckerchief, neck-tie; a cravat; a small rectangular plate of gold (studded with gems) worn on the throat” (PD).

¹⁴³ The word *bainā* means “an ornament (consisting of a small circular plate of gold with enamel work) worn by women on the forehead” (PD).

¹⁴⁴ The meaning of *hinduwānī* is “after the fashion of Hindus” (PD).

4. Bordered skirt¹⁴⁵
5. Skirt
6. *Peshwāz*¹⁴⁶
7. Head ornament¹⁴⁷
8. Silver-plated flute¹⁴⁸

Totaling eight items.

Sakhīs' costumes

1. Ornament¹⁴⁹ [on the headdress]
2. Plume¹⁵⁰ [on the headdress]
3. Headdress¹⁵¹
4. Complete [set] of jewelry
5. *Peshwāz*
6. Scarf (*dupaṭṭā*)
7. Trousers (*pājāma*)

Totaling seven items.

Parīs' costumes

¹⁴⁵ The word *phariyā* means “bordered skirt” (PD) and it is also referred as “a kind of bordered vestment wore by Hindus” (John Shakespeare Dictionary).

¹⁴⁶ This garment was worn by Muslim aristocratic women in the early *nawābī* period (Swarup, 2012, 48). The courtesans used to wear a tight fitting bodice *peshwāz* with a bias cut skirt which had a swirling effect while dancing (71).

¹⁴⁷ The word *sar-ā-sarī* means “an ornament worn on the head, going all round it” (PD).

¹⁴⁸ The text says *nuqra'ī bānsurī ma'a murlī*; this seems to mean “a *murlī* made out of a reed flute coated with silver”.

¹⁴⁹ The word *jīga, jēga* means “an ornament worn on the turban; it consists of a band of velvet about six inches long and two broad, beautifully embroidered, and a gold plate set with precious stones sewn on it” (PD).

¹⁵⁰ The word *kalghī* means “plume; a gem-studded ornament fixed in the turban, usually with the feathers of the *humā* or phoenix” (PD).

¹⁵¹ The word *sulṭān band*-تاج نمازین ٹوپی جو ڈرامے میں ایکٹر پہنتے ہیں۔

1. Embroidered scarf (*dupaṭṭā*)
2. *Jāma-e ḥusn*¹⁵² decorated in gold¹⁵³
3. Trousers (*pājāma*) decorated in gold
4. Complete [set] of jewelry

Accordingly, there are four requirements.

Dīv's costume

1. Black pants
2. Black gloves¹⁵⁴
3. Black socks
4. Cardboard face of terrible aspect¹⁵⁵
5. Black wooden mace
6. Large, paper wings¹⁵⁶

There are seven items.

Jogan's costume

1. Vermilion¹⁵⁷ colored lower garment¹⁵⁸
2. Mendicant dress¹⁵⁹
3. Ascetic wig (literally fake matted hair)
4. Serpent made of cloth

¹⁵² It is a particular garment fashioned by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (Trivedi 2010, 30). The *jāma* is a robe, gown, long gown (PD). Rizvī also notes that this is a garment that was created by Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (1957, 212).

¹⁵³ The word *pur* means “full, full of, abound in” and *zar* is “gold” (PD).

¹⁵⁴ The word *dastāna* means “glove, a falconer's glove; the handle of a shield” (PD). The text has *dāstāna* with long ā in the first syllable. Nothing else seems to be appropriate.

¹⁵⁵ The meaning of *karīh-manzar* is “of detestable aspect.” Not in the *devanāgarī* text.

¹⁵⁶ The word *par* means “wing” and *kalān* means “large, great, big” (PD).

¹⁵⁷ The word *shanjarf*= *shangarf* means “vermilion, red sulphuret of mercury” (PD).

¹⁵⁸ The word *parca* means “fragment, piece, scrap; piece of cloth, rag; cloth” (PD) and *tahmat* means “a cloth worn wrapped round the waist and falling to the ankles= *luṅgī*” (MD).

¹⁵⁹ The word *kafnī* means “a dress (resembling a *kafan*) worn by a *faqīr* or Mohamman mendicant” (PD).

5. Cloth bag
6. Gourd for carrying water¹⁶⁰
7. Ashes of cow dung¹⁶¹
8. Wooden stick of an ascetic¹⁶²

There are eight items.

Implements and costumes of the mākhanvālīs

1. *Sārī* dress
2. Silver¹⁶³-plated¹⁶⁴ brass¹⁶⁵ pot
3. Silver-plated brass tray
4. Churning stick
5. Silver-plated cup-shaped¹⁶⁶ container
6. Small silver-plated cup¹⁶⁷
7. Hindu jewelry

As appropriate to the *qiṣṣah* of His Lordship [Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh], there are seven items.

Costumes and jewelry of the panihārins

1. *Sārī* dress
2. Copper water pot

¹⁶⁰ The word *tumbā* means “the gourd *Lagenaria vulgaris*; a hollowed gourd in which mendicants carry water. It can also be a kind of pipe or musical instrument (made of the gourd) played on by snake-charmers” (PD).

¹⁶¹ The word *bhabhūt* means “ashes of cow dung which Hindū devotees rub on their bodies in imitation of Śiva” (PD).

¹⁶² The text says *bairāgī*, but it seems to be the object *bairāgan*- A small cross-shaped stick or piece of iron which a *bairāgī* places under his arm-pit to lean upon as he sits (PD).

¹⁶³ The word *nuqra’ī* means “made of silver, silver; silvery; white, cream-colored” (PD).

¹⁶⁴ The word *gilaṭ* means “gilt, gilding, chromium or metal plating of any kind” (MD).

¹⁶⁵ The word *birinjī*, *biranjī* means “made of brass, brazen” (PD).

¹⁶⁶ The word *khuriyā* means “up shaped container” (MD).

¹⁶⁷ The word *kulhiyā* means “small earthen cup; a small earthen (saucer-shaped) vessel; a cup (used for cupping)” (PD).

3. Bucket
4. Rope¹⁶⁸
5. Prop¹⁶⁹ well with a pulley¹⁷⁰
6. Jewelry

As appropriate to the *qiṣṣah* of the author, totaling six items.

Costume of the traveler

1. *Angarkhā*¹⁷¹
2. Trousers (*pājāma*)
3. Turban
4. Bundle
5. Staff
6. Water pot
7. Bundle¹⁷² of provisions¹⁷³
8. Small carpet

Totaling eight items.

Costume of Ghurbat

1. *Angarkhā*

¹⁶⁸ The *devanāgarī* text says *resham* “silk” which does not make sense. The text in *nasta’līqha* has *resmān*-String, cord, thread, rope (PD).

¹⁶⁹ The word *maṣnū’* means “created things; things artificially made; creations; works of art or skill” (PD). Text in *devanāgarī* has *masnavī*.

¹⁷⁰ The word *garārī* means “a pulley” (esp. that over which the rope is passed in drawing water from a well) (PD).

¹⁷¹ The *angarkhā* is “a full sleeve outer wear, open at the chest and tied in the front, covering the chest with an inner flap” (Swarup 2012, 156). “It is typical upper body costume of the *nawābī* period” (26). The *angarkhā* was “refashioned and modified in Lucknow to replace the flowing dresses of Delhi” (Trivedi 2010, 30). Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh appears in several portraits with an *angarkhā*.

¹⁷² The word *basta* means “bound, shut, closed, fastened, folded up; parcel, bundle (as of papers or books), bale” (PD).

¹⁷³ The word *tosha* means “provision for a journey, provision supplies, viaticum” (PD).

2. Trousers (*pājāma*)
3. White *capkan*¹⁷⁴
4. Waistband¹⁷⁵
5. Fine white cloth [for the head]¹⁷⁶

Totaling five items.

Costume of Rām̄cīrā

1. *Dhotī*
2. *mirzā'ī*¹⁷⁷
3. Small turban
4. Sacred thread
5. Silver bracelet¹⁷⁸
6. Towel cloth¹⁷⁹

Totaling six items.

Rahas performers' costumes

1. Trousers (*pājāma*) richly decorated in gold
2. *Peshwāz* richly decorated in and edged¹⁸⁰ with gold
3. Scarf (*dupaṭṭā*) richly decorated in gold
4. Jewelry

¹⁷⁴ The word *capkan* means “knee length coat for men; upper half is similar to Western style coat and lower resembles an *angharkhā*” (Swarup 2012, 156).

¹⁷⁵ The *kamarband* is “a girdle, zone, sash, belt, waistband; a long piece of cloth folded round the loins” (PD).

¹⁷⁶ The word *dastār* means “sash or fine muslin cloth wrapped round a turban” (PD).

¹⁷⁷ The word *mirzā'ī*, *mirza'ī* means “a cotton or muslin jacket with long sleeves, quilted coat” (PD).

¹⁷⁸ The word *karā* means “a ring, a massive ring of gold or silver worn on the wrist or the anklets” (PD).

¹⁷⁹ The word *angauchā* means “a cloth which Hindūs fasten round their waists when bathing, and afterwards wipe themselves with” (PD).

¹⁸⁰ The word *maṣāleh-dār* means “cloth worked over, or edged, with gold or silver lace” (PD).

As appropriate to the lavishness of the *jalsā* of the author, there are four items.

Second qiṣṣah of Rādhā and Kanhaiyā

In this qiṣṣah there are no less than twelve female rahas-performers and all their costumes and jewelry are the same as the previous detailed description.¹⁸¹ There are five sakhīs, Lalitā, Cainā, Sakhā, Laṛvā, Kubja, adorned in the same aforementioned clothes and ornaments; the rahas-performers also play cows¹⁸². Kanhaiyā has the same costume (as described) and Rādhā likewise.¹⁸³ Rāmcirā [is dressed] according to the previous instructions. There are two¹⁸⁴ khemtā¹⁸⁵ performers who wear saṛīs and Bengali jewelry. Rāmcirā, a servant of Kanhaiyā, according to previous instructions has tied a lodhī¹⁸⁶ dhoti, wears a mirzā'ī,¹⁸⁷ a hand-tied turban, a staff in hand, the sacrificial thread¹⁸⁸ and carries a cloth.¹⁸⁹ The rahas-performers stand in a line.¹⁹⁰ Each sakhī places her left hand upon the left side of the waist, curling it up into a fist. Placing the forefingers¹⁹¹ of the right hand below the lips, they come forward swaying¹⁹² right and left, and keep dancing with repeated pattern¹⁹³ encompassing tā thaī thaī tat thaī thaī tat. Kanhaiyā

¹⁸¹ After the first *rahas* there is an enumeration of the costumes for each character.

¹⁸² The *devanāgarī* has *gārā* which has no meaning. The text in *nasta'liq* has *gāyeñ* “cows.”

¹⁸³ The phrase ‘*ala haṣa'l-qiyās*’ means “on this measure, on the same manner, in like manner, similarly” (PD)

¹⁸⁴ The words *do ism* seem to mean “two in name” or “two are enumerated”

¹⁸⁵ The word *khemtā* refers to “a dance prevalent in Bengal in the 19th and 20th centuries, the origins of which were in the villages of rural Bengal” (Purkayastha 2014, 25).

¹⁸⁶ The word *lodhī* refers to “name of a class of agriculturists; an individual of that class” (PD).

¹⁸⁷ The word *mirzā'ī* means “a cotton or muslin jacket with long sleeves and open cuffs worn under the *qabā*; a quilted coat” (PD).

¹⁸⁸ The word *jane'u/janeū* means “sacred thread worn by the Brahmanical order” (PD).

¹⁸⁹ The word *angauḥā* means “a cloth which Hindus fasten round their waists when bathing, and afterwards wipe themselves with; a towel” (PD).

¹⁹⁰ The word *ṣaf* means “a row, line”; *ṣaf bhāndhnā* “to form a line” (PD).

¹⁹¹ The meaning of *kalām-kī unglī*, *kalme-kī unglī* is “fore-finger” (PD).

¹⁹² The text in *nasta'liq* has *jhūmnā* “to shake, to sway to and fro or from side to side, to wave; to stagger, roll”. The *devanāgarī* text has *ghūmnā* “to turn, turn round, revolve, whirl, spin” (PD).

¹⁹³ The word *lahera* in music means “the repeated melodic pattern encompassing a predetermined number of beats cyclically supplied in the required tempo on sarangi, harmonium or violin” (Ranade 2006, 58).

places a cloth¹⁹⁴ on his head, (holds) a staff in his hand and stands opposite¹⁹⁵ to the cows. He thus calls the cows:

Kanhaiyā: Hur, hur, hur¹⁹⁶ (driving them away). Come come come, come this way, come this way, come this way.

When the cows come close, Kanhaiyā jī, looks at them and shakes the staff. In this way, he calls them 3 times and drives them away, and all the cows come at the time of being called and set off upon being sent away. The fourth time Kanhaiyā jī says:

Kanhaiyā: Stand still immediately upon the signal of my finger!¹⁹⁷

One cow stops right there. Rādhā jī rises from the chair, stands opposite to Kanhaiyā and asks:

Rādhā: Twists here, twists there, Shall I give *kulīca* here, shall I give *kulīca* there?¹⁹⁸

The author's instruction¹⁹⁹ applies [here]:

Along with this speech²⁰⁰, Rādhā jī lightly strikes both of Kanhaiyā jī's cheeks. Then the [following] question of Rādhā is included with the previous question.

¹⁹⁴ The *devanāgarī* text has *sāphā* “turban” and the *nasta ‘līq* has *ghopā*. The word *ghopā* means “a cloth (or a blanket), with one end folded like a sugar-loaf to cover the head, worn over the body in cold or rainy weather” (PD).

¹⁹⁵ The word *muqābil* means “fronting, confronting; opposing” (PD).

¹⁹⁶ The *devanāgarī* text has *dur* (interjection) “be off! clear out!” (MD).

¹⁹⁷ The *devanāgarī* text has *bajardās*. The *nasta ‘līq* text might be read as *ba-mujarrad* “on a mere, simple, or single (order, glance, &c.); on the instant (of), instantly, immediately, forthwith” (PD).

¹⁹⁸ This is a cryptic passage and the meaning is unclear. The editor of the *devanāgarī* text was also at lost here. The *devanāgarī* has *as maīyoṅ as maīyoṅ as kalejā daiho*. The text in *nasta ‘līq* reads: *as murhyoṅ as murhyoṅ us kulīca de hūn us kulīca de hūn*. The word *murhī* can mean “turned, twisted, bent.” The word *kulīca* can mean “a small disc-shaped loaf, a cake of bread or a sweetmeat” (PD).

¹⁹⁹ The text in *nasta ‘līq* has *tafhīm* which means “making understand or know, teaching, instructing, informing.” The text in *devanāgarī* has *taṣānīf* “literary compositions, works” (PD).

²⁰⁰ The word *kalma* means “word, speech, saying, discourse” (PD).

Rādhā: Searching the Jamuna²⁰¹, [I find that] you are grazing your cows. King of kings, supreme Lord, prime embodiment of Shiva! The flute—in which six *rāgas* and thirty-six *rāganiyas* (“minor *rāgas*”) resound—what did you do with that flute? Why are you grazing the cows?

At this time Kanhaiyā jī brings his hands together, and spreads his garment in supplication.

Kanhaiyā: Kānhā bows his head (to you). May you live for many *yugas* and be happy! Oh Rām! That flute is lost!

Rādhā: King of kings, supreme Lord, prime embodiment of Shiva! I know you well; you must have given it to Kubja.

Kanhaiyā: No, my queen, I swear to God, it was lost.

*Kanhaiyā stands up, and recites and sings a dohrā. At this time, Kanhaiyā recites this dohrā.*²⁰²

Kanhaiyā: My flute is lost upon a sand-bank of Mathura and Vrindāvan

I can find it neither here nor there, nor can I find it in the fields.

After singing the dohrā, Kanhaiyā jī places the staff on his shoulder, and walks to the rhythm around²⁰³ the entire mahfil three times. During the fourth round, Rāmcīrā presents himself.

Rāmcīrā: Mahārāj, the thief of the flute is a Lodhī²⁰⁴. I captured him.

Kanhaiyā: Present him.

When he appears Kanhaiyā asks:

Kanhaiyā: Is he the one who stole my flute?

²⁰¹ In the *nasta'līq* text there is no long “ā” at the end of Jamuna.

²⁰² The text repeats this instruction.

²⁰³ The verb *gardish karnā* means “to go or turn round, to revolve; to circulate” (PD).

²⁰⁴ Lodhī refers to a “name of a class of agriculturists; an individual of that class; an agriculturist” (PD).

Rāmcīrā: Yes, Mahārāj.

Then Kanhaiyā jī performs tapasya. Rādhā jī at that instant²⁰⁵ quickly stands up from the seat of tapasya and clings to the neck of Kanhaiyā. Afterwards, Kanhaiyā tells Rādhā:

Kanhaiyā: Queen, sovereign over all kings, supreme lady, great queen, may you live many *yugas* and remain happy! Kānhā bows his head (to you). That flute, which you thought I gave to Kubja, was found.

Rādhā: Mahārāj, who had stolen it?

Kanhaiyā: Mahārānī, this boy of Lodhī who is standing—this bastard²⁰⁶ stole it.

Rādhā: Mahārāj! I should have the nose of this wretched fellow cut off!

In short²⁰⁷, per²⁰⁸ Kanhaiyā's order his nose is cut off and Rādhā says:

Rādhā: Now my heart is happy and pleased!

But²⁰⁹, inwardly, she was agitated due to her rivalry with Kubja.²¹⁰ Outwardly²¹¹, Kanhaiyā jī refused to go to her; however, inwardly, he was infatuated²¹² by Kubja a thousand times over.

Kanhaiyā jī, Rādhā jī, all the sakhīs and rahas performers stand in two lines²¹³ and the amorous²¹⁴ couplets are recited²¹⁵. Kanhaiyā jī stands across²¹⁶ from Rādhā jī and (in each line)

²⁰⁵ The *nasta 'līq* text has *bamujarrad* which means “on a mere, simple, or single (order, glance) on the instant, immediately” (PD).

²⁰⁶ The word *dāḍhījār* = *dārījār* means “husband of a prostitute or concubine; transf. bastard” (MD).

²⁰⁷ The word *alamukhtaṣar* means “abbreviated; abridged, summed up; cut short” (Baalbaki.2005. *Al-Mawrid Dictionary*).

²⁰⁸ The meaning of *ba-mūjib* is “by reason, on account (with) according (to), in conformity” (PD).

²⁰⁹ The *devanāgarī* text has *kahne ko rādhā jī khush ho gayī* “It seemed as Rādhā was happy”. This is not in the *nasta 'līq*. The *devanāgarī* also has *bāqeyatan*, the word *bāqiyāt-* means “remainders”. The *nasta 'līq* text has *bāṭanan* “inwardly” (PD).

²¹⁰ The word *khālish* means “pricking, pain, care, solitude, anxiety” (PD).

²¹¹ The word *zāhirā* means “outwardly, openly, publicly, manifestly, evidently” (PD).

²¹² The verb *farefta honā* means “to be deceived or deluded (by); to be fascinated (by), to be enamored (of, -kā), be madly in love (with)” (PD).

²¹³ The word *ṣaff* means “a rank, row, line” (PD).

²¹⁴ The word *āshiqānā* “amorous, erotic lover-like” (PD).

²¹⁵ Probably referring to the amorous couplets of the first *rahas*.

²¹⁶ The word *muqābil* means “opposite.”

four *sakhīs* stand in opposition (to those in the other line). First, *Kanhaiyā jī* recites and sings this *matla*²¹⁷ and mimes to *Rādhā jī* the meaning of the couplet.

matla ‘: How long can they torment a tormented heart?

How to bring around this heart which is offended

At this pause²¹⁸ they keep dancing [according to the metrical pattern] *mafā ‘ilun-fa ‘ilātun* then *mafā ‘ilun-fa ‘ilun*²¹⁹.

Rādhā jī: I gave you my heart and you destroyed it

You gave me your heart and I thanked God.

At this pause *Rādhā jī* dances: *fa ‘ilātun, fa ‘ilātun, fa ‘ilātun, fa ‘ilātun*.²²⁰

After the question and answer²²¹ session, *Rādhā* and *Kanhaiyā* sit down along with the *rahas*-performers. Because *Rādhā jī* maintained an irrational²²² enmity²²³ and rivalry²²⁴ towards *Kubja*, she impatiently²²⁵ asks *Kanhaiyā* this:

Radhā: *Mahārāj* every day you start a quarrel,²²⁶ for sure you keep going to meet *Kubja*!

²¹⁷ First couplet of a *ghazal*.

²¹⁸ The word *taqīf* means “the caesura or pause.”

²¹⁹ Names of metrical feet in Perso-Arabic and Urdu Prosody (For the names of the prosody feet see Pritchett 1987).

²²⁰ Name of one of the metrical feet (Pritchett, 1987).

²²¹ The meaning of *savāl-javāb* in music is “a call and response pattern between two musicians” (Neuman 1990, 275).

²²² The meaning of *besabab* is “without reason.” (PD).

²²³ The word *‘adawat* means “enmity, hostility, resentment, hatred” (PD).

²²⁴ The word *riqābat* means “rivalry, competition” (PD).

²²⁵ The meaning of *be-tābāna* is “restlessly, uneasy, impatient, impatiently” (PD).

²²⁶ *Devanāgarī* has *nāmghate* and *nasta ‘līq* has *nāndhate*. The word *nādhnā*, *nāndnā*, or *nāndhnā*, means “to begin” (PD). The word *nāmgh* in Braj means “to jump across to jump over” (MD).

Kanhaiyā: I swear to God, I don't go!

Rādhā: Mahārāj, let me just get a hold of you!

Kanhaiyā: You will never be able.

Kanhaiyā gets up from Rādhā's side on account of their spat²²⁷. Kanhaiyā jī quickly gets up from her side and says:

Kanhaiyā: The urgency of some matter weighs upon me. I will come back a little later.

Rādhā jī did not consider it proper to stop Kanhaiyā, but understood, in her heart, that something appeared suspicious [and thinks]: "He is struck by the arrow²²⁸ [shot from] the arched eyebrows²²⁹ of Kubja."²³⁰ He quickly goes to her [Kubja]. Here, overcome by love, Rādhā jī begins this ṭhumrī. Miming the meaning [of the verses], she sings in the correct pitch²³¹ and tempo²³² in such a manner that the hearts of the beasts²³³ of the desert²³⁴ and the fish of the sea burned in passion;²³⁵ jins²³⁶ and men, parīs and dīvs were moved to distraction.²³⁷

Refrain: Mohan, the dark one, is mine, but Kubja has cast a spell!

²²⁷ The meaning of *shakar-ranjī* is "misunderstanding" (Forbes Dictionary).

²²⁸ The word *kḥwurda* means "afflicted." tīr *kḥwurda* "struck or wounded by an arrow" (PD).

²²⁹ The meaning of *kamān abrū* is "arched eyebrow" (PD).

²³⁰ This is past tense in the text, but is obvious that it is reported speech of Rādhā's fears.

²³¹ The term *sur* means "a musical note implying the correctness of its pitch" (Chib 2004, 283).

²³² The term *lay* "the tempo of a rhythm" (Chib 2004).

²³³ The word *waḥsh* means "a wild animal; a fierce, shy, or untamed animal" (PD).

²³⁴ The meaning of *ṣaḥrā* is "a desert, waste wilderness" (PD).

²³⁵ The verb *kabāb honā* or *ho jānā* means "to be roasted; to be scorched or burnt; to burn (with envy, or rage, or love), to be enraged; to be desperately in love" (PD).

²³⁶ One of the Genii, a male fairy.

²³⁷ The meaning of *pec-o-tāb*, *pec-tāb* is "twisting and twining; convolution, twisting knots, folds; contortions; restlessness, anxiety, agitation, perplexity, disquietude, distraction, distress; vexation, anger, indignation" (PD).

Verse: Lift your veil, with your lips say: Akhtar, do not burn, do not scorch in the fire.²³⁸ na jaro
na dāg jārā re

After singing the song, she sits down, grief-stricken. Addressing²³⁹ all four sakhīs, she says:

Rādhā: Is there anyone who would drag our Kanhaiyā away from Kubja?

Each one submits: O Queen, Sovereign over all kings, Supreme lady, Great Queen, do not be
dejected. Command me.

Rādhā jī gives this answer to each one: I will not tell you! Sit down.

In accordance with²⁴⁰ the order,²⁴¹ all four sakhīs sit down. Rādhā jī says again to the four sakhīs:

Rādhā: You four who are following me around, would you be able to pull Kanhaiyā jī away from
Kubja? It is said, and accordingly it is the case that, when the flute plays and one hears it, the soul
is freed of sadness.²⁴²

At this time all the sakhīs stand hands folded.²⁴³ Lalitā comes forward.

Lalitā: May the supreme lord keep you well. If Kanhaiyā jī is up in the sky, I shall find and bring
him even from there.

Sākhā: If he is upon the earth, I will present him before you.

²³⁸ The *devanāgarī* has *najo nidā gujārā re*. The words in the text in *nasta 'līq* can perhaps be divided as *na jaro na dāg jārā re*. The word *dāg* = *dagdha* “to burn” and *jārā*=*javālā* “flame, heat” (Dāsa. 2005. *Hindīśabdsāgara*).

²³⁹ The word *mukhātib* means “conversing (with), addressing” (PD).

²⁴⁰ *ba-mūjib* “by reason (of, -ke), on account” (PD).

²⁴¹ The word *irshād* means “direction, instruction; order, command” (PD).

²⁴² This sentence is not in the *devanāgarī* text. The *nasta 'līq* says: *voh kahat hai aur us bal par hai ki murlī kī gunan aur vākī sunan se prān dukh jāt hai*.

²⁴³ The word *bast* means “bound, folded, etc.”; *dast* is “hand” (PD).

Cain: If he is in water, I will bring him.

Larvā: If he is in the air, I will produce him before you.

Then all four sakhīs start out in search of Kanhaiyā jī and, repeatedly wishing Rādhā jī well and saluting her, leave. The four arrive at the house of Kubja. At that moment, Kanhaiyā jī, upon a velvety²⁴⁴ seat, with the flute upon his lips, his feet on Kubja’s lap, a pillow²⁴⁵ underneath his side, and having removed his crown, had fallen asleep while watching the dance of the khemṭā performers²⁴⁶. Kubja had also dozed off while massaging²⁴⁷ the feet of the lord. Meanwhile,²⁴⁸ the khemṭā ladies, tying up their sarīs and adorning themselves with²⁴⁹ Bengali jewelry, dance khemṭā and move upstage and downstage²⁵⁰ three times, singing this dādrā:²⁵¹

Refrain: Oh sleep, come visit my lover.

Verse: Let there be no suffering in your dream, Akhtar, may the Lord keep you virtuous.²⁵²

And then they sing this ṭhumrī, miming the meaning of the verses:

Refrain: Hearing the sound, [he was] startled from sleep.

Verse: Sleep fled! Who came, oh pleasure seeker!

²⁴⁴ The word *maḥmalī* means “velvet; like velvet, velvety” (PD).

²⁴⁵ The word *takya* is “a pillow, bolster, cushion; anything” (PD).

²⁴⁶ At the beginning of the *rahas* two *khemṭī* performers are listed wearing Bengali jewelry and *sarīs*. The *devanāgarī* here reads as *ghumṭī* since every time the word appears in this part of the *rahas* there is a “g” at the beginning of the word. Nevertheless, it seems that there was a common confusion between “g” and “k” since the spelling *khemṭī* and *ghumṭī* is identical in *nasta’līq* with the exception of the first letter. No *ghumṭī* performers are listed and the initial clothing is repeated. The word *ghumṭā* means lit. “giddiness.” Could be a reference perhaps to the spins of the dance, but it is clear that the text refers to the *khemṭā* performers.

²⁴⁷ The meaning of *mukkā lagnā* is “to receive a blow with the fist” (PD).

²⁴⁸ The word *maqam* means “circumstance; contingency; state.” (PD).

²⁴⁹ The verb *ārāsta karnā* means “to array; to collect, group; to adorn, ornament, decorate, embellish” (PD).

²⁵⁰ The meaning of *āmad-raft*, *āmad o raft* is “coming and going” (PD).

²⁵¹ The word *dādrā* refers to “a vocal genre closely related to *ṭhumrī*, often set in a six or eight count tāla” (Manuel 1989, 153). “The lyrics of the *dādrā* are also about the pangs and joys of love” (Wade 1998, 183).

²⁵² The text says *maulā rakhe dharm ko*.

*In the meantime*²⁵³ Kubja says:

Kubja: Go whirling ladies! My Kanhaiyā has dozed off.

After hearing this, the whirling ladies leave and Kubja also dozes off in the same way. Espying the sleeping Kanhaiyā jī, the four sakhīs say to one another:

First one: Oh Friend!²⁵⁴ Look how he lies there asleep.

Second: Oh sister,²⁵⁵ he is senseless.

Third: There is not even a little awareness.

Fourth one: He pays no heed to anything.²⁵⁶

Lalitā: You three wait, I will awaken [him].

Sākhā: You three wait, I will arouse [him].

Cain: You three wait, I will ruffle his hair.²⁵⁷

Larvā: You three wait, I will grab both of Kanhā jī's ears and make him sit up.²⁵⁸

*Finally,*²⁵⁹ *grabbing both of Kanhaiyā jī's ears, Larvā makes him sit up. Immediately, Kubja is also startled awake and with a sigh of despair*²⁶⁰ *says:*

²⁵³ The word *aṣṇā* means “folds; middle, midst; interstice; interval, interim, meantime, while” (PD).

²⁵⁴ The word *guiyām* means “a female friend or companion” (MD).

²⁵⁵ The text in text in *nasta 'līq* has *būā* “sister, dear sister, father sister” (PD). *Devanāgarī* text has *muā* “dead, wretched, cursed.”

²⁵⁶ The verb *gāfil honā* “to become forgetful, or thoughtless (of); to be or become negligent” (PD)

²⁵⁷ The text says *shāna hilāungī*. The word *shāna* “a crest, comb” (PD).

²⁵⁸ The author plays with the similarity of this name of Kṛṣṇa “Kānhā” and *kān* the word for “ear.”

²⁵⁹ The word *algarz* means “finally” (MD).

²⁶⁰ The meaning of *dam-e-sard* is “a cold sigh, a sigh of despair” (PD).

Kubja: Oh Larvā, you deceived me.

Larvā: Make this statement²⁶¹ in front of Rādhā jī.

Larvā, grabbing both ears of Kanhaiyā jī, brings him and Kubja in their [current] condition²⁶² to Rādhā.

Rādhā: Well, has your theft been discovered or not? Haven't I had you found and brought in?

Kanhaiyā (*folding his hands*): Yes my queen, I slipped up, made a mistake. Forgive me. She was enamored of the sound of the flute.

Rādhā: Play the flute, you found it [right]?

Kanhaiyā jī plays the flute. As per the request of Rādhā jī, Kanhaiyā jī plays this ṭhumrī upon the flute.²⁶³

Refrain: The flute of Shyām has begun to play.

Verse: On the bank of the river, 'Akhtar' makes the flute play

A sigh escapes from the heart.

Rādhā: Shall I rock you to sleep on a swing?

Kanhaiyā: That is fine my queen, I have not had my fill of sleep.

²⁶¹ The word *kalma* means “a word, speech, saying, discourse” (PD).

²⁶² The *nasta'liq* text has *hai'at-e majmū 'ī* “general aspect or condition” (PD).

²⁶³ This stage instruction is not in the *devanāgarī* text. The *nasta'liq* text has *kanhaiyā jī kā bansurī bajānā kanhaiyā jī ne ḥasb farmāish rādhā jī yeh ṭhumrī bansurī meñ bajāī*.

Now all the *rahas* performers, *sakhīs*, *Rādhā* and *Kanhaiyā* form a line,²⁶⁴ *Kanhaiyā jī* is in the middle²⁶⁵ of the row. Across from *Kanhaiyā jī*, *Rādhā* twists a long colorful turban into a rope and holding one end in her right hand,²⁶⁶ gives the other end to *Kanhaiyā jī*'s right hand. When the line steps forward, they pull the rope taut, and when the line steps back, following²⁶⁷ she lets the rope loose. The *rahas* performers dance in *rūpak tāl*²⁶⁸ and they move upstage and downstage²⁶⁹ at least three times. This *sāvan* song²⁷⁰ composed by the author is sung:

Refrain: Oh beloved! This beautiful *sāvan* season gave (us) a push.

I lost my head on the swing; Akhtar increased the swaying.

Thanks to god the second *qiṣṣah* of *Rādhā* and *Kanhaiyā* is also completed. If there is a desire to remain awake all night,²⁷¹ then after the end²⁷² [of the *rahas*] the rest is up to the preference²⁷³ [of the audience]. All night they may request to see²⁷⁴ singing and dancing, in turn, by each dancer as may appeal to the mood, and offer the author prayers of well-being.²⁷⁵

matla ' ²⁷⁶May writing remain black upon white,

²⁶⁴ The verb *ṣaf bhāndhnā* means “to form a line”(PD).

²⁶⁵ The word *darmiyān* means “middle, midst” (PD).

²⁶⁶ The meaning of *dasti rāst* is “the right hand” (Steingass Dictionary).

²⁶⁷ The meaning of *pas rau'ī* “following” (PD).

²⁶⁸ Rhythm of seven beats divided in three.

²⁶⁹ The literal meaning of *āmad-raft*, *āmad o raft* is “coming and going” (PD).

²⁷⁰ The swings are a pastime in the month of *sāvan* (July- August) when the rain starts, the wind blows and the weather is more pleasant.

²⁷¹ The meaning of *shab-bedārī* is “a vigil, sleeplessness” (PD).

²⁷² The word *ikhṭitām* means “finishing, end, conclusion, fulfillment” (PD).

²⁷³ The meaning of *ikhṭiyār* is “choice, election; preference; option, will, pleasure, discretion” (PD).

²⁷⁴ The word *mulāḥaza* means “looking attentively, contemplating, inspection, view” (PD).

²⁷⁵ The meaning of *du'ā e khair* is “prayer for the welfare (of anyone)” (PD).

²⁷⁶ First couplet of the *ghazal* both lines have end rhyme.

[but] for the writer, there is no hope of tomorrow.

These two *qiṣṣahs* were each prepared from and composed²⁷⁷ of different sets of thirty-six *rahas* in the year 1292 (1875) of the *Hijrī* calendar, while resident²⁷⁸ in Calcutta in the neighborhood of Matya Burj. Of course,²⁷⁹ the gems²⁸⁰ and jewelry [mentioned] in the introduction²⁸¹ could not be arranged²⁸² for by the writer to the extent²⁸³ that he could execute²⁸⁴ it [to his satisfaction]. During the time of [my] ruling and authority,²⁸⁵ the Lord had provided²⁸⁶ everything, and even now I have my hopes set on His grace.²⁸⁷

The end.

²⁷⁷ The word *murattab* means “set in order, regularly disposed, arranged, regulated, classified; distributed; appointed; prepared” (PD).

²⁷⁸ The word *maqām* or *muqām* means “staying, stopping, resting, halting; abiding” (PD).

²⁷⁹ The meaning of *al-batta* is “decidedly, assuredly, certainly, of course, indeed, to be sure” (PD).

²⁸⁰ The word *ḥulī* means “ornaments (of a woman), jewels, gems” (PD). The *devanāgarī* says *ūlā* which is a meaningless word.

²⁸¹ The word *muqaddmāt* means “preambles, prefaces, premises, preliminaries” (PD).

²⁸² The word *muḥaiyā* means “dispose, arranged; got together, got ready, prepared, ready” (PD).

²⁸³ The word *qadr* means “appreciation, account; value, price; measure; degree; quantity” (PD).

²⁸⁴ The verb *takmīl karnā* means “to finish, complete, bring to a conclusion or termination” (PD).

²⁸⁵ The word *istiqlāl* means “absolute power or authority, sovereignty, supremacy; independence; absoluteness” (PD).

²⁸⁶ The word *ʿata* means “giving, gift, present, offering, favor” (PD).

²⁸⁷ The meaning of *zāt* is “possessor; essence, substance, nature, radical constituent; soul; body, person, self (i.e. a man's self, or a thing's self) (PD).

CHAPTER 4 The Braj *rās līlā* tradition and Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh

This chapter will focus on the dialogue between devotional and secular theater, now associated with the history of Hindi and Urdu respectively. In studies of the development of theater in North India in the 19th century, Hindi and Urdu drama are typically treated as two separate, mutually exclusive categories. While the Braj bhāshā *rās līlā* tradition is considered part of “Hindi theater”, the extant plays of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh are labeled “Urdu drama” (Taj 2007, 31; Qureshi 1987, 3; Lal 2004, 50). With the goal to contribute to a historical narrative that restores the confluence of anachronistically separated literary cultures, I investigate the relationship between the Braj bhāshā *rās līlā* tradition and the dramatic work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. I will trace the specifics of how the devotional performing arts from the Braj area influenced the *rahas* of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. I will do so based on a comparison between the first *rahas* by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and a contemporary *rās līlā* play on a similar theme. In the course of this chapter, I will provide the text and translation of a 19th century, previously unpublished and untranslated *rās līlā* play by Lalit Kīśorī, *Vaṃśī naṭ līlā*, to illustrate the parallels between the Braj tradition and the secular *rahas*.

As an example of how the historic narrative of Hindi and Urdu drama is perceived as separate, *The Oxford Companion to Indian Theater* has distinct entries for Urdu and Hindi theaters.

The section on Urdu states:

Strictly ‘Urdu’ theater begins with a number of musical compositions in the mid nineteenth century. The earliest called *rahas*, were written, directed and designed by the Avadh prince, Wajid Ali Shah, in Lucknow. Glowing descriptions of this entertainment inspired Amanat to compose his famous *Indar Sabha* (1853), later staged in an open public space and, probably, also in the palace compound in Lucknow (Lal 2004, 50).

The section on Hindi reads:

Although theater in Hindi has a tradition spanning more than four centuries, in many ways it represents the continuity of Sanskrit theater in various literary languages or spoken dialects in northern India, comprising the present states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal,

Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarhi, Rajasthan, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. This geographical spread and diversity of Hindi linguistic structures naturally found expression in equally varied theatrical narratives like Ramlila in Avadhi and Ras lila in Braj bhasha (Lal 2004, 151).

Thus in *The Oxford Companion to Indian Theater*, the work by Wājīd Alī Shāh has been disjointed from previous traditions and associated to other “Urdu dramatic” works such as *Indarsabhā* by Amānat.

The Braj rās līlā performance tradition

The *rās līlā* is a theatrical tradition native to the Braj area in the Western region of Uttar Pradesh. This region of North India was identified as the land in which Krishna was born and grew up according to the Vaishnava scriptures (Entwistle 1987, 28-31). The local idiom, Braj bhāshā is strongly connected to Vaishnava devotional poetry and is the language in which the *rās līlā* is performed. This dramatic tradition is loosely based on the stories told in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, particularly the ones of Krishna’s childhood and adolescence in Braj and his interaction with the local cow herders or *gopīs*. There is textual evidence that the *rās līlā* has been staged since at least the 16th century (Swann 1990, 184; Hein 1972, 226).²⁸⁸

From the perspective of the tradition, the first performers of the stories of Krishna were the *gopīs* themselves. Vaishnava sources like the *Harivaṃsha* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* illustrate how the *gopīs* imitated Krishna (Hein 1972, 236-9; 130) and even details of music and instruments are given (Thielemann 1998, 5-13). The stories of Krishna and the *gopīs* function as the ultimate revelation of divine love in several Vaishnava traditions; for a thousand years they have been told and expanded by poets and dramatists (Schweig 2005, 8).

²⁸⁸ It is worth mentioning that there is earlier evidence of performers in the Braj area. An inscription that records the presence of actors in Mathura in the 2nd century (Hein 1972, 233-36).

The current state of the *rās līlā* has been widely studied (Hawley 1981; Hein 1972; Mason 2009; Thielemann 1998; Swann 1990), but there is still much to learn about the scripts, the staging of the plays, the actors, the performance contexts, and how all this evolved over the centuries. Pauwels has shed new light on the history of the *rās līlā* performance in her analysis of the *Tīrthānand* or “The Pilgrim’s bliss” by Nāgarīdās. In this text the poet describes *rās līlā* performances in Braj in the mid-18th century; this is particularly relevant since Nāgarīdās documents the *rās līlās*’ performance contexts at festivals at specific locations, even providing some quotes of plays he witnessed (Pauwels forthcoming, 108). An interesting feature of these accounts is the staging of *rās līlās* during religious processions (137). There are historical accounts about the *rās līlā* performances and performers during the 19th century. The performances were described by Europeans (Hein 1972, 131-4); and a list of directors active in Braj is found in the *Vṛndāvandhāmānurāgāvalī*, a Braj bhāshā text that deals with the history of the area (Entwistle 1987, 87).²⁸⁹

Nowadays, the actors who play Krishna, Rādhā and the *gopīs* are Brahmin boys, while some secondary characters are played by adult males. The children who play Rādhā and Krishna are called *svarūp* which means that they become the divine characters they impersonate. This genre of theater can be better described as a dance-drama because it includes pure dance, music, singing, poetry as well as acting. Nevertheless, it is not just drama, but also liturgy (Hawley 1981, 19). The actors emulate the iconography of devotional images, tell the stories of sacred scriptures and are worshipped as divinities during performance.

²⁸⁹ In the manuscript prepared for publication consulted at Braj Saṁskṛiti Shodha Saṁsthān, Vrindavan this information is in *Vṛndāvandhāmānurāgāvalī* verses 117-131.

The *rāsdhārī* or director of the troupe sings the main narrative and is accompanied by a group of musicians, known as *samāj*. The plays are divided in two parts. The first one includes dance and song and is called *rās*. This part reenacts one special episode in which Krishna danced in a circle with the *gopīs* on an autumnal full moon night. The circular dance is one of the most sacred stories of Krishna; therefore, it is celebrated in the *rās līlā* and is also very popular in Vaishnava poetry (Hein 1972, 129). The second part called *līlā* narrates different episodes from Krishna's childhood up until his teenage years. In the *līlā* there is acting, recitation of poetry and some dancing accompanying the action.

Many of the stories of Krishna's childhood that are performed in the *rās līlā* come from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. However, there are other sources too in Sanskrit and Braj bhāshā. The theme of the stolen flute, for example, is not in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. One of the earliest texts in which it appears is the *Govinda līlā amrita* written in Sanskrit in the 16th century. This text also contains other episodes performed in the *rās līlā* that are not in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Entwistle 1987, 56). Hein listed 106 different plots in the repertoire of *rās līlā* performers and identified the sources when it was possible (Hein 1972, 163-178). These plots reflect the state of the *rās līlā* after Indian independence when he did his fieldwork.

In contemporary scripts anonymous songs and poems are mixed with verses of early modern Braj poets. There are also dialogues in prose that help introduce topics, clarify or emphasize the meaning of specific passages. The director needs to explain the verses to the audience, since some of them were composed hundreds of years ago. Prose is also used for humorous interactions between the characters, and verses are recited and sung (Hein 1972, 154). The plays can also contain Sanskrit verses interspersed with the Braj bhāshā ones. The *rās līlā*

plays have heterogeneous material threaded together through several subthemes. A humorous passage, for example, might use a verse that is unrelated to Krishna's devotional poetry.

The main structure of the play has been handed down through generations of performers. Most of the dramas are not attributed to a particular author (Hawley 1981, xii) since they have been created collectively. There are collections in which several *rās līlās* have been published (Śarmā 1976 and 1977).²⁹⁰ These publications have a basic text that can be expanded in performance. Svāmī Shrī Fateh Krishna Śarmā, a *rāsdhārī* for more than 30 years active at Jaisingh Ghera in Vrindavan,²⁹¹ claims that although he composes his own poetry, he does not include his poetry in the *līlās* but uses the same scripts as previous generations. Svāmī Shrī Kunjabihārī Śarmā, another active *rāsdhārī* of Vrindavan, who belongs to a family of performers, confirms that the *līlās* are arranged from selections of Braj poetry although minor changes may be added to already existing compositions.²⁹² There are troupe leaders who do use their own verses in the *līlās* (Swann 1990, 192). Many *rās līlā* plays still circulate in manuscript form and have not been published. Svāmī Harekrṣṇa Śarmā, yet another *rāsdhārī* from Vrindavan, who belongs to a family of performers and lives and works in Hyderabad has shared with me a handwritten script of the *Vaṃśī corī līlā*, which he teaches to performers in that format.

The collection of the Braj Saṃskṛiti Shodha Saṃsthān in Vrindavan contains a notebook from the early 20th century that used to belong to a *rās līlā* performer and is an example of this kind of manuscripts (figure 5). From inspecting the notebook, it is clear that the owner wrote down just the metrical portions of the *līlā* (figure 6). This notebook lists 35 *līlās* in the index. Norvin

²⁹⁰ For a transcription of a *rās līlā* in Braj bhāshā and English translation (see Hein 1972), for transcriptions of performances in translation (see Hawley 1981 and Swann 1975).

²⁹¹ Svāmī Śrī Fateh Krishna Śarmā played the role of Krishna in his childhood and later in his life he became a director. He kindly consented to an interview in his house in Vrindavan on June 2015.

²⁹² Personal communication May 2015.

Heins states that *rāsdhārīs* are ready to perform for 30 days at least, which means that they have 30 *līlās* in their repertoire although a good performer might have command of about 45 *līlās* (1972, 154).

Relevant Braj bhāshā sources on the development of the *rās līlā* are described by Rāmnārāyaṇ Agrawāl (1981) in his book *Braj kā rās raṅgmañca*. He includes the so-called *ashṭachāp* or “eight seal” poets from the Vallabha Sampradāya with special emphasis on Sūrdās, Kumbhandās, Nanddās and Paramānanddās. He also takes into account Harirām Vyās, the Rādhāvallabhan Dhruvdās, Nāgarīdās and Brajvāsīdās. The Rādhāvallabhan poet Cācā Vṛndāvandās who was active in the 18th century receives special attention since his compositions have been the basis for performances up until today (Agrawāl 1981, 217).

Three main playwrights are discussed by Agrawāl in his description of *rās līlā* in the 19th century: Nārāyaṇ Svāmī, Bhāratendu Hariścandra and Lalit Kīśorī. Nārāyaṇ Svāmī (1830-1900) was a key figure for the *rās līlā* stage. He composed many songs on the *līlā* themes and was a performer; portions of his *līlās* are in current use now (Agrawāl 1981, 227). Bhāratendu Hariścandra (1850-1855) is well known for his contribution to the making of modern Hindi and the nationalization of the Hindu tradition (Dalmia 1997), here I just refer to his contributions to religious themed drama. He composed *Devi cadm līlā* and *Rānī cadm līlā*, for example, although these plays did not become popular amongst the performers. But his play *Candrāvalī* is a favorite of the *rāsdhārīs* (Agrawāl 1981, 228). The structure of *Candrāvalī* follows Sanskrit drama and served Bhāratendu as a medium to express his sectarian views (Garlington 1984, 80). The third playwright, Lalit Kīśorī, is the author of the play studied here, so will be treated in the next section in more detail.

Lalit Kiśorī: a rās līlā playwright from the 19th century

Shāh Kundanlāl (1825- 1873) was born in Lucknow in a rich *Agrawāl* family of jewelers. He later took the name Lalit Kiśorī on account of his devotion for Krishna. He was the son of Shāh Govindlāl and grandson of Shāh Bihārīlāl, who obtained the title of “Shāh” from the Nawābs of Awadh. His younger brother, Shāh Phundanlāl, also became a devotee under the name Lalit Mādhurī. Lalit Kiśorī and Lalit Mādhurī were educated in Persian; they also learned Hindi, Panjabi and Bengali. The two brothers had to teach themselves Sanskrit since at the time no one would teach them because of their caste (Gupta 1931, 6).

Lalit Kiśorī went to Vrindavan around 1850, traveled in Braj for a month and favored the deity of Rādhāramaṇ. He wanted to extend his stay, but at the time it was not possible. After his return to Lucknow his father and grandfather died and he became the disciple of Rādhāgovind Gosvāmī who visited Lucknow from Vrindavan (Gupta 1931, 7). Lalit Kiśorī started composing poetry; his brother Lalit Mādhurī collected his work and wrote his own verses too. Around 1857 the two brothers went to Vrindavan and patronized the construction of the Lalit Nikunj temple, known today as Shāh jī Mandir (figure 3), in 1860.

Lalit Kiśorī wrote poetry in Braj bhāshā, Urdu and Khaṛī bolī. A collection of his poetry is published in *Ābhilāsh mādhurī* (1931) which includes Urdu *ghazals* on the theme of Rādhā and Krishna and devotional songs. He also wrote numerous *rās līlā* plays that are collected in the book *Rās kalikā*, which was printed in Mathura with a short selection of these plays under the name *Laghu Ras kalikā* (Viyogi Hari 1962, 268).²⁹³ The manuscript of the *Ras kalikā* (figure 7) is preserved in the Shāh jī temple; it contains 24 sections of *līlās* and was written in 1878, shortly

²⁹³ I saw a lithograph of *Laghu ras kalikā* at Braj Saṁskṛiti Shodha Saṁsthān, Vrindavan, but it had no publication details.

after the death of Lalit Kiśorī. Some of the *līlās* have topics that are not mentioned in the list of plots by Hein; these *līlās* seem to be unique creations of the poet, for example, *videsī* or “foreigner” *līlā*, *sitar* or “lute” *līlā*, *hammām* or “bathing room” *līlā*, amongst others (Mittal 1983, 259).

Three of Lalit Kiśorī’s plays are well known: *Mān līlā*, *Cīrharāṇ līlā* and *Nāukā līlā*. The last one is still presented by *rās līlā* troupes and published in a collection of *līlās* under the name of *Kevaṭ līlā* (Śarmā 1976). It is written in a mixture of prose and verse, at least in the published format. The verses of Lalit Kiśorī are also used frequently in others’ Krishna dramas (McGregor 1974, 164). Besides composing plays, Lalit Kiśorī took an active role in their performance in the Shāh jī temple (Agrawāl 1981, 228). The publication of the *Ras kalikā* is a desideratum in order to understand Lalit Kiśorī’s contribution in terms of text and performance (Mittal 1983, 259). As a Vaishnava Bhāratendu recognized Lalit Kiśorī’s extensive contributions to Rādhā-Krishna’s devotional literature:

Having first settled in Lucknow he nurtured his love for the Glorious forest
Where he erected the beautiful divine couple and made a temple
In the *kaliyug* he recreated the eternally joyous *rās* of the *dvāpar* (yuga)
He was soaked in the color of the blissful emotion of worship
Under the name Lalit Kiśorī, he composed lakhs of new verses,
Kundanlāl emerged as the purifier of the Agravāl family (Viyogi Hari 1962, 267)

Bhāratendu also highlighted the two location where Lalit Kiśorī lived and the sponsorship of the temple. On the floor outside the Shāh jī temple there is a portrait of the two brothers, Lalit Kiśorī and Lalit Mādhurī, with their names (figure 8), and inside the temple there is an image of Lalit Kiśorī as a *sakhī* with his name on it (figure 9). Interestingly on the ceiling of the temple there are statues of *gopīs* playing instruments (figure 11) and one of them represents Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh dressed as a *gopī* (figure 12). The descendants of Lalit Kiśorī and owners of the temple, Shāh Praśānt Kumār and E.S. Gupta, claim that the inclusion of the statue demonstrates the secular

sentiments of Lalit Kiśorī and his brothers, since Wājid ‘Alī Shāh was a Muslim. The relatives think that there was a friendship between Lalit Kiśorī and Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, which would account for the Nawāb’s image being installed in the temple. The local lore explains the situation by stating that the nawāb was a Krishna *bhakta*. It is uncertain when the statue was made and placed in the temple.

Perhaps the connection between Lalit Kiśorī and Wājid ‘Alī Shāh is not so farfetched. At least there are historical records that prove a relation between Lalit Kiśorī’s father, Shāh Govindlāl, and the Nawābī government in Lucknow. W.H. Sleeman reports a criminal incident that occurred in Lucknow in 1824 in his *Diary of a Tour through Oudhe*. Although Sleeman was not in India at that time, he was informed of all the details and gives a full account of the story. The two sons of the king’s minister were abducted and there were attempts to negotiate with the kidnapper:

The alarm spread through the house and town, and many of the chief officers of the Court were permitted to enter the room unarmed. Roshun-od Dowlah, Sobhan Alle Khan, Fakeer Mahomed Khan, Nuzee Alle Khan, (the Kashmahul’s son in law) and others of equal rank, all in loud terms admonished the assailants, and demanded the surrender of the children, but all were alike unheeded. The chief merchant of Lucknow, Sa Gobind Lal, came in; and thinking that all affairs could and ought to be settled in a business like way, told the chief officer to fix the sum to be given, and he would at once pledge himself the payment (Sleeman 1858, 12-13).²⁹⁴

This passage shows that Shāh Govindlāl was a powerful and rich man who had access to government circles. Of course this was shortly before the birth of his son, Lalit Kiśorī, and when Wājid ‘Alī Shāh was only a few years old and does not prove that the two authors had a personal connection. Still, it establishes a family connection, besides the fact that Wājid ‘Alī Shāh and Lalit Kiśorī were both from Lucknow, contemporary playwrights and directors of performances. This

²⁹⁴ I thank Laxminārāyaṇ Tiwārī for giving me this reference.

makes all the more compelling the comparison of the *rahas* with Lalit Kiśorī’s play entitled *Vamshī naṭ līlā*.

The script of the Vamśī naṭ līlā

Since Lalit Kiśorī’s play has not been published, I provide here the translation of the *Vamśī naṭ līlā* and the Braj bhāshā text in the Appendix. The scholarly edition here is based on the scroll manuscripts held at the Vrindavan Research Institute (VRI) and the *Ras kalikā* manuscript of the Shāh jī temple (SM). This work was done with the help of Praśānt Kumār, E.S. Gupta and Mranaliny Dixit. The VRI scrolls have text that is not present in the SM manuscript and those portions are written in bold letters. I provide here a literal translation, words are glossed with references to dictionaries, within parenthesis epithets are glossed and within square brackets there are clarifications that are not in the original.²⁹⁵

“The play of the flute and the acrobat”

Rādhā: Oh Krishna (Urbane chief acrobat),²⁹⁶ perform this dance that they may appreciate your virtues today,

Do so (the dance) here amidst the crowd of beautiful²⁹⁷ young women.

Chorus: The one and only Krishna (jewel amongst lovers) began dancing in the gathering, (with) the melody constantly expressing the *ras*, and the gestures uniting movement with the beat.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ I thank Praśānt Kumār and E.S. Gupta who so kindly gave me access to the manuscript at the Shāh jī temple.

²⁹⁶ The word *naṭvar* is a name of Krishna, the literal meaning is “chief acrobat.”

²⁹⁷ The word *sugar* means “well-formed, well-made, symmetrical” (PD).

²⁹⁸ The word *vāj= bāj* which means *bāje kī dhvani* (Śarmā’s *Brajbhāshā Koś* is abbreviated as SB).

Chorus: Oh Friend! The flute of Krishna proclaims [itself] stolen²⁹⁹

Who knows if Lalitā took it, and went and gave it to Rādhā³⁰⁰?

Sakhī: The *sakhīs* look at his sash.³⁰¹ Krishna is alarmed.

“Oh! Where O where is the flute?” Having said [this]³⁰², he searches, looking in a niche [in the wall].³⁰³

Krishna: Do you have it, Campikā? I just lost it.

I beg³⁰⁴ you over and over: “Give me the flute!”

Sakhī: My eyes do not [even] know what the flute looks like.

Look around, Krishna, [it must be] somewhere amongst the bamboos in the forest.

Krishna: Oh Visākhā, Did you take it? Tell me the truth.

I will make new melodies resound, so that all gathered may enjoy the *ras*!

Sakhī: Even my ears³⁰⁵ do not hear it. Look around [for it] somewhere in the forest.

You were calling out to the herd of cows,³⁰⁶ [and] must have dropped it somewhere when

²⁹⁹ The word *khasnā* means *sthān se haṭnā* “to be removed or moved from a place”; *khisak kar girnā* means “slip away and fall” (Gupta’s *Brajabhāshā Sūr-Koś* is abbreviated BS).

³⁰⁰ The meaning of *laraitī-pyārī* is “beloved” (BS). Here is translated as Rādhā.

³⁰¹ This is the place where Krishna puts his flute.

³⁰² The word *vadnā* is taken as “to say”.

³⁰³ The word *byāl* can mean “serpent” and *bayāl* could be “niche” (in the wall) (MD).

³⁰⁴ The word *valihārī* is glossed as “*nichāvar, apneko utsarga kar denā*” (BS).

³⁰⁵ There is a play on the word *kānana*, it appears twice in this line. The first time it is used with the sense of “ear,” the second with the meaning of “forest.” The name of this figure of speech is *yamaka*.

³⁰⁶ The meaning of *bacharā, bachrū is gāy kā bacheṛā*; variant *bāchrā*. (BS).

you came.

Krishna: Oh Lalitā! You took it [and therefore] you are laughing softly.

Sakhī: How crazy³⁰⁷ your words seem, my dear!

Krishna: Give me the flute Candrāvalī,³⁰⁸ you took it away!

Sakhī: It's not on me! That Sasimukhī hid it inside her blouse.³⁰⁹

Krishna: Give me the flute, dear Sasimukhī, it is mine!³¹⁰

Why are you repeatedly denying it, when you have it hidden in your blouse?

Chorus: Flushing with anger and indignation³¹¹ she pulls away [from him] and strikes his cheeks two times.³¹²

Not finding [the flute], Krishna hesitates in his mind, [and] searches here and there.

Chorus: Over there, Krishna goes in all four directions, searching for the flute,

[while] here, Rādhā, placing it upon her lips, plays the flute.

Chorus: [When Krishna] hears the sound of the flute, every hair on his body stands up in excitement.

³⁰⁷ The word is *matvārā* “crazy” (BS). The feminine should be *matvārī*. This word is problematic.

³⁰⁸ Name of a *gopī*.

³⁰⁹ The word *kaṁculi* is glossed as a synonym of *colī* in (SB).

³¹⁰ This could be from *āsnā*= *honā* (BS)

³¹¹ The word *jhamki* could mean *ṭhasak dikhānā* (BS).

³¹² The word *gulcā* means *phūle hue gāloṅ par halkā ghūmsā saprem mārṇā; gulcanā- gulcā mārṇā* (BS).

Upon hearing the mellifluous sound, Krishna surrenders, [then] begs and pleads.

Krishna: Soft, honeyed and melodious,³¹³ delicate, beautiful, and sweet,

To this day, no one, not even I, has played it like this, lady.³¹⁴

Krishna: Please give me my flute, beautiful lady, I surrender.

Rādhā! Rādhā! [Then] I would play with *ras*. I offer [you] my body and soul.

Krishna: Your lips are softer than butter, I am defeated.

I beg you, Rādhā (Lalit Kīśorī),³¹⁵ just look at me.

Rādhā: Implore,³¹⁶ jump up, and raise a din,³¹⁷ blowing your own trumpet!³¹⁸

If [you] show me the art of the acrobat, I will give you your flute.

Chorus: The women keep dancing there, as Krishna jumps behind the cover of a tree.

From head to toe he dons the attire³¹⁹ of a female acrobat, tying the loin-cloth³²⁰ around his thighs.³²¹

³¹³The spelling *lahiranī* was not found. The meaning of *lahrānā* is “to wave, to undulate.” Here is taken as related to *lahrā* “lively tune” (MD).

³¹⁴ The word *vāl* is taken as *bāl* “girl” (BS).

³¹⁵ Pun on the playwright’s *chāpa* or penname, which is also an epithet for Rādhā.

³¹⁶ The verb *hā-hā karnā* means “to beg humbly, to implore, entreat” (PD).

³¹⁷ The word *galval* is glossed as *kolāhal* “uproar, noise” (BS).

³¹⁸ The meaning *gāl bajānā* is “to talk haughtily, to boast” (MD).

³¹⁹ I am taking the reading of *vānaka* which means “attire” (BS).

³²⁰ The meaning *lamgoṭ kasnā* “to tie on a loin cloth” (MD).

³²¹ The meaning of *jāmghiyā* is “relating or belonging to the thigh; short drawers or breeches reaching to the thighs or half-way down the thighs.” (PD).

Chorus: Krishna joins the women, disguising himself as a female acrobat.³²²

Imploring, he quickly³²³ springs, playing the drum.

“Entreaty by offering tribute”

Krishna:

- 1) Glory to Rādhā (darling of Vriṣabhānu)³²⁴!
- 2) Glory to her beauty, radiant from head to toe!
- 3) Glory to the girl³²⁵ with curly³²⁶ tresses!³²⁷
- 4) Glory to how she draws out her snake-like braid³²⁸!
- 5) Glory to her forehead, adorned with a *bindī*!
- 6) Glory to her eyebrows, arched like daggers!
- 7) Glory to her beautiful eyes,³²⁹ does in a grove!
- 8) Glory to her earrings that whirl and twirl³³⁰!
- 9) Glory to her red³³¹ lips [that carry] the sound³³² of a cuckoo!
- 10) Glory to the borders of her mirror-cheeks!³³³
- 11) Glory to the pearl in her parrot-beak³³⁴ nose, superior among women!

³²² Later on in the text it seems that the female acrobat is Krishna. After he dressed as a woman he is referred to as a female.

³²³ The meaning *catpat* is “quickly” (MD).

³²⁴ Rādhā’s father.

³²⁵ The meaning of *bālī* is “girl” (BS).

³²⁶ The word *ghuṁgharālā* is glossed as “chale” (BS). The word in the text is *ghuṁgharī*.

³²⁷ The word *alkaim* is glossed as “mastak ke idhar udhar laṭkaṭe hue ghuṁgharāle bālī” (BS). Not the exact spelling.

³²⁸ The word *vyāl*, *vyālī* means “serpent” (BS). Here short “ī”.

³²⁹ The word *manja* is glossed as “manju” (SB); *manju* “beautiful” (BS).

³³⁰ The word *ghūm* means “turning around, revolution, drowsiness” (MD); *ghumālī* (text has long ū) *ghūmnevālī* (SB).

³³¹ The word *arun* means “red” (SB).

³³² The word *bain* means literally “speech” (MD).

³³³ The word *mukura* means “mirror” (BS).

³³⁴ The word *sukanāsā* means “jis strī kī nāk tote kī comc jaisi sundar ho” (BS).

- 12) Glory to her nose ring that has no equal!
- 13) Glory to her chin, a well full of *ras*!
- 14) Glory to the girl with her smile of lightning!
- 15) Glory to her arms, golden and broad!
- 16) Glory to her breasts³³⁵ like water pots!
- 17) Glory to her navel that is like a bee,³³⁶ and her slender waist³³⁷!
- 18) Glory to her exquisite thighs, large as plantains!
- 19) Glory to the beautiful young girl with plump buttocks³³⁸!
- 20) Glory to her lotus feet, upon which I surrender!
- 21) Glory to the one who moves like a swan, and whose gait is like that of an elephant!
- 22) Glory to her moon-shaped toenails, and her shapely body, from head to toe!
- 23) Glory to the one intoxicated in the passion for Mohan!
- 24) Long live Lalit Kiśorī (the lovely young Rādhā)!³³⁹

Chorus: Having performed each acrobatic act, *she* pleads, extending *her* hands.³⁴⁰

Saying “Flute!” *her* face blooms, as she looks on with soft³⁴¹ eyes.

Chorus: As *she* bows, the female acrobat beats the drum, leaping and jumping.³⁴²

She snapped *her* fingers quickly, saying “This is my art! This is my art!”

³³⁵The word *uroja* means “breast” (BS)

³³⁶The word *bhamvar* also means “whirlpool” (BS).

³³⁷ The word *chīn=ksīṇ* means “slender” (MD).

³³⁸ The word *prthu* means “fat, broad, fleshy” (BS)

³³⁹ Again, a pun with the name of Rādhā and the pen name of the poet

³⁴⁰ Here and in the following, *she* refers to Krishna in the guise of the female acrobat.

³⁴¹ The word *ḍīlā* means “loose.” Perhaps the eyes are half open.

³⁴² The word *dhamāri* is glossed as “*uchal kūd, dhamācaukaṛī, naṭom kī kalābājī*” (BS).

Chorus: Swaying and bending, *she* performed *her* act, supporting *her* hands on the ground.

Carrying *her* feet from here to there, *she* rotated and straightened skyward.

Chorus: Standing up somehow on their heads, the performers slap their arms as if in challenge.³⁴³

Then, placing their feet upon their head, they walk like peacocks using their arms.

Chorus: Mounting on the shoulders of each one, the female performer then proclaimed, “Glory to Rādhā (darling of Vrishabhānu)!”

Chorus: With tender hands somewhere on the wall, *she* lands on *her* feet, having jumped off [the shoulders of the other performers].

The young woman, lying on the ground, positions *her* head so as to flip over.

Chorus: Standing up, they bend backwards and put their hands on the floor.

[With] beauty like the arch of Kāma, the acrobats stand up after kissing the earth.

Chorus: They climb the bamboo pole and walk the tight rope with a dramatic gait,³⁴⁴ keeping to the beat of the drum.

The acrobats adroitly jump to the ground, boasting of their own skill.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ The verb *kham thoknā* means “to slap the hands on the arms (as showing readiness, to fight or to set to) (MD).

³⁴⁴ The verb *aṭalānā* means “*itarānā, nakharā dikhān*” (BS).

³⁴⁵ The verb *gāl bajānā* means “to talk haughtily, to boast, to blow air from the cheeks by striking them” (MD).

Chorus: The young maiden, Rādhā, is extremely pleased with the art of the acrobats,
She takes off her bangle,³⁴⁶ ring and mirror-ring³⁴⁷ and gives³⁴⁸ them to all [the performers].

Krishna: That day a *sakhī* from Punjab fled, taking with [her] the knowledge.
Dancing on the edge of the sword; say the word, and I will show you.

Krishna: Invoking again and again Jvālāmukhī, that woman just danced.
Touching your lotus feet, watch the slave dance.

Rādhā: Here, take your flute. Everyone is happy, this performance went well.³⁴⁹
Ask for some further wish, O scoundrel of the performers, it shall be granted today.

Chorus: He takes the flute and places it on his lips, then again touching it to his forehead.
Having played the flute beautifly the rogue³⁵⁰ speaks flirtatiously.³⁵¹

Krishna: I put the lotus bud with five broad petals on the head of the lord [making the hand into the shape of a lotus bud, as if seeking offering].³⁵²

³⁴⁶ The word *chalā- cāllā* is glossed as “ring, round thing bangle or earring” (BS).

³⁴⁷ The word *ārsī* means “ornament in which a mirror is set, females wear on the finger of the right hand. A mirror” (BS).

³⁴⁸ The word *daye=diye* (BS).

³⁴⁹ The word *sāj* means “*bājā*”; *bhale* “*acchī tarah*” (BS).

³⁵⁰ The word *laṅgar* means “*naṭkhaṭ*” (BS).

³⁵¹ The meaning of *caṭak- maṭak* is “*nāj nakhrā*” (BS).

³⁵² A note on the margins of the SM manuscripts explains the hand gesture.

May I receive a k-i-s-s as my gift and offering.³⁵³

Rādhā: K-n-o-c-k-s first give [their] gifts.³⁵⁴

Krishna: That is best left for last. I take the twentieth part of twenty.³⁵⁵

Chorus: Laughing gently, Rādhā gave to her dearest beloved Krishna

a very lovely chest-garland, and calling it an offering, the beloved took it.

Chorus: Laughing gently Rādhā gave to Krishna a new pearl garland as a gift in gratitude

Krishna (the Urbane acrobat), folding his hands, said “This I take happily.”

Chorus: Garaj Dās³⁵⁶ say something else thus: that a different request was made

Lalit Mādhurī gave her heart’s desired treasure to Krishna.

Chorus: Saying this quickly and leaping, the acrobat wove a trap with his dance

**Performing the different arts with the *pūriyā rāgas*,³⁵⁷ Krishna, the net (of the trap)
and eternally happy one.**

³⁵³ The line says literally “Bearing bangles, etc. a forest of dots, may I receive gifts and offerings” which does not make sense. However, a note on the margins of the SM manuscript explains it is a play on words in which the first syllable of *curī* (cu) is combined (*yuti*) with a *bindu* and “ban” to yield *cumban* “kiss”.

³⁵⁴ The line says literally “virtue, lock (of hair), follower, etc. all first give gifts.” A note on the margins of the SM manuscript explains a play on words in which the first syllable of *guna* (gu), the first letter of *laṭ* (l) and the first syllable of *cārī* (cā) to yield *gulcā* “light punch.”

³⁵⁵ Not clear what he is referring to.

³⁵⁶ I have yet not been able to identify who is Garaj Dās.

³⁵⁷ The word *pūriyā* means “name of a *rāg* or a *rāgiṇī*” (MD).

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s perspective of his rahas and Hindu devotional drama

This play illustrates a lively *rās līlā* tradition during the 19th century. Whether to this particular play or not, we know Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was exposed to this kind of performance. In his memoirs, the king himself describes a similar spectacle he prepared in palace, which he called “*rahasyadhārī*”:

One day the gardener of nature had spread out upon the ground a bed of tulip flowers and the hearts of the servants of God had become happy and joyous like the bright blooms of the tulip. That day was such that even the wedding night could not present an equal response. The entire Huzūr Bāgh (a part of the palace) was perfumed by the fragrance of the flowers. I had arrived at Falak Sair (one of the palaces) with the equipment for the dancing and singing. At the time I gave the order for the *rahasyadhārī* to the *parīs*. The *rahasyadhārī* is a kind of dance that is worshipped in the Hindu religion. Hindu people spend countless rupees on the things for this worship. In it the form of Kanhaiyā and his milkmaids is assumed. It is not an exaggeration to say that nowhere else would there be a *rahas* like the one I had prepared. Skilled *ustāds* instructed and prepared all the *parīs* with great hard work. Aside from this, there are seven men giving artistic form to it, who are servants in my government. They prepared the appearance of Kanhaiyā and the milkmaids, the details of which are as follows:

Sultān parī in the role of Rādhā who is the special milkmaid of Kanhaiyā.

Māhrukh parī in the role of Kanhaiyā.

Yāsmīn parī, Dilrubā parī, Izzat parī, Hūr parī in the roles of the other milkmaids of Kanhaiyā.

Several lakhs of rupees were spent on the preparations of this play. Beyond obtaining all the equipment, five hundred rupees were spent just on a series of repairs. Giving an account of the arrangement of the paraphernalia for the worship and of the clothes, etc. would be a waste of time. The ones who were the lovers of Kanhaiyā were known as *gopīs* in the Sanskrit language. Their dance and singing is in harmony with Lakshmī and Brahm, and these are names of *tāls*. In this dance, the impact of the conversation between Kanhaiyā and Rādhā is felt, which arises in the states of union and separation. (Siddīqī 1998, 110-111).

There are several relevant facts revealed in this passage. First, it shows that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was aware that there was a dramatic devotional Hindu tradition. Second, he sponsored such plays monetarily and put in effort in the same way Hindus did. Several lakhs of rupees was a large

amount of money for the 19th century. He affirmed that what he did was unique. Finally, he also emphasized his interest in the states of union and separation between Rādhā and Krishna.

Sharar states in his chronicle that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh had witnessed *rās līlā* performances. Nevertheless, Sharar was not a witness of such event and the information should be taken cautiously:

The king has seen all the rahas of Krishna jī which are prevalent amongst the Hindus and was pleased with Krishna’s love stories to the extent that from these rahas he composed a play about them in which he himself played the part of Kanhaya and decorous and virtuous ladies of the palace acted as gopis (Sharar 1975, 64).

The statement that the king himself performed has been contested by Qureshi, (1987, 51), who denies the Nawāb ever participated, since it is not confirmed by other sources. The king did not record his participation; he was only a part of the audience. Qureshi also is at pains to assert that no chaste and veiled ladies of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh participated in the performance (ibid). However, Sharar explicitly states that the Hindu performances were the source of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s inspiration:

In addition to the courtesans who sang and danced another group of similar character developed in Lucknow. Perhaps it would not be wrong to say that these courtesans just exist in Lucknow. This is the group which performs rahas. The art of rahas belongs to Mathura and Braj and the constant flow of dancers from these areas made it popular in Lucknow (Sharar 1975, 146).

Sharar first suggested that there was a legacy in Lucknow of the *rahas* performers and second, he expressed a connection between the Braj area and Lucknow. It would be worth to explore other sources to assess if the link was as direct as Sharar proposed. The staging of Wājīd Alī’ Shāh’s plays was limited to a small group of people close to him. Nevertheless, an interesting question arises with regard to the ladies trained for the *rahas* and what they did later with that experience. It seems that there was a cross-germination of ideas in the performance tradition

between Lucknow and Braj. It is tempting to consider if Lalit Kiśorī was an important conduit in this exchange.

Vaṁśī naṭ līlā and the Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah

Despite the multiple differences between the two plays, there are many similarities that are not coincidental. Lalit Kiśorī was a Krishna devotee steeped in the religious tradition. The theme of the missing flute appears in several Sanskrit texts from at least the 16th century and also in numerous in Braj bhāshā verses. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh saw, heard or learned in some way about this popular Vaishnava narrative. Whether he witnessed this particular play is not likely, but it was certainly part of an exchange between Lucknow and Vrindavan.

From Lalit Kiśorī’s play we can conclude that the theme of the missing flute was still in fashion during the 19th century in devotional circles. The parallels with the *rahas* suggest that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was inspired by the *rās līlā* and it could have been the case that this was directly from a performance. In his memoir, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh emphasized the fact that Hindus spend a large amount of money for *rās līlā* performances. His appreciation might have derived from the fact that he witnessed the performances.

The characters of both plays are Rādhā, Krishna and the *gopīs*; both also have Lalitā and Sākhā. The *rahas* has additional characters from Persian literature that were mixed with those of the *rās līlā*, such as the *parīs* and the *div*. The *Vaṁśī naṭ* has the acrobats who perform, but they do not speak. In the plot of both plays, the flute disappears, Krishna has to search for it and a condition has to be met for the recovery. In the *Vaṁśī naṭ* Krishna has to perform an acrobatic dance and in the *rahas* he has to search for butter. Krishna is typically the one who steals from *gopīs*, but one of the charms of this play is the reversal in which the *gopīs* become thieves and take Krishna’s flute away (Hawley 1981, 112).

In the *Vaṃśī naṭ* Rādhā is extolled and each part of her body from head to toe is celebrated. This kind of praise is not in the *rahas*, but Rādhā's beauty is praised in a similar way. For example,

*rādhā jī aṃg par bimdiyā iti chavi det
manom phūlī ketkakī bhor bāsan let* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 92)

The *bindi* upon Rādhā jī's body, Oh, bestows beauty;
it is like a bee enjoying the fragrance of a *ketaki* in bloom

One of Lalit Kiśorī's twenty-four praises is:

bendī bhāl samvārī kī jay

Glory to her forehead, adorned with a *bindī*!

In both plays Rādhā has to be pleased; in the *Vaṃśī naṭ* she wants to see Krishna perform otherwise she will not give the flute back. Krishna has to entreat her for an agreement. In the *rahas* Rādhā is upset because she wants to hear the flute played and it is missing. Krishna has to supplicate her to calm her down. Once the flute is recovered everyone is joyful again and Krishna plays. In both plays a performance takes place, a play within the play. In the *Vaṃśī naṭ* the *naṭ* dance is performed to make Rādhā happy and in the *rahas* the dance of Rādhā and Krishna is enacted to please the *jogin*. In both cases Krishna is presented as a special performer who profoundly gratifies his audience.

The *Vaṃśī naṭ* highlights the amorous feelings between Rādhā and Krishna. After the performance Rādhā is cheerful and expresses her love

*prītam pyāre lāl ko vihasi kiśorī dīna
uramālā ati pyār pī valihārī vadi līna*

Laughing gently, Radha gave to her dearest beloved Krishna
a very lovely chest-garland, (which) offering the beloved took in return.

In the *rahas* Rādhā and Krishna have a conversation in which couplets of different moods are exchanged between them. Rādhā expresses her love to Krishna in this way:

*barsī vale mohan hamarī or to dekha
main tohe rākhūn nainan mē kājar sī rekha* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 95)

Mohan, flute player, look towards me.
I keep you in my eyes, [ineffaceable] like a line of *kājal*.

The *Vamshī naṭ* dwells almost exclusively on the sweetness of the love of Rādhā and Krishna. Part of the *līlā* portrays Krishna playing with the *gopīs*, asking them if they have the flute, until he hears Rādhā playing and cannot contain his excitement. Later, he makes her extremely happy by performing and at the end they have a pleasant exchange. In contrast, the *rahas* explores love in separation, the pain and the cruelty of the beloved. Perhaps influenced by Urdu poetry Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh has a different take on the theme.

Lalit Kīśorī wrote his full play in verse whereas Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh used prose and verse. The *Vamshī naṭ* is very homogenous since all the couplets are *dohās*, there is a clear unity of the whole text concerning meter and language. There are no couplets that are unrelated to the story. The *rahas* is rather different in that there is no metrical unity; it uses different registers, incorporates other literary sources and is generally more heterogeneous.

Both plays are short and are not divided in scenes or acts. The *rahas* has some stage instructions. The *Vamshī naṭ* does not contain any further information other than the characters' dialogue and the part played by the lead singer. There are verses in which a part of the drama is narrated, which is not the case in the *rahas*. With regard to authorship, they both inserted their pen name in the text, making explicit the association between the drama and the creator.

Comparison between the two dramas

Similarities

	Lalit Kīśorī ‘s <i>Vamshī naṭ līlā</i>	Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s first <i>rahas</i>
Characters	Rādhā, Krishna and the <i>gopīs</i>	Rādhā, Krishna and the <i>gopīs</i>

	Lalitā, Visākhā Campikā, Candrāvalī and Sasimukhī	Lalitā, Sākhā, Cīnā Laṛvā
Problem	Flute disappears	Flute disappears
Progress	Krishna searches for his flute	Krishna searches for his flute
	Rādhā has to be pleased to return the flute	Rādhā has to be pleased by finding the flute
Condition	Krishna has to perform <i>naṭ</i> dance	Krishna has to bring butter
Outcome	Krishna recovers the flute and plays	Krishna recovers the flute and plays
Structure	Play not divided in acts	Play not divided in acts
Penname in the verses	✓	✓

Comparison between the two dramas

Differences

	Lalit Kiśorī 's <i>Vaṃśī naṭ līlā</i>	Wājīd 'Alī Shāh's first <i>rahas</i>
Characters	No other characters	Paṛīs and Div
Focus	Love	Love, jealousy and pain
Meter	<i>Dohās</i> exclusively	Different meters including <i>dohās</i>
Prose	X	✓
Language	Braj bhāshā exclusively	Multiple registers
Narrator	✓	X
Stage instructions	X	✓

Conclusion

There is enough evidence to prove that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was influenced by the Braj *rās līlā* tradition. The historical narrative of Hindi/Urdu drama should take into account the interaction of traditions and geographical regions such as Lucknow and Vrindavan. The label “Urdu theater” for the work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh obliterates the interaction that he had with the Braj *rās līlā*. It is more productive to think about Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh together with Bhāratendu Hariścandra, Lalit Kiśorī, as well as Amānat, to understand the beginning of modern theater. The separation of Hindi and Urdu drama as distinct entities is arbitrary and ignores the dialogic nature of texts like the *rahas*. Regional traditions seemed to have had fluid boundaries.

There is much more to learn about the scripts of *rās līlā* plays before contemporary times. The work of Lalit Kiśorī opens up the investigation on the format of drama scripts in this tradition. This provides an opportunity to look at these two dramatic texts in vernacular language together. The play of Lalit Kiśorī contrasts in an interesting way with that of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. One playwright is Hindu, the other Muslim; one is a devotional work, the other one secular. Nevertheless, they both harked back to the same performance tradition converging and diverging at different points.

The comparison between *Vaṃśī naṭ līlā* and the *rahas* helps to support the idea that Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was aware of the Braj *rās līlā* as a whole. The response of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh to the *rās līlā* should be inserted into the narrative of the development of this theatrical form. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s *rahas* is an example of a secular drama based on a devotional theatrical tradition. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh adapted in his cosmopolitan court an ancient theme from a Hindu temple setting.

Figures

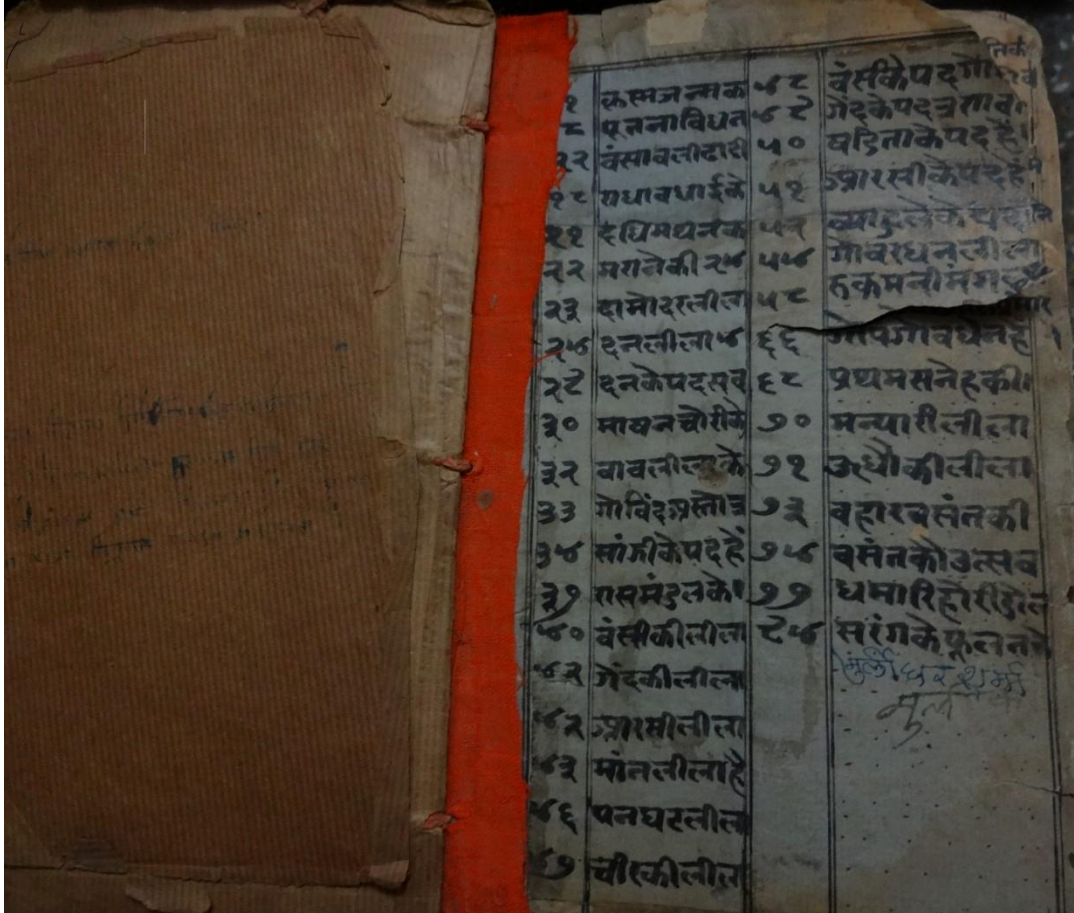


Figure 5 Early 20th century *rāsdhārī* notebook. Braj Samṣkṛiti Shodha Samsthān, Vrindavan.

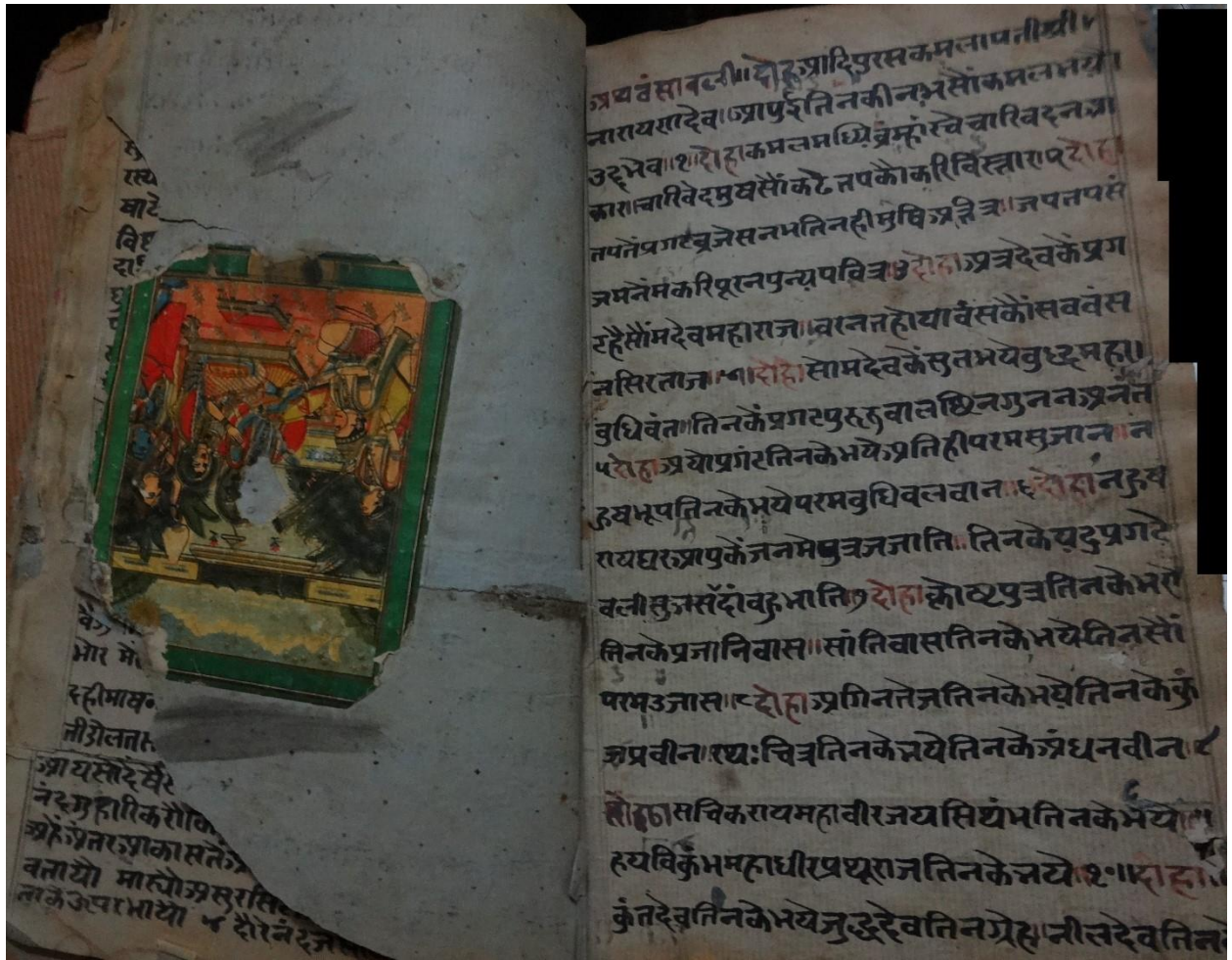
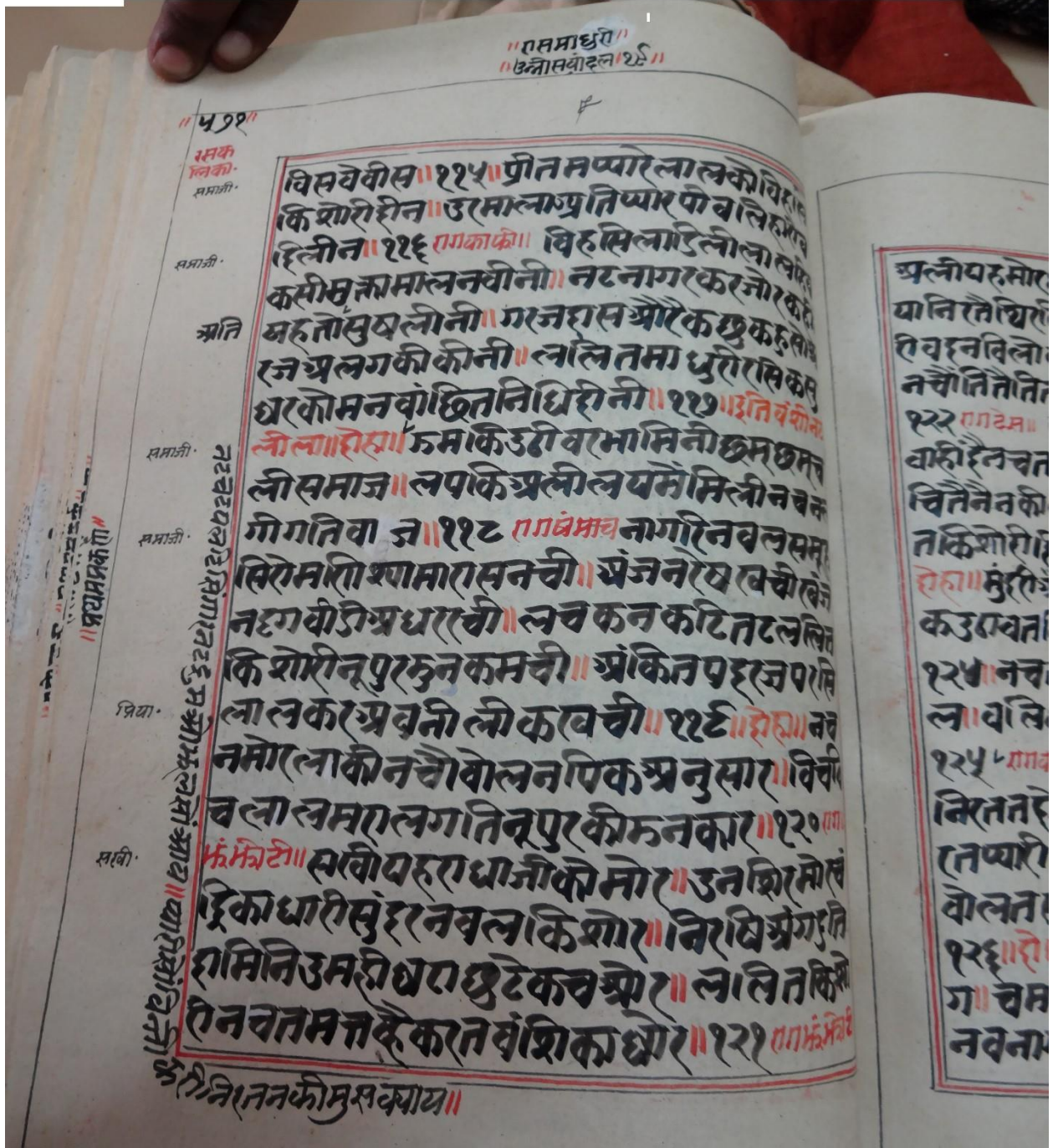


Figure 6 Early 20th century *rāsdhārī* notebook. *Lilā*. Braj Samskṛiti Shodha Samsthān, Vrindavan.



॥ रामप्रदुर ॥
॥ उन्नीसवाइल ॥ १६ ॥

॥ ५११ ॥

रसक
लिका
समाजी

समाजी

आति

समाजी

समाजी

प्रिया

सखी

विसवेवीस ॥ ११५ ॥ प्रीतमप्यारे लालकोचिह्न
 किशोरीदीन ॥ उरमात्प्रतिप्यारपोबलिह
 हिलीन ॥ ११६ ॥ गगकाके ॥ विहसिलाडिलीला
 कसीसुत्तामालनवीनी ॥ नरनागरकरजोरक
 बहतोसुयलीनी ॥ गरजदास और कछुकुसु
 रजप्रलगकीकीनी ॥ लालितमाधुरासिकसु
 धाकोमनवाछितनिधिरीनी ॥ ११७ ॥ इतिबंकी
 लोला ॥ रोसा ॥ रुमाकेडरी वरभामिनी छमछम
 लीसमाज ॥ लपकेप्रलीलयमैमित्रीनचक
 गीगतिवा ॥ ११८ ॥ गंधमच नगारेनवलसमा
 सिरोमरीशामारासनची ॥ अंजनरेषवचीके
 नदगवीडोप्रधारी ॥ लचकनकरितरललित
 किशोरीनूपरुनकमची ॥ अंकितपइरजपरसि
 लालकरप्रवनीलीकवची ॥ ११९ ॥ रोसा ॥ नच
 नमोलाकीनचौबोलनपिकअनुसार ॥ विच
 चलासमालगतिनूपरकीरुनकार ॥ १२० ॥
 रंभंकेटी ॥ सखीघहराधाजीकोमो ॥ उनकिरोस
 इकाधारीसुंदरनवलकिशो ॥ निरधिअंगुति
 समितिउमरीधराछुटेकचओ ॥ लालितकि
 रिनचतमत्तकेकारतवंशिकाधोर ॥ १२१ ॥ रंभंकेटी
 इतिनातनकीमुसक्याय ॥

अलीघरमोर
 यानितैचिर
 रिवदनविलो
 नचौतितैति
 १२२ ॥ गगदम ॥
 वाहीदैनचत
 चितैनेनकी
 तकिशोरी
 रोसा ॥ सुंरि
 कउएवत
 १२४ ॥ नच
 ल ॥ वलि
 १२५ ॥ गग
 निततरे
 एतप्यारो
 बोलत
 १२६ ॥ रो
 ग ॥ चम
 नवनम

Figure 7 Ras kalikā manuscript, Shāh jī temple.



Figure 8 Shāh Kundanlāl and Shāh Phundanlāl, Shāh jī temple.



Figure 9 Lalit Kisorī, Shāh jī temple.



Figure 10 Detail



Figure 11 Ceiling Shāh jī temple.



Figure 12 Wājid Alī' Shāh dressed as a *gopī*, Shāh jī temple.

CHAPTER 5 The story of the theft of the flute in Vaishnava literature

During the 19th century there were new trends that triggered innovation in theater. One important stream of influence was Western drama and another Sanskrit theater filtered by European scholars (Chatterjee 1993, 7). The structure and themes of Western theater were assimilated in India. At the same time, Orientalist scholars promoted Sanskrit plays as the most important theatrical development in South Asia (Solomon 2009, 16). Modern theater was built on a new understanding of the literary past.

From the mid-19th century onwards Sanskrit dramas became a part of the repertoire of theatrical companies. The translation of Sanskrit plays into English and Indian languages was fundamental to epitomize Sanskrit theater as the major ancestor of performance. A figure deeply engrossed in Sanskrit theater was Bhāratendu Hariścandra who played a major role in the development of modern theater. Bhāretendu translated Sanskrit dramas into Hindi and mimicked the structure of Sanskritic prototypes in his own work as a playwright (Dalmia 1997, 301-2). He revived traditional characters from the Krishna mythology transforming the past into the present (Garlington 1984, 84) The creation of new theatrical models involved rehabilitating local literary cultures.

In the context of the renewal of older models for theater, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh also renovated a devotional theme, but in a secular setting. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s dance-drama was inspired by an old narrative in Vaishnava circles. This chapter traces the theme of the stealing of Krishna’s flute in Sanskrit, Bengali and Braj bhāshā to explore Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s engagement with an indigenous tradition. The framework of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s dance-drama could have been drawn from a variety of devotional sources from at least the 16th century on. As other playwrights of his time, Wājīd

‘Alī Shāh redressed the old to create something new and his work can be placed between tradition and modernity.

Devotional texts in Sanskrit in the 16th century

I will first sketch the very broad context of the Sanskrit texts, followed by textual references to the theme of the stolen flute. Braj has a long and rich history in which devotional poetry and drama have been cultivated. The 16th century was marked by the development of a new kind of devotion or *bhakti* associated with the god Krishna. The flourishing of Braj as a religious and cultural center is linked to a Hindu-Muslim collaboration at the imperial level (Hawley 2015, 75). The alliance between the Hindu princely states and the Afghan Suri dynasty, and later the Mughals, shaped the building project of Braj that placed this area in a central position in North India (156). The crystallization of religious traditions in the area was connected to a literary production mainly in the vernacular, but Sanskrit was not absent.

Sanskrit language was part of the religious tradition connected to Caitanya. One characteristic of the 16th century religious map in South Asia was the rise of several competing religious communities or *sampradāy* in Braj. One of these communities, the Gauḍīya *sampradāy*, figures prominently here because the authors of the texts that will be cited were associated with this community. The Gauḍīya *sampradāy* has its origins in the teachings of the Bengali mystic Caitanya (1486-1533). The biographies of Caitanya contain accounts of his ecstasies, wondrous encounters and mass conversions (Entwistle 1987, 143). Caitanya had many supporters, but not more than eight Sanskrit verses authored by him survive and his life and instruction are only known mostly through later biographies.³⁵⁸ Some of Caitanya’s followers wrote in Sanskrit, perhaps with the intent to appeal to a larger educated audience or to emulate standard Sanskrit texts (De 1961,

³⁵⁸ On this topic (See Stewart 2010).

119). The theft of the flute is a theme present the in Sanskrit texts by Rūpa Gosvāmī, Krishṇadās Kavirāj and Kavikarṇapūra.

Rūpa Gosvāmī

The scholar and poet Rūpa Gosvāmī was one of the main figures in this process of the transmission of the theology attributed to the teachings of Caitanya. Rūpa was born between 1470 and 1490 in the area that is now Bengal; he belonged to a family of *Brāhmaṇas* that was originally from Karnataka and had two brothers: Sanātana and Anupama. There are several inconsistencies concerning the dates of Rūpa's life, birth and the dates of his compositions, but he might have died around 1557 (Haberman 2003, xxxii). Rūpa was educated in Sanskrit and along with his brother Sanātana worked originally for the Muslim court of Husain Shāh close to the city of Gauda in what today is Bengal (xxx). After being instructed by Caitanya, Rūpa and Sanātana systematized a theological framework of their preceptor's teachings.

Rūpa and Sanātana were quite influential in the development of the Gauḍīya *sampradāy*. Their writing followed the commentary of Śrīdhara, on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Śrīdhara's commentary written in the 13th century, focused on religious practice characterized by an emotional relationship with god. The emotional *bhakti* that inspired devotees through the example of Caitanya was later organized formally in the Gauḍīya *sampradāy* after the origin in Gauḍa (Stewart 2010, 5). Rūpa and Sanātana went to Vrindavan, where they lived and worked on the theological bases of the new religious tradition.

Rūpa was the author of more than a dozen texts in Sanskrit, including dramas, *kāvya* and theological treatises. Amongst the most relevant ones are the plays *Vidagdha-mādhava* and *Lalita-mādhava* with the same theme of Krishna *līlā*, and the theological treatises *Bhakti-rasāmrita-*

sindhu and *Ujjvala-nīla-mani* and two *dūta-kāvya*s as well as an anthology of devotional poetry he collected, entitled *Padyāvalī*.

The *Vidagdha mādghava* has seven acts and more than thirty characters, including: Krishna, his friends, brother and parents, Rādhā and other *gopīs*, Rādhā's husband, Rādhā's mother-in-law, her grandmother and the grandmothers of other *gopīs*. The fourth act is entitled "The theft of the flute" (*veṇu haraṇa*) and the story of the theft continues into the fifth act called "Soothing Rādhā" (*rādhā prasādana*). In the following verse from the *Vidagdha-mādghava* the flute is conceived of as another *sakhī* or "friend." The flute is also perceived as a female rival because "she" enjoys close proximity to Krishna, particularly to his hands and lips:

सखि मुरलि विशालच्छिद्रजालेन पूर्णा
लघुरतिकठिना त्वं ग्रन्थिला नीरसासि ।
तदपि भजसि शश्वच्चुम्बनानन्दसान्द्रं
हरिकरपरिरम्भं केन पुण्योदयेन ॥ (Śāstrī 1937, IV.7)

Oh flute friend! You are filled with a net of cavities,
you are light, extremely hard, knotted and without *rasa*,
so as a result of which merit you engage in the embrace
of the hands of Krishna and the intense joy of constant kissing?

In the play Krishna and Rādhā are going to meet in the forest, but he ends up with Candrāvālī, another *gopī*. When Krishna sees Rādhā much later, she is very upset with him. Rādhā distracts him flirtatiously and takes his flute away placing it on the border of her dress, but he doesn't notice. The scene is described by Lalitā:

निद्रागमेऽपि सखी नन्दसुतस्य हर्तुं
यां शक्नुवन्ति न पराः पशुपालबालाः ।
धन्या कटाक्षकलया किल मोहयन्ती
तां राधिकाद्य पुरतो मुरलीं जहार ॥ (Śāstrī 1937, IV. 34)

Bewildering by the art of glances
the auspicious Rādhikā, stole the flute in his presence

that flute which the cowherd boys are not able to steal from the son of Nanda even in his time of sleep.

Although Krishna is typically the trickster, here instead Rādhā manages to deceive Krishna taking his precious flute away with her charm. There is a role reversal in which Rādhā is the one who plays the pranks. The text emphasizes the fact that she achieves what the others are not capable of doing. Rādhā takes revenge on Krishna's mischievousness by depriving him of the flute.

Rādhā is excited to have the flute that drives all the *gopīs* crazy. Madhumangala approaches Rādhā and tries to help, but makes it worse by bringing Candrāvālī into the conversation. When Krishna realizes that his flute is missing, he asks Rādhā to return it, but she claims she is not a thief and pretends to be offended with this accusation. Krishna tells Rādhā's grandmother, Mukharā, what has happened. The grandmother scolds Krishna for his bad behavior and he leaves. Rādhā feels sad, jealous of Candrāvālī and misses Krishna. Viśakhā tells Rādhā that if she places the flute against the wind, the flute will play music; Rādhā holds the flute and with the wind it resounds. Jaṭilā, Rādhā's mother in law, hears the flute and infuriated takes the flute away from Rādhā. Vrindā, the goddess of the forest of Vrindavan, sends a monkey to steal Jaṭilā's yogurt to distract her. Jaṭilā throws the flute at the monkey to stop it, but the monkey runs away with the flute. Vrinda recovers the flute from the monkey. Krishna is unhappy because he has not seen Rādhā. Vrinda and Subala disguise themselves as Rādhā and Lalitā and they meet Krishna and give back the flute. When Krishna plays the flute, the real Rādhā comes to him and they are reunited. The story in the *Vidagdha-mādhava* is relevant since it records the theme of the stolen flute in drama.

Padyāvalī

The *Padyāvalī* is an anthology of poetry that was compiled by Rūpa Gosvāmī early in his life. The text includes 386 devotional Vaishnava poems by 125 Sanskrit poets, both unknown and famous,

from a wide range of time periods. Not all the authors nor all the themes were related to a Vaishnava context; however, Rūpa altered the poems to “Vaishnavise” their content (De 2002, 112). The theme of the theft of the flute appears in the *Padyāvalī* in a verse attributed to Daityāripaṇḍita, an unknown poet and author of two verses in the anthology. Rūpa was clearly attracted to the theme since he later composed an act of his play on the theft of the flute. The verse by Daityāripaṇḍita is the theft of the flute in a nut shell:

नीचैर्न्यासादथ चरणयोरनूपुरे मुकयन्ती
 धृत्वा धृत्वा कनकवलयान्युत्क्षिपन्ती भुजान्ते ।
 मुद्रामक्षणोश्चकितचकितं शश्वदालोकयन्ती
 स्मित्वा स्मित्वा हरति मुरलीमङ्कतो माधवस्य ॥ (De 2002, 253)

Silencing the anklets of her feet by placing them down,
 constantly raising the golden bangles to the upper part of her arms,
 incessantly looking out for a movement of the eyes (of Krishna) with great caution,
 smilingly she steals the flute from the lap of Mādhava.³⁵⁹

In this verse the stealing of the flute is a little vignette, Rādhā is again the thief, the one who is capable of outwitting Krishna. The instant in which the incident takes place is described with details. The poet conveys Rādhā's pleasure and the silence necessary for successfully taking the flute without Krishna noticing its disappearance

Krishnadāsa Kavirāj

Krishnadās Kavirāj was also a Krishna devotee known for his biography of Caitanya. There is not much information about the life of Krishnadās Kavirāj. He was born in Burwan in what is today Bengal; the date of his birth was probably 1517 and he spent time in Vrindavan also. The biography of Caitanya, the *Caitanya-caritāmṛita*, was composed mainly in Bengali, but with some portions in Sanskrit. It is not clear when the composition of the text was finished; one possibility is 1581

³⁵⁹ My translation benefited from the English translation by Kuśakratha Dāsa.

but, other sources say 1615 (Dimock and Stewart 1999, 29-30). In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛita*, Krishnadās Kavirāj mentions Rūpa Gosvāmī suggesting that there was a relation between them (28). Krishnadās Kavirāj was the author of significant texts for the Gauḍīya tradition as well.

The *Govinda-līlāmṛita* is another text that is attributed to Krishnadās Kavirāj, fully written in Sanskrit. There are allusions to Rūpa Gosvāmī reinforcing the relation of the author with the theologian. The text contains 23 *līlās* about the pastimes of Krishna in Braj. This text mixes the daily routine of Krishna with other apocryphal incidents that revolve around some humorous tricks and have become the basis of other poems or *rās līlā* performances (Entwistle 1987, 56). The use of the episodes of the *Govinda-līlāmṛita* for devotional drama is a relevant feature of text.

In the *līlā* of the stolen flute in the *Govinda-līlāmṛita*, Krishna embraces Rādhā tightly and Lalitā scolds Krishna for disturbing the *gopīs* who are married women. Krishna replies that Rādhā happily accepted his embrace. Nevertheless, Lalitā angrily requests Krishna not to touch Rādhā. In the meantime, Rādhā seizes the opportunity to take away the flute:

ललितायाः पुरो राधां वातोऽपि स्पृष्टुमक्षमः।
तत्यजामूं नचेदस्माद्धाटी शार्टी निचोलय ॥
इत्यालपन्त्यां त्वरितं रुषास्या मग्रेसरत्यां ससखीकुलायाम् ।
कम्पाश्रु रोमांच मुखेश्च भावै रानन्दजैः सोऽप्यभवद्विहस्तः ॥
कान्तांग संगज सुखेन विमोहितेऽस्मिन् भीतोऽयमित्यवगते ललिता भियान्यैः।
आदाय कम्पित करान्मुरलीं स्वखलन्तीं सा निर्गता झटिति विश्लथ बाहुबन्धात् ॥
निर्गत्य तस्यां स्वपटाञ्चलेन संगोपयन्त्यां मुरलीं प्रयत्नात् ।
आगत्य तस्याः पुरतो विशखा कृष्णेन संलापमसौ व्यधत् ॥ (Śyāmadāsa 1999, 10. 28-31)

In front of Lalitā, not even the wind is able to touch Rādhā. Therefore leave her otherwise there will be an assault, let go of her dress. She said this with an angry face and quickly approached (Krishna) along with the group of *sakhīs*, even Krishna was perplexed, with his excitement-born reactions of trembling, tears and horripilation.

He was infatuated by the joy of being in contact with the body of the beloved. The others thought he was afraid of Lalitā

(Rādhā) took the slipping flute from his trembling hand,
she quickly freed herself from the slackened hold of his arms,
once freed she hid the flute with great effort within the border of her dress,
then Viśākhā, placed herself in front (of Rādhā) and engaged Krishna in conversation.³⁶⁰

In the narrative of Krishnadās Kavirāj, Rādhā is the thief once more and the poet also focuses on the specific manner in which the flute is taken away. Krishna's distraction occurs on account of his love for Rādhā. As in the drama by Rūpa, several characters have the flute, triggering playful situations before its being returned to the owner.

Krishna continues his amorous play with the other *gopīs* and when he returns to Rādhā, she tells him to leave the wives of others and kiss his wife, the flute. Krishna realizes then that his flute is lost and Rādhā quickly gives the flute to Tulasī. Krishna tells Rādhā that she is a thief. Rādhā escapes from him and Tulasī gives the flute to Rūpa Mañjarī. Krishna grabs Tulasī and searches her body, but she doesn't have the flute any more. Rūpa Mañjarī gives the flute to Lalitā and then Krishna searches Rūpa Mañjarī's blouse. Lalitā gives the flute to Kundavallī. When Krishna goes to Lalitā, she states that the sound of the flute agitates the three worlds and calls Krishna the husband of the flute. Lalitā claims that if the flute is lost, the housewives will do their chores and keep their underwear in place. She also states that the flute is lost because Krishna stole the clothes of the *gopīs* making them suffer. Kundalatā tells Krishna that the flute is just a stick, a cheap piece of bamboo. Krishna explains that his flute is powerful and endowed with many qualities. He searches Lalitā, but doesn't find it. Rādhā has the flute again, but gives it to Tulasī. Krishna doesn't know who the thief is and continues to argue with the *gopīs*. Tulasī gives the flute to Vrindā who calls the flute glorious for causing the wonderful *līlās* of Rādhā and Krishna. Rādhā goes to a grove

³⁶⁰ My English translation benefited from the Hindi translation (Śyāmadāsa 1999).

in the forest and Krishna meets her there; during their lovemaking he asks for his flute. The issue of the stolen flute carries over into the next *līlā*.

In the eleventh *līlā*, Vrindā goes to look for Krishna to return the flute, but everyone is engaged in describing the beauty of Rādhā from head to toe. In the twelfth *līlā*, Madhumangala and Krishna meet the *sakhīs* to the and the theft of the flute is discussed again. Lalitā insists that no one has seen the flute, but if possible it should be thrown into the Yamunā. Vrindā is discovered because she has the flute in her hand and the wind blows and plays the instrument. According to Vrindā, she got the flute from the monkey who got it from Śaibyā. Kundalatā hands the flute to Krishna who is rejoiced to play it after such a long time. The flute is celebrated since all creatures are affected by it.

Kavikarṇapūra

The life of Kavikarṇapūra is not well documented as his birth date is not entirely clear; but he was born apparently in 1524, a few years before Caitanya's death. Kavikarṇapūra's name was Paramānanda Sena and he was originally from Kāñcanapalli near Naihatia, in the modern state of Bengal. He was the son of an early disciple of Caitanya (De 1961, 42). There are 11 literary works attributed to him, amongst the more important ones are the play *Caitanya-candrodaya* about Caitanya's life. An interesting fact of this drama is that it is based on real life history more than any other Sanskrit play (Tubb 2015, 710). *Caitanya-candrodaya* was performed at the Jagannātha temple in Puri and was commissioned by the King of Orissa (691). Kavikarṇapūra also penned the *Alaṅkāra-kaustubha*, a work on Sanskrit rhetoric and *Ānanda-vrindāvana-campū*. The latter tells the story of the life of Krishna in 22 episodes or *stabakās* of mixed verse and prose. One of them is the *Muralī-caurya-līlā* in which the theft of the flute is narrated.

In the *Ānanda-vrindāvana-campū* the *gopīs* plan together to steal Krishna’s flute because they are always attracted to its enchanting melody, but they wonder what would be a good method since Krishna never puts his flute down. The *gopīs* ask Rādhā for help achieving the goal of the theft. Krishna’s friend Kusumāsava knows a part of the plan and informs Krishna that the *gopīs* want to steal his flute. To prevent the theft, Kusumāsava offers to keep the flute with him and promises he will protect it. Krishna gives Kusumāsava his flute and sings a beautiful song. Kusumāsava claims that nobody can sing as beautifully as Krishna. Saṅgīta Vidyā, a *gopī* musician, says that Lalitā is capable of singing better than Krishna. Kusumāsava calls for a competition. After Lalitā sings, Kusumāsava is distracted and loses the flute:

तदा तदाकर्ण्य सगर्वमाह कुसुमासवः ही ही पराजितं भोः पराजितं ललितया इति बाहू समुद्दम्य कक्षान्मुरली पतति स्म तां निपतितामालोक्य सत्वरया रयादेव सङ्गीतविद्या सस्यासाभावेनैव निहन्त्य रक्षिता क्षितावेकोऽपि न जानाति स्म नाऽतिस्मयवती सा च निजवर्ग कस्यैचित् कथितवतीति स्थिते सैव तमुवाचाऽलं वाचालम् भोः कथमकाण्डे प्रहर्षमतोऽसि किमिति मतवन्नरीनृत्यते विचारयतु रयतुलितकोटिद्वयस्तवैव वयस्यः कस्य जयः इति ॥ (Śāstrī, 2000 21. 32)

Then after hearing (Lalitā’s song) Kusumāsava said proudly: “Ha, ha Lalitā lost.” He lifted his arms while dancing and the flute fell from his armpit. Saṅgīta Vidyā saw the fallen flute on the ground. She took it and concealed it, swiftly, in a quick motion, without any effort. No one noticed it. She was extremely surprised and did not tell her own group (of friends). In this state, she said to the extremely boisterous (Kusumāsava): “Hey! Why are you overcome with joy without any reason and dancing repeatedly in (such) excitement? Let your friend quickly determine who the winner is by comparing the two sides.”³⁶¹

In this rendering of the story, Krishna and Rādhā are not directly involved in the stealing scene. The flute is robbed on account of Kusumāsava’s foolishness. The *gopī* outsmarts Krishna’s friend. This kind of narrative in which Krishna’s companion is tricked is found in later Braj

³⁶¹ My English translation benefited from the Hindi translation of the consulted edition.

versions of the story. Rādhā here does not figure in the incident so prominently as in the other Sanskrit versions discussed.

The *gopīs* claim they have won and therefore want Krishna. Kusumāsava says he will give them the flute instead of Krishna, but then realizes that the flute is lost. Krishna searches the *gopīs* looking for his flute and accuses each one saying “you are the thief” and opens their bodices. Kusumāsava argues with the *gopīs* to find out who is responsible. Saṅgīta Vidyā gives the flute to Lalitā and then she gives the flute to Rādhā. Kusumāsava blames each *gopī* one by one and finally claims that Rādhā is the one who has it. The flute falls accidentally from Rādhā’s bodice; Krishna takes it and plays.

Caṅḍīdās

The theft of the flute seems to have a strong connection also with Bengali Vaishnavism. Since Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh spent decades of his life in Calcutta, this is an interesting precedent. The stolen flute occurs in the Bengali song cycle attributed to the poet Caṅḍīdās, called *Śrī Krishna kīrtana*. There is not much information about the author. The date of the composition of *Śrī Krishna kīrtana* is controversial and there is no definite answer; the earliest suggested date is the end of the 14th century, but it has also been placed not earlier than the beginning of the 17th century (Klaiman 1984, 18-19). The *Śrī Krishna kīrtana* is amongst the oldest Bengali texts and it was probably written before Caitanya’s time. In Caitanya’s biography *Caitanya-caritāmṛita* some verses of Caṅḍīdās are quoted (12). At least the *Śrī Krishna kīrtana* was composed before the *Caitanya-caritāmṛita*. The *Śrī Krishna kīrtana* documents an early Vaishnava period in Bengal. The text contains 13 sections with 412 songs. Since it was composed in the vernacular, the assumption is that it must have been accessible to ordinary people (14). Knutson asserts that the plots of the songs seem to come from oral folk traditions and not from the epic *Purāṇas* (2014, 94). One of the

stories not found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and present in the *Śrī Krishna kīrtana* is the stealing of the flute.

In the *Vaṁśīkaṇḍa* of the *Śrī Krishna kīrtana*, the story of the stolen flute is told in over 20 songs which can be separate units or a continuous narrative. In this retelling Rādhā is suffering because she misses Krishna terribly and her grandmother suggests that they steal Krishna's flute. If the flute is stolen then Krishna will come in person to supplicate Rādhā. The grandmother puts a sleep inducing charm on Krishna to give Rādhā the opportunity of taking the flute away:

All of the maidens set out for the Yamuna River for gathering water.
There Abhimanyu's wife Rādhā saw Krishna asleep at the base of a *kadamba*.
Stealthily edging up close to his side, Rādhā picked up his flute in a hurry.
Into the jug of her hip she inserted the instrument, then she went homeward.
Placing the jug on the ground after reaching the household, Candrāvālī Rādhā
Took out the flute; in exuberant spirits, she looked at it over and over (Klaiman 1984, 250).

In this series of songs with the theme of the stolen flute, Rādhā is the thief and, as in the *Padyāvalī*, she robs the flute while Krishna is asleep. The text provides specifics about the setting, how Rādhā takes the flute away and her later excitement. The songs foreground the closeness of Rādhā and Krishna. When Krishna wakes up he looks for his flute everywhere; not being able to find it he weeps in distress. The grandmother consoles Krishna and explains that the *gopīs* felt neglected and therefore stole the flute. Krishna requests Rādhā to give the flute back and explains how powerful the instrument is. Over several songs and messages through the grandmother, Krishna insists he wants the flute and Rādhā denies having it. Only when Krishna promises that he will not ever ignore Rādhā, she returns the flute.

Since Wājīd 'Alī Shāh lived in Bengal and even integrated Bengali dances in his *rahas*, it is not impossible that a Bengali version was a source of transmission. The *rahas* focuses on Rādhā and Krishna's relationship, but Rādhā is not responsible for stealing the flute. Quite the opposite

she is upset as a result of the theft. The character of the grandmother and Rādhā's husband are completely absent in the *rahas*. This Bengali version does not have significant similarities with the narrative Wājid 'Alī Shāh presents.

In all of these versions the flute is stolen to play with Krishna and there is excitement about the theft. In at least the work of Rūpa the flute is understood as a rival and the *gopīs* and women are jealous of the attention Krishna gives to his flute. In the *Govinda-līlāmrita* and the *Ānanda-vrindāvana-campū* the *gopīs* decide to play a prank on Krishna because he always distracts them with his charm. In all the versions except the *Ānanda-vrindāvana-campū*, the thief is Rādhā. However, the flute passes through the hands of several characters, other *gopīs* also participate and have to trick someone in order to get the flute. At the end, Krishna has to negotiate to recover it. The *gopīs* are fascinated by the flute which is connected to the divine nature of Krishna.

The theft of the flute in Braj bhāshā

The theft of the flute was a recurrent theme amongst Vaishnava poets in Braj. The popularity of the stolen flute has endured till today. The pleasure of hiding the flute is to play with Krishna, to tease him, to talk to him. It is an excuse to interact, flirt and make him a little upset. The game between Krishna and the *gopīs* over the flute is full of implicit and explicit erotic references. In the *dohā* from the 17th century by the famous Braj bhāshā poet Bihārī, Krishna needs to perform to recover his flute. This verse strongly resonates in the play by Lalit Kiśorī linking recovery and dance (Chapter 4). Here the essence of the theft of the flute is presented in a succinct form:

बतरस लालच लाल की मुरली धरी लुकाय।
सोंह करै, भौंहुनु हंसै देन कहै नटि जाय॥ (Pandey 1977, 254)

Hungry for conversation, she takes Krishna's flute and hides it,
She swears (she doesn't have it), but laughs as she frowns, she says in order to give it he
should dance.

Anonymous and known Braj poets composed songs and couplets on different facets of Krishna, such as the above quoted *dohā*. Verses on specific themes are collected in the *rās līlā* plays, some of which have been recorded and published in contemporary times. Today the scripts of *rās līlās* are typically not composed by one single author, but come from a variety of devotional sources. The theme of the theft of the flute is present in the *līlā* entitled *Vaṁśī corī*, an English translation of the drama can be found in the book *At play with Krishna* by John Hawley (1981). The *Vaṁśī corī* is a popular play included in the repertoire of *rās līlā* troupes in Vrindavan. Although there may be slight variations in the text of different troupes, the core of the *līlā* tends to be very similar.

The text of the *Vaṁśī corī līlā* that will be used here is a transcription of a performance that took place in Vrindavan in 2012. The troupe was under the direction of Svāmī Śrī Fateh Krishna Śarmā (Figure 13). He is from a village named Damsinga in the district of Mathura and he used to play the role of Krishna as a child for the Svāmī Kunwar jī Maharāj's *rās līlā* group. Svāmī Śrī Fateh Krishna Śarmā later formed his own troupe and trained many children from the Braj area in singing, dancing and the playing of various musical instruments. He has won several national awards for his work. This is the introduction that Śrī Fateh Krishna Śarmā gave to the *Vaṁśī corī līlā* play and the opening verses:³⁶²

आइए, आज की लीला है वंशी चोरी । ये वंशी श्री ठाकुर जी ऐसी है कि जब यह बजै है, तो महाराज यहां की बात तो छोड़ौं स्वरगादि में हूँ देवता लोग सुन के मुग्ध है जांय है और बहां अपनौ कार्यभार भूल जायें सब शंकर जी समाधि खुल जाय, और ब्रह्म जी वेद पाठ करनौ भूल जायें, अप्सरा नाचें तो वह नृत्य करनौ भूल जायें। जब उनकी ये दशा है तो गपिन की कहा दशा होगी। आप ये ध्यान लगावें और आगे लीला को आनंद लें

³⁶² I thank Mohan Syām Śarmā and Prakash Śarmā for helping me with the transcription. I also thank the Śrī Caitanya Prem Samsthān for providing me a recording and Svāmī Śrī Fateh Krishna, the director of the *rās līlā* troupe for answering all my questions and allowing me to take pictures during their performance.

वंशी मदन गोपाल की बाजत गहन गम्भीर ।
सुखदास बाजत सुनी कालिंदी के तीर ॥
मधुर सुधारस वांसुरी अधर धरी नंदलाल ।
ब्रजबाला सब वश भई सुनि सुनि शब्द रसाल ॥

Please come, today the *līlā* is the stealing of the flute. This flute of Śrī Krishna is such that when it plays, gentlemen, let alone here, even in heaven the gods are infatuated upon hearing it and there all their responsibilities are forgotten. Śiva's concentration is broken and Brahma jī forgets the study of the Vedas, and the *apsarās* that are dancing forget how to dance. When their condition is such, what would be the condition of the *gopīs*? Pay attention and enjoy the *līlā* that will be performed.

Chorus:

The flute of Madan Gopal plays in a deep and intense (manner).
Sukhadās heard the playing on the bank of the Yamuna River
The flute, sweet nectar, placed on the lips of Nandalāl
All the young girls of Braj became entranced listening on and on to the sweet notes.

In the *Vaṁśī corī līlā* the *sakhīs* talk about how powerful the flute is and how they are distracted every time they hear its music. The *gopīs* plan to steal the flute, but Madhumangala overhears their conversation.³⁶³ Later Madhumangala informs Krishna of the *gopīs*' plan in a comic manner that makes the audience laugh (Figure 14). Madhumangala compares the *gopīs* to the flute which is not uncommon in the Vaishnava literary tradition:

मधुमंगल मोय एक बात बता, तोय गोपी सखी प्यारी लगै कि वंशी सखी प्यारी लगै?
ठाकुरजी भैया! मोकूँ तौ जे गोपी सखी भी प्यारी लगै और वंशी सखी भी प्यारी लगै। दोनों ही प्यारी लगै।
मधुमंगल अधिक प्यारी कौन सी लगै।
ठाकुरजी भई देख मधुमंगल! में काऊ में भेद भाव नाय समझूँ। मोकूँ तौ दोनों समान हैं, प्रिय दोनों ही लगै हैं।
मधुमंगल दोनों?
ठाकुरजी दोनों प्रिय लगै।
मधुमंगल तौ फिर आज तेरी वंशी सखी चोरी में जायगी।
ठाकुरजी हाय हाय भैया! ये तौ बडौ ही अनर्थ है जायगौ।

³⁶³ Very similar to the story in *Ānanda vrindāvana campū*

मधुमंगल अब काय कूँ हाय हाय कर रहयौ है? अबई तौ यह कह रहयौ कि दोनों सखी प्यारी लगें। अरे एक सखी वंशी चोरी में जायगी। तेरी दूसरी सखी गोपी सखी परी है। काऊ ऐ पकर कें वंसी बनाय लीजौ। क्यों लाला, ऐसी विद्या तौ हमें सिखाय दे। हमऊ काऊ लम्बे से बाबा जी कूँ पकर कें अलगोजा बनाय लेंगे।

Madhumangala: Tell me one thing. Do you love the milkmaid *sakhīs* or the flute *sakhī*?

Krishna: Friend! I love the milkmaid *sakhīs* and I also love the flute *sakhī*. Indeed, I love both.

Madhumangala: Whom do you love more?

Krishna: Look Madhumangala, I never feel a difference. Both are equal and both are dear to me.

Madhumangala: Both?

Krishna: Both are dear to me.

Madhumangala: So today your flute will be stolen.

Krishna: Oh no! Then this would indeed be a great tragedy.

Madhumangala: Now why are you suffering? You just said that both *sakhīs* are dear to you. One *sakhī*, the flute, will be stolen. You have another *sakhī*, a milkmaid *sakhī*. Just grab one (of them), and turn her into a flute. Friend, why don't you teach me such a skill. I will grab some tall, venerable old man and turn him into a pipe.³⁶⁴

Madhumangala offers to keep Krishna's flute so that the *gopīs* cannot steal it. Krishna gives Madhumangala his flute hesitantly. The *gopīs* know that Madhumangala has the flute and they plan to trick him and take the flute away (Figure 15). Madhumangala is the buffoon in the story and the *gopīs* need to entice him with the things he likes:

सखी मधुमंगल लाल जी! आपके भोजन हैं। आप हमारी देव पूजा कराओगे ना तौ हम आपकूँ भोजन कराइन्गे, दक्षिणा दिंगे।

मधुमंगल भोजन! दक्षिणा!! कहा कहा भोजन हैं।

सखी छप्पन भोग के भोजन करायेंगे।

मधुमंगल छप्पनभोग ! नाम हैं कछू उनके।

सखी नाम सुनाऊँ उनके अब। रबडी, रसगुल्ला, गुलाबजामुन, पेडा, रायतौ, खीरमोहन, दही...

मधुमंगल अरे बस, बस इतनौ ही बहुत है।

सखी अबई तौ और रह गये व्यञ्जन।

मधुमंगल सुन सुन कें ही पेट भरतौ जाय रहयौ है, पर सुनौ में चलयौ चलतौ पर मैं भोजन प्रिय नहीं हूँ, मैं तौ संगीत प्रिय हूँ।

सखी संगीत प्रिय हौ। अजी संगीताचार्य जी आप कछू संगीत के विषय में जानौ हौ?

मधुमंगल संगीत के विषय की बात कर रही हौ। जब हम संगीताचार्य हैं तौ हम संगीत की जड में घुसे परे

³⁶⁴ My translation benefited from Hawley's English translation.

हैं। हम तोय जड मेंते कछू सुनामें।
 सखी कछू सुनाय देऔ, हमहू सुन लेंगे।
 मधुमंगल तुम जानौ संगीत कूँ

सखी हाँ आपके बराबर तौ नाय जानें हैं।
 मधुमंगल नहीं जे बात है कि जानें ध्रुपद नहीं बजाई, वानें कछू नहीं बजायौ, जानें राग नहीं गाये वानें कछू नहीं गायौ। तुम्हारी समझ में नाय आयेंगे।
 सखी तौ हमकूँ आप समझाओगे तौ समझ में आ जायेंगे, कछू बता तौ देऔ, कोई सरल पद सुनाय देऔ।

मधुमंगल अब तुम्हें कहा समझाऊँ। चलौ पर थौडौ बहुत सुनाय दऊँ।
 मधुमंगल और मैं तौ ऐसौ ही सुनाय दऊँ जो तुम्हारे समझ में आय जाय, ज्यादा गहरी चीज तुम्हें सुनायबौ ठीक नाय जो समझ में ना आवै वाते कहा फायदा।

सखी सरल सौ सुनाय देऔ कोई।
 Sakhī: Dear Madhumangala, we have your food. You will perform a pūjā for god, right? We will feed you and give you a fee.
 Madhumangala: Food! Alms! What kinds of food?
 Sakhī: We will feed you fifty-six dishes.³⁶⁵
 Madhumangala: Fifty-six dishes! Name some of them.
 Sakhī: I'll tell you their names: *ravaḍī*, *rasgullā*, *gulābjāmun*, *peḍā*, *rāitā*, *khīrmohan*, *yogurt*...³⁶⁶
 Sakhī: But there are more dishes
 Madhumangala: My stomach gets full just listening. But listen, I will go with you, but I'm not a food lover, I'm a music lover.
 Sakhī: You are a music lover, Oh Music master, do you know anything about music?
 Madhumangala: You are talking about music. Since I am a master of music, I know the quintessence of music, I will sing you something from this essence.
 Sakhī: Sing something, I will listen.
 Madhumangala: Do you know music?
 Sakhī: Yes, but I don't know as much as you.
 Madhumangala: No, the thing is that he who has not played *dhrupad*, has not played anything; he who has not played a *rāg*, has not sung anything. You won't understand.
 Sakhī: So if you will explain, then I will understand. Just tell me something, sing some easy verse.
 Madhumangala: Now how could I explain to you. Let's go, I will tell you a little bit. And I will sing you something you'll understand. It will not be right singing something very profound for you. What will be the benefit of singing something which you will not understand?
 Sakhī: Sing something simple.

³⁶⁵ The fifty-six dishes "as offered to the Vallabhan deity" (PD).

³⁶⁶ All of these are prized sweets.

The *sakhīs* decide to invite Madhumangala to their *rās līlā* dance which immediately draws the attention of this comic character who falls into all the traps:

सखी आपने कबहू श्याम सुन्दर की रासलीला देखी है।
मधुमंगल श्यामसुन्दर की रासलीला! रासलीला कौ तौ में बहुत प्रेमी हूँ
सखी अच्छौ! तुमने कबहू देखी है अपने जीवन में।
मधुमंगल एक बार देखी है, जब मैं दो साल कौ हौ, तब देखी पर मेरी समझ में नाय आई।
सखी समझ में नाय आई। अब आपकी इच्छा हो तो हम आपकूँ रासलीला दिखाय दें।
मधुमंगल रासलीला दिखाओ, मोए जबई ते रासलीला ते बहुत प्रेम है। हाँ तौ अबई देखौगी।

Sakhī: Have you ever seen Śyām Sundar’s *rās līlā*?

Madhumangala: Śyām Sundar’s *rās līlā*? I love the *rās līlā* very much.

Sakhī: Oh really! Have you ever seen it in your life?

Madhumangala: One time I saw it, when I was two years old, but then I didn’t understand.

Sakhī: You didn’t understand? Now if you wish, we will show you the *rās līlā*.

Madhumangala: Show me the *rās līlā*. I have had a great love for the *rās līlā* ever since then. Yes, show it to me right now!

Once Madhumangala is attracted to participate in the *rās līlā*, he is told that he should dress as a female to become a *gopī* (Figure 16). A circular dance is performed along with a song addressing Krishna. Madhumangala becomes dizzy and falls fast asleep on the ground. The *gopīs* take advantage of the situation, steal the flute and ask for Rādhā’s help (Figure 17). In this story she does not participate in the theft:

बाँसुरी की धुनि सुनि भई निहाल,
बाँका साँवरिया मेरा नँदजू का लाल।
वंशीवट पै रास रचायौ, दूवै दूवै गोपी बिच बिच ग्वाल।
बाँका साँवरिया मेरा नँदजू का लाल।
मोर मुकुट सोहे साँवरिया, गल सोहे वैजन्ती माल।
बाँका साँवरिया मेरा नँदजू का लाल॥
मधुमंगल हे श्यामसुंदर! कहाँ छोड कै चले गये मोकूँ।
सखी सखियौ! श्यामाजू कूँ बुलाय कै लामें। वे ही उन्हीं के पास ये वंशी रखी जाय।
समाज यह उपकार प्यारी सदा हम मानेंगी।

सखी हे लाडलीजू! आप हमपै एक उपकार कर देऔ। आप या वंशी कू अपने पास रख लेऔ। ये उपकार आप हमारे ऊपरे कर देऔ।

Chorus:

[I am] gratified upon hearing the sound of the flute
My flirtatious dark complexioned one, son of Nanda
At the Banyan tree he performed the *rās*

Yes, he performed the *rās*, Kānhā performed the *rās*

Oh dear one, [you are] between every two *gopīs*

My flirtatious dark complexioned one, son of Nanda

The peacock crown sits majestically upon your head,
oh dark complexioned one

Your multicolored garland lies resplendent about your neck

My flirtatious dark complexioned one, son of Nanda

Madhumangala: Oh dark-beautiful one, where did you go, leaving me behind?

Sakhī: Sakhīs! Call Rādhā and bring her. The flute should be kept with her.

Chorus: We shall always remember this sweet favor.

Sakhī: O Rādhā! Do us a favor. Keep the flute with you. Please do this favor for us.

When Madhumangala wakes up, he discovers that the flute is missing. He asks the *gopīs* if they know where the flute is. The *gopīs* pretend not to know what has happened. Madhumangala goes to see Krishna and tell him that the flute is lost. Krishna and Madhumangala meet the *gopīs* and they start a conversation to request the flute:

ठाकुरजी वंशी हमरी देहु कायकू रार बढावौ
समझि बूझि मन माँहि काहे कु लोग हँसावौ
लोग हँसै, चरचा करै, मनमें सोच विचारि
वह वंशी मनमोहिनी (तुम) देती क्यों न गँवारि

सखी हमसौ कहत गँवार आपनी करत बडाई।
मारूँ गुलचा गाल तबै बाबा ढिंग जाई॥
वे दिन तुमकूँ विसर गये हमसौ मागी छाक।
फटी कमरिया ओढकै कहा दिखावत आँख

ठाकुरजी या वंशी की सार कहा तुम ग्वालिन जानौ
तीन लोक पट तरन यासौ मो मन मान्यौ
या वंशी खोजत फिरे सिव, विरंच मुनिनाथ
परचायौ परच्यौ नहीं, कहा नचावत हाथ
नंद महर के कुँवर कान्ह, तुम्हें कहा पतीजै।

भूल आए कहुँ अनत, दोष हमकुँ नहीं दीजै॥
लै लकरी मुख पै धरी, वंशी ताकौ नाम।
जिन घर ऐसे पूत हैं, उजरत तिनके धाम॥

मधुमंगल राम! राम! कहा कही! कि जा गाम में तौ जैसे पूत है जायें वो गाम उजड जायें।

ठाकुरजी रुक जा अबही !अरी सखी!!
उजरौ चाहे बसौ, तुम्हें कहा लाज हमारी।
तुमसी हैं लखचार नँदघर गोवर हारी॥
एक लख मेरे संग चलें, लख आबें लख जायें।
लख ठाडी दरसन करें, लख खरी खरी ललचायें॥

मधुमंगल शाबाश !वाह पट्ठे !!शाबाश!!

Krishna: Give me the flute, why do you extend the fight?
Having understood and perceived in your heart, why make people laugh?
People are laughing and gossiping, (even after) having considered it in their hearts.

The flute that enchants the heart, why not give it back, you boorish ones!

Sakhī: By calling us boorish, you are vaunting your superiority.

I will strike your cheek and it will go to your father.

Have you forgotten that day, when you demanded food from us.

Wearing your torn small blanket, why do you stare defiantly now?

Krishna: What do you milkmaids understand about the essence of this flute?

(She)Crosses the three worlds at once, my heart succumbs to it.

Śiva, the Creator, and the greatest of sages, roamed searching for the flute

Even when tamed she does not remain tame, such she makes my hand move.

Sakhī: How to trust you Kanhā? You are the young boy of Nanda's wife

You forgot it somewhere (the flute) don't you accuse us

The reed you put in your mouth is called a flute

The house of such a son, that abode will fall into ruin

Madhumangala: Oh God, oh God! What a thing to say! The village of that son will fall into ruin.

Krishna: Stop it now, O Sakhī! whether it falls into ruins or flourishes, what is my shame to you?

The village of Nanda has four lakh³⁶⁷ people like you, cow dung handlers

One lakh sets out with me, one lakh comes and one lakh goes

One lakh stands looking, one lakh stands lusting (for me).

Madhumangala: Excellent, wonderful! Krishna, excellent!

³⁶⁷ A hundred thousand

The negotiation of Krishna with the *gopīs* to repossess his flute is the subject matter of many verses (Figure 18). In the following text Krishna addresses Rādhā explaining the need for the recovery:

राधे श्री वृषभानु दुलारी प्यारी वंशी दीजै मोय।
या वंशी बिन चैन न पाँऊं, याके बिन कैसे गाय चराऊं, याके बल गिरिराज उठाऊं।
शिव ब्रह्मा सनकादिक याकौ पार न पायौ कोय॥
राधे श्री वृषभानु दुलारी प्यारी वंशी दीजै मोय।
कैसी वंशी श्याम तुम्हारी, हमनें नैनन नाय निहारी, तुम छलिया हम भोरी भारी।
झूठौ दोस लगावै लाल वनमें खोई होय॥

Krishna: Rādhā, Vrishabhānu's daughter, Dear one return my flute.
Without the flute I have no peace, without it how can I herd the cows? By its power I lift Govardhan hill.
Śiva, Brahmā, Sanaka and others, none of them could get to the bottom of this.
Rādhā, Vrishabhānu's daughter, Dear one return my flute.
Sakhī: What kind of flute is this Krishna? Our eyes have not seen it, you are a trickster, we are innocent,
You falsely accuse (us) Krishna, (the flute) may have gotten lost in the forest.

One of the *sakhīs* asks Krishna if he will let Rādhā decide on this matter of the theft of the flute. Krishna accepts and each part presents their view. The *gopīs* claim that they did not steal the flute; it just got lost when Madhumangala had it. Madhumangala accuses the *gopīs*; he claims the girls took it away during his sleep. Rādhā decides that the theft has not been proven: there is no evidence. Therefore, the *gopīs* are not guilty. The *gopīs* want Krishna to promise that he will not play the flute and distract them from their household tasks. Krishna refuses to promise that he will not play, but still recovers the flute.

Wājīd 'Alī Shāh's adaptation

Stealing the flute in the devotional literature is associated with the closeness and affection between Krishna and the *gopīs*. In all the Vaishnava versions of the story cited in this chapter, the theft is expressed with details. In the two *rahas* there are allusions to the theft or disappearance, but it is

not shown and the audience does not know how the incident happened. In both *rahas*, Rādhā requests Krishna to play, but he realizes the flute is lost. Rādhā claims that Kubja must have the flute. In the first *rahas*, it turns out that the water maidens have the flute. In the second one, a man is accused of having stolen it. Instead of a playful interaction with the thief as in the Vaishnava tradition, Rādhā demands that the nose of thief be cut. Nothing is known about the flute until Rādhā looks for Krishna in Kubja’s house where he is lying down with his instrument. Rādhā enquires if Krishna has found the flute. It is not entirely clear if Kubja had the flute and Krishna was lying or if the man indeed had stolen it. Without doubt the theft had no major implications for Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh.

In all the Vaishnava narratives there are portions devoted to the flute's recovery. There are songs and verses in which Krishna searches the bodies of the *gopīs* and tries to negotiate with them. Nevertheless, in the *rahas* Krishna just acknowledges the disappearance:

*muralī hamarī khoya gaī mathurā vrindāvan kī reta
nā mohe sūjhata or chor na mohe sūjhata kheta* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 101)

My flute is lost upon a sand-bank of Mathura and Vrindāvan.
I can find it neither here nor there, nor can I find it in the fields.

In the devotional narratives the *gopīs* blame Krishna for his frequent mischievous behavior and in revenge the flute is stolen. But in the *rahas* there are no references of this kind. Whereas in the *Vaṁśī corī līlā*, Krishna says: *yā vaṁśī bina caina na pāūn* “Without this flute I can’t find [any] peace.” In the first *rahas*, Krishna says: *oke bina dekhe nahiñ caina* “Without seeing her [Rādhā] I find no peace” (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 98). The focus is on Rādhā’s anger and Krishna is concerned with pacifying her before searching for his flute.

In devotional literature, the *gopīs* are jealous of the flute, particularly in the *Vaṁśī corī līlā* and in the play by Rūpa. The flute is conceived as a woman who has the privilege of being close

to Krishna's lips. In the two *rahas* that is not the case, but there is rivalry between Rādhā and Kubja. Rādhā suspects that Kubja has the flute and she becomes jealous when Krishna goes to her.

Once Rādhā meets Krishna in the house of Kubja, she says:

rādhā: kyon jī tumaharī corī pakarī gaī ki nahīn? tumako dhūmḍhakar pakara bulavāyā ki nahīn?

kanhaiyā: (hātha bāndhakara) hān mahārānī cūka parī bhūl huī mil jāo yeh to murlī kī āvāza kī 'āshiq thī.

rādhā: murlī bajāo mil gaī? (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 111)

Rādhā: Well, has your theft been discovered or not? Haven't I had you found and brought in?

Krishna: (folding his hands) Yes my queen, I slipped up, made a mistake. Take it. She was enamored with the sound of the flute.

Rādhā: Play the flute, now that you found it [right]?

In the *rahas* the disappearance of the flute has a negative connotation for Rādhā. When the flute disappears, Rādhā thinks that another woman is involved in the disappearance. It is as if Krishna's loyalty is connected with the flute. When the flute is found finally Rādhā is happy again and embraces Krishna. This stage instruction indicates what Rādhā should do: *rādhā jī muralī kī āvāz sunte hī daurkara kanhaiyā jī ke gale se cipaṭa jāyeñ aur badila rāzī ho jāyeñ* (Taqī and Saxenā 1987, 105) "As soon as Rādhā jī hears the sound of the flute, she should run and embrace Kanhaiyā jī, and be heartily pleased."

In the devotional texts Krishna and the music of the flute are praised constantly. In the two *rahas* Krishna is not extolled, but the text alludes to the beautiful music of the flute. The following *thumrī* appears in both *rahas*. Not only the music of Krishna is celebrated, but also it seems that Wājid 'Alī Shāh identified himself with Krishna:

āstāī: bajana lāgī syāma kī bāmsurī re

antarā: nadiyā kināre akhtara bāmsurī bajāvata

nikala jāta jiyā se sāmsurī re (Taqī and Saxenā 1987,101, 111)

Refrain: Oh the flute of the Dark one began to play!

Verse: On the bank of the river ‘Akhtar’ makes the flute play
A sigh escapes from the heart.

Humor plays an important role in the devotional texts. In the Vaishnava narratives the male friends of Krishna are shown as gluttonous or gullible to delight the audience. In the *rahas* there are comic characters too: ‘Ifrīt and Rāmcīrā. ‘Ifrīt is a demon dressed as a westerner and plays with rhyming words that sound like Arabic and others words that are close to terms of abuse. Rāmcīrā’s character accompanies Krishna while he searches for the flute and his comicality is similar to that of Madhumangala. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s adaptation shares the playfulness of the devotional narratives.

Comparative table

	<i>Vidagdha- mādhava</i>	<i>Śrī Krishna kīrtana</i>	<i>Govinda līlāmrita</i>	<i>Ānanda- vrindāvana- campu</i>	<i>Vaṁśī corī</i>	First <i>rahas</i>	Second <i>rahas</i>
Thief	Rādhā	Rādhā	Rādhā	<i>gopī</i>	<i>gopī</i>		<i>Lodhī man</i>
Krishna searches for the flute	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Celebration of the flute	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Praise of Krishna	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Comic passages	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Conclusion

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was inspired by the story of the theft of the flute which has been a popular theme in devotional literature for hundreds of years. His choice was not accidental since the story has

circulated in several languages, in both short and long formats. The theft of the flute has been the theme of couplets, songs, plays and narrative poems. The songs of the contemporary *Vaṃśī corī līlā* existed perhaps in the 19th century. Without question Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh encountered some rendition of the story. Since the theft of the flute has been adapted for theater, it not impossible that the king was influenced by the text of a performance.

Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh wrote a secular adaptation of the story only loosely inspired by the plots and trickery of the *gopīs* of the Vaishnava tradition. He did not emphasize Krishna’s divinity, but rather foregrounded the lovers’ quarrels, jealousy and rivalry. Like the Vaishnava tradition, the text of the *rahas* is humorous and contains music imagery. As a king surrounded by female performers, Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh identified himself with Krishna and the *gopīs* with the female performers of his court.

The theme chosen by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh has precedents in early modern Sanskrit drama, but the *rahas* did not imitate the structure of Sanskrit plays. Yet Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh used an old indigenous tradition as a basis to create his new drama. This was not an anomaly in the development of theater in the 19th century in North India where modern playwrights like Bhāratendu also incorporated tradition. In this case it stands out that the channels of transmission and the exchanges between traditions were complex and multidirectional. The multilingual literary renditions of the theft of the flute were connected to theatrical innovations supporting the conclusion of the assimilation of Hindu culture at the Muslim court.

Figures



Figure 13 Svāmī Śrī Fateh Krishna Śarmā



Figure 14 Krishna and Madhumangala, Jai Singh Ghera, Vrindavan 2012.



Figure 15 Madhumangala and the *gopīs*, Jai Singh Ghera, Vrindavan 2012.



Figure 16 Madhumangala being dressed as a *gopī*, Jai Singh Ghera, Vrindavan 2012.



Figure 17 The theft of the flute, Jai Singh Ghera, Vrindavan 2012.



Figure 18 Krishna trying to recover his flute, Jai Singh Ghera, Vrindavan 2012.



Figure 19 Rādhā and Krishna being worshipped, Jai Singh Ghera, Vrindavan 2012.

Conclusion

This dissertation explored the dramatic work of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh to consider the cultural production at the Lucknow court and the court in exile in Calcutta. The theatrical contributions of the last king of Awadh illustrate fluid boundaries between Hindus and Muslims and a shared cultural heritage between these two groups. The dance-dramas by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh also help to rethink the historical narrative of Hindi and Urdu drama, not treating these categories as two separate entities.

The first chapter reflected on the figure of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and his placement in performing arts. The king attracted much attention due to his participation in the political history of the princely states, but also for his artistic sensibility and patronage and the writings of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh are crucial for understanding the court culture of Awadh in the 19th century. From a historical point of view, the king’s accounts are an alternative perspective to the sources written in English by the Colonial power. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s writings questioned the British denunciations of his government and deserve further interrogation. There is still a need to evaluate the way in which the British arguments about the misrule of the king permeated later discourses on the subject and obliterated the importance of the artistic enterprises at the court.

In the second chapter Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh and Amānat were compared since both authors stood out as important figures in the theatrical setting of Lucknow. The available information suggests that the plays of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh were performed for a selected elite while the first performance of *Indar sabhā* was open to the public. Therefore, the audience of *Indar sabhā* was very likely more diverse than the audience at the court. Despite this significant difference, the plays of both authors are hybrid; in other words, they are not linked to one exclusive linguistic or cultural identity. The similarity between Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh’s dramatic work and the *Indar sabhā* reveals a highly inclusive performance culture with continual crossover between genres and registers.

Scholars have argued that *Indar abhā* was inspired by the shows at the court, notwithstanding the lack of evidence of Amānat being patronized by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh. The main evidence is that the courtesan performances that were at the heart of the artistic projects of the king also feature in the *Indar sabhā*. As the autobiographical texts of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh emphasize, the female performers were from a variety of backgrounds. The shows of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh reflected the culture at the court and an eclectic taste. This was exemplified in the Rādhā-Krishna show in Lucknow and later in the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah*. The spectacles inside the court and other performance spaces could have been linked by the large number of dancers and musicians who circulated in both settings.

The *rahas* of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh has been labeled as a foundation of Urdu drama, but this categorization is misleading. The *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* does not contain much Urdu, with the exception of the stage instructions. The mixing of registers and genres is also found in the *Indar sabhā*. The *rahas* shares the hybrid linguistic nature of commercial theater. Perhaps it is better to think of the *rahas* as part of a continuum of performance practices, rather than as the starting point of a category.

In addition to comparing the text of dramatic works, this study has taken care to pay attention to performative aspects. The *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* had a complete female cast, in a period in which this was not at all common in other performing spaces, such as the *rās līlā* or commercial theater. In the *rahas* women impersonated men like Krishna, the demon and the clown. There was an overlap with the courtesan performance in the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah*, in particular the singing and dancing of *ṭhumrī*, but there were also prose passages and humorous lines that do not mirror the courtesan’s repertoire. Many of the women involved in the *rahas* were

temporary wives of the king and the performances were private, still the participation of females in theatrical spectacles constitutes an interesting precedent.

The third chapter provided a translation of the *rahas* which documents the assimilation of a Hindu theme by a Muslim author. In addition, it displays the intersections between poetry, dance and music. The dance-drama by Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh was clearly meant to be seen and heard; it was not written just to be read as literature. The text has stage instructions and a list of costumes that signal its esthetic principles and the possibility of reenacting the play. The *rahas* is not only an example of a vernacular theatrical script, but also a record of performance practices.

The fourth chapter considered the *rās līlā* as a source for the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah*. The comparison of the *rahas* with the play of Lalit Kiśorī illuminates the way in which the *rahas* harked back to the aesthetics of devotional theater. Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh himself recognizes in his autobiographical writings that he did something new by integrating the theater of the Hindus in his Lucknow spectacle. The sculpture of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh in the Shāh jī temple reminds people of the engagement of the king with Hindu devotional practices. The contrastive comparison of the *Vamsī naṭ līlā* and *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah* foregrounds the dialogue of Wājīd ‘Alī Shāh with other religious traditions.

Our exploration of the Hindu-Muslim encounter in the *rahas* reveals again the flaws of the category of “Urdu drama”. The separation of Hindi and Urdu theater disregards the fluidity of the boundaries between them. There is still room to research the specifics of secular adaptations of the *rās līlā* in the 19th century and the role they played in the repertoire of the emerging commercial theater. It is also necessary to investigate more about the scripts and staging of the traditional *rās līlā* over the centuries. The *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qīṣṣah* constitutes a part of the historical development of the *rās līlā*.

The language and structure of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* diverges from the contemporary plays of Lalit Kiśorī and Bhāratendu Hariścandra. The *Vamsī naṭ līlā* is an homogeneous text, with no prose and a single meter in Braj bhāshā. Whereas *Candrāvalī* by Bhāratendu Hariścandra uses another prototype with verses in Braj bhāshā, prose in Sanskritized Hindi and act divisions that mimic Sanskrit plays. The work of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh innovates, not reinventing Sanskrit theater, but devotional dramas. The fluidity of the language and juxtaposition of poetic forms in the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* expose a composite culture at the court in exile.

The fifth chapter investigated the popularity of theft of the flute in Vaishnava literature for several hundreds of years. This story has been adapted in different contexts and a variety of languages from Sanskrit and Bengali to Braj bhāshā. It has been the subject matter of songs, plays and couplets and it is performed even today in devotional theater. It is not clear which version or versions Wājid ‘Alī Shāh was familiar with. Since the second version of the *rahas* has Bengali musical references, it is possible that the king was acquainted with a Bengali version. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh borrowed the situation and characters from a Vaishnava story and placed them in a Persianate context. The *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* illustrates the manner in which the king of Awadh employed and redesigned tradition.

The *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* illuminates the king’s appropriation of tradition. The theatrical paradigm of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh was strongly engaged with indigenous performance practices. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh definitively created a new theatrical model that forces us to think about the beginnings of modern theater. It is perhaps more useful to place the dramas of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh in a shared space between modernity and tradition.

The comparison of the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* with other dramas revealed particular choices in purpose, structure, language and imagery. As the *Rādhā Kanhaiyā kā qiṣṣah* combines

Hindu and Muslim literary traditions and has a variety of registers, it was productive to look at other contemporary plays and texts with a similar theme to recognize the commonalities in language, phases, periods and genres. The *rahas* can be best described as dialogic cutting across the former categories all of which point to the existence of fluid boundaries and a shared cultural heritage between Hindus and Muslims.

Appendix I: *Rahas* text

پہلا قصہ رادھا اور کنہیہ کے اظہار حالات اور تعشق میں ³⁶⁸

دو سکھیاں کارچوہی پر لگا کر بہاری جامہ حسن پہنیں ایک کا نام ارغوان پری دوسری کا نام زعفران پری ہے اور ایک مرد بشل و یو کر یہ منظر بنے اسکا نام عفریت ہے ایک سکھی جو گن بنی اسکا نام صحرا ہے اور ایک مرد خادم جو گن کا بنے اسکا نام غربت بعد ختم رہس سب سکھیاں بیٹھ جائیں اور ایک جانب دونو پر یان کر سیون پر بیٹھیں اور ایک طرف جو گن کر سی پر اجلاس کرین اور دیو پر یون کے سامنے گز لیے ہاتھ بندھے کڑا ہوا اور غربت جو گن کے سامنے دست بستہ استدہ ہو اور ایک جانب رادھا کنہیہ باگت اور تہہ بینہ ³⁶⁹ لگائے ہوئے گھونگھٹ بنگالہ نکال ہوئے کر سیون پر اجلاس کرین اور رام چیر ادونون کی خدمت میں دست بستہ حاضر ہو اور چار سکھیاں ایک کا نام للتا دوسری سا کہا تیسری چینہ چوتھی لڑوا جیغہ کلنی لگائے ہوئے جہر مٹ کیے ہوئے عطلدہ کھڑی ہون اور چار پنہیاں مصنوعی کون سے ٹھمری گتی ہوئی راقم کی تصنیف پانی بہرتی ہوئی ہون اور ایک مرد مسافر کی صورت بنا ہوا معہ گٹھہری اور عصا بدست حاضر ہو اور چار کھن والیان ہوری راقم کی تصنیف گاتی ہوئی اور کھن نکالتی ہوئی ہون جو گن کو چاہیے غمزدہ بیٹھنا سوال غربت کا اور عرض صحرا سے جگ جگ جیو آندر ہو جو گن صاحب کیون ملول ہو کا ہے جیو ملیں ہے

صحرا کا ارشاد غربت سے چوبیس برس ہوئے ایک رنج ہے

عرض غربت وہ کیا رنج ہے ہمسے کہنے کا ہو تو کہیے

ارشاد صحرا چوبیس برس ہوئے مہکا اس گم میں کہ رادھا کنہیہ کا ناچ نہیں دیکھا

عرض غربت بس آپ کو اس کا گم ہے جاتا ہون تدبیر کرنے کو

غربت کا تجس کرنا غربت چلا اور عفریت سے عطلدہ ملاقات کی اور کہا سلام علیکم میان عفریت

جواب عفریت و علیکم السلام اسین والام اطعام والکلام الکشمش والبادام میان غربت علی خان بہادر بہادران کہٹ پٹ جنگ نامردی

دہڑ چود

پہر دونون بغلگیر ہوئے عفریت اس طرح سے ہنسا کاؤن کاؤن کہل کہل کہل کہل

³⁶⁸ The complete title is not in the *devanāgarī* edition-

³⁶⁹ The *devanāgarī* has *vagerā*

غربت کا سوال عفریت سے میان عفریت ہماری تمہری مدت سے بہائی چارہ ہے ہمکو تم سے ایک امر ضروری کہنا ہے اگر تم سے ہو سکے

جواب عفریت کیا کام ہے

سوال غربت ایک جوگن ہے او سکوا ایک غم ہے

جواب عفریت وہ کونسا غم ہے

سوال غربت جوگن صاحبہ کہتی ہیں کہ مجھے رادہا کہنیہ کے ناچ نہ دیکھنے کا غم ہے مین وعدہ کر آیا ہوں کہ کوشش کرتا ہوں اگر تم سے ہو سکے تو میرے وعدے کو پورا کرو

عفریت کا جواب اور قسمین تینتی مینتی دم خبیشی لو ٹکلا ٹاجہو ٹنگ جہاٹا صندوق معلق ٹراگاؤ کی دم اور بچون کی قسم جو میرے کیے برآمد مطلب ہو گا ہرگز دریغ نکر ونگا لو مین سعی کرتا ہوں

بس اوسی وقت عفریت غربت کو ہمراہ لیکر روانہ ہوا اور کہنے لگا بابا سا تو ر بازی حٹال بازی نیزہ بازی خلال بازی شمشیر بازی راست بازی چل میرے ساتھ اور بکھور زعفران پری اور ارغوان پری حاضر ہو اور عرض کی ایک جوگن رادہا کہنیہ کا ناچ کی غم مین جوگن ہوئی ہے اور چاہتی ہے کہ وہ ناچ دیکھے

پریون کا ارشاد جوگن کو لے آ

عفریت غربت کے ہمراہ جوگن کے پاس آیا اور کہا

غربت کی عرض صحرا سے جوگن صابہ چلو پریون نے بلایا ہے جوگن صابہ معہ غربت و عفریت پریون کی خدمت مین حاضر ہوئیں

پریون سے عفریت نے عرض کی کہ جوگن حاضر ہیں

حکم ہوا بلاؤ

جب جوگن آئیں دونو پریان او ٹہکر بغلگیر ہوئیں

پریون کا سوال صحرا سے کیا تمکو ہوا کیون جوگ لیا

جواب صحرا چومیس برس سے یہ غم دامن گیر ہے کہ کسی طرح سے رادہا کنہیہ کا ناچ دیکھوں

پریون کا حکم ارے عفریت رادہا کنہیہ کا ناچ جو گن کو دکھا دے

عفریت چلا کر حکم دیا نہیں ب عفریت رادہا کنہیہ اور سکھیون پر رادہا کنہیہ سکھیان ناچو ہنڈولے کا ناچ

اوس وقت سب سکھیان برابر استادہ ہون اور ایک سرا دوپٹے کا کنہیہ تہا میں دوسرا سر ارادہا جی وسط صف میں تہا میں اور یہ

ہنڈولہ گاتی جائن اور ایک دو کی پاؤن تال میں لگاتی جائن اور سب³⁷⁰ سکھیان متابعت رادہا جی کی کرتی جائن اور کنہیہ جی

پیش قدمی پر مقابل رادہا کی ہو کر ڈوپٹہ کنہیہ لیا کریں اور پس قدمی پر ڈھیل دیا کریں

استائی ہنڈولہ جہولے سیاما سیام گہنے سے گہنہ چلت پون سنہ سنہ سنہ سنہ سنہ سنہ

پہلا انتر سب سکھین مل پینگ بڈھا لیکے تان تنہ تنہ تنہ تنہ تنہ تنہ

دوسرا انتر مور مکٹ کٹ راکہر دہ گنڈر پائل باجے جہنہ تنہ جہنہ تنہ جہنہ تنہ

بعد اختتام ہنڈولہ سب سکھیان راجہ رام چندر کے جے کہیں من بعد رادہا کنہیہ مقابل استادہ ہون اور نصف سکھیان کنہیہ کی

جانب اور آدہی رادہا کی طرف کھڑی ہون اور رادہا کنہیہ سے سوال و جواب شروع ہون اور ارتہ بہاؤ ہوتا جائے اور ارکان

بحور چکرون میں دہنی جانب سے دونوں کے پاؤن سے ہر بیت اور ہر دوہرے کے بعد ادا ہوتی جائن

زبانی رادہا لمصنفہ مجمع غیر میں ایسا ستم ایجاد کیا

قاتلا ہول کے ہمکو نہ کہی یاد کیا

دوسرا میں برہنی سنجوگ سنگ نہ کوؤ ساتھ

ناری چووت بید کے پہچہلا ہو گے ہات

³⁷⁰ The devanāgarī text inserts a different passage here: *sab saf ke pichle qadam aur pastī par rassī ko dīlā kiyā kareñ rahasvāliyāñ rūpak tāl nāceñ aur tīn martabā se kam āmadorāft na kareñ aur ye sāvan faqīr kā banāyā huā gātī jaen āstāī sainyā re jhakorā de gayo yah ritu sāvan bahār sīs ghūm gayo jhule pe akhtar peñg badhāe*

جواب کنہیہ لمصنف نام میرا ہے کنہیہ میں تجھے جانتا ہوں
 رادہا جی جان سے میں تمکو یہاں تمکو مانتا ہوں
 دوسرا رادہا جی کی انگ پر بندیہ اوہ چہپ دیت
 مانوں پہول کینگی بہور باسن لیت
 جواب رادہا لمصنف میں ترے عشق میں دوانی ہوئی اے کانا
 میں نے جی جان سے تجھکو تو یہاں پہچانا
 دوہرا آؤ پیارے موہن پلک ڈہانپ تو ہے لیون
 نامین دیکھوں اورن کونا تو ہے دیکھن دیون
 جواب کنہیہ لمصنف عشق میں ترے رادہا جی جنگل جنگل چہانا
 دیو پری نے بھی مجھکو کہیں نہیں پہچانا
 جواب رادہا تو مکٹ کٹ کا چہنی کر مرلی اور مال
 یہہ مانک موہ من بسے سدا بہاری لال
 جواب کنہیہ رادہا دوارہ دور ہے جیسے پنڈ کھجور
 چڑھے تو چاکھا پریم رس اور گرے تو چکنا چور
 دوہرا سائین جہر وکے بیٹھکر سب کا مجرا لے
 جیسے جا کے چاکری دیس وا کو دے

اس دوہرے کے بعد کنہیہ حاضرین اور ناظرین سیکو زر چاکری تقسیم کرے اور سب ہاتھوں میں لین اور سر سے اور
 آنگھوں سے لگائیں اور چو میں

زبانی رادہاندی کنارے دہوان اوٹھے رے مین خانون کچھ ہوئی

جا کے کارن جوگن کمایا³⁷¹ و ہونہ جرتا ہوئی

مونہ مہتاب دا گلابی چشماندے ہاتہ وچ سوڑاں دی ہتکڑیاں

دل بہی دیکھا پردیس بہی جاندا رہا دی ویکھڑ کھڑیاں

کول طیببان پاٹیاں تین مینڈے الہڑے گہاؤ نہ چہیڑ³⁷²

جتو درد بٹاون³⁷³ میر بچھڑے جانے میر

تم داتا دوو جگ کے تم لگ ہمری دور

جیسے کاگ جہاج کو سوجھت اور نہ چہور

کانا تم مت جانو تم بچھڑن بیت گئی

جیسے بیل پوئی کی دن دن ہوت ہری

کاگاسب تن کہا یو اور چن چن کہا یو ماس

دو نینا مت کہا یو کہ پیالین کی آس

بنسی والے موہن ہمری اور تو دیکھ

میں تو راکھون نینن میں کا جر کی سی ریکھ

جواب کنہیہ رادہا کا ہے دور ہو گھر انگنہ ناسہائے

جون مہندی کے پاتن میں لالی کھی نہ جائے

³⁷¹ devanāgarī text has ramāyā

³⁷² devanāgarī text has per

³⁷³ devanāgarī text has barāvan

سوال رادھا راجن کے راج ادھراج مہاراج جگ جگ جیو آئند رہو وہ مُرلی جامین چہہ راگ چہتیس راگنیاں باجت تہین
وہ مُرلی کہان پر چہوڑ آئے وہی مُرلی بجاو

کنہیہ کا جواب گد پھیلا کر راجن کے راج ادھرائی مہارانی کانہا سسیس دیت ہے جگ جگ جیو آئند رہو رام دوہائی وہ
مُرلی کہوے گی

جواب رادھا مہاراج مین تم کا کہوب چہینہت ہون تم کبری کو دے آئے ہو یہ کہکر رادھا جی خفا ہو گئین اور روٹہ کر علحدہ
بیٹھین اوس وقت کنہیہ یہ ہٹھری گا کر ارتہ بہاو کرنے لگے اور پاؤن پر گرنے لگے اور ہتہ بندہ کر منانے لگے

آستائی میری مہارانی رادھا رانی

انتر کیا مو سے کچہ چوک پڑی میری رانی اکہتر کدر نہ جانی

پہر مجبور ہو کر کنہیہ جی رام چیرا اپنے ملازم کو پکاریں

رام چیرا جواب دے حاجر مہاراج عرض رام چیرا راجن کی راج ادھراج مہاراج شیو پر دہان چہتر پتی بتاؤ تو کیا ہوا

کنہیہ رادھا کا خفا ہو گئین جانت ہین کہ مین مُرلی کبری کو دے آیا ہون

رام چیرا مہاراج پہر مناؤ

اسی طرح تین مرتبہ رام چیرا طلب ہو اور وہ یہی عرض کرے چوتھی مرتبہ رام چیرا عرض کرے کہ مہاراج اب کسی

سکھی کو نیچ مین ڈال کے صفائی کر لو

اس وقت کنہیہ نے جی پکاریں ارے للتا

للتا جواب دے آئی مہاراج

اور تال مین لہرون کے ساتھ ایک دو ایک دو ناچتی ہوئی حاضر ہو اور بیٹھ جائے

کنہیہ کہین ای للتا ہماری رادھا ہم سے نہیں مانت ہین کیا کروں

وہ جواب دے مانتی کروناک رگڑو پیمان پڑو موڑ گھسو چروری کرو جب تو منہین

کنہیہ کہیں مین نے سب جتن کیے وہ ناہین مانت ہین اور تیرے کہنے سے پہر مناتا ہون
دوبارہ کنہیہ پہر منائیں اور ٹہمیری گائیں اور بطریق اول منت ساجت سے ارتہ بہاؤ ادا کریں
آستائی رادہا جی مو سے بولو کیون نہ رے

انتر اکیا مو سے کچ چوک پڑی موری رانی ہنس ہنس گہو نگہت کہو لو کیون نارے

اسی طرح سے چار دفعہ رام چیرا سے شکوہ کریں اور بموجب عرض رام چیرا تنون باقی سکھیون کو بھی اسی طرح تال
مین بلائیں اور وہ سکھیون وہی کلمات مرتومہ بلا عرض کریں جب چوتھی سکھی کے آنے باری ہو اس وقت کنہیہ جی یہ
ٹہمیری گائیں اور اسحاح زاری و بے قراری مثل دفعات اول عمل مین لائیں

آستائی میری تو جیون رادہا

انتر اپیان پرون مین تورے لتا تورے سا کہا تورے چینا تورے لڑوا تورے بن دیکھے نہیں چین

اس انتر کے گانے مین جس سکھی کا نام آئے اسکی منت کریں اور پاؤن پر گرین پہر سب سکھیان کھڑی ہو جائیں اور
پر رادہا بیٹھی رہینن اور کہیں تال سر مین

دیدے اتاتا تاتا تہی دیدے اتاتا تاتا تہی

انتر تہی تہی تہی دیدے اتاتا تاتا تہی دیدے اتاتا تاتا تہی

اور کنہیہ جی بھی اوٹہ کھڑے ہون اور تال سر مین کہیں رادہا رادہا رادہا رادہا کچ گن مین رادہا رادہا کچ بہون مین رادہا
رادہا

اور ناچتے جائیں اور کھڑے اور توڑے پاؤن سے لیتے جائیں³⁷⁴

اوس وقت رام چیرا عرض کرے کہ مہاراج رادہا کو داتا سے مانگو اور تپسیہ کرو شیا مل جائیں

اوس وقت کنہیہ جی آسن مار کر داہنے ہاتھ سے ناک پکڑ کر سانس رکین فوراً رادہا جی اوٹہ کر گلے سے چپٹ جائیں پہر
سکھیان لڑو پوجا کی ترکیب یہ ہے کنہیہ جی کال پہلا کر ایس آکھیں بنائیں کہ پتایون کو حرکت نہ ہو اور بائیں پاؤن کے بہل

³⁷⁴ The devanāgarī has an additional yeh gāte hue.

کھڑے ہون اور دہنے باؤن کی ایڑی بائیں باؤن کے گھٹنے پر رکھیں اور چار سکھیاں دہنے گھٹنے زمین پر ٹیک کے بائیں پاؤن بلند زین پر دہر³⁷⁵ کر دونوں ہاتھوں کو مدور کر کے گول شکل پنچون میں مثل نشان بتانے لڑو کی کلائی اور دور کے مانند بنائیں اور ان بنے ہوئے ہاتھوں کو تال سے نچاتی جائیں اور حرکت دیتی جائیں اور وقت گردش ہائے دستی ہر مرتبہ لے تال میں کنہیہ جی کے پہولے ہوئے گلوں پر گچکا یعنی ٹھوکا اور ضرب³⁷⁶ جیسے ہلکا گھونسا مارتی ہیں مٹھی باندہ کر دیتی جائیں اور یہ الفاظ گاتی جائیں

لے لے لاڑوالے سکھیوں کا کھڑی ہو³⁷⁷ کر گانا لڈو پوجہ کے بعد سب سکھیاں برابر استاد ہون اور یہ دہرا گائیں

پہلا تک ایک نار بیاکل بھی برچی لگی جگ وا کے

دوسرا تک اے بدہاتا تو مو سے پنکھ تو دے میں جاے کروں درسن پیا کے

تیسرا تک سمجھائیں سکھیاں مت سوچ کرو بن اودہ بوجھے نہ جمین پر وا کے

چوتھا تک اور جو پنکھن ہی سے پیو ملین تو یا لے کیا پنکھ نہین چکوی چکوا کے

جب سکھیاں چاروں تک گا چکیں تو برابر برابر بیٹھ جائیں اور کنہیہ جی کھڑے ہو کر یہ دہرا گائیں

پہلا تک مڑلی ہمری کھوے گی متھرا بندرا بن کی ریت

دوسرا تک نامو سو جھت اور چھور نامو ہے سو جھت کہیت

رادہا جی کا سوال مہاراج جب ہی خوش ہوگی جب مڑلی ڈھونڈہ کر لا دوگے

کنہیہ جی کا جواب مڑلی ڈھونڈہ لے لاتا ہون

فوراً کنہیہ جی اسی وقت مڑلی ڈھونڈہین اور ہر ایک سے یون دریافت کریں ہمری مڑلی کسی نے دیکھی ہے

رام پھیرا ازراہ مزاح یہ جواب دے ہمری مڑلی کسی نے دیکھی ہے

³⁷⁵ Missing in devanāgarī text

³⁷⁶ The devanāgarī has jashb

³⁷⁷ Missing in devanāgarī text

کنہیہ جی اُسے گھونسا مار کے اور گردنی دے کے وہاں سے نکال دین اور ہنس کر کہیں ہماری مرلی ڈھونڈت ہیں کہ مرگی

رام چیرا دوبارہ کہے مہاراج تمہارا مرلی کے دو سینگ بھی ہے اور دُم بھی ہے

پہر کنہیہ جی اُسے گھونسا مار کے اور گردنی دین³⁷⁸ اور پہر بانسری کے تھکس اور تجسس مصروف ہوں اور کلمہ اول
کہیں

پہر رام چیرا کہے ہماری بہینس کسی نے دیکھی ہے

پہر کنہیہ جی حرکتِ مسبوق الذکر بجالین اس درمیان میں چاروں پنہارن چاہ مصنوعی سے یہ ٹھمری راقم کی گاگا کر پانی
بہرنے لگیں

استائی سب راہ باٹ میں ڈھونڈہ پہری بندرابن میں ہو سانوریہ

جنگل جنگل سُن سان بہو سُن پائی کیسی بانسریہ

انتر اگ دہرت دہرت لٹ پلٹ گیو

پنگھوا گھا گھرا اولٹ گیو کر پکرت کنگن اوچٹ گیو

چل چھانڈ دے اکہتر بانگریہ

اسوقت کنہیہ جی ناچر ہو کر مسافر سے پوچھیں کہ میان مسافر کہاں سے آتا ہو

وہ جواب دے متہرا بندرابن سے آون ت ہوں

کنہیہ جی پوچھیں ہماری مرلی بھی کسی کی پاس دیکھی ہے

مسافر جواب دے وہاں دیکھی ہے وہ چار پنہیارن کنوین پر پانی بہر رہی ہیں اونمیں جو ایک گوری ٹھمکی ناٹھی سی ہے واہی

لین ہے مانگ لاؤ

³⁷⁸ This sentence is not in the *devanāgarī* text

منت کرنا کنیہ جی کا پنہیار نونسی اور اونکا دہلیڈینا کنہیہ جی چارون پنہیار نون منت ہاتہ بندہ باندہ کر کہنے لگے ہم تمہیں
لڈو کھلائیں گی ہماری مُرلی دے دو

پنہیار نون کا جواب جاؤ جاؤ ہٹو ہٹو یہاں مُرلی نہیں ہے

کنہیہ ہر ایک منت اور سماجت کرین اور وہ چارون باری باری ہلکی ہلکی گلچے یعنی گہونسے کنہیہ جی کی گلون پر لگائیں اور دہکے
دے دے کر ہٹا ہٹا دیا کرین آخر ش سارقد کہے راج کے راج ادہیراج مہاراج شیو پردہن جگ جگ جیو آند رہو تاجہ
تاجہ ما کہن لا دو تو ہم دین اور کنہیہ جی ما کہن لا دینے کا اقرار کر کی اوسکے تجس مین روان ہون اور چارون پنہیارن کو مین
پر وہی ٹہمری گاتی رہن مگر سوال و جواب کی وقت غل شور نہ ہو اکرے اور سازون کا بجنا بھی موقوف ہو جایا کرے کنہیہ
جی کا جانا ما کہن کی تلاش مین ما کہن والیون پاس جا کر کہیں

جگ جگ جیو آند رہو تہ وڑا سا ما کہن دو

ما کہن والیان سینی پر مٹکی دہرے ہوئے متہنی سے چارون دہی متہتی جائیں اور یہہ ہولی تصنیف راقم گاتے جائیں

آستائی اے دی مین ما کہن بیچن جات

انترانا لو کا ناتم ما کہن مور اپچوون اکہتر ہاتہ

جب کنہیہ جی ماکن طلب کرین ما کہن والیان جواب مین اسی ہولی کا انتر اگادیا کرین آخر ایک ما کہن کی سینی ما کہن
والیان کی آنکھ بچا کر چر الاین اور پنہیار نون کو دین اور اونسے مُرلی لین اور بجائیں رادہا جی مُرلی کی آواز سنتے ہی دوڑ کر
کنہیہ جی کی گلچے سے چٹ جائیں اور بدل راضی ہو جائیں

رادہا جی کا مہاراج کا بول بالا رہے اب مور من کہس بہواتم کدئی پر برا جو مین تمہرے آگے گاوت ناچت ہون اور
اوس وقت سازندون کی نیچ مین جا کر یہ ٹہمری گائیں اور خوب دل سے ارتہ بہاؤ نگہ پلاس سمیت ادا کرین

آستائی بجن لاگی سیام کی بانسری

انتر اندیہ کنارے اکہتر انسری بجاوت نکس جات جیہ سے سانسری رے

قصہ ختم ہوا اگر شب بیدری مظلوم ہو تو ہر ہر سہمی علحدہ علحدہ ناچ ناچ اور گا گا کے رات کاٹ سکتی ہے مگر یہ قصہ اور رہس وقتِ شب مُریب اور بہتر معلوم ہوتی ہیں دن کو نہیں اچھے لگتے اس واسطے جب اس قصہ اور رہسون کی کیفیت دیکھیں وقتِ شب آراستہ کریں ومنہ اللہ التوفیق اللہ بس مابقے ہو

تفصیل پوشاک کہنہ جی

گہٹنہ معہ جاگہیہ

گہا گہرہ

گلو بند کارچوبی

مکٹ کارچوبی

چار عدد ہونے

تفصیل پوشاک کی اور رادہا جی کی

تہ

بینہ تمام ہندوانی زیور

پہریہ

لہنگہ

پیشواز

بندے یعنی سراسری

نقرۂ بانسری معہ مری

آٹھ عدد ہوئے

سکھیوں کی پوشاک

جیغہ کلغی

سلطان بند

جملہ زیور

پیشواز

دوپٹہ

پاجامہ

سات عدد ہوئے

پریوں کی پوشاک

کارچوبی دوپٹہ

جامہ محسن پزر

پاجامہ پزر

جملہ زیور

مطابق لیاقت چار ضرورتیں ہوئیں

دیو کی پوشاک

جاکٹ سیاہ

پتلون سیاہ

داستانہ سیاہ
موزہ یعنی جراب سیاہ
چہرہ مقوہہ کریہہ منظر
گزر چوبی سیاہ
پرکلان کا غدی
سات عدد ہوئی
جوگن کی پوشاک
تہمت پارچہ
شجرنی
کفنی
جٹا کلان مصنوعی
سانپ کپڑے کا کلان
جہولی پرچہ
تونہ
بیرگی چوبی
بہہوت
آٹہ چیزین ہوین
آلات و پوشاک ماکنن والیون کی

ساڑھی

مٹکی برنجی گلٹ نقرہ

سینی برنج گلٹ نقرہ

مستہنی چوبی

کھریہ گلٹ نقرہ

کلہیہ گلٹ نقرہ

زیور ہندوانہ

حسب لیاقت صاحب قصہ سات چیزین ہوئیں

پوشاک زیور پنہیار نون کا

ساڑھی

گہڑہ مسی

ڈول

ریسمان

چاہ مصنوعی معہ گراری

زیور

حسب لیاقت بانئ قصہ چہ چیزین ہوئیں

پوشاک مسافر کی

انگر کہہ

پاجامہ

پکڑی

گٹھہری

لاٹھی

لوٹہ

توشہ

بستہ دری خورد

آٹھہ عدد ہوئے

پوشاک غربت

انگر کہہ

پاجامہ

چپکن سفید

کمر بند

دستار سفید

پانچ عدد ہوئے

پوشاک رام چیرا

دہوتی

مرزائی

پینٹ

جنیو کڑہ دست نقرہ

انگوچہ

چہ عدد ہونے

رہس والیون کی پوشاک

پاجامہ پرزر

پیشواز مصالہ دار پرزر

دو پٹہ پرزر

زیور

حسب لیاقت اور تمول بانی جلسہ چار چیزین ہوین

Appendix II: *Rās līlā* text

वंशी नट लीला

प्रिया- नटवर नागर निरति ये देखै तव गुन आज ।

सुघर जुवति जन जूथ में सो करो समाज ॥

समाजी-जो आय एकहि रसिक मणि लाग्यो नचन समाज ।

गाय गाय रस तान ते³⁷⁹ अभिनय मिलि गति वाज ॥

समाजी -रसिक लाल की बाँसुरी, खसी वतावत भाय ।

जानी ना ललितै लई, दई लडैती जाय ॥³⁸⁰

सखी- चितवत फेंटा तन सखीं, चकित रह्यो नंदलाल ।

अरी कितै कहाँ बाँसुरी, वदि खोजत लखि ब्याल ॥

लाल- तुमहीं पै है चंपिके, अबहीं गई हिराय।

बारबार वलिहारियाँ, वंशी देहु बताय ॥

सखी- हों नाहीं देखी दृगन, वंसी कैसी होय ।

वंस वंस वन में कहूँ, लाल लीजिये जोय ॥

लाल- अहो विसाखे लई तुम, साँची सी कहि देहु ।

³⁷⁹ Not clear if it is *te* or *ne*.

³⁸⁰ SM manuscript starts with this *dohā*.

नई नई तान सुनाइहौं, रस समाज सुख लेहु ॥
 सखी- कानन हू हम सुनि ना, कानन में कहूँ हेर ।
 टेरत घेरत वाछरू, आये हो कहूँ गेर ॥
 लाल- हे ललिते तुमहीं लई मंद मंद मुसक्यात ।
 सखी-मतवारन कैसी लगत,लला ³⁸¹ तिहारी बात ॥
 लाल- दै दिजे चन्द्रावली, तुमने लई उठाय ।
 सखी- मोपे ना वा ससिमुखी, कंचुलि धरी दुराय ॥
 लाल- दै दीजे जू ससिमुखी मेरी मुरली आय ।
 नाहीं नाहीं क्यों करत या, कंचुलि धरी दुराय॥
 समाजी- तमकि झमकि न्यारी भई, दे दै गुलचा गाल।
 पाई ना सकुचात ³⁸² चित,खोजत इत उत लाल ³⁸³॥
 समाजी- उतै लाल खोजत फिरयो, बंसी चहुँ दिस जाय ।
 अधरन धरि इत लाइली, वंसी ³⁸⁴ दई बजाय॥
 समाजी- सुनी लाल मुरली धुनि, रुम रुम हरषाय ।
 झमकि बोलि वलिहारियाँ, माँगत विनै सुना ॥

³⁸¹ VRI manuscript has *lāl*

³⁸² VRI manuscript has *sakucāy*

³⁸³ VRI manuscript has *vāl*

³⁸⁴ VRI manuscript has *ocak* “suddenly”.

लाल- मंद मधुर औ लहिरनी, झीनी ललित रसाल।

मो हूँ पै ना आज लों, ऐसी वाजी वाल ॥

लाल- दे दीजे सुकुमारि यह मेरी वांसुरी वलिहारि।

राधा राधा सरस बजाऊ तन मन डारों वारि ॥

लाल- कोमल अधर अधिक माखन सों परे होंयगे हारि ।

ललित किशोरि विनती मोरी मो तन तनक निहारि ॥

प्रिया- अहा अहा करि चटक उठ, गलवल गाल बजाय । ³⁸⁵

तव दे हों तव वाँसुरी, नट की कला दिखाय ॥

समाजी- नचत रही इत नागरी, कूदि रसिक द्रुम ओट ।

नख सिख नट वानिक ³⁸⁶ वन्यौ, जंघिया कस्यो लंगोट ॥

समाजी- रसिक वधूटिन संग किन, नटनी बेष बनाय

आ अहा हा करि कुयो चटपट ढोल बजाय ।

अहाहहाहा वलिहारि

लाल- वृषभान दुलारी की जय । १

नख शिख रुप उजारी की जय । २

³⁸⁵ In the VRI manuscript this line is said by *sakhis* and just the second line of the *dohā* is said by Rādhā.

³⁸⁶ VRI manuscript has *vānak*.

धुंधरी अलकों वारी की जय । ३³⁸⁷

वेनीव्यालि निकारी की जय । ४

बेंदी भाल सँवारी की जय । ५

भृकुटी कुटिल कटारी की जय । ६

कुंज मंज मृग नैनी की जय । ७

झूमक घूम³⁸⁸ घूमारी³⁸⁹ की जय । ८

अधर अरुन पिक वैनी की जय ।³⁹⁰

मुकुर कपोल किनारी की जय । १०

सुकनाशा वर मोती की जय । ११

नथ उपमा अनहोती की जय । १२

कुइया चिवु रससारी की जय । १३

मुसकन दामिनि वारी की जय । १४

कंचन वाहु विशाली की जय । १५

कुंभ उरोजन वाली की जय । १६

नाभि भंवर कटि छीनी की जय । १७

³⁸⁷ Number 3 is written on the margins of the manuscript.

³⁸⁸ This word is written above the line and not very clear.

³⁸⁹ The first letter of the word is not clear.

³⁹⁰ This line is written on the margins.

कदलि जंघ वर पीनी की जय । १८

प्रथु नितंव सुकुमारी की जय । १९

चरन कमल वलिहारी की जय । २०

गति मराल गजगामिनी की जय । २१

नख शसि अंग अंग रमनी की जय । २२

मोहन मद मतवारी की जय । २३

ललित किशोरी की जय । २४

समाजी- येक येक करि नट कला, माँगत हाथ पसारि ।

वंशी कहि कछु विकसि मुख, ढीले नैन निहारि ॥

समाजी-आ अहा करि नटिन ने, पीट्यो ढोल धमारि ।

बोलि कला है कला है, चटकी चट सुकमारि ॥

समाजी- झूमि लचकि कीनी कला, टेकि हथेरी भूमि ।

इत सो उत लै जाय पग, नभ मारग ब्हे³⁹¹घूमि ॥

समाजी- कहूँ सीस वल ब्हे ठठी, खम ठोकें नट वाल ।

कबहुँक कर वल सीस पग, चलैं मोर की चाल ॥

समाजी- येक येक के अंस चढि, कबहुँक नटी पुकारि ।

³⁹¹ Another way of writing *hvai*.

श्री वृषभान दुलारि की, बोलैं जै जैकार ॥

समाजी- हाथ नवल कहूँ भीति पै, पायन धरैं उछारि ।

पौढि भूमि कहुं सीस लै, पलटि जाय सुकुमारि ॥

समाजी- ठाढी है पाछे झुकैं, धरैं हथेरिन भूम³⁹² ।

सोभा काम कमानसि, उठैं नटी भू चूम³⁹³ ॥

समाजी- बांस चढैं डोरी चलैं, पीट ढोल अठलाय ।

चटक नटनिया भूमि पै, कूदैं गाल बजाय ॥

समाजी-रीझ रीझ नटनिन कला, नवल वधू सुकमारि ।

छला अंगूठी आरसी, सबहिंन दये उतारि ॥

लाल- वा दिन सखि पंजाब सौं, विद्या लई उड़ाय ।

तेग धार पै निरति वो, कहो तो देहुँ दिखाय ॥³⁹⁴

लाल- सुमिरि सुमिरि ज्वालामुखी, वह नाची ही वाम ।

चरन कमल छी³⁹⁵ रावरी, देखो³⁹⁶ नचै गुलाम ॥³⁹⁷

प्रिया- ये ले वंसी मुदित सब भई भले या साज ।

³⁹² VRI manuscript has *bhūmi*.

³⁹³ VRI manuscript has *cūmi*.

³⁹⁴ This *dohā* is not in the VRI text.

³⁹⁵ VRI manuscript has *hī*

³⁹⁶ VRI manuscript has *dekhau*

³⁹⁷ This *dohā* is not in the VRI text.

माँग माँग कछु और हू, नट के सठ दें आ ज ॥

समाजी-लै वंसी अधरन धरी, फिर कि भाल परसाय ।

चटक मटक ³⁹⁸ बोल्यो लँगर, वंशी विशद बजाय ॥

लाल-विपुल पंच दल कमल कल, धरों ईस के सीस ³⁹⁹

चुरी आदि युति विंदुवन, पाऊँ वलि वकसीस ॥

प्रिया- गुन लट चारी आदि सब, प्रथम देहिं वकसीस ।

लाल- बहुत भली वह पाछ ही, ले हैं विसवे वीस ॥

समाजी- प्रीतम प्यारे लाल को, विहसि किशोरी दीन ।

उरमाला अति प्यार पी, वलिहारी वदि लीन ॥⁴⁰⁰

समाजी-विहसि लाडली लाल हि, बकसी मुक्ता माल नवीनी।

नट नागर कर जोरे कहि हो, यह तो सुख लीनी ॥⁴⁰¹

समाजी- गरज दास और कछु कहु सो, अरज अलग की कीनी ।

ललित माधुरी रसिक सुधर को मनवान्छित निधि दीनी ॥ ⁴⁰²

समाजी- यह कहि के चट झपटि नट निरत्यो प्यारी पाश ।

³⁹⁸ VRI manuscript has *caṭki maṭki*.

³⁹⁹ The first line of this *dohā* differs in both manuscripts, but the second line is the same. The first one is from the SM text. The first line of the VRI manuscript reads केलिकला नूतन करै सब सों सरसइ कीसा

⁴⁰⁰ Not in the VRI text.

⁴⁰¹ Not in the VRI text.

⁴⁰² Not in the VRI text.

कला कला करि पूरिया लाल जाल मुखरास ।।

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