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New Aesthetics in Eighteenth-century Brajbhasha

Emerging Individualism and a New Concept of Love in Ānandghan's Poetry[1]

Introduction

257 years ago, on 21 September 1743 Savāī Jaisingh, the founder of the city of Jaipur, breathed his last. According to tradition he was looking towards the Govindadeva temple, which he had established within the precincts of his city palace, and was listening to the recitation and exposition of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*. The Bhaṭṭ family lore holds that the person who was expounding the scripture for him was a *kathāvācak* called Brajnāth Bhaṭṭ.[2] Apart from being Jaisingh's personal friend and the teacher of Rāṇī Bāṅkāvatī, the queen of Kishangarh, Brajnāth was the author of a Hindi work on aesthetics and a compiler of Sanskrit and Hindi anthologies.[3]

Some five years later the same Brajnāth appended some surprising lines to his new Brajbhasha compilation,

I have taken these quatrains with a lot of trouble losing my honour, prestige and "character".

Yet he also explains that it was worth it, since he was doing it for something that he valued higher,

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

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[2] Śāstrī Kalānāth: 'Bhāgavat ke amar kathāvācak Brajnāth Bhaṭṭ.' *Rājasthān*. (Jaipur) 5 Dec. 1996.

[3] Brajnāth is the author of Sanskrit works such as the unpublished *Saccidānanda-padārtha-bhāva-candrikā* and the *Marīcikā* commentary on Vallabhācārya's *Brahmasūtrānubhāṣya-vr tti*. His *Padyataraṅginī* (Benares, Caukhamba, 1905, Caukhamba Sanskrit Series 24) is an anthology of Sanskrit *muktaka*s by various authors. He is also the composer of the Brajbhasha *Sāhityasār*, a treatise on aesthetics. The last lines of this composition state that it was written in 1748 in Rupnagar. A *Sāhityasār* manuscript from 1772 is preserved in the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur, nr. 2264.

While lines extolling one's own personal emotions were not unusual in Persian and Urdu poetry, they were surprising in Brajbhasha literature, which, embedded in Sanskritic tradition, did not consider it conductive to aesthetic enjoyment. In Brajbhasha literary culture such lines marked the emergence of a deeper level of individualism and a new aestetics of love more detached from the Krishna-lore and the *nāyikā-bhed* type classifications of women in love.

The eighteenth century, a century so central to Shamsur Rahman Faruqi's work, and the new concept of love in Urdu with its underlying aesthetics has been studied by him in one of his major articles.[4] This century has also produced some exciting poetry on the Brajbhasha side. Although most Hindi literary histories hold that emphasis on personal sentiments appeared in Hindi during the *Chāyāvād* movement of the early twentieth century not without the influence of western romanticism, individualism, a corollary of early modern cultures in a global context[5], had already found its way into many of the literary cultures of South Asia already before the colonial period. A new personal voice and a new concept of love emerged in Brajbhasha literature in the eighteenth century and caused tribulation not only for Brajnāth but, as we are going to see, also to the poet who most successfully introduced it into Braj literature, Ānandghan. The apparent reason for the rejection of the new voice is that it was perceived to be too Islamicate in a Vaishnava devotional milieu, in other words, it reminded the readers too much of Urdu and Persian poetry.

In this paper I will first try to make a preliminary follow up of the emergence of individualism in North India, then pin down the parallels between the new aesthetics of love in Urdu and Ānandghan's early poetry.

Ānanghan's poetry centred on the expression of inner torments of love fits into a larger early modern context. The emergence of a new personal voice in Hindi is not an isolated phenomenon in South Asia before the colonial period. While this personal voice is not the same as what is found in modern western literatures one can perceive a subtle move towards the importance of individual life and sentiments in various South Asian literary cultures between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Stressing direct emotional contact between devotee and God in bhakti poetry can already be considered a manifestation of the value of personal feelings. Individualism, however, also appeared in a secular context.

[4] S. R. Faruqi: 'Conventions of Love, Love of Conventions: Urdu Love Poetry in the Eighteenth Century.' *Annual of Urdu Studies* 14 (1999), pp. 3-32. References here will be made to the author's later version incorporating final changes (http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00fwp/srf/index.html#index).

[5] Charles H. Parker: 'Introduction: Individual and Community in the Early Modern World.' In Charles H. Parker & Jerry H. Bentley (ed.): *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity: Individual and Community in the Early Modern World*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2007 pp. 1-12.

The emergence of portraiture in South Asia is surely linked to the increased importance afforded to the individual. Its advent is usually attributed to European influence at the Mughal court from the 1580s, which is implicitly acknowledged in the *'Ā'īn-i Akbarī*,

> Most excellent painters are now to be found, and masterpieces worthy of Bihzād[6] may be placed at the side of the wonderful works of the European painters who have attained world-wide fame.[7]

And certainly, the most vivid portraits are from there, especially under Jahangir and Shahjahan. However, portraiture was present beyond the Mughal world and the emergence of Mughal portraiture is not simply due to European influence but is rather the result of converging ideas and techniques from within and outside South Asia. Crispin Branfoot argues that there are indigenous traditions of portraiture in terms of artistic representation that develop further in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[8] Although Rajput traditions of portraiture, lagging behind Mughal to some extent by up to a century, were inspired by Mughal painting, they more markedly absorbed more indigenous, non-Mughal elements.

Unlike in the case of Mughal portraiture, no scholar would try to argue that the appearance of individualism in literature was due to European influence. Although more subdued than western individualism it emerged in various languages in North India especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The importance lent to the individual can be detected in the spread of Persian autobiographical writings in Mughal India.[9] In Hindi literature a rather interesting case is the Jain merchant Banārsidās's autobiography, the *Ardhakathānak* "Half a tale" (1641). Although biographical writing on a historical person among the Jains is not without precedent, as is illustrated by the *Jagarucarita*, a fourteenth-century Sanskrit historical romance in the form of

[6] "*Bihzād* was a famous painter, who lived at the court of Shāh Isma'il Ṣafawi of Persia" *Sirājullughāt*. (Blochmann's note).

[7] Abū'l-Faẓl Allāmī: The *Ā'īn-i Akbari vol. I.* tr. H Blochmann, New Delhi, Low Price Publications, 1994 (Bibliotheca Indica 61) (reprint, originally published in 1927-1949) p. 113.

[8] For Mughal portraiture see Susan Stronge*, Painting for the Mughal Emperor: The Art of the Book 1560-1660*. London: V&A Publications, 2002 (2nd edn). Some material related to South India is discussed in chapter 7 in **Crispin Branfoot**: ***Gods on the Move:*** *Architecture and Ritual in the South Indian Temple*. London: British Academy & Society for South Asian Studies, 2007. Recently a conference dedicated to *Portraiture in South Asia* was held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London on 21-22 May 2010.

[9] Alam, Muzaffar & Subrahmanyam, Sanjay: 'The Making of a Munshi'. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24/2 (2004) p. 70. See also R. O'Hanlon: *History in the Third person: Shitab Khan on the Bengal frontier in the Early 17th century* (unpublished paper).

mahākāvya, about the twelfth-century Jain merchant Jagaru[10], the *Ardhakathānak* is often considered "the first autobiography in the Indian tradition."[11] The extended *ātmakāhinī*s "autobiographical passages" in the Bengali *maṅgalkābya*s, such as the one of Rūprām Cakrabarti in his *Dharmamaṅgal* (? 1649), although going back to shorter Sanskrit antecedents, were inspired in a similar interest lent to one's individual life.[12] An extended autobiographical account in Sanskrit also appeared in the *Haṁsavilāsa* of Haṁsamiṭṭhu (b.1737).[13] In all these works the interest in the individual's life overshadows the fact that the life-stories may have been used as illustrations for some abstract concept.

The importance lent to individual sentiments is, however, more marked in sixteenth-seventeenth-century Persian and then in Urdu poetry. S. R. Faruqi rightly reminds the reader that the "emotions" expressed in the ghazal at that time are not necessarily the poet's "personal" emotions.[14] They can indeed be poetic *topoi* used for millennia in various cultures.[15] There was, however, also scope for expressing "real" emotions, especially in the *maktab-i wuqu'* "realistic writing", a "school of poetry that flourished in Persia for most of the 16th century and emphasized the precise depiction of the delights, tantrums, and banter of all-too-human lovers."[16]

This style was also transposed into other South Asian literary cultures. The mid-seventeenth-century Sanskrit poet and aesthetician, Panditarāja Jagannātha, for example, under Persianate influence[17] not only made poetry on his personal tragedies[18] such as the loss of his son or his wife, but also wrote verses that were interpreted as expressing his personal love for a Muslim woman named Lavaṅgī. It is true that there are lots of legends about the love of famous South

[10] Its text is published in Bühler, Georg, ed. The Jagaducharita of Sarvananda, a Historical Romance from Gujarat, Indian Studies No.1. Wien: Sitzungberichte der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, 1892.

[11] Snell, Rupert: 'Confessions of a 17th-century Jain Merchant: The *Ardhakathānak* of Banārasīdās' South Asia Research XXV/1 (May 2005) p. 79. A recent verse translation of this work is Rohini Chowdhury tr. *Ardhakathanak: A Half Story.* Penguin Books, 2009.

[12] Arun Das Gupta: 'Situating the Individual in Medieval India: An excursion into History Beyond the Mainstream'. *The Calcutta Historical Journal*, XVI, 2 (July-December 1994) pp. 17-19.

[13] Swami Trivikrama and Mahamahopadhyaya Hathibhai Shastri ed. *Hamsavilāsa* of Haṃsamiṭṭhu, GOS 81, 1937. An English translation of the 'autoprosopographical passages' (p. 3ff.) is available at http://sarasvatam.blogspot.com/.

[14] Faruqi: 'Conventions of Love'. pp. 4-5.

[15] For example the classical Graeco-Roman *topos* of the suffering excluded lover *(exclusus amator)*, victim of the cruel beloved *(dura puella)*.

[16] Paul Losensky: 'Mohtasham Kashani'. In *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (http://www.iranica.com/articles/mohtasham-kashani).

[17] Sheldon Pollock: Sanskrit Literary Culture from the Inside Out'. In Pollock ed., Literary Cultures in History. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 pp. 97-99.

[18] The younger Bāṇa's lines in *Kādambarī* on the death of his father in the seventh century have always been considered exceptional and were not taken up as exemplary in Sanskrit.

Asian authors and it was a stock element of medieval and early modern lore that the earthly love of certain famous poet-devotees, such as Nandadās, Tulsīdās and Raskhān, just to mention the Hindi examples, was transformed into love for god. However, we do not have any surviving poetry of their individual love. Whether Jagannātha's poetry indeed expressed his feelings towards Lavaṅgī or it was just a poetic convention is secondary to the fact that it was perceived as poetry expressing individual sentiments. It is significant that according to the legend the Brahmin community excommunicated Jagannātha and the story of his love had a tragic ending. Moreover, later readers were embarrassed by the Lavaṅgī-verses and thus the poems are not present in many editions of Jagannātha's collected poems. Ānandghan's quatrains emphasising personal emotions were written in a similar vein more then half a century later. They were similarly rejected by religious circles busy in maintaining themselves along sectarian lines. This was probably done after an initial success as can be inferred from the vehemence of the rejection.

Individualism in Brajbhasha poetry can be perceived as an aspect of early modern culture mediated most prominently by Persian and Urdu literature. The other innovation of Ānandghan is also linked to Urdu poetry and is possibly a reaction to and step forward from this individualism. Here we can historically pin down direct influence, namely that of the poetry of Valī Aurangābādī (1665-1708). The contribution of Vali is that in his ghazals, the beloved is occasionally female, often male, and in many cases, indeterminate. His distinction between poet—the person who actually wrote the poem — and protagonist — the person, or the voice, which articulated the poem[19] is linked to the emergence of new aesthetics first found in Nuṣrat Bījāpurī's *'Alī-nāma* (1672). This aesthetics is based on distinguishing between *mazmūn* (the actual content or theme) and *ma'nī* (thing/object/idea, which the poem is about) as two separate entities. In Urdu poetry it meant that the lover in the poem need not have to be the poet himself, nor did the beloved necessarily have to be "real" or "real-like" person, while in Brajbhasha this signified that the love described is not necessarily the love of Krishna and Radha or of the abstract *nāyaka* 'hero' and *nāyikā* 'heroine'. Love becomes an all-pervading force with mundane and divine aspects. In other words emphasis shifted from the subject (lover) in Urdu and from the object in Hindi (the heroine) to the verb (love) in both.

The new aesthetics appeared in Brajbhasha poetry very soon after its success in Delhi. It is well documented that the arrival of Valī's Divan took Delhi by storm in 1720 and we have the first Braj manuscript with 218 quatrains in the new style by 1727.

While in Urdu the vehicle of this new aesthetics was the ghazal form, in Braj it was conveyed in the format of *muktaka*s, independent short poems, a genre

[19] Faruqi: 'Conventions of Love'. pp. 4.

inherited from Sanskrit, which became one of the most popular forms of early Hindi literature. The *muktaka*s normally were sententious couplets, *dohā*s, or more courtly quatrains, *kavitta*s and *savaiyā*s, which in most of the cases were probably presented orally in a court for aesthetic enjoyment. Along with oral transmission, they were also circulated in handwritten albums of random poems and in manuscript anthologies organised by subject or by author

The first and foremost representative of the new aesthetics was Ānandghan, who introduced the possibility of individual love into Brajbhasha poetry dominated by devotional and courtly Krishna-themes. His influence on subsequent poetry was enormous and even the modern Hindi poetry of the *Chāyāvād* echoed the intensity of the torment of love expressed in his poetry. Readers and listeners associated certain Islamicate romanticism with his quatrains even when they apparently dealt with themes of Krishna-bhakti, while his *pada*s, devotional songs, and other works were perceived as expressions of genuine Vaishnava devotion. It was the blurring of the boundaries of the secular and the devotional in his quatrains that caused a fierce battle around his quatrains.

The *bhaṛuā chand* (see below) and later tradition agrees that Ānandghan was a *kāyastha*, and through his community and early education he may have been especially receptive to Persian poetry and its aesthetics. He probably spent a part of his early life as a Vaishnava renunciate in the Nimbārkī Math in Salemabad near the princely centres of Rupnagar and Kishangarh and later settled in Vrindaban, where he was eventually killed in 1757. It is likely that while belonging to the Salemabad math Ānandghan was also in close contact with the court of Rupnagar, especially with Nāgarīdās, since an old drawing shows the two together in front of the abbot of the Salemabad math. He might even have accompanied Nāgarīdās or other members of the royal family on one of their frequent trips to Delhi.

The addressee of Ānandghan's quatrains [20] is a person whom he called Sujān. In some poems *sujān* "one with good knowledge, connoisseur", a word having both Persianate (*jān* "soul", "beloved") and Indic undertones, is an epithet of Krishna or Radha, in many the exact denotation of the word is left ambiguous, and in some others the word seems to refer to an earthly beloved, who already

[20] Together with more than three thousand other verses, some seven hundred *kavitt-savaiyā*s are published in the *GhanĀnand [granthāvalī]* (Benares: Vāṇī-vitān, 1952) that represents Ānandghan's complete poetic oeuvre. On Ānandghan's life see Bangha, Imre: *Saneh ko mārag: Ānandghan kā jīvanvr tt*. New Delhi: Vāṇī Prakāśan, 1999, on the Ānandghan debate Bangha, Imre: 'Lover and Saint: The Early Development of Ānandghan's Reputation, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society XI/2 (July 2001) pp. 175-190, on his contacts with Rupnagar and Salemabad Bangha, Imre: 'Courtly and Religious Communities as Centres of Literary Activity in Eighteenth-Century India.' in Dezső, Csaba (ed.): *Indian Languages and Texts through the Ages*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2007 pp. 307-353.

by his contemporaries was perceived to be a courtesan with Muslim background. Using Krishna vocabulary for one's mundane love, or as Heidi Pauwels puts it, "romancing Radha" was not without parallels at that time. A person living not far from Ānandghan's math in Salemabad and acquainted with the poet has already done something similar: Nāgarīdās expressed his love for the slave girl Banī-Ṭhanī with the vocabulary of devotion towards Radha.[21] While Nāgarīdās did this in the framework of *bhakti*, Ānandghan's poetry gained intensity by the description of internal torments and contradictory feelings that develop in love and in his best poetry the Krishna theme is present only as a loose framework. The poet often uses one form of his signature, *ghana ānãda* 'Intense Bliss' as a designation of the beloved. Since any positive epithet can be attached to Krishna, the poems below can easily accommodated within the world of Krishna lore even though the following one describes much more a moment of mystic epiphany than the longing of the cowherd girls,

The magic of the beautiful, charming Sujān, appeared a bit after many days.

The eyes were bewildered in the flash. Alas, what can I say? I have been lost in looking at it.

Words vanished on my tongue and my heart overflowed; not even a word came out. Are you true or confusion? Intense Bliss, my mind is absorbed in thoughts. (353)[22]

The following two examples can easily be taken as expressive of a memory of earthly or divine love, yet attaching such context to them restricts their poetic possibilities and feels somewhat forced,

Lengthening the string of his coming on the sky of hope, he lifted it up with delight — all this was done as a play.

He is totally cruel and do not pull it towards himself — who would tell this sorrowful state to that pampered Sujān?

'In this way it is in a strange situation, o Cloud of Bliss, it is in your hand but do not manage to get close.

Although unsteady in the gusts of the wind of separation and drenched in the water of love my soul still flies like a kite.' (49)

[21] See Pauwels, Heidi: 'Romancing Rādhā: Nāgarīdās' Royal Appropriation of *Bhakti* Themes'. *South Asia Research* XXV/1 (May 2005) pp. 55-78.

[22] Poems from the *Sujānhit* are translated on the basis of the text published in V. P. Miśra's *GhanĀnand [granthāvalī]*.

Once I lived drinking your radiance, — now my eyes keep burning in thoughts.

My life, was nurtured on food of love,— now it throbs full of terrible pain and guilt. Without my friend, the wise [sujāna] Intense Bliss, all components of happiness are remote.

Then the necklace seemed like a hill, — now on the way of your coming here are hills. (36)

The direct expression of emotions, although allowed in the Sanskritic tradition under the name of *svabhāvokti*, was considered less appropriate in Indian aesthetics that preferred the description of the outside effects of emotion, called *anubhāva* by Sanskrit theoreticians. Direct expression of emotions was associated rather with Persianate poetry but in Ānandghan's quatrains this Persianate tinge was balanced by the extensive use of traditional Indian *alaṅkāras*, figures of sound and sense. Moreover, Persian or Urdu influence on Ānandghan does not manifest in introducing features so far unknown in Hindi poetry but common in the literature of those languages. It is somewhat subtler and can be traced rather in the poet's attitude and preferences. The abundance of idiomatic usage and paradoxes[23] is considered to reflect Ānandghan's taste for Persian or Urdu poetry, which relied more on figurative language. Although figurative usage is also a prominent feature of Sanskritic poetic theory, where it is called *lakṣaṇā*, in Hindi literature its use was limited before Ānandghan.[24]

The poem below is one of his most famous quatrains. Although there is no explicit mention of Krishna mythology, the address to a masculine beloved *(pyāre sujāna)* and the word translated as "my dear child" *(lalā)*, used traditionally as an address to Krishna by the cowherd girls, suggest the setting of the Krishnaite poetry. This stanza is heavily loaded with traditional Indian figures of sense, the most outstanding of which are the puns *(śleṣa)* in the last line: the word for number *(āṅka)* also means lap and embrace and, therefore, affection. The end of the last line can also be translated as "you take my mind *(mana)* but do not give a flirting side-glance *(chaṭāṅka)"* or "you fathom my mind *(mana lehu)* though do not caste a glance on me."

The way of love is very straightforward, without the least cleverness or crookedness on it.
The truthful ones walk on it abandoning their selfhood but the designing ones,

[23] Studied in detail in Manoharlal Gaur: *Ghanānand aur svacchand kāvyadhārā.* Benares: Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, 1972 (2nd edn). pp. 107-126 and 193-196 respectively.
[24] Ramchandra Shukla: *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās.* Benares: Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, 1942 (Revised and enlarged edn.). p. 36.

those with fear, are at loss.
Listen, my dear Sujān, cloud of bliss, one number cannot be changed into another on it.
But what slate have you studied from, my dear child? You take a maund and do not even give a gram! (267)

Ānandghan's philosophy of love is expressed explicitly in another quatrain,

Observing that the ocean of love was boundless, poor
Reflection was baffled and turned back from this very side.
Seeing that two lovers of one essence, Hari and Radha,
plunge into it powerless the ocean was overwhelmed.
A particle escaped from one of its billowing waves
welled up and inundated all the worlds.
That particle – stuck to the cloud-of-bliss Sujān – is love;
having thus pondered I have established the image in my mind.[25]

In this philosophy the poet's love for Sujān is a particle of the endless ocean of love. The same in which the divine couple partakes.

The controversy

Ānandghan's poetry, as often happens with innovations, was not univocally welcomed in the established framework of Braj poetry and was the subject of bitter debates. In this atmosphere newer and newer anthologies of Ānandghan's quatrains were prepared. Scribes both moved and puzzled by Ānandghan's quatrains either interpreted them as expressions of Vaishnava devotion, as is done in the collection *Sujānhit*, or as poetry in a courtly style informed by Persian and Urdu literary ideas, as in the collection *Ghan-Ānand kabitt* or simply *Kabitt*.

These two published collections are only two out of the several ones that were compiled and copied during the centuries. As is the case with most early modern Brajbhasha poets, no autograph manuscript of Ānandghan is available today. We have, however three extant manuscripts dated from his lifetime (1727, 1729, 1743)[26], two of them were copied in Rupnagar and the one from 1729 in Shahjahanabad (Delhi). The two earliest ones with 219 quatrains are virtually the same collection. The third one omits their initial 11 poems and thus has only 208 stanzas.

In spite of its closeness to the poet both in time and space this collection

[25] The original is nr. 310 in V. P. Miśra's *GhanĀnand-kabitt* (Benares: Vāṇī-vitān, 1943). The readings of other non-*Sujānhit* manuscripts present only orthographic variants.
[26] City Palace, Jaipur 2437 (4); Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur 9431(2), Alwar RORI 4789(4).

does not represent the text that was written originally by Ānandghan. On the contrary, its quatrains have been drastically altered. Many occurrences of the word *(su)jāna*, have been changed into clearly religious or secular expressions such as *(ju) syāma* 'Krishna' or *su pyārī* 'that beloved (woman)'. This was done in order to avoid the possibility of identifying Krishna with a worldly beloved. These readings, however, are secondary since the multi-layered connotations of the word *sujāna*, peculiar to the same poems in all other collections and to the much larger corpus of all other quatrains, are lost in them and the text becomes pedestrian. No later manuscript followed this practice. These early copies seem to represent an attempt to defend Ānandghan from sectarian accusations.

A more sophisticated attempt to present Ānandghan in a Vaishnava light can be detected in the collection *Sujānhit*, in which every now and then explicitly devotional poems pop up although they were hardly present in its predecessors. In one case the *Sujānhit* also introduces a spectacular change into the structure of the philosophical *kavitt* quoted above. The text of the other poems included into later compilations is usually untouched and has only a few minor variants. In that *kavitta* a more characteristic difference can be observed, besides different readings of some words, the order of the lines is changed. The text in *Sujānhit* 116 presents the second line about Hari and Radha as the final line. By the change the philosophy is also changed. In the *Sujānhit* the importance of the ocean of love is lessened by that of Krishna and Radha. This version is in accordance with the legend that Ānandghan's love for Sujān, a courtesan in Muḥammadśāh's court in Delhi, turned into love for Radha and Krishna and it is also in accordance with the structure of the *Sujānhit*, in which towards the end Ānandghan's early-style love poetry gives more and more way to devotion, reminding the reader of the Sufi idea of "earthly" love *('iśq-i majāzī)* developing into "love divine" *('iśq-i ḥaqīqī)*, an idea that seems to have already been accommodated in Brajbhasha poetry. However, the *Sujānhit*'s version of the quatrain in question seems to be more awkward because Krishna and Radha would plunge into the image and not into the ocean of love. The thought expressed in it does not give importance to Sujān, though the poet's love for Sujān – whether Sujān is a woman or a form of the Absolute – is the most important theme of Ānandghan's quatrains.

These changes in Ānandghan's quatrains can be better understood in the light of another approach, the voice of Ānandghan's opponents that may have been vociferous at that time as we can glimpse it from some mocking verses, the *bhaṛuā chand*[27],

The kāyastha Ānandghan was a great rogue. Although he died in the

[27]First published in Mishra *GhanĀnand [granthāvalī]* pp. *'Vāṅmukh'* 66-67. According to Dr. Manoharlal Gaur (personal communication, Oct. 1995) these poems are preserved in a handwritten book called *Yaś kabitt* in the Yājñik Collection of the Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, Varanasi. In March 1966, however, I was not able to find the book there.

massacre of Braj, his bad reputation remains. This is his description:

That slave of a prostitute abuses his guru; very
shameless and dirty; eats paneer and naan.
Steals the speech, introduces its base theme,
composes poems and sings in a particularly lewd tune.
Feeds his body, drier of liquor-vessels, only with meat; harasser
of Brahmins and cows, he is pride itself incarnate.
Abode of sin, he visits forbidden women; this is
how the world knows the shaven Ānandghan.

He beats the tambourine, sings like a Ḍom or a Ḍhāṛhī, pleases
a Muslim and then gets false fame;
He is the servant of the Muslim pleasure-woman [turakinī hurakinī] Sujān,
leaves the name of Rām and worships her abode of desire.
...

These poems attest to the fact that some people questioned Ānandghan's religiousity despite of his being a renunciate ("shaven Ānandghan"). A large part of the blame poured on Ānandghan expressed condemnation from an orthodox Vaishnava point of view emphasising outward signs of religious affiliation. To mock the implicit Persian influence on Ānandghan's quatrains, the *bhaṛuā chand* are full of Persian words (although in his poetry Ānandghan hardly used any). The half-line "Steals the speech, introduces its base theme" *(baina ko curāvai tākau majamūna lāvai kūra)* seems to be a reference to Ānandghan directly taking over the "speech" (*baina*, Skt. vacana), that is the style, of Islamicate poetry and its theme (*majamūna*).[28] Similarly his association with a courtesan — no matter if there was any evidence for it or if it was inferred from his poetry — was condemned. The influence of the views of this group explains why Ānandghan's quatrains were altered and their sequence reorganised, and why Ānandghan wrote the *Kr pākaṇd· nibandh*, a work on divine grace as opposed to the external manifestations of religion. In this later compilation of quatrains the poet extended the meaning of the word "sujān" even further as making it an attribute of divine grace *(sujāna kr pā)*. It seems that this clever innovation was not succesful and Ānandghan had to give in to his opponents. In his later life he himself stopped writing quatrains and repudiated his earlier works,

My tongue is entangled in Gopāl's virtues;

[28] The word *baina* can also refer to a kind of dirge sung by women in Panjab and by extension introducing the cruel Persianate theme *(krūra majamūna)* of death into Indic love poetry. However, Ānandghan was cautious, even at the early stage of his poetry, not to introduce so openly Islamicate elements into his quatrains and hardly any poem of his is linked to death.

and disentangled from the various bonds of false poems and traps of twaddle. (*Padāvalī:* 687)

The overwhelming majority of Ānandghan's apparently later poetry (more than three thousand stanzas) are devotional couplets or *pada*s.

Brajnāth, a court scholar and friend of Mahārājā Savāī Jaisiṃh of Jaipur, took up the task of "restoring" the original poetry by creating a new anthology probably around 1748, when he visited Rupnagar, a centre of the controversy. He composed eight *kabitt*s in praise of Ānandghan's quatrains celebrating the value of personal experience both in Ānandghan and in those who expound and read his poems.

The one whose heart's eyes have seen the pain of love will understand Ānandghan's poetry.

Aware of the novelty of this poetry Brajnāth warns its future readers,

Do not listen to the poetry of Ānandghan if you are not acquainted with that field;
If you cannot keep still at all without reading it, then read it with cautious mind.

Although Brajbhasha poetry was never the same after Ānandghan, the lasting power of the views of the opposition may account for the scant explicit appreciation of Ānandghan's poetry during the more than hundred years that followed his death and it was not until the 1940s and early 1950s that Ānandghan's two most popular collections, the *Sujānhit* and the *Kabitt* were published in their entirety.

Conclusion

Several scholars drew attention to the lively intellectual milieu of eighteenth-century north India, which included the fast exchange of ideas. In this exchange literatures in various idioms and in various traditions were directly or indirectly cross-fertilising each other. An example of indirect cross-fertilisation is the emergence of an early modern individualism in a wide range of literatures, such as Persian, Urdu, Bengali, Brajbhasha or Sanskrit. Direct influence can also be detected. Poetry based on the distinction between *mazmūn* and and *ma'nī* in Persian and Urdu go back to Sanskrit but reached Brajbhasha in the 1720s through Urdu.

The cultural environment in which Brajbhasha received this innovation, however, was ambivalent towards the new poetic voice and Ānandghan, the person in whose poetry it appeared most prominently, had to face strong

opposition, which led to serious alterations in his poetry and in his personal stance. At the same time his quatrains were anthologised, copied and influenced leading Brajbhasha poets. While Ānandghan's poetry is deeply influenced by the aesthetics mediated to Delhi by Valī, his contemporaries, both his opponents and Brajnāth, perceived his poems as manifestations of his personal love.

Just like his younger contemporary, Mīr, Ānandghan universalized love poetry and through this, in spite of their restricted accessibility in an increasingly forgotten poetic idiom, his quatrains have similarly strong appeal for reasons so beautifully phrased by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi with regards to Mīr in the case of Urdu,

> The depths and intensities of experience, coupled with the fullest vocalization of the mysterious power of love that Mir is able to achieve is not seen elsewhere in this century, or in any century, for that matter. In Mir's poetry, the dimensions of both loss and gain are infinite, and yet the poems are strictly earthy, not abstract or cerebral.[29]

[29] Faruqi: 'Conventions of Love'. p. 18.