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## A Newly Discovered Fragment of the Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan

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**Keywords:** Middle Bengali, Newar, Kathmandu

### Abstract

Baru Caṇḍīdās' Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan (ŚKK), a collection of songs on Kṛṣṇa, is considered the earliest text in Middle Bengali. For a long time, only one manuscript has been available to scholars. Recently, however, a fragment which contains several songs parallel to the ŚKK was discovered in Kathmandu.

The Caryāpada, a collection of Tantric Buddhist hymns written in the old forms of the Eastern NIA dialects, is considered the oldest specimen of Old Bengali by Bengali scholars, while Baru Caṇḍīdās' Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan<sup>1</sup> (abbr. ŚKK), which is the second oldest document in Bengali, represents the beginning of the linguistic stage of Middle Bengali. Also from the point of view of the history of Bengali literature, the Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan is a very important work, in that, being composed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it is a forerunner of the Bengali Vaishnava poems which have never ceased to enjoy general popularity in the Bengali-speaking areas up to modern times. In spite of being such an important document, only one manuscript has so far been available to us.

Recently, however, a possible fragment of the ŚKK was discovered in Kathmandu valley. The details of the discovery are as follows. When Makoto Kitada visited the Nepal Research Centre, Kathmandu, in March 2011, Kashinath Tamot told him that he had found a manuscript of songs in Bengali language, and that Caṇḍīdās was mentioned as the author. He expressed his conjecture that these songs could be from the ŚKK. In August 2012, we worked together on this manuscript. As a result of that, this manuscript in fact turned out to be a genuine fragment of the ŚKK, although only a very small part of it. This article was written by Kitada with the permission of Tamot, and published under both of our names.<sup>2</sup>

The information about this manuscript (abbr. MS) is: Manuscript No. 1-1696, Real No. B287/2, titled merely as 'Rāga', written in Newārī script<sup>3</sup>. It contains 13 folios, but those which concern us are the first six-and-a-half folios (Fol. 1r-7r). The rest (Fol. 7v-13v) deals with a collection of fables in Newārī based on the Pañcatantra, which has nothing to do with the former part of the manuscript.

<sup>1</sup> For general information on Baru Caṇḍīdās' Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan, see Amitrasūdan Bhaṭṭācārya 2011, Bidbadballabh 2007/2008 and Das 1988.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to express my cordial thanks to Prof. Rahul Peter Das for his helpful suggestions.

<sup>3</sup> In Prof. Tamot's opinion, the style of letters is that of about the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Folios 1r-7r consist of two parts:

- (1) Thirteen songs numbered from 14 to 27. They contain many linguistic features and expressions common to the ŚKK. At the top of each song, the name of the *rāga* and the name of the *tāla* are mentioned<sup>4</sup>.
- (2) Songs Nos. 28 to 34 seem to originate from the opening scene of a drama in Bengali, in which the characters appear on the stage one after another, introducing themselves to the audience in song. The name of a king, *Govindacanda* who is mentioned suggests that this drama is a version of the *Gopīcandranāṭaka* which used to be one of the very popular dramas performed in the Kathmandu valley. Expressions such as *baṃgeśvara rājā*, *baṃgero bhuvāpati* (meaning ‘the king of Vaṅga/Bengal’) etc. hint at a certain connection of this drama with Bengal. The text breaks off abruptly.

Accurate deciphering of the manuscript is difficult. Newārī script is in many cases not completely free from obscurity and ambiguity. In Classical Newārī spelling, the distinction between dental and retroflex as well as the distinction between L and R in the NIA languages is not perfectly retained and is very often confused. I have the impression that the Newārī transcriber[s] was/were not able to understand the original language (an earlier stage of Middle Bengali) any more. All these make the text extremely hard to understand. Therefore, in this short article, I will confine myself to a few brief remarks.

Song No.16 in its *bhaṇitā* verse mentions Baṛu Caṇḍidās as the author:

vāsariya raṇa śire vaṃḍiyā gāyiro vadu caṇḍidāsa //16,7d

“Thus sang Baṛu Caṇḍidās, [holding] Goddess Bāsālī on his head [and] praising [her].”<sup>5</sup>

This is parallel to the *bhaṇitā* verse of, e.g., ŚKK 131<sup>6</sup>:

bāsālī śire bandī gāilo caṇḍidāsa //ŚKK 131,4d

“[Thus] sang Caṇḍidās, [holding] Goddess Bāsālī on his head [and] praising [her].”

Song No.15 contains parallels of ŚKK 105<sup>7</sup>. I first give the whole text of No.15 below<sup>8</sup>, then Amitrasūdan Bhaṭṭācārya’s version.

No.15

Rāga Pahariyā // Parimāna //

<sup>4</sup> Song No.14 (Bhatyāri, Jati), No.15 (Pahariyā, Parimāna), No.16 (Korāba, Parimāna), No.17 (Bhathali, Paritāra), No.18 (Śrī, Ekātālā), No.19 (Śrīrāga, Ekātālī), No.20 (Śrī, Raṃga (?) Jati), No.21 (Rāga Varāri, Ekātālī), No.22 (Rāga Patamaṃjali, Paritāla), No.23 (Śrīrāga, Tāra Mātha Jati), No.24 (Savali, Mātha Jati), No.25 (Nāta, Rūpaka), No.26 (Nāta, Rūpaka).

<sup>5</sup> The term *raṇa* is unclear.

<sup>6</sup> Bhaṭṭācārya 2011, p. 293. Bidbadballabh 2007/2008, p. 48f.

<sup>7</sup> Bhaṭṭācārya 2011, p. 259f. Bidbadballabh 2007/2008, p. 38f.

<sup>8</sup> Words are not separately written in the manuscript, but here, separations are given according to our own provisional interpretation.

ati padumini rūpasa deṣiyā ceta thira nahi morā /  
 surati siṃghāra diyā rādhika prāna rakṣā kara more //  
 naṃpata kahnāya kapata upāya mukhe nahi tora nāja /  
 sudala morā nideṣi bhāre parikṣā dekhiyā rūpasa kaje //  
 kāmasukha bāne ceta byākula kimsake volahu maurāni /  
 vola paradite akṣe bhādiresa caṃyi jāniya ahme //  
 bhayata duya mora nayi jiya judāyi ra [?] <sup>9</sup> datā he  
 ahmāra jaubhana [??] <sup>10</sup> śrī  
 phala khāyita kasaka dhāya //  
 jāhe khidhā vaise <sup>11</sup> suno govārīṇī ki torā kāvaya <sup>12</sup> kāya /  
 jakhana je pāya takhana se khāya jānāhi khidhā parāya //  
 amāra jaubhavana mudita bhaṃdāra ihate nahī kaculi /  
 amāra jaubhavana kāla bhujaṃgama khāyi re suyī <sup>13</sup> re mali //  
 tuhme padumini ahme padmanābha kṣaure tuhmāke nahi chāḍi /  
 tumāra jauvana kāla bhujaṃgama ame bhara ujhā gadali //15

The corresponding song, ŚKK 105 in Bhaṭṭācārya's edition, runs as follows:

Deśāgarāgaḥ //  
 āti rūpasī padumini jāti dekhi thira nahi mane /  
 tora birahe citta beākula moerñ nā jīboñ kenamane //105,1  
 henaka bacana nā bola kāhnāñiñ tora bāpe nāhiñ lāja /  
 sodara māūlāñita bhole parilāhā dekhiññ rūpasa kāja //2  
 madanabāṇe citta beākula kibā ghosasi māmī māmī /  
 michā kāje moke bhāṇḍiteñ cāho sakale jāñie āhmī //3  
 chāoṃyāla kāhnāñiñ bola na bujhasi bujhila tohmāra matī /  
 moñ je goālīñ ābālī rādhā na jāṇo raṅga suratī //4  
 āhme se kāhnāñiñ goāla nāgara tohmāra bāra bariṣe /  
 nahuli yaubana āti śūsobhana surati deha hariṣe //5  
 prathama yaubana mudita bhāṇḍāra tāta nā sambāe curī /  
 āhmāra yaubana kāla bhujaṅgama chuileñ khāileñ marī //6  
 āhme se kāhnāñiñ tohme candrābalī maraṇe tohmā nā chārī /  
 tohmāra yaubana kāla bhujaṅgama āhme ho bhāla gāruṇī //7  
 nāgara kāhnāñiñ moke bigute āṣeṣa neāa jurī /  
 koṇa bibudhi e hena pathe ānile dāruṇī burhī //8

<sup>9</sup> An unclear letter.

<sup>10</sup> Unclear letters.

<sup>11</sup> Or: *caise*?

<sup>12</sup> Or: *kācapa*?

<sup>13</sup> Or: *supī*?

nāgara dekhiāñ deha ālīngana kike kara ābhiroṣe /  
āhmara karame tohmāka āñile baṛāyira kamaṇa doṣe //9  
tapata dudha nāle nā pīe jurāyileñ soāda tae /  
nahulī yaubana kāmca śiriphala tāhāka keho nāhiñ khāe //10  
yāta khidhā base nagari rādhā kibā tāra kāmca pākāe /  
yemane pāe temane khāe yā nāhiñ khidhā pālae //11  
dīṭhi dīṭhi cāhi bolom mo kāhnāñim āhmāka eriteñ juāe /  
samukha dīṭhe pañile banata bhukhila bāgha nā khāe //12  
āhmāra bacane sundari rādhā mane kara hariṣe /  
basalīcaraṇa śīre bandiāñ gāila baru caṇḍīdāse //13

This is a dialogue about a quarrel between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. For convenience, I quote the translation by Klaiman<sup>14</sup>:

“You’re so alluring, a natural seductress<sup>15</sup>. My heart quickens pace when I see you. / With your aloofness, my thoughts are untranquil. Oh, how can I go on surviving?”

“Krishna, don’t say things like this. You don’t have any modesty. Where are your parents?<sup>16</sup> / You’ve merely spotted a juicy affair; you’re entranced by the wife of your uncle.”

“Why must you say, ‘I’m your aunt, I’m your aunt’? I’ve been driven insane by love’s goading. / Radha, you’re trying to use unfair means to elude me; I know all about it.”

“You’re a child, Krishna; you can’t understand what I’m saying. I see your intentions. / I am just Radha, a dairymaid; I’m very small. I know nothing of passion.”

“I’m dashing Krishna, your cowherd pursuer, and you are a twelve year old lady. / This is most lovely, your blossoming youth; you should gladly bestow it upon me.”

“My blooming youth is a treasure that’s sealed. There’s no possible way you could rob it. / I have a poisonous snake in this youth; if you touch and are bitten, you’ll perish!”

“I am your Krishna and you’re my Candrāvalī. Till I am dead I can’t leave you. / You say your youth is a poisonous snake – I’m an excellent venomist, Radha!”

“There is no end to these intricate arguments! Krishna’s too smart, he unnerves me. / What sort of folly induced that cruel Granny to have me approach by this pathway?”

“Look at your lover, bestow an embrace on me. Why are you overexcited? / How is your Granny at fault? It’s because of my merits that you have been brought here.”

“Milk that is hot can’t be drunk through a straw; when it is cooled, it is tasty for drinking. / Breasts which are starting to bud are like marmelos; no one enjoys them unripened!”

“When someone’s hungry for something, he couldn’t care less if it’s ripe or it isn’t. / He’ll eat it as he encounters it till all his hunger is gone, clever Radha!”

“Krishna, I’m looking you square in the eye and I’m warning you: better avoid me. / Even a tiger will not

<sup>14</sup> Klaiman 1984, p. 91. I do not necessarily agree with her interpretation in every single detail, but this will suffice for the moment, for a minute examination of the ŠKK is not the purpose of this article.

<sup>15</sup> *Padmini*, i.e. women with the ideal beauty as mentioned in the Kāmaśāstra.

<sup>16</sup> Klaiman (ibid.) notes that the literal meaning is: “you have no shame from your parents”.

eat a creature he meets face to face in the forest.”

“Beautiful Radha, discard your misgivings. Be pleased to agree to my wishes.”

It is obvious that MS song No.15 is closely connected with ŚKK 105, but, containing many variants, fails to agree with it word for word.

It must be noted that the ŚKK was originally orally recited. This fact raises the question, to what degree the written sources are reliable, while the texts orally handed down vary. It may be whether a collection of components of various origins, or the enlargement and alteration of a single kernel.

MS Song No.27 again has a *bhaṇitā* verse in which the name Caṇḍīdās (*caṇḍīdāse*) appears, and contains many lines parallel to ŚKK 291. The text runs as follows:

rādhe // tini kitana dadhi, torā hoyiveka kata nā vudhi //27,1  
 kahnāyī, haivo muyi govārini jāti, morā ghr̥ta dudha utapati //2  
 rādhe, o torā do rājavaisya mai uthi dayā curase //3  
 kahnāyī, kācaram̐ pākerokali, mai nahi jāne <su><sup>17</sup>rati murārī<sup>18</sup> //4  
 rādhe, kata vaṣāna<sup>19</sup> se sati, paṃca puruse pohāyi rāti //5  
 kahnāyī, uceta paṃthera nāli, yibe vāṃchita tuyi he murārī //6  
 rādhe, sargga mañca pātāre mu jāni, yibe ahmāke sati vaṣāni //7  
 kahnāyī, kaṃsāsura vada duruvāre, tehi sunire nahi ucāre //8  
 rādhe, kaṃsa vadhire ahme vāne, tave sādhipo mādādāni lo //9  
 kahnāyī, muyi reki putanā māri, khāyire aje tiri vadhiya murārī //10  
 rādhe, māyī reki jānāhi māli, tathi pāpa je nahi sundari //11  
 kahnāyī, khāyireki tanera khīra, ive vola <vāra><sup>20</sup>ha vacana vīra //12  
 rādhe, piyara mai janani rakṣāṃ lire, mora teja vasira śarire //13  
 kahnāyī, tohara mukha nahi cāhi, ati pāpeta kāla kahnāyī he //14  
 rādhyā, ahmāke na patiśi dhamdhā, moke vudhi thāyīyo jāha vaṃdhā //15  
 kahnāyī, reho mora sāta sarīhār<sup>21</sup>, moke vaḍāyī deho ekovāra //16  
 rādhe, deho moke surati siṃghāre, tave vaḍāyī di[śa?]<sup>22</sup> tuhmāke //17  
 kahnāyī, dvādaśa variśe ahme nahi jāna, surati dhammārī he //18  
 rādhyā, mādthāya guri phure tora khoyā<sup>23</sup>, ralakṣaka mulelo //19  
 kahnāyī, yitum̐ cchāda patiyāse, kavi gīta gāyila caṇḍīdāse he //20

The corresponding verse, ŚKK 291<sup>24</sup>, runs as follows:

<sup>17</sup> This syllable is marked with a sign of deletion.

<sup>18</sup> Or: *surārī*

<sup>19</sup> I.e. *bakhāna* < Skt. *vyākhyāna*.

<sup>20</sup> Marked with a sign of deletion.

<sup>21</sup> Here is a *virāma* sign.

<sup>22</sup> Extremely obscure.

<sup>23</sup> Or: *khopā*

korārāgaḥ // krīḍā // laganī // daṇḍakaḥ //  
 rādhā nītī bikaṇasi dadhī / tora haibe kata nā budhī //1  
 kāhnāñiṃ hooṃ mo goālajātī / mora budhī tora kheūmatī //2  
 rādhā / māthata gulāla phule / tora nahe se lākheka mūle<sup>25</sup> //3  
 bolasi toṃ tutībacane / tāta nā lāge āhmāra mane //4  
 hoāṃ toṃ goālajhiārī / tohme eta baṛa āchidarī //5  
 nahoṃ kāhna mo āchidarī / baṛa nilaja tohme murārī //6  
 rādhā tora thīra nahe maṇe toke manda boloṃ tekāraṇe //7  
 kaṇsa baṛa durubāre / tāra bhae nibāroṃ tohmāre<sup>26</sup> //8  
 kaṇsa māriboṃ parāṇe / tabe sādhiboṃ āpaṇa māṇe<sup>27</sup> //9  
 kālī khāileṃ tohme khīre / āji bolasi bāmana bīre<sup>28</sup> //10  
 khāāṃ pūtanāra khīre / tāra parāṇa hariloṃ śarīre //11  
 vadhileṃ pūtanā nārī / tohme tirībadhiā murārī<sup>29</sup> //12  
 mārantāka ye nā māre / tāra pāṇī nā lae pītare //13  
 tora mukha nāhiṃ cāhī / tohme āti pāpiā kāhnāñiṃ<sup>30</sup> //14  
 juriārī e pāñica bāṇe / āji laiṃboṃ tora parāṇe //15  
 tohme nā kara mora nirāse / gāila baṛu caṇḍīdāse //16

I quote Klaiman's translation<sup>31</sup>:

“Most of time you spend selling your produce. / How much intelligence you must have Radha!”  
 “Krishna, although I was born among cowherds, / I have my sense, while you're addle-minded!”  
 “One hundred thousand's the worth of your head with its blossoms of basil. / You haven't the money!”  
 “You may address me with flattering comments; Still I'm not taken in by them, Krishna.”  
 “You're completely intractable, Radha, / Even though you're a dairyman's daughter.”  
 “I'm not the one who's intractable. Krishna. / You're extremely audacious, Murāri.”  
 “You're impulsive in temperament, Radha; / This is the reason I call you unworthy.”  
 “Kaṇsa is very implacable, Krishna. / Since I'm afraid of him, I must resist you.”  
 “I am about to assassinate Kaṇsa; / Then I'll be able to salvage my honour.”  
 “Only a day ago, milk was your diet. / Now you proclaim you're a hero, you midget!”  
 “While I imbibed Lady Pūtanā's milk, I / Extracted the life from her body, my Radha.”  
 “Did you destroy Lady Pūtanā, Krishna? / Why, you have murdered a woman, Murāri!”  
 “Forefathers don't accept votive oblations / From those who avoid killing murderous people.”

<sup>24</sup> Bhaṭṭācārya 2011, p. 367f. Bidbadballabh 2007/2008, p. 108f.

<sup>25</sup> Corresponding to MS 27,19: *rādhya, māthāya guri phure tora khayā ralaṣaka mulelo*.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. MS 27,8, although its second half is different.

<sup>27</sup> Corresponding to MS 27,9: *rādhe, kaṇsa vadhīre ahme vāne, tave sādhibo māhādāni lo*.

<sup>28</sup> Corresponding to MS 27,12: *kahnāyi, khāyireki tanera khīra, ive vola <vāra> ha vacana vīra*.

<sup>29</sup> Corresponding to MS 27,10: *kahnāyi, mūyi reki putanā māri, khāyire aje tiri vadhiya murāri*.

<sup>30</sup> Corresponding to MS 27,14: *kahnāyi, tohara mukha nahi cāhi, āti pāpeta kāla kahnāyi he*.

<sup>31</sup> Klaiman 1984, p.223f.

“I cannot look at your face any longer. / You are extremely unprincipled, Krishna.”

“This very day, I’ll discharge these five arrows / and snatch you away from the world of existence!”

“Don’t take away my serenity, Krishna!”

These are all the portions that have been elucidated so far. Although the language shows many linguistic features common to the ŚKK, many lines remain unclear because of the above mentioned difficulties. Nevertheless, many parallel expressions and lines are found, which suggest that these songs are from the ŚKK.

Song No.18, although not identified in the ŚKK, is one whose meaning is relatively clear:

Śrī // ekatālī //

antare antare gopi antare aṅganā / rāsa mandara kṣere devakinandane //dhru

kāhu deya āriṅgana kāhu deya cuṁbane / stane nakha ghāta deya adhara daṁsane //dhru

nivi visarccana kare kṛṣṇa rasa vase gagane apasaragana sayatnikhase //

rāsa mandare kṛḍā dekhe thira candra rāti bādhe kṛṣṇa rame candra kāma dhandhā //18

The gist would be:

“Inside, inside, cowgirls, [come] inside the court! / In the circle of the dance party (*rāsa*) plays (*kṣere* = *khele*) the son of Devakī (= Kṛṣṇa). He gives someone an embrace, gives someone a kiss, / [and] gives [someone] a scratch of nail in the breast, and [someone] a bite in the lips. // In the excess of desire (*rasa-vase*), he unties someone’s waist string. / In the sky, *apsaras* [???]. // Seeing the play (*kṛḍā* = *krīḍā*) in the circle of the dance party, the moon is motionless, / Kṛṣṇa enjoys the night [???]. //

As for MS Song Nos. 28 to 34, i.e. the second subdivision dealing with a drama scene, a question remains about what relation this drama has with the preceding Kṛṣṇa songs. Does it indicate that the Kṛṣṇa songs were sung before the drama began on the stage? Or, were the two texts without any connection put together in one manuscript? As pointed out in the beginning of this article, expressions like “the king of Bengal/Vaṅga” shows that this drama has a certain connection with Bengal. At the moment we are not able to give an adequate answer to this question without comparing this fragment with other manuscripts of the Gopīcandraṅgata preserved in the Kathmandu Valley. Whatever it may be, we will continue further investigations into this matter and our results will be published in the future.

## Abbreviations

MS = manuscript NIA = New Indo Aryan ŚKK = Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan

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(= 2007/2008AD), pratham saṅskaraṇ 1323 (= 1916/1917AD).

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## 『クリシュナ讃歌』の新発見の写本断片

カーシーナート・タモート

北田 信

キーワード：中期ベンガル語、ネワール、カトマンドゥ

ボル・チョンディダシュ (Baru Caṇḍīdās) 作『クリシュナ讃歌』(Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan) は中期ベンガル語最初の作品である。今まで、写本はベンガル地方で一個しか見つかっていなかった。ところが最近になって、ネパール・カトマンドゥでこの作品の写本断片が発見された。本論文では、この写本断片を簡潔に記述し、そこに記載された歌詞のうち、二つを『クリシュナ讃歌』のものと同定した。