Radha-Krishna lyrics and poetical works in pre-Caitanya era...
It has already been noted that stray songs and lyrics dwelling on the love-making between Radha and Krishna were not unknown in the old Bengali period. Indeed stories relating to amorous attitude of Krishna were widely known and stray songs written in Apabramsya and Sanskrit collected by quite a few reputed compiler point to the fact that the sentiment of love, wooing and amorous plays displayed therein were popular folk-songs. These verses by virtue of their being associated with the names of Radha and Krishna should in no way be accepted as compositions connected with any religious feelings whatsoever. Ramendro Sundar Trivedi in his preface to "Sree Krisna Kirtana" struck a note of Vaishnavaite fervour and devotion which he found in the text under consideration. In fact, a true devout sensing the spirit of Vaishnavism in any compositions bearing
love-affairs between Radha and Krisna might be inclined to go back to still earlier period to discover prevalence of a religious fervour of Bhakti-cult in those days long before the advent of Rabindranath.

It will not be out of the way to point out that side by side with the existing sophisticated dramatic works of the elite written in Sanskrit in the earlier days, there was a type of popular light plays written in the prakrit dialects which were source of amusement for the ordinary people. Such works termed as "Sattaka" in the Sahitya Darpana dwell on popular sentiment of human love. Rajaekore’s "Karpuramanjari" written around 8th century AD is a Sattaka containing verses and songs depicting beauty of heroine and indicating amorous pleasures. In all likelihood, a tradition had been developed to display love-affairs of Krishna-Radha in the form of popular verses, "Yatra" or "Natgiti" even during the Pala of Bengal. About Sattaka, Suru remarks: "Sattaka, therefore appears to be kind of loka-natya (formerly called TAMASHA in Marathi) which pleased and delighted the masses while the gentle
society shunned it."

Indeed the "Komelekānta madhur pūdayali" of Jaydev was a luxurious display of amorous delights enjoyed in the royal court. This was probably a finished work of art by a great poet based on folk-traditions in relation to the love affairs of Radha-Krishna. "In all probability Jaydev was chiefly and essentially a poet. No doubt he emphasises in this poem the praise and worship of Krishna but it was not unusual in older poetry to present poetic and even secular theme under the garb of religion." ² In Vidyapati, a great poet as he was, the beauty and flavour of youthful life has been attuned to the music of eternal love, but it was not a zealous approach of a devout Vaisnava, but an image of life depicted in a poetic spirit. The fervent leanings to Krishna by Radha as found in Jaydev and Vidyapati are expressed "in the intimate language of earthly passion".³ Dr. De, thinks it unhistorical and illogical to scent the flavour of Vaisnavaite Bhakti in the composition of the poet during the time of Laksmisena. He further notes that the work definitely served as a source of inspiration to the later poets viz. "as the Srikrishna kirtana of Badu Candidas".⁴
The poet of Sri Krisna Kirtana assorted materials from different purana's, Sri Gitagovinda and also from different local sources. He probably collected and were aware of materials handed down through traditions. The basic sources might be the Bhagabat purana, the Bisnu purana, the Gita Govinda. He was definitely a well-read learned man, yet he in creating dramatic man situations, in dialogues and in some minor settings of plot might have depended on age-old stories, nat-giti or popular "pancali". Though the text strikes a note prevailing irreligious and impious conditions when the birth of Krisna was felt a necessity to uphold the social justice and truth, yet in the first canto itself he also briefly describes birth of Radha and her marriage with impotent Aihan. Thereafter, the text begins to sing song of the mundane earth, of human aspirations and of domestic, social as well as mental resisting forces working in the minds of Radha, a child-wife, a village girl so to say. Maledher hailed Krisna as the "Lord of his heart", and depicted valour and glory of the protector and saviour. In
though there is an expression on "Vaidhi-bhakti" but the emotional excess and the "madhuryalila as supposed to have been given vent to in tune with the episode found in the Sri-Krisna Kirtana cannot be accepted as the "raganuga bhakti." Dr. Bapurao stated, no poetry of this age was confined exclusively to writing songs on Radha-Krisna. Jayadeva himself did not write only the Gitegovinda.... he composed poems on earthly love and passion.... Even we come across verses on Radha Krisna written by Laksanduran.

It is evident therefore, from verses found in anthologies written earlier, verses collected by Rupa Goswami (Padavali) and from the poetical works of Jaydev and Beda Candidas, as well as the Radha songs of Vidyapati that poetical works dwelling on earthly passion and human emotions were composed long before an established norm of "raganuga-bhakti" preached and professed by Sri Caitanya. The translated versions of the Srimad Bhagvat viz. of Maladhar Basu and others had a tone of "vaidhi" bhakti, and even the "vyas of Caitanyaalila" Sri Vrindavandas hailed his lord as an "avatara" who came in
human form to protect the society from disorder and sin and chaos. In Sri Krisna Kirtana, however, this aspect of Vaidhi Bhakti has never been clearly pronounced though the birth of Krisna was an urge by the gods. Though this attitude of Bhakti was predominantly followed elsewhere, in Bengal even in later days i.e. during and after Sri Caitanya, it was not favoured much. The "raganuga" Bhakti of the Gaudya Vaishnavism was never reflected in the literary works noted earlier. These poets followed in content and expression the traditional brand of Indian amorous and esoteric love-poems.

It may be noted that the old Bengali poetry contained in the Carya and Doha, has on many occasions displayed a sentiment of love and passion even in symbolic verses. Whatever might be the philosophical and religious attitude implied therein, the pades depicting the beauty of the aver girl and poet's longing to have her as consort, or Kaka as an amorous lover deeply losing heart to Bombi-girl, do not materially differ from the early esoteric verses.
associated with the names of Radha-Krisna. In content and in
devotional aspects "the Vaishnavism of the time could scarcely
escape its (Tantric-Buddhistic) influence. Its bipolar
system of thought and culture, for instance, must have consi-
derably influenced and shaped bipolar conception of Radha
and Krishna. In the later Vaishnava tantra, Radha has been
mentioned as a spirit of Sakti. They svarupa-sakti and
Hladini-sakti of Radha who was supposed to mad in love with
Krisna have been explained and accepted in a new light so
that it has transformed into a distinct philosophical code
of LILAVADA. In "Ujijvalanilaman" (Radha-prakama) the
Hladini Sakti of Radha was said to have emanated from the
bliss of maha-SAKTI. Rupa Goswami based his views with refer-
ence to Gtani-tantra. Dr Dasgupta also observes, Radha in
Caitanyita Vaishnavism became so distinctly singular in passion
and physical appearance that she can no longer be identified
with sakti of the Tantra.

(b)

Except a few casual remarks Vidyapati has so far been
left out of the preceding discussions Vidyapati has been
acclaimed by Mahaprabhu as a devotee whose pades pleased him much. Vidyapati, however composed his padavoli before the advent of Mahaprabhu. He was in the court of Sivasinaha, the king of Mithila and composed his pada's in Vrajabuli.

Inspite of Sri Caitanyadeva's appraisal, there is no evidence that the poet was a Vaishnava by faith. Contrarily, he composed poems in praise of Lord Siva, with a feeling of devotion to Durga, and with a spirit of dedication to Radhava. He wrote biographical narrative kavya in Apabraman and above all the padavali which Mahaprabhu tasted with delight. Prof. A.K. Banerjee observes in his concise complete History of Sanskrit literature that not only was Vidyapati born before the advent of Sri Caitanya, he sang in eulogy of many gods and goddesses; secondly his "padavali" do not reflect the sentiment of Bhakti, he was indeed a "paucopasaka".

Vidyapati has been acclaimed as a "Vaishnava mahajana by the persons of Vaishnavaite faith but he was not a avowed Vaishnava, he presented a Radha as a frivolous girl gradually
developing physical symptoms of womanhood and moving with her companions like a sportive fawn with surging waves of new-born sense of love and passion. A genuine poet is enamoured with "form" and "Beauty" - of Nature, Human Beings, Divine souls and whatever he sees through his physical and inward eyes. Vidyapati unfolded, to as a charmed seer, the nascent beauty of an adolescent girl and nascent beauty of Love that emanates from heart. He is never spiritual in his approach. While Jaydeva's Radha symbolises love and "sentiment of love for her consort, Vidyapati's heroine has a steady and gradual growth of body and mind. Badu Candidas also does not present Radha as a symbolic type character, she has a growth by and by of body and mind, she moves dramatically with domestic, social and finally mental conflicts. Badu Candidas's Radha is an innocent girl born and brought up in rural surroundings, when Krishna appeals to her physical beauty, she has a feeling of profanation. Vidyapati's Radha is well aware of her beauty and is pleased at heart to be praised by others. She is enchanted with the sentiment
of budding love, and emotional upsurge of being loved. On the other hand, Badu's Radha when attains an age of understanding finds herself in a world of disillusionment. With all her feminic, domestic and social prejudices she feels herself in utter isolation, deprived and dejected. Then and only then, the lute of the stray lover (Krishna) which she hated all the while, begins to tune a music of life. 17

Through Radha, in padavali Candidas or in other poets of Caitanya and post-Caitanya period the subjective devotional personality of the poets, the 'mahajana's fine expression of their sentiment of Bhakti. Radha, on the contrary, in Vidyapati and Badu is an objective character, too much human-conscious of her personal and social self (in respective cases). She is never depicted as a symbolic figure, companions of Radha in Vidyapati and the presence of "badei" in Badu make her aware of the world around. So this Radha is an earthly Being and never spiritual at the earlier phases. She is, from the beginning not shown to be wedded to an eternal spiritual and supreme Being.
Even before the norms of Vaisnava padaa of Bengal

were set-up, Vidyapati composes this norm

on outing, sojourn or "abhisara" of Radha, and in executing

his poetic merit, he was definitely influenced by the tradi-
tions of the ancient Indian poetry—its ornamental and concep-
tual aspects. Indeed, he it was, who through his high-

standard of appealing poetic tone set-up a pattern of the padae of "

"abhisara" which the Vaisnava mahajanes accepted and followed."

These verses, reflecting the aspirations for a higher goal,

striving for achieving the fullness of life strike a note

of genuine poetry which is an image of life spoken in eternal

truth" (Shelley

"Defence of Poetry"). The value-based

approach to Vidyapati's poems, and that too, with a pre-

ceived feelings of Vaisnava" rose-vada," strips his works

of the merit of a great work of art. Matthew Arnold while

noting the difference in outlook between the ancient Greeks

and a modern mind observes\(^1\) .... with us attention is fixed

on the value of thoughts and images which occur in the

treatment of an action". Badu has, for his Radha struck
a poignant note of the pangs of being alone, of leading a life so desolate and meaningless (Radha-viraha), but he has no "abhisara". In fact, "abhisara" of Vidyapati or the absence of the same of Badu is not really a physical action, it is only a mental projection - an inner urge for deeper realisation of life. This therefore, is not exclusively a committed expression in tune with the Vaisnava theology. Vidyapati, like other great poets with meditative bent of mind had a spirit of devotion no doubt but he was not a Vaisnava in the estimation of Caitanyaite Vaisnavism.

The poignant note of living alone without which life becomes meaningless, and of an insatiable desire to be with the Heavenly consort as we find in "Radha-viraha", and the blissful joy of deep realisation - an attainment of the desired objective as reflected in Vidyapati's "Bhavasamjiman" have a mystic overtone of poets who as human beings have at the same time, a spiritual craving for an unified goal of life.

All great poets sing alike.
This therefore is poetry, a higher form of feeling of deep realisation (or a desire for it) of the sole-selfthis soul waiting for Heavenly bride-visititation of divinity in man. Why need we fear to extend this most beautiful and natural sentiment to the intercourse between the human soul and its maker possessing as we do the very highest warrant for analogy which existed between conjugal and divine love sometimes, it is held that songs of Vidyapati, dwelling on Radha-Krisna basically provide "leukiko rasa", but at times the verses appear to have been attuned with a spiritual meaning. Such remarks tend to underestimate the poetic genius of the poet, because the attitude of glorification of human soul and a craving for identifying oneself with the eternal flow of creative force are expressed in literature by great poets like Tagore and Goethe with a super-human feeling of Unity.

From the point of view of theory and theological dogma, Vidyapati was not a Vaishnava, nevertheless he was a poet, an artist who hovered from the sky on earth to an abode of eternal truth.
Apart from the Radha-Krisna verses and song of Vidyapati there were pades composed before or during the advent of Mahaprabhu. It is said, Sri Caitanya liked to taste the songs of three poets\textsuperscript{25} in particular, of which those of Candidasa are ones to be considered now. The padavali of Candidasa or adi Candidasa, as he is sometime referred to was a distinct personality and must not be confused with "Badu" Candidasa of Sri Krishna Kirtana fame\textsuperscript{26}. In content, form as well as in poetic mood, the verses of this Candidasa varies widely from those of Sri Krishna Kirtana. These three poets in particular have been widely acclaimed to be devout Vaishnavas, though "Badu" has sometimes been rejected by reputed scholars\textsuperscript{27} and has also been condemned for his alleged excess of obscenity. That however is beside the point here.

Verses composed by Candidasa are not found in the set-pattern of the standard Vaishnava lyrics of Bengal. While Vidyapati and Badu seemed to have displayed
artistic craftsmanship in ornamentation, use of metaphor
and epigram, his verses come from the heart direct in
plain and simple style. Radha of Badu is in the
first phase rooted to a family surrounding and is averse
to the lusty frivolity of Krisna, and of Radha of Vidyap-
pati makes appearance as a budding flower, yet ignorant
of the charms of Beauty, Love and Nature, Radha of Candida
is a dedicated soul from the beginning, who, contrary
to the former type of character, appears to be like a nun
indifferent to the world at large and to her own beauty
or comfort.

It appears that Candida was basically not a poet,
but a saintly man, and verses come out of his heart as
expressions of the saint's inner soul. The "atma-vivadana"
(self-deception) verses clearly indicates the saintly
poets identity with Radha- Neither in attitude not in his
composition, did he follow any established norm(had there
been any at his times) of Bhakti poetry. Like Radha of his
creation, sitting alone with a mood and spirit of dedi-
...
distinct from "atmanivedan" of Candidas. A man of saintly personality as he was, he stroked a tune of finality with a pleasure of submission

"parana parana bandhila premer phansi"

strings of love bind the heart's together.

A happy finale of "the intercourse between the human soul and its maker" as Keble puts it Vidyspati's "bhava-sammilan" is not a saintly realisation, but a poetic projection of fullness which is ever anew and ever afresh.²⁸

sākhi, ki puchasi anubhava moy
soi piriti anu — rāga bākhanite
tile tile nutan hoy.

There is a note of ecstasy and serenity in this expression of feeling. Tagore says²⁹ this feeling of infinite in Nature is identification with absolute Beauty and this feeling of infinite through human yarning is the touch of
of supreme Love. Wordsworth feels a presence in nature of "something far more deeply interfused", and "a sense sublime, and joy of elevated thoughts". Verses of Vidyapati, dwelling on sentiment of love between Radha and Krisna, touch the sky-high sublimity and joy of elevated thoughts which reflect the fineness of poetry redeeming "the visitations of divinity in man." 

(d)

Sri Krisna Kirtana of Badu Candidasa is an important literary specimen of the pre-Caitanya period dwelling on Radha-Krisna legend. Many incidental points have already been drawn into this discussion in the preceding sections with reference to Badu. The much debated points on the poet's personal life and the date of composition of his work are extraneous yet very pertinent matters which have at length been discussed by different authorities from the historical point of view.
bk. K is the first and only available text so far which is not an assortment or serial arrangement of verses depicting the stress and strain between Radha and Krisna, it has a very nicely planned dramatic setting in the form of an episodical narrative poetry in Bengali literature. Nowhere do we find a pictorial and graphic presentation of Radha since her birth in minute detail. She is a village-girl, subsequently & being married to the impotent Aihan at a premature stage, she is found to be going out to sell milk and cards with other gopi-girls to far off places even across the Jamuna. An innocent village-girl, a child-wife is interrupted on the way by a wanton boy Kanha. Sometimes she is teased, heckled, her modesty is outraged, and with her domestic attachment and social as well as feminine prejudices she resists, rebukes and chastises the wanton lover.

Badu, therefore places Radha in a social and domestic surrounding. The whole episode centres round Radha and Krisna.
at times come to the fore-front only as an agent to kindle all sorts of conflicts—moral, physical and mental, in the life-drama of the heroines. The dramatic developments upto the "Dana-khanda" are designed to spread out the ground of the theme and then it takes a turn from "Nauka khanda" where Radha is shown to have come in physical contact per force with Kanha. A child-wife who by this time attained adolescence and who naturally remained dissatisfied with her impotent husband now found herself craving with passion Radha who wants to love and wants to be loved ultimate discovers in her an upsurge of love which the passion has aroused. This has been very skilfully shown in Yamunakhandas.

The free analysis of situation as presented by the poet indicated clearly this Radha of Badu is distinctly human and in no way can she be acknowledged as an idealised character of the later Vaishnava literature. In fact Sk. K. can even be accepted as a very good piece of dramatic poetry, and had the poet not adapted the legendary name of Radha, Sk. K. could safely be acclaimed as a poetical drama based on
life as it was. Regarding the excess of reference to the physical side of human life one commentator observes that the reference to the physical aspects of life, as we come across in the later Vaisnava verses is got so bare, and... the throbbing of heart and sensational feelings of body and mind strike a super-human tone of idealised, passion free from biological aspirations. 31

As long as the dramatic situations were well spread out in field and furrow, conflicts in the minds of the heroine came from outside. She became a prey to circumstantial complexities. The curtain of a social drama was lifted by Candidas the dramatist wide open before our eyes exposing the vile pranks of the youthful hero. The moment the objective assessment of conflicting situations ceased to exist, the dramatist leaves the pen to be taken up by the poet who finds Radha struggling within in the inner drama of life—Vasei-khanda is symbolical, as to say, in as much as the lyre or the lute of Radha's heart which was getting rusted emitted sweet music by touch of love. Sk.K ends in Radha-viraha...
which marks a distinct approach and attitude of the poet. While padaveli Candidasa finishes with a happy "union", and Vidyapati sings a note ecstatic delight of a blissful sublimation, Badu has apparently a tragic note of despair. Candidas strikes a note of saintly conciliation, Vidyapati take a philosopher-poet strikes a note of aesthetic leisure, but Badu appears to be realistic in his final touch. The 'Radha-viraha' is indeed the unheard music of life, this yearning and search for supreme goal is real. This human tragedy is in fact the human achievement. The poet probably believes in this heart-searching rather than in an idealised attainment.

(s)

After a review of the pre-Caitanya verses and poetical works associated with Krisna, a question may now be posed as to whether the ideology of the "prema-bhakti" was rooted to the soil of Bengal before the advent of the exponent of
of Bengal Vaisnavism. It has been pointed out that the concept of "Vaidhi Bhakti" which had been prevailing in other parts of India might have been routed to this area and meladhar Basu and a few others must have been wedded to this thought. It is doubtful and there is no positive evidence to prove whether Vidyapati and "padavali-Candidas" had been influenced by the Nimbarka and/or the Ballabha school of thoughts.\(^{32}\) Dr De who had gone deep into the study of Vaisnava movement in Bengal could not even admit unhesitatingly that the Vaisnava faith in Bengal had its origin from the concept of Bhakti preached by the Madhvi school. In "Caitanya Caritamrita" and in "Caitanya Bhagvat" meeting between Sri Caitanyadeva and Iswara puri has been described Sri Krishnadasa Kaviraj also points\(^{32}\) out that Sri Caitanya has greatly been influenced by Kesab Bharati in acquisition of Vaisnaveite thoughts and philisophy. Iswara puri and Keshab Bharati were disciples of Madhavendra Puri whom Vrindavandas refers to as the precursor of Bengal Vaisnavism.\(^{33}\) The author of 'Caritamrita' has also mentioned about Madhavendra puri with
reverence and compared him to the celestial tree (Kalpa.
It deems that prior to the advent of Sri Caitanya, probably
Madhavendra Puri and his disciples softened the soil of
Bengal by nurturing and preaching the Bhakti cult and subse-
quently Mahaprabhu became a living embodiment of the concept
of "prema-bhakti". To which school did Puri belong? Or did
he belong to any at all — there is no evidence
anywhere in the standard works of Bengal Vaishnavism that
Madhavendra Puri and his disciple Iswara Puri who influenced
the early religious inclinations of Caitanya, was in fact a
Madhva ascetic."34
References:


3. ibid, p. 3.

4. ibid, p. 9.

5. "সর্বাঙ্গে এমন বিষয় আপনার অন্যথা পদ্মের প্রতি আর কিছু অবিকল্প পক্ষপাত।"

Bhattacharyya A. ed. (Sri Krisna Kirtan, Intro. p. 28.

6. "নানা সন্ধ্যা যদি মোদু মোদু আমর্না।" Sri Krisna-Vijaya


8. free translation-ibid."জগ-মহাদেব মিঠুনের অগ্রজ কর্ম দিলেন, করেন বিশাল সর্ব কৃপা সব সুখী করিয়া সমাজে সাধনা করিয়াছিলেন।"

9. "কন্তুলে কথায় সর্ব সুখী বিশালে।" (- শীতলকুমার, সংস্করণ)

"কেসার পর দেব নাচে দোলাদ্ধ মারামানি।" (৩)

10. Mukherjee, H.N.- Ujjvalanilamani (Bharatiya Book Stall)

1372 B.E.), p. 85 মুনি মুনির আমার তর্পণ করিয়া দিলে। তত্ত্ব মুহূর্ত তৃণ প্রাত্মাভাষায়াত্তে মারামানি অনিন্ন মানুষের প্রতি বিস্তৃত বিদ্যুতের সার্থক নীতি।"
11. "...বিচিত্র বিশ্ব পোষ্ট কবিতার তোর রূপ এক প্রলম্বয়ত্বী দৃশ্যমানি
হইতেই আমুজির পোষ্ট কবিতার বিলেও পাদকর্ম্মর করিমানে।"

Dasgupta, S.B. ibid, p.137.

12. De, S.K., ibid, p.27-28

13. ibid(mukherjee), p.50.

14. ibid, p.209 "প্রথম বিচিত্রবিশ্বস্থ রসোন্ত নিয়াঙ্গে, অপূর্বপূজ্য
নির্দেশে নেক্ত সাহিত্যাদিতে সত্য যোগাযোগের বিশিষ্টকরদের
ফোর্ম উপাধি দান।"

15."আন মেহল তৃষ্ণাবৃদ্ধন!"

16. Radha reacts strongly to Krishna's remark on her beauty
when she will not bear
her beauty's weight.

(S.K.)

17."সমস্ত সব মোট আর্তার পাশ হলুদ।"

18. a) হৃদয় আকৃতি, বিকাশ নিয়াঙ্গে
b) হৃদয় কৃষ্ণ মোহ
চিরকির্তা বিদ্যমানি
দিনে দুই ভাবে রাখা।

At times, I roar about,

do not take your
appearance to-day I shall
write and send a letter
to my beloved.
The choice of subjects in Poetry (pp. 311-312).

Banerjee A.K. - 

Kamble S.K. - v. 2, p. 87.


Banc Anjune 


- Mithila Khyon Veiloneva Ramo San, v. 2.

- Tagore (Janam-sundari) (Caitanya Carita, p. 428).

- Let, I come across a

fifth girl for (at this time of the day, alone)
26. Banerji- Sri Kumar ibid, p.27

Banerji, A.K.- Sampurna Itivritta p.30

"ব্যাপক প্রায় প্রকৃত আলোকচিন্তা আকারের মূল কাহন ২৮নং
দিকটে এক কল্পনা সহায়তা কর্মকরম।"

27. Vide, Mazumdar, B.B. Sadas Satakar Padavali, Intro.

28. i) প্রথম কেবল সমাজের আলোক আদায়
কাঙ্কে দিলু দিলু প্রবাহী পরিপূর্ণে
আশিয়া কল্পনার প্রথা।

ii) আমা কুলীর কি তৈরি অন্তরে জনা
বিশ্বণি দিলু আমিশু অর্জনে
শরে কল্পনা করা বলে,
বিশ্বকোষ তরে তারার পথে
মূর্তি মেহিমী পাই।

iii) যাই কি আমারে অনিচ্ছু আমাত
আকাশে জননী অর্জনে
করিবে সব অন্য পথে
মূর্তি মেহিমী পাই।

29. anubhava = anu + yebhu i.e. to be after someone

implying to rediscover oneself.

"বুদ্ধ সঞ্জয় মৃত্যু শীর্ষক স্নেহকৈ এলাকীতে
অনুভব করিয়া নাড়।"

Tagore, Pancabhuti ( মুক্ত ত )


32. Caitanya Caritamrita, Canto II (Madhya lila), 6

33. Caitanya Bhagvat, Adi, 0

34. De, S.K. - ibid., p.