

Compositions of Maharaj Bindadin

By

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IT is a prevailing mis-conception that the Kathak dance is merely an exhibition of technical skill devoid of any literary or aesthetic content. This belief finds support in the performances of many of the exponents who not having cared to study the literary traditions of this style of dancing pay the least attention of the *Rasa* or *Bhava* aspect of Kathak. Even in cases where a dancer uses a literary composition in his dance such as *Kavita* etc. he utilizes the most expressive words of a composition as mere abstract dance syllables. The result is that these emotionally rich compositions which are essentially meant to add grace and expressiveness to the dance lose their entity and remain only as another set of dance syllables.

Lucknow Gharana

Has this been the tradition of Kathak dancing? A study of the history of the *Lucknow Gharana* will reveal that the early exponents of this style were all versed in literature and had built up a literary-treasure for their dance. In books on music written during the last century we find reference to a book on Kathak dancing called *Pothi Prakas* by Shri Prakas Kathak, a forebear of Shri Shambhoo Maharaj. This work which was highly appreciated and valued at that time is not available now. It is said that Wajid Ali Shah had incorporated a portion of it in his book *Sautul Mubarak*. This monumental work is said to have contained among other things description of 360 *Gats* in the repertory of the *Gharana*. Of these *Gats* Wajid Ali Shah chose only sixteen for his court, and most of the remaining have gone into oblivion with the work itself.

It is quite likely that the said work must also have contained the family heritage of compositions on various themes etc. which too have gone out of use, as the versatile Wajid Ali Shah composed new songs and dances to suit his taste which we find in his *Rahas*.

Thus quite a lot of the early traditions of this Kathak family were lost at the time of Wajid Ali Shah.

Maharaj Bindadin

After the downfall of the Oudh Kingdom Maharaj Bindadin, a great dancer of this *Gharana*, attempted to revive the earlier traditions of the family. It was the time of the new national awakening which came in the wake of the Mutiny. Maharaj Bindadin started a school of Kathak dancing in Lucknow. He composed innumerable songs mainly on the theme of *Krishna-Leela* and made them part of his dance repertoire, which have been handed down to the family. Unfortunately due to negligence and lack of interest on the part of his successors most of his compositions are now lost to us.

Dance Songs

I would however like to give a few dance songs composed by Maharaj Bindadin which I have collected from various sources including the descendants of the composer.

A perusal of these compositions will reveal that Maharaj Bindadin was a versatile genius. The songs though depicting a number of themes, such as the revelry of Holi, its effects on Krishna, Radha and Gopis, the Gopis yearning for Krishna etc., are musically very rich. The compositions are in almost all styles viz., *Dhrupad*, *Hori*, *Kheyal*, *Thumri*, *Tappa*, *Bhajans* and also *Dadra* and *Kaharawa*. Due care has been taken to express the literary idea through music and dance. Some songs are composed in pairs and are known as *Joras*, in order to depict the complex emotional attitudes of Gopis. For example if in one song Krishna is depicted as the aggressor and Gopis bewail and threaten to report his pranks to his mother, we find in another song, a '*Jora*', where Gopis play the aggressive role. In these songs the composer takes us through the various

emotional stages in the life of Gopis, his description revealing a masterly grasp of the theory of *Nayikabhed*. In the *Krishna-Leela* of Braj, this devotee of Krishna sees the entire universe in motion. In his vivid portrayal of the emotional attitudes of Gopis one can discern his mind soaring high into the realm of philosophy visualising the strife and longings of Jeevatma for its union with Paramatma.

हमीर : त्रिताल

मोहे छेड़त मोहन बनवारी ।
डगर चलत में देखो देत गारी ॥ मोहे ॥
नटखट नन्द के लाल न माने ।
बिन्दा सुनो मैं इन संग हारी ॥ मोहे ॥

Look how He teases me,
The ever alluring Banwari!
He waylays and hurls abuses at me.
The incorrigible mischief maker,
He pays no heed to my entreaties.
Says Binda, "I know not what to do?"

जोड़ा : त्रिताल

आवें लचक लचक ब्रज नारी ।
बेंदी भाल श्रवण कुंडल गले माला ।
मुख दामिनी सी दमकत चालें मतवारी ।
देखत बिहारी पगपरी गले बांह डारी ।
बिन्दा पर कृपा रहे तेरी गिरधारी ।

Behold the maidens of Braj
Coming with swaying gait
As though intoxicated !
Mala adorns their necks.
Bindi shines on their foreheads.
And *Kundal* dangles on their ears.
They come in swaying gait,
Revealing their faces
Like the flashes of lightning.
Having spotted Behari,
They fall at his feet,
And put their arms round him;
Says Binda, "O Girdhari,
Be merciful to me."

सपताल

मेरी सुनो श्याम छाड़ो अंचरवा ।
कहा मान ले प्यारे हूं तेरी चेरी ॥

जाने नहीं देत गयल लंगरवा ।
बिन्दा सुनो यह नहीं मानू श्याम तेरी ।

I beseech you Shyam
Let go my *Anchal*!
Listen to me, "O dear,
I am your *Cheri*!
Look at this impudent boy blocking my
path.
Says Binda, "O Shyam, none of your
pranks will be tolerated."

दादरा

काहे रोकत डगर प्यारे नंद लाल मेरे ।
नित ही करत झगड़ा हमसे पनघट नहीं जाने देत ।
देख भई नारी मोरी बहिया क्यों गहे रे ॥ काहे ॥
बिनती करूं मैं नहीं वह मानत, सुनत नहीं भाई
छीन लीनो गरे को हार मांगे नहीं दे रे ।
बिन्दा देख ढीठ लंगर बरबस मोरी लाज लेत
दूंगी दुहाई अब ही जाई नन्द के दुआरे ॥

Why do you block my path
O darling of Nanda?
Starting a fresh quarrel
You hamper my daily task of fetching water.
O Mother,
In vain did I protest :
"Why do you catch hold of my hand?
Can't you see the prying eyes of women?"
But he did not heed.
He forcibly snatched away my necklace,
I begged of him, yet he refused to return it.
Thus did that naughty boy embarrass me!
"Wait", says Binda,
Until I complain to Nanda."

जोड़ा : दादरा

डगर चलत देखो श्याम मेरो मन लीनो ।
मैं तो जाँत पनिया भरन आवत है उतसे कान्ह ।
निरखंत जिया गयो लुभाय टोना अस कीनो ॥
बांकी छबि कैसी आली मुकुट शीश धारे ।
भूकुटि कुटिल केसर को तिलक भाल दीनो ॥
बिन्दा कहत सकल नारी मोहे ब्रज नाथ देख ।
भूली कुल जग की लाज मदन अंग मीनो ॥

While going my way Shyam snatched my
heart away.
I was going to fetch water,

And there comes he—
A glimpse of him and I was lost!
Oh what a spell he cast.
With the *mukut* on his head
And *Kesar-tilak* on the forehead
He stood with a mischievous twist of his
eye-brows,
What an enchanting sight it was!
Says Binda,
“Thus did the women of Braj,
Shamelessly confess their feelings
At the sight of the Lord of Braj.”

त्रिताल

कान्ह देखो ठाढ़े है ब्रज की ओर
कैसे के जाऊं पनिया भरन मोरी आली
मोरी सरकी चुनरिया छोर ।
नित-नित छेड़ करत हम से, यही डर लागे
जो अपने बस कर मोहे पैये
फिर बिन्दा श्याम बनेगी पति मोर ।

Kanha stands athwart the path to Braj!
How shall I go to fetch water, my friend?
He pulls my veil from my head.
Everyday does he set on me !
I am afraid.
Says Binda,
“He hopes, to draw me to him
And become my husband!”

जोड़ा : त्रिताल

देखो मुरली बजी बन की ओर ।
कैसे के करूं जिया नहीं माने मोरी आली री,
सब बन के चलो वहीं ओर ।
सब सखी मोह गई हैंगि कृष्ण रट लागो ।
बिन्दा कहत धन्य-धन्य ब्रज नारी,
निस दिन प्रेम लगे हरी ओर ।

Listen to the call of the flute,
How can I resist the luring melody?
Come, *Sakhis*, let us adorn ourselves and
hurry thither,
Enchanted by the flute, the *Sakhis* rush
toward him uttering Krishna! Krishna!
Says Binda, “Glory be to thee, O women
of Braj
Who are pining for Hari day and night.”

त्रिताल

जल जमुना भरन कैसे जाऊं ब्राज ।
मची धूम बजत ढप मृदंग बीन,
खेले नंद को लाल होरी ब्रज में ब्राज ।
मुख मीजे भल रोरी अंग देत झकझोरी
गहि गरवा लगाये मुंह चूमे बाराजोरी ॥
बिन्दा श्याम घेर लिनो सखिन ब्राज ॥

How can I go to Jamuna to fetch water?
Holi is in full swing!
Listen to the tumult and deafening sounds
of the *Mridang* and *Duff*.
Look, what that darling of Nanda does:
He paints the faces of *Gopis* with colour,
He seizes them and gives them a violent
shake,
He puts his arms round them
And forcibly kisses them.
Says Binda,
“Thus did Shyam set on *Sakhis* today!”

कहरवा

जसुदा के लाल खेले होरी धूम मचोरी ।
चोवा चन्दन अतर गुलाब को गलियन कींच मचोरी ।
उड़त गुलाल लाल भयो वादर चली रंगकी झोरी ॥
स्याही नील मिलाय तेल में सबके मुख ही भलोरी ।
लाख जतन कर छूटत नाहीं भई कारी सब गोरी ।
बाजा बजत देव नभ छाये सुमन वरख करि जोरी ।
बिन्दा कहत धन्य ब्रज युवती नाचत कृष्ण खडोरी ॥

Son of Yasoda is engrossed in the riotous
play of colours,
The lanes are slushy with *Chandan* and
Gulab
The *Gulal* flying in the atmosphere
Has painted the sky red,
And the patches of clouds above
Appear like bags of colour,
Daubed are the faces of all
With black and white mixed in oil,
In vain do they try to wash off the colour
And fair faces are dark now.
Heaven rejoices, gods beat the drums and
shower flowers.
Says Binda, “Glory be to thee
O maidens of Braj
Dancing with Krishna in ecstasy.”

चाँचर

मैं तो खेलूंगी उन्हीं से होरी गुइयां
 लैंके अबीर गुलाल कुंकुमा
 वह तो रंग भरे पिचकारी गुइयां ॥
 जाय घेरयो डगर मोहे जाने दो घर
 ऐसो बीठ लंगर नाहीं माने निडर
 मोहे गरे लगाये कर जोरी
 पैयां परोरी बांह गहोरी ।
 अब श्याम सुन्दर से रंग मचाये
 बिन्दा लाऊंगी गहि बर जोरी ॥

With him alone will I play *Holi* today
 Why?
 I was going with *Abir, Gulal* and *Kumkum*
 But he came armed with colour-filled *Pichkari*.
 He waylaid me, "Let me go", I pleaded.
 But naughty that he is
 He is not afraid.
 With folded hands he came to me,
 Then caught hold of my hand
 And forcibly put his hands round me.
 Thus did he treat me.
 Now, says Binda, "I must
 Avenger this wrong."

चाँचर

कान्ह खेलो कहां ऐसी होरी गुइयां ।
 किन रंग में बोरी, मुख भली है रोरी ।
 राधे पूछत खड़ी कर जोरी ॥
 तेरी चोटी गुथाइ, मांग मोती भराइ
 कर चूरी पिन्हाई सारी दीन्हीं ओढ़ायी ।
 देखो आज बिन्दा श्याम सुन्दर की
 खुली है नित की चोरी ॥

"Why do you try to conceal your escapades
 of *Holi*?
 Your face smeared with colour betrays you.
 Who drenched you in colour, Oh, Kanha?"
 Asks Radha with folded hands.
 "Who plaited your hair and decked it with
 pearls?
 Who adorned your hands with bangles
 And draped you in a Sari?"
 Says Binda, "No escape,
 You have been caught today for all your
 dalliances."

A *Gopi*, whose husband was away, was
 being approached by other *Sakhis* to join
 them to play *Holi* with Krishna.

विरह भाव : चाँचर

का से खेलूं पिया घर नाही,
 होरी खेलत लाज आवत ।
 हमसे कहत छिपके चलो सखी,
 यही बसी तुमरे मन माही ।
 कैसे बिन्दा उनके सनमुख हूं,
 जिन नहीं देखी मोरी परछाई ।

With whom shall I play *Holi*
 When my husband is away?
 Without him the festival has no charm!
 "Fie on you *Sakhi*", says Binda,
 "How could you have the heart
 To coax me to play on the sly with one,
 Who has not even had a glimpse of my
 shadow?"

ताल : दादरा

प्रगटे ब्रज नंद लाल मुख निधनिया ।
 घुघवारी अलकें मधु पंकित सो है कंबलन पर ।
 लगे चन्द्र कोने मनु राहु-सी ग्रहनिया ॥
 बंक भूकुटी चपल नैन कोटि कोटि वारूं मैं न
 देखत भई दासी सब जगत मन मोहनिया ॥ प्रगटे ॥
 घुटरन हरी धावे गहि बांह पग चलावें ।
 यही भुजा पग है आली बलि बान्धि वाली हनिया
 ॥ प्रगटे ॥
 लीनो है मात गोद बाल कलि कर विनोद
 जीयो तुम प्राण मेरे कंस के दहनिया ॥ प्रगटे ॥
 यही जगत को उबारो यही हेत अंग धारो
 गिरधर गोपाल बिन्दा के पाप के हरनिया ॥ प्रगटे ॥

Born in the land of *Braj* is the son of Nanda,
 the embodiment of all happiness.
 Like swarms of bees on lotus, like the moon
 partially eclipsed do the dark curly tresses rest
 on his face,
 With his bow-like eye-brows and restless eyes
 This enchanter of the Universe
 Has captivated me.
 He crawls on all fours, and totters on his
 unsteady feet.
 He stretches his frail hands seeking support
 Unsteady and frail.

But these are the same feet that sent the
mighty
Bali to Patal, the same hands that killed
the wicked Baali.
His mother picks him up but he slips down
and runs hither and thither.
Thus does he indulge in childish pranks.
He, the slayer of Kansa.
May he be blessed with long life, the Lord
of my soul !
O ! Girdhar Gopal, O ! Saviour of Binda,
Come back again among mortals and save
the world from misery.

In the following song the salient
features of Kathak dance are visualised in
the dance of Natwar Krishna.

ताल : रूपक

निरतत ढंग है....

बहे मवन मंद सुगन्ध शीतल बंशी बट तट निकट
जमुना वृन्दावन की कुंज गलिन में राधे गोपी उमंग ॥
संगीत नाचत तगुन थरकित तत्त थै थै तत्तत थै थै ।
गोपी कर पर श्याम कर सोहे मनहु बँठे भुजंगा ॥
॥ निरतत ॥

लय गत दिखावत हाव भाव कटाक्ष सोलह अंग बनावत
गीब डोलत मसक थिरकन चलत ताल ही संग ॥
॥ निरतत ॥

अंग फेरी कवच पलटां फरद तोड़ा और तिहैयया
तत त थै थै तत त तिमदा दिग दिग चरण धरत
उछंग ॥ निरतत ॥
तुम नाथ बिन मोहे को उबारे कौन अस जो बिपतटारे
बिन्दादीन पे कृपा करो प्रभु व्यापे दुख नहीं अंग ॥
॥ निरतत ॥

When a balmy breeze blew over Brinda-
van swaying the trees and creepers,
Fanning the flames of love in the hearts of
Radha and Krishna danced in ecstasy.
As He danced *Sangeet* creating musical
patterns varied syllables.
His dark hand clasping the fair wrist of
the *Gopi* seemed like a serpent resting on it.
With the beautiful movements of his sixteen
angas
He showed various gaits, and the *Hav-Bhav*.
His face and eyes reflected the varied
moods in exuberant gaiety!

Through the whirling movements of his
dance
He demonstrated *toda palta*, and spinning
tihais
And his agility of feet was a feast for
the eyes!
O Saviour of the world, bestow on Binda
the same agility and grace you possess.

ठुमरी : त्रिताल

काहे को मेरे घर आये हो
श्रीतम तुम रैन सोहत संग जागे
नैना रतनारे
पैयां न पड़ो अब प्यारे ॥ काहे को ॥
उनही के घर रहो
जावो नहीं बोलो मुझसे
बिन्द सुनो नहीं यह माने
जिया जारे (गारे) ॥ काहे को ॥

Why have you come to me now, my love,
Having spent the night in sport with my
rival?
No, do not fall at my feet for forgiveness,
Your eyes tainted red—tell a thousand
tales.
Go back to her and make her happy!
Do not talk to me.
Says Binda, "I am burning within, but he
does not heed."

झूलत राधे नवल किशोर ।
जड़ित मणि दोऊ खम्ब राजत
झोंक देत झकोर ॥
घेर घन यह रात बादल
घटा उठी घन घोर ।
पवन मंद सुगंध डोलत बरस रहे चहूँ और ॥ झूलत ॥
इत मुकुट छत्री उत चंद्रिका
इत श्याम उत तन गोर ।
मनहु घन पर तड़ित चमकत
देख नाचत मोर ॥
व्योम हरि शशि राधिका
सब सखिन उडगन ठोर ।
जरि की सारी अंग बिराजत
लग्यो मोतिन कोर ॥ झूलत ॥

ब्रह्म शिव सनकादी नारद
करत जय जय शोर ।
बिन्दादीन पे कृपा करो प्रभु
मांगे यही कर जोर ॥ झूलत ॥

Behold the happy sight,
Radha and Krishna are seated on the *Jhoola*.
Fastened on bejewelled pillars !
Rocked by the gust of gale
The *Jhoola* swings back and forth soaring
higher and higher,

Roaring clouds dark and thick
Gather above in mighty array,
And a gentle breeze
Floating on its fragrant wings
Sprinkles the earth with soothing showers !
Matched in contrast
Behold the dark and fair
Seated together are they—

The dark-hued and the moon-faced—
Like the clouds and the lightning !
And his *Mukut*?

Is it the peacock dancing at the sight of the
clouds ?

Behold the Universe on this swing !
Radha—the moon,
Shining against the dark sky—Krishna !
And those shimmering pearls on their garments?
Aren't they the stars?

All sing your glory:

Brahma, Shiva, and sages alike,
O, Merciful!

Pleas Bindadin, with folded hands,
“Bestow the bounty of mercy on me !”

जाय कोउ कहो, जाय इतना संदेशवा कोई कहो
जबसे गये मोरी, सुध हू न लीनी
बिरहा के बान हमसे ना सहो
बरसन जो बीते दरस बिन
'बिन्दा' बिन मिले श्याम, हमसे ना रहो ।
जाय कोउ कहो ।

Let some one go and tell him,
Once away from me
Why did he keep me out of his mind ?
For years have I endured
The pangs of separation !
And, now no more can I endure !
Says Binda :
“Not for a moment can I live
Without Him !”

श्याम लचक चले—मुकुट धरि आवत
श्याम लचक चले मुकुट धरि बाँसुरी
ऐसी बजी सबन के मन को हरि आवत
उमगन झूमक झूम झुक चलि
मधु-मतवारे नैना, नैना
'बिन्दा' कहत काहे—मनको हरि आवत ।

Wearing the *Mukut*
Shyam comes,
In exuberant gait.
On the strains of flute
He strings the hearts of the people
Intoxicated with happiness
His restless eyes
Wander hither and thither,
“Why ? and why ?”, asks Binda !

पिया के आवन को सुनत खबरिया
राह तकत हूँ मैं नेक नजरिया ।
तड़पत हूँ मोहे कलना परत है
बिन्दा कहत यूँ ही बीती उमरिया ॥

In anguish and longing
I spent all my life
At last the news—
My beloved may come.
“I remain,” says Binda,
“With my eyes glued to his path !”