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पानी केरां बुद्धिका, अस मानस की जाति।
देखात ही छिपि जाय़, ज्यौं तो परभाति ॥ - कबीर

This life of ours is like a bubble of water;
As soon as you see it, it disappears,
Like the stars at dawn. - KABIR
Bārahmāsā in Candāyan and in Folk Traditions

SHYAM MANOHAR PANDEY

Bārahmāsā, the description of the twelve months has been a very popular genre in the literature and folklore of northern India dating back to the twelfth century. The first literary bārahmāsā was composed by a Muslim Persian poet Sād i Salmān (AD 1043-1131) who lived in Lahore. Sād i Salmān, whose full name was Masū’d ibn Sād i Salmān, lived during the Ghaznavī period of Indo-Muslim history. Masū’d was a wealthy landlord and was made Governor of Jalandhar for some time. His political interests led to repeated periods of imprisonment, but in AD 1107 he was finally set free and lived to an old age (A. Schimmel 1979, p. 11). It was Sanā’ī, the Persian mystical poet from Ghazna, who carefully collected his verses. A little later Jain poets too started writing bārahmāsā and the tradition continued for a long time.

Sufi poets writing in Hindi also used the bārahmāsā genre, along with saṭ ṛtu (‘six seasons’) descriptions, and my objective here is to discuss the bārahmāsā of these Sufi poets. These writers are Maulānā Dāūd (Candāyan), Kutuban (Mṛgāvatī), Malik Muhammad Jāyasī (Padmāvat; Kanhāvat) and Maņjhan (Madhumālātī). Later I will compare the Sufi bārahmāsā tradition with Masū’d Salmān’s bārahmāsā and with other bārahmāsā current in the folk literature of the Hindi speaking area.

The first Sufi poet to use the bārahmāsā genre was Maulānā Dāūd. His composition Candāyan, completed in AD 1379 (during the reign of Firoz Shāh Tughlaq, 1351-88), contains a bārahmāsā description of the heroine Mainā’s virah following her husband’s elopement with another woman.2 Mainā’s pangs of separation month by month are described in the following sections.

Sāvan

After Candā has eloped with Lorik, his wife Mainā starts suffering from the pangs of separation in the month of Sāvan (July-August). Crying desperately, she watches day and night for her husband’s
return, and keeps repeating his name (v. 339). She is like a fish out of water.

In the meantime she hears that a caravan of seven hundred traders has arrived whose leader is Surjan. Surjan, a Brahmin, listens carefully to Mainā’s virah tormented message. Mainā describes her separation through the twelve months, beginning with Sāvan (July-August). In fact, most of the early Sufi texts describe bārahmāsā beginning from Sāvan, the only exception being Padmavat, in which the bārahmāsā begins in Āsārh.

In Sāvan the dry earth becomes drenched with water, and greenery sprouts everywhere. Mainā requests Surjan to tell Lorik that the rainy season has captured her eyes and that they are shedding tears continually, rotting the strings of her garlands, and the kohl on her eyes, a mark of her beauty, has wiped off. Mainā requests Surjan to tell Lorik that even since Candā took him away in Sāvan, Mainā’s eyes have continuously poured water. ‘O Surjan! Give Lorik this message that Mainā has been unfortunate and cannot sleep since he went away.’

Kutuban, author of Mrgavati (1503), follows Candāyan when he describes the earth as wearing a garment of greenery. Rūpmini in Mrgavati suffers in the same way as Mainā in Candāyan. She requests Dullabh, the leader of the merchants’ caravan, to tell her husband Manohar that she has been scorched by virah. In Mrgavati the bearer of the message is also a leader of merchants but he does not seem to be a Brahmin as in Candāyan.

Jāyasī uses more detailed imagery in his Padmavat. Nāgmati suffers in Sāvan due to the absence of Ratnasen. In her sorrow she sheds tears of blood which fall to the earth as velvet insects (vīr badhuvā). In the month of Sāvan, as is the tradition even now, girls swing on their swings in happiness, but Nāgmati was overcome by the pain of virah and was trembling with agony. Like the author of Candāyan and Mrgavati, Jāyasī describes the earth as having put on a garment of greenery. In Padmavat it is the bird Parevā who is a messenger. Here Nāgmati, in her message to Ratnasen, says that the whole world is filled with water and that there are impassable mountains and dense forests on the path. ‘How could I come to you? I have no wings to fly.’ Jāyasī’s long and detailed descriptions single him out from the other poets of this tradition of Hindi Sufi poetry.

In Kanhaiyat, which is attributed to Malik Muhammad Jāyasī, milkmaids suffer from virah when Kṛṣṇa leaves them and goes to Madhupuri. Their eyes shed water like the eaves of a house during the rainy season. This imagery is also found in Padmavat: the clouds are raining heavily but the milkmaids are drying up. Those women who, united with their husbands, are swinging on swings and wearing nice garments have been described in the same way as in Sufi texts. The milkmaids, like other women suffering from virah, are without embellishments and feel that their lives are useless. Here the wind carries the milkmaids’ message to Kṛṣṇa.

In Madhumalati, Maṇīṣa describes the heroines’ virah as follows: ‘Both the thick clouds of the Sāvan month and Madhumalati’s eyes are overflowing with water like the rivers Gangā and Yamunā.’ Madhumalati sheds tears of blood and, as in Padmavat, the tears turn into velvet insects as they fall. As in Candāyan and the other Sufi texts, Madhumalati’s eyes shed tears continuously and she is plunged deeply into the agony of separation.

Bhādē

In Bhādē (August-September) the nights become deep, dark and fearsome for Mainā, who is still a young girl. Lightning flashes and loneliness seizes her heart in the absence of her husband Lorik. Without a companion she suffers painful isolation. Tears fall from her sorrowful eyes and fill both land and sea. It is impossible for her to cross the mountains and the waterlogged earth to reach her husband. In the last two verses she complains that Lorik listened to a wicked woman (Candā) and ran away with her. Mainā spends her nights crying (Candāyan, v. 38).

Mrgavati’s description of the month of Bhādē in the Indian rainy season is more detailed than the description in Candāyan. It is continuously raining in torrents and the nights are deep and dark. Lightning is also flashing (v. 318). Like Mainā in Candāyan, Rūpmini is also described as being afraid. Her bed is no longer comfortable for her; it bites her like a serpent. Here Kutuban shows his familiarity with Indian myths and legends. Rūpmini’s eyes shed water in the same way as rains fall in the Slesa and Maghā naksatra. Rūpmini has become like a pañāthā bird always calling pī, pī (‘loved one’). The croaking of frogs which kills Rūpmini has also been described here. She says that she is sinking
in the ocean of virah and that there is no boatman or rope that she can hold onto. Her eyes are overflowing like the flooded Ganga. Her bed is also floating in the floods.

Malik Muhammad Jāyasi (v. 318) in Padmāvat describes the nights of Bhādā to some extent as in Candāyan or Mrigavati. Lightning flashing in the deep, dark and cloudy nights is similarly described, and the water flowing from Nāgmati’s eyes is similarly likened to water falling from the eaves of a house. This imagery first appears in Candāyan and then in Mrigavati and is continued in Padmāvat. Nāgmati is drying up in the rainy season—this is Jāyasi’s own imagination. In Bhādā the land and sky meet but Nāgmati drowns in the profound water of youth. She says, ‘O loved one, come and protect me.’

In Kanhhavat (v. 319) the dark night of Bhādā has been depicted in the same way as in other Sufi texts. In their palaces the milkmaids are suffering and are complaining that Kṛṣṇa has gone away and been enchanted so that he does not care to send them any messages. The earth is filled with water and so are the eyes of the milkmaids; without Kṛṣṇa, who is compared to a boatman, they drown in the deep water of virah.

It is needless to say that the poet of Kanhhavat also follows Candāyan and Mrigavati as far as the description of nature is concerned. There is close similarity between Padmāvat and Kanhhavat in that Nāgmati is also sinking in the deep water of youth and calls out to her loved one, Rama, to save her. In Madhumālati, Madhumālati is burning in the forest fire of virah during the dark night of Bhādā. This forest fire of virah is her only friend in bed in the dark night of Bhādā. Simh and Mahīgh disturbs her and her eyes shed tears in the same way as water falls from the eaves of a house. Again it can be seen that this description has been borrowed by Mañjhā from his predecessors who wrote Candāyan (v. 343/5) and Padmāvat (v. 346/4).

Kvār

Now the month of Kvār (September-October) comes and the star Canopus (Agastya) appears. The rains stop but Mainā’s husband Lorik does not return. Kāś (a tall grass) grows and the swans start swimming in the ponds. Cranes, wagtails, and herons also appear. In this month of Kvār young girls are happy with their husbands and start burning lamps in earthen plates. In this new season of freshness, king and poor alike cook nice food in the dark fortnight of the month at the time of Pitrapaksā2 and eat well, but Mainā cannot eat anything. There is no enjoyment for her. She is without her loved one. Mainā expects Lorik to saddle his horse and return home but the mokhu (mālakṣa, unclean one) does not return (Candāyan v. 345-7); he remains cruel and obdurate.

Kutuban describes Āsvin (Krā) a little differently. Here the appearance of the star, the stopping of the rains, the appearance of flowers, grass, birds, wagtails, and cranes have all been described in the same manner as in Candāyan, but virah has become like the Hasti naksatra (kathiya)10, thundering and roaring. Rūmīnī is alone in her bed. In Mrigavati the image of the elephant of virah is repeated in lines 5 and 6 of the stanza. The phrase maimant kūmjar (‘madden elephant’) has been used here for the symbolic elephant who is trampling the body of Rūmīnī suffering from the agony of virah. In Padmāvat the star Agastya and diminishing water have also been described as in Candāyan and Mrigavati. Wagtails, cranes, and partridges too have been described as in Candāyan. The description of the elephant of virah tearing Nāgmati’s body into pieces and eating her up is more or less similar to the descriptions in Candāyan. However, Jāyasi describes Citra, Hasti, and Urtāra naksatra in some detail,11 displaying his excellence as a poet all the time. ‘The elephant of virah disturbing Nāgmati’ is not his original idea but the request to Ramasen to come as a lion to control the elephant (v. 347) is his own creation and adds to the excellence of his poetry.

In Kanhhavat (v. 311) the poet describes the happy women whose husbands are at home and who are eating well, but tells us that Kṛṣṇa has tricked the milkmaids Radha and Candravali. The star Agastya and the partridge (khaṇjan) are described here as well. The milkmaids lament and say, ‘Hā! we known that Kṛṣṇa would not return we would not have let him go.’

Mañjhā describes, in Madhumālati (v. 404), the festival of Navrātri, and the wagtails, cranes, and partridges as in Candāyan. All the birds are chirping and chanting but Madhumālati is flying in the forest like a bird. All are happy in this season but Madhumālati is crying. In Kvār the rains stop and the water begins to subside, but Madhumālati’s eyes are filled with tears; she can neither speak nor describe her sorrow.
Kārtik

In the month of Kārtik (October-November) the nights are pleasant and clear but the moonlight burns Mainā, and she suffers painfully. Other women make beds for their worthy husbands and embrace them. Mainā thinks her loved one will come for Divālī to play and sing on this great festival of lights, but he does not return, and the whole world becomes dark for her. Candā took away her bright one (husband), and she suffers in his absence. Her husband has left Mainā and become someone else’s. Mainā requests Surjan to plead with him on her behalf and prays that he might return to worship the deity on the festival of devathān.¹²

Like Maulāna Dāūd, Kutuban (v. 320) also describes the bright nights of the sarad season and the cool moon, all of which disturb Rūpmini since she suffers the pains of separation. In Padmāvat the cool nights and bright moon are also described while Nāgmati burns in virah. Kutuban does not describe the Divāli festival of lights, but Jáyasi refers to it and the women singing festive songs as in Candāyan. Candāyan refers to the worship of devathān, but in Padmāvat, mānīvar or mānāna worship is mentioned.¹³ All the women celebrate the festival in Padmāvat, but it is a painful occasion for Nāgmati without her husband.

Kārtik is also painful for the milkmaids in Kanhhāvāt (v. 312) and the moonlight also burns them. Women whose husbands are with them enjoy themselves, but the milkmaids suffer because Kṛṣṇa is away and nobody comes to them from Madhuban with a message.

Madhumālati (v. 405) is tormented by the cool moon—a standard image found in almost all the Hindi Sufi texts. Other women enjoy themselves, but Madhumālati suffers in Kārtik. The Divāli festival is referred to here, but Madhumālati is miserable and flies from one forest to another.

Agahan

In Agahan (November-December) the nights start becoming long and the days, short. Mainā in Candāyan (v. 347) says that her own body is decaying day by day. The wind blows slowly and she feels the cold attacking her body, yet her husband Lorik does not return to protect her. She burns with kām (‘sexual desire’) and the pain of virah causes wildfire in her body. It burns her to ashes and smears the ashes onto its face and body. Virah is clearly personified here as a Śaiva sādhu who picks up the ashes of corpses and smears them on her forehead and body. Mainā is deeply anguished and prays to God not to give such suffering to anyone. In contrast Candā enjoys the company of the Sun, Lorik, leaving behind her own husband Bāvan. Mainā feels insulted that her husband has abandoned her and laments that in that cold season the shameless Candā sleeps and enjoys herself with someone else’s husband.

Mrgāvati describes how cold the world feels in Agahan (v. 321). Here Kutuban’s Rūpmini sends her message to her husband Manohar and requests him to come and enjoy himself with her as the prime of her youth will never return again. At the end of the stanza Kutuban says, ‘One should not forget love even for a moment. This youth declines just as water slowly drips out of cupped palms (aṅjali).’

Following Candāyan, Malik Muhammad Jáyasi in Padmāvat describes the declining days and the expanding nights. At night hearts tremble as the cold season begins, but Nāgmati burns in virah like thewick of a lamp. Other girls are with their husbands and embellish themselves with fine garments, but Nāgmati is deprived of all this. Like Mainā in Candāyan, Nāgmati is also burning in the fire of sorrow in separation. She sends her message to Ratnasen and tells him that even bees and crows were burnt black by Nāgmati’s fire of virah. Here one sees the universalization of virah so typical of Jáyasi (e.g. Padmāvat v. 349. 8-9).

In Kanhāvāt (v. 313), the shortening of the day and expansion of the nights are described in the same way as in Candāyan. Here saur supeti (‘thick quilts and sheets’) are being prepared by all the women who are with their husbands, but the milkmaids are shedding tears of virah because Kṛṣṇa who used to sleep with them on the bed (sej swanār) is away from them. They are dying of cold and wish Kṛṣṇa could come as the Sun to embrace them and dispel the cold. It is to be remembered that saur supeti for thick quilt and sheet first appear together in Candāyan when the month of Pās is described (v. 340) and occur in descriptions of this month also in the works of subsequent Sufi poets (Mrgāvati v. 322, Padmāvat v. 350). The only exception seems to be Madhumālati (v. 406) which describes Agahan as a cold month in which people want to be near the fireplace. The happiness of the
daytime has diminished and the sorrows have increased for Madhumalati whose intense virah has been vividly presented here.

**Pūṣ**

Now the month of Pūṣ (December-January) comes and Mainā watches the path for her husband's arrival (Candāyan, v. 348). She cannot sleep even for a moment day or night, cannot bear the cold, and feels neither dead nor alive. In every house women arrange thick quilts and sheets (saur sapeti) and eat meat of various kinds and ghee (clarified butter), but Mainā's heart burns in separation. She does not want to wear fine clothes or bodices. She thinks that her loved one will return with the arrival of the month of Pūṣ but that does not happen. Kings and paupers, all enjoy themselves at home with their women in this period, but Lorik has gone away on business (banijā), and Mainā sheds tears. She requests Surjan to ask Lorik what profit he will gain if he loses his main asset (pūjā).

In Mrgavati (v. 322), Rūpmiini is also suffering in the month of Pūṣ. The frost (tussar) has thickened and her cold bed causes her more anguish. She is alone on her bed and the thick quilt and the bed sheets are uncomfortable for her. It is clear that Mrgavati's descriptions are distinctive, but Kutuban describes Rūpmiini's virah as intensely as Maulānā Dāu’d depicts Mainā's in Candāyan.

In Padmāvat (v. 353), Nāgmati trembles in Pūṣ. As in the other works, the sun is weak but her virah is great. Even with the thick quilt and sheet she feels cold as if the bed were submerged in ice. A female partridge who is separated from her mate during the night is united with him in the daytime, but Nāgmati can meet her husband neither in the daytime nor during the night. Nāgmati is alone and the vulture of virah is attacking her. It seems that this vulture of virah which is eating her up during her lifetime will not spare her even after her death. Nāgmati has become thin and emaciated: her flesh has melted and her tears have changed into blood. As these examples reveal, although Jāyasi borrows many themes from Candāyan, he surpasses his predecessors in poetic skill.

In Kanhāvat also (v. 314) the cold is terrible in Pūṣ, and cruel (vichoh) Krṣṇa does not return. The milkmaids' hearts tremble with pangs of separation and they shiver like the leaves of a tree. The firepot of virah (aṅghīthā) burns their bodies to ashes. This image is found in Candāyan in the context of the description of Māgh (v. 349.2). The milkmaids say if Krṣṇa returns and embraces them, they will revive. They pray to him to come and save them. While the intensity of the virah described here is akin to that described in other Hindi Sufi texts, the vulture of virah and the image of the partridge and its mate are not found in Kanhāvat.

For Madhumalati (v. 407) the night is difficult in this month of Pūṣ. Other girls desire to meet their husbands, but she flies from one forest to another like a bird, complaining that her husband has left her in the full bloom of youth. Other wives meet their husbands happily, but Madhumalati is deprived of hers. The biting cold of Pūṣ has not been mentioned here.

**Māgh**

In Māgh (January-February), it is frosty and so cold that even the strings of Mainā's necklace tremble on her breasts. Her teeth chatter with cold and tears trickle from her eyes. The firepot of virah burns in her heart. First she burns from the pangs of separation, then the frost strikes her. Her life has become burdensome for her. Just as the frost strikes the lotus causing it to decay, so her husband Lorik has caused her to decay in the month of Māgh. In the mornings of this hemant season she finds herself without the Sun (Lorik). Candā has eloped with the Sun and that malekasa ('wicked one') has slept with another woman. She requests Surjan to tell Lorik that she is dying, struck by frost, and that he should return soon to comfort her (Candāyan, v. 349).

In Mrgavati (v. 349) Rūpmiini also burns in virah even though the cold wind blows. She requests her husband to come and shine like the Sun to remove her cold. The last dohā in Mrgavati is very interesting; Rūpmiini says that virah has stolen all her happiness and comforts in the same way as Rāvan abducted Sītā. Her husband should come and kill Rāvan as Rām (Raghunandānaid) did.

The frost of Māgh strikes Nāgmati in the same way. Just as in Candāyan (v. 349.7) Mainā calls her husband to come in the form of the Sun and warm her up, so in Padmāvat Nāgmati requests Ratnasen to come and do likewise. In the cold season the virah burns Nāgmati to ashes and wants to scatter them all around. Jāyasi uses hyperbole (atisayōkti) (v. 351) to intensify the depth of Nāgmati's virah.

In Kanhāvat (v. 35) the frost of Māgh disturbs the milkmaids
just as it does Mainā in Candāyan. Thick quilts and sheets (saur saperī) are cold as ice to them; they suffer from virah and complain to their co-wife Kubjā.

For Madhumālatī (v. 408) it is a terribly cold season (ṣiyāl), but she sits on the branch of the virah tree, which is extremely painful for her. The last verse (‘My husband took away all my happiness and besides this, virah was attacking my bones and flesh with its sharp knife (kāti)’) epitomizes Madumālatī’s condition.

Phāgun

In Candāyan (v. 350) Maulānā Dāūd says that people feel that the cold increases four-fold in Phāgun (February–March) and the wind blows hard, but for Mainā the cold has increased by seven times more. She is dying in the month of Phāgun since Lorik is not there to embrace her. In every house girls play Phāg with sticks (danāhar). They are as blessed as princesses; they chew betel leaves, put kohl on their eyes, braid their hair, put vermilion in the part of their hair and a special mark on their forehead. They dance the Phāg dance and their ankle bells ring sonorously. The whole world is overcome with joy, but Mainā sheds so many tears of blood that her bodice and clothes become red. She requests Surjan to tell Lorik that Mainā has been burned to ashes during the period of Holī. In Mṛgāvatī, the virahini is also burnt to ashes (v. 924). The whole world plays Phāg or Holī and Mṛgāvatī puts her life itself in the burning Holikā bonfire, hoping that her ashes might fly to her loved one. The spring season has arrived but virah is singing cārāri songs to burn her to ashes. She sheds tears of blood and thus her body turns vermilion. The wind also disturbs her, the courtyard and the bed do not please her, and the spring passes in vain since her beloved has left her and become someone else’s. The festival of Vasant (‘spring’) is pleasant for others, but for Mṛgāvatī it brings the madness of youth. Leaves fall from the trees and still her husband does not come back home.

In Padmāvat (v. 352) the wind of Phāgun blows and the virahini Nāgmāti suffers still more. Her body has withered like a dried leaf. Trees have put on flowers and nature is happy, but Nāgmāti is anguished. People enjoy Phāg and women dance and sing Holi songs (cārāri, etc.), but Ratnasen has put the bonfire of Holikā into Nāgmāti’s heart. Nāgmāti says that she will burn her body and reduce it to ashes and ask the wind to scatter them on the path; maybe her loved one will put his feet on the ashes. She wants to meet him in any way possible.

In Kanhāvat as in Candāyan, the cold in Phāgun is four times stronger than in the previous month. Women who are with their husbands embellish themselves and play Holī, but the milkmaids dry up in virah. The sun also burns them, and Kṛṣṇa has gone away and hidden himself in Madhuban. The milkmaids remember him and suffer (v. 316).

In Madhumālatī, the heroine recounts her sorrow. Her burnt body has become like Holikā’s bonfire. Autumn has set in and gardens are deserted. Madhumālatī goes to all the trees and sits on their branches in the form of a bird, lamenting and crying. She suffers the pangs of separation as she is away from her husband. Her youth is in full bloom, but in her heart she is dry and deserted (v. 409).

Caitra

In the month of Caitra (March–April) buds appear and the green trees dress in white and red; the lotus blossoms and the sandal trees and other flowers generate sweet fragrances. Bees wander around the perfumed flowers. Mainā says to Surjan that the spring season has arrived, but her husband has seen another creeper and fallen in love with it (Candāyan, v. 351). This new season does not please Mainā at all since her husband has not arrived. She requests Lorik to return and see her garden; she is decaying, lonely, making her bed on thorns, and cannot sleep. She requests Surjan to tell Lorik that Mainā does not enjoy his company even for a moment.

In Mṛgāvatī (v. 325) new leaves have also appeared and flowers have blossomed. Cuckoos have started singing, but Rūpmīni has started burning in the fire of virah. Candāyan and Mṛgāvatī both contain descriptions of intense virah, but in Padmāvat, as usual, the descriptions of nature are exhaustive. In this spring season women sing Basant and Dhamār, but for Nāgmāti the world is deserted. Cuckoos sing, and it appears as though Kāmdev, the god of love, is shooting his five arrows. Nāgmāti pours out tears of blood which soak all the trees and their leaves, and the majith and tēsū flowers. Mango trees start to bear fruit; bees buzz around all
the flower trees, but they do not please Nāgmatī. They are all like thorns piercing her heart. In the end she requests Ratnasen to be like a homing pigeon and rush back home. The parrots of virah have attacked the fruits of her youth. Only he can save her (Padmāvat v. 353).

In Kanhāvat women celebrate this spring festival and bring flower garlands home for their husbands. They also decorate their beds with flowers, but for the milkmaids it is not pleasant. All the liveliness of nature burns them in sorrow. Spring is beautiful only when the husband comes home smiling. The milkmaids remember Kubjā and despise her because she has detained Kṛṣṇa and made them suffer. Nights bring death to them, and the whole day they sit and wait for Kṛṣṇa (v. 317).

In Madhumālāi (v. 410) the trees have put on new garments of leaves and bees buzz everywhere. The leaves which had fallen in the autumn have appeared again but for Madhumālāi it is still autumn because her husband Manohar has left her. The Sun of virah is in the eighth position and shines sharply right upon her head.

Vaiśākh

Mainā says in Candāyan (v. 352) that the trees bear fruit in Vaiśākh (April-May). Mainā always thinks of her beloved, keeping him in her heart. She asks Lorik, who lacks good taste, to return and protect his ‘mango garden’ (i.e. Mainā), and enjoy himself with her. Who else could protect her? It grieves her that she is not able to discover which forest Lorik is living in. She suffers the pangs of separation and, feeling miserable, cries the whole day. She tells the valiant Lorik to return soon, for in his absence the ardent heat burns her badly. The spring season passes but Lorik does not come to her bed. He wanders around another creeper, like a bee enjoying the fruits of another vine.

In Mrgāvat (v. 326) the trees have also been described as bearing fruit. Rūpmini requests her husband to return and enjoy himself with her, saying that she has protected his mango orchard so far, but it is impossible for her to protect it any longer from wicked ones. The parrot of virah wants to eat up all the fruit, and it is impossible to make him fly away.

Jāyasī (v. 354) describes the hot Sun who wants to go towards the Himālayas to cool himself. Instead he drives his chariot towards Nāgmatī who then burns all the more with virah. Nāgmatī feels hot despite all her cool clothes, and her heart burns like a kiln. Padmāvat does not contain all the descriptions of the mango trees and orchards found in Candāyan and Mrgāvat, but at the end of this section Nāgmatī says that the lotus which had blossomed in the pond of her heart has dried up and that new leaves could sprout in it only after her husband’s arrival.

In Kanhāvat (v. 318) the Sun is extremely hot and burns Candravallī, Rādhikā, and the other sixteen thousand milkmaids. As in Padmāvat, cool clothes feel hot to the heroines (here the milkmaids), and sandalpaste fails to cool them down. Akṛrī has taken their beloved Kṛṣṇa away to Madhupurī, and he does not care to return.

In Vaiśākh Madhumālāi suffers extremely in contrast to the other girls, who enjoy themselves with their husbands (v. 411). It is still the spring season and trees have put on flowers, but for Madhumālāi everything looks desolate and she is tormented at every moment. Yellow, red, and green leaves and fruit appear on the trees, but the fruits of Madhumālāi’s youth, still unripe, fall off in the absence of her loved one.

Jeth

After the month of Vaiśākh, Maulana Dāūd describes the month of Jeth (May-June, v. 353). The moon (cād) has seized the sun, and the sun, burns the earth. Ardent heat scorches Maina and tells her the tale of separation. Even cool drinks such as khāndavānī and fresh water feel as if they are on fire. Due to the intense heat, she does not apply sandalpaste to her body nor use perfumed grass (khās). People start thatching their roofs and repairing the huts in preparation for the rainy season. All the other women enjoy union with their husbands, but Mainā burns in virah. She requests Surjan to beg Lorik to return home and to become the water of a river to extinguish her fire.

Kutuban also describes the extremely hot sun in the month of Jeth that produces wildfire. Rūpmini invites her husband, Manohar, to come and give her coolness. Since Madan, the god of love, burns her, he must come like the cool wind coming from the Malay mountains. She sends her message through Durlabh, requesting him to tell Manohar to come as a cloud. Otherwise the sun will burn her, and she will crumble to pieces (v. 327).

In Padmāvat Malik Muhammad Jāyasī (v. 354) describes the
scorching heat and the dust storms of Jeth. Mountains are also extremely hot in this month. Virah rises and roars like Hanumān and starts burning Nāgmati’s body like the city of Lāṅkā. Winds blow from four directions and fan the flames so that they reach her bed (palaṅkā). Nāgmati burns and becomes black like the Yamuna River (Kālindī). The fire of virah has become intolerable for her. Jāyasi says that the hungry ravenous crow, who has started eating her flesh, has struck her bones. Nāgmati’s deep sorrow has been depicted here in detail; no other poet of this tradition surpasses Jāyasi in his use of similes and metaphors, and in his poetic excellence.

In Kanhāvat (v. 319) descriptions are simple, without any ornamentation. In Jeth the milkmaids have become lifeless. There is scorching heat (lī) and the wind blows sharply; wildfire spreads and so does the virah of the milkmaids, burning them thoroughly. They pray to Krṣṇa to come back from Madhuban to cool them.

In Madhumālati (v. 412) also the month of Jeth is extremely hot. The sun spreads fire and Madhumālati’s heart is scorched by virah. Her husband is not with her to share her bed; she suffers viyog (separation), exile, and loneliness; her form changes from that of a human being into that of a bird. All this makes her desperate. She wants to die, but death does not approach her to take her away.

As in the description in Candāyan, traders return home. Rūpmini’s husband, however, remains in a foreign land. The month of Sāvan begins again and the world is filled with water. Indra and Śani unite to make Rūpmini suffer and cry.

The bārahmāsā in Padmāvat starts in the month of Āṣārh and ends in the month of Jeth. Āṣārh comes and the clouds thunder in the sky just as in Candāyan. But the virah in Padmāvat starts a great war and blows its trumpet loudly. Dark, white and grey coloured clouds wander about like soldiers, the flocks of white cranes look like the banners of an army, and the lightning is like the brandished swords of a king. These vivid descriptions in which the king of virah launches a war against Nāgmati are not found elsewhere in Hindi Sufi texts. Peacocks and cuckoos along with frogs all disturb Nāgmati, and she worries about who will repair the roof of her house. It is interesting to see that Ratnasen is described in the text as a king, but here her husband Nāgmati is described as worrying about a roof which needs repairing. In many folktales heroines are described as queens, but they wash their own clothes like ordinary women. In Āṣārh Nāgmati is devoid of happiness without her husband.

Like Padmāvat, Kanhāvat also describes the month of Āṣārh at the beginning of the bārahmāsā (v. 308). Clouds thunder and lightning flashes here as well. Cuckoos, peacocks and partridges all call and frogs, who bring the message of rains, croak. Thus the milkmaids suffer agony in separation, saying that Krṣṇa is as near to them as a necklace is to the body, but a great mountain like Kubjā has blocked him from coming. It is hard for them to bear this pain and sorrow of separation.

In Madhumālati (v. 413) the thundering of clouds and flashing of lightning are also described, and in this work also people are roofing their houses against the rains. Madhumālati complains that the earth is turning green and the buds of flowers and fruits are sprouting on the trees and plants, but in her husband’s heart love does not sprout. She tells her friend that she spent twelve months in virah and asks her to help her come out of it.

It is interesting to see that all the messengers start suffering from virah when they listen to the message. Their suffering emphasises a universal cosmic virah. Listening to the sad tale of virah in Candāyan, Surjan himself becomes filled with sorrow; dvandva (‘conflict and confusion’), udveg (‘anxiety’), ucāt (‘sleeplessness’) all take hold of him as he starts burning in the fire of
virah. He forgets his own original trade and remembers only the pangs of separation. Not only Surjan, but all his friends and companions also, start burning in the wildfire of virah. This virah is so strong that all the houses on the path burst into flames. All the animals and birds are blackened by the fire of virah. The fish in the sea and the partridges in the lakes suffer from it; the moon’s face in the sky is blackish, and the clouds have become dark; both the old and the young have started suffering from the pangs of virah (vv. 362-3).

Mrgāvati follows Candāyan closely in this universalization of virah. For example, Nāyak in Mrgāvati is also plunged into the grief of virah and dvandva (‘confusion’, ‘conflict’); experiences udvag (‘anxiety’), and ucāti (‘sleeplessness’). He forgets his own trade and carries the load of all this suffering. Rūpmāni’s message has deeply affected him. As in Candāyan, people who collect taxes on the path (dānī) all burn in virah along with the houses and forests. In Mrgāvati even the sea burns up (vv. 332-3).

In Padmāvat, when the bird carries the message, the fire of virah spreads everywhere and the whole of Sigihāl (Sri Lanka) starts burning. As the fire rises, the clouds become dark, and the earth, sea, fish, forests, and trees all burn from this cosmic virah.

In Kanhāvat the earth and sky all burn from one spark of virah (v. 322). Kṛṣṇa asks the wind why it is burning so intensely, and it replies with the message sent by Rādā, Candrāvali and the milkmaids. Kṛṣṇa listens to the message, and love grows in his heart until finally they meet. The suffering of the milkmaids is as intense here as in the other Sufi texts.

It is clear from these descriptions that Sufi poets have a special purpose in describing the bārahmāsā. The philosophy of virah is central to the Sufi concept of love, and this finds clear expression in the bārahmāsā. All the messengers begin to suffer as they listen to the message of virah which the poets make universal and cosmic. They have chosen the bārahmāsā theme to convey the virah felt by the soul as soon as it separates from the Divine. Love and the pain of virah are almost synonymous in Hindi Sufi texts.

Salmān Masū’īd’s ‘Bārahmāsā’

The bārahmāsā of Masū’īd Sādī Salmān (1043-1131) is the first work of this type in Persian though it does not deal with virah. It was composed in praise of King Masū’īd who succeeded Mahmūd Ghaznavi (d. 1030) and reigned for ten years, from AD 1030 to 1040.

This bārahmāsā begins with the Iranian month of Parvardin which begins on 21 March and ends in the month of Spandārmāz (which is called Isfand Māh in modern times). The poet, who lived in Lahore, was probably influenced by Indian folk literature or the literary conventions in which descriptions of the six seasons were very common. In Indian folk literature twelve month descriptions must have been as popular during Salmān’s lifetime as they are today, but literary bārahmāsās appear at a comparatively late date. The oldest example according to Agarwāl Nā’hā, is Bārahmāvatī by an unknown poet, probably composed in the thirteenth century. Vaudeville (1986, p. 18) has analysed the contents of this work which praises Dharma Śūri. It will be interesting to compare this bārahmāsā with Salmān’s bārahmāsā, which is nothing but a eulogy of King Masū’īd.

Salmān begins his bārahmāsā by asking the people to remain happy. God is great and His commandment is that we should obey the king until the Day of Judgement. King Masū’īd is great, and the kings of Rūm send gifts to him. He sits on the throne and possesses various kinds of jewels. All beautiful gardens are symbols of his glory, and he meritorious praise for them. People taste the good fruits of the trees of his justice. The poet Salmān Masū’īd wishes him well and prays to God that his glory remain forever and that prosperity and happiness follow him.

The second month that Salmān describes is Ardibahisht, which falls in April. In this month the world becomes a paradise and the enjoyment of wine is permitted. Without wine life is useless. The glory of this month is great: fields, gardens, and mountains have started smiling with flowers and the clouds have started shedding tears, birds have started chirping; the earth has put on different types of raiment; angels have started shaping the earth in beautiful forms; God has given power to the king, and he is enjoying the flowers and perfumes.

Khurdād Māh, which begins in May, looks beautiful with its blooming gardens; the flowers and nature are embodiments of happiness in this season; birds sing sitting on the tree of liberty; slaves and king alike are happy in this season. It is good to drink in this month. King Masū’īd is great; his kingdom is superb; he and his people are all happy; he is the custodian of religion; prosperity and generosity are due to him. The poet Salmān prays
for him and wishes that he might rule until the Day of Judgement.

With regard to Tir Māh, the poet declares:

O Beautiful One, with the face of a moon, you should ask for wine in this month. This is a good time. You must enjoy wine. It is through wine that the heart feels fresh. My heart is happy with wine. If you see sins in me, I may tell you truly that I do not have many sins or faults in me. The wine is costly. Even the king feels so when he proceeds for a war with his soldiers. Our king is like a lion. He has captured all the territories; other kings are his slaves.

The poet goes on to say that we are all happy in the month of Mūrdād, which begins in June:

You must drink wine in this month. The earth has assumed various beautiful colours. The eyes of the clouds are filled with tears. The earth and mountains have all put on new clothes. The city of Rūn looks beautiful with its new garments. Be happy and ask for wine under the protection of our king. King Masūd is the crown of all kings. Jewels obtain brilliance from the king. The throne of the kingdom is stable due to him. O king, I wish you might live long in happiness. Let your enemies die in fear and agony.

In the next month, Shahriwār, people are happy because of the king’s justice: I am also happy. O my friend, dear to my heart, give me wine and remember the king. He is happy on the throne. There is no other king whose crown is so beautiful.’ The poet goes on to say that in the month of Shahriwār ‘The king has been selected by the sky (destiny). Nobody has ever seen such a good king. In this season camphor has increased on the earth. You should also take perfumed wine in your hand. In this prosperous kingdom you should hold the wine cup since the spring season has now arrived. O king, through your kindness the autumn of the world has changed into spring.’

In the seventh solar month, Mahra, the moon shows its compassion to the people. If you cannot drink this month, you are unfortunate. In this month the faces of my friends look clean in the daytime but their hearts are black. But the king is the blessed one. He wishes well to others. All other kings are his slaves. There is no other king like him. Mecca and the Kab’ah are very expensive places to see, but our king is easy to approach. He is prosperous; even the sky serves him and bows before him in respect. He has many slaves. His kingdom offers glory to the people.

In the eighth month, Ābān, the rains begin:

They are hidden in clouds. You should drink the water of grapes (wine) at this time. It is good to sleep during this time but it is better to drink and be intoxicated. Have you seen that man who is wise and intelligent and who has broken the backbone of my poverty and removed my sorrow? He has wine, and through this wine he protects others. Pass your time in happiness. Drink wine as you have been set free from sorrows. King Masūd is sitting down to drink; we must be happy with his justice.

On the arrival of the ninth month, Azārmāh, the poet says:

Give me strong burning wine. Burn fire. People in the houses are happy. Let this month come with his face as shining as fire. It is true that the gardens are without flowers and the trees are without fruits, but King Masūd has made this garden like a paradise. People are safe with his justice and generosity. God has given him power. His name is glorious. May the king’s glory, kingship, and generosity live—as long as the moon and the sun are in the sky.

When the tenth month, Dei, comes, the wind starts dispersing camphor over the earth. It starts snowing. The autumn wind becomes cold, and the army of cold waves start moving from the sky. ‘King Arsalān Masūd is great; he has changed this earth into a garden. King Alexander and Naushervān have now incarnated in you. Your sense of justice is better than theirs. I wish you a life as long as the sky.’

The poet says that wine is necessary in the month of Bahan:

Wise men infuse new life in the world this month. Minstrels, singers, and wine cup bearers (ṣāqī) appear now and start singing. They play the nād and bring wine for the king in order to celebrate the festival in his presence. The king is sitting and will definitely drink. He is superb, unparalleled, next to none. Sometimes God brings a cold season and sometimes a hot one. The king also sometimes becomes generous and sometimes cruel.

Spandār, the twelfth month of the Iranian solar year, is said to be

the last month for the enemies who are going to die. This month brings a new message of life. Gardens will be green again, flowers will blossom, and beauty will spread everywhere. Birds will start chirping in the plains and in the gardens, clouds will appear and cover the sky, the wind from the north will blow, and fragrance will spread. I thank the king. Through his kindness the new year will bring prosperity and happiness. O king, the sky is beautiful for you. The sea is for you to govern. There are all kinds of gifts and the ornaments for your kingship. May God bless you.
You shine like the Sun and give light to your people. Progress every day and earn more and more prestige from your people.

This poem of Salmān is the first bārahmāsā in Persian literature, but its content is neither virah nor union of lovers as we find in Indian traditions. In India, literary bārahmāsā started appearing in the thirteenth century; before that only the šat ṛtu (six seasons) descriptions are found. From the Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa to the Apabhṛṃśa poet Addahmāna of the twelfth century šat ṛtu are found in large number. Masūd Salmān is the first and last Persian poet to compose a bārahmāsā. It can safely be assumed that he may have been influenced by Indian folk traditions, but his descriptions of nature, praise of his contemporary king, and emphasis on wine drinking is his own creation. The first Jain poet, the anonymous author of Bārahmāvātā, describes the greatness of a Jain master, but his bārahmāsā is a Jain religious text.

Vaudeville in her Bārahmāsā in Indian Literature has made a general study of bārahmāsā, including some translations of the original texts. Virah bārahmāsā are found in folk traditions in large number. Hindi Sufi poets borrowed their themes from folk tradition, demonstrating the philosophy of virah everywhere they could. In Candāyan not only the wife, Mainā, but also Surjan, who carries the message of virah, begins suffering from the pain, sleeplessness, and anxiety caused by the message. Other Sufi texts follow Candāyan in saying that nobody could remain untouched by virah.

Krishna Dev Upadhyay has collected fifteen bārahmāsā16 of which eight begin with Āśār17, as do four of the eight collected by Ram Naresh Tripathi in Kavitā Kaumudi (Bombay: Navnit Prakashan, 1966). It is interesting to see that a large number of bārahmāsās begin in the rainy season. In Kālidāsa’s Meghadūta the Yakṣa sends his message of virah in Āśār. This tendency seems to be very common in the folk tradition.

One example of folk bārahmāsā beginning with Āśār is given here from the Upadhyay collection. The virahini says:

O friend, the first month was Āśār; we could hear the thunder in this month. My cruel husband did not come at all, his heart was obdurate. It was drizzling in Sāvan, but my husband was getting wet in a foreign land. The suffering woman remembered her husband and repeated his name. Peacocks screamed in the forest. In Bhādō the night was fearsome and it rained heavily in all directions. Partridges were chanting and frogs were croaking. In Kūvār my husband was in a foreign country and my three symbols of vermillion, kohl in my eyes, and youth—all wanted to kill me. Kārtik came, the special bathing (Kārtik snān) began, and all my friends bathed in the Ganges; all put on yellow garments, but I put on old tattered clothes. In Agahan my husband brought me home after the guṇā ceremony and then left for a foreign land. He did not even send me a letter after he left and did not care to find out news of me. In Pūs it rained, but I was alone, my house was empty, and the night did not pass easily. I did not know when the morning would come. Māgh came. I felt cold. If my beloved husband had been here, I would have made him sleep in my lap, and the winter would not have affected me. In Phāguna Phagūva was celebrated and all my friends played Holi. If I had played Holi, people would have spoken ill of me. My whole body was burning in virah. The month of Caitra was sad for me. My husband had gone away. I was as unfortunate as a black female serpent. It seemed my husband would return in the spring, but he did not come back. Vaiśākha was hot, and I shed tears. How could I blame that Yogi who had charmed my loved one? In Jeth the heat was scorching and the hot wind blew, but still my husband did not return. He was hard and had no tears in his eyes.

This is an example of a simple folk woman’s virah bārahmāsā with no literary ornamentation. Perhaps this kind of bārahmāsā was the inspiration behind the literary versions even though they start in different months. Vaudeville has explained that the literary bārahmāsā is indebted to folk literature and not vice versa (Ch. Vaudeville 1986, p. 20). All over northern India such virah bārahmāsās are found as an independent genre in folk literature. Their descriptions of external nature through the twelve months are in consonance with the emotions of woman suffering from virah. Sufi poets used the bārahmāsā to depict the philosophy of virah or firāq, which was in the origin of creation. Through sexual symbolism these works express the desire of the soul to unite with the divine.

Candāyan begins in Sāvan, and all other early Sufi poets except Jāyasi follow Candāyan in this respect. However, it is clear that all these bārahmāsās begin in the rainy season, whether in Āśār or Sāvan, because a virahini is understood to suffer most when the clouds thicken and lightning flashes. There are some exceptions such as Narpati Nath’s bārahmāsā (which begins in Kārtik), but most virah bārahmāsās begin in the rainy season.

I would like to add here that the four volumes of oral epics based on the Lorik-Candā tale which I have published so far do not include bārahmāsā. Sufi poets as well as secular poets such as Narpati Nath, the author of Vīṣṇudeva Rāsō, or the Jain poet
Vinaycandra Suri who wrote *Nemināth Catuspadikā*, were influenced by lyrical folk songs. The long oral epics *Lorikī* or *Canainī* which I have studied have not used twelve-month descriptions although they have messengers who carry the message of Mainā’s *vīrah* to Lorik. In the Banaras version Jaggū Bahjarā carries the message of Mainā Mājari to Lorik, whereas in the Allahabad version a caravan of traders are the messengers. In the Mirzāpur version the messenger is a barber named Gāngī. In all the oral versions of the epic, messengers play an important role in carrying the message of *vīrah*, even though they all come from different caste backgrounds. In *Cāndāyan* it is the Brahmin Surjan who is the messenger, but he is a trader by profession. An interesting aspect of this *vīrah*, description is that Mainā Mājari protects her fidelity and faithfulness when faced with adverse situations. But the most important aspect of *Cāndāyan* is that the poet suggests a philosophy of *vīrah* to demonstrate the profound nature of divine love.

**NOTES**

1. Sanā’ī, whose literary activities cover the first half of the twelfth century, was the first Persian author to write an extensive poem elaborating the doctrines of Sufism.
2. For the *bārahmāsā* see verses 343-54 of Gupta’s edition of *Cāndāyan*.
3. For the *bārahmāsā* see verses 317-28 of Gupta’s edition of *Mrgāvati*.
5. *Kanhaiya* is a Kṛṣṇaite text attributed to Jāyasi. Its date of composition seems to be AH 947, which corresponds to AD 1540. His *Padmāvat* is also supposed to have been composed in AD 1540. The poet refers to Humayun and not Shershāh as the contemporary king. It is difficult to believe that in the same year a poet of Jāyasi’s calibre could write two epics, one of which is of such inferior quality. Two different kings are mentioned in these two texts, which also creates some doubts about the authorship of *Kanhaiya*. However, this is the first text in Hindi which deals with the Kṛṣṇa story although it is a Sufi text in which Kṛṣṇa is divine and the women are seekers after love. The bārahmāsā occurs in verses 309-19. For details on *Kanhaiya* see S.M. Pandey, ‘*Kanhaiya a Kṛṣṇaite Sufi Text*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*, 26 (1995), 187-8.
6. Maṇjhan, who wrote *Madhumālati* in AH 952 (AD 1545) belonged to the Sattārī order of Sufis. His teacher was Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus, who was a famous saint of this sect. In Gupta’s edition of *Madhumālati*, the bārahmāsā is described in verses 402-13.

7. Sleṣā and Maghā *naksatra* (verses 315-18) appear in the month of Bhadrapada. It rains in this period very heavily. Maghā is the name of the tenth lunar asterism and contains five stars (*Mrgāvati*, v. 318).
8. This becomes visible in northern India at the end of rainy season and heralds the onset of autumn. When Agastya appears, the monsoon withdraws, which is why the sage Agastya, who gave his name to the constellation, is said to have swallowed the ocean (Ch. Vaudeville 1986, p. 67).
9. The dark half of the month of Bhādō when rites are performed in the honour of the deceased ancestors.
10. Name of the thirteenth lunar mansion. It rains heavily and clouds thunder during this period.
11. Citrā, the fourteenth lunar mansion, is said to be the friend of moon since it is under this *naksatra* that the moon begins to shine brilliantly again in a pure sky.
12. The waking of Viṣṇu on the eleventh of the bright half of the month of Kārtik.
13. Agrawal accepts the reading of *munivar* and interprets it as ‘the Seven Rishis’, whom girls worship at the time of Divālī. According to M.P. Gupta, the correct reading is *manorā* which is a festival celebrated by women after the rains are over (*Padmāvat* 348/7).
15. See his *Divān* ed. Rashid Yasmine: Mu’asasa-yi-cap wa intisārät Pirū 3, Tehrān Hijrā Shamsi 1339 (1961), pp. 653-8. Sanā’ī, the mystical poet from Ghaznī, carefully collected his verses (see note 1). See also Annemarie Schimmel 1973, p. 11. I am grateful to Nādir Tanhā for supplying me an Italian translation of Masūd’s Persian bārahmāsā.
16. Krishna Dev Upadhay, *Bhojpuri grām gīt* (Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, vs 2000 [1943]). It was later published under the title *Bhojpuri lok gīt*, vs 2011 (1954). In *Bhojpuri grām gīt* fifteen Bārahmāsās were collected, but in the second edition most of them were taken out, leaving only 4; see pp. 407ff.

**REFERENCES**


