

RESEARCH NOTE

ANGUISHED CRY OF A DEFEATED RULER: A RAGA SONG COMPOSED BY RANAJIT MALLA

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It is well known that Ranajit Malla (b. 1703, reign 1722-1769) was the last king of the Kingdom of Bhaktapur also known in the later part of the Malla rule in the Nepalmandala (the Kathmandu valley and the areas surrounding the Valley) as Bhadagaun. He was the ritual father (*mitabā*) of Prithvi Narayan Shah, founder of modern Nepal. A ritual friendship had been established between Ranajit's son Viranarasimha Malla and Prithvi Narayan Shah while both of them were Crown Princes of their respected kingdoms, Bhaktapur and Gorakha. This was the reason why even after the defeat of the Mallas in the final war fought between the Malla and Gorkhali forces in Bhaktapur in 1769 Prithvi Narayan had offered various options to Ranajit Malla. He even asked Ranajit if he wanted to become a local ruler of the area covering Banepa, Dhulikhel and surrounding villages popularly known as *satagaun*. Choices were left open for him even to become the local ruler of any other area in and around the valley except the three major cities, Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan. However, Ranajit Malla declined to live in Nepal as a puppet local chieftain working under the Gorkhali rule. He rather expressed his willingness to go to Benaras and spend the rest of his life taking refuge to religious activities. Prithvi Narayan Shah happily agreed to provide for necessary arrangements with a fund to cover Ranajit's expenses for travel and accommodation in Benaras with a royal standard.

Ranjit's decision to go to Benaras, however, was not his happy choice. It was just a better one compared to other very humiliating options left for him including the one accepting a position of a local ruler of smaller area in and around the Kathmandu valley. The *raga* poem composed by Ranajit Malla clearly highlights his inner feeling. It seems that he must have been guided by a thought that spending the rest of his life as a puppet chieftain of a smaller area under Prithvi Narayan Shah's rule would not have been any better than being under house arrest ('being in a cage' in his poetic expression). Looking at the situation that Ranajit was facing that time, his thought can be viewed as an ideal one indeed. If he had accepted the option of becoming a local ruler, it would have been a matter of deep insult and a cause of inner pain for a person like Ranajit Malla who was once among the most respected kings of an independent, historically older and glorious kingdom in the valley. Despite his struggling long rule of about five decades Ranajit was always very

popular within his kingdom. This was why, without any doubt, Ranajit decided to go for a *tirthavasa*¹ in Benaras.

The final departure from his native and most beloved place after a devastating and humiliating defeat, however, was not an easy thing to cope with for Ranajit. He was deeply shattered and crying from the bottom of his heart. Thus, it seems that in order to cope with such a saddened situation, he had used his literary ability by expressing his grief through this *raga* poem. The source manuscript from where this poem is excerpted itself tells that Ranajit had composed this poem while he was on the way to a final spiritual shelter (*tirthavasa*) in Benaras leaving the Kathmandu Valley for ever. The same source also tells that Ranajit Malla had even sung this *raga* after having a final glance at his lost Kingdom Bhaktapur and the entire valley while taking a rest at a *cautari*² located at the pass at Candragiri hill near Kirtipur. The eyewitness description of the account also tells that Ranajit was deeply crying with unstopped flow of tears in his eyes while singing the *raga* and having a final glance at the Valley. Since the hilltop of Candragiri is the last place from where one can have a final glance at the Valley, it seems that Ranajit was having a very hard time to proceed further for his already started journey because that would take him away from the sight of his native place for ever (see facsimile of the account).³

There are numerous other Newari devotional poems composed by Ranajit Malla available in written and oral forms. In fact, composing devotional and *raga* poems was a quite common practice among the Newar rulers of the late Malla period. King Siddhinarasimha Malla of Patan, Pratap Malla and Bhaskar Malla of Kantipur, Jitamitra Malla and Ranajit Malla of Bhaktapur seem to have been leading among the Newar rulers with literary ability. The devotional songs of the late Malla period seem to have been composed in *raga* form and dominated by the *rasa* known as *karuna* and *vira*. However, the number of songs composed with the *rasa* known as *sringara* is not small in number at all. The *rasa* employed in the poem published here is *karuna*.

Ranajit Malla's present *raga* poem is an excerpt from a historical account of Nepal collected in the 1840s by B. H. Hodgson, British Resident in Kathmandu, and it is known popularly as *General Mathabarasimha Thapa Account of Nepal under the Gorkhali Rulers* (Hodgson Manuscripts Vol. 45 (scroll)).⁴ It must have been written originally in the contemporary Newari script and perhaps transcribed later by a Newar writer into Nagari as part of the historical account. In the account there is a quite long description of Bhaktapur with special focus on the final war fought in Bhaktapur between the united force of the three Malla Kingdoms of the valley and Gorkha. It covers the details of the war and the aftermath of the war including the conversation held between Prithvi Narayan Shah and Ranajit Malla and the final departure of Ranajit from Kathmandu.

Translation of the poem (English)

Oh Ram! Oh Ram! How could I survive without remembering Nepal?
The evil enemy destroyed me now!! // ⁵

[There is] no more shelter [for me] in the country of twelve thousand
[households]!
A foreign land has become my abode now on! Oh Ram! Oh Ram!! //1//⁶

As the fruit of the sin that I committed in my previous life, I have already
seen what I have not even heard of!
There is no point of living in a cage! Oh Ram! Oh Ram!! //2//

I pray million times to Goddess Nava-Durga and God Ganesa!
For a pardon over the crimes I committed! Oh Ram! Oh Ram!! //3//

To how many people the grief of pain I express?
No one can make me free from this anguish! Oh Ram! Oh Ram!! //4//

Kept on showing affection, the evil [conspirator] deceived [me]!
Alas! Alas! What sort of thinking [of mine] caused this? Oh Ram! Oh Ram!!⁷
//5//

[To] this Ranajit Malla, the jewel of the Solar Dynasty,
A shelter in heaven is offered by Goddess Taleju! Oh Ram! Oh Ram!! //6//

Transliteration of the poem from its original Newari

haya haya rama rama gathe maluma nepala saturi durajananan phutakalayo
ava// //

jhinte dola raje samadatayo jita vasa. videsaya vasa jula thani ava rama
rama//1//

hathujana bhaya papam manenagusoya dhuno // panjalasa cona maduthe
jinona rama rama //2//

navadurga ganesyake sahasra ji vinati yana // lasalapi aparadha chemayaau
rama rama //3//

lhaya gohmayake jina dusaya vedana: thugu pasa pheniao suna na rama
rama //4//

piratiyana vacona chalayata durajanana // haya haya chu nugala jula rama
rama //5//

suryavamsi kulamani sri ranajita malla // talejuna vila vaikunthavasa rama
rama //6//

Facsimile of the manuscript containing the raga poem

सनीलेवितिगरिनवैसभयोअवसमीलाइकावाहिंछुकेहिविराडुनुभयाकोछे
नकाशिवासपायाकुछभनिवितिगरिनकुवेमहाआनन्दगरिवस्याउहंपछि
राजाननितमल्लरानीभाषासंक्रांतिकाअधील्लादीनसयतयदियाचा
रवीनअधीसदीरकेहसिवध्यातआयारुछाराजाकाहजूरमाआइवितिग
पांराजानीलाइरअवधुतसीलाइपोराकदीपगयाकुइदिनअधीअतु
लगाभवानिकास्थानमाजाइम्कछीनविस्तारगरिनपल्लोवगसिदसंगरि
मनचोक्छदक्षिणागरिराजानीडोलामाचछीअवधुतसीप्रतिमनअधी
कारिपारथभगरिलेपतिघोडाबछिदवरिवापुपस्थानगरिसुनछीकावाप
निसक्यासहरकाप्रगाहसुवेरैआभयाकाथियातिनहसलाइआसिरवापदी
सरासरकातिपुपुग्पाइसीनदवरिमावासदियाभीनिपल्लराजानीवापहा
प्राछीराहसुबन्नीषानामाछनतिनहसलाइवन्नीछुटाइहामिहसलाइविछु
मनिसम्मपयाउनआउनपायासुतापरसुगंधदुग्याथियोभनिदपरिकेह
सिवध्यातसंगहजूरमावितिगनपगयाउसैमाफिकभामहाराजयथीतारा
पराहाहकाकुकुमलेछीराहसुकनशकाइभेटगराथीदीयातिछीराहसुम
थेअछुतसीसाहेविरामीथियारविछुमनितपोवहिपाराभुक्तभयोउ
कीसीसतिगइवछीगइइवसिलेसस्कारगयायहाउपानराजाराजि
तमल्लश्रीकासिवासनिमित्तजादाचरुगरिपर्वतमखठिनेपालकिसामाया
नेनेपालनर्फहेरियकछीनश्रासगरिउसैघरियकगतियस्तानहको॥

राग ॥ रागमहायामरागमथे मलुमनेनेपालसतरिडसुनने फुत्तकलओआव॥ १॥ जि
नेरोलभनेममदतयेतितवासविदेशयावासकुनथनिआवगलराग॥ १॥ हथुननेभयापापेम
डेनामुसायभुनो॥ पञ्जलसनेनामदुथेजिडेनरागराम॥ २॥ नदङ्गागोशस्याकिसहअजिनिनी
याना॥ लखलपिअपराधेमायाचोशमरा॥ ३॥ द्वायगोलयकिनिरदुवसोवदना॥ थुगपा
साफेनिओलुनानरागराम॥ ४॥ फितीयालावनोलदुलयातदुरनेन॥ हायहायछुनुगलनुनरा
गराम॥ ५॥ सुथवैसिकुनमनिओरराजितगध्व॥ नेलनुनविलेवङ्गावासरगराम॥ ६॥

राग ११ श्रीविमिकिराग १२ श्रीहरिराग १३ श्रीवैद्यराग १४ श्रीवयानराग १५ श्री
मनोरथराग १६ श्रीजयराग १७ श्रीजगन्नाथराग १८ श्रीभोजराग १९ लसयाआया
का श्रीभुपतिराग २० श्रीवैद्यनिकराग २१ श्रीमन्मथराग २२ भिकोईकोखिलडमा
आइराजायाका श्रीभुपालराग २३ तन्कापुव श्रीमोवा २४ डेनकापुवहस २५ मथेपु
मानन्दमन्त्रवायनाइगुदक्षिणाखिलवितलपुगरिदिकनपल्लानुवाकोदमारजायाका श्री
जयेनवान २५ श्रीसुधवान २६ श्रीभीवावान २७ श्रीविचित्रवान २८ श्रीजयदेववान
२९ इरकाछोरेदेविसाहिकहाया कार्कीमाआइराजायाका अकुलमंडनसाह ३० इर
काछोरेहसमथेलमुंडमालाइराजायाका श्रीयशोवमुसाह ३१ इरकाछोरातनुमथे
माहिला श्रीजनकुमारइयसाहलाइत्पाइराजानुत्पाउननिमित्तआजलेहाततिथीकास
वेपेचलोडगोशपाडेलेसक्षेपविदाब्राह्मणयसमगहेहिओभयाकानागाथोरसुकन
पुवहस थापाकुसालगुनामास्कीगनागेहपाडथेअलिअहमगरपावहसपनिप्रवेज
माहादुलथेधमगरिचेकेनमन्गरिकनशनकाविचमादमरिधेरिकथोकगरिगोश
कादवागमिअपमिअहागनालाडमायापाडिआदिनेपराजयजेनामथि

सनीनेवितगरिनवेसभयोअवसमीलाइयावाहिंछुकेहिविरागनुभयाकोछे
नकाशियासपायाकुछभनिवितिगरिनदुवैमहाआनन्दगरिवस्य। उहंपछि
राताहनजितमल्लरानीमाध्यासेक्रांतिकाअधील्लादीनसयेतसदियोबा
रवीनअधीसदरैकेहसिबध्यात् आयाखुछाराजाकाहजमाआइवितिग
पागजारानीलाइरअवधुतसीलाइपोराकदीपगया। दुइदिनअधीश्रीतु
लनाभवानिकास्थानमाजाइमकछीनविस्तरगरिजपल्लोवगसिदसंगरि
पुनचोकेप्रदक्षिणागरिराजारानीडोलामाबठीअवधुतसीप्रतिमनअधी
कारिपारथभजरिनेपनिघोडाबठिदवरिवाटप्रस्थानगरिसुनकोकाबाट
निसक्या। महरकापुनाहसुधैरैमाभयाकाधियातिनहसुलाइआसिरवादी
सरासरकातिपुपुगपाउसीनदवरिमावासदियाभोलिपल्लराजारानीवाटहा
घाछोराहसुबन्दीबानामाधनतिनहसुलाइबन्दीछुटाइहामिहसुलाइबिछु
मतिमम्मपयाउनआउनपायासुनापरसुगंधकुत्याथियोभानिसदरैकेह
सिबध्यातसंगहजुरमावितिगनपगया। उसैमाफिकशामहाराजयथीतारा
यशासाहकाकुक्रमलेछोराहसुकनशकाइभेटगरायीदीयातिछोराहसुम
धेअभ्युतसीसाहेविरामीथियारबिछुमतिनप्यावहिएरागनुक्तभयोउ
त्कीखीसतिगडबछोराइवसिलेसस्कारगया। यहाउपानराजारागजि
तमल्लश्रीकामिनासनिमनुजादाचछागरिपर्वतमावठिनपालकामाध्या
लेनेपालतर्फहेरियकछीनश्रासगरि। उसैघरियकगीतयस्तानहको॥

रग ॥ हायहायराजरागधेमनुभनेनेपालसतुरिइस्तननैफुतकतयोआव॥ १॥ जि
लेबोलगनेसमदतयोजितवासविदेशयावासकुलथतिआवगमम॥ १॥ दुथुजनभयापापम
उनामुसोयधुनो॥ फजलसबोनामुथेजिडेनराभम॥ २॥ नवदुर्गागोभ्याकेसहजिबिनी
याता॥ लजलपिअपराधेमायाशेराभम॥ ३॥ हायगोलयाकेजिनदुखसावदना॥ थुगपा
साफेनिओसुनानराभम॥ ४॥ फितीयाताबनेनछल्यातदुरनेन॥ हायहायछुगमहदुनरा
भम॥ ५॥ सुथेवैसिकुलमनिश्रीराजितमद्व॥ तलेननविलेवैवैवासशभम॥ ६॥

यस्तानहकोगीतवांधीगाइअधुपातगरिनेपालक्षेत्रकोदक्षतगरिसरसरकासितफ
गया। वहापुगपापछि। यकमेजाजन्मभैगमालाभभइन्फेरि२०दीनमारनिगंगला
भभइन्नेपालीसम्बत८८१श्वेसुशुदि१०दसहरकादीनराजारनजितमल्लसुर्यव
शमाउत्पेनभयाकाअनकाशनावहनालमापरलाकभयाअग्निसेस्कारगर्दव
हनालवाटकनागमाथिआइप्रदक्षिणागरिअग्निमाफालहलिसहगामिनि
भैगया। चारदीनअधीस्कयोमीआइराजारनजीतमल्लसेगएकानगरिफकीगिया
कोकसैलेदेजेननहादेखीनेपालमाभुइसुर्यवसिलोपभैगया॥ नेपालतिनस
हरकागताइआपपतउचीजीविनिगरिनीराजराजितमल्लनेगीतेपरीये

Notes

1. In Hindu tradition elderly people may like to spend their *banaprastha* and *sanyasa* days (life after the age of 50 and 75 respectively) by devoting themselves to only spiritual activities at a religious pilgrimage centre such as Benaras in India and that type of living is known popularly as *tirthavasa*.
2. A resting place on walking trails locally constructed with stones in the form of a platform. A *cautari* usually would have a single or multiple plinths at the front edge and some time at the back wall of the platform topped with beautiful stone slabs for sitting. In order to provide shed for the travellers mostly a pair of banyan and pipal trees or some time even *sami* or other auspicious trees are planted at a *cautari*.
3.yaha upramta raja ranajita malla. sri kasivasa nimitta jada candragiri parpatama cadhi nepalako mayale nepalatarpha heri yakachina visrama gari usai ghari yaka gita yasta tarhako // (the text of the raga here)
yastatarhako gitabamdhi gai asrupata gari nepala ksetrako darsana gari sarasara kasitarpha gaya.
4. I thank Sukrasagar Shrestha and Sabita Vaidya for their help in translating this eighteenth century Newari poem into Nepali.
A note in English by Brian Hodgson written on the top of the account (in scroll) tells that this account was collected and prepared under the command and sponsorship of General Mathabarsimha Thapa. It was later given to the king of Nepal and preserved in the Royal Palace. Hodgson had acquired this original copy from an English man named Mr. Mortimer who had got it earlier from King Rajendravikram Shah (MSS/Hodgson/volume 45/British Library, London). Mr. Mortimer had visited Nepal and submitted his survey and observation report to the British Government in India while Hodgson was British Resident in Nepal.
5. This beginning verse seems to have been composed as the refrain or title stanza of the *raga* because unlike other verses there is no number given to this. Inclusion of serial number begins only after this stanza. Thus there are seven verses altogether in this poem but only six of them are numbered.
6. Real sense of this line would be "I am forced to take refuge in the foreign land now."
7. Actual meaning of this line would be "how I failed to understand the conspiracy of the evil enemy which brought this devastation on me?"

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Siddhinarsimhamallaya mye (The Asha Archives, No. 2770, Kathmandu)

Pratapamallaya mye NE 794 (The Asha Archives, No. 351, Cat. No. 15 and No. 2770, Kathmandu)

Ragamala NE 794 (The National Archives, Kathmandu, Reel No. B287/11, Cat. No. II-254)

मूल नेवारी (Newari Original)

१. ॥ हाय हाय राम राम गथे मलुम नेपाल सतुरि दुरजननं फुनकलयो आव ॥ ॥
२. भित्ते दोल राजे समदतयो जित वास. विदेशया वास जुल थनिआव राम राम ॥ १ ॥
३. हथुजन भया पापं मडेना गुसोय धुनो ॥ पन्जलस चोना मदुथे जिडोन राम राम ॥ २ ॥
४. नवदुर्गा गणेश्याके सहश्रजि विनती याना ॥ लषलपि अपराध छेमायाओ राम राम ॥ ३ ॥
५. ल्हाय गोम्हयाके जिन दुषया वेदना: थुगु पासा फेनिओ सुना न राम राम ॥ ४ ॥
६. पिरतीयाना वचोन छलयात दुरजनन ॥ हाय हाय छु नुगल जुल राम राम ॥ ५ ॥
७. सूर्यवसि कुलमनि श्री रणजित मल्ल ॥ तलेजुन विल बैकुंठवास राम राम ॥ ६ ॥

नेपाली अनुवाद (Nepali Translation)

१. हे राम ! हे राम ! म यो नेपाल (लाई) नसम्झिईकन कसरी रहन सकूँला !
शत्रु-दुर्जनले मलाई अब सिद्यायो -खत्तम पाऱ्यो) !! ॥ *
२. १२ हजारको (१२ हजार घर भएको) राज्यमा मेरो वास अब सकियो !
अवदेखि विदेशको वास भयो ! हे राम ! हे राम !! १ ॥
३. पूर्वजन्मको पापले नसुनेको (पनि) देखि सकें,
पिंजडामा बसी बाँच्नुको प्रयोजन छैन राम ! राम !! २ ॥
४. नवदुर्गा र गणेशलाई सहस्र विन्ति गर्छु,
मैले गरेका अपराधका निम्ति क्षमा गर (भनेर) राम ! राम !! (३)

* रागको मूल बोल वा शीर्षक श्लोक जुन राग गाउने समयमा हरेक श्लोक पछि फेरी दोहोर्‍याउँदै गाइन्छ ।

५. दुःखको वेदना म कति (जना) सँग (मात्र) कहूँ ?

यो पासोबाट मलाई कसैले फुकाउन सक्दैन राम ! राम !! ॥ ४ ॥

६. माया-प्रीति गरिबसी छल गन्यो दुर्जजनले,

हाय ! हाय ! (मेरो) के सोचाईले गर्दा यस्तो भयो⁺ राम ! राम !! ॥५ ॥

७. सूर्यवंशको कूलमणि जस्तो रणजित मल्ललाई

तलेजुले वैकुण्ठवास गरायो राम ! राम !! ॥ ६ ॥

⁺ मैले कस्तो सोचाइले गर्दा त्यस्तो शत्रुको छल बुझ्न सकिन र आखिर यस्तो भयो भन्ने अर्थ यसको हुन्छ ।