The most prolific writer in old Hindi literature is perhaps Vṛndāvandās of the Rādhāvallabh sect, who because of his long life was called Cācā, 'uncle'. According to the description of the most extensive search for Hindi manuscripts (Gaur 1961: 640), about twenty thousand strophes of his are available, but he is believed to have composed one hundred thousand verses. In his Harikalā Bēlī, Cācā Vṛndāvandās deplores the massacre in Braj by the Muslim soldiers of Ahmadšāh Abdālī. This work was written in the Āṣāṛh month of the Vikrama year 1817 (June-July, AD 1760):

(Arilla)
Know that in the eighteen hundred and seventeenth year,
On the eleventh of the dark fortnight of Āṣāṛh this Bēlī is told.¹

(Sorāṭhā)
Written in the abode of Bharatpur, where the king is known as Sujān Sīrīn,²
The Bēlī named as Harikalā; Vṛndāvan’s Love is the dear Śyām.³

In this work Vṛndāvandās mentions that the Muslim invaders, the Yavans, came twice to Braj:

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¹ I am indebted to Dr Śaraṇbhārī Gosvāmī, Prof. Govind Śarmā, Dr Nareśendra Bansal, Śrī Kiṣorisaran ‘Ali’ jī Mahārāj and Dr Jayesh Khandelvāl for helping me to interpret the difficulties of the Braj text of the Harikalā Bēlī and for providing published and unpublished materials for this article. I am also thankful to Prof. W. Callewaert and Prof. R. Gombrich for their remarks regarding its language and style.

² The other name of Sīrāj Mal, Maharaja of Bharatpur (1757-63).

³ likhi bharathapura grāma jahā nrpa vidita sujāna sīnha |
   bēlī harikalā nāma Vṛndāvana hita Śyāma priya ||
(kavitta)

The Yavans came twice and harassed the people:
during the years eighteen thirteen and eighteen seventeen.4  (184)

The first massacre in Braj took place between 28 February 1757 (9 Phālgun Śukla 1813; cf. Qanungo 1982: 55; Yājñavalkya 1988: 56) and 6 March 1757 (1 Caitra Krṣṇa 1813; cf. Singh 1983: 68 and Yājñavalkya 1988: 56). This coincides with the end of the Vikrama year 1813 (the last day of VS 1813 being 20 March 1757). As far as the second date is concerned, the Vikrama year of 1817 lasted from 18 March 1760 to 5 April 1761. Thus the mention of the second attack must refer to the siege and taking of Aligarh from 5 March to 7 April 1760 (Sīṁh 1971: 208; Cāndavat 1982: 163). Besides these two attacks there was a small abortive siege of Dig – a fort about forty kilometers from Mathura – on 6 and 7 February 1760, that is in the Vikrama year of 1816 (Singh 1983: 78; Sīṁh 1971: 206-7).

In nine kavittas and chappayy of the Harikalā Beli (verses 174-83) Vṛndāvandās bewails nine eminent bhaktas who died in the Muslim attacks on Braj, but he does not mention in which one. These bhaktas are Mukundalāl Gosvāmī, the brother of Vṛndāvandās’ guru, Rūplāl Gosvāmī (1681-1744; cf. Mītāl 1968: 211.); Premdās, a disciple of Rupāl Gosvāmī and the author of the most popular commentary on the Hit-Caurāsi (Mītāl 1968: 211; Bh. Miśra 1972: 248); Krṣnadās Bhāvuk; Ānandghan; Yādvādās or Jādo Rasik; Bhagavandās; Krṣnadās, a priest of Bāṅke Bihārī; Lakṣman Simh; and Yugaldaśs, who is perhaps another commentator on the Hit-Caurāsi.5 The kavita on Ānandghan’s death is as follows:

He burnt his body by viraha, (and) accomplished the true vow of the Forest;6
Blessed Ānandghan did what he sang.
Hey, youngster of Braj, glory, glory also to you !
What an incomparable rule you have extended to the world !
The deep worshipper of Braj who at last threw his body away completely,
Out of desire for the dust put his body exactly there.
Vrindaban’s Beloved Beauty, you too, Hari, threw dust (on him) (humiliated him),
Still the true resolve of your worshipper has become visible.7  (178)

4 thārāha sai teraha au athār̥ha sai satr̥ha varṣa
da[h]ā bāra aya yavana janaṇi tāpā dayau hai |
5 Mītāl (1968: 410) mentions a certain Yugaldaś, disciple of Vilāsdās, commentator of the Hit-Caurāsi, who is perhaps identical with the Yugaldaś of the Harikalā Beli.
6 Probably a religious vow not to leave Vṛndāvan, the Forest of Vṛndā. (Vṛndā, the Sanskrit word for the holy basil plant is also the name of a goddess).
7 biraha so tāyau tona nibāhyau bana sāmcau pana
dhanyā ānandaghana gai soi kari hai |
 eho vṛjā kuṇvarā dhanya dhanya tuma hi kauni
kāhā niki ati prabhutā yaha jaga mein bistari hai |
The witness of the Harikalā Belī is unquestionable: Ānandghan, one of the foremost poets of Hindi literature,9 died in one of the attacks on Braj – either in 1757 or in 1760 – at the hands of the Muslim soldiers.

Before Viśvanāthprasād Miśra’s research in the 1940s (see V. Miśra 1948; 1952: 57-61), the Harikalā Belī’s reference to Ānandghan was not known to the public. (To date the complete text of this work has not been published).9 From the nineteenth century until Rāmcandra Śukla, it was thought that Ānandghan died in Vrindaban, in the attack of Nādir Śāh in 1739.10 However Nādir Śāh’s army never went to Braj: his massacre was confined to Delhi. Radhācaran Gosvāmi’s (1859-1925) reference to Ānandghan (Viyogi 1993: 173) gives us a clue to this misunderstanding. He wrote that Ānandghan ‘met the dust of Braj in (the) Nādirśāhi’ (Nādirśāhi braja raja mile). A word such as Nādirśāhi must have been interpreted by many scholars as the ‘attack or massacre by Nādir Śāh’. This word, however, has a wider meaning: ‘unrestricted reign, bestial tyranny’ (nirankus śāsan, pāśvik atyācār; cf. Prasād et al. 1992: 581-82.). This is the sense in which Radhācaran Gosvāmi and others must have used this word. Later it was interpreted as the massacre by Nādir Śāh of 1739. Another reason must be that the massacre by Nādir Śāh – the first one after a long period of peace – made a deeper impression on people’s minds than the later ones.

Viśvanāthprasād Miśra in determining the date of Ānandghan’s death, used – besides some fragments of the Harikalā Belī – two sources by Jaylāl, who was the court poet of Kishangarh, and was active around the turn of the century. In a letter written to Rādhākrṣṇadās,11 Jaylāl mentions a journey taken together by Nāgaridās and Ānandghan to Kishangarh in VS 1813.

garhau vraja upāśi jina deha anta pūri pāri
raja ki abhilāśā sa tahām hi deha dhari hai
vrmadāvana hita rūpa tumā hā hari urāi dhūri
epai sāmcī nistha jana hi ki lakhi pari hai ||

8 Ānandghan is today known as Ghanānand, because in his savaiyās – to insert it into an anapaestic or dactylic metre – he used his chap (poetic signature) as ghanā anāda. Most modern scholars have been acquainted with or impressed by only Ānandghan’s kavittas and savaiyās. Thus they became familiar with this ḍhāp, which they often contracted as Ghanānand. This form, however, was never used before the twentieth century except in cases of metrical constraint. The poet himself and his contemporaries usually used the form Ānandghan, ‘Cloud of joy’, etc.

9 In addition to the abridged version of the Harikalā Belī published by Varmā (1988: 223-31), I have consulted three nineteenth and twentieth-century MSS in the Ras Bhāratī Sanstān, Vrindaban (among them only the twentieth-century MS gives a complete text).

10 According to Mahādevprasād’s Sāhityabhāṣān (Gupta 1961: 216), Grierson (ibid.) and Bhāratendu Harīscandra (1870). The latter is also at the base of the reference by Tassy (1870-72: 3, 459).

11 Quoted by Rādhākrṣṇadās in his life of Nāgaridās. See Śyāmsundardās (1937: 173).
It is heard that when Mahārājā Nāgarīdāsa ji and Ghanānand came to Kishangarh from Vrindaban, they first came to Jaipur and went to have a darṣan of Śrī Govinddev. There in the presence of Śrī Govinddev, Ānandghan ji sang a kirtan. At that time the Mahārājā of Jaipur came for darṣan and praised his kirtans. Then Ānandghan ji said: ‘Who are you to praise? If my kirtans are to be praised let Śrī Govardhan ji praise them!’ Having said this he took leave from there and said to Nāgarīdāsa ji: ‘I will not go further in such a country, I will turn back!’ So he went back to Mathura and it is also heard that he asked the masacrer in Mathura: ‘Wound me by your sword little by little, very slowly!’ As he was being wounded by the sword he continued to roll about in the dust of Braj. In this way he left his body (met his death).

In the Nāgarsamuccay Jaylāl also mentioned the date of Nāgarīdāsa’s departure from Vrindaban:

Know that in the year eighteen hundred and thirteen
On the twelfth of the dark fortnight of Caitra he set forth from Braj.  

This implies that Ānandghan must have remained alive after the first massacre of Braj, which lasted until the first of the dark half of Caitra. Thus, according to Miśra, Ānandghan must have died in the second attack, in the Vikrama year 1817.

But in another place – unnoticed by Miśra – Jaylāl wrote that:

The news of the attack had secretly reached here to Rupnagar-Kishangarh. Nāgarīdāsa’s younger brother, Bahādur Simh and Nāgarīdāsa’s son Sardār Simh wrote to him insisting that he should by all means come here for a family visit. He came here, cheated by this trick, and after staying for six months he returned to Vrindaban.

According to Kiśorilāl Gupta, the editor of the collected works of Nāgarīdāsa, the poet-king left Braj not in the month of Caitra but in Phālgun (see Gupta 1965: 34), before the massacre. By this last quotation Jaylāl meant that the news of the imminent attack reached Kishangarh before the attack itself. That is why he uses such words as ‘secretly’ (gupta) and ‘trick’ (dhokhāda), (cf. Rājendra 1972: 70). Obviously Jaylāl did not know the exact days of the massacre, which took place more than one hundred years before his time. Still the motivation given by him for the family visit seems reasonable.

Thus the basis for Miśra’s hypothesis that Ānandghan died in the second attack on Vrindaban in VS 1817 is not incontestable.

In historical sources there is a description of a wide-ranging massacre of the monks of Mathura and Vrindaban in 1757; while in 1760, only strategic operations (the siege of Dig and the capturing of Aligarh) are mentioned.

12 athāraha sa ipa saṁvata tera ha janu |
    caitra krṣṇa tihi dvādaśi braja tem kīyo payāna || Quoted by Miśra (1952: 58).

13 Quoted by Bahugunā (1944: 3), from Śyāmsundardāsa (1937: 172-73).
In 1757 Ahmadshah Abdali, enraged with Sauraj Mal Jat of Bharatpur (1757-1763), gives orders to Jahân Khân: ‘Move into the boundaries of the accursed Jât and plunder and ravage every town of the district held by him. The city of Mathura... let it be put entirely to the sword’ (see Singh 1983: 65). On 26-27 February 1757, Jahân Khân was given a firman (see Yajñavalkya 1988: 56): ‘Every person cutting off and bringing in heads of infidels should throw them down before the tent of the Chief Minister. An account would be drawn up and five rupees per head would be paid for them from government funds’ (see Singh 1983: 65).

On 28 February, a few days after Holi, Jahân Khân with his 20,000 men reached Mathura, which is an unfortified city. After defeating an army of 5,000 left there by Sauraj Mal, he started the massacre and looting of the town. On 6 March the marauders set out for Vrindaban. The brutality of the massacre can be guessed from the eyewitness’ accounts:

Every horseman had loaded all his horses with plundered property, and atop of it rode the girl-captives and the slaves. The severed heads were tied up in rugs like bundles of grain and placed on the heads of the captives... an order was given to carry the severed heads to the entrance gate of the Chief Minister’s quarters, where they were to be entered in registers, and then built up into heaps and pillars...

Wherever you gazed you beheld heaps of the slain; you could only pick your way with difficulty, owing to the quantity of bodies lying about and the amount of blood spilt. At one place we reached, we saw about two hundred dead children lying in a heap. Not one of the dead bodies had a head... When I got to the town of Mathura I saw exactly the same state of things. Everywhere in lane and bazaar lay the headless trunks of the slain; and the whole city was burning... I saw a number of Bairagi and Sanyasi huts, huddled close together... In each hut lay a severed head with the head of a dead cow applied to its mouth and tied to it with a rope around its neck.14

There is no account of any massacre in 1760.

* * *

In his argumentation, Viśvanāthprasād Miśra does not rely on the full text of the Harikalâ Beli, but only on some parts of it. (Obviously he did not have access to the complete version of this work and he did not even mention where he took his text from).15

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15 It seems that Miśra’s acquaintance with this work was limited to the verses he quoted in V. Miśra (1948: 12-13) and in id. (1952: 59-60; strophes 1-7, 117 and 178). Probably his source was the Traivāršik khoj vivaran 1912-14 of the Nāgaripracārini Šabhā, in which entry 196k is
In the opening lines of the Harikalā Beli, Vṛndāvandās, the poet, states:

(Arīla)
In the year eighteen hundred and thirteen by Hari’s will the Yavans destroyed the country (and) a great disaster occurred. Then my mind became troubled, that He lets the sādhus fall, Oh, Hari, as if holding the weapon of the time of the destruction of [the creation].

(Dohā)
When by running away some escaped, then anxiety was born in my mind; Hey, Lord, you killed the bhaktas, how did you become so mean? Thinking of it again and again my life grows more perplexed, Yavans killed the true ones: this sorrow cannot be born. At the town of Farrukhábād, I approached the River of the Gods. There was a Rāsalīlā there on the eleventh of the bright fortnight of Caitra. The third watch at night passed as the actors sang a song. A miracle happened there that I am going to describe. When one sang a khālī of Ānandghan my eyes suddenly opened, listening to it I became very anxious, my mind was not at peace. Such Hari-bhaktas were killed by the Yavans, It has become a great wound in my heart and it immersed me in thoughts. In a dream I saw a twelve year old boy, He jumped from a high building and fell onto his back. I wondered anxiously whether he was alive or not. He stood up with his arms flailing — (I felt) great joy in my heart.

the description of a manuscript of the Harikalā Beli. This vivaran is mentioned in id. (1948: 12).

16 thāraha sai terahom barasa hari yaha kari  
yamaṇa bigoyau desa bipati gārhi pari  
tabā mana cintā bārhi, sādhu patana kare  
hari hām, manahū srṣī sanghāra kāla āyudha dhare

17 The Ganges.

18 Three o’clock.

19 bhāji bhāji koū chūte, taba mana upajyau soca  
aho nātha tumā jana hate, bhaye kauna vidhi poca  
bāra bāra socata yahi, gaye prāṇa baurāya  
santa kare badhi yamana ne, yaha dukha sahau na jaya  
śahara pharrikhābāda jahām, gaye śuradhuni pāsa  
caita suti ekādaśi, tahāṃ bhayau ika rāśa  
tin pahara rajani gai, bhēṣanti kiya uv gāna  
tahāṃ ekā kautuka bhayau, jāko kauaṃ bakhāna  
ānandaghana ko khyāla ika gāyau khula gaye naima  
sunata mahā silvala bhayau, mana nahim pāyauv caina  
aishē hari-santa jana, māre yavanuṇi āya  
yaha ati kheda, hite bhayau ānau soca dāhāya  
bālaka bārāha barṣa ko supane paryo lākāya
Then I asked him: ‘Who are you? Where do you come from?’

Then he said: ‘Well, I come from Ānandghan’s dwelling.’

I said: ‘(But) he got the abode of (the eternal) Vṛndabān!’

Then he told me: ‘Well, he is staying (just) behind the temple’.

I asked again: ‘Where are all the other monks?

Tell me then, they are near; increase my faith!’

Vṛndabān’s Beloved Beauty said: ‘Look back!’

When I turned back I saw they were all watching the performance. 

All the people killed by the mlekchās were sitting (there).

I said to him in wonder: ‘Clear away my doubts!’

Then he said: ‘I have already played one trick (and)

I am going to play a second one. Behold with your eyes!’

He leaped up in the same way: after touching the temple he fell to

the earth.

My doubts did not leave me – thinking of the wonder.

Vṛndabān’s Beloved Beauty – having seen all this

I woke up and told the bhaktas: ‘Let’s accept Hari’s orders!' 

In the year eighteen hundred and seventeen, the Yavanas returned.

This way the Veracious did not forget the word of the trick.

Every creature of Braj was trembling in fear;

bringing this (fear) the mlekchās were swelling with fourfold pride.

You have thrown away your reputation as ‘Tender to the bhaktas

– now your words are very favourable!

Vṛndabān’s Beloved Beauty, let me sacrifice myself for you / I swear /:

In whose shade we were nursed, that one became unfavourable.

[kūdaya uñcē bhavana tēnu paryau urddhamukha āya]
[mohi parama acaraja bhayau, svāsā hai ki tana nāṁhi]
[una uttī paṭakāi bhujā, mahā harṣa mana māṁhi]

20

main to būjhi kauna tuma kahāni te ju āye ho,
un to kahi āyau haumi ānandaghanā vāsa to |
mainme kahi unani ju vṛndāvana dhāma pāyau,
un to bātāyau eka mandira ota vāsa to |
bahuri main būjhi jī aura saba mahanta kahām,
nikaṭa te bātāvo bārīvāo viśvāsa to |

vṛndāvana hita rūpa una kahi pāchei dekhī,
pāchei muri dekhāum to dekhāta saba rāsā to

21

je je ye malekṣani māre te te saba bauthē hain,
kautuka so kahā hai, sandeha merai tāriye |
taha to una kahi eka kalā haumi kheylau haumi,
dīji puni khetlāta haum, nainani nihāriye |
vaisei kūdayau puni mandira chve bhāmi giraya |
mero na sandeha bhajau, acaraja bičāriye |

vṛndāvana hita rūpa main saba yaha dekhī kain,
fāgi kahayau santana som, ajā hari dhāriye

22
From this description we learn that the author of the Harikalā Belī had his vision on the eleventh of the bright fortnight of Caitra in VS 1814 (31 March 1757), just a few days after the first massacre. Vṛndāvandās fled from Braj to Farrukhabad in those days. His vision foretells the second attack on Braj, which took place in the Vikrama year 1817, and it is also clear that by the time of the vision Ānandghan was dead. Thus, he must have died in the massacre of Mathura and Vṛndabān between 28 February and 6 March 1757, 23 and he was not a victim of a strategic operation of Ahmadshāh Abdali's army. As has been argued above, there was only one massacre in Braj. Vṛndāvandās mentions the second attack in order to show that the 'Veracious' fulfilled his promise. In all probability, Ānandghan met his fate in Vṛndabān, where he used to stay in the later years of his life. Therefore, the most probable date of his death is 6 March 1757, the day when Vṛndabān was looted.

There are some scholars, who also gave the date of Ānandghan's death as VS 1813, that is AD 1757. While Prabhudayāl Mītal (1968: 360) and Bhagīrath Miśra (1972: 248) do not give any reason for this conjecture, Rājendra Kumār (1972: 68–72) denies Jayālī’s credibility and mentions that there was no massacre in Mathura and Vṛndabān in VS 1817 (AD 1760).

* * *

As has been mentioned, Jayālī, the main source of Viśvanāthpasād Miśra, is not entirely reliable. In the Nāgaraśamuccay, for example, he ardently tries to present Nāgaridās as a follower of the Puṣṭimārg. Even in his letter, quoted above, it seems that in mentioning 'Govardhan ji', Ānandghan too was a Puṣṭimārgī, though he was initiated into the Nimbārī sampradāy by Vṛndāvandēvācārya of Salemābād. 24 Still, Jayālī’s description might be based on facts. Ānandghan may have left for Kishangarh together with Nāgaridās in the Phālgun month of VS 1813. In Jaipur, however, there was some quarrel or misunderstanding and Ānandghan turned back. He reached Braj exactly at the time of the massacre. If we accept Jayālī’s version, then it can be said that

vraja ke jīva jantu sab kāmpe ati māni bhaya
lāya ke maleśa kachu caugune se phūle haim ∥
bhakta vatsala virada kom pāchehi ju dāri diyau,
abake to vacanāni ati anukāle hainī |
vṛndāvana hita rūpa bali jaiyai rūvare ki
jina ka pal haim chāha tinatem prati kāle hainin ∥ 12 ∥

23 The accounts put the massacre between 28 February and 6 March although the Jāt territory was cleared of Ahmadshāh's army only by 29 March (Qanungo 1982: 57).

Ānandghan may have been killed on his return journey to Vrindaban one day between 28 February and 29 March. Still, the most likely date remains 6 March, because he probably reached Vrindaban before this day, that is why Vṛndāvandās mentioned the Forest, Vrindaban, in connection with his death.

Ānandghan may have known of the danger. Thus, in his death there may be an act of will, too: he wanted to die in Braj, to reach dhāmmākti. That is why Vṛndāvandās wrote that Ānandghan ‘accomplished the true vow of the Forest’.

* * *

It is worth mentioning that the Harikalā Beli’s importance is not limited to being a description of a disaster and a source for Ānandghan’s death. First of all, it is a religious work: a complaint and a question to Krishna, who left his bhaktas unprotected. Many of the most beautiful strophes of the poem express this feeling:

(kavītta)

Like the cloud of the final dissolution, the flying dust of the horseshoes of the mlecchas’ army enveloped the sky.
The country was quivering, the birds (and) people fluttering;
like the hawk’s swoop, death circled them.
‘Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!’ – was repeated by all women and men.
Hey, Nanda’s Joy, why have you become merciless?
Vṛndaban’s Love, stone melts at such sorrow;
(but) it does not reach you if you put us on your left. 25

it is sung in the books.
What suffering have you not undergone for the sake of Braj?
You are called the Lover and Evernew Bridegroom of Braj.
Deep knowledge and essence of Braj, son of the king of Braj,
Benefactor of Vṛndaban, you set even the Creator a-dancing.
Thus listen to our continuous call, do not delay now!
Remove these mlecchas who are flashing their teeth. 26

25 pralaya kāla ghaṭā jaisi umāri malekṣa sena
urī khura reṇu tāsoṇī nibha chāya gayau hai
thaharāne desa phaharāne haim pahkerē jana
bāja ki sī jhapajānī mein mryu gherī layau hai
hā nātha! hā nātha! terata saba nāri nara
eko nanda nandana niṭhura kāheī bhayau hai
vṛndāvana hita iha karānā pāṣāṇa draye,
tumakōṁ na byāpi to, hamem ju bāyoṁ dayau hai

26 || 21 ||
Remove these mlechhas who are flashing their teeth.\(^{26}\)  \(^{(22)}\)

(savaiyā)

Coming out (from Braj) nobody looks (at anyone). The people are uprooted: all are leaving.

Where the song of Rādhā-Hari’s sports (resounded), there, in the Forest-king the lanes are empty.

Did you become ignorant deliberately or did you forget to be tender out of a fault of your mind?

Vrindaban’s Love, you betrayed our trust. In Nanda’s dwelling you have turned from boy to girl.\(^{27}\)  \(^{(31)}\)

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\(^{26}\) braja candra braja iśa braja ko kalaśa braja
   pāla karata āye yōṁ granthani mēṁ gāyau hai
   kahāṁ kahāṁ kaśṭa nāṁha sahyau nahiṁ braja ke hetu
   braja ko dina dūlaha aur baliabhā kahāyau hai
   braja ko taṛva vedae gurha brajarajā atamajā,
   vṛndābana hita kartā vidhi hā nācayau hai
   sunyamūṁ jā ṭera yōṁ ahera abha karibai nāṁhi
   ṭāro ya māleksa kom kaha dhaun mūha lāyau hai

\(^{31}\) bāhirā ai keni dekhata nā, parajā ujāri saba jāta caṁ
   rādhā-hari līlā ko gāṇa jahā tahā sāṁ parīṁ banarajā gali
   jānti ajāna bhaye ho kidauni ye jī bhulami bhulata budhi bachali
   vṛndāvanahita visāvāsa ṭhage, bhayau nanda ke dhāma laṁā kai ṭalī
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