CHAPTER 4

Bhakti and Nayak-Nayika

Krishna and Radha, as we found them in Saneh-Sagar and as we will see them in the poetry of Bodha, Rasnidhi, Surati Mishra and Thakur, were earthly persons. The humanized form of Krishna was certainly not a new idea but the change was marked by the relegation of his divinity. The poets spoke little about the mythological or divine attributes of Krishna and their intimate sensual relationship was understood as perfect symbolic love that could enable a person to realize the Ultimate. More significant was the reversed roles of Krishna and Radha where Krishna became the subject and Radha was the object. They conveyed the idea of bhakti as combination of spiritual mysticism and earthly love and passion, independent of any tradition. Bhakti as a personal religion was also preached by other contemporary Reeti Kal poets who also defied adherence to any literary, mythological or religious tradition. The lover-beloved relationship between Radha and Krishna or between Krishna and a devotee were enveloped in deep erotic sentiment by Bodha, Thakur, Tosh and Rasnidhi. This form of bhakti at the onset owed its allegiance to Vaishnava tradition under the leadership of Chaitanya Maharpabhu. It is believed that Rup Goswami, an eminent follower of Chaitanya during the sixteenth century composed a treatise Ujjwalnilmani in Sanskrit language for highlighting erotic-religious sentiment, Radha and
Krishna being the main characters.\textsuperscript{1} It has further been suggested that Chaitanyaite \textit{Vaishnavism} drew its ideas from Nimbarka, Jaideva and Vidyapati, who had dealt extensively the theme of love between Radha and Krishna.\textsuperscript{2} As we read carefully, the origin of the medieval \textit{Vaishnava bhakti} is traced back, at the most, to \textit{Bhagvat Purana} in the writing of these scholars and also to the affectionate \textit{bhakti} tradition of Ramaite cult of Vaishnavas founded by Ramanuja. It is not to be denied that Krishnaite \textit{bhakti} as emotional devotionalism was presented in \textit{Bhagvat Purana}, our idea is to produce the views of those scholars who traced the origin of \textit{bhakti} in folk religions and popular literature of the south dating back to the first century of Christian Era.

Friedhelm Hardy, though accepts that thirteenth century onwards Krishnaite devotees had begun to cultivate a form of religion which they mainly derived from \textit{Bhagvat Purana}, describes the different phases of evolution of \textit{bhakti} as human devotion in Krishnaite religion.\textsuperscript{3} The religion

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} S.K. De, \textit{History of Sanskrit Poetics}, p. 266-8, and see also, P.V. Kane, \textit{History of Sanskrit Poetics}, p. 310-5. S.K. De in his book \textit{Early History of Vaishnava Faith}, p. 203-8 also discusses Rup Goswami's \textit{Ujjwalnilmani} as the foremost text on erotic-religious sentiment.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} John Straton Hawley, \textit{Surdas: Singer, Poet and Saint}, p. 95-118 and C. Vaudeville, \textit{Myths, Legends and Saints in Medieval India}, p. 153-54. Edward C. Dimock Jr. 'Doctrine and Practice among the Vaishnavas of Bengal' in Milton Singer (ed) \textit{Myths, Rites and Attitudes}, p. 42. All these scholars were concerned more with the identification of Radha in relation to Krishna. In this attempt, they examined the emergence of Radha as a beloved of Krishna. The idea of personal \textit{bhakti} was implicitly explained in the love relations between the two. The origin of \textit{bhakti} needs reference to posterity and vernacular literature of different regions in India.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Friedhelm Hardy, \textit{Viraha Bhakti: The Early History of Krishna Devotion in South India}, Introduction. The author believes that the historicity of Krishna stimulated the beliefs in incarnational theories. The human God, who had descended to this world was then not merely to be worshipped by loyal, devoted or devout people, but he was to be loved with a perfect mind. This idea of \textit{bhakti}, when absorbed different folk elements since ancient period, found expression in Sangam literature, Alvar literature and in \textit{Bhagvat Purana}.
\end{itemize}
of Krishna, as she writes, was different from other theistic traditions of Hinduism due to its eroticism. The ravishing beauty of Krishna stimulated the aesthetic, the erotic and the ecstatic faculties of Radha and other gopis and resulted in intense yearning for him. As the union was practically not possible, the devotees as Radha released their passion in terms of ecstatic or abnormal behaviour reflected in loss of consciousness, sleeplessness or wandering aimlessly. The bhakti in her thesis becomes bhakti in separation or Viraha-bhakti.

Gavin Flood explores the literature of the period belonging to the Vedic Age in order to define the narrative traditions of early Vaishnavism. He attributes two central themes—love and war, to Lord Vishnu on the basis of his analysis. The different aspects of love to the Lord were expressed in Sangam literature and Alvar poetry since the first century of the Christian Era. Amongst many incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Vasudeva-Krishna, Krishna-Gopala and the Yadu-Prince came to be widely accepted. It could be perhaps for this reason of repeated incarnations that Krishna became a synonym of Lord Vishnu. The love deeds of Lord Vishnu laid the foundation of expression of emotions and over period of time the descent-God Krishna

4. Ibid., p. 7 and 531-55.
5. Gavin Flood, An Introduction to Hinduism, p. 129.
6. A Barth, The Religions of India, (Tr. by J. Wood, p. 166-68) presents Krishna as popular deity which was not known in Vedas. It also emerges in the view of the author that the Brahmanical God, Lord Vishnu also attained Supremacy by the fusion the popular God Krishna in his divinity. The view of Krishna as Kuledevta or ethnic god is also supported by K.M. Sen who writes that the worship of Krishna might have been confined to nomadic Abhira tribe of Mathura-Dwarka region in the beginning. So many legendary folk tales associated with Krishna suggest his origin in some popular deity. See his book Hinduism, p. 92.
became a symbol of passionate love. It is however, to be noted that eroticism in context of the descended God and the devotee was not a characteristic feature of the Vaishnavas alone. Lord Siva, who had never incarnated as human God, was recognized as a human being by the Virsaiva cult and erotic love was a dominant theme of their Kannada popular poetry during the tenth century.

The origin of the emotional devotional bhakti as we find in the poetry of our poets was conglomeration of various erstwhile traditions, however great or little and classical or popular. The bhakti, in its institutionalized form during the period under review demanded the God to be a person having physical charm that would fascinate the devotee. The description of Krishna's beauty as intoxicating was essentially seen in the poetry:

---

7. Gavin Flood, *Introduction to Hinduism*, p. 132. The notion of affectionate love became more sensuous in *Reeti Kal* poetry. The scholars like Eric Seigel interpret allegorically the love poetry of Krishna and Radha whereas Flood, like Madeleine Biardeau distinguishes between *Prema* and *Kama*. These interpretations need careful application in context of *Reeti-kal* poetry because the poets like Bodha and Ghananand composed the *Viraha*-poetry only after their expulsion from the Courts on charges of their indulgence with the Court prostitutes.

8. A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva*, p. 35 and p. 50-2. Referring to the devotees of Virsaiva cult, and Mahadeviyakha, a woman in particular, the author shows how the conventions of Indian love-poetry were adapted by the devotees of this cult. Though eroticism had been attached to Lord Siva and her consort Parvati long time back by Kalidasa in his Sanskrit drama *Kumarasambhavam* but it has not gained popularity in the literary circle. The idea of passionate love between the incarnated God and the devotee was perhaps better suited for a God like Krishna who was taking birth and rebirth in different ages. The various facets of love like social constraints and yearning as seen in Virsaiva poetry were presumably applied to the notion of Krishna bhakti in the South.
Since I have seen the beauty of Braja king, none comes to my heart, Poet Bodha says that the heart is fully intoxicated and does not pay heed to anybody’s advice.

Charmed by the beauty, the devotee aspired for a personal relationship with him. To different poets, the extent of intimacy was also different. Rasnidhi wanted to have frequent visions of the Lord while Bodha aspired for immediate communion. Thakur, in a worldly manner, wished a permanent stay with Krishna:

Either I settle down in Nandagaon or you come to stay in Barsana.

With Krishna, in the poetry of all these poets, actual physical contact was seemingly possible and this delusion intensified their yearning. The lover or devotee lost all his or her consciousness and defied all the social constraints. Inspite of the eagerness to sacrifice honour and grace and the courage to face humiliation and sarcasm, the Beloved never appeared practically. The separation remained unresolved and the fire of loneliness

---

9. Bodha, *Ishqnama*, v. 4, Sec. 3 and see also Thakur, *Thakur Thasak*, V. 32 and 42. Rasnidhi, *Ratan Hazara*, V. 370, 404, 512. Anne Hunt Overzee in *The Body Divine* (p. 87-127) sees the divine body as representing different levels of theological symbolism and also as the perception of unity of all things in the divine body as the Supreme Self. Lord Rama to Ramanuja and Lord Krishna to Arjuna were manifestation of all the divinity and supernatural elements which was reflected through their face, eyes, hands or complexion. The body language to Overzee was esoteric and exotic whereas we find *nakh-shikh* description as aesthetic and erotically
became unbearable in the poems. The sharp reactions were reflected in sleeplessness, loss of appetite, unconsciousness and weeping:

दिन वारे नौं ओ मूँह नहीं जब ते हिय मैं यह आते बसो।

(Day and night I don't experience hunger or sleep since the feeling of love has been dwelling in my heart.)

The devotee so drenched in love realized at a later stage the impossibility of physical experience of divinity. She (the devotee was generally a female in the poetry) cursed Krishna for betraying and at times held herself responsible for falling in love with him. Her ecstasy of love became so ardent that she found it inconceivable to live without her Beloved. She renounced all the worldly activities in a hope of experiencing her counterpart some day:

कभी मिलो कभी मिलो यह धीरज ही मैं धरेबो करे।

This state of ecstasy in the bhakti tradition probably guided many scholars to suggest a kind of sufi tendency in Krishnaite bhakti tradition of our period. We have also discussed the influence of Sufi ideology in context

11. Thakur-Thasak, V. 59, 60, 83 and 170. Bodha, Ishqnama, V. 18, Sec. 2. The social life as obstacle to passionate bhakti was also illustrated in Virsaiva poetry. Mahadeviyakha's passionate love often expressed in sexual terms led to conflicts between the spiritual conduct and the worldly life. For this discussion, see David R. Kinsley, Hinduism: A Cultural Perspective, p. 59-62 and A.K. Ramanujan, Speaking of Siva, p. 50.

12. There are references in the poetry of Surdas and also in that of Bodha and Thakur wherein we find Krishna and Radha are depicted as enjoying the moments of unions. Surdas himself admitted that union as illusionary but Reeti poets nowhere explain the nature of this union.

13. Bodha, Ishqnama, V. 1, Sec. 3.

of Saneh-Sagar, but it would not be reasonable to consider the ecstatic state as exclusively Sufic idea of bhakti. We have been tracing the different stages of bhakti through which it had passed in the ancient Indian traditions of the south and the north. Zaehner also distinguishes between the Hindu and the Sufi mysticism on the basis of their respective ideologies. Our poets also attempted to prove that the path of the bhakti they followed had the sanctions of Vedas and Puranas:

यह प्रेम को पंख हलाहल है सुलिंग वेद पुरानों गावत है।

(The cult of love is ecstatic and its praise is sung by the Vedas and Puranas.)

Further, the description of drinking vish (poison) by the mad devotee indicates the ascetic practices given in Rigveda Samhita. Gavin Flood also discusses the various interpretations of this act in terms of Shiva’s drinking of the poison churned up from the ocean. The ascetic’s drinking of poison implies his ability to remain in the poisonous material world. Whatever might be the more reasonable interpretation, we are concerned only with

that Chaitanya and Nanak, by combining the elements of Islam and Christianity with Hindu theology produced new religions. See his book, The Origin and Development of Classical Hinduism, p. 113 and see also, R.S. McGregor (ed) Devotional Literature in South Asia, Sec. III. A Barth also believes that the love-poems were the production of Sufism, see, Religions of India, p. 231. Irfan Habib also holds that the Sufis in India extended the notions of sexual love between the god and devotee. See, ‘Reason and Science in Medieval India’ in D.N. Jha (ed.) Society and Ideology in India, p. 166.

15. Zaehner Writes that the idea of love devotion was visible in Bhagvat Gita and Yogic traditions. Moreover, the idea of liberation was foreign to Sufi mystics which could be seen in the Hindu mystic poetry of the period. See his book Hindu and Muslim Mysticism in India, p. 71 to 105. Bodha and Thakur, both frequently refer to crossing the mundane ocean by renouncing affinity, anger, ego and desire which was then Indian.. See, Bodha, Ishqnama, V. 5, Sec. I, Thakur-Thasak, V. 72 and 172.

16. Bodha, Ishqnama, V. 10, Sec. I and see also, Thakur-Thasak, V. 66.

the occurrence of this act in the Reeti Kal poetry which helps us in tracing the origin of bhakti in Indian antiquities. The separated devotee, like a yogi drank the poison:

च्र र का घाव लगे तो जिसे ओ जिसे विष बाँझ पिये मतवारी। 18

(If wounded by Braja, the mad (devotee) survives by consuming the poison.) The virahini or viyogini thus was identified with the yogi of the earlier traditions. The lover, not in a position to bear the pains of separation selected the ascetic path of meditation by renouncing the world. 19

The feeling of dissociation became so strong that the lover lost all her senses. Rasnidhi described the continuous weeping of the lover due to sufferings caused by the fire of separation (Viraha-agni) which could not be appeased by the showers of tears. 20 The mind of the devotee was to be resorted to a perfect state in order to have a contemplative vision of the Beloved. The Viraha or Viyoga thus has been interpreted as the highest form of yoga by Bodha:

त्याग को जोग जहाँ कहै हम तौ तब ही चूकि त्याग जहाँ। 21

उठी जू जोग की रीति कहै हम जोग ना दूलो वियोग ले जाने।

19. Bodha, Ishqnama, V. 28 in Sec. 2 and, see also, V. 34 in the same section.
21. Bodha, Ishqnama, V. 3, Sec. IV. Hawley in Surdas : Saint, Poet and Singer has devoted one chapter to 'separation' (p. 93-118). He analyses at great length the similarities between the yogic practices and the ways suggested by Uddhava to the gopis for coping the pains of separation. He suggested them the meditational mode of worship for attaining the knowledge about the divinity with a perfect and disciplined mind. The same idea as being reflected in the citation was also considered as an essential feature of yogic mysticism in India by Zaehner. Friedhelm Hardy in the manner of Hawley and Zaehner also argued that mental concentration or yoga was intrinsically linked to knowledge through intensive introspection. For this discussion, see, Friedhelm Hardy, Viraha-Bhakti p. 25-26 and Zaehner, Mysticism in India, p. 89.
The world identifies renunciation with *yoga*, so I had renounced it then only; Udho! you tell the mode of yogic practice, I believe *viyoga* as the highest *yoga*.)

The *bhakti* thus propounded in *Reeti Kal* was not purely emotional. The inclusion of *Viraha* as a significant dimension demanded not ecstatic wandering but mastering of senses and mind. The meditational relationship between the God as passionate object and humble devotee with strong reasoning acquired through knowledge and practice certainly represented an intellectual atmosphere. Our poets, however, did not distinguish between theistic or non-theistic and *nirguna* or *saguna* traditions.

O’Flaherty also believes that the monistic scholars artificially created the distinctions between *nirguna* and *saguna* and situated the *sants* in the former. She proposes the distinctions to be made carefully in terms of certain features like, knowledge, moral standards and illusion that mark the

---

22. J.C. Ghosh believes that Vaishnavism was mainly responsible for intellectual decline in pre-colonial Bengal. He further criticises the over emotional nature with a bias for a life of love and devotion against that of the thought. The devotees cherishing the sentiment remained occupied with attempts to intensify that emotion. The ecstatic state also paralysed the action. J.C. Ghosh, *Bengali Literature*, p. 24. This idea has also been extended by Tapan Ray Chaudhury in his article ‘Pursuit of Reason’ in Rajat Kant Ray (ed) *Mind, Body and Society*. In the article, he compares the views of different scholars and social reformers about the absence of ‘Reason’ and ‘knowledge’ in pre-colonial India which differentiated her from the West. Trevor O Ling cites from J.C. Ghosh’s *Bengali Literature* to highlight the negative views pertaining to the medieval Vaishnavate *bhakti*. See, *Religious Change and Secular State*, p. 23. Irfan Habib, largely reviewing the Islamic and Sufi thought in Medieval India attempts to negate the views reflecting absence of reason and science in the contemporary society. Patronage to learned scholars, foreign travellers and missionaries have been seen as proofs of dynamic attitude of the elites. See his article, ‘Reason and Science in Medieval India’ in D.N. Jha (ed.) *Society and Ideology in India*.
difference between the two. Hawley, in the similar fashion, in his analysis of the manuscripts of *Sursagar*, negates the possibility of such distinctions in the earlier phase of *Bhakti-kal*. It was only during the later phase, when formation of *panths* and cults became the tradition, the verses representing *saguna* form of the Lord were added to *Sursagar*. Hawley elsewhere also suggests that Sur's sense of unmediated confrontation with the Lord is analogous to *nirguna* modes of expression.

The poets were concerned with realization of the Ultimate either attained through the grace of benign deity or through the sustained efforts of detaching the self from the illusionary world by asceticism or meditation. The devotee experienced him in both *nirguna* and *saguna* forms. The *bhakti* in *Reeti Kal* in this manner reflected a combination of different responses like affection, knowledge and grace. Still, this path of devotion was not very

---

23. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, 'The integration of *nirguna* and *saguna* images of deity' in Schomer and McLeod (ed.), *The Sants*, (p. 47-52); C. Vaudeville also believes that though Indian literary tradition supposes the *sants* as adepts of *nirguna* and *Vaishnavas* as adepts of *saguna* it is difficult to maintain the difference. p. 27-30 and 37 in *The Sants*.


25. Hawley, *Surdas: Poet, Singer, Saint*, p. 156-60; Bakshi Hansraj in *Saneh-Sagar*, however, accepts the division. In his words:

के सागुन के निर्गुण कहियत के कछ और विचार।
कहिये समझ बृज़ि हिसदय में सत्त बचन निरस्थार।
(V. 104, Section V).


27. Rasnidhi, *Ratan Hazara*, V. 25, 47, 48 and 60, see also *Saneh-Sagar*, V. 4, Sec. 2; Bodha, *Ishqnama*, V. 2, Sec. 1.
simple as it involved intensive suffering, meditation, dedication, renunciation and servility. Bodha expressed the vicissitude in the following verse:

यह प्रेम को पंथ कराल महा तरवार की धार पै धारनी हे ।

(The cult of love is very difficult as one has to run on the sharp edges of a sword.)

The Viraha-Bhakti was probably a dominant mode of worship during our period because the religious barahmasas constitute the bulk of Reeti-Kal poetry. The hero and heroine again were Krishna and Radha and the viraha theme in the songs of twelve months was depicted as inextinguishable fire, divine in nature, leading the virahini in a state of absorption into the Supreme Beauty. The Sufis, the Sikhs-Gurus and other sant poets also composed barahmasas. Our poets concentrated largely on the expression of Radha’s sufferings due to separation from Krishna:

सुनि ऊघव प्रान—पियारे बिना, इहँ का तकि कातिक के रहिएँ।

(Listen Udhav! what should I see in the month of Kartika without my Beloved.)

The poetic dictions, in many cases, did not follow the traditions of barahmasa poetry and selected any month for beginning; they did not necessarily describe each month. The explanation of yearning and longing was their prime concern and viraha-barahmasa theme was utilized as a popular literary mode of expression.

28. Bodha, Ishqnama, V. 3, Section I and V. 68; see also, in Thakur-Thasak, p. 17.
29. C. Vaudeville, Barahmasa in Indian Literatures, p. 36-42.
30. Surati Mishra, Bhakti-Vinod, V. 192 and 193-203 describe other eleven months.
The barahmasa and other viraha poems as we noticed, even in separation, which is believed to be nirguna form of devotion, praised the Lord’s appearance and attitudes, thus echoed saguna mode of devotion. Thakur’s description of Radha as savage still reflected Lord Krishna’s manifest form:

ताकूर ये ब्रज ठाकूर हैं सु बनी न बनी उनको सब सोहे।

(Thakur says that he is the Lord of Braja and, therefore his bliss or neglect is justified.)

Such narrations suggest, in contrast to the eroticism involved in viraha, an element of vinaya as a mixture of praise, petition and self-remonstration. Overjoyed with the Lord’s presence, the devotee praised his appearance and attributes:

वारिष्ठ हलाहल को पी पिसाची गूँतना को कियो घात है।
भूघरहुं कर ले कही लोष कियो सब बाही अनोखिये बात है।
ज्वाल को पान के काली नथी सोइ बाली गली में आवत जात है।
पात सो गात कमे तिरछे लखि वाके कघू न कघू कही जात है।

(Sucking through his lips the deadly poison, he killed the demoness Putana; carried the mountain on his finger is a strange incident; mitigating the tides he killed the Kaliya, he wanders in the streets; I can not describe how my body shivers seeing his person.)

Bodha, though expressing viraha as suffering due to Lord’s absence throughout Ishqnama, highlighted his concrete attributes:

32. Thakur-Thasak, V. 156.
33. Tosh, Sudhanidhi, v. 358. Lord’s qualities were also praised by poets who were sufferings the pains of separation, see, Surati Mishra, Bhakti-Vinod, V. 26, 28, 95 and 144. Thakur-Thasak, V. 10 and 11.
She knew the tradition of love so she was saved from the tumbling mountain; the king of elephants screamed and died, and he did not get burnt in Holika fire. Bodha says, it is not strange that you have to make efforts for continuing devotional love; such was the faith of Prahlad that Lord appeared from the stones.

The interest of the devotees were vested in the praise of the Lord, Beginning with eulogies, the devotee found himself in an inferior position as the Lord was empowered with so many qualities. As a result, his devotion was filled with a sense of humility. He blamed his deeds and lapse of knowledge. He treated himself as the sinner. Tosh, and Thakur in the same esteem blame themselves for not continuing the devotion due to their involvement with maya. To quote a verse from Thakur:

\[ \text{Thakur} \quad \text{काँटे खानी तु भेद न जानत माया के गौंसन माझ धर्मरी हैं} \]
\[ \text{चीर में भीम न नीचहि सुखत मोह की कीम के बीच झूस्यो हैं} \]

(Thakur says that the devotee does not know that he is entrapped by maya (illusion); with closed eyes he can not think of lowliness, he is stuck in the mud of affection.)

The devotee considered himself as fallen or patit for his heart was filled with demerits and was devoid of virtues. He, therefore, openly

34. Bodha, *Ishqnama*, Sec. I, V. 10 and for this direct mediation between the Lord and the devotee in *saguna* form as manifestation of concrete values, see also Thakur *Thasak*, V. 28, *Sudhanidhi* V. 451.

35. *Thakur Thasak*, V. 20 and see also, *Sudhanidhi*, V. 504, V. 21 and 37;
confessing all his vices behaved like desperate and unruly beggar, requesting very humbly:

जौ ही महा पतिति पतिति ने पान के पावन ती तुम ही महाराज ही।

हैं सरने सरनागते पाल सदा विशदे की निवाहत लाज है।

जौ ही महा अति दीन तो दीन के बस्तु सदा तुम श्री ब्रजरज ही।

सूरति जोग बन्यो हे सबे ही गरीब ती आप गरीब.निवाज ही।

(If I am the worst among the fallen, you are the sinner-saver; I look for shelter as you protect the refugees and keep their honour; If I am indignant, you are Braja-raj and benign; Surati feels that in this condition, there is every possibility that I am poor and you are the protector of the poor.)

The sinful devotee further revealed his faults as neglecting the recitation of mantras, pilgrimage, sacred bath and charity; he was buried with carnal desires, greed, affection, ego and anger; he still called upon the Lord because he believed in reciting his name:

और तो मरीसी मान्ति मोतिन की राखें प्रमु।

मेरें तो तिहारे एक नाम को भरौसों है।

(Other may rely in different ways, I trust only your name.)

Whereas Surti Mishra placed the ritualistic worship in an inferior position, other poets like Bodha, Thakur and Tosh lamented and condemned rituals as a mode of devotion. The verse with bitter sarcasm in Sudhanidhi reads as follows:

---

36. Bhakti-Vinod, V. 27, for notions of patit as lacking virtues, see also, Thakur Thasak, V. 19, 21 and 25; Sudhanidhi, V. 464, 477; Rasnidhi, Ratan Hazara, V.V. 772, 773 and 987. For his role as patit, Surdas is considered as a sinner and not a sant by Hawley, See, Hawley, Surdas, p. 150.

37. Bhakti Vinod, V. 21 and see also V. 290.
(You place tilak, wear beads, anoint your body with dust and guise as a sant; whatever tactics you follow, Ram will not admire you; the simple way is of love devotion.)

The bhakti poets, unlike sants, demonstrated the superiority of human love on one hand, they also insisted on absolutely personal experience of the nirguna god, on the other. Tosh in the earlier citations cites human love while advocated for individual experience within the self in the following verse:

श्री हरि की छवि देखिबे को अंखिया प्रतिरोधमि में करि देखो।

(To see the reflection of Shri Hari, direct your vision towards pours of your skin.)

The idea of knowledge as alien to saguni poets and love to the nirguni have been considered as divides by the scholars. We however do not find any conflict or opposition between the two and observe a cross-fertilization in the poems of the bhakti poets being discussed here. The same poets produced parallel verses drenched in love and based on knowledge. Knowledge was essentially acquired for the attainment of the Ultimate Reality

38. Tosh, Sudhanidhi’, V. 469 and see also, Bodha, Ishqnama, V. 2, Section I; and Thakur Thasak, V. 136, All these poets in their outpourings lay emphasis on love (Prem, Priti) as true mode of devotion, Hawley distinguishes Kabir as Sant from Surdas in this context because Kabir and other Saints did not apparently accept love devotion as a mode of bhakti. See, Hawley, Surdas, p. 141.

39. Sudhanidhi, V. 472.

even for those poets wandering in ecstasy. Surati Mishra comments on knowledge as follows:

(As ignorance leaves you in the world, knowledge leads to realization of Brahma.)

The notions that nirguna, saguna and the sant traditions represented different bhakti ideologies are not corroborated by our references to the poetry of bhakti poets writing during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The sect formation during this period has been seen as influencing the distinctions. We, however, do not observe these features even in the poetry of Tosh who wrote at length about sant and satsang. He talks of the sant as follows:

(Preach the qualities of Hari and perform meditation; hold the rudder of

41. Bhakti-Vinod, V. 42 and 43. Hawley in Surdas, Poet, Singer and Saint writes that the meditation in Viraha leads to knowledge and inclusion of love, meditation and knowledge eliminate the boundaries between nirgunis and sagunis. The poetry of Rasnidhi also defines the Reality as formless, V. 16, 25 and 54; and at the same time considers it as sagun. Cf. Ratan Hazara, V. 551, 744, 749.

42. John Straton Hawley, 'The nirgun/sagun distinctions in early modern Hindi poetry' in Lorenzen (ed) Bhakti, Religion of North Indian and Hawley's chapter 'Sant and Sinner' in his book Surdas. C. Vaudeville in her article 'Sant Mat': Sanstism as the universal path to sanctity' in Schomer and McLeod (eds.) The Sants also writes that it is difficult to draw a hard and fast line between the nirguna and saguna, at least, up to the beginning of sixteenth century, which saw the development of the two main modern Krishnaite sects in northern India. See p. 37.

43. Sudhanidhi, V. 468.
mantras and recite it by heart; riding the boat the sants got salvation, there is no harm in riding that boat; Consider the head of guru as boat and cross this mundane ocean.)

The guru as the guide to the path of salvation was also depicted by Surati Mishra. He believed that the guru as guide would extinguish his disciples’ faults. Bakshi Hansraj venerated his Satguru in the very first verse of his poetry and assigned him an equal status as to the one given to Lord Siva, Goddess Bhawani or Ganesha. He believed that the gods were propitiated by worshiping Satguru.

Further, in concluding section, he revealed his faith in his Satguru because it was only due to his grace and teaching that one could realize the Supreme reality. From the descriptions given by Tosh, Surati Mishra and Bakshi Hansraj, it is difficult to distinguish between a guru and satguru. Bhikharidas, however, hints at some difference implicitly. While describing jealous anger (Mana) of his nayika, he suggested satguru as superior to guru.

44. Saneh-Sagar, Section I, V. 1 and see also for his notion of Satguru, Section V, V. 104.
45. Ibid, Section ix, V. 123.
46. C. Vaudeville, ‘Sant Mat’ in Schomer and McLeod (eds.) The Sants (p. 33-4) distinguishes between guru and satguru. In her analysis, she defines satguru either as divinity himself or a human guru who had attained divinity. Peter Brent in his book Godmen in India, (p. 13-15) distinguishes guru from sat guru in terms of inheritance. The Guru inherits the seat of Satguru but Satguru as the teacher of Reality is unique and superior among the lesser gurus.
47. Bhikharidas Granthavali, Shringar-nirnaya, V. 207.
(She is in jealous-anger mood and does not cool down; someone may experience guru-jealous anger' she assumes satguru-jealous anger.)

The company of sadhus and saints was also advised in Sudhanidhi by Tosh, who wrote about the company of saintly people as follows:

सप्तसंग जहाँ में बैठे रहे भव सागर में केवल काज भी हैं

(Keep sitting in the ship of Satsang and you will not be drowned in the mundane ocean.)

The company of bad people and dissociation from sadhus was treated as the sign of one’s being patit.

Thakur did not talk of ‘good company’ but mentioned kusang in the following verse:

कह ठाकुर में हूं उपाय किये वह आवे न हाथ कुसंग बस्ये हैं

(Thakur says that he had taken all resorts but my heart is beyond control as he is in the company of bad people).

We thus see that the notions of Sant sand satsang were known to Tosh who composed the poetry during 1634. Moreover, the idea of sant mat is also reflected as Tosh writes about it:

जग में जीवन लघु जानिये जूँ श्रुति संत कहयो धित में धरिये

(Consider your life small and learn the teachings of sants by heart.)

The ambiguity about the form of the Lord still remains unresolved as we find the same poet, emphasizing the sants and satsang as means to

---

48. Sudhanidhi, V. 465 and see also Bhakti-Vinod, V. 18.
50. Thakur-Thasak, V. 15.
51. Sudhanidhi, V. 467 and see also V. 464; See also, C. Vaudeville ‘Sant mat: Satism as universal path to Sanctity’ in The Sants. Vaudeville believes that there is no adequate translation of Sant mat except as points of view of sants which were generally oral expressions Tosh also wrote Shruti of sants which also implies oral tradition. It is, however, not clear which sants the poet was referring to.
attain unity with the God, considered the divinity as formless:

\[ \text{जो बिन आनन बैन कहे निरखे बिन नैन सुनें बिन श्रूनहि...} \]  

(One, who speaks without mouth, sees with eyes, hears without ears; relishes without tongue and walks without legs....)

We find in the same text the description of Krishna’s appearance and observe Radha experiencing him in concrete form.\(^{53}\)

The confusion to set distinctive lines in further aggravated by Surati Mishra, who, though preached, the \textit{Saguna} Lord Krishna, considered the world as illusion:

\[ \text{जग कौ सुनन जानि मृत्यु कौ निकट मानि,} \]  

(See V. 119), and also in \textit{saguna} form (V. 266 and 551).

\(^{55}\) We feel that \textit{bhakti} as an independent expression and individual experience could not be imprisoned within the boundaries of doctrinal theories or poetics. Still, the \textit{bhakti} poetry, reflected, in a great measure, the idea of devotion either

---

52. \textit{Sudhanidhi}, V. 463.
54. \textit{Bhakti-Vinod}, V. 50. See also v. 48 and 49. Rashidhi also produced confusion by conceiving Lord Krishna as infinite, (See V. 119), and also in \textit{saguna} form (V. 266 and 551).
cherished in association or yearned in dissociation indicated a kind of eroticism in the poetry of almost all the Reeti Kal poets. The idea of erotic Krishna and Radha was captured by other poets of our period who were not bhakti poets for representing the themes of nayak-nayika.

**Krishna and Radha as Nayak and Nayika**

We have already discussed how the conflict between the bhakti and eroticism was resolved by the medieval Sanskrit scholars and literary saga. In modern times Wendy Doniger, Biardeau, Hawley and many other scholars deduced deep philosophical and spiritual implications from the accounts of sexual gratification. Nirad C. Chaudhary further questions the idea of treating these erotic devotional poems as allegories and he finds the correct explanation in the baseness of the poetry itself. 56 S.N. Das Gupta treats the love poems of Radha and Krishna as containing tremendous religious inspiration. 57 A. Barth finds it as a new stage in the erotic mysticism in which 'the sensual delirium defies all translation; and we do not know which is more astounding, the lewdness of imagination or devout frenzy which have inspired these burning stanzas'. 58 This confusion is removed by Chaitanya Krishna who traces the origin of such poetry in the Indian courts right from the beginning. His powerful assertion that we have betrayed Lord Krishna because of our obsession for sex convicts the royal patronage and the court poets for relegating the image of the Lord of Gita. 59

---

56. Nirad C. Chaudhary, *Hinduism*, p. 268-71. He does not find the relations between Krishna and gopis, as described in *Bhagvatpurana*, in any way illicit. Adultery, in his views, is both doctrinal and practical expression of bhakti. What is regarded as virtue on behalf of gopis is sacrificed so it is the highest form of devotion.


sex and religion were the prime concerns of the patricians, they preferred the former and absorbed the later in it. The culture of the affluent elites with roving eyes and relaxed moral could not distinguish between the licentious and mystical poems. As a result, during the medieval period, the poets picked up the strand of Krishna as a folk-hero with great sexual fascination and developed it without any restraints for the purpose of their poetry which they and their patrons liked.  

Moreover, the criticism of Reeti poetry by Hindi scholars apart, some historians also consider the application of Sanskrit poetics in vernacular languages as one of the reasons for distortion of the emotional devotional love relations between Krishna and Radha. The poets could perhaps be exempted from such convictions only when they had specified verbally that their poems were allegories of the spiritual love. These critics of the love-poems of Krishna and Radha did not reflect a rational attitude as did John B. Carman in treating the notions of bhakti. He informs that many social reformers during the nineteenth century, rejected Vaishnava bhakti and looked for inspiration to distant Vedic past. J.C. Ghosh also suggests that the Vaishnava period of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries was seen as 'dark ages' and the beginning of the social reform movements was seen as the 'Renaissance' in the Indian history. Carman differs from J.C.

60. Ibid., though Chaitanya Krishna accepts the eroticism in devotion, he criticises Git Govinda and Reeti poems for extreme eroticism. We may not, however, accept his views in total.
61. W.G. Archer, *The Loves of Krishna in Indian Painting and Poetry*, p. 84-92. He writes that with the vernacular language as medium of expression, the problems of Hindi composition began to dwarf those of Sanskrit.
Ghosh in explaining the eroticism. Whereas Ghosh accepts the vaishnava devotion as elimination of reason, Carman finds every reason for defining secularization of bhakti in Vaishnava faith. He argues that once the theology of incarnation was accepted and human was taken up so thoroughly to express the divine and that the assumption became such an important cultural value, it was only a small step for those somewhat separated from the orthodox tradition to conceive these incarnations as purely human figures.  

We also believe that the devotional love poetry of the period with uninhibited descriptions of the dalliances signified a stage of development not only in literature but in different aspects of life. The poetry apart from demonstrating the power-relations in terms of gender and widening of the scope of religious preaching at the popular level, reflected the pragmatic notions about the sexuality—that it was not to be suppressed but expressed in socially sanctioned ways. The vernacular dialects facilitated the capture of Krishna and Radha as symbol of love in the poetry. They became so popular as literary genre that each poet's nayak and nayika, the description of nakh-shikh and various moods originating as rasa were expressed through Krishna and Radha. The tradition beginning from Chintamani Tripathi and Kesavadasa till the end of the nineteenth century portrayed Radha as a nayika longing for husband's return, exchanging all sorts of carnal pleasures and bearing the pains of separation. The debates concerning the licentiousness demand a brief discussion of the wide range of theoretical

64. John B. Carman, 'Reversal and Rejection of Bhakti' in Schomer and McLeod (eds.) The Divine Consort, p. 126-27;
65. Karine Schomer, 'Where have all the Radha Gone? Images of Woman in Reeti-Kal Poetry' in Hawley and Donna Wulff (eds.) The Divine Consort.
classifications of *nayak*, *nayika* and their moods. We will see through illustrations if it was relegation of the divine image of Radha-Krishna or it implied an extension of *bhakti* over vast geographical and demographic regions.

The models of *nayak* and *nayika* (Radha and Krishna in our poetry) were well defined by Rupa Goswami in his *Ujjvalnilmani*. He categorized *nayika* as *swakiya* and *parkiya*, each of three kinds viz. *mudha*, *madya* and *pragalbha*. They were further sub-divided into eight kinds, namely, *abhisarika*, *vasaksajja*, *utkanthita*, *khandita*, *vipralabda*, *kalhantarita*, *proshitpatika* and *swadhinpatika*; with further sub-divisions of three hundred and sixty kinds. Similarly, the hero was classified as *pati* and *upapati* and sub-divisions as *anukul*, *dakshin*, *shath* and *dhrishta*. The male friends of *nayak* and female friends of *nayika* were also grouped. The poetry was to be composed by including certain *gunas* with names, actions and things in surroundings. The instincts and emotions were also numbered and explanation of *Shringara* was given in terms of *rati* or *prema* having different aspects. *Rati* was again classified as in communion or separation, again requiring sub-divisions.

Such a detailed classification of the *nayak* and *nayika* with elucidation and illustration necessarily invited eroticism and unrestrained depictions in few places at least. Rup Goswami escaped the criticism by giving the excuse that the condemnation could be applied only to ordinary mortals and not to an *avatara* who had descended to give the taste of mystic love to his devotees.

---

With these classifications as guidelines and the argument of Rup Goswami as the plea to justify the shriring-rasa, the Reeti poets, with no hesitation assumed Krishna and Radha as the nayak and nayika. The representations of illicit love could not, then, be condemned for the nayak and nayika of Keshavadasa were Krishna and Radha:

नीबौं बिहोक चौंह उदी पहिबानि झुकी बलियाँ कहि बाई।
बासर गाइं गैंपार चरावत आवत हैं निसि सेज पराई।
(Astonished she got up finding someone opening her waist belt, she rebuked him; the rural folk grazes the cattle during the day time and comes to the bed of others at night.)

The poetry was severely criticized in the manner as we have seen for the inhibited descriptions. The poet under consideration was as great a poet of Reeti tradition to be called an Acharya. Still, while depicting the actions of Radha as excitant, he transgressed all social restraints:

पहिले हति रुटि बली उठि गीवि दे मैं पिति साखि तैं न लखी रे।
पुनि धाइ धरे हरिजु की भुजानि तैं छुटिबै कों बड़ि भीति झकरी।
गाहि के कुण पीढ़न दंत नखचछत वैलनि की सरजाद नखी री।
पुनि ताहि को पान खायबाति है उलटी कछु प्रीति की रीति सखीरी।
(First she got-up and moved in annoyance, not looking at him; again attempted in many ways to release herself from the arms of Hari; holding

68. Keshavadasa himself confessed the depiction of different modes of Radha-Krishna in the name of their divinity. He wrote at the end of many sub-sections in Rasik-Priya as follows:
राधा रमन के कहे स्मारमति घब।
ढिलई केसब राई की छमियाँ कवि कविराव।
70. Ibid. V. 38, p. 52
her painful breasts bitten and stretched by nails she realized the modesty of the enemy; again she offers him the betel leaf, this is critical tradition of love.)

The critics of the *Reeti* poetry, perhaps, did not notice that eroticism of Keshavdas in no way bypassed the divine element in his *nayak*. It was repeatedly exhibited throughout his texts. We may quote a verse as an analogy to his divinity:

केसव जीवन जो ब्रज को पुनि जीवन्त तें अति बापहि भये।

जापर देवे-अदेवे कुमारिनी बारत माइन बार जगावो।

ता हरि ये तू गंवार की बेटी महावर गाइ झांजाई दिवावो।

(Kesav says, that the Lord who, after reincarnation protects the life of Braja like a father; whom gods, demons and girls adorn and receive his grace; from the same Hari, you, the daughter of rural folk, get your feet anointed.)

And finally we quote yet another verse which can firmly be placed in the *Sur*-tradition:

दे भाँवे पान न पान्यों न तु सु तें कान्ह-सम्य कि तु कान्ह-सम्य है।

(Neither he nor you drink even water, whether you have robbed Kanha or Kanha has robbed you!)

71. *Keshav-Priya*, p. 39, V. 5 and see also, P. 43, V. 28; p. 84, V. 19; p. 85, v. 26 and p. 93, v. 9. Also, after the concluding verse of each section is devotional offering to Radha-Krishna, V. 4, p. 69, he compares Radha with Gauri. The poet, like other *bhakti* poets as we discussed earlier, talked about the social constraints, cowherd profession of Lord Krishna and love and separation between the duo. He also used *Kanha, Ghanshyam, Nand Lal* or *Gopal* which are being treated as the divine epithets of the Lord in the thesis. The anointing of Radha's feet with colour by Hari was also versified by other poets, say, Tosh; V. 146 in *Sudhanidhi* and sounds just similar to the one quoted from Dev. These verses, making the Lord sit at *nayika's* feet apart from describing the *swadhinapatika nayika* signified power relations in favour of female.

In *Sursagar*, when Krishna left the *gopis* in despair, they accused him of deception and called him a *thug*.*  The conception of Lord Krishna as *thug* may certainly remind the reader of his divinity.

Dev, another great poet whose *Dev Charitra* and *Vairagya-Shatak* compiled in along with *Sukhsagar Tarang* in *Dev-Granthavali, Part I*, are pure devotional poems. *Sukh Sagar Tarang* consists *Shringar* as a dominant theme with Radha-Krishna as the main characters. One may find it interesting as the poet who versified the glory of Lord Krishna in his devotional poems attached popular incidents to his character. The Divine Lord in *Sukh Sagar Tarang* played 'hide and seek' game in the streets to satiate his carnal desires but still represented the infinite existence of the Divine:

(On pretext of playing 'hide and seek' game, not able to search me, he wander in ecstasy; he immersed in lotus as perfume and became drops of nectar on the moon.)

The frolicsome Krishna, in this poetry, was aggressive love-maker whose beloved Radha recollected his love-pranks in the following verse as *mugdha-nayika*:

(Does not let me tie my bodice nor allows me to cover the breasts, without wasting time, puts his heart into mine quickly.)

---

73. *Sursagar*, 3821.6 and 4364.2. The views of Hawley in this context are quite convincing. He feels that Lord Krishna in different ranges of qualities good or bad represented the lordship. Different qualities signify different realities. See his *Surdas*, p. 159.

74. *Sukh Sagar Tarang*, V. 332.
Following the tradition of Keshavdas and Surdas, he portrays Radha as upbraiding Krishna which again becomes symbolic in revealing the divinity.

उठत लुटाऊ, बढ़तार बटाऊ, फर लपट लुटाऊ, नट कपट, माखन चोर।

दूध-चोर, दधि चोर, अम्बर अधि चोर, वितहित चोर, घिर चोर रे माखन चोर।

These epithets of Krishna do not need translations as we have discussed these terms earlier.

Gulam Nabi Rasleen is well-known for uninhibited and frank expressions of shringar. He also selected Krishna and Radha as nayak and nayika. His expression of erotic sentiment was also no aberration. The intensity of Kama, Krishna being the excitant, was beyond control:

जरत नहीं कछु आग ने जल ते नहीं सियरात।

रघे देखत हो भई यह गति हरि के गात।

(It is not burnt by fire, nor is cooled by water; As Radhey saw the person of Hari, her condition became like this.)

The love-relations between the two were a cause of social criticism and sarcasm. It was such a disgraceful relation not to be disclosed to anyone:

समुन्धि बोलिये बात यह खरो चबाई गाँव।

नाज लेत हरि को अली हर में दीजत पाँझ।

(Say it cautiously as entire village in ready to asperse. As you recite the name of Hari, your foot will be crushed by the Har (a woodden device for punishment).

Inspite of a worldly character of the Lord subjected to perform worldly acts, his divinity could not be concealed. Radha as a devotee was an

75. Ibid, V. 466.
76. Rasleen Granthavali, Ras Prabodh, V. 822.
77. Ibid, 228.
embodiment of humility and yearned for his benign bliss:

जाहि बचायो भेंज तें कार गिसिर की छाँहि ॥

लाहि स्याम जिनि जारियो बिरह अनल ज्यार हाँहि।

(Whom you saved from clouds by giving shelter under the rock; why do you burn her by the furious flames of viraha.)

These are just few examples being cited to suggest that our poetry was not devoid of bhakti. The eroticism and baseness was conventionally attached to the legends of Radha and Krishna, exactly in the same manner as did Kalidasa in Kumarasambhavan with Lord Shiva and Parvati; Jaidev and Vidyapati followed by Rup Goswami in their texts added it to Krishna and Radha; the immediate predecessor of Reeti poets, Surdas, composed highly erotic devotional verses. The Shringar poetry may thus be interpreted as representing yet another aspect of devotion though it was a little more humanized than the ones of earlier period.

We therefore, find that the religion of Krishna during the period under review manifested not only the plurality of religious beliefs but also produced a secular image of Divine Krishna and Radha which was acceptable to all sections of the society. The audience of these poets were the Mughal kings, local rulers, chieftains or the gosains who apart from the religious preaching performed military services also. The religious elites of the cults to which these poets were associated also sanctioned the composition of such poetry. When the patron was a small chieftain or small local ruler, the poetry was

78. Ras Prabodh, V. 654 and see also V. 414. These few citations are few representations among innumerable verses in the poetry of many other Reeti poets. Ras Saransh and Shringar Nirnaya of Bhikharidas and Somnath’s Raspiyushnidhi were also thoroughly analysed from this perspective and we observed an inherent appeal for the divinity of Lord Krishna.
perhaps, communicated to the popular masses directly and in case of big and grand courts, it might have reached through various channels. It was only in the colonial context that the poetry was taken to represent the degeneration.

**The Universalized Symbols**

We may, however, notice the widespread popularity of Radha-Krishna among the *Reeti* poets not as degeneration but as universalized literary genre. There was thus no conflict between the character of Radha as a religious symbol and Radha as symbol of love in our poetry. The poets, however, bound by the tradition (*Reeti*) composed their poetry in such a way that Radha had to fulfil all the qualities (*gunas*) of a *nayika*. She, being the *nayika*, had to be exceptionally beautiful; perfect in sex deeds; nicely beautiful and causing pleasurable moods (*rasa*):

सुंदर केलि-कला-चतुर भूषन-भृणित अंग।

इह बिधि बरनी नाइका रस को पाई सङ्ग।

This outward description of *nayika*’s beauty, in most of the poems, generally named as Radha, included the description of various parts of her body which we have noticed elsewhere in the thesis. An elaborate stratification of *nayika* attached various physical, emotional or behavioural qualities to her character.

The poets projected Radha both as *Parakiya* and *Swakiya nayika* though the notions concerning the concepts in itself were contradictory.

---

79. Somnath-Granthavali, V. 5, p. 275 and see also, V. 5 in Rasraj in Mati Ram Granthavali.
Bhikharidas, in his *Shringar-nirnaya* portrayed Radha in one instance as *Parakiya-Mugdha*:

\[ \text{बिन काज्हु काज्हु दास जखीं जसुदा—गृह आवन जान जगी।} \]

\[ \text{ललिताहुं सों नेक बतान लगी रसबात सुने सकुचान लगी।} \]

(She started visiting Yashoda’s house without any work; started narrating few things to Lalita, felt shy in listening such talks)

The same poet also situated her in the category of *Swakiya*, not as woman belonging to the other but to Gopala as his own:

\[ \text{केसरिया निज सारी रंगी जखी केसरि—खारि गोपाल के गातनि।} \]

\[ \text{दास चिते चित खूंजेेहारी विचावलि सेज नए तरु पातनि।} \]

(She dyes her *sari* in saffron colour seeing saffron clothes of Gopala; thinking of Kunj Bihari, she spreads the bed of just grown leaves.)

Not named many times, she was generally addressed as *tiya* or *nari*. Hari being her counterpart, the reader could understand the *nayika* as Radha:

\[ \text{हरि आगम सुनि पथिक मुख उमंगे सहित सनेह।} \]

\[ \text{नख ते सिख लेनारि की भई चीकनी देह।} \]

(Listening about the arrival of Hari from a passer-by, the passion was aroused; the woman’s body from head to toe turned smooth.)

Likewise, Radha represented different images of *nayika*; She was *mugdha-nayika* who made love in bashful youth; a *praudha* who was devoid of shame and performed love-battles in an aggressive manner; she could be a *swadhinpatika* for having full command over Krishna. The poetry thus transformed the image of Radha as a symbol and not as an individual.

---

81. Ibid, V. 139.
Lord Krishna then also denoted a poetic genre. Rasleen described Krishna as *nayak* in the following verse:

(He, who is the God of eroticism, identify him as Krishna.)

While he was depicted as *anukul nayak* or sincere husband, on one hand, he represented an unfaithful husband or *dhrisht pati* in poetic language:

(Keeping the shawl of the lady on his head, he is sweating, O friend! Brajraj is returning home without a dim sign of shame.)

His divine *ras-lila* was not understood as illusory play of the Lord; the poets rather viewed it as deceitful conduct of an unfaithful husband:

(One *Ahir* Krishna became many and each is inclined for money, physical pleasure and ecstasy, how would the women of Braja be saved, he is always hidden in the jungles like a wolf.)

We observed elsewhere that the poets like Dev and Bakshi Hansraj used harsh terms for Krishna in order to depict his humanly misbehavior and selfishness. We noticed various ill-metaphor like *Kapati, dhurta, thag* or *dhrishta*. As Hawley also considers in context of Surdas, and we notice

84. Ibid.
in our devotional poems Krishna was never called a Shath or simpleton. The Reeti poets in their treatment of poetics and literary theories, placed Krishna even in the category of a Shath nayak. Bhikharidas wrote about the shatha deeds of Krishna as follows:

(Watching the beauty of all in the Mahal Sarai, Girdhari went in the room on top roof; sent friend and called the daughter of Vrishbhan all alone there.)

The nayak Krishna in the poetry visited bathing places of women, performed various acts to meet the nayika as Kriya-chatur-nayak, and also indulged in flirting other women thus causing jealousy in the heart of Radha. He also faced Radha in her jealous anger or mana. He succeeded in appeasing her jealousy on many occasions but failed when it was a case of guru-mana. Tosh described the mediation through a friend for reconciliation:

(Listen to the statement of Hari, Oh ignorant! why do you stretch your eyebrows? He will displace your jealousy; don’t you know Kanha?)

It is interesting to note that Krishna became more depersonalized than Radha. The poets still maintained few reservations by not portraying Radha as Kulata, ganika or barbadhu. In defining these types of women, poets generally used tiya, nari or adhama nayika in place of Radha or

86. Hawley, Surdas: Singer, poet and Saint, p. 159.
87. Bhikharidas, Shringar-nimaya, V. 70.
88. Tosh, Sudhanidhi, V. 408.
Vrishbhanu-Kishori. The metaphors and symbols which were peculiar features of Lord Krishna’s life, e.g. flute, Yamuna-bank, ball, Peacock-feathers, the crown, matki and butter now represented the excitants and various moods in the poetry. The flute of Lord Krishna which once contained divine inspiration now became been of a nayak which attracted the nayika:

अरी मोहने मोहि दै कि तो मोहि दै बीन।
(The flute intoxicates the nayika who safer it may be.)

The divine stick and feather-crown of Lord Krishna were owned by the nayak of Rasleen which fell down on the earth due to unbearable passion aroused by the nayika Radhey:

लकुटि गिरी छुटि हाथ तें मुकुट परयो झुकि पाइ।
मोहन की यह गति करी राघे बदन दिखाई।

The most interesting feature of the universalized legend of Radha-Krishna was the theme of separation. Lord Krishna, once separated from Radha and other gopis never came back and viraha was a permanent mood afterwards in earlier traditions. In the poems under review, Mohan, Kanha or Shyam being a depersonalized individual, departed off and on and his return was always portrayed as joyful celebration:

आवन सुनी घनस्थाम की आन देस तें वात।
चपल हैं चमकन लगयो देहन हीं को गात।

89. Bhikharidas, Ras Saransh, V. 111, 250, 251, 395; and Rasleen, Ras-Prabodh, V. 573, 637, 863, 907 and 909. These verses suggest Yamuna bank as a universal meeting place of nayak and nayika.
90. Bhikharidas, Ras-Saransh, V. 111.
91. Rasleen, Ras-Prabodh, V. 907.
92. Ibid, V. 450.
(She heard about the return of Ghanshyam from that land; her body drenched in love began to glitter.)

Radha-Krishna as nayak-nayika appeared as a monotonous theme whose relationship was imprisoned within the boundaries of poetic genre. Each type of nayika maintained a stereotyped relation with her nayak and the poets, may it be Keshavdas, Bhikharidas or Rasleen, followed erstwhile traditions with slightly different metaphors. We can therefore understand Radha-Krishna in this poetry simply as poetic genre and nothing else.