CHAPTER VI

THE TENETS OF BHAKTI IN MĀDHAVADEVĀ'S WORK
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The Bhāgavata-purāna has given due importance to bhakti in the direction of realising the Supreme. The neo-Vaisnava movement of Assam was based on the bhakti-sūtra of the Bhāgavata-purāna and it brought the message of prema-bhakti to the people. Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva and their followers glorified the bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata throughout their literary works and indicated to the individual that his voice could be heard by God if only it rose from a pure and sincere heart. 1 Both Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva composed a good number of literary works including plays, songs and narratives giving importance to bhakti. Among the works of Madhavadeva, in the Kālāmukhī work of philosophical nature, the saint has announced the glory of bhakti and bhakta in an open voice. His bhakti-ratnavālī, a translation of Visnupuri’s original work, brings together the choice verses of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa dealing with bhakti. Importance has been given on inner love towards God and complete self-surrender to Him in plays and lyrics of Mādhavadeva. In all of his works he...

1. SHT, p. 122
bhakti in a higher position than mukti. Dāsyā-bhakti is the main significance of Madhavadeva's works which is a special attraction of his Nāmghoṣā.

The nature of bhakti:

Of all the works by Madhavadeva it is in the Nāmghoṣā and the Bhakti-ratnāvalī that we find the most elaborate discourses on the cult of bhakti. In his Nāmghoṣā he has spoken of bhakti as rasamayī (exhilarating), thereby expressing the intensity of his devotion. The lyrics he has composed are also expressive of his sincere devotion as well as his consideration that life without devotion is insignificant. For him, bhakti is not merely a feeling, he also considers it as a duty enjoined upon all. His devotion to Viṣṇu as expressed in the Nāmghoṣā is equivalent to an attitude of absolute surrender before the Supreme One. According to Kīrti's Bhaktisūtra, bhakti signifies a state of profound and eternal love towards God. Sāndilya's Bhaktisūtra defines bhakti as intense love for the Lord. According to Bhakti-ratnāvalī, bhakti is love towards God as expressed

2. v. 1
3. Bṛgīt, Nos. 23, 27, 37, 73, 80, 81
4. Bhāgavata Bhakti Cult, p. 24
5. op. cit., p. 50
6. v. 287
through the devotee's body, words and mind. Compared with
the beatific joy with which bhakti fills the mind of the
devotee, even the joy of salvation is insignificant.\(^7\)

Nothing is unattainable by means of single-hearted devotion,
because Visnu being the Supreme Giver presents the devotee
with whatever he desires. But the true devotee is always
selfless; he does not crave for anything except the
attainment of bhakti. Still, such is the efficacy of bhakti
that even without desiring it the devotee attains to
salvation.\(^3\) If a person sets on the path of devotion to
Hari with some desire at heart, by and by he finds such
joy in his devotion that he forgets his earlier desire. His
devotion is carried on for the joy it brings to him. Under
such circumstances, his earlier desire is fulfilled by the
Lord even when he does no longer seek it.\(^9\) There is no
need of one's becoming a learned man or one's acquiring
virtues of pilgrimage or other religious rituals for car
vating devotion to Hari.\(^10\) Such a devotee does not so op
castes; he can win the Lord's grace by serving him with
unshaken faith.\(^11\) Even the most wretched man can get

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7. ibid., v. 115
8. Bhakti-ratnāvalī, vv. 54-55
9. ibid., vv. 66-67
10. Bhakti-ratnāvalī, v. 146
11. Nāmāghosa, vv. 479-485; Bhagavad-gītā, 9-30, 31
liberation, if he seeks the devotion of the Lord sincerely.

Of the three paths prescribed for the attainment of the Lord, namely, jñana (knowledge), karma (renunciation) and bhakti (devotion), the highest importance has been attached to bhakti in the Bhagavata-purana, though all three paths are mutually interlinked. Only bhakti can free people from worldly attachments by ridding them of doubts. Without being assisted by bhakti, jñana and karma cannot lead one to the attainment of salvation. Bhakti, however, can alone fulfill one's desires without the assistance of either jñana or karma. After repeatedly asserting that bhakti is superior to mukti (salvation), Madhavadeva further states that, after attaining to the path of devotion to Hari even after being free from the cycle of re-birth.

The close association with bhaktas has been regarded as a necessary precondition for arousing the attitude of bhakti. By associating with saintly persons, one can purify one's mind by driving out all evil desires.

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12. Bhagavata-purana, 5.2.18; Namaghosa, v. 434
13. Bhagavata-mahatmya (Padma-purana), vv. 11-71
14. Bhakti-ratnavali, v. 232; Bhagavata-purana, 1.5.1
15. Namaghosa, v. 200
16. ibid., vv. 251, 282, 283, 288
the path of bhakti is thereby cleared. Just as the presence of fire can help one in getting rid of the fear of cold or darkness, so also the association of a saint can save people from all attachments to karma, worldly fears and darkness of ignorance.

Classification of bhakti:

The Bhāgavata-purāṇa has mentioned various forms of bhakti on various occasions. The classification of bhakti in this book extends from three forms to as many as thirty-six forms. Of these, nine forms of bhakti have found frequent reference in the neo-Vaiṣṇavite doctrine of Assam. These nine forms are: śrāvāna (listening to the recital of the name and glories of Hari), kīrtana (recitation of the glories and name of Hari), smarāna (recalling or meditation upon the Lord's form), arcana (worship of the Lord's image with flowers, etc.), vandana (obeisance), padasevāna (personal services), dāśya (a servant's devotion to the Lord), sakhyā (a friend's love to the Lord) and ātmanivedāna (self-surrender at the Lord's feet). A Few

17. Namaghoṣa, v. 214
18. ibid., vv. 437-433
19. 2. 1. 5; 6. 2. 3.
20. 11. 3. 23-31
forms of bhakti have been noted in the Bhakti-ratnavali, namely, bhagavati-bhakti, prema-bhakti and kevala-bhakti. Bhagavati-bhakti is that state of the highest form of devotion by which the devotee attains to full wisdom by means of bhakti and offers all activities and near and dear ones at the feet of the Lord.\textsuperscript{22} Fortified by a profound devotion, such a devotee is blessed with all the benefits of a religious life even though he does not perform his daily round of worship and services.\textsuperscript{23} As regards premabhakti, the Bhakti-ratnavali notes that, endowed with a purely emotional or loving devotion, the devotee, out of sheer love of the Lord, alternates between laughter and weeping. From fears of social disapproval or a false sense of shame, he loses all attachments. Even while uttering the name of God, his voice is surcharged with the spirit of love.\textsuperscript{24} This feeling of devotion which to such a devotee brings joys even higher than the joys of salvation, is regarded as prema-bhakti. Regarding kevala-bhakti or antaranga-bhakti (intimate or all loving devotion), the Bhagavata has mentioned\textsuperscript{25} that the Lord Himself had said to Uddhava about this form of bhakti. Even the worldly-wise people can rid themselves of all sins by means of kevala-bhakti.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Bhakti-ratnavali, v. 184
\item \textsuperscript{23} op. cit. v. 133
\item \textsuperscript{24} Bhakti-ratnavali, vv. 229-230
\item \textsuperscript{25} Bhavartha-dipika, XI. 25
\end{itemize}
bhakti. Where even the blessings of the Lord, kevala—up.
can do so. Everyone including the Candala or the lowest
the social hierarchy can become pure through devotion. 3

We present below a brief introduction to the
types of bhakti as discussed by Madhavadeva:

Sravana: Madhavadeva considers sravana as an
excellent path to bhakti. Just as the appearance of sun
serves to purify water, similarly by listening to the
recital of Hari's glory or name a person's mind can be
purified. 27 Those who are indifferent to the chanting of
Hari's name and engage in worshipping other deities or
sacrificing animals and birds are sure to be thrown into
hell. 28 They are like animals, concerned only with the
need for food and sleep. 29 On the other hand, people who
find joy in the name of the Lord, which is as sweet as
nectar, experience a feeling of devotion that increas-
by day, attain to a state of pure happiness with their
hearts purified, acquire real knowledge, and are trans-
formed into Vaikuntha (the heavenly abode). 30 The real
devotees are aware that sravana-bhakti is higher than even
rājya-bhakti. Hence what they desire is only the joy of listen-
ing.

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26. Nāgārjuna, v. 481; Bhakti-ratnāvalī, vv. 218-227
27. Nāgārjuna, v. 15
28. Bhakti-ratnāvalī, vv. 561-563
29. ibid., v. 576
30. ibid. vv. 388-389
glories of Hari from the lips of the saints.  

Kirtane: On several occasions both Śaṅkara-deva and Mādhava-deva have noted that the best way out of the sinful world is śravaṇa and kīrtana. Even a sinner like Ajāmila could earn salvation by simply uttering the name of the Lord. Only the fools seek Him by such methods as chanting obscure and difficult mantras and taking the painful ways. His soft-sounding and short names such as Tāmā and Kṛṣṇa are enough to bestow upon one the rewards dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa. The tongue can serve as a bridge between men's soul and the goal of release. By crossing this bridge through the recital of Kṛṣṇa's name, the devotee can easily win his heart's desire. The recital of the playful actions of God in His various incarnations on different occasions is the best path to bhakti during the Kali-yuga.

Smarana: One of the ways of attaining to the state of bhakti is calling to mind the forms and actions of the Lord. Those who recall His forms during the final hours of their lives are blessed with what is known as sarupya-mukti.

31. Rāmāghosa, v. 664
32. Kīrtana, Ajāmila-upakhyāṇa, based on Bhāgavata-purāṇa. Book VI; Rāmāghosa, v. 89
33. Rāmāghosa, v. 766
34. ibid., vv. 398-401
liberation with the same form of the Lord. Even those recall him as an enemy are also not deprived of inner bliss. By remembering him in a mood of fear or of love, also, one can easily attain to this form of liberation. Gopīs or the class of milkmaids won his favour by virtue of their constant meditation on him in a mood of pure desire. Hence, the devotee can have all his desire fulfilled if he meditates on him with firm conviction.

Pedasevana: When a person surrenders himself on the feet of the Lord, those feet serve as a boat enabling a person to cross the rough sea of the world. Thus a person can cross the shoreless ocean of the world without using any bridge. Unlimited is the significance of surrender oneself at His feet. Even a low-caste Cāndala serving at Viṣṇu's feet is superior to a brāhmaṇ who does not serve at His feet. Such as the joy a devotee derives from serving at Lord's feet that he does not seek saṃsāra or liberation by merging into the Lord because such liberation deprives him of serving at the divine feet. Indifferent to all forms of worldly enjoyments, such a devotee only aspires after the fortune of touching His

35. Bhakti-ratna-vañī, v. 391
36. Bhāgavata-purāṇa, 10. 44. 59
37. Bhāgavata-purāṇa, 10. 44. 59
38. Bhāgavata-purāṇa, 10. 44. 59
with the dust of Krsna's feet. 40

Arcana: To worship Visnu, who is the cause of the universe, is to worship all gods and goddesses. Just as the water poured into the roots of the tree reaches the branches and leaves as well, so also the worshipping of Visnu pleases the other deities. 41 Though God Himself, being full of His own glory, is not keen on being worshipped, any worship offered with sincerity pleases Him. He only accepts such worship as is offered selflessly, with conviction. Dhakti needs a selfless service of God. 42 Since He exists in everybody's heart, by worshipping Him the devotee worships his own self. 43

Vandana: By making obeisance (vandana) to Visnu, Lord of the universe, man can achieve final release. Whenever a person is afflicted with some injury or some illness, he recalls the name of Hari almost spontaneously. Even even by such involuntary invoking of the glorious name, he is easily placed with the grace of Visnu. 44 Even the sort of obeisance to any object as part of the entire universe, wherein God is immanent, is received by Him. 45

40. Bhakti-ratnavali, v. 1028
41. Bhagavata-purana, IV. 39. 2.; Bhakti-ratnavali, v. 1104
42. Bhagavata-purana, 1. 2. 6.
43. ibid., 11. 12. 15
44. Namaghosa, v. 7
45. Bhakti-ratnavali, v. 1104
Dāsya: So long a devotee does not surrender himself at the feet of Viṣṇu, he lives as a prisoner within the four walls of his domestic life. When he sacrifices all worldly possessions, his house and his kith and kin, at the feet of Lord and also considers himself as the servant of the Lord, he becomes free from all responsibilities and worries, and attains to salvation by his single-minded devotion to the Lord. A devotee's ultimate goal of life to become a servant of the Lord. He considers the master-servant relation with the Lord as the most desirable and seeks nothing other than the pleasure of worshipping His feet as a servant.  

Sakhya: This form of devotion is of utmost joy for a devotee. Any friendship with a human being involves many anxieties such as those of possible separations etc.: there is no such fear of separation from God who is omnipresent. The milkmen and the milkmaids of Vṛndāvana and even the birds and animals of that place enjoyed the fruits of friendship with the Lord Kṛṣṇa. The deep feeling of joy arising out of a friend's love of God has found expression in Madhavadeva's Nāmabhogā as well. The friendly form of devotion is regarded as an easy path:

46. Nāmabhogā, vv. 800, 801, 802, 803, 804.
47. Bhakti-ratnavālī, v. 1123
48. v. 128
attain to salvation.

Atma-nivedana: By coming closer to God through the path of self-surrender or atma-nivedana, the devotee is rid of all worldly worries. God, too, is pleased with a devotee whose only concern is bhakti and He blesses him with the final release that is of the same level as brahman. God demands a complete willing self-surrender as part of a devotee.

Classification of bhaktas:

About the characteristics of a bhakta, Madhavadeva mentions that a bhakta in the real sense is desirous of good to all, full of forgiveness, quiet and saintly. By sacrificing everything including wealth, family and friends in favour of God he devotes himself single-mindedly to the śravana, kirtana and smarana of Hari's name and glory, and directs his heart only to Hari. He is free from anger, never forshakes good life and never desires anything more than what is barely necessary for keeping his body and soul together. A man of devotion is solely attached to God and mentally and heartily detached from worldly pleasures and aspiration. He is...

49. Bhāgavata-purāṇa, 11.12.15; Bhakti-ratnāvalī, vv. 1134-1137

50. Bhakti-ratnāvalī, vv. 323-324
from any trace of selfishness.  

Śāṅkaradeva in his Bhakti-ratnākara, has divided the bhaktas into three categories - uttama (the best), madhyama (the mediocre) and prākṛta (the lowest). His Bhakti-ratnavali of Madhavadeva narrates the greatness of all these three categories of bhaktas, and by giving accounts of various anecdotes pertaining to nirguna bhaktas (devotees without any desire), has glorified nirguna-bhakti. A devotee without desire finds God in his own heart. Those who are saguna bhaktas (devotees with some desires) also gain through their devotion.

Śāṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva’s advocacy of dāsya-bhakti:

The vaisnava religion initiated by Saint Śāṅkaradeva preaches the ideal of serving God physically as well as mentally by regarding oneself as the servant of the Lord. Of the nine forms of devotion, it is service devotion to the Lord that has been given the highest importance by Śāṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva. They feel glorified by declaring themselves as the servant of Lord.

51. Bhāgavata-purāṇa, 3.1.10
52. ch. 16
53. ch. 17
54. ch. 18
55. Kirtanāgāvsa, Prahlād-carita, based on Bhāgavata-purāṇa, Book VII
Visnū in various lyrics, poetical and dramatic works. We as we find Śankaradeva calling himself 'Śankara kinākara' (Śankara the servant) and 'Śankara dāsa' (Śankara the slave), etc.; similarly Mādhavadeva's familiar way of self-introduction is 'dāsakū dāsa' (the slave of slaves), 'rati' (the poor one), 'mūrka-mati' (the dull-witted one), etc. The humility which has found expression in all Mādhavadeva's works is but the expression of his servant-like devotion or dāṣya-bhakti. This form of devotion propagated through Vaishnavism had its origin in the Bhāgavata-purāṇa which declares that Visnū is the Supreme being and all forms of being are but His parts. According to Śankaradeva, just as a dutiful royal servant serves his master the king selflessly without thinking of his personal gains, as also should be the nature of bhakti towards God. In praise of the greatness of dāṣya-bhakti he put the following speech into king Bāli's lips in his Kīrtana:

The soul craves not for the rubbish riches,
0, break the chain of my low desire;
Have mercy on me, I promise to be Thy serf,
and shall wear again and again a serf's attire.

Mādhavadeva's Nāmaghosa is a unique expression of dāṣya-bhakti. The poet-devotee has, addressed his plea:

56. The Bhāgavata Bhakti Cult, 36
57. Kīrtana, Prahlād-carita, based on Bhāgavata-purāṇa, Book VII
58. Kīrtana, Daivakīr puttra-ānayana, based on Bhāgavata-purāṇa, Book X
of worship in various forms. After establishing a bond of close relationship with such terms of kinship as suhī (companion), suhrd (friend), priyatama (the dearest one), etc., he accepted God as his nātha (master) and finally surrendered himself at his feet as his bhrtya (servant). His feeling of devotion became so intense that he spoke out in a complaining voice addressing the Lord, - "O, Merciful, speak, what damage has Thou to face if Thou taketh me as Thy own servant?"

The Nāmaghosā has often asserted that God is merciful to His servants. Just as the cow nourishes her calves, so also God looks after the devotees. True devotees do not seek any pleasure except the happiness of serving at the feet of the Lord. A true devotee is virtuous in the same manner as serving God. In the ghoṣā quoted below, Madhavadeva has expressed his desire for such a position:

I do not belong to the four castes nor to the four āgamas. Neither am I pious, giving alms and visiting sacred places. But surely do I seek the servant of the servant - who is the servant of the Lord of Godīs, who is the ocean of joy.

59. Nāmaghosā, v. 801
60. ibid., v. 803
61. ibid., v. 256
The **bargaits** or holy numbers composed by Madhavadeva also express the same feeling of a servant's devotion to God. One is in need of God's mercy to be able to cross the rough seas of the world. If one serves the Lord with the devotion of a servant, one can have the ashire of His feet, resucing one as a boat across this sea-like world which is infested with the crocodiles of greed, lust and full of sweeping currents. All the wealth possessed by a man, his near and dear one, youth and physique are as transient as the flash of a lightning. Blinded by mayā (illusion), he takes these for the real. Only God's mercy can save one from attachment to these things. Hence it is the highest desire of the devotee to gain His mercy by becoming a servant and having recourse to the dusts of His lotus-feet. In another **barga** Madhavadeva says, - "O Govinda, Thou Master of all mercies to the poor devotee, Thou art my Lord and I am Thy slave. I seek Thy feet with a beseeching heart, crave Thy service at Thine purple feet. I bow in obeisance at Thy feet, I have no other desire except seeking service at Thy feet."

The essence of Madhavadeva's concept of servant-like devotion lies devoting oneself to the Lord for His

62. **Barga** , No. 10
63. ibid., No. 19
64. ibid., No. 48
sake of devotion only. By offering all the actions at his feet and by worshipping at his feet disinterestedly, one can get rid of all sense of attachments. The \textit{Chhaya} says that by serving God with a disinterested mind one can have a joy compared to which even the joy of salvation becomes insignificant. Madhavadeva has found this supreme joy through the depth of servant-like devotion to the Lord. Thus it is that, wherever his literary works carry his personal emotions we find the expression of a state of exultant spiritual surrender.

Madhavadeva's all-out devotion and services to his guru has become a living legend to Assamese society. Madhavadeva happened to meet Sankaradeva when the former was about twenty years in age and Sankaradeva was seventy years. After a furious debate with the neo-Vishnuit scholar Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva, who was a follower of the cult of \textit{Sakti}, became his disciple. On being won over by the neo-Vaishnavite fold, he became so engrossed with the propagation of his new faith that all worldly attractions became meaningless to him. He became an avowed life-long bachelor leaving behind his betrothed bride. In spite of the apparent difference in their age, there grew up a

\footnote{65. \textit{The Bhagavata Bhakti Cult}, p. 31}
of warm friendship between the guru and his disciple. The brilliant personality of Madhavadeva, who followed him like a shadow, provided the Śaṅkarite religious movement with both inspiration and help. Śaṅkaradeva was greatly pleased at Madhavadeva's sharp genius, humility, spirit, living and presence of mind. Madhavadeva became his bandhava (lit., a friend of the vital winds).

To the three fundamentals of the Mahāyāna religion (nām, deu and bhakat), Madhavadeva added another guru. To the three bhatimas of Śaṅkaradeva, viz., rāja-bhatima, bhatima of the plays, and deva-bhatima, he added a fourth, viz., guru-bhatima. In his guru-bhatima Madhavadeva paid tributes to his guru Śaṅkaradeva by asserting that God Himself took incarnation in the form of Śaṅkaradeva to propagate the nāma-dharma in the world during the Kali-yuga. Śaṅkaradeva combined in himself the qualities of śrī (beauty), yaśa (glory), dana (munificence), māna (dignity) and dayā (mercy). A profound scholar and famed poet, Śaṅkaradeva loved his disciples even more than his son.

On many an occasion Madhavadeva noted that with a guru one cannot find the path that leads to God...
whose inspiration ruled him to the auspicious beginning of his literary career.\textsuperscript{66} That was why he would ever use his pen in sharp denunciation of the opponents of Śankaradeva. In the \textit{Nāmachosā} he firmly asserted that Śankaradeva is the sole guru of the devotees of Vaiṣṇavism. Madhavadeva denounces those people who devoid of the virtues of a guru, try to pretend as a guru just to pull out their livelihood and thereby bring corruption in society and he has advised the devotees to take refuge at the feet of guru Śankaradeva. Madhavadeva found the true virtues in his guru as are associated with God.\textsuperscript{67} That Śankaradeva sought refuge at the feet of the Lord with ardent devotion typical of the milkmaids of Vaiṣṇava, Madhavadeva offered himself at the feet of the Lord as well as the guru with the same devotion.

During the course of Śankaradeva's second pilgrimage, Madhavadeva attended him in all possible ways. After traversing a long distance on foot every day, he would make all necessary arrangements for the cooking of meals for his guru at night; and, at bedtime, he would massage with oil his guru's feet till the latter was asleep and only then would he go for cooking his own meals. Madhavadeva also shared his guru's deliberations on life.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66} \textit{Jaṅga-rebasya}, v. 120
\item \textsuperscript{67} \textit{v. 374}
\item \textsuperscript{68} \textit{KGC}, p. 205
\item \textsuperscript{69} ibid., p. 275
\end{itemize}
they proceeded on their journey. Even into the personal life of Śankaradeva, Yadhavadeva had an easy access. He introduced certain modifications in the household arrangement of his guru's wife so as to add to the comfort of his guru. On occasions when the maid servant had not washed his guru's clothes in time he would himself wash these. He would himself cut off and remove branches of trees that created difficulties in the passage leading to the open-air toilet used by his guru. He would also harvest the mustard plants raised by Śankaradeva with the help of other people and would spread the katha with his guru. Once because of cloudy weather, the clothes remained wet and Śankaradeva did not have dry clothes to change. When Yadhavadeva came to know this, he went by night and walked along a dangerous route, braving the rain, passing through jungles full of tigers and poisonous insects to reach the weaver's home and brought clothes for his guru.

Being deeply impressed by his devotion and loyalty, Śankaradeva at the suggestion of his wife wanted to make Yadhavadeva a member of his family by giving

70. KCC, p. 154
71. ibid., pp. 34-35
72. ibid., p. 167
73. ibid., p. 183
74. ibid., p. 190
daughter Fukmini in marriage to him. But, being free from any attachment to the worldly affairs, Sankaradeva did not respond to the proposal of his guru's wife, as directed by his guru, and preferred to accept Sankaradeva's son as being worthy of worship. He accepted Sankaradeva as his father-like guru and spent his life as an immaculate Vaisnava in full conformity with the ideal preached by Sankaradeva. Till the last day of his life he drew inspiration for all his activities from the ideals and the memory of Sankaradeva.

The concept of bhakti as advocated by Šantideva is essentially the same based on the Bhāgavata-purāṇa. His literary works are redolent with the teachings of bhakti cult of the same species which eulogise the virtue of bhakti as the means for emancipation and announce the grace of Lord Supreme. Of all the different tenors of bhakti, he concentrated upon the kind that goes under the name, dasya-bhakti; and, it is the frequent eulogisation of this variant of bhakti which gives the Nāmaśūra and other works of him a distinctive stamp of tremendous impact. As for his choice of disciples, he had a marked propensity to pick them up from all castes and classes, high or low. This fact is recorded in the Nāmaghosh, wherein he makes a reference to the acceptance of pupils from all the assorted castes and classes. It may be noted...
these people were never brought inside the fold of Hinduism till the advent of Sankaradeva; and, Madhavadeva followed the tradition with still more ardour and unctitude. It is this open embrace of the neo-Vaisnava movement which gave it a distinctive quality among the prevalent Hindu tradition of the time.