

# The Embodied Aesthetics of Mystical Realization: Enraptured Devotion and Bodies of Bliss in Kṛṣṇa *Bhakti*

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**M**y work as a comparative historian of religions has emphasized the role of comparative study as an inextricable component of the scholarly enterprise that serves two functions: first, as a heuristic tool through which we construct and apply our scholarly categories and models; and, second, as a method of critical interrogation through which we continue to test, reassess, refine, deconstruct, and reconstitute these categories and models.<sup>1</sup> These two functions correspond, respectively, to the “heuristic” and “provocative” functions of comparison described by the comparative philosopher of religion Thomas Kasulis:

Comparison typically serves one of two purposes. It can, first of all, try to increase our understanding of one or both of the comparates by seeing one in light of the other. This is a *heuristic* function, a way of classifying and gathering information. Secondly, comparison may try to use the similarities and differences as a means of provoking a new perspective on a traditional issue. . . . This is a *provocative* function, one that leads immediately to questions, not answers.<sup>2</sup>

Comparative analysis is intrinsic to the process through which we construct and apply analytical categories such as “mysticism,” which has historically assumed a central role in the academic study of religion. We construct and define the category “mysticism”—whose genealogy derives from Christian formulations of the *via contemplativa*—and then we survey and compare a range of potential candidates from a variety of religious traditions to determine in each case whether the indigenous categories

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1. See Barbara A. Holdrege, “South Asia and the Middle East: Connecting Cultures Outside of and in Spite of the West,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 12 (2008).

2. Thomas P. Kasulis, “Introduction,” in ed. Thomas P. Kasulis, Roger T. Ames, and Wimal Dissanayake, *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), xiii.

accord with our scholarly constructions of the category. In the opening section of my analysis, I use the category mysticism to interrogate the Hindu category *bhakti* and raise questions concerning the viability of using the term *bhakti* to describe a particular mode of “mystical” experience. However, I would suggest that using Western constructions of mysticism as the default cultural template against which to compare and evaluate Indian categories of religious experience serves to perpetuate the legacy of “European epistemological hegemony”<sup>3</sup> in the academy. In order to establish “theoretical parity”<sup>4</sup> in this cross-cultural encounter, the major portion of my analysis uses the Hindu category *bhakti* to interrogate the category mysticism and to explore how the models of religious experience developed by certain *bhakti* traditions coincide and collide in mutually fructifying ways with the freighted category mysticism.

After briefly surveying a range of expressions of *bhakti* in Vaiṣṇava traditions, my analysis focuses on Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava constructions of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, which are grounded on the canonical authority of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, an important *bhakti* movement inspired by the Bengali leader Caitanya (1486–1533 CE) in the sixteenth century, developed an indigenous typology of religious experience that critically assessed and ranked the contending paths in the Indian landscape in light of their own distinctive path of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. The Gauḍīyas’ analysis of religious experience interweaves three indigenous categories—*bhakti*, devotion; *rūpa*, form or body; and *rasa*, aesthetic enjoyment—in order to generate a distinctive new theology, which I term a theology of “embodied mysticism” and which can be characterized more specifically as an embodied aesthetics of mystical realization.<sup>5</sup> In the Gauḍīya theology of embodied mysticism the body is a site of central significance that is ascribed a pivotal

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3. This expression derives from Sheldon Pollock, “Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power Beyond the Raj,” in ed. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 114–115.

4. This expression derives from my colleague Jose Cabezón, “The Discipline and Its Other: The Dialectic of Alterity in the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 21–38.

5. For an extended study of the embodied aesthetics of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, see Barbara A. Holdrege, *Bhakti and Embodiment: At Play with Kṛṣṇa’s Limitless Forms* (forthcoming).

role on two levels: first, as the material psychophysical complex that is to be cultivated on the path to realization, and second, as the nonmaterial, eternal body that is to be attained in the highest state of realization. In contrast to the contending models of mystical realization promulgated by the exponents of other Indian schools, such as classical Yoga and Advaita Vedānta, the Gauḍīyas insist that the body is not simply an instrument to be disciplined on the path to realization and then dispensed with once the goal is reached. Rather, the body assumes a critical role not only on the *path* but also as part of the *goal* of realization.

## Bhakti and Theistic Mysticism

The term *bhakti*, from the root *bhaj*, “to share, partake of,” is generally used to designate a relationship of service, reverence, love for, and devotion to a deity. The term *bhakti* connotes sharing in, partaking of, and participating in the deity as Other. The various Hindu traditions that are characterized as *bhakti* traditions tend to posit an initial duality between the *bhakta*, or devotee, as subject and the divine Other as object and then delineate a path by means of which the *bhakta* may overcome the state of separation and engage in an increasingly intimate relationship with the divine Other conceived of as a personal God. This relationship finds fruition in the ultimate goal of union with the deity, which is variously represented, ranging from a state of union-in-difference to a state of unity without duality.<sup>6</sup>

A number of scholars have considered the question of whether the category *bhakti*, as a devotional mode of religious experience that culminates in union with a personal God, constitutes a form of mysticism. John B. Carman, after providing an insightful analysis of the issues involved in responding to this question, concludes that the category *bhakti* can be appropriately correlated with the category “theistic mysticism.”<sup>7</sup> However, this hybrid category “theistic mysticism” is itself somewhat problematic and, as Carman himself notes, scholars of mysticism have presented contending perspectives concerning the validity and significance of such a category.

6. For a recent analysis of the category *bhakti*, see Barbara A. Holdrege, “Interrogating *Bhakti*,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 12 (2008).

7. John B. Carman, “Conceiving Hindu ‘Bhakti’ as Theistic Mysticism,” in ed. Steven T. Katz, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 191–225.

"Theistic mysticism" is a more restricted term [than mysticism], which some students of mysticism would consider a contradiction in terms, since for them theism implies a fundamental distinction between creator and creature which mysticism denies or overcomes. At most they would view theistic mysticism as a mixed type or impure variety of mysticism, a practical compromise concealing a metaphysical contradiction. A quite different view of mysticism sees theistic mysticism as a fully legitimate type, possibly even the most legitimate type of mysticism, exemplified repeatedly in the tradition from which the concept derives, the mystical theology or *via contemplativa* of Christian tradition, both Eastern and Western.<sup>8</sup>

As Carman points out, those scholars whose work focuses primarily on Christian, Jewish, or Islamic mystical traditions, such as Evelyn Underhill,<sup>9</sup> Rufus Jones,<sup>10</sup> Gershom Scholem,<sup>11</sup> and Annemarie Schimmel,<sup>12</sup> have tended to allot an integral place to theistic mysticism.<sup>13</sup>

## Typologies of Mystical Experience

Among scholars who have proposed cross-cultural typologies of mystical experience, R. C. Zaehner and W. T. Stace present opposing perspectives in their evaluations of theistic mysticism. Zaehner posits three types of mysticism—pantheistic, monistic, and theistic—and, in accordance with his Roman Catholic biases, assigns primacy of place to theistic mysticism.<sup>14</sup> Stace, in contrast, establishes a twofold typological distinction between introvertive and extrovertive forms of mystical experience and gives primary emphasis to monistic, introvertive experience as the highest form,

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8. Carman, "Conceiving Hindu 'Bhakti' as Theistic Mysticism," 191.

9. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (1910; reprint, New York: Noonday Press, Meridian Books, 1955).

10. Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1909).

11. Among Gershom Scholem's numerous studies of Jewish mysticism, see in particular his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd rev. ed. (1954; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1961).

12. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

13. Carman, "Conceiving Hindu 'Bhakti' as Theistic Mysticism," 192–193.

14. See R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry into Some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, 1957); and R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1960).

with theistic mysticism relegated to a secondary place.<sup>15</sup> Both Zaehner's and Stace's phenomenological typologies are problematic, for, like most attempts at cross-cultural typologies, they fail to account for the manifold varieties of mystical phenomena and do not give sufficient attention to the specific religious, cultural, and historical contexts that shape these phenomena.<sup>16</sup>

If we turn from cross-cultural typologies to a consideration of studies of Indian mysticism more specifically, we find that *bhakti* is generally included as a central category by both Western and Indian scholars. S. N. Dasgupta, for example, includes *bhakti*, or devotional mysticism, as one of the four major types of Indian mysticism, along with the Upaniṣadic, the Yogic, and the Buddhist.<sup>17</sup> Zaehner, in his study of Hindu and Muslim mysticism, builds on Dasgupta's fourfold typology and arrives at three types of Hindu mysticism:

The types are (i) the pantheistic or pan-en-henic, . . . the "I am this All" of the Upaniṣads; (ii) the realization of undifferentiated unity, however philosophically interpreted; and (iii) the loving dialogue with God which results in transforming union. . . .<sup>18</sup>

Zaehner's threefold Hindu typology is simply an adaptation of his threefold cross-cultural typology mentioned earlier, with the three Hindu types corresponding, respectively, to the pantheistic, monistic, and theistic forms of mysticism. In this context *bhakti* mysticism, as "the loving dialogue with God which results in transforming union," corresponds to theistic mysticism. Once again betraying his Christian bias towards theism, Zaehner proclaims theistic mysticism a "higher form of religious life" for Hindus than monistic

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15. See W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1960).

16. See, for example, Steven Katz's critiques of Zaehner and Stace in his "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," in ed. Steven T. Katz, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 25–32. Katz emphasizes that "the phenomenological typologies of Stace and Zaehner are too reductive and inflexible, forcing multifarious and extremely variegated forms of mystical experience into improper interpretative categories which lose sight of the fundamentally important differences between the data studied" (25). Katz's "contextualist" approach to the study of mysticism will be discussed later.

17. S. N. Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism* (1927; reprint, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1959).

18. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 19.

mysticism.<sup>19</sup> A. Govindacharya and P. N. Srinivasachari, two modern Hindu scholars who are adherents of the Śrīvaiṣṇava *bhakti* tradition, go even farther and assert that devotional mysticism—the quest for union with a personal God—alone qualifies as “true” mysticism.<sup>20</sup> Such characterizations of *bhakti* as an important—or indeed, the most important—form of Hindu mysticism, are, as Carman points out, in striking contrast to “the view that many in India and the West have come to take for granted: that Śāṅkara’s monistic interpretation of the Upanishads is the primary type of Hindu mysticism.”<sup>21</sup>

A more balanced, differentiated treatment of Indian mystical traditions is presented by Gerald J. Larson, who proposes a fourfold typology of Indian mystical experience that is reminiscent of Dasgupta’s fourfold schema: unitive mystical experience, exemplified by the Upaniṣads and Vedānta traditions; isolative mystical experience, exemplified by Jain traditions, classical Sāṃkhya, and classical Yoga; copulative mystical experience, exemplified by theistic traditions and late tantric traditions; and nihilative mystical experience, exemplified by early Buddhist traditions.<sup>22</sup> *Bhakti* traditions, according to Larson’s taxonomy, are representative of copulative mystical experience, in which “the relationship of the devotee to the Lord is

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19. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 11. In his treatment of *bhakti* mysticism, Zaehner focuses on the Bhagavad-Gītā together with Rāmānuja’s commentary on the Gītā (64–85). For a critique of Zaehner’s “dogmatic approach to the study of mysticism,” see Frits Staal, *Exploring Mysticism: A Methodological Essay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 67–69.

20. A. Govindacharya, *A Metaphysique of Mysticism (Vedically Viewed)* (Mysore: n. p., 1923), 7–9; P. N. Srinivasachari, *Mystics and Mysticism* (Madras: Sri Krishna Library, 1951), 1–43. As Carman notes, both scholars’ treatments of mysticism betray their bias towards *bhakti* as members of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community that derives from Rāmānuja. See Carman, “Conceiving Hindu ‘Bhakti’ as Theistic Mysticism,” 195, 202–203.

21. Carman, “Conceiving Hindu ‘Bhakti’ as Theistic Mysticism,” 201–202. The tendency to privilege the monistic mysticism of identity as the central form of Hindu mysticism is reflected, for example, in Rudolf Otto’s classic study *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*, trans. Bertha L. Bracey and Richenda C. Payne (London: Macmillan, 1932), in which he takes Śāṅkara as the paradigmatic exemplar of “Eastern” mysticism.

22. Gerald James Larson, “Mystical Man in India,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 12, no. 1 (1973): 1–16. One of the innovative contributions of Larson’s fourfold typology, which is more differentiated than Dasgupta’s fourfold schema, is his attempt to correlate the four types of Indian mystical experience—unitive, isolative, copulative, and nihilative—with four stages in human development—infancy and early childhood, adolescence, marriage and adult sexuality, and old age and death, respectively.

described in relational and interpersonal terms. . . . [T]he devotee longs for God or the Lord as the lover longs for the beloved.”<sup>23</sup>

The scholarly consensus of both Western and Indian interpreters thus suggests that *bhakti* is a “legitimate” type of mystical experience that can be fruitfully correlated with theistic mysticism. However, in the final analysis none of these typologies of mystical experience is sufficiently nuanced to account for the variegated forms that *bhakti* itself assumes in diverse religious contexts. Therefore, to be able to define more precisely the nature of certain Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* traditions as representatives of distinctive modes of mysticism, we need to examine more closely a range of constructions of *bhakti*.

### Viraha-Bhakti and Erotic-Ecstatic Mysticism

**A**mong the various forms of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* traditions, we find a broad spectrum of modes of devotional experience. On one end of the spectrum we find more intellectual, contemplative, and meditative forms of *bhakti*, as expressed, for example, in the Bhagavad-Gītā (ca. 200 BCE), the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (ca. 300–500 CE), and the Śrīvaiṣṇava teachings of Rāmānuja (1017–1137 CE). On the other end of the spectrum we find intensely emotional, passionate, and ecstatic forms of *bhakti*, as expressed, for example, in the devotional hymns of the Tamil Vaiṣṇava poet-saints known as the Ālvārs (ca. sixth to ninth centuries CE), the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (ca. eighth to tenth century CE),<sup>24</sup> and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachings inspired

23. Larson, “Mystical Man in India,” 11.

24. For a summary of scholarly opinions concerning the date of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, see Ludo Rocher, *The Purāṇas* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), 147–148; Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 486–488, with n. 10; and Edwin F. Bryant, “The Date and Provenance of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the Vaikuṇṭha Perumāl Temple,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 11, no. 1 (September 2002): 51–80. One of the dominant scholarly perspectives, articulated by Hardy and many others, dates the Bhāgavata to the ninth or tenth century. This perspective has been challenged recently by Bryant, who invokes Dennis Hudson’s study of the Vaikuṇṭha Perumāl Temple in Kāñcīpuram to establish the eighth century as the new upper limit for the date of the Bhāgavata. See Bryant, “The Date and Provenance of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,” 61–62; Dennis Hudson, “The Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa in Stone: The Text as an Eighth-Century Temple and Its Implications,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 3, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 137–182.

by Caitanya. The following characterization in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is representative of this type of *bhakti*:

Without the hair of the body bristling, without the heart melting, without being inarticulate due to tears of bliss (*ānanda*)—without *bhakti* how can consciousness be purified? He whose speech is stammering, whose heart melts, who weeps repeatedly and sometimes laughs, who unabashedly sings and dances—such a person, united by *bhakti* with me [Kṛṣṇa], purifies the world.<sup>25</sup>

A number of scholars have noted that the passionate and ecstatic form of *bhakti* expressed in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa constitutes a distinctive new form of devotion that is markedly different from the more intellectual and contemplative forms of *bhakti* that find expression in different ways in the Gītā, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, and Rāmānuja's teachings. J. N. Farquhar was one of the first scholars to suggest that the Bhāgavata Purāṇa presents a "new theory of *bhakti*," which he characterizes in terms that are reminiscent of the Bhāgavata passage just cited:

What distinguishes it [the Bhāgavata Purāṇa] from all earlier literature is its new theory of *bhakti*; and therein lies its true greatness. Some of its utterances on this subject are worthy of a place in the best literature of mysticism and devotion. . . . Bhakti in this work is a surging emotion which chokes the speech, makes the tears flow and the hair thrill with pleasureable excitement, and often leads to hysterical laughing and weeping by turns, to sudden fainting fits and to long trances of unconsciousness. . . . Thus the whole theory and practice of *bhakti* in this purāṇa is very different from the *bhakti* of the *Bhagavadgītā* and of Rāmānuja.<sup>26</sup>

Jan Gonda similarly suggests that the "passion and emotionalism" of devotion in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa constitutes a "new stage" of *bhakti* that differs from the "more speculative description of the earlier texts."

Bhakti has entered here a *new stage, or perhaps better*, displays here aspects which in the older texts *did not, or less so*, become manifest, and these aspects were illustrated and stressed with a fervour and a conviction which can amaze the unprepared Western reader. Particularly in the life of the young herdsman god Kṛṣṇa a theory and practice of *bhakti* is developed in a very emotional and sensual poetry, which *differs* in its passion and emotionalism from the more speculative

25. Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.14.23–24; cf. 11.2.40; 11.3.31–32; 1.6.16–17. All translations of Sanskrit texts are my own.

26. J. N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (1920; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), 229–230.



description of the earlier texts. *Bhakti* is here an overpowering, even suffocating emotion, which causes tears to flow and the voice to falter, and even, stimulates hysterical laughter, loss of consciousness, and trance.<sup>27</sup>

S. N. Dasgupta, in his discussion of *bhakti* as a form of devotional mysticism, distinguishes three stages of development, from (1) self-abnegation, self-surrender to God, and contemplative union with God, as taught in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and reflected in the teachings of Rāmānuja, to (2) the desire for contemplative union combined with the longing to taste God's love, as expressed by the devotee Prahlāda in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, to (3) the intoxicating, sensual, blissful, and ecstatic love of God that is celebrated in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Dasgupta notes:

This *bhakti* . . . is no longer the old contemplative meditation of God, stirred by a deep-seated love. It is the ebullition of feelings and emotions of attachment to God. It manifests itself in the soft melting of the heart and expresses itself in tears, inarticulate utterances of speech, laughter, songs and dances, such as can only be possible through a mad intoxication of love. This kind of *bhakti* is entirely different from the calm contemplative life of complete self-abnegation and self-surrender to God and a mind wholly immersed in God and the thought of God. . . . They [the *bhaktas*] come to experience such intense happiness that all their limbs and senses become saturated therewith and their minds swim, as it were, in a lake of such supreme bliss that even the bliss of ultimate liberation loses its charm. . . . The *bhakta* who is filled with such a passion does not experience it merely as an undercurrent of joy which waters the depths of his heart in his own privacy, but as a torrent that overflows the caverns of his heart into all his senses. Through all his senses he realizes it as if it were a sensuous delight; with his heart and soul he feels it as a spiritual intoxication of joy. Such a person is beside himself with this love of God. He sings, laughs, dances and weeps. He is no longer a person of this world.<sup>28</sup>

Paul Hacker, through a comparison of the portrayals of the devotee Prahlāda in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, has demonstrated the differences between the representations of *bhakti* in the two *Purāṇas*.

27. J. Gonda, "Het begrip *bhakti*," *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* 10 (1948): 640; translation cited in Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, 38.

28. Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism*, 124–126. Thomas Hopkins has also noted the "significant change" from the "quiet contemplation" of the *bhakti* of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* to the "emotional fervor" of the *bhakti* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. See Thomas J. Hopkins, "The Social Teaching of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*," in Milton Singer, ed., *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 9.

The more contemplative *bhakti* of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is characterized by Prahāda's remembering, thinking about, or meditating on Viṣṇu, while the more emotional *bhakti* of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is characterized by Prahāda's ecstatic weeping, laughing, singing, and dancing while immersed in the bliss of Kṛṣṇa's love.<sup>29</sup>

Friedhelm Hardy, in his extended study of the early history of Kṛṣṇa devotion in South India, emphasizes that the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is the first work in Sanskrit that expressed this new type of "emotional Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*," which he characterizes more specifically as an "aesthetic-erotic-ecstatic mysticism of separation."<sup>30</sup> By adopting the canonical form of a Purāṇa, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa provided a brahmanical Sanskrit framework for this mysticism of love-in-separation, *viraha-bhakti*, which has its roots in the Tamil devotional traditions of the Ālvārs.<sup>31</sup> The Bhāgavata sought

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29. Paul Hacker, *Prahāda. Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hinduismus*, 2 vols. (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1959), esp. vol. 1, 93–147. See also Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, 160–162, in which Otto contrasts the mystical experience of Prahāda in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, for whom *bhakti* is "the stilling of the soul before God, a trustful, believing devotion," with the experience of Caitanya, for whom *bhakti* is "'Prema,' a fevered, glowing Krishna-eroticism, colored throughout by love passion." As will be discussed later, the Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* of Caitanya and of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava movement that he inspired is closely allied with the *bhakti* of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which provided the authoritative scriptural basis for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology.

30. Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, esp. 8–10, 36–43, 573.

31. For a brief overview of scholarly opinions concerning the connections between the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Tamil devotional traditions of the Ālvārs, see Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, 41–43. Hardy himself asserts that the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is "an attempt to render in Sanskrit (and that means *inter alia* to make available for the whole of India) the religion of the Ālvārs" (44). Whether or not the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is directly connected to the Ālvārs, the scholarly consensus is that the text originated in the Tamil region of South India. For a summary of the evidence for the text's South Indian origin, see Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, 488–489, 637–646. See also Rocher, *The Purāṇas*, 148; C. V. Vaidya, "The Date of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa," *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, n.s., 1 (1925): 156–158; A. Ray, "Domicile of the Author of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 8 (1932): 49–53; Radhakamal Mukerjee, *The Lord of the Autumn Moons* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1957), 72–74; Hopkins, "The Social Teaching of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa," 4–6; T. S. Rukmani, *A Critical Study of the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa (with Special Reference to Bhakti)* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1970), 9–11; and Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare, trans., *The Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), xl. For a refutation of a number of the arguments in support of the

to integrate the religiocultural traditions of South India and North India and reconcile the claims of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* with brahmanical orthodoxy by incorporating the *viraha-bhakti* of the Ālvārs within a brahmanical Sanskrit framework that reflects North Indian ideologies.<sup>32</sup> This *viraha-bhakti*—which finds consummate expression in the devotional laments of the Ālvārs Nammālvār and Āṇṭāl and in the insatiable yearnings of the *gopīs*, the cowmaiden lovers of Kṛṣṇa, in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa—involves a dialectic of union and separation that is never fully resolved. Charlotte Vaudeville remarks:

The theoreticians of Bhakti entertained, from the time of the Ālvārs, a *dynamic* conception of Bhakti, whose highest state is less a repose than a tension, an unquenchable thirst even in the possession of God, a continual yearning and stretching for a fuller apprehension of the divine Lover, who unceasingly draws all souls to Himself. There can be no satiety in divine Love; and so it was the pathetic character of the *virahinī*, the faithful wife forever tormented by the pangs of separation from her Lord and longing for Him even when she enjoys the bliss of His presence, which remained for the Ālvārs, as well as for their spiritual descendents, the most adequate symbol of Love divine.<sup>33</sup>

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South Indian provenance of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, see Bryant, “The Date and Provenance of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,” 63–67.

32. Regarding the Bhāgavata Purāṇa’s role in Sanskritizing the Tamil *bhakti* of the Ālvārs and contributing to the synthesis of North Indian and South Indian traditions, Hardy remarks: “The period from about the sixth to about the tenth century in the Tamil South is characterized by a very fertile and multifarious encounter between two cultures, Tamil and Sanskrit Hindu. The BhP [Bhāgavata Purāṇa] is an attempt to harmonize the various complexes involved in this encounter and to resolve the tensions it had given rise to. . . . Northern culture orientated itself by a social system (the brahmins as the foremost *varṇa* [social class]) and an ideology (the Vedānta, viz. the systematization of the teaching of the *Upaniṣads*), while Southern culture was characterized by an emotional religion (of the Ālvārs) and by great aesthetic sensibility (the old *caṅkam* poetry, and the *akattiṇai*). The BhP tries to integrate all four complexes, and it uses the symbol of the Vedas to achieve this, while adopting the purāṇic literary form. Thus, . . . it is an *opus universale* attempting to encompass everything” (*Viraha-Bhakti*, 489).

33. Charlotte Vaudeville, “Evolution of Love-Symbolism in Bhagavatism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82, 1 (January–March 1962): 40.

## Bhakti-Rasa and the Embodied Aesthetics of Mystical Realization

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition inspired by Caitanya developed a distinctive new mystical theology based on the scriptural authority of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in which the erotic-ecstatic mysticism of *viraha-bhakti* was appropriated and reimagined as a form of embodied mysticism. Caitanya himself did not leave a legacy of devotional poetry or other literary expression, beyond eight verses, termed *śikṣāṣṭaka*, that are traditionally ascribed to him.<sup>34</sup> He charged a group of his disciples, the six Gosvāmins of Vṛndāvana, with the task of developing a formal system of theology to perpetuate the *bhakti* movement inspired by him. This theology, together with a regimen of practices termed *sādhana-bhakti*, is articulated in four of the most important works of the Gauḍīya tradition: Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*<sup>35</sup> and *Ujjvalanīlamanī*; Jīva Gosvāmin's *Bhāgavata Sandarbha*, which comprises six *Sandarbhās*;<sup>36</sup> and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, the Bengali compendium by one of the Gosvāmins' most acclaimed disciples.<sup>37</sup> In his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* and *Ujjvalanīlamanī*,

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34. The eight *ślokas*, or verses, of the *śikṣāṣṭaka*, are recorded by Rūpa Gosvāmin in his *Padyāvalī* and are presented together for the first time as an eight-*śloka* unit by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 3.20.7–38, *ślokas* 3–10. References in the Notes to the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* indicate section (*līlā*), chapter (*pariccheda*), and verse(s) and follow the numbering convention adopted in Edward C. Dimock's translation, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja*, ed. Tony K. Stewart (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), which is based on the Bengali edition of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* edited by Rādhāgovinda Nātha, 3rd ed., 6 vols. (Calcutta: Sādhana Prakāśanī, 1948–1952).

35. The *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, "The Ocean of the Nectar of *Bhakti-Rasa*," is divided into four quarters (*vibhāgas*)—Eastern, Southern, Western, and Northern—each of which is subdivided into chapters called "waves" (*laharīṣ*). References in the Notes to the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* indicate quarter (*vibhāga*), chapter (*laharī*), and verse(s).

36. The *Bhāgavata Sandarbha* is also called *Ṣaṭ Sandarbha*, since it comprises six *Sandarbhās*: *Taitva Sandarbha*, *Bhāgavat Sandarbha*, *Paramāṭma Sandarbha*, *Kṛṣṇa Sandarbha*, *Bhakti Sandarbha*, and *Prīti Sandarbha*. For an overview of the contents of the six *Sandarbhās*, see Ravi M. Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī: When Knowledge Meets Devotion* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 201–207; and Satyanarayana Dasa, "The Six *Sandarbhās* of Jīva Gosvāmī," in ed. Edwin F. Bryant, *Krishna: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 373–387. References in the Notes to the *Sandarbhās* indicate section (*anuccheda*).

37. Among scholarly studies of the works of the Gosvāmins and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, see Sushil Kumar De, *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta:

Rūpa Gosvāmin, one of the principal architects of the Gauḍīya tradition, reframes the authoritative devotional teachings of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in the light of Indian theories of aesthetics and produces a distinctive new theology of embodied mysticism that can be characterized as an embodied aesthetics of mystical realization founded on the category of *bhakti-rasa*. In this mystical theology the aesthetic experience of *rasa*, pure aesthetic enjoyment, is reimaged as a transcendent religious experience and the religious experience of *bhakti* is reimaged as a transcendent aesthetic experience, and it is this transcendent aesthetic-religious experience of *bhakti-rasa* that is the culmination of the path of embodied mysticism. This theory of *bhakti-rasa* is elaborated by Jīva Gosvāmin in his commentaries on Rūpa Gosvāmin's works and in his *Bhakti Sandarbha* and *Prīti Sandarbha*.

The Gauḍīya theology of embodied mysticism provides a striking example of what Steven Katz has characterized as the dialectic of mysticism, which "oscillates between the innovative and traditional poles of the religious life."<sup>38</sup> Katz argues that while mystics may at times introduce "radical" teachings, at the same time they exhibit a "conservative" tendency in which they seek to locate their teachings within the broader normative framework of their respective religious traditions. The mystic's experience is, moreover, "preconditioned" by his or her embeddedness in a particular religious tradition, in that both the distinctive character of the experience and the subsequent interpretation of the experience are shaped and informed by the inherited images, symbols, and categories that the mystic brings to the experience from the larger tradition. Katz emphasizes in this context the important role that scriptures have assumed as sources of authority and legitimation for mystical traditions.<sup>39</sup> The formative role of scriptures

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K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1961); David L. Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānuṣā Bhakti Sādhana* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); David L. Haberman, trans., *The Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu of Rūpa Gosvāmin* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003); Neal Gorton Delmonico, "Sacred Rapture: A Study of the Religious Aesthetic of Rupa Gosvamin" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1990); Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī*; and Dimock, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja*.

38. Steven T. Katz, "The 'Conservative' Character of Mystical Experience," in ed. Katz, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, 3–4.

39. Katz, "The 'Conservative' Character of Mystical Experience," esp. 3–32. For Katz's arguments concerning the preconditioned nature of mystical experience, see "Language,

in shaping and authorizing mystical teachings is vividly exemplified by the Gauḍīya theology of embodied mysticism, which is grounded on the canonical authority of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. As we shall see, while the Gauḍīyas constantly invoke verses from the Bhāgavata as prooftexts to authorize their mystical theology, at the same time they invest the Bhāgavata's devotional teachings with new valences by reframing Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* as an embodied aesthetics of mystical realization.

### Gauḍīya Typology of Mystical Experience

The Gauḍīyas develop their own indigenous typology to account for the varieties of mystical experience in the Indian landscape. The Gauḍīya typology establishes a multidimensional *hierarchy* of mystical experience in which their own distinctive form of embodied mysticism is represented as the pinnacle of mystical realization. This hierarchy includes a ranked assessment of (1) ontologies, (2) paths to mystical realization, (3) goals of mystical realization, and (4) modes of devotional relationship.

#### *Ontologies*

The Gauḍīyas invoke Bhāgavata Purāṇa 1.2.11 in order to provide a scriptural basis for their hierarchical assessment of the three aspects of the supreme Godhead: “The knowers of reality declare the ultimate reality to be that which is nondual knowledge. It is called Brahman, Paramātmān, and Bhagavān.” The Gauḍīyas interpret the order of terms in this Bhāgavata verse as indicating ontological precedence, from lowest to highest: Brahman, Paramātmān, Bhagavān. Brahman, the lowest aspect of the Godhead, is the impersonal, attributeless, formless, and undifferentiated ground of existence that is beyond the realm of *prakṛti*, primordial matter. Paramātmān, the intermediary aspect of the Godhead, is the indwelling Self that on the macrocosmic level supports the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the material realm of *prakṛti* and on the microcosmic level resides in the hearts of all *jīvas*, individual living beings. Bhagavān, the highest aspect of the Godhead in its complete fullness (*pūrṇa*), is transcosmic—beyond

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Epistemology, and Mysticism.” See also Robert M. Gimello's discussion of the “essential contextuality” of mystical experience in “Mysticism in Its Contexts,” in ed. Katz, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, 61–88.

both the macrocosm and the microcosm—and is personal, endowed with innumerable qualities, and possessed of an absolute body (*vigraha*). The Gauḍīyas' theology of embodied mysticism emphasizes that the absolute body of Bhagavān is nonmaterial (*aprākṛta*), unmanifest (*avyakta*), and self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) and, like his essential nature (*svarūpa*), consists of being (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*).<sup>40</sup>

The Gauḍīyas invoke the Bhāgavata Purāṇa's declaration that "Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān himself (Bhagavān *svayam*)"<sup>41</sup> in order to establish that Kṛṣṇa is *pūrṇa* Bhagavān, the full and complete Godhead, who encompasses within himself Brahman and Paramātmān and at the same time extends beyond both. As such he is the *avatārin* who is the source of all *avatāras* and who descends to earth periodically and assumes a series of manifest forms in different cosmic cycles.<sup>42</sup>

In Gauḍīya mystical theology Bhagavān is celebrated as *śaktimat*, the possessor of innumerable *śaktis*, or energies. The three principal types of *śakti* are the *svarūpa-śakti*, the *māyā-śakti*, and the *jīva-śakti*. The *svarūpa-śakti* operates on the transcosmic level as the *śakti* that is intrinsic (*antar-aṅga*) to Bhagavān's essential nature (*svarūpa*), comprising three aspects that are constitutive of his essence: *saṁdhinī-śakti*, the principle of being (*sat*); *saṁvit-śakti*, the principle of consciousness (*cit*), and *hlādinī-śakti*, the principle of bliss (*ānanda*). The *māyā-śakti* operates on the macrocosmic level as the *śakti* that is extrinsic (*bahir-aṅga*) to Bhagavān and that is responsible for manifesting and regulating the material world of *prakṛti* and for subjecting *jīvas*, individual souls, to the bondage of *saṁsāra*, the cycle of birth and death. The *jīva-śakti* operates on the microcosmic level

40. In the first seven sections (*anucchedas*) of the *Bhagavat Sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmin introduces the three aspects of Kṛṣṇa: Brahman, Paramātmān, and Bhagavān. He then provides an extended analysis of the nature of Bhagavān in the remaining sections of the *Bhagavat Sandarbha* and an extended analysis of the nature of Paramātmān in the *Paramāṭma Sandarbha*. No separate *Sandarbha* is devoted to an analysis of Brahman. See also the discussion of the three aspects of Kṛṣṇa in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 1.2.2–18; 2.20.134–137; 2.24.57–60.

41. Bhāgavata Purāṇa 1.3.28.

42. See, for example, *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.1.40; 2.1.202–203; 2.1.249–250; *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 1.5.3; 2.20.133, with *śloka* 20. For discussions of the Gauḍīya *avatāra* system, see Sushil Kumar De, "The Doctrine of Avatāra (Incarnation) in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism," in his *Bengal's Contribution to Sanskrit Literature and Studies in Bengal Vaisnavism* (1943; reprint, Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1960), 143–153; Dimock, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja*, 142–143.

as the intermediary (*taṭasthā*, lit., “standing on the borderline”) *śakti* that constitutes *jīvas* as, on the one hand, a part (*aṁśa*) of Bhagavān and, on the other hand, subject to the binding influence of *māyā-śakti*.<sup>43</sup>

The ultimate goal of Gauḍīya mystical theology is the attainment of that sublime state of mystical realization in which the *jīva* awakens to the reality of Kṛṣṇa as *svayam* Bhagavān, the supreme personal Godhead beyond Brahman, and realizes its true identity as a part of Bhagavān. Liberated from the binding influence of *māyā-śakti*, the *jīva* enjoys an eternal relationship with Bhagavān in a state of *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivable difference-in-nondifference.

The Gauḍīyas, by allotting the highest place in their ontological hierarchy to the personal Godhead, Bhagavān, and relegating Brahman and Paramātmā to subordinate positions as partial aspects of Bhagavān, actively engage in a polemic against the contending ontologies and formulations of mystical realization propounded by two classical schools of Indian philosophy: the nondualist school of Advaita Vedānta expounded by Śaṅkara (ca. eighth century CE), and the dualist school of classical Yoga articulated in the Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali (ca. fifth century CE). Adopting the terminology of Larson’s typology of mystical experience, we can frame the debate as one in which the Gauḍīyas position their own distinctive form of embodied devotional mysticism over against the “unitive” mystical experience of Advaita Vedānta and the “isolative” mystical experience of classical Yoga.

The Gauḍīyas provide a rigorous critique of the unitive conception of mystical realization advanced by the exponents of Advaita Vedānta, which is based on a monistic ontology in which Brahman alone is declared to be real. The Advaitins describe Brahman as an impersonal totality, the universal wholeness of existence, which in its essential nature is *nirguṇa* (without attributes) and completely formless, distinctionless, nonchanging, and unbounded. As *saguṇa* (with attributes), Brahman assumes the form of Īśvara, the personal God who manifests the phenomenal world as an illusory appearance (*māyā*). Deluded by ignorance (*avidyā*), the individual self (*jīva*)

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43. In *Bhagavat Sandarbha* 11–22 Jīva Gosvāmin introduces the *śaktis* of Bhagavān, focusing in particular on the *svatūpa-śakti* that is intrinsic to Bhagavān’s essential nature. He provides an extended analysis of the functions of the *māyā-śakti* and the *jīva-śakti* in relation to Paramātmā in the *Paramātmā Sandarbha*.



becomes enchanted by the cosmic play and mistakenly identifies with the psychophysical complex, becoming bound in *saṃsāra*, the cycle of birth and death. The goal of human existence is *mokṣa* or *mukti*, liberation from the bondage of *saṃsāra*, which is attained through knowledge (*jñāna* or *vidyā*) alone. When knowledge dawns the individual self awakens to its true nature as Ātman, the universal Self, and realizes its identity with Brahman. In this state of mystical realization the *jīvanmukta*, liberated sage, enjoys a unitary vision of the all-pervasive effulgence of Brahman in which he sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.

The Gauḍīyas advance a series of arguments to challenge the monistic ontology of the Advaitins, which represents the ultimate reality as an impersonal, undifferentiated unitary reality that is without attributes and without form. They assert that, on the contrary, the highest aspect of the Godhead is personal, differentiated, endowed with infinite qualities, and possessed of an absolute body. Moreover, in opposition to the Advaitin ontological hierarchy in which the personal God is associated with the domain of *māyā* as a lower manifestation of the impersonal Brahman, the Gauḍīyas maintain that the impersonal Brahman is itself subsumed within the supreme personal Godhead as a partial aspect of Bhagavān. In the Gauḍīya perspective the effulgence of Brahman is simply the radiance (*prabhā*) that shines forth from the self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) absolute body of Bhagavān.

The Gauḍīyas also provide a critical assessment of the conception of mystical realization advanced by the exponents of classical Yoga, which is based on a dualistic Sāṃkhya ontology that posits a plurality of *puruṣas* that are eternally distinct from *prakṛti*, primordial matter. *Puruṣa* is pure consciousness, which is the silent, eternal, nonchanging Self that is the witness of the ever-changing transformations of *prakṛti*. Bondage is caused by ignorance (*avidyā*) of *puruṣa* as distinct from *prakṛti*. Ignorant persons mistakenly identify with the activities of the intellect, ego, and mind, which are subtle forms of materiality, and thereby are subject to the binding influence of *prakṛti*. Liberation from bondage is attained through an eight-limbed program of Yoga (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*), which includes physical and mental disciplines aimed at purifying the psychophysiology and attenuating the residual karmic impressions (*saṃskāras*) that perpetuate the cycle of rebirth. During meditation the *yogin* experiences progressively refined states of *samādhi*, enstatic absorption in *puruṣa*, and through sustained practice

ceases to identify with the fluctuations of ordinary empirical awareness (*citta*) and realizes the true nature of *puruṣa* as separate from the realm of *prakṛti*. The liberated *yogin*, having realized the luminous reality of *puruṣa*, attains *kaivalya*, a state of absolute isolation and freedom in which identification with the dance of *prakṛti* ceases.

In their hierarchical assessment of contending ontologies, the Gauḍīyas allot a higher place to the dualistic ontology of classical Yoga than to the monistic ontology of Advaita Vedānta. In the Gauḍīya perspective the Yoga school's goal of *kaivalya*, in which the *yogin* awakens to the reality of his own Self, *puruṣa*, as distinct from *prakṛti* and from other *puruṣas*, is a higher state of realization than the Advaitins' goal of *mokṣa*, in which the *jīvanmukta* awakens to the reality of the universal Self, Ātman, as identical with the distinctionless unitary reality, Brahman. The Gauḍīyas understand the Yoga school's goal of realization of *puruṣa* as pointing to the realization of *saviśeṣa* (differentiated) Paramātmān, which is a higher state than the realization of *nirviśeṣa* (undifferentiated) Brahman. However, while the advocates of classical Yoga are viewed as avoiding the Advaitin extreme of absolute unity, they are critiqued for indulging in the opposite extreme of absolute separation. While they are applauded for maintaining the distinctions among the plurality of *puruṣas*, they are chided for failing to recognize that the individual *puruṣas*—which the Gauḍīyas term *jīvas*—are themselves parts (*aṁśas*) of a greater all-encompassing totality: Bhagavān, who is Puruṣottama, the supreme Puruṣa, and who subsumes within himself both *saviśeṣa* Paramātmān and *nirviśeṣa* Brahman as partial aspects of his totality.

### ***Paths to Mystical Realization***

The Gauḍīya critiques of Advaita Vedānta and Yoga are articulated as a contestation among paths (*mārgas*) to mystical realization in which the *bhakti-mārga*, the path of devotion, emerges victorious as the supreme path that surpasses both the *jñāna-mārga*, the path of knowledge advocated by the Advaitins, and the *yoga-mārga*, the path of *yoga* advocated by the exponents of classical Yoga. The Gauḍīyas maintain that although those who follow the *jñāna-mārga* may realize their identity with *nirviśeṣa* Brahman, and those who follow the *yoga-mārga* may experience *saviśeṣa* Paramātmān, neither the *jñānin* nor the *yogin* realizes Bhagavān, who is attained through

the *bhakti-mārga* alone.<sup>44</sup> Invoking the canonical authority of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Gauḍīyas declare that *jñāna* and *yoga*, when devoid of *bhakti*, are barren paths that cannot yield the highest fruit of realization in which one awakens to Kṛṣṇa as *svayam* Bhagavān.

The *sāstras* say: abandon *karma* and *jñāna* and *yoga*. Kṛṣṇa is controlled by *bhakti*, and by *bhakti* he should be worshiped. . . . “Only that very powerful *bhakti* toward me [Kṛṣṇa] is able to compel me; I am not [compelled by] *yoga*, *sāṃkhya*, *dharma*, Vedic study, *tapas*, or renunciation.”<sup>45</sup>

### Goals of Mystical Realization

As we have seen, the Gauḍīya critiques of Advaita Vedānta and Yoga encompass not only the nature of their respective paths but also their formulations of the goal of mystical realization. The Gauḍīyas, in upholding the ideal of *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivable difference-in-nondifference, reject both the goal of absolute unity or identity with Brahman advanced by the Advaitins and the goal of absolute separation or isolation (*kaivalya*) advanced by the exponents of Yoga. In this context they provide a sustained critique of the formulations of liberation, *mokṣa* or *mukti*, propounded by both schools.

The Gauḍīyas’ critical assessment of *mukti* generally includes an analysis of five types of liberation: *sālokya*, in which one resides in the world of the deity; *sārṣṭi*, in which one enjoys the powers of the deity; *sāmīpya*, in which one lives near the deity; *sārūpya*, in which one assumes a form like that of the deity; and *sāyujya*, in which one attains a state of undifferentiated unity with the deity. Invoking the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as their scriptural authority, the Gauḍīyas reject all five types of *mukti*—*sālokya*, *sārṣṭi*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya*, and *sāyujya*—and assert that true *bhaktas* do not desire any form of liberation but rather cherish *bhakti*, selfless devotion to Kṛṣṇa, as the highest end of human existence.

44. See, for example, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 2.20.134–137; 2.24.57–60; 1.2.2–18. In the *Bhakti Sandarbha* Jīva Gosvāmin discusses at length the defining characteristics and practices of *bhakti* and its relationship to other paths such as the *jñāna-mārga* and the *yoga-mārga*.

45. *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 2.20.121, with *śloka* 13, which cites Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.14.20. See also *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 1.17.71, with *śloka* 5; 2.22.14–16. All translations of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* are from Dimock, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja*.

The distinguishing characteristic of unqualified *bhakti-yoga* is declared to be that devotion (*bhakti*) to the supreme Puruṣa [Kṛṣṇa] which is without motive and ceaseless. Even if *sālokya*, *sārṣṭi*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya*, and *ekatva* (unity) are offered, devotees do not accept anything except worship (*sevana*) of me. This very thing called *bhakti-yoga* is declared to be the highest end.<sup>46</sup>

Among the five types of *mukti*, *sāyujya* or *ekatva* in particular is disparaged, for it is understood to be synonymous with the Advaitin goal of absolute unity in which one merges with the impersonal Brahman like a drop merging with the ocean.<sup>47</sup> The ultimate goal of the Gauḍīyas is not a state of nonduality but rather a state of union-in-difference (*bhedābheda*) in which the distinction between the subject (*āśraya*) and the divine object of devotion (*viṣaya*) is maintained so that the *bhakta* may enjoy eternally the bliss of *preman*, the fully mature state of supreme love for Kṛṣṇa. Having realized its true identity as a part of the supreme Godhead, the *jīva* savors the exhilarating sweetness of *preman* in eternal relationship with Bhagavān. The realized *bhakta* who has attained Kṛṣṇa-*preman* is deemed “the crest-jewel of *muktas*,”<sup>48</sup> for although liberation is not the goal of the *bhakta*, it is the natural byproduct of the perfected state of *preman*.

### ***Bhakti-Rasa and Modes of Devotional Relationship***

The Gauḍīya typology of mystical experience includes a hierarchical assessment of the various modes of devotional relationship (*bhāvas*) that are cultivated in the *bhakti-mārga* and that find fruition in the various “flavors” through which the *bhakti-rasa* of *preman* is expressed. This Gauḍīya conception of the flavors of *bhakti-rasa* is developed by Rūpa Gosvāmin as part of his creative appropriation of the rhetoric of *rasa* derived from Indian aesthetic theories.

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46. Bhāgavata Purāṇa 3.29.12–14; cf. 9.4.67. These verses are invoked by Rūpa Gosvāmin as part of his extended discussion of the glories of *bhakti* over the quest for *mukti* in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.1.13–17; 1.2.22–57. Regarding the five types of *mukti*, see *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.1.13–15; 1.2.28; 1.2.38; 1.2.55–57; *Bhakti Sandarbha* 234; *Prīti Sandarbha* 10; *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 2.6.236–242, with *śloka* 23; 1.4.172, with *śloka* 34–37; 2.19.149–150, with *śloka* 22–25; 2.24.119, with *śloka* 66; 3.3.177, with *śloka* 12; 1.3.15–16. In the opening sections of the *Prīti Sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmin provides a critical assessment of the various types of *mukti* in relation to the ultimate goal (*prayojana*) of human existence: *prīti*, or *preman*, supreme love for Kṛṣṇa.

47. See, for example, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 2.6.236–242; 1.3.15–16; 1.5.27.

48. *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 2.8.203.

The Sanskrit term *rasa* encompasses a range of meanings, including “essence,” “juice,” “taste,” and “flavor.” In Indian aesthetics the term *rasa* is ascribed central importance as the pivotal category that designates aesthetic enjoyment. The theory of *rasa* first appeared in the *Nāṭya-Śāstra* (ca. fourth or fifth century CE), an authoritative treatise on drama attributed to Bharata. The theory remained primarily within the sphere of drama until the advent of Ānandavardhana’s *Dhvanyāloka* (ninth century CE), which introduced the notion of *dhvani* (suggestion) and assigned primacy of place to *rasa* in traditional Sanskrit poetics. The *rasa* theory attained its classical formulation in the *Dhvanyāloka-Locana* (tenth to eleventh century CE), the commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka* by Abhinavagupta, the eminent exponent of Kashmir Śaiva traditions. Abhinavagupta’s reflections on *rasa* were systematized by Maṃmaṭa in his *Kāvya-Prakāśa* (twelfth century CE), the standard compendium of literary theory. Finally, it remained for Viśvanātha to incorporate the science of dramaturgy and the science of poetics into a single work, the *Sāhitya-Darpaṇa* (fourteenth century CE). This tradition of reflection on *rasa*, which celebrates Abhinavagupta as its principal spokesman, became the dominant school of Indian aesthetics. A radically different theory of *rasa* was advanced by a second influential school of Indian aesthetics whose principal exponent was Bhoja, an eleventh-century king of Malwa (Rajasthan). As we shall see, it appears that Bhoja’s school may have exerted a more profound influence on Rūpa Gosvāmin’s theory of *bhakti-rasa* than Abhinavagupta’s school.<sup>49</sup>

The theory of *rasa*, as originally laid out in the *Nāṭya-Śāstra*, begins by classifying human emotions into eight fundamental types termed *sthāyi-*

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49. Among studies of the various traditions of reflection on *rasa* in classical Indian aesthetics, see Sushil Kumar De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 2nd rev. ed. (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960); Edwin Gerow, *Indian Poetics* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977); J. L. Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture: The Rasādhyāya of the Nāṭyaśāstra*, 2 vols. (Poona: Deccan College, 1970); and Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan, trans., *The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). For analyses of Rūpa Gosvāmin’s theory of *bhakti-rasa* and its relationship to the theories of *rasa* propounded by the dominant schools of Indian aesthetics, see Delmonico, “Sacred Rapture: A Study of the Religious Aesthetic of Rupa Gosvamin”; Neal Delmonico, “Sacred Rapture: The Bhakti-Rasa Theory of Rūpa Gosvāmin,” *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 6, 1 (January 1998): 75–98; and Haberman, *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, xxxvi–lxvii. See also note 51.

*bhāvas*, or abiding emotions: *rati* (love), *hāsa* (humor), *śoka* (sorrow), *krodha* (anger), *utsāha* (courage), *bhaya* (fear), *jugupsā* (disgust), and *vismaya* (wonder). Eight *rasas* are also enumerated, which correspond to the *sthāyi-bhāvas*: *śṛṅgāra* (erotic), *hāsyā* (comic), *karuṇa* (tragic), *raudra* (furious), *vīra* (heroic), *bhayānaka* (terrifying), *bībhatsa* (disgusting), and *adbhuta* (wondrous). Some recensions of the *Nāṭya-Śāstra*, as well as Abhinavagupta's commentary the *Abhinavabhāratī*, add a ninth *rasa*, *sānta* (tranquil), which corresponds to a ninth *sthāyi-bhāva* called *śama* (tranquillity).

The *Nāṭya-Śāstra* elucidates the dramaturgic principles through which each of the *sthāyi-bhāvas* can be reproduced on stage and elicit the corresponding *rasa*, which will be relished by the audience as pure aesthetic enjoyment. According to the famous *rasa-sūtra* of the *Nāṭya-Śāstra*, "Rasa is produced from the combination of the *vibhāvas*, the *anubhāvas*, and the *vyabhicāri-bhāvas*."<sup>50</sup> The *vibhāvas* are the stimulants that, when represented in a play, make possible the audience members' realization of the *sthāyi-bhāva* and the corresponding *rasa*. The *vibhāvas* are of two types: the *ālambana-vibhāvas*, or substantial stimulants, are the objects towards which the emotions are felt, such as the hero (*nāyaka*) and the heroine (*nāyikā*) of the play; and the *uddīpana-vibhāvas*, or enhancing stimulants, are the factors that serve to foster the emotion, such as the time frame and setting of the play. The *anubhāvas* are the words, bodily gestures and movements, and other outward manifestations through which the characters of the play indicate the presence of the *sthāyi-bhāva*. The *vyabhicāri-bhāvas* are transitory emotions, such as envy, intoxication, and confusion, that often accompany the *sthāyi-bhāvas*. In addition to the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, and *vyabhicāri-bhāvas*, Bharata introduces a fourth category, the *sāttvika-bhāvas*, which are involuntary bodily manifestations of certain emotional states, such as perspiration, bristling of the body hair, and trembling, through which the characters suggest the *sthāyi-bhāva*'s presence. The dramatist is expected to be a highly adept craftsman who skillfully makes use of these four aesthetic components in order to allow the audience members to savor the most delicate nuances of the *rasa*.

Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*, in developing the *dhvani* theory of poetry in which *rasa* assumes a central role, extended the category of *rasa* beyond the sphere of drama into the domain of poetics. According

50. *Nāṭya-Śāstra* 6.31.

to the *dhvani* school as expounded by Abhinavagupta, everyone has latent impressions (*vāsanās*) of the *sthāyi-bhāvas* generated by previous emotional experiences. If the dramatist or poet is successful in suggesting the presence of a particular *sthāyi-bhāva*, such as love (*rati*), in the characters of the play or poem, then the latent impressions of the emotion will be aroused in sensitive persons of refined taste (*sahṛdayas*) who view the play or hear the poem, enabling them to experience the universal essence of the emotion. This savoring of the distilled essence of the emotion is termed *rasa*, which results in an experience of pure impersonal joy that transcends the ego-bound concerns of the individual *sahṛdayas*. Abhinavagupta compares the pure aesthetic enjoyment that results from the realization of *rasa* to the bliss (*ānanda*) that arises from the realization of Brahman.

*Śṛṅgāra-rasa*, the erotic *rasa*, which is savored as the distilled essence of the *sthāyi-bhāva* of *rati*, is the most celebrated of all the *rasas*. The preeminence of the erotic *rasa* is emphasized in Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāra-Prakāśa*, which provides a detailed analysis of every phase of *śṛṅgāra-rasa*. Bhoja's theory of *rasa* is unique in that, in contrast to other exponents of Indian aesthetics, he insists that there is only one *rasa*: *śṛṅgāra-rasa*. Moreover, in contrast to Abhinavagupta's aesthetic theory, in which the experience of *rasa* is an impersonal experience that is utterly distinct from the *sthāyi-bhāva*, in Bhoja's theory the experience of *rasa* is a personal emotional experience that is an intensified form of the *sthāyi-bhāva*. It is likely that Bhoja's reflections on *śṛṅgāra-rasa* had a significant influence on the *rasa* theory expounded by Rūpa Gosvāmin in his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* and *Ujjvalanīlamanī*.<sup>51</sup>

In Rūpa Gosvāmin's theory of *bhakti-rasa*, the aesthetic experience of *rasa* is invested with new valences as a transcendent (*alaukika*) religious experience that is the culmination of the path of *bhakti*. The various components of classical Indian aesthetics—*sthāyi-bhāvas*, *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, *sāttvika-bhāvas*, and *vyabhicāri-bhāvas*—are reimagined as critical components of the divine drama, Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* (play), that is recorded in literary form in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The tenth book of the Bhāgavata

51. For a comparative analysis of Rūpa Gosvāmin's theory of *bhakti-rasa* and the contending theories of *rasa* propounded by Bhoja and Abhinavagupta, see Delmonico, "Sacred Rapture: A Study of the Religious Aesthetic of Rupa Gosvamin," 231–260. Delmonico concludes that Bhoja's theory of *rasa* exerted a more profound influence on Rūpa's notion of *bhakti-rasa* than that of Abhinavagupta.

Purāṇa recounts the divine drama through which Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Bhagavān, descends to earth in approximately 3000 BCE and appears in a human form as Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd (*gopa*) of Vṛndāvana. Gopāla Kṛṣṇa is depicted as an eternally playful youth who during his sojourn on earth frolics with his fellow cowherds (*gopas*) and cowmaidens (*gopīs*) in his sacred abode (*dhāman*), the land of Vraja (Hindi, Braj) in North India. In his youthful exploits in Vraja, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa is celebrated as a mischievous child, a cherished friend of the *gopas*, and a passionate lover of the *gopīs*, who lures his companions with the sound of his flute, bewitching and intoxicating them, inspiring them to join with him in his play. In Gauḍīya mystical theology this earthly *līlā*, which is represented in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as occurring at a particular time and place in history, is understood as the manifest (*prakāṣa*) counterpart of the unmanifest (*aprakāṣa*) *līlā* that goes on eternally within Bhagavān in the transcendent sphere of Goloka, the eternal Vraja, beyond the material world of *prakṛti* and beyond Brahman. In this perspective the associates of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja are eternal expressions of the *hlādinī-śakti*, the bliss that is intrinsic to Bhagavān's essential nature (*svarūpa*), and the play of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs* and *gopas* is interpreted in terms of the inner dynamics of the Godhead as self-referral play within Bhagavān in which he revels eternally with the blissful impulses of his own nature.

In Rūpa Gosvāmin's appropriation of *rasa* theory, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa's account of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* is recast as an aesthetic-religious drama in which Kṛṣṇa and his eternal associates in Vraja assume the role of the central characters and the *bhakta* assumes the role of the *sahṛdaya* who witnesses the unfoldment of the divine play. This theory gives precedence to *rati*—and more specifically to Kṛṣṇa-*rati*, love of Kṛṣṇa—as the principal *sthāyi-bhāva*, which matures in the heart of the *bhakta* and is relished as the *bhakti-rasa* of *preman*, the pure transcendent enjoyment of supreme love. “The *sthāyi-bhāva* here is declared to be that love (*rati*) which has Śrī Kṛṣṇa as its object (*viṣaya*).”<sup>52</sup> Rūpa Gosvāmin describes the *sthāyi-bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa-*rati* as a special form of pure luminous being (*śuddha-sattva*) that participates in Kṛṣṇa's essential nature (*svarūpa*) as a manifestation of the

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52. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.5.2.



*mahāśakti*, which Jīva Gosvāmin's commentary glosses as the *hlādinī-śakti*.<sup>53</sup> The *sthāyi-bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa-rati finds fruition in its fully mature expression in the *bhakti-rasa* of *preman*, which is represented as the intensified form of Kṛṣṇa-rati. The *sthāyi-bhāva* is compared to a ray of the sun of *preman* that softens the heart and that gradually expands into the full sunshine of *preman*, which melts the heart completely.<sup>54</sup> "When the *bhāva* has softened the heart completely and is very intense in nature . . . it is called *preman* by the wise."<sup>55</sup>

According to the theory of *bhakti-rasa*, the *sthāyi-bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa-rati manifests in five distinct modes of devotional relationship (*bhāvas*), which are forms of primary (*mukhyā*) Kṛṣṇa-rati: *sānti* (tranquillity), *prīti* (respectful affection), *sakhya* (friendship), *vātsalya* (parental love), and *priyatā* or *madhurā* (erotic love).<sup>56</sup> This theory recognizes that, among the diverse array of *bhaktas*, the particular form of *rati* that each *bhakta* experiences is determined by his or her unique inherent nature (*svarūpa*) as a vessel (*āśraya* or *pātra*) of love for Kṛṣṇa.

*Rati* assumes a particular form due to the particular nature of the vessel (*pātra*), just as the sun's reflection assumes a particular form in a crystal or other object.<sup>57</sup>

The five forms of primary (*mukhyā*) Kṛṣṇa-rati find fruition in five corresponding flavors of the *bhakti-rasa* of *preman*, which are called primary (*mukhya*) *rasas* and are ranked hierarchically, from lowest to highest, according to increasing degrees of intimacy: *sānta* (tranquil), *dāsyā* or *prīta* (serviceful affection), *sakhya* or *preyas* (friendship), *vātsalya* or *vatsala* (parental love), and *mādhurya* or *madhura* (erotic love).<sup>58</sup> The theory

53. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.3.1, with Jīva Gosvāmin's commentary; 2.5.3; 2.5.92, with Jīva Gosvāmin's commentary.

54. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.3.1; 1.4.1.

55. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.4.1.

56. Rūpa discusses the five forms of primary Kṛṣṇa-rati in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.5.6–38.

57. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.5.7.

58. Rūpa enumerates the five primary *rasas* in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.5.115. He then devotes the five chapters of the Western Quarter of the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (3.1–3.5) to a discussion of each of these five *rasas*. Rūpa's *Ujjvalanīlamanī* is devoted entirely to *mādhurya-rasa*, which he ranks as the highest in the hierarchy of primary *rasas*. Jīva Gosvāmin, elaborating on Rūpa's aesthetics of devotion, provides an extended exposition of the five primary *rasas* in the *Prīti Sandarbha*.

of *bhakti-rasa* thus accommodates two of the nine *rasas* of classical Indian aesthetics in its hierarchy of five primary *rasas*: *śānta-rasa*, the tranquil *rasa*, which is positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy, and *śṅgāra-rasa* or *mādhurya-rasa*, the erotic *rasa*, which is ranked at the top of the hierarchy. The other seven *rasas* of Indian aesthetics—*hāsyā* (comic), *adbhuta* (wondrous), *vīra* (heroic), *karuṇa* (tragic), *raudra* (furious), *bhayānaka* (terrifying), and *bībhatsa* (disgusting)—are relegated to the status of secondary (*gauṇa*) *rasas*, for they are based on seven corresponding emotions (*bhāvas*)—*hāsa* (humor), *vismaya* (wonder), *utsāha* (courage), *śoka* (sorrow), *krodha* (anger), *bhaya* (fear), and *jugupsā* (disgust)—that are nourished by a contracted form of Kṛṣṇa-*rati* but are not direct manifestations of pure luminous being (*śuddha-sattva*).<sup>59</sup>

*Śānta-rasa*, the tranquil *rasa*, in which Kṛṣṇa is experienced as Paramātmā in the state of *samādhi* during meditation, is ranked as the lowest in the hierarchy because it does not entail an intimate emotional relationship with the supreme personal Godhead. The paradigmatic exemplars of the other four forms of *rasa* are the associates of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, who are represented as the eternally perfected (*nitya-siddha*) vessels (*āśrayas*) of love for Kṛṣṇa. *Dāsyā-rasa*, the *rasa* of serviceful affection, is exemplified by the various attendants of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, who are respectful, serviceful, and submissive in attending to their master's every need. *Sakhyā-rasa*, the *rasa* of friendship, is exemplified by the *gopas*, the cowherd boys of Vraja, who romp and play with their companion Kṛṣṇa with carefree affection, adoring him as the first among equals. *Vātsalyā-rasa*, the *rasa* of parental love, is exemplified by Kṛṣṇa's elders and more specifically by his foster parents in Vraja, Nanda and Yaśodā, who care for and cherish Kṛṣṇa as an adorable, mischievous child. *Mādhurya-rasa*, the *rasa* of erotic love expressed in the lover-beloved relationship, is exemplified by the *gopīs*, the cowmaidens of Vraja, who are completely consumed by the intoxicating power of *preman* for their cowherd lover Kṛṣṇa. As the highest

59. Rūpa discusses the seven *bhāvas*, or forms of secondary (*gauṇī*) Kṛṣṇa-*rati*, on which the seven secondary *rasas* are based in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.5.39–72. He enumerates the seven secondary *rasas* in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.5.116 and then devotes the first seven chapters of the Northern Quarter of the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (4.1–4.7) to a discussion of each of these seven *rasas*. An analysis of the seven secondary *rasas* is also included in Jīva Gosvāmin's *Prīti Sandarbha*.

in the hierarchy of *rasas*, *mādhurya-rasa* is celebrated as the most intimate, refined, and sublime expression of *preman*. The *gopīs*, as the embodiments of *mādhurya-rasa*, are represented as giving consummate expression to the erotic-ecstatic mysticism of *viraha-bhakti*, which alternates between the impassioned agony of separation (*vipralambha*) and the intoxicating bliss of union (*sambhoga*).<sup>60</sup>

Rūpa Gosvāmin's theory of *bhakti-rasa* thus provides a hierarchical assessment of the various modes of devotional relationship that encompasses the two forms of *bhakti* discussed earlier, with the more contemplative and meditative forms of *bhakti* relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy and the erotic-ecstatic mysticism of *viraha-bhakti* represented as the pinnacle of mystical realization. The hierarchy of *rasas* accommodates and domesticates the contending path of the *yoga-mārga* by recasting the *yogin's* practice of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and quest for experience of the nonchanging Self (*puruṣa*) as a meditative form of *bhakti* based on Kṛṣṇa-rati—*śānta-rasa*—which culminates in a direct visionary experience (*sākṣātkāra*) of the essential form (*svarūpa*) of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>61</sup>

That bliss (*ānanda*) which, due to the complete destruction of all ignorance, manifested in the meditative state of distinctionless (*nirvikalpa*) *samādhi* became concentrated and increased ten-millionfold when the Lord of the Yādavas [Kṛṣṇa] appeared directly (*sākṣāt*) to me.<sup>62</sup>

The hierarchy of *rasas* relegates this meditative form of *śānta-rasa* to the lowest rung of the hierarchy because it is devoid of any form of intimate emotional relationship with the supreme personal Godhead, Bhagavān. At the same time primacy of place is allotted to *mādhurya-rasa*, the intensely

60. As mentioned in note 58, Rūpa devotes the five chapters of the Western Quarter of the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (3.1–3.5) to a discussion of each of the five primary *rasas* and then provides an extended analysis of *mādhurya-rasa* in his *Ujjvalanīlamanī*. For a recent translation and study of the Rāsa-Pāñcādhyāyī, the five chapters of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa pertaining to Kṛṣṇa's *rāsā-līlā* (circle dance) with the *gopīs*, see Graham M. Schweig, trans., *Dance of Divine Love: The Rāsā Līlā of Krishna from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, India's Classic Sacred Love Story* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Schweig's illuminating study draws on the works of Rūpa Gosvāmin, Jīva Gosvāmin, and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, as well as later Gauḍīya commentators such as Viśvanātha Cakravartin (seventeenth century).

61. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 3.1.4–6; 3.1.36–42.

62. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 3.1.37.

intimate, emotional, and ecstatic form of *bhakti* embodied by the *gopīs*. David Haberman remarks regarding the typology of religious experience established by Rūpa Gosvāmin's theory of *bhakti-rasa*:

Rūpa has created a typology of religious experience that ranks the various types of possible ultimate relationships in terms of intimacy with the divine and intensity of emotion. Within this typology Rūpa is able to place both the Peaceful (*śānta*) experience of the ascetic yoga traditions, which often define the ultimate state as the absence of all emotions, and the Amorous (*śṛṅgāra*) experience of passionate devotion, which seeks to utilize the power of all emotions to establish a solid connection with the divine as beloved. These two impulses represent polar tensions that have defined and enlivened much creative debate within Hindu philosophy, and Rūpa's presentation provides yet another way of viewing their relationship.<sup>63</sup>

### Gauḍīya Path of Embodied Mysticism

Rūpa Gosvāmin's theory of *bhakti-rasa* ascribes a central role to *sādhana-bhakti*, an elaborate regimen of devotional practices, as the means through which the *sthāyi-bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa-rati, love for Kṛṣṇa, is generated and cultivated so that it matures into the *bhakti-rasa* of *preman*.

Dedicated devotion to *sādhana* arouses a taste (*ruci*) for Hari, then generates attachment (*āśakti*) to him, and then engenders love (*rati*) for him.<sup>64</sup>

Once the *sthāyi-bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa-rati has manifested in the heart of the *bhakta*, it is raised to the supreme state of the *bhakti-rasa* of *preman* through the embodied practices of *sādhana-bhakti*, which engage both the external (*aṅga*) and internal (*antar-aṅga*) aspects of the psychophysical complex.<sup>65</sup> *Sādhana-bhakti*, the Gauḍīya path of embodied mysticism, involves the construction of a "devotional body" by means of two forms of devotional discipline: *vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti*. In *vaidhī-bhakti* the practitioner, or *sādhaka*, performs practices with the *sādhaka-rūpa*, the material psychophysical complex, and engages in a regimen guided by scriptural injunctions (*vidhis*) that is designed to purify and transform the psychophysiology, reconstituting the body of bondage as a body of devotion. In *rāgānugā-bhakti*, the advanced form of *sādhana-bhakti*, the

63. Haberman, *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, lxiv.

64. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.3.8.

65. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.4.4–5.

*bhakta* realizes a *siddha-rūpa*, a perfected devotional body that is an eternal, nonmaterial body of bliss.<sup>66</sup>

In his discussion of the path of embodied mysticism, Rūpa Gosvāmin introduces the technical terminology of Indian aesthetics in order to explain the specific mechanisms through which Kṛṣṇa-*rati* is raised to the relishable state of *bhakti-rasa*.

This *sthāyi-bhāva*, Kṛṣṇa-*rati*, is raised by means of the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, *sātvikas*, and *vyabhicāris* to a relishable state in the hearts of *bhaktas* through hearing (*śravaṇa*) and other practices, and it thereby becomes *bhakti-rasa*.<sup>67</sup>

As discussed earlier, the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, *sātvika-bhāvas*, and *vyabhicāri-bhāvas* are described in the *Nāṭya-Śāstra* and later aesthetic works as the four aesthetic components that the dramatist or poet utilizes in order to suggest the presence of a particular *sthāyi-bhāva* in the characters of the play or poem so that the *sahṛdayas* who view the play or hear the poem may savor the corresponding *rasa* as pure aesthetic enjoyment. In Rūpa Gosvāmin's reformulation these four aesthetic components are elements of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, the divine play that *bhaktas* enjoy through listening to recitations of the *līlā* (*līlā-śravaṇa*) as recounted in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa or other texts, witnessing dramatic performances of *līlā* episodes (*rāsa-līlās*), and other forms of *sādhana*. In this context the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, *sātvika-bhāvas*, and *vyabhicāri-bhāvas* serve as the means through which the *sthāyi-bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa-*rati* matures in the hearts of *bhaktas* so that they may savor the *bhakti-rasa* of *preman* as pure transcendent enjoyment of supreme love.<sup>68</sup>

In accordance with the conventions of classical Indian aesthetics, Rūpa Gosvāmin's discussion of the *vibhāvas* distinguishes between the *ālambana-vibhāvas*, or substantial stimulants, and the *uddīpana-vibhāvas*, or enhancing stimulants. The *ālambana-vibhāvas* are Kṛṣṇa, who is the object (*viṣaya*) of love, and his *bhaktas*, who are the vessels (*āśrayas* or

66. The two forms of *sādhana-bhakti*, *vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti*, are discussed in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2–1.4; *Bhakti Sandarbha* 235–340; and *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 2.22.55–96. The distinction between the *sādhaka-rūpa* and the *siddha-rūpa* will be discussed later.

67. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.1.5.

68. Rūpa devotes the five chapters of the Southern Quarter of the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (2.1–2.5) to a discussion of the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, *sātvika-bhāvas*, *vyabhicāri-bhāvas*, and *sthāyi-bhāvas*, respectively. Jīva Gosvāmin also provides an analysis of these five aesthetic components in his discussion of *bhakti-rasa* in the *Prīti Sandarbha*.

*ādhāras*) of love.<sup>69</sup> Rūpa celebrates Kṛṣṇa, the central character in the divine play, as the “crown-jewel of heroic lovers (*nāyakas*)” and provides a detailed account of his forms and qualities.<sup>70</sup> The account begins with a description of the beautiful two-armed adolescent form of the cowherd Kṛṣṇa, which is identified as the essential form (*svarūpa*) of the absolute body of the supreme Godhead.

The sweet form (*mūrti*) of [Kṛṣṇa], the enemy of Madhu, brings me intense joy. His neck has three lines like a conch, his clever eyes are charming like lotuses, his dark limbs are more resplendent than the Tamāla tree, . . . his chest displays the Śrīvatsa mark, and his hands are marked with the discus, conch, and other emblems. . . . This lover has a beautiful body (*aṅga*) and is endowed with all auspicious marks, radiant, luminous, powerful, eternally young.<sup>71</sup>

While the major portion of Rūpa Gosvāmin’s analysis of the *ālambana-vibhāvas* focuses on the nature of Kṛṣṇa, the divine object (*viṣaya*) of love, he also provides a brief account of the qualities of Kṛṣṇa’s *bhaktas*, who are the vessels (*āśrayas*) of love. His taxonomy classifies *bhaktas* into five principal categories corresponding to the five primary *bhāvas*, or modes of devotional relationship, and their respective *rasas*: tranquil, servant, friend, parent or other elder, and lover. Within each of these five categories of *bhaktas* Rūpa distinguishes three possible levels of spiritual attainment: *sādhakas*, practitioners who are following the path of *sādhana-bhakti* but are not yet perfected; *samprāpta-siddhas*, *bhaktas* who have obtained perfection through the practice of *sādhana-bhakti*; and *nitya-siddhas*, the eternally perfected associates of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja who have never been subjected to the bondage of *saṃsāra*.<sup>72</sup>

This schema thus includes both the paradigmatic *bhaktas* who are the central characters in the eternal *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa and the *bhaktas* who engage the *līlā* through listening to stories of the divine play and other forms of *sādhana*. This point is highly significant, for in the final analysis Rūpa Gosvāmin’s notion of *bhakti-rasa* is not simply a *theory* of religious aesthetics but is above all a *path* to mystical realization and more specifically an embodied aesthetics of mystical realization. In contrast to the secular aesthete, the

69. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.1.16.

70. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.1.17–271.

71. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.1.22–23.

72. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.1.273–300.

goal of the *bhakta* is not simply to attain a temporary state of pure aesthetic enjoyment through hearing recitations of *līlā* narratives or witnessing dramatic performances of *līlā* episodes on the manifest plane of human existence. Rather, the ultimate goal of the *bhakta* is to attain an eternal state of pure transcendent enjoyment through direct experiential realization of the *līlā* on the unmanifest plane of Kṛṣṇa's transcendent abode (*dhāman*). Having become a *samprāpta-siddha*, the perfected *bhakta* attains a direct cognition (*sākṣātkāra*) of Kṛṣṇa and his *līlā* and enters into the transcendent Vraja-*dhāman* as an eternal participant in the unmanifest *līlā* that goes on perpetually as self-referral play within the Godhead. In this state of realization the *jīva* not only awakens to its true identity as a part (*aṁśa*) of Bhagavān but also, in accordance with its unique inherent nature (*svarūpa*), reclaims its distinctive role in the unmanifest *līlā* in eternal Vraja—whether that of an attendant of Kṛṣṇa, a *gopa*, an elder, or a *gopī*.

As part of his articulation of the embodied aesthetics of *bhakti-rasa*, Rūpa Gosvāmin describes the *uddīpana-vibhāvas*, or enhancing stimulants, that serve to enliven the flow of Kṛṣṇa-*rati* and foster the *bhakta*'s ability to relish the ambrosial nectar of *prema-rasa*. His lavish description of the *uddīpana-vibhāvas* centers on the distinguishing characteristics of Kṛṣṇa's body, including his age, complexion, dress, body markings, ornaments, bodily fragrance, gestures, and emblems.<sup>73</sup> While Rūpa's account of the *uddīpana-vibhāvas* focuses on Kṛṣṇa's body, his account of the *anubhāvas* and *sāttvika-bhāvas* focuses on the bodies of Kṛṣṇa's *bhaktas*. The *anubhāvas* are the bodily gestures and movements through which the *bhaktas* give manifest expression to their internal state of Kṛṣṇa-*rati*, such as dancing, whirling, rolling on the ground, singing, roaring, sighing, and laughing loudly.<sup>74</sup> The *sāttvika-bhāvas* are the eight forms of involuntary bodily manifestations through which the *bhakta*'s internal devotional state is marked on the external body: stupefaction, perspiration, bristling of body hair, faltering voice, trembling, change of color, tears, and loss of consciousness.<sup>75</sup> Rūpa's

73. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.1.301–384.

74. Rūpa discusses the *anubhāvas* in the second chapter of the Southern Quarter of the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (2.2).

75. Rūpa discusses the *sāttvika-bhāvas* in the third chapter of the Southern Quarter of the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (2.3). The eight *sāttvika-bhāvas* enumerated by Rūpa in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.3.16 correspond to the standard list of eight *sāttvika-bhāvas* given in Nāṭya-Śāstra 6.22.

reformulation of the four aesthetic components concludes with a discussion of the *vyabhicāri-bhāvas*, the thirty-three transitory emotions, such as despondency, intoxication, madness, joy, and envy, which serve to enhance the *sthāyi-bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa-rati by adding variety to the ways in which the abiding emotion of love is experienced.<sup>76</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Rūpa Gosvāmin suggests that the *sthāyi-bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa-rati is raised to the relishable state of the *bhakti-rasa* of *preman* in the hearts of *bhaktas* through specific forms of *sādhana* that serve as means of engaging the divine *līlā* in which Kṛṣṇa and his eternally perfected *bhaktas* in Vraja are the protagonists.

*Rati* . . . becomes *rasa* in the *bhaktas* by means of their hearing about (*śruta*), apprehending (*avagata*), and remembering (*smṛta*) Kṛṣṇa and other aspects [of his *līlā*], which function as the *vibhāvas* and other aesthetic components.<sup>77</sup>

This verse points to three specific forms of *sādhana* through which *bhaktas* may engage Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*: hearing (*śruta*) the *līlā* by listening to recitations or retellings of *līlā* narratives; apprehending (*avagata*) the *līlā* by witnessing dramatic reenactments of particular episodes; and remembering (*smṛta*) the *līlā* by means of meditation (*dhyāna*) or contemplative recollection (*smaraṇa*). Elsewhere in the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Rūpa includes listening to (*līlā-śravaṇa*, *carita-śravaṇa*), singing about (*līlā-kīrtana*), and meditating on (*krīḍā-dhyāna*) Kṛṣṇa's divine play as three important practices that are part of the regimen of *vaidhī-bhakti*.<sup>78</sup> In the advanced form of *sādhana-bhakti*, *rāgānugā-bhakti*, an important distinction is introduced between external bodily practices such as *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* that are performed with the *sādhaka-rūpa*, the practitioner's body, and internal meditative practices such as *dhyāna* and *līlā-smaraṇa* that lead to the realization of a *siddha-rūpa*, a perfected devotional body.

In *rāgānugā-bhakti* the *bhakta* enters into an intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa characterized by passionate love (*rāga*). This form of *bhakti* is achieved through emulating the eternally perfected *bhaktas* (*nitya-siddhas*)

76. Rūpa discusses the *vyabhicāri-bhāvas* in the fourth chapter of the Southern Quarter of the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (2.4).

77. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.5.79.

78. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.170; 1.2.172; 1.2.145; 1.2.147; 1.2.178; 1.2.181. See also Jīva Gosvāmin's discussion of these practices in *Bhakti Sandarbha* 253–255; 268; 278–279.



who reside with Kṛṣṇa in the transcendent Vraja-*dhāman* and who are called *rāgātmikā bhaktas* because their very essence (*ātman*) is spontaneously absorbed in passionate, all-consuming love (*rāga*) for Kṛṣṇa.<sup>79</sup> According to Rūpa Gosvāmin's definition, "That [*bhakti*] is called *rāgānugā* which emulates the *rāgātmikā-bhakti* that shines forth clearly in those who reside in Vraja."<sup>80</sup> The process of emulation involves cultivating one of the four principal modes of devotional relationship with Kṛṣṇa that are embodied by the paradigmatic *rāgātmikā bhaktas* of eternal Vraja: *dāsyā-rasa*, the mode of service, exemplified by the attendants of Kṛṣṇa; *sakhya-rasa*, the mode of friendship, exemplified by the *gopas*; *vātsalya-rasa*, the mode of parental love, exemplified by Nanda and Yaśodā and other elders; and *mādhurya-rasa*, the mode of erotic love, exemplified by the *gopīs*.

Rūpa Gosvāmin suggests that the *bhakta* should seek to realize the *rasa* that accords with his or her unique inherent nature (*svarūpa*)—whether that of servant, friend, elder, or lover—by emulating the corresponding *rāgātmikā bhakta* of eternal Vraja "with both the practitioner's body (*sādhaka-rūpa*) and the perfected body (*siddha-rūpa*)."<sup>81</sup> Although Rūpa himself does not elaborate on the nature of these two bodies, in his commentary on this verse Jīva Gosvāmin glosses the *sādhaka-rūpa* as the physical body "as it is" (*yathāstitha-deha*) and the *siddha-rūpa* as an internal meditative body (*antaś-cintita-deha*). Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and later Gauḍīya commentators suggest that emulating the *rāgātmikā bhaktas* of eternal Vraja with both the *sādhaka-rūpa* and the *siddha-rūpa* means that the *bhakta* should become identified with the chosen *rāgātmikā bhakta* on two levels: first, by emulating the chosen *rāgātmikā bhakta* through performing external bodily practices with the *sādhaka-rūpa* that engage Kṛṣṇa and his *līlā* through *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and other modes of sensory engagement; and, second, by cultivating a state of inner absorption in the unmanifest *līlā* of eternal Vraja through the internal meditative practice of *līlā-smaraṇa*, which culminates in the construction of a perfected body, *siddha-rūpa*.

79. Rūpa provides an overview of the progression from *rāgānugā-bhakti* to *prema-bhakti* in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.270–1.4.21. See also Jīva Gosvāmin's discussion of *rāgānugā-bhakti* in *Bhakti Sandarbha* 310–340 and of *prema-bhakti*, or *prīti*, in the *Prīti Sandarbha*. For an extended analysis of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, see Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*.

80. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.270.

81. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.295.

This *sādhana* has two parts: external and internal. External is the performance of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* with the body of the *sādhaka*. In their minds [these *sādhakas*] mentally construct their own perfected bodies [*siddha-dehas*], and day and night they serve Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. . . . Following after one who is beloved of Kṛṣṇa, . . . in their inner minds they serve him eternally.<sup>82</sup>

This passage presents the difference between the *sādhaka-rūpa* and the *siddha-rūpa* in terms of different forms of practice: the physical body utilized in external bodily practices, and the meditative body constructed through internal mental practices. However, in other contexts the distinction between the two bodies is presented as an ontological distinction between two categories of embodiment: the material (*prākṛta*) psychophysical complex that is subject to the binding influence of *māyā-śakti* in the material realm of *prakṛti*, and the eternal (*ananta*), nonmaterial (*aprākṛta*) body that participates in the *svarūpa-śakti* in the transcendent Vraja-*dhāman* of Bhagavān. In this perspective every *jīva* possesses a *siddha-rūpa*, an eternal body, which is a particle of the self-luminous light (*jyotir-amśa*) of the Godhead and, like the absolute body (*vigraha*) of Bhagavān himself, is constituted of consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*).<sup>83</sup> Due to the binding influence of *māyā-śakti*, the *jīva* becomes deluded by ignorance (*avidyā*) and mistakenly identifies with the material psychophysical complex and forgets its true identity as a part of Bhagavān. Moreover, the *jīva* forgets its unique inherent nature (*svarūpa*), which determines its distinctive role as an eternal protagonist in the unmanifest *līlā* and the corresponding form of its *siddha-rūpa* in the transcendent realm of Vraja. The goal of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is to awaken the *jīva* from the sleep of ignorance so that it may realize its inherent nature, *svarūpa*, and the particular form of its eternal body, *siddha-rūpa*—whether that of a *gopī* or a *gopa* or some other associate of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja.

The Gauḍīya path of embodied mysticism emphasizes the role of the guru and the practice of *līlā-smaraṇa* as two critical components in the *bhakta*'s realization of the *siddha-rupa*. The realized guru, who has attained the status of a *samprāpta-siddha* and continually delights in the

82. Caitanya Caritāmṛta 2.22.89–91. This passage invokes *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.294 and 1.2.295 as illustrative *śloka*s.

83. See, for example, *Prīti Sandarbha* 10; Caitanya Caritāmṛta 3.4.183–185. For a discussion of Gauḍīya conceptions of the *siddha-rūpa*, see Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, 86–93.

unmanifest *līlā* of eternal Vraja, is ascribed the role of revealing to the *bhakta* the identity of his or her particular *siddha-rupa*. The practice of *līlā-smaraṇa*—contemplative recollection of the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa and his eternal associates in Vraja—then serves as the means through which the *bhakta* can gain direct experiential realization of the *siddha-rupa* and enter into the unmanifest *līlā* as an eternal participant.

Rūpa Gosvāmin provides the basis for the practice of *līlā-smaraṇa* by instructing practitioners of *rāgānugā-bhakti* to dwell continually in Vraja by remembering (root *smṛ*) Kṛṣṇa and his beloved companions.<sup>84</sup> Jīva Gosvāmin elaborates on Rūpa's instruction by providing an extended analysis of *smaraṇa*, which he defines as contemplative recollection of Kṛṣṇa's names (*nāmans*), forms (*rūpas*), qualities (*guṇas*), associates (*parikaras*), and playful activities (*līlās*). He distinguishes five stages of *smaraṇa*: (1) *smaraṇa*, thinking about Kṛṣṇa in any manner; (2) *dhāraṇā*, withdrawal of the mind from external sense objects and focusing the attention on Kṛṣṇa; (3) *dhyāna*, meditation on the forms and other aspects of Kṛṣṇa; (4) *dhruvānusmṛti*, a more advanced stage of meditation in which consciousness flows in an unbroken stream towards Kṛṣṇa; and (5) *samādhi*, the most advanced stage of meditation in which the *bhakta* attains a state of complete absorption that culminates in a direct cognition of Kṛṣṇa and his *līlā*.<sup>85</sup> Jīva's analysis of the five stages of *smaraṇa* thus appropriates three terms that are central to Patañjali's technique of yogic meditation—*dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*—and reinterprets them as stages in the Gauḍīya practice of meditation on Kṛṣṇa. He explicitly distinguishes his understanding of *samādhi*, which is a state of absorption in the supreme personal Godhead, Bhagavān, from the yogic notion of *asamprajñāta samādhi*, which he frames as an objectless state of absorption in the impersonal Brahman. Moreover, he suggests that adherents of *śānta-rasa*, who are intent on experiencing Kṛṣṇa as an object of meditation but do not desire an intimate emotional relationship with him, do not experience the highest form of *samādhi* in which direct cognition of Kṛṣṇa's unmanifest *līlā* is attained. Direct experiential realization of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* is available only to those who cultivate one of the four modes of personal

84. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.294. See also *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.87 and 1.2.175–177, in which Rūpa Gosvāmin includes *smṛti*, remembering, as one of the sixty-four practices of *vaidhī-bhakti*.

85. *Bhakti Sandarbha* 275–279.

devotional relationship with Kṛṣṇa: *dāsyā-rasa*, *sakhya-rasa*, *vātsalya-rasa*, or *mādhurya-rasa*.<sup>86</sup>

Building on the insights of Rūpa Gosvāmin and Jīva Gosvāmin, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and later Gauḍīya authorities developed the practice of *līlā-smaraṇa* into a meditation technique in which the *bhakta* visualizes in elaborate detail the *līlā* activities of Kṛṣṇa and the eternally perfected *rāgātmikā bhaktas* in the transcendent realm of Vraja. As part of the meditation technique, the *bhakta* visualizes the beautiful two-armed adolescent form (*kiśora-mūrti*) of Kṛṣṇa's absolute body; the eternal forms of the *gopīs*, *gopas*, elders, and other residents of Vraja; the spatial arrangement of the transcendent realm, including the specific locales of each *līlā* activity; and the time of day in which each *līlā* activity occurs. The *bhakta* also mentally constructs his or her own *siddha-rūpa* and visualizes this meditative body interacting with the eternal residents of Vraja in specific *līlā* activities. For example, if the guru has revealed the identity of the *siddha-rūpa* to be that of a particular *gopī*, then the *bhakta* visualizes his or her *gopī*-body in all its particularity, including the *gopī*'s name, age, appearance, dress, place of residence, mode of service, and so on.<sup>87</sup> In this technique of *līlā-smaraṇa* visualization, the mentally constructed meditative body serves as the means to catalyze an awakening in which the *bhakta* remembers (*smaraṇa*) his or her unique essential nature, *svarūpa*, and eternal form, *siddha-rūpa*, and reclaims his or her distinctive role as an eternal participant in the unmanifest *līlā*. Established in the highest state of mystical realization as a member of Kṛṣṇa's transcendent entourage, the *bhakta* savors the intoxicating sweetness of *prema-rasa* in eternal relationship with Bhagavān.

The Gauḍīya path of embodied mysticism emphasizes that the perfected *bhakta*'s internal state of enraptured devotion, *prema-rasa*, is marked on the external body in a panoply of physical signs, which in the rhetoric of *bhakti-rasa* theory are termed *sāttvika-bhāvas*. The internal ecstatic state overflows into all the senses and the organs of action and erupts in spontaneous bodily

86. *Bhakti Sandarbha* 278–279. See also *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 3.1.6, in which Rūpa Gosvāmin similarly suggests that although adherents of *śānta-rasa* may experience Kṛṣṇa's essential form (*svarūpa*), they do not experience his mind-captivating *līlā*.

87. See in particular Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Govindalīlāmṛta*, the authoritative guidebook for the practice of *līlā-smaraṇa* visualization. For an analysis of the role of *līlā-smaraṇa* in Gauḍīya traditions, see Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, 123–133.

manifestations such as perspiration, trembling, bristling of body hair, tears, faltering voice, and change of color.

It is the nature of *prema* to agitate the body and mind. . . . By the nature of *prema* the *bhakta* laughs, and cries, and sings and being mad he dances and runs here and there. Sweat, trembling, thrilling, tears, choking, pallor, madness, sadness, composure, pride, happiness, humility—in all these *bhāvas* does *prema* cause the *bhakta* to dance; he floats in the sea of the nectar of *ānanda* of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>88</sup>

The Gauḍīyas emphasize that while the *bhakta*'s consciousness, immersed in the ocean of Kṛṣṇa's bliss, reverberates with the exhilarating waves of the nectar of *prema-rasa*, the *bhakta*'s physical body also thrills with the intoxicating madness of devotion. The transformed material body, infused with bliss, manifests an array of involuntary physical symptoms, *sāttvika-bhāvas*, that are the external counterpart of the internal ecstatic state. This brings us back full circle to the passage from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa with which we began our analysis and which we can now re-vision, from the perspective of *bhakti-rasa* theory, as the paradigmatic expression of the embodied aesthetics of mystical realization:

Without the hair of the body bristling, without the heart melting, without being inarticulate due to tears of bliss (*ānanda*)—without *bhakti* how can consciousness be purified? He whose speech is stammering, whose heart melts, who weeps repeatedly and sometimes laughs, who unabashedly sings and dances—such a person, united by *bhakti* with me [Kṛṣṇa], purifies the world.<sup>89</sup>

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88. *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 1.7.84–87.

89. Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.14.23–24. For a study of the role of *divyonmāda*, the divine madness of *bhakti*, in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, see June McDaniel, *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 29–85.

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