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Bhakti Rasa for the Advaitin Renunciate: Madhusudana Sarasvati's Theory of Devotional Sentiment

Lance E. Nelson, *University of San Diego*
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BHAKTI-RASA FOR THE
ADVAITIN RENUNCIATE:
MADHUSŪDANA
SARASVATĪ’S THEORY OF
DEVOTIONAL SENTIMENT

Lance E. Nelson

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (ca. 1540-1647), a monk of
the Śaṅkara order, was without doubt among the most
important intellectual figures of late medieval India.
Dominating the scholarly world of his time with his
vast learning and formidable dialectical skills, he was
known for his brilliant, uncompromising defense of
Advaita (non-dualist) Vedānta in works such as the
ponderous Advaitasiddhi ("Vindication of Non-dual­
ism"), which became a classic of the Śaṅkara tradition.
His scholastic reputation rested primarily on the bril­
liance of his polemic against the theistic, devotional
dualism of the Madhva school. Intriguingly, and some­
what paradoxically, he was at the same time renowned
as a fervent devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The devotional side of this masterful champion of
Advaita is revealed in two works in which he deals
extensively with devotional themes. Most well-known
is the later of the two, the Bhagavadgītāgūḍhārthadīpikā,
an extensive "elucidation of the hidden meaning
(gūḍhārtha) of the Bhagavad Gītā." In this commentary,
Madhusūdana challenges Śaṅkara’s view that the es­
sential intent of the text is to inculcate renunciation,
suggesting the (more plausible) thesis that it is, instead,
"complete surrender to God" (bhagavad-eka-śaranatā).
The earlier Bhaktirasāyana is a shorter, more explicitly
devotional work, the only independent treatise on the
theory of bhakti ever written by one of the great precep­
tors of Advaita. It will be the focus of the present study.
The title of the Bhaktirasāyana (BhR) contains a play on words. It can mean both “Elixir (rasāyana) of Devotion (bhakti)” and “The way, path, or course (āyana) of the sentiment (rasa) of devotion.” That the author intended to invoke the idea of rasa as well as the image of an elixir needs no demonstration. A good part of the first chapter of the text, and almost all of the second and third chapters, defend the legitimacy of, and develop, the idea of bhakti as rasa, an “aesthetic sentiment.”

The notion of bhakti-rasa, the “sentiment of devotion,” was important in all of the North Indian schools of Kṛṣṇa devotion that drew inspiration from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. A technical concept, the notion of rasa itself was borrowed from the writers on Sanskrit poetics (alarikāraśāstra). Rasa-theory was adopted by the Vaiṣṇava devotionalists as a device for explaining their imaginative, emotional religious practice. The latter centered largely on identification with characters in the divine drama of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal sport (līla), as mediated through literary sources. The theory of bhakti-rasa received its most comprehensive elaboration at the hands of Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmin, the leading theologians of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava school.

These writers were militantly theistic and ecstatically devotional in their outlook. For this reason they, perhaps even more than other Vaiṣṇava teachers, maintained an attitude of passionate hostility toward Advaita. In his BhR Madhusūdana presents his own theory of devotional sentiment. Although based on his very different, non-dualistic understanding of the devotional experience, Madhusūdana’s exposition shares much in common with the Vaiṣṇava approach. It is not as extensively developed as the Gosvāmins’ treatment, and it probably never received any wide-scale religious application. Nevertheless, as an Advaitin’s appropriation of some of the primary patterns of Kṛṣṇa devotionalism—and one which in the end dramatically reverses some of those patterns—it is worthy of more notice than it has received to date. After giving a short introduction
to the literary theory of *rasa*, I wish here to shown how Madhusūdana develops the notion of *bhakti-rasa* in a way that has many parallels with, but also significant differences from, the treatment of the Gosvāmins.

**Rasa, Secular and Devotional**

The doctrine of *rasa* was first enunciated in the sixth chapter of Bharata’s *Nātyasūtra* (ca. sixth century C.E.). Developed by Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and other writers, it became by the eleventh century one of the central concerns of poetic theory. A *rasa* is a heightened, idealized emotion, identified as the primary mood of a piece of poetry or a drama. Enjoyed for its own intrinsic aesthetic pleasure, it arises in the mind of a sympathetic connoisseur (*rasika*) as the latter interacts with a well-executed literary work.

The basis of *rasa* is *bhūva*, “emotion.” Each of the eight *rasas* recognized by the tradition is associated with a corresponding “permanent emotion” (*sthūyi-bhūva*), which serves as its psychic foundation. For example, the *sthūyi-bhūva* of *sṛṅgāra*, the important sentiment of erotic love, is *rati*, “love.”

The goal of the artist’s craft is to awaken the permanent emotion—which lies dormant in the mind as a latent impression (*sahākāra*)—and transform it into its corresponding aesthetic sentiment. The experience of *rasa* lifts the connoisseur out of his or her individual moods, limited as they are by ego and its attendant anxieties. This leads to a state of self-transcendence in which the *rasa* may be contemplated calmly and happily.

While the proponents of *rasa* were fond of comparing the secular “relishing of sentiment” (*rasāvāda*) with the religious experience of realizing Brahman (*brahmāvāda*), they were not on the whole eager to develop the religious applications of their theory. Some granted the religious emotion of “tranquility” (*sānta*) status as a ninth *rasa*. For the most part, however, they were opposed to recognizing non-literary emotions. This was especially true in the case of *bhakti*, which they explicitly
excluded. Despite this resistance, we find evidence of a movement championing the inclusion of devotion among the *rasas* as early as the thirteenth century in the work of Vopadeva. This movement continued and eventually culminated in the elaborate system of the Bengal Gosvāmins. The result was the entrenchment, at least within Vaiṣṇava circles, of the idea that *bhakti* was a legitimate *rasa*, indeed the highest, most blissful *rasa*.

Aesthetic theory helped the theologians of Kṛṣṇaite devotion deal with several important problems. How, for example, could the devotees actually realize the emotions experienced by other persons who were actors in a sacred drama that was, whether temporally or metaphysically, removed from them? And, particularly perplexing, how could men, if they wished to enjoy the bliss of the highest *bhakti*, experience the love cherished by the cowherd women of Vṛndāvana (the *gopis*) for the male character Kṛṣṇa? Fortunately, almost identical questions had already been explored in depth by the writers on Sanskrit aesthetics, using especially the idea of transcending personal and temporal limits through aesthetic generalization (*sādhāraṇī-kāraṇa*). Moreover, the aestheticians had developed the theory of *srṅgāra-rasa*, the erotic sentiment, to a high level of complexity and detail, particularly under the influence of such writers as Rudrabhaṭṭa (tenth century) and Bhoja (eleventh century). This made the *rasa-sastra* well-suited to the needs of the Gosvāmins, who were above all concerned with explicating the nuances of the ecstatic love-relationship of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis*.

The exact reasons for Madhusūdana's interest in the theory of *bhakti-rasa* are unclear, as is the extent of his dependence, if any, on the Gosvāmins. We can be sure, from the devotional poems occurring in the *Gūḍhārtha-dīpikā* and even in the *Advaitasiddhi*, that he was a serious devotee of Kṛṣṇa. It is also true that Madhusūdana's range of interests was wide and varied, so that the *Bṛh* may be at least partly explained by his irrepressibility as a scholar. He in fact delighted in exercising his intellect and displaying his erudition by
entering into and expressing viewpoints other than that of his own Advaitic tradition. As we shall see in the present case, however, he often gave such expositions a final non-dualistic twist.

Vaiṣṇava Rasa-theory and Madhusūdana's Non-dualist Re-valuation

The Absolutization of Bhakti

As they adapt conventional rasa-theory to the Kṛṣṇaite context, the Gosvāmins leave its main outlines and many of its key terms intact. They are, however, forced to alter some of the underlying rationale of the secular system to accommodate their particular religious ends. Most notable in this connection is their elaboration of the metaphysical dimensions of rasa-theory. This is done in the interest of allowing the initially literary encounter with the gopī's Lord to become a distinctly religious experience with ontological dimensions. The secular aestheticians insist that rasa is a purely literary experience; for them, it has no bearing on the real world apart from a temporary exaltation of the mind of the appreciator. The Gosvāmins, however, want to create a situation in which aesthetic joy has the potential of genuine, indeed ultimate, soteriological consequences.

Thus the Vaiṣṇavas see the Kṛṣṇa-līlā as much more than just another historic or even supernatural event immortalized by a poet. It is an ongoing, transphenomenal reality, eternally taking place on the highest celestial plane. Imaginative identification with the story, therefore, if practiced with sufficient intensity, becomes much more than a source of aesthetic pleasure—more, even, than a cause of profound religious emotion. It is a means of effecting a change in ontological level. Through this practice, one can truly transfer one's being to Kṛṣṇa's eternal realm or, however briefly, make that world manifest in the terrestrial sphere.

The metaphysical interest continues in the analysis of bhakti-rasa itself. The permanent emotion of the devo-
tional sentiment, like that of the poetic rasas, is latent in the heart of the appreciator. But in the case of bhakti, according to the Gosvāmins, it is not acquired through ordinary empirical experience. The sthāyi-bhāva of devotion, love for Kṛṣṇa, is none other than the rati ("love") that is innately present in all beings as an aspect of the Lord’s eternal hladini-śakti, the divine “power of bliss.” Kṛṣṇa-rati, the basis of bhakti-rasa, is therefore eternal in nature (nitya-siddha) and constantly abiding, in latent form, in the heart. As a sthāyi-bhāva, it is truly permanent.  

Madhusūdana makes a similar attempt to demonstrate that bhakti-rasa participates in ultimacy. Like the Gosvāmins, he suggests that the permanent emotion of the sentiment of devotion is not one derived from ordinary empirical experience. He cannot, however, identify either bhakti-rasa or its sthāyi-bhāva as a divine power. In Advaita the only śakti belonging to the Supreme Lord (Īśvara) is māyā, the ontological status of which is dubious at best. He therefore attempts a more radical solution, one he hopes is a truly non-dualist way of elevating rasa above the phenomenal. The permanent emotion of bhakti-rasa is not a divine śakti. It is, according to BhR 1, the very form of the Blessed Lord (Bhagavat), present in the mind as a reflection. Moreover, this “form of God” (bhagavad-ākara) is eternally and inherently present in the mind, since “the eternal Lord, the Inner Controller of all, pervades everything and is the substratum of the inexpressible māyā, the subtle cause of the mind itself.” Because it is a reflection of the Lord, who is pure bliss (ānanda), the sthāyi-bhāva also is pure bliss. All the more, then, will the rasa that arises from it be blissful.

According to the Advaitic “reflection-theory” (pratibimba-vāda), most typically used to show the identity of the individual soul and Brahman, the reflection is finally non-different from the object reflected. Applied here, the doctrine suggests that defining bhakti as the reflection of the Lord is the same as identifying it with him. This makes it impossible to speak of bhakti or
bhakti-rasa as a modification (vr̥tti) of the mind. Madhusūdana tells us that rasa is equivalent to the supreme reality and that, as such, it is distinct from the vr̥tti which manifests it. Making use of Taittiriya Upaniṣad 2.7.1, he explicitly identifies rasa with the Upaniṣadic Ātman: "'Rasa is the supreme bliss, the very Self,' so say the scriptures."⁹ Again:

Rasa is said to be the sthāyi-bhāva manifested as bliss.... Since this bliss is that of the Self, it has no locus or support, but the [locus and support] of the vr̥tti which manifests it is the mind of the connoisseur.¹⁰

The second half of this verse introduces the idea, so important to the Gosvāmins' exposition, that rasa is distinct from the mental modification. This notion is repeated emphatically later on:

A single modification of the mind, consisting of the material quality of luminosity (sattva-guṇa), is produced.... This [modification] immediately and necessarily manifests the supreme bliss, and that [bliss] is rasa. Some teachers, however, hold that this [modification] itself is rasa.¹¹

Madhusūdana, then, like the Gosvāmins and for similar reasons, takes pains to show that the sentiment of devotion is more than a mere mental phenomenon. The rasa is not a vr̥tti of the mind, as a traditional follower of Śaṅkara would hold; nor is it a divine śakti; for this Advaitin, it is the supreme bliss (sukhamuttamam) itself:

The Legitimacy of Bhakti as a Rasa

The elevation of bhakti to ontic status prepares the ground for the defense of its place as a legitimate rasa. Against Mammata's dictum that devotion to a deity cannot be a sentiment, the Vaiṣṇavas argue that this objection applies only to the "ordinary" deities (prākṛta-
deva). It does not apply to Kṛṣṇa, who himself is rasa. Madhusūdana takes a similar tack. If anger, grief, and fear, which are painful, can become rasas, how can anyone deny that bhakti, which is infinite bliss, is a rasa? There is, says Madhusūdana, no good reason. He takes up the classical objection of the orthodox aestheticians with an attitude comparable to that of the Vaiṣṇavas, but he leads the argument in a slightly different direction. It may be true that “love for deities” (deva-diviṣayā ratiḥ) is a bhāva as the rhetoricians claim. Yet this will be the case only in reference to “other deities” (devāntara). The various gods are limited in nature, being themselves transmigrating souls, and do not embody the highest bliss. The objection, however, does not hold true “in reference to the supreme Self (Paramātman) who is the highest bliss.” Note here the implied identification of Bhagavat (i.e., Kṛṣṇa) and the Paramātman, conceived in the Advaitic sense. The theologians of the Bengal school would, of course, vehemently reject this idea.

Denial of the Supramundane Status of the ordinary Rasas

The conventional rhetoricians think of their rasas as supramundane (alaukika) because they transcend the cares and limitations of ordinary daily experience. The Gosvāmins, however, never tire of asserting that, in comparison with bhakti-rasa, the secular sentiments fare so poorly as to be considered mundane (laukika). Consisting of the material quality of luminosity (sattvaguna), they belong to the realm of māyā. The pleasure derived from the secular rasas is consequently limited and, like all material pleasures, inextricably mixed with pain. Bhakti-rasa is far superior, for its bliss, being that of Kṛṣṇa’s highest sakti, is infinite.

Madhusūdana again parallels the Vaiṣṇava writers by consistently contradicting the secular aestheticians’ estimate of the value of their sentiments. In comparison with bhakti-rasa, they are inescapably laukika ("mun-
Madhusūdana displays, however, somewhat more sympathy than the Gosvāmins for the non-devotional rasas. He admits that they, like bhakti, are also blissful. From the perspective of Advaita, he points out, all objects—including even the seductive heroine (kālīmini) of the secular love story—are in reality non-different from Consciousness (caitanya), which is infinite joy, the highest Reality. The happiness derived from the worldly sentiments is consequently not finally different from the supreme bliss of Brahman. It is, however, not the pure ānanda of the ultimate itself. Rather, it is the bliss of that Consciousness as conditioned, and hence limited, by the objects. Hence the joy of the mundane rasas is restricted. The delight of bhakti-rasa, on the other hand, since it is nothing other than the pure, unconditioned bliss of Bhagavat, is unlimited and far superior to the joy of the worldly sentiments. Bhakti, then, is the highest rasa, because it is the supreme bliss in its perfect fullness, untainted by sorrow. The erotic and the other secular sentiments cannot attain such levels of joy, and are therefore inferior. In comparison with bhakti-rasa, they are like fireflies shining in the face of the sun.

Classification of Rasas

The Bengal Vaiṣṇavas recognize five authentic modes of approach to the divine, each associated with characters in scripture who epitomize a particular kind of relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Connected with these five devotional moods (pañca-bhāva) are an equal number of primary (mukhya) bhakti-rasas.

In śānti, the tranquil mood, love (rāti) for Kṛṣṇa appears in a form uncolored by other emotional attitudes; hence this bhāva is also called śuddha ("pure"). The other four bhāvas are dāsya ("servanthood"), sakhya ("friendship"), vātsalya ("parenthood"), and madhūra ("sweetness," the Gosvāmins' term for the erotic mood). In these, the flow of love is refracted, as it were, through the prism of various emotional tones appropriate to the
respective relationships. It is important to note, though, that the Vaiśnava theses consider these “mixed” moods to be more blissful, and hence more valuable, than the tranquil form of devotion, Śānti. The Gosvāmins regard the latter (along with its associated rasa, Śānta) as lower than the others because it is based on the realization of God in his Lordly nature (Īśa-svarūpa), which inspires awe in addition to love. The Śānta-bhaktas (“trivial devotees”) do not desire to serve Kṛṣṇa or enter into his joyous līlās, but are satisfied in merely obtaining a vision of the deity.

True ecstatic bhakti begins only in dāsya, with the emergence of a feeling of a distinctly personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa as the supremely blissful Bhagavat. After dāsya, the ascending order of bhakti-rasas is determined by increasing degrees of intimacy with Kṛṣṇa. The hierarchy culminates in the sentiment of the gopīs, madhura. This is the most highly prized of all rasas since it involves the most intimate and most blissful relationship with the Lord. As such, it is called bhakti-rasa-rāja, the “king of all devotional sentiments.” Only Rādhā herself, Kṛṣṇa’s favorite, can experience it in its completeness.

In the second and third chapters of the BhR, Madhūsūdana enters upon a lengthy and complex analysis of the various types and possible combinations of sthāyi-bhāvas and rasas. He accepts a total of seventeen sentiments, of which ten are recognized as possible bhakti-rasas. The most important of these, for our purposes, are (1) Śrīgūra (“erotic love”) and (2) Śuddha (“pure” love). The exposition is explicitly intended to reflect the experience of Kṛṣṇa’s companions in Vrindavana; it is designed to suggest how the divine bliss of bhakti can be richly articulated to include all the ecstatic nuances of the devotion enjoyed by these paradigmatic devotees, as described in the Bhagavata Purāṇa. Nevertheless, it is also true that here the unique, Advaitic slant of Madhūsūdana’s work emerges most dramatically.

The tranquil sentiment, admitted by both Vopadeva and Rūpa Gosvāmin as a legitimate bhakti-rasa, is ex-
plicitly rejected as such by Madhusudana. This is because, according to him, it cannot have Bhagavat as its object. This suggests (1) that he follows the classical aestheticians in associating śānta with the ascetic, non-emotional paths of knowledge and yoga, which aim at Brahman-realization and mokṣa, and (2) that he wishes, because of this association, to separate śānta completely from devotion. This would be in accord with the BhR's theory that bhakti is an independent spiritual path with no positive relation to the quest for liberation through knowledge.

While rejecting śānta, interpreted on the lines of conventional poetics, as a devotional sentiment, Madhu-sudana introduces a new bhakti-rasa that is, in fact, hard to distinguish from the Vaiṣṇavas' version of śānta. He calls it śuddha, the "pure." Like the Gosvāmins' tranquil sentiment, the pure bhakti-rasa of the BhR is free from mixture with the various emotional tones associated with human love-relationships; it is prompted solely by the mind's joyous realization of the greatness (māhātmya) of the Lord. This similarity does not, however, indicate that Madhusūdana accepts the Vaiṣṇava evaluation of this sentiment. Indeed, his conception of śuddha-bhakti-rasa becomes the focal point of the most striking difference between his system and that of the Gosvāmins.

Gopi-bhakti Subordinated to a Higher Ideal

Madhusūdana appears at first to follow the universal Kṛṣṇaite tendency to regard śṛṅgāra or madhura, the love of the gopīs for their Lord, as the highest form of bhakti and the highest rasa. He describes it as "extremely intense" (tīvra-tīvra), "the most powerful" (balavattara) of all sentiments. The gopīs, he says, experience the "supreme sentiment" (paramo rasaḥ). It consists of a sublimely delectable blending of erotic love, parental love, friendship, and love-in-fear—a mixture in which, according to a standard rule of the aestheticians, the resulting delight is greater than the joy of its constituent
elements. Following the Vaiśnava tradition of imitative bhakti, he says that a devotee “should subordinate his own mind to that of the women of Vṛndāvana.” Such thinking is also evident in Madhusūdana’s description of the highest stage of bhakti at the end of chapter one of the BhR. It shows just how far he is willing to go, as an Advaitin and a renunciate, to accommodate the ecstatic devotional mood of the Vaiśnavas.

The glorification of the bhakti of the gopis, however, is not final. In a radical departure from traditional Vaiśnava thought, Madhusūdana reserves the highest experience of devotion for those who follow, not the passionate cowherd women of Vṛndāvana, but rather the tranquil sage-devotees, the enlightened renunciates who worship Kṛṣṇa in a more subdued way. This change of emphasis is not immediately obvious, since the discussion of the eleventh and highest stage of devotion at BhR 1.36 does not suggest anything beyond the bhakti based on srngara. A close examination of several key stanzas of chapter two of the text, however, reveals that Madhusūdana does not wish to accept devotion based on the analogy of human passion as the ultimate.

Verses 12-13 provide the first clue in this direction: Madhusūdana says that “pure love” (suddha-rati) directed to Kṛṣṇa is the end of all spiritual practice. Such love, we learn, is the basis of suddha, the sentiment of the same name. This love arises out of contemplation of the Lord’s greatness (māhātmya), as we have seen, not out of erotic desire (kāma), as does the love of the gopīs. Further one, at 2.46, we gather two more relevant pieces of information. We are told, first, that this suddha-bhakti is the mood of ascetics and saints such as Sanaka and the other eternally youthful, eternally celibate, “mind-born” sons of Brahmā. Second, we learn that Madhusūdana classifies himself in this category of devotees, though of course on a lower level than that of Sanaka. This personal statement, though brief and discrete, is particularly important, since it is the only clue we have as to Madhusūdana’s understanding of his own place in the scheme of bhakti outlined in the BhR, and since it
would be quite natural for him to regard his own style of devotion as the highest.

Later verses confirm that this is the direction in which Madhusūdana is heading. While the love of the gopīs is mixed with a variety of sentiments rooted in secular and very human emotions, this, Madhusūdana tells us, is not the case with the śuddha-bhakti of the great saints:

Being devoid of elements of other sentiments, [pure love] like that of Sanaka and the rest, attains the Essential Nature (svārūpa) and becomes the tenth sentiment, which is even greater.32

Again:

The pure (śuddha) is declared to be unconditioned, and the mixed, to be conditioned. The unconditioned is based solely on the majesty of the Supreme Bliss. It is said, owing to the infinite virtues of its object of worship, to have only one form.33

By saying that this type of bhakti is "pure" or "unconditioned," he means that it is free of the various emotional colorings associated with the other sentiments, called "mixed." Madhusūdana's conception of śuddha thus again resembles that of the Gosvāmins. But while the latter seem to believe that this particular kind of purity is a drawback, Madhusūdana regards it as an advantage. Here the similarity between the two views ceases abruptly. The author of the BhR implicitly rejects the Vaiṣṇava devaluation of the mood of the ascetics in his assertion that śuddha-bhakti is able, by virtue of its lack of extraneous emotional conditioning, to participate more intimately in the bliss of the "essential nature" (svārūpa) of God. It is therefore an "even greater" (adhika) sentiment.

Another important idea introduced in this verse is the enigmatic attribution to śuddha-bhakti of "only one form" (eka-rūpa). Pandeya, the author of the Hindi commentary, explains this as meaning that śuddha-bhakti is
experienced only as union or consummation (sambhoga) and not, as in the Vaiṣṇava's śṛṅgāra, in the two forms of union and separation (vipralamba). If this is Madhustudana's intention, as seems likely, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, at the pinnacle of his scheme of devotion, he is allowing a dramatic resurgence of the spirit of Advaita. The ecstatic pain of love-in-separation is an essential ingredient of gopi'-bhakti and a vital element in the traditional Kṛṣṇaite understanding of preman and mahābhāva, the highest states of devotional love. It is, however, ultimately eliminated in Madhusūdana's version of śuddha-bhakti.

Bhakti-rasa for the Advaitin Renunciate

What is Madhusūdana, a non-dualist monastic, doing wandering with Kṛṣṇa's companions in the lush groves of Vṛndāvana? Is he not in danger of losing his ascetic detachment, bedazzled by the ecstatic display of the Lord's māyā? At the least, he seems to be dabbling in a spirituality, and ways of thought, that might lead him to compromise his reputation as a champion of strict Advaita. The BhR does not provide complete answers to such questions, but it does contain important clues to the mind of this enigmatic genius of the Śaṅkara tradition. While his scheme of bhakti-rasa does place a high value on the ecstatic joy of the gopi's love for God, Madhusūdana in the end seeks to subordinate the higher Vaiṣṇava bhāvas to a more restrained ideal. Patterned as they are after normal human modes of love and involving the tension of union/separation as a defining feature, the moods of the cowherd women cannot be the final height of devotional experience. A more ascetic, contemplative, and essentially unitive style of devotion supersedes them as Madhusūdana's highest goal. No doubt, it is one more appropriate to the emotional life of a sophisticated non-dualist renunciate.
 ENDNOTES

1. Sanskrit aesthetics generally goes by the name *alāhkarā-śāstra*, literally, “the science of [poetic] ornamentation.” It is also called the *rasa-śāstra* (“science of aesthetic sentiment”), due to its tendency to concentrate, in its later period, on the theory of *rasa*. It is concerned almost exclusively with problems of poetics and drama, and is therefore more limited in scope than the more broadly conceived Western philosophic discipline known as aesthetics. I follow established convention here in referring to it as “aesthetics” or “poetics,” and its writers as “aestheticians” or “rhetoricians.”

2. Their work has been fairly well studied, thanks particularly to the pioneering scholarship of S.K. De. See S.K. De, *Early History of the Vaiśnavī Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers Limited, 1942).

3. An oft-quoted verse from the *Advaitasādhi*, popular even today among Hindu teachers, translates: “I know of no reality higher than Kṛṣṇa, whose hand is adorned by the flute. His complexion is like a fresh dark cloud laden with water, and He wears beautiful yellow silk. His reddish lips are like the *bimba* fruit, His face is as beautiful as the full moon, His eyes are like lotuses” (2.7).

4. For example, Madhusūdana’s *Paramakaranātāparīyaḥ*, a commentary on the first verse of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, is divided into three sections. In the first, he gives the interpretation of the Upanisadic (*asaṃśaṭṭa*) school, including explanations of several important *Brahma Sūtras*. The second expounds the verse from the point of view of the Śātvatas or Bhāgavatas, and incorporates Advaitic interpretations of certain categories important to the *Pāñcarātrāya* system. The third part presents the view of what Madhusūdana calls the “pure devotion” (*kevala-bhakti*) school. See Devi Datta Upadhyaya, ed., *The Harihitāmrtam by Śrī Bāpadeva*, Chowkamba Sanskrit Series, No. 411 (Benaras: The Chowkamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1933).

5. Even Abhinavagupta, of the writers on poetics the most interested in spirituality, writes: “*Rasas* are found only in drama, not in the real world” (*nātya eva rasa na loke, Abhinavabhākāraśi;* quoted in J.L. Masson and M.V. Patwardhan, *Śantarasa and Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Aesthetics* [Poona: The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969], 54, n. 3).

6. *Bhaktirasāṁyastisindhu*, 1.2.2; *Caityarāṣṭriyamāṇa* mahāya 22.107, 8.159-160.

7. *Ṭhāṇa* on BhR 1.32, p. 70. I have used the *Srimadbhaktirasāyanam*, edited with Madhusūdana’s *Ṭhāṇa* on the first *Uttara* and the editor’s Hindi *Anuwāda* by Janardana Sastri Pandeya (Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1961). All page references are to this edition.

8. “The permanent emotion known as love (*rādī*) is the form of the Blessed Lord. Manifest as a *rasa* ... it reveals itself as an immediate realization of the highest bliss” (*Ṭhāṇa* on BhR 1.1, p.10).
10. BhR 3.2b-3, p. 186-188.
15. BhR 1.11-12.
17. De, Early History, 149.
21. BhR 2.31-35, p. 161-162. At 2.33-34, the bhakti-rasās are listed as: (1) śrīgāra (“erotic love”), (2) karuṇa (“compassion”), (3) hasya (“mirth”), (4) prīti-bhayānaka (“love-in-fear”), (5) abhuta (“wonder”), (6) yuddha-vīra (“heroism in battle”), (7) dāna-vīra (“heroism in charity”), (8) śuddha (“pure”), (9) vatsala (“parental affection”), and (10) prayas (“dearness” or “friendship”).
23. Tīkā on BhR 1.1, p. 5-6.
24. Indeed, the term śuddha is sometimes used by the Vaiṣṇavas themselves to designate the sthāyi-bhāva of śānta.
25. BhR 2.12-13, p. 150.
29. Tīkā on BhR 1.34-36.
30. BhR 2.12b-13, p. 150.
31. BhR 2.46, p. 165. Madhusūdana is certainly well-aware of the fact that Śaṅkara, in the introduction to his commentary on the Bhagavadgītā, identifies Śaṅkara and the others as the first, paradigmatic exponents of the path of renunciation and knowledge.
32. BhR 2.73, p. 183.
33. BhR 2.64b-65, p. 179.
34. p., 180.