

Bodies & Emotions: Analyses of Embodiment & Bhakti in Sahajiyā

Cuerpos y emociones: análisis de la encarnación y el bhakti en Sahajiyā

Somdatta Mukherjee*

Independent Researcher, India.

mukherjee.somdatta4@gmail.com

Abstract

In this present writing I tried to portray how the practice of bhakti (as an emotion) transforms body into both yogic and devotional body within the corpus of the religious group of sahayiyā. The manifestations of both Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa bhakti contribute to the a priori concept of practice of both bhakti and yoga through the embodiment in sahayiyā. With the help of my field work (that includes in-depth interviews) and a few theoretical explanations I tried to unveil how the realization of truth of the body leads to the realization of the truth of the universe through the practice of bhakti involving body. Bhakti needs body. The divine body of Kṛṣṇa and the devotional bodies of Kṛṣṇa bhakta-s are integral parts in sahayiyā. I also tried to explain that the Gauḍīya discourse of divine embodiment embraces a number of hierarchical taxonomies that classify the divine forms of Kṛṣṇa that proves Kṛṣṇa's existence as a yogīn. It also consists of multidimensional hierarchy of ontologies, paths and goals where embodied Kṛṣṇa bhakti is represented as the acme of spiritual realization. The hierarchical ontologies represent different dimensions of embodiment. The valorization of yogic body both theoretically and practically refigured the concept of yoga body into devotional yoga body.

Key words: Embodiment; Emotions; Yoga; Religion; Body.

Resumen

En este escrito intenté retratar cómo la práctica de bhakti (como emoción) transforma el cuerpo en cuerpo yóguico y devocional dentro del corpus del grupo religioso de sahayiyā. Las manifestaciones tanto de Kṛṣṇa como de Kṛṣṇa bhakti contribuyen al concepto a priori de la práctica tanto del bhakti, como del yoga a través de la encarnación en sahayiyā. Con la ayuda de mi trabajo de campo (que incluye entrevistas en profundidad) y algunas explicaciones teóricas intenté desvelar cómo la realización de la verdad del cuerpo conduce a la realización de la verdad del universo a través de la práctica del bhakti que involucra al cuerpo. Bhakti necesita cuerpo. El cuerpo divino de Kṛṣṇa y los cuerpos devocionales de Kṛṣṇa bhakta-s son partes integrales de sahayiyā. También traté de explicar que el discurso gauḍīya sobre la encarnación divina abarca una serie de taxonomías jerárquicas que clasifican las formas divinas de Kṛṣṇa y que prueban la existencia de Kṛṣṇa como yogīn. También consta de una jerarquía multidimensional de ontologías, caminos y metas donde el Kṛṣṇa bhakti encarnado se representa como la cima de la realización espiritual. Las ontologías jerárquicas representan diferentes dimensiones de encarnación. La valorización del cuerpo yóguico, tanto teórica como prácticamente, reformuló el concepto de cuerpo de yoga en cuerpo de yoga devocional.

Palabras claves: Encarnación; Emociones; Yoga; Religión; Cuerpo.

* PhD from Centre d'anthropologie Culturelle. Université Paris Cité, France. Secretary & Newsletter Editor, RC54 The Body in the Social Sciences, International Sociological Association (ISA). ORCID 0000-0003-2243-9340

Bodies & Emotions: Analyses of Embodiment & Bhakti in Sahajiyā

Introduction

The aim of this present writing is to explore the embodiment, primarily in *Gauḍīya saḥajiyā*; how human body serves as devotional yoga-body to achieve the ultimate truth and in which way(s) bodies become yoga-body and devotional for this purpose. For a better understanding within limited words, I first tried to describe how body has been manifested in Buddhist and *Gauḍīya saḥajiyā*; I tried to figure out the practice of *saḥajiyā* as a whole to portray how practice of *bhakti yoga* (conceiving *bhakti* as an emotion) makes body both yoga-body and at the same time devotional within the corpus of the *Gauḍīya saḥajiyā* cult.

From epic *Mahābhārata* to *Caitanya caritāmṛta Kṛṣṇa* has been depicted as the ultimate *yogīn* with all the powers of *siddhi*. It is true that the role of *Kṛṣṇa* changes in different ways in different situations and in different texts. It is *Kṛṣṇa līlā* that portrays *Kṛṣṇa*'s manifold manifestations. *Kṛṣṇa* establishes the link between *yoga* and god (he himself) in *Mahābhārata*'s *mokṣadharmā*. He explains *Arjuna* the essence of *yoga* as depicted in verse 2.48: "*yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmani sanyugam tyaktvā dhananjaya |siddhi-asiddhyoḥ samo bhutvā samatvam yoga ucyate ||* (Fosse, 2007) (Establish yourself in *yoga*, O *Arjuna*. Perform your duty and abandon all attachment to success or failure. Such evenness of mind is called *yoga*).

Regarding *Kṛṣṇa bhakti* David Gordon White states that in his commentary on *yoga sutra* Edwin Bryant pointed out that *Vijñānabhikṣu* described *īśvara-praṇidhāna* to the practice of devotion and submission to lord *Kṛṣṇa*. *Bhagavat Gītā (BhG)* identified *Kṛṣṇa* as *puruṣottama* who creates, maintains and destroys the world. *Kṛṣṇa* as depicted in *BhG* is *yogeśvara* (master of *yoga*) and an ideal *yogīn* (White, 2014).

The cynosure of this present writing is embodiment in *saḥajiyā* and its nature. In doing so their practice will also be addressed. I prefer to put forward the concept of 'practice' as defined and elaborated by Bourdieu and his concept of *habitus*. He explains practice as:

...the internal forces arising instantaneously as motivations springing from free will, the internal dispositions the internalization of externality - enable the external forces to exert themselves, but in accordance with the specific logic of the organisms in which they are incorporated, i.e. a durable, systematic and non-mechanical way (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55).

I will try to explain how *bhakti* instigates the free will of the practitioners and motivates them to internalise the ultimate reality as *saḥaja* and through the practice of *saḥaja*. Thus *bhakti*, an act of emotion, helps in the realisation of embodiment.

The journey through body and mind

Attempts will be made to showcase how, within a particular socio-cultural context, the practice of *saḥaja* has been developed as a way of life. Through the practice of their ways of *bhakti* it would be easier to grasp the nature of the embodiment. Sashibhusan Dasgupta wrote in detail about the practice of the Buddhist *saḥajiyā*-s. The *saḥajiyā* school protested and criticized traditional rules, regulations and formalities of life and religion. According to them truth can only be achieved through the unconventional way of practicing *yoga* which would be easier for all. Strict rules for suppression of hunger and sex are considered to be unnatural and thus should be avoided. Body should be treated as it is. Constant suppression of body's nature can only lead to unnatural condition of both body and mind. Thus, *saḥajiyā*-s never opt for

any type of unnatural condition or process. Instead, they take body and mind as they are. To them, this is the only way to achieve the truth. Thus, their path is *sahaja* or easy to follow. Their way of *yoga* is not to obliterate sex instead they contemplate on natural sex of human being that body and mind need. *Samputika* maintains that this is the supreme process of *yoga* and thus eternal. It explains that human passion of sex which is very much a part of human nature is the origin of it. According to them human nature never infringes. Since passion of sex is natural to human nature and what is natural is the easiest, it should be transformed into yogic process to realize the ultimate truth. *Sahaja* is the royal road or *rāja patha* that in the form of *mahā sukha* leads to the ultimate realization without any sacrifice, ritual and rite or chanting of *mantra* etc. In that way the *sahajiyā-s* criticize scholars who seek to find truth by reading scriptures etc. They maintained that nothing will be achieved only by taking holy bath to have purity in body if mind is impure and full of sin. Purity in both body and mind should be achieved through the path of *sahaja*. Thus they valorize *rāgānugā bhakti* (selfless love and devotion to god) over *vaidhī bhakti* (devotion through performance of religious rites and rituals). In *vaidhī bhakti* the *sādhaka* performs external bodily practices designed to purify, transform and reconstitute karmic body of bondage as a body of devotion. *Rāgānugā bhakti* is considered as an advanced form of *sādhana bhakti*. It is characterized by passionate love. The *bhakta* performs internal meditative practices with external bodily practices in order to realize the perfected devotional body that is eternal and nonmaterial which is called *siddha rūpa*. Thus *smaraṇa* and *dhyāna* are essential parts of *rāgānugā bhakti*. Both of these yogic processes help in culminating the realization of *siddha rūpa*. *Rūpa Gosvāmīn* and *Jīva Gosvāmīn* advocated that *dhyāna* is an essential part in *bhakti yoga*. Barbara A. Holdrege states that some of those meditative practices are derived from *Pātañjala yoga* and *tāntrik* ritual tradition of *yoga*. *Jīva* included in his five stages of meditative practice (*smaraṇa*, *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna*, *dhruvānusmṛti* and *samādhi*) three principal terms from the practice of yogic meditation to the practice of *bhakti* and those are *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. Though he distinguishes his understanding of *samādhi*. In *samādhi rāgānugā sādhaka* realizes the impersonal, formless and supreme bliss of *Kṛṣṇa* and the radiant of *Kṛṣṇa's* absolute body. But *yogīn* who embraces *śānta rasa* as a path of *bhakti* does not achieve the highest form of *samādhi*. The *yogīn* experiences the *paramātman* and not the *bhagavān*. It is only through *rāgānugā bhakti* that the highest state of realization can be achieved.

The embodiment and the emotions

Jīva Gosvāmīn proposes *mantra dhyāna* of *Kṛṣṇa* as one of the most effective means of realization of the supreme bliss. *Mantra dhyana* is accompanied by visualization techniques and bodily practices centered only on *Kṛṣṇa*. Thus *siddha rūpa* is culminated. The *sādhaka* visualizes his or her meditative body in a series of *līlā* (as any form of *rasa*) and engages himself or herself directly with the eternal associates of *Kṛṣṇa* in *Vraja dhāman*. Regular practice of *bhakti yoga* involving this visualization helps *yogīn* to realize the eternal *siddha rūpa* where the *yogīn* becomes a part of the *līlā*. Thus the *yogīn* remains inwardly absorbed in *siddha rūpa*. Outwardly *sādhaka rūpa* manifests as a material body of devotion. Holdrege explains that *prema*, by its nature agitates the a priori concept of what is known as body and mind to us. *Prema* accelerates *ānandā* inside the *bhakta* resulting in the innate joy of *ātman* that makes the *bhakta* laugh, cry, sing, sweat, and dance in madness. This way one emotion leads to another which eventually helps realising the eternal bliss where body becomes the mediator. Holdrege states, '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*.' (Holdrege, 2013, p. 183). It is only in the true path of *bhakti yoga* that a *sadhaka* experiences these psychological and physiological states. Sukanya Sarbadhikary (2015) explains how devotee's body experience divine *prema* through the embodiment of *līlā*. It is evident that emotions and embodiment can not be separated in the process of bodies becoming yoga-bodies and devotional in this particular cult.

The Body and the practice

The Buddhist perspective

Dasgupta writes that like Hindu *tantra-s* and *yoga* texts the Buddhists envisage three lotuses or plexuses. The three *kāya-s* are identified with these three *cakra-s*. In the navel region the lowest *kāya* is called the body of transformation or the *nirmāṇa kāya*. In the region of heart, the *cakra* is conceived as the body of ultimate truth as the cosmic reality and it is called *dharmā kāya*. Just below the neck the third *cakra* is identified as the body of bliss or *sambhoga kāya*. In *tāntrik* Buddhism the fourth *kāya* is called *sahaja kāya* or *vajra kāya*. It is located in the *uṣṇīṣa kamala* (in Hindu scriptures it is named as *sahasrāra*). It being the ultimate realization is called as *mahā sukha*

cakra. Among the various nerves in the body thirty-two are considered to be more important than the others. Among those thirty-two three are considered as the most important. Two of them are situated by the two sides of the spinal cord and another one is situated in the middle which is considered to be the meeting point of those two situated by the two sides of the spinal cord and as the path for *sahaja*. The two nerves of both sides of spinal cord are identified with *prajñā* and *upāya* (also identified with female and male or even with female and male organ known as the lotus and the thunder) that meet at the path of *sahaja* or *avadhutikā* to fabricate *bodhicitta* or the supreme bliss.

As far as the esoteric practice of the *sahajiyā-s* is concerned *kāya sādhanā* is given much importance to achieve the ultimate realization. Dasgupta explains it in an intense manner. It is maintained that without a perfect body it is impossible to reach to higher stages of *yoga*. Practice of *haṭha yoga* is adopted to achieve a mature body. Thus Buddhist *siddhācārya-s* were also *haṭha yogīn-s*. It is strongly advised that the *yogin* must acquire a strong body to achieve the yogic process of *mahā sukha*. The esoteric practice is aimed at the production of *bodhicitta* in the *nirmāṇa cakra* through the process of *haṭha yoga* and then move it in the upward direction to pass it through the *dharma cakra* and the *sambhoga cakra* and then turn it motionless in the *uṣṇīṣa kamala*. At that point *mahā sukha* is realized with the help of the nature of *sahaja*. The two aspects of *bodhicitta* is *saṃvṛta* and *vivṛta*. *Saṃvṛta* is the quotidian restless aspect in the form of gross sexual pleasure. *Vivṛta* or *pāramārthika* is the motionless aspect of absolute bliss (Dasgupta, 1946). In the yogic *sādhanā* the *sahajiyā-s* first try to produce *bodhicitta* through the union of *prajñā* and *upāya* and then convert the *saṃvṛta bodhicitta* into *pāramārthika*. Thus body plays a vital role to achieve the ultimate goal of the *sahajiyā-s*.

The importance of body in *sādhanā* can also be understood through the *caryā gīti-s*. Human body is conceived as microcosm of the universe in every aspect of prevailing yogic element. In *hevajratāntra* the readers can unveil that Bodhisattva asked Lord about the necessity of the physical body and physical world. Lord replied that without body how one could realize the eternal bliss. Truth is within the body and arises beyond it. Thus it is not only physical. The *Śrī-kāla-cakra* considers body to be important for realizing supreme bliss and for *yoga* also. Body is the ultimate sacred place and abode of bliss. The *sahajiyā-s* maintain that *tattva* is within our body and human beings search for it outside. The bodiless

supreme hides himself within the body and he who knows him in the body is liberated. Thus, to the *sahajiyā-s*, body plays a crucial role in the realization of ultimate truth. In *caryā gīti-s* body is depicted as abode of truth. Without a perfect body the realization of *sahaja* is impossible. On this note culture of body or *kāya sādhanā* is an important issue in *sahaja sādhanā*. *Vaiṣṇava sahajiyā-s* maintain that truth resides in the body. Thus the realization of truth of the body leads to the realization of the truth of the universe. This is the state of *viśuddha sattva*.

Vaiṣṇava perspective – the body and emotions

The evolution of Buddhist *sahajiyā-s* had been immensely influenced and channelized by the love-religion of *vaiṣṇava sahajiyā*. As early as the 8th- 9th century Bengal the divine romance of *kr̥ṣṇa* and *rādhā* was celebrated by the *vaiṣṇava sahajiyā-s* with poets of Bengal and with further exploration of *Caitanya* that elevated *parakīyā rati* (the love of a man for a woman who legally belongs to another) above *svakīyā rati* (conjugal love) (Britannica, 2017). Dasgupta writes that in standard *vaiṣṇavism* the *parakīyā rati* is considered as a theological speculation but the *sahajiyā-s* accept it even in its most practical form. Thus body has been valorized much among the *vaiṣṇava sahajiyā-s* that is reflected through the works of *Jaydeva*, *Caṇḍīdāsa*, *Vidyāpati*, *Rūpa*, *Sanātana*, *Vṛndāvanadāsa*, *Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja* and many more. Dasgupta again writes that “It is customary to sneer at the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult as an order of debauchery under the cloak of religion” (Dasgupta, 1946, p. 138). In *Rūpa Gosvāmīn’s* appropriation of *rasa* theory *bhakti rasa* consists of five flavours (*śānta* or tranquil, *dāsyā* or serviceful affection, *sakhya* or friendship, *vātsalya* or parental love and *mādhurya* or erotic love) among which *mādhurya* is the highest one that consists *Kṛṣṇa ratī* or love for *Kṛṣṇa*. In pure *bhakti yoga* only *mādhurya* involves direct and intimate connection and cognition with *Kṛṣṇa* as *svayam rūpa* and thus it is the ultimate path to *sahaja* realization and the expression of *preman*. The *Gauḍīya* authorities amalgamate three categories in their own *Kṛṣṇa bhakti* tradition. Those are *bhakti* (devotion), *rūpa* or *deha* (body) and *rasa* (aesthetic enjoyment). Holdrege calls it ‘the embodied aesthetics of *bhakti*’ (Holdrege, 2013, p. 156) in which both the divine body of *Kṛṣṇa* and the devotional bodies of *Kṛṣṇa bhakta-s* are integral parts of the final realization. The pure bliss or *āhlāda viśuddhābdhi* arises from an unmediated visionary experience or *sākṣāt kāra* of *bhagavān’s* absolute body.

Glen Alexander Hayes writes about *Ātmatattva* that speaks of *vaiṣṇava saḥajiyā* (devotional god is *viṣṇu*) with a blending of both *bhakti yoga* and *tāntrik yoga*. The fifth and highest level of self has been described in relation to god. Hayes describes the fifth and highest level of self and it is *ātmārāmeśvara* which means lord who delights in knowing the self. It has also been interpreted as *Kṛṣṇa* embracing *Rādhā* within himself. This depicts the union between the cosmic male and female principle. This delightful cosmic union is called *hlādinī*. The *saḥajiyā-s* give a *tāntrik* interpretation of this union in the experience of *saḥaja*. The text denotes that it is the eternal yogic body that the adept eventually inhabits in the celestial abode of *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa* in *Vṛndāvana*. *Ātmatattva* projects that by the practice of *yoga* the *yogīn* is able to understand and realize the highest and mightiest of the other Hindu and Vedic gods (Hayes, 2012).

The embodiment – emotion needs body

Barbara Holdrege states that all the devotional practices are embodied practices. She explains Christian Novetzke (building on Pechilis Prentiss's insights) and quotes on the concept of publics of *bhakti*. It concludes with the statement that '*bhakti* needs bodies' (Holdrege, 2015, p. 24). Here, I consider *bhakti* as an emotion. If *bhakti* is an emotion, then it needs body to project itself by celebrating *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rādhā bhakti*. In *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava bhakti* tradition the divine body and the devotional body are fashioned in such multileveled models of embodiment that only one thought comes out of it and that is celebrating *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rādhā bhakti*. The question now is whether these bodies are yogic or not. As far as the divine body is concerned it has all the strength, power and capacity that a perfect yogic body can achieve. Thus *Kṛṣṇa* is the ultimate *yogīn* who has all the powers of *siddhi*. From his birth through childhood to maturation *Kṛṣṇa* shows his yogic body powers through his numerous *līlā-s* (please note that *līlā* can also be considered as projection of emotion) depicted both in *bhagavat gītā* and *bhāgavat purāṇa*. Readers may consult Barbara A. Holdrege for a better and detailed understanding of it. A short description of embodiment is quoted here both to show the manifestations of embodiment and the intense description of Holdrege. She explained how in *mūrti* the manifestation of *Kṛṣṇa* as a divine body is worshipped by the *bhakta-s* as the devotional bodies which shows the path of *bhakti yoga*. In every *Kṛṣṇa* temple in *Vraja* the worshippers venerate the *mūrti* as the living body of *Kṛṣṇa*. Holdrege explains it and states that they perform the worship in such a manner that reflects the double life of the deity. She writes,

On the one hand, the priests of the temple celebrate the public life of *Rādhāramaṇa* as the embodiment of *aiśvarya*, divine majesty, by honoring and serving him as a royal guest in the temple in strict accordance with the ritual and aesthetic prescriptions of *mūrti-sevā*. Each day the deity embodied in the *mūrti* is awakened, bathed, dressed, adorned with jewelry and flowers, fed periodic meals, revered through ritual offerings, and put to bed. Worship of the *mūrti* involves the presentation of a series of sixteen ritual offerings (*upacāras*), including food, water, cloth, sandalwood paste, flowers, *tulasī* leaves, incense, and performance of *āratī* through circling oil-lamps before the image. On the other hand, the temple priests seek to foster an awareness of the hidden life of *Rādhāramaṇa* as the embodiment of *mādhurya*, divine sweetness, by dividing the temple service into eight periods (*aṣṭa-yāma*) corresponding to the *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā*, the eight periods of the divine cowherd's daily *līlā* that goes on eternally in his transcendent abode and its earthly counterpart, the land of *Vraja*. During this eightfold *līlā* he engages in intimate love-play in the secret bowers with his cowmaiden lover *Rādhā*, tends the cows and romps through the forest with his cowherd buddies, the returns home periodically to be bathed, dressed, and fed by his adoring foster mother, *Yaśodā* (Holdrege, 2015, p. 5).

Are devotional bodies yoga-bodies?

From my ethnography

Now it is to be examined if devotional bodies are yoga-bodies or not. *Bhakti yoga* is evident when pilgrims and residents of *Vraja* perform *Govardhana parikramā*. They circumambulate the mountain *Govardhana* either by walking approximately five to six hours or by *daṇḍavat parikramā*. *Daṇḍavat Parikramā* is a sequence of full-body prostrations along the way. It may take ten to twelve days to complete the entire *parikramā*. *Govardhana* is worshipped as *svarūpa* of *Kṛṣṇa*. Thus *Kṛṣṇa bhakti* is very much evident both in the embodiment of what are both divine and devotional embracing itself into the corpus of *bhakti yoga*. The devotees engage their own bodies with *Kṛṣṇa*'s embodied form in the *mūrti*. Through *līlā kīrtana*, prostrating before the *mūrti*, dancing, ringing bells they express their *bhakti bhāva*. Through this path of devotional *bhakti yoga*, they try to achieve the ultimate bliss. *Naam saṃkīrtana* (singing the divine names of *Kṛṣṇa*) is the essential

part of *bhakti*. The *Gauḍīya* theology maintained that the names are ascribed to *Caitanya* himself. The divine names are the localized embodiment of *Kṛṣṇa* in the form of sound. Also *Bhāgavat Pūraṇa* is considered as the text-embodiment in the form of speech (Holdrege, 2015). Devotees listen to it from the recitation of qualified Brahmins. It is complex to understand the manifold manifestations of *Kṛṣṇa*'s bodily presence which is experienced through the bodily practices of *bhakta*-s.

During my field work I interacted with Rass Sindhu Das and Premdatta Krishna Kirtana Krishna Sakha Das. The devotees, explained their journey towards a new life after their '*dīkṣā*'. As Rass Sindhu Das stated, "*Dīkṣā* is considered to give a 'new born' to the materialistic body. The name given by *guru* indicates the journey in the service of the lord. Our relationship with the lord is not worldly, but very true. With the new name our journey in the service of the lord becomes eternal." It is very much important to observe that body plays a vital role in the journey to eternity.

The *Gauḍīya* discourse – merging the body & the emotions:

The *Gauḍīya* discourse of divine embodiment advocates *Kṛṣṇa* as *ananta rūpa* (endless forms). As far as the philosophy of *yoga* is considered we know that only a perfected yogic body can possess the power to have *ananta rūpa*. One who achieves the power of *siddhi* in *yoga* can only exercise the power of *ananta rūpa*. From *Kṛṣṇa līlā* we come to know that he possesses the absolute body with its endless manifestations. And thus he himself is the *yogīn* as he proves his power of *aṣṭa siddhi*. The principal architects of *Gauḍīya* discourse of divine embodiment are *Jīva Gosvāmin* (ca. 1516-1608 CE), *Rūpa Gosvāmin* (ca. 1470-1557 CE) whose works are expanded by *Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja* (ca. 1517- 1620 CE). Holdrege states that the *Gauḍīya* discourse of divine embodiment embraces a number of hierarchical taxonomies that classify the divine forms of *Kṛṣṇa* as *ananta rūpa*. It also consists of multidimensional hierarchy of ontologies (*brahman*, *paramātman*, *bhagavān*), paths and goals where embodied *Kṛṣṇa bhakti* is represented as the acme of spiritual realization. The hierarchical ontologies represent different dimensions of embodiment. *Brahman* is impersonal, attribute-less and formless. *Paramātman* animates the cosmos bodies on the macrocosmic level and on the microcosmic level resides in the hearts of all embodied beings. Beyond the macro-cosmos

and micro-cosmos there is *Bhagavān* with infinite qualities, innumerable *śakti* and the absolute body. In *Gauḍīya* discourse *Kṛṣṇa* is celebrated as *pūrṇa bhagavān*. These *śakti*-s are categorized into three principle types, namely, *svarūpa śakti*, *māyā śakti* and *jīva śakti*. On the transcendent level *svarūpa śakti* represents the essential nature of *bhagavān* with its three essential aspects, namely, *saṁdhinī śakti* (with the power of *sat*), *saṁvit śakti* (with the power of *cit*) and *hlādinī śakti* (with the power of *ānanda*). The *māyā śakti* operates on the macrocosmic level regulating the cycle of birth and death, bondage of *saṁsāra*. The *jīva śakti* operates on the microcosmic level constituting embodied being. *Kṛṣṇa* is *svarūpa śakti*. *Svarūpa śakti* includes *Kṛṣṇa līlā* that is represented as the expression of *hlādinī śakti*. Holdrege explains in detail the *Kṛṣṇa rāsa līlā*. In the *līlā* the *gopī*-s are the eternal expressions of the *hlādinī śakti*. *Rādhā* represents the quintessential expression of *hlādinī śakti* and consummate embodiment of *Kṛṣṇa*'s bliss.

The *Gauḍīya* discourse of divine embodiment centres on *svarūpa śakti* while *jīva śakti* represents the discourse of human embodiment. The ultimate goal is to achieve the state of realization in which *jīva* is liberated from the bondage of *māyā śakti*. One has to realize *Kṛṣṇa* as *bhagavān* himself. All human beings are parts of that *svarūpa śakti*. The devotees engage themselves in the unmanifest *līlā* and enjoy the bliss of *preman* in the eternal embrace of the supreme reality. *Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja* wrote that the body of *Kṛṣṇa* consists of *sat cit ānanda*.

In *Gauḍīya* discourse *bhagavān* is conceived as the ultimate non-material, unmanifest, eternal and self-luminous body designated as *vigraha* embraced with *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. Here body and the possessor of body are non-different. It is the perfect *yoga*-body. The body of this eternal *yogīn* [*Kṛṣṇa*] has been described in such a way that only a *siddha yogīn* can achieve that body through *yoga*,

The sweet form (*mūrti*) of the enemy of Madhu [*Kṛṣṇa*] brings me intense joy. His neck has three lines like a conch, his clever eyes are charming like lotuses, his blue-black 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 (Holdrege, 2015, p. 36).

Body and emotions merge together to realise the ultimate truth which eventually describes body with eternal joy, love and happiness. Pure emotion of love and joy is reflected upon the beautiful body.

Conclusion

Though there are differences in perception both of these *sahajiyā* cults gave much importance to body and its yogic and devotional manifestations. The main difference between the Buddhist and *Vaiṣṇava sahajiyā*-s is lying on their perception of the world. The Buddhist *sahajiyā*-s maintain that the truth of the universe is comprised of the microcosm of the human body. The *vaiṣṇava sahajiyā*-s conceived this theory in an intense level of significance with their dominating spirit of love both in theory and practice. Thus, body has been valorized both theoretically and practically. There are similarities between several *mahāyāna* Buddhist sources and the description of the god *Kṛṣṇa*. The Buddhist sources consider the bodies of enlightened beings that are capable of filling the universe. These are *nirmāṇakāya* or constructed bodies. Whereas *gītā* describes *Kṛṣṇa*'s body as *viśvarūpa* or universal body. *Viśvarūpa Kṛṣṇa* displays his 'yoga' while *nirmāṇakāya* and *viśvarūpa* are of the same order (White, 2012). Dasgupta states that

...the secret yogic practices, round which grew the paraphernalia of the different Sahajiyā cults, belong neither strictly to the Buddhist fold nor exclusively to the Hindu fold; they are essentially yogic practices, which by their association with different theological systems, either Buddhist or Hindu... (Dasgupta, 1946, p. 134).

The pleasure of sex is transformed into transcendental bliss through yogic control which accelerated the *vaiṣṇava sahajiyā* movement in Bengal. In *vaiṣṇava sahajiyā* males and females are conceived as the physical manifestation of *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rādhā*. The union of the two is the state of supreme love – the ultimate stage of *sahaja*. Thus the *vaiṣṇava sahajiyā*-s consider the highest stage as positive and eternal flow of divine love. A non-dual state of supreme bliss is absorbed in the unfathomable depth of emotion which is the absolute state of *sahaja* realization. And this concept of *sahaja* realization made *sahaja sādhanā* more a religion of psycho-sociological discipline in the culture of love than a culture of psycho-physiological yogic process (Dasgupta, 1946). When man and woman realize themselves as *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rādhā* then their love goes beyond gross sensuality and becomes divine. Thus the emotion of love is the realization of *sahaja*. *Sahaja* is realized through a physiological process. But the *sahajiyā*-s consider it something not as physical. Since they criticize scholars and stigmatize typical intense religious and philosophical words as bombastic. One should consider their way of realization as simple as it appears without any latent meaning. Thus the

sahajiyā-s path of truth falls under the tautology where the process is physiological and they do not consider it physical (Dasgupta, 1946).

In *sahajiyā* there is the mention of the state of arrest or the ultimate realization that has been much emphasized in the system of *yoga*. The question is can we consider *sahaja* body as yoga-body? Dasgupta has elaborated much on this concept in his writing. Some *yoga* exponents conceive that the state of arrest in *sahaja* and *yoga* is not the same. The final state of *samādhi* in *yoga* is not totally same as the final state of *sahaja* realization. *Samādhi* is not temporary. It is a permanent state of cessation of mind from each and every this-worldly activity. From the five *citta bhūmi*-s (*kṣipta*, *mūḍha*, *vikṣipta*, *ekāgra*, *niruddha*) *ekāgra* and *niruddha* are considered to be yogic. It is true that in an intense state of emotion one can go beyond the ordinary physical and psychological existence. This transcendental emotion relates itself with intense religious experience. But the critical question lies in the fact that in which way and how far one can accept such state of transcendence to be identical with the experience of supreme religious bliss or ultimate truth of universe or the absolute realization mentioned in *yoga* though *bhakti yoga*, as considered worldwide, is a typology of *yoga* even practiced in present-day. If we consider *sahajiyā* from both *Kṛṣṇa bhakti* and *Rādhā bhakti* point of view body plays the most important role in the *bhakti bhāva* as the abode of truth. The ultimate realization is achieved through the true realization of body. It is the yogic body of the emotion of *bhakti* that helps to realize the ultimate truth of *bhakti*.

Bhāgavat Pūrāṇa maintains that *jñāna* and *yoga* can never produce complete fulfilment without *bhakti*. Also in *bhakti yoga* when *bhakti* is attached to *jñāna* and *yoga* the ultimate realization of the *bhagavān* can be achieved. The *Gauḍīya* discourse of *Kṛṣṇa bhakti* is based upon these three canonical categories – *bhakti*, *jñāna* and *yoga*. It is different issue that the *Gauḍīya* authorities rejected the *advaita vedāntin jñāna* and *Pātañjala yoga*. But at the same time they were influenced by some *bhakti*-inflected forms of *advaita vedānta* and *yoga*. Holdrege writes that “they posit a model of realization that *incorporates* and *domesticates* the Advaitin and Pātañjala yoga models by recasting them as lower levels of realization of their own all-encompassing Godhead” (Holdrege, 2013, p. 170). Holdrege states that the *Gauḍīya* discourse re-vision meditation in the advanced stage of *sādhana bhakti* as the kernel of devotional method. The *Gauḍīya* meditative practice is integral to this devotional method that we commonly

know as *bhakti yoga*. The practice also considered techniques from *aṣṭāṅga yoga* to incorporate it in the devotional meditative method of *bhakti yoga*.

It should also be noted that Holdrege marks that the early *Gauḍīya* authorities chose the terms *rūpa* and *deha* to mark two categories of human bodies in *bhakti*. *Rūpa Gosvāmīn* used the terms *sādhaka rūpa* and *siddha rūpa* and *Jīva Gosvāmīn* and *Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja* used the terms *sādhaka deha* and *siddha deha*. They purposefully forswore the term *śarīra* since *śarīra* can depict both *sūkṣma śarīra* (subtle body) or *sthūla śarīra* (gross body). Thus they avoided the burden of the semantics of materiality. They inculcate *bhakti rasa* where the *bhakta* can savour union-in-difference with *Kṛṣṇa*. They establish their own ideal of inconceivable difference-in-nondifference (*acintya-bhedābheda*). Thus they refigured the concept of *yoga* body into devotional *yoga* body of *bhakti* through the practice of *bhakti* – and thus, bodies and emotions become inseparable, bodies become devotional through the emotion of *bhakti* reflected in the embodiment explained in this specific religious cult.

Bibliographical references

- Bourdieu, P. (1972). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1980). *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford University Press.
- Das, P. (1988). *Sahajiyā Cult of Bengal and Pancha Sakha Cult of Orissa*. KLM Private Limited.
- Dasgupta, S. (1946). *Obscure Religious Cults. As Background of Bengali Literature*. Calcutta University Press.
- Dimock, E. C. (1966). *The Place of the Hidden Moon. Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult of Bengal*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Flood, G. (2006). *The Tantric Body. The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion*. I.B. Tauris.
- Fosse, L. M. (2007). *The Bhagavad Gita*. (translated) YogaVidya.com LLC.
- Hayes, G. A. (2012). Eroticism and Cosmic Transformation as Yoga: The *Ātmatattva* of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of Bengal. In David Gordon White (Ed.) *Yoga In Practice*. Princeton University Press.
- Holdrege, B. A. (2013). The Gauḍīya Discourse of Embodiment: Re-visioning *Jñāna* and *Yoga* in the Embodied Aesthetics of Kṛṣṇa Bhakti. *The Journal of Hindu Studies*, 6, 154-197.
- Holdrege, B. A. (2015). *Bhakti and Embodiment. Fashioning Divine Bodies and Devotional Bodies in Kṛṣṇa Bhakti*. Routledge.
- Sarbadhikary, S. (2015). *Place of Devotion: Siting and Experiencing Divinity in Bengal-Vaishnavism*. University of California Press.
- White, D. G. (2012). *Yoga In Practice*. Princeton University Press.
- White, D. G. (2014). *The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali A Biography*. Princeton University press.

Citado. Somdatta, Mukherjee (2024) "Bodies & Emotions: Analyses of Embodiment & Bhakti in Sahajiyā" en Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios sobre Cuerpos, Emociones y Sociedad - RELACES, N°44. Año 16. Abril 2024-Julio 2024. Córdoba. ISSN 18528759. pp. 83-90. Disponible en: <http://www.relaces.com.ar/index.php/relaces/issue/view/647>

Plazos. Recibido: 15/11/2023. Aceptado: 27/12/2023.