

[DOI: 10.20472/AHC.2019.005.004](https://doi.org/10.20472/AHC.2019.005.004)

AMITABH VIKRAM DWIVEDI

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, India

TAXONOMY OF THE ROMANTIC HEROINE: INTERROGATING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS IN BRAJ POETRY

Abstract:

Unlike English literature, the taxonomy of the romantic heroine in the Braj literature is extended and elaborate. The nomenclature employed for each kind is descriptive, and far beyond the regular, hackneyed girlfriend, lover, beloved, sweetheart and darling type. These English expressions only tell us about romantic or sexual relationship between two lovers-married or unmarried, whereas the courtly Braj poets coined different words for heroine to express their psychological states of mind as well. Since this extended taxonomy follows a pattern that was well-established in the Bhagavata and Gita Govinda, and further mastered and reached to its perfection in the hands of Keshavdas and others, the Braj expressions are not only psychological in nature but they also reflect the religious overtone in its backdrop. The Hindu god and goddess, i.e. Krishna, Radha and Gopis are actually metaphors for lovers and beloved. This paper focuses on the taxonomy of heroine, and analyzes her moods, manipulation, persona and psyche enveloped in the poetry, while employing the textual analysis as a tool for research.

Keywords:

Hero; heroine; Braj literature; court poets; sexual and romantic love

Introduction

With the advent of *ritikavya* 'mannered or courtly poetry' in the 18th and 19th centuries in the Medieval India, a genre of *nayaka-nayika bheda* 'taxonomy of the romantic hero and heroine' came into existence. This article focuses on the taxonomy of *nayikas* 'heroine' used by the courtly poets in Braj poetry. The study will further explore how the nomenclature of the types of heroine depicts the psychological states of mind-their moods and manipulations as well as it will also throw light on their persona and psyche. The Braj courtly poets borrowed vocabulary from *barahmasa* 'folk songs in local dialects' which featured the lament of a woman in love who is separated from her beloved. The *Brijbhasha* 'Braj language', a descendant of the Middle Indo-Aryan *Apabramsha*, also drew words from Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian and Arabic sources. This linguistic borrowing also made the Braj lexicon richer so much so that each love type and style was to be expressed adequately. The Braj language is known for its musical texture-the consonants are soft and words have many vowels. It is believed that Braj language is best fit for poetry and song, and not for prose writing, and further this language is also considered the perfect language for romantic poetry. Each expression for heroine expresses a separate love style and personality of the heroine.

The paper tries to explore whether there is any connection between personality traits and love styles. Does our understanding of linguistics and modern psychology provide some insight into this? Following the taxonomy of John Alan Lee in his *The Colours of Love* (1973), Hendrick and Hendrick found different personality traits, associated with different love styles which might help us finding an answer of the question: how Braj poets succeeded in inventing numerous love types of heroine. Actually, each individual heroine (for taxonomy of heroine and description, see Appendix-1) has a peculiar love style, and each style is based upon an aspect of personality. So, for instance, more passionate love equals to greater self-esteem; more possessive love equals to lower self-esteem, if we follow the modern psychology as described by Hendrick and Hendrick. Similarly, sensation-seeking love is also the part of personality as well as game-playing lovers need variety, again, because of some personality trait.

Hendrick and Hendrick measures the personality factors, also known as Big Five, namely agreeableness, conscientiousness, extroversion, neuroticism, and openness. Also, Kenrick acknowledges the existence of cultural differences in love and corresponding behaviors- they arise because of social variations and variations in the physical ecology. In Hinduism, Lord Krishna is famous for his Rasleela 'love without passion' with Radha 'his maternal aunt' and hundreds of other gopis 'Radha's maids'. Krishna's type of love is considered an ideal type, and is practiced with some variations during the Holi by the followers of Hinduism. The Braj poets use Krishna, Radha and Gopis as metaphors for heroines who are in love in their courtly poetry, and depending upon their behaviours; they coined a love type which in turn both specifies and generalises for the heroine and readers respectively. Behaviors that are adaptive in one environment are not necessarily adaptive in a different environment. Therefore, to raise a question, like why we do not have a similar types in English, is actually invalid. There would be some different types in the English language to represent different colours of love. For example, Lee categorises six types of love: eros (passionate love), ludus

(game-playing, uncommitted love), storge (friendship love), pragma (calculating love), agape (altruistic love), and mania (obsessional love).

The aim of this paper is not to compare the taxonomy found in Braj poetry with that of taxonomies found in other languages and cultures-this will be a futile activity and it will not yield desired results. Instead, the paper will actively seek and highlight the religious and psychological aspects found in Braj poetry for developing a better understanding of love. For that, it will take into account theories derived from linguistics, psychology, or a mixture of both to provide an argument and explanation. The remainder of the paper is divided into the following headings: in the section titled, Hypothesis, the paper takes into account two hypotheses, stating that love types provide a better understanding of love, and that Braj poetry prepares a canvas of romantic love where spiritual, emotional and sexual colours draw an image; the next heading, titled research questions raise some significant questions related to the nature of love, romantic relationship, religious metaphors in Braj poetry, and the path of self-discovery; in Extended Taxonomies, the progress of taxonomy, starting from *Bhagavata* till medieval courtly poets, is discussed; the next heading, titled Major Braj Poets and their Poetry provides a glimpse to major Braj poets and their writings; the taxonomy of nayikas starts a discussion while taking into account the psychological and religious aspects of love; the heading Conclusion sums up the paper.

Hypothesis

1. The Braj romantic poetry with its taxonomy of the romantic hero/heroine uncovers psychological and religious aspects of love which reflects passionate spiritual-emotional-sexual attachment between a man and a woman, and reflects high regard for the value of each other's person.
2. Since romantic love is not a uniform phenomenon, only through numerous love types we can understand its various colours and hues.

Research Questions

1. What is the nomenclature of the heroine-types in the Braj poetry, and how does this taxonomy pave a path to understand the distinctive nature of love?
2. What is role of religious metaphors in Braj poetry? Do religious metaphors provide explanation to the psychological states of mind?
3. How can a loving relationship pave a path to self-discovery?
4. Does romantic love necessarily imply sexual inclusivity? And whether the ultimate realisation of romantic love is sex.
5. Does jealousy an intrinsic part of a romantic relationship?

Extended Taxonomies

The heroines of *Bhagavata* and *Gita Govinda* are goddess Radha and her *gopis* 'play maids of Radha'. The *dashama skandha* 'tenth episode' of the *Bhagavata* depicts Krishna as a romantic lover who performs and celebrates various *kridas* and *lilas* with Radha and *Gopi* as a pastoral cowherd. Jayadeva in his *Gita Govinda* presents goddess Radha as a central heroine who teases and woos, dallies and dances with Lord Krishna. Braj courtly poets brought Lord Krishna down to earth and made him totally human. They also transformed the rustic *gopi* 'maid' into a courtly *nayika* 'heroine'. The Bharata's eightfold description of heroines in *Natyashashtra* transformed into manifold in the hands of Braj courtly poets. However, it was Keshavdas who set the tone of courtly *nayaka-nayika bheda* 'taxonomy of the romantic hero and heroine' by creating numerous romantically sensuous and aesthetically charged situations.

There are four periods in the history of Indian poetry: *adikal* 'the ancient period', *bhaktikal* 'the devotional period', *ritikal* 'the mannered period', and *adhunik kal* 'the modern period'. Out of these, *Bhaktikal* 'devotional' and *ritikal* 'mannered' periods are closely associated with each other as they incorporate both romance and devotion in the poetry. Due to multiple Muslim invasions, the *Bhakti* period of medieval India was filled with the climate of psychological insecurity and lack of certainty for Hindus, and this led to the development of the *Vaishnava bhakti* cult, and that of Krishna in particular. The poets and sages used to seek refuge both in private and personal worship as well as in communal veneration of Lord Krishna. Most of the *bhakti* period poets, including Jayadeva sought refuge in Krishna as a master or lord, and Radha as a goddess or queen, and they glorified and eulogised their love and romance. We can say that by that time Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha were not become a metaphor for lover and beloved-the devotional tone had an upper hand over the romantic fervour. The *bhakti* poets mainly sought the blessings of their god and goddess, and their poetry in turn became their hymns. Notwithstanding their poetry prepared a fertile ground for the coming generation poets who could experiment on their footsteps during the *ritikal* 'the mannered period'.

But a question arises why only such mannered poetry originated, developed and flourished in the Braj region. The origin and evolution of *ritikal* 'the mannered period', its language and poetry and its transformation into miniature painting, was not abrupt, and it was associated with the history, sociology, politics and aesthetics of the Braj region. The earthly incarnation of Krishna happened in the Braj region, and the Hindu scriptures particularly *Puranas* identify this. Also, the Braj region had witnessed the progress of many religious traditions, and in the 16th century during the rise of *Vaishnavism* 'the *bhakti* movement', the cult of Krishna got intimately tied with Braj. Moreover, it was also not the case that before mannered poets no one wrote on love and romance in India. In ancient India, *shringara rasa kavya* 'love and romance poetry' produced in *Prakrit* and *Tamil* and then in *Sanskrit*. The prominent examples are: Hala's *Saptasati*, *Bhartihari's Shringara Trayi*, *Amaru's Shringara Shataka* and the *Aham* poetry in *Tamil*. So, the ancient Indian poets were well-accomplished in the literary arts and poetry. But the ancient poets' works could not reach to the common masses, and became as popular as the Braj courtly poetry.

Major Braj Poets and their Poetry

Majority of English readers are aware of only two courtly poets, namely Keshavdas and Bihari, and this knowledge is only through paintings which was brought to their attention by pioneers, such as Havel and Archer and Coomaraswamy. Keshavdas poetry opened the flood gates of romantic situations for the painters- Sahibdin of Mewar, Nihal Chand of Kishangarh and Nainsukh of Guler made use of it in their timeless paintings. However, the Braj literature is replete with other courtly poets and their works. There are at least fifty poets; the details of each along with their works are mentioned in the Appendix-1. *Brajbhasha* 'the Braj language' is used chiefly to compose *muktak kavya* 'fragmentary poetry' in three forms: *bhakti* 'devotional', *niti* 'moral and ethical', and *shringara* 'romantic'. The courtly poets wrote their poetry in *pada* 'a metrically song in rhyming couplets', describing *nakh-sikh varnan* 'description of the romantic heroine from tresses to the toes', *solah shringara* 'adornment of the heroine with the sixteen traditional adornments', *shad ritu varnan* and *barahmasa* 'description of lamentation are set against the changing seasons', and *nayika bhed* 'different hues and textures and situations of the woman in love'. The rest of the article provides the description of the *nayika bhed* which also throws light on the admixture of psychological and religious aspects of love.

Taxonomy of Nayikas: Psychological and Religious Aspects

The *nayika* 'heroine' saw a transformation in the hands of courtly Braj poets. Earlier, the heroine was either goddess Radha or a rustic *Gopi* 'maid', but now she is transformed into a romantic heroine of courtly love-she is both *ramini* 'desirable' and *kamini* 'sensuous' woman. The analysis of the taxonomy of heroine also finds its root in the paradigm of *prakriti* 'nature' in search of *purusha* 'ultimate being'- in the Hindu philosophy *prakriti* is multicolored and multilayered while *purusha* is singularly steadfast. Also, the common women of the town, of a lower social order, such as the wife of the gardener or the barber found representation in poetry.

A married woman totally dedicated to her husband is known as *Svakiya*. The poet (Lal) describes one such heroine who is ready for the pleasures of love which are akin to a war, and he says that *bhohan maror dhanu, baruni banaye baan* 'her brows are bow, eye lashes her arrows'. Another poet (Bhikharidas) gives a description of *navodha* 'young inexperienced heroine who is shy of romantic pleasures' who tells her friend that *prabiin bade baldev ke bhaiyaa* 'Krishna is very clever'-had I known his intentions I would not have slept on his bed. In the hands of courtly Braj poets, Lord Krishna has transformed into a metaphor used for a lover. The poet (Matiram) writes about *mugdha* 'a heroine who is growing up from a child to a youth and who is more shy than romantic' who talks to her friend about her beloved, and says *hon sakhii laajan Jaat mari* 'I am embarrassed' as when people gather and talk they insult him saying he has become my slave. There is also a description of heroine who is unaware of the changes in her body, known as *ajnatyauvana*.

The poet (Nevaj) provides description of *madhya* 'a heroine who has an equal measure of shyness and romance' who 'wished to kiss her beloved came close to his lips, but said no

when the beloved held her in his arms' *mukh chumban mein mukh le jo bhaje, piya ke mukh mein mukh naayo chahe*. The poet (Mansinh Dvijdev) describes *praudha* 'a heroine who has lost her inhibition and is well versed in the arts of romance'; one such heroine's pleasure is reflected on her lotus-like reddened face *phaili gayo raag mukh-pankaj lalaam par*. Quite surprisingly, a derogatory and abusive term for a woman, i.e. *kulta* 'a heroine who makes illicit love-relationship with many men' also finds an expression in Braj courtly poetry. The poet (Thakur) gives a description of *parakiya* 'a heroine who is married to one but loves another man', and the description goes like this: the heroine responds to a friend who is counseling her on issues of morality- *ab kaa samajhaavati, ko samjhe, badanami ke bijan boi chukii rii* 'why are you counseling me on ethical conduct now that I have already sown seeds of ill reputation?'

Also, there is description of other heroines, such as *gupta* 'a heroine who hides her love for her beloved'; *vidagdha* 'a heroine who cleverly sends signals of her love to her beloved'; *lakshita* 'a heroine whose love has been made public'; *anushayana* 'a heroine who is distressed and falls asleep while waiting for her beloved to arrive'; *mudita* 'a heroine who is excited when her beloved comes unexpectedly'; *samanya* 'a heroine who is free with her love and is involved with many men'; *anyasambhogdukhita* 'a heroine who is saddened when she sees marks of love caused by another woman on her beloved'; *garvita* 'a heroine who is proud of her beauty and her love'; *manvati* 'a heroine who finds her beloved guilty and feels angry'; *proshitapatika* 'a heroine who is saddened when she hears that her beloved is going abroad on business'; *kalahantrita* 'a heroine who fights and insults her beloved but who repents after he has left'; *khandita* 'a heroine who is jealous when she sees her beloved return in the morning after he has spent the night with another woman'; *vipralabdha* 'a heroine who is distressed when her beloved does not come to the appointed tryst'; *utkanthita* 'a heroine who expectedly waits for her beloved'; *svadhinapatika* 'a heroine whose beloved is totally dedicated to her'; and *abhisarika* 'a heroine who leaves her home in the middle of the night, ignoring various perils, to meet her beloved'.

Appendix-1

Sr. No.	Taxonomy of heroine	Description
1	Svakiya	A married woman totally dedicated to her husband.
2	Mugdha	A heroine who is growing up from a child to a youth and who is more shy than romantic.
3	Ajnatyauvana	A heroine who is unaware of the changes in body as she grows up.
4	Navodha	A young inexperienced heroine who is shy of romantic pleasures.
5	Vishrabdha Navodha	A newly married heroine who gradually comes to trust her husband and loses her inhibition and feels romantically drawn to him.
6	Madhya	A heroine who has an equal measure of shyness and romance.

7	Praudha	A heroine who has lost her inhibition and is well versed in the arts of romance.
8	Gupta	A heroine who hides her love for her beloved.
9	Parakiya	A heroine who is married to one but loves another man.
10	Vidagdha	A heroine who cleverly sends signals of her love to her beloved.
11	Lakshita	A heroine whose love has been made public.
12	Kulata	A heroine who has multiple romantic liaisons.
13	Anushayana	A heroine who is distressed and falls asleep while waiting for her beloved to arrive.
14	Mudita	A heroine who is excited when her beloved comes unexpectedly.
15	Samanya	A heroine who is free with her love and is involved with many men.
16	Anyasambhogdukhita	A heroine who is saddened when she sees marks of love caused by another woman on her beloved.
17	Garvita	A heroine who is proud of her beauty and her love.
18	Manvati	A heroine who finds her beloved guilty and feels angry.
19	Proshitapatika	A heroine who is saddened when she hears that her beloved is going abroad on business.
20	Kalahantarita	A heroine who fights and insults her beloved but who repents after he has left.
21	Khandita	A heroine who is jealous when she sees her beloved return in the morning after he has spent the night with another woman.
22	Vipralabdha	A heroine who is distressed when her beloved does not come to the appointed tryst.
23	Utkanthita	A heroine who expectantly waits for her beloved.
24	Svadinapatika	A heroine whose beloved is totally dedicated to her.
25	Abhisarika	A heroine who leaves her home in the middle of the night, ignoring various perils, to meet her beloved.

Appendix-2

Sr. No.	Poets	Major works
1	Udaynath Kavindra	Vinodchadrika and Rasachanrodaya
2	Karan Bhatt	Sahityachandrika; Rasakallol; Kavyodaya; Rasa Ullas
3	Kalidas Trivedi	Janjira; Vadhuvinod; Hajara
4	Kashiram	Kanakmanjari; Parshuram Samvad; Kavitt Kashiram

5	Gurudutt Sinh Bhupati	Rasaratna; Bhupati Sat Sai; Rasadipaka
6	Gwal	Bhaktbhavan; Vijayvinod; Hamirhattatha; Rasikananda; Sahityaananda; Rasrang; Kavidarpana
7	Chadrashekhar Vajpeyi	Hamirhath; Rasikvinod; Nakhashikh; Vrindavan Shatak; Haribhakti Vilas
8	Chintamani Tripathi	Pingal; Kavittvichar; Kavikulalakpataru; Shringar Manjari
9	Jagat Sinh	Ratnamanjari Kosh; Rasmrugank; Alankarasathidarpana; Uttammanjari; Chitramimsa; Jagatvilas; Nakhshikha; Bharatikantahbharan; Sahityasudhanidhi
10	Jaswant Sinh	Shringarshiromani
11	Tosh	Sudhanidhi
12	Datta	Lalityalata; Sajjanvilas; Svarodaya
13	Dev	Rasvilas; Bhavavilas; Kavyarasayan; Devmayaprapanch; Premchandrika; Sukhsagartarang
14	Dwijadev	Shringaralatika; Shringarabattisi; Shringarachalisi
15	Nandram	Shringaradarpana
16	Nagaridas	Nagarsamuchhaya
17	Nilkanth	Amreshvilas
18	Pajnes	Alankarratnakar
19	Padmakar	Jagadvinod; Padmabharan; Prabodhpachasa; Gangalahiri
20	Puhakar	Rasratna
21	Pukhi	Alankar Ratnakar
22	Pratap Sinh	Jay Sinhprakash; Alankarachintamani; Vyangarthakaumudi; Shringaramanjari; Shringarashiromani; Kavyavinod; Rasrajtilak; Ratnachandrika
23	Pravinrai	Kavipriya
24	Baldev Awasthi Dvij	Shringarsudhakar; Shrngarsaroj
25	Beni	Rasmay
26	Beni Pravin	Navarasatarang
27	Bodha	Ishkanama
28	Bhikaridas	Rassaransh; Shringaranirnaya; Kavyanirnaya
29	Manchit	Krishnayan; Surabhidanalila
30	Makarand	Alankararatnakar; Makarandvani
31	Matiram	Rasraj; Lalitlalam; Satsai; Alankarapanchashiksha

32	Makhan	Basantmanjari
33	Mubarak	Alakshatak
34	Raskhan	Premvatika; Sujana Raskhan; Danlila
35	Lal	Rasmul
36	Vikramsahi	Vikramsatsai
37	Shambhunath Mishra	Rasatarangini; Alankardipak; Rasakallol; Brahmarshatak
38	Shiv	Rasikvilas; Alankarbhusan; Pingal
39	Shobhnath	Navalrasachandrodaya
40	Shripati	Kavyasaroj; Kavyasudhakar; Anupras
41	Sukhdev Mishra	Nakhashikarasarnava; Jnanaprakash; Rasaratnakar; Chandvichar; Vrittivichar
42	Sunder	Shringara
43	Senapati	kaviratnakar
44	Sevak Bandijan	Barvai Nakhshishk; Vagvilas
45	Somnath	Rasapiyushnidhi; Raspanchadhyayi; Sujanvilas; Madhav Vinod; Dhruvacharitra; Brajendravindod
46	Harinath	Alankar Darpana

References

Lee, J. A. (1973). *The Colours of Love: An Exploration of the Ways of Loving*. Don Mills, Ont.: NewPress.