

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Volume - 2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka

Part 7

Jagad-ānanda

The Bliss of the Worlds

Text 151

yā vai śriyārcitam ajādibhir āpta-kāmair
yogeśvarair api sad-ātmani rāsa-goṣṭhyām
kṛṣṇasya tad bhagavataḥ prapadāravindam
nyastam staneṣu vijahuḥ parirabhya tāpam

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Although the Goddess
of Fortune & the
other demigods have all
their desires fulfilled
they get to worship
Kṛṣṇa only with their
purified minds
But during the
rāsa dance
→ still
lotus
feet

→ He placed His lotus feet on their breasts & they embraced it

“Although (**api**) the goddess of fortune herself (**śriyā**) and Lord Brahmā and all the other demigods (**aja ādibhiḥ**) have realized all their desires (**āpta-kāmaiḥ**) and are masters of yogic perfection (**yoga-īśvaraiḥ**), they can worship (**arcitam**) the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa only within their purified minds (**sat-ātmani**). But during the rāsa dance (**rāsa-goṣṭhyām**) Lord Kṛṣṇa (**kṛṣṇasya**) placed (**nyastam**) His feet (**bhagavataḥ prapada-aravindam**) upon these gopīs’ breasts (**yāḥ vai staneṣu**), and by embracing those feet (**tad parirabhya**) the gopīs gave up (**vijahuḥ**) all sorrow (**tāpam**).

Aren't all devotees of Kṛṣṇa equally glorious for renouncing their families and whatever else prevents them from approaching Kṛṣṇa?

Yes, but the intimacy of the gopīs' surrender makes them special.

Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet are worshiped by the goddess of fortune with all the opulence at her command; she serves her Lord's feet by massaging them, and she attends Him in various other ways.

Brahmā, Rudra, Indra, and other demigods also worship
Kṛṣṇa's feet, and so do the mahat-tattva and the other
elements of creation; the demigods and the elements over
which the demigods preside worship Kṛṣṇa's feet by
performing Vedic sacrifices and carrying out His orders.

Self-satisfied liberated sages also worship with devotion those
same feet, aiming at them as the supreme goal of life.

The great masters of bhakti-yoga worship His lotus feet within their purified hearts by hearing and chanting Kṛṣṇa's glories with pure love.

But the worship performed by all these elevated souls (with the exception of the goddess Lakṣmī) is for the most part only mental; rarely does Kṛṣṇa grant His darśana to these demigods, sages, and devotees.

The gopīs' worship of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet is much more intimate.

The words **kṛṣṇasya tad bhagavataḥ** indicate this intimacy.

The pronoun tat (“that”) implies that even before the rāsa dance the gopīs were already intimately familiar with the supreme beauty of Kṛṣṇa’s feet.

And after Kṛṣṇa left the gopīs at the very beginning of the rāsa-līlā, they spent some time vividly remembering those very feet in the ecstasy of separation.

Though these were the same lotus feet worshiped by Śrī, the goddess of fortune, the gopīs realized them in a special way, as the feet of the darling young son of Yaśodā and Nanda.

The lotus feet the gopīs repeatedly held to their breasts during the rāsa dance were thus the most excellent embodiment of all beauty.

By holding Kṛṣṇa's feet in this way, the gopīs were completely relieved of the pain of separation.

Certainly, then, the gopīs are the greatest devotees, because they worshiped Kṛṣṇa's feet not merely by meditating on them but by holding them physically in their embrace.

Because the feet they worshiped were the feet of the Supreme Lord in the form of Kṛṣṇa, the gopīs are superior to the demigods, headed by Brahmā.

Because the gopīs touched those feet directly, the gopīs are superior to the self-satisfied sages.

Because the gopīs held those feet to their breasts, the gopīs are superior to the masters of yoga.

And because the association of the gopīs with Kṛṣṇa occurred during the rasa-līlā, the gopīs are superior even to Mahā-lakṣmī.

As Uddhava describes how the gopīs, during the rāsa dance, obtained relief from the distress of separation, he harbors the concern that the feelings of separation the gopīs suffer now are much more serious.

Now that Kṛṣṇa has left them to go to Mathurā, Uddhava doubts whether even a skillfully delivered message from Kṛṣṇa can do much to console them.

Although Uddhava has done his best, the effect will most likely be negligible.

But in any case, he himself has been deeply affected by his meeting with the gopīs.

He has imbibed the spirit of their special prema, and in that mood
he has prayed to take birth in Vraja in any form of life, be it a
bush or other plant, that may be touched by the dust of the gopīs'
divine feet.

Because Uddhava could properly value and learn from the love of
the gopīs, it was him Kṛṣṇa chose to carry the message to
Vṛndāvana.

Like Uddhava, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī took to his own heart the
gopīs' mood of devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

At the end of the Tenth Canto, Śrīla Śukadeva expresses this mood when he praises Kṛṣṇa's Dvārakā queens:

yāḥ samparyacaran premṇā
pāda-saṁvāhanādibhiḥ
jagad-gurum bharṭṛ-buddhyā
tāsām kim varṇyate tapaḥ

“How could one possibly describe (kim varṇyate) the great austerities performed by these women (tāsām tapaḥ) who perfectly served Him (yāḥ samparyacaran), the spiritual master of the universe (jagad-gurum), in pure ecstatic love (premṇā)? Thinking of Him as their husband (bharṭṛ-buddhyā), they rendered such intimate services as massaging His feet (pāda-saṁvāhanādibhiḥ).” (Bhāgavatam 10.90.27)

Even though Śrīla Śukadeva, while speaking this verse, uses the term bhartr (“husband”) rather than jāra (“paramour”), he is actually thinking of the gopīs of Vraja and burning in the fire of their ecstasy.

But he dares not mention this, out of fear that in ecstasy he would lose his self-control.

Even in modern times, and even among men, there are great devotees who are known to have attained pure love for Kṛṣṇa in the mood of the gopīs.

No one should doubt this, thinking that for male devotees the mood of the gopīs is incompatible.

Anyone well versed in the epics and Purāṇas will know the example of the austere sages of the Daṇḍaka forest.

When the sages saw the beauty of Śrī Raghunātha (Lord Rāmacandra), they became attracted in the conjugal mood and wanted to enjoy having Him as their husband.

In the Uttara-khanda of Śrī Padma Purāna, Lord Śiva, speaking to his wife Pārvatī, describes that history:

dr̥ṣṭvā rāmaṁ hariṁ tatra
bhoktum aicchan su-vigraham
te sarve strītvam āpannāḥ
samudbhūtāś ca gokule
hariḥ samprāpya kāmena
tato muktā bhavārṇavāt

“When they saw Lord Hari in the beautiful form of Rāmacandra, they at once wanted to enjoy Him. Thus they all took birth as women in Gokula and, by their lusty attraction to Lord Hari, obtained Him as their husband. In this way they gained liberation from the ocean of material existence.”

The Kūrma Mahā-purāna also states:

agni-putrā mahātmānas
tapasā strītvam āpire
bhartāraṁ ca jagad-yoniṁ
vāsudevam ajaṁ vibhum

“By performing austerities, the wise sons of Agni took birth as
women and obtained as their husband Lord Vāsudeva, the
unborn and unlimited source of creation.”

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vande nanda-vraja-strīnām
pāda-reṇum abhīkṣṇaśah
yāsām hari-kathodgītam
punāti bhuvana-trayam

Again & again I
offer my respects to
the feet of NM the Gopis
whose ~~land~~ land belongs to
Hari & the Purifies the
3-worlds.

“Again and again (abhīkṣṇaśah) I offer my respects (vande) to the dust (renum) from the feet (pāda) of the women (strīnām) of Nanda Mahārāja’s cowherd village (nanda-vraja). When these gopīs (yāsām) loudly chant (udgītam) the glories (kathā) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (hari), the vibration purifies (punāti) the three worlds (bhuvana-trayam).”

After thus taking great satisfaction from sweetly singing the glories of the gopīs, Uddhava falls flat on the ground, on the very path their lotus feet have touched.

Picking up a speck of dust from the path, he places it on his head as if it were the rarest treasure in the universe.

And after offering again his prostrate obeisance, he recites this final prayer.

Uddhava is absorbed in ecstasy, so much so that even though he can see the gopīs, he speaks and offers homage to them with deep reverence as if they were not present.

Obviously, he feels sublime pleasure in chanting their glories.

The most ecstatic kind of saṅkīrtana, however, is that chanted by the gopīs themselves; their loud songs purify all the worlds, including the upper, lower, and middle planetary systems.

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī has described this earlier in his
narration of Uddhava's visit to Vṛndāvana:

**udgāyatīnām aravinda-locanam
vrajāṅganānām divam asprśad dhvanih
dadhnaś ca nirmanthana-śabda-miśrito
nirasyate yena diśām amaṅgalam**

“As the ladies of Vraja loudly sang the glories of lotus-eyed
Kṛṣṇa, their songs blended with the sound of their churning,
ascended to the sky, and dissipated everything inauspicious in
every direction.” (Bhāgavatam 10.46.46)

Uddhava also implies that any suitable praise of the gopīs, such as the prayers he has just sung, is in fact the most excellent form of hari-kathā.

Such glorification can easily purify the three worlds, as Uddhava hoped to do by speaking these verses.