

The Shackles of the Gopis

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Into English, within square brackets, and

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[...] “You have fully cut asunder the shackles that bound you to your home, shackles that are difficult to break, and serve Me lovingly.” [Bha.X.32.22]

Krishna speaks here, considering the gopis’ feeling of being married, that they believe themselves to be married and mortal beings. In the text, there is no word about the gopis having shackles of samsara, and saying that they were selfish and then vanquished their selfishness is a gross defamation of the gopis. [...] According to *Brahma* [in his stuti, Bha.X.14], the vrajavis’ house, family etc., all they have, their atma, their hopes are only for Krishna’s sake.

Generally, the gopis are careful *not to give Krishna a bad reputation* among the cowherds, a reputation of being a *seducer*. They are cautious *for His sake*, not for their reputation, but when He calls them to the rasa-play, they forget everything and run to Him *immediately*. It is *not* that they *hesitate* to run to Him in the rasa-lila – in their belief to be married women, feeling themselves to be adulteresses – they forget *everything* and run to Him *immediately*.

Generally, however, they observe their duties, the duties incumbent on them as wives of cowherds, which they think they are. They do this for Krishna’s sake, not out of “samsara” or selfishness [...]. They wear these shackles, these duties, for Krishna’s sake, but during the rasa-play, they transgress these bounds *for His sake* [immediately, without hesitation]. Higher than people think of Him, His joy is their joy, which He calls them to.

As you know from Shuka’s answer to Parikshit’s question, the gopis were not married [to the cowherds] at all. The cowherds always had *their* wives by their side; they did not marry Radha or the other gopis. Already during the celebration of matrimony, they married gopis who resembled Radha and the other gopis. However, Radha does not know this, and Krishna does not destroy this conception of Hers.

In his Krishna-Sandarbhā and Gopala-Champu, Jiva Gosvami has collected all these details from Skanda-, Brahma-, Brahmānda- and Brahmavaivarta-Purana and other sources. No one is betrayed in Vraja, as in the world of Maya and the adulterer. The first verse of the rasa-chapters [X.29.1] says that Krishna *particularly uses Yogamaya* in His lila with the gopis. [...]

No word in the text says that the gopis were shut up in their chambers by their men. To begin with, no one at all knows why these gopis suddenly are running away like wild, neither the older nor the younger of the cowherds and cowherdresses. And the husbands even less. [...] Shuka explains to Parikshit: “The cowherds were not angry at all because Krishna’s mighty power had produced a kind of mental derangement in them – they thought that their wives were by their side.” (X.33.37)

Think clearly now, please! This lila is just as complicated or even more complicated than Krishna’s lila with the calves and the boys. From other passages, from the words of the gopis in chapters 29 and 32 and Shuka’s description (see later in my notes), it is evident that the gopis are Krishna’s shaktis and wedded wives. The gopas and everyone else know that they were married. As you know, Krishna had also told the gopi girls that they were to be His wives. (ch. 22) No one should think that adultery is praised or is only used as a “metaphor” here in the Bhagavatam!!! Adultery is never “pure” love, as Krishna, Uddhava, and others call gopis’ love!!

As Shuka says, the husbands, etc., did not suspect Krishna or the gopis. When the gopis were in the woods, the gopas saw they were with them. Yes, and not only the husbands; “the inhabitants of Vraja,” i.e., their parents, their parents-in-law, their brothers, their kinsfolk, etc. But why does it say, “They thought...”? Since the wives of the gopas created by Yogamaya resembled the true gopis, the latter were never touched by the husbands in any way. [...]

The gopas were thus lawfully married to gopis – *the gopis created by Yogamaya, who are very much alike Krishna’s gopis*. And since they are very much alike to the true gopis, the cowherds, enchanted by Yogamaya, believe that the true gopis are with them – without actually being so. As soon as the day is dawning, these wives disappear, and Krishna’s gopis – who believe themselves to be married [to their so-called husbands] – return to their houses. [...]

It says, “Some gopis were in their houses and could not come out”. Full of anxious love, they closed their eyes, completely lost in thoughts of Krishna.” (X.29.9) [...] Because of their loving care, etc., for Him (tat), they cannot do anything else than forget everything else they have in their mind and exclusively think of Him.

In his stuti, Brahma says [...] that the vrajavasis – *not* only the gopis – have all they have, within and without, only for His sake, to give Him joy. Yashoda cooked His milk for His sake, and for His sake, she left Him.

Krishna’s gopis have their supposed husbands and homes for Krishna’s sake. But when Krishna calls them to render exceptional service, they leave everything they have for His sake, or as those mentioned here, who *tried to* leave everything, but *to no avail*. Here, you can see how Krishna’s gopis have a more intensive, [self-]hypnotising love for Krishna. In their will to serve Him and affectionately care for Him, they are completely lost in thoughts of Him, unable to think of anything else.

“They, whose happiness (in their hope to come to [serve] Krishna in the woods) was gone, attained great joy through the embrace of Krishna, Whom they had attained by exclusive thinking of Him. Through the severe agony of unbearable separation from the Beloved, everything dreadful (the obstacles standing in their way) had now been destroyed.” (Bhagavatam X.29,10–11) “Yes, they came together with Him, the most Precious of the precious, despite thinking that He was their Lover (and not their Husband). They left the body of attachments and became completely free – immediately – from the attachment to their house.”

As I have already said, it is a distinctive feature of anuraga that Krishna becomes visible and “shines forth” [visphurti]. In the even more intensive stage of prema, i.e., mahabhava, one directly plays with Him [avirbhava].

They don’t experience Him “in meditation”. They experience Him because they care for Him only for His sake and think of Him in the deepest possible way. They think Krishna is their lover and they are married [to others]. But now they leave their awareness of being on earth and being married [to others] and know Him as He is in the lila, which is not visible on earth, as their true Husband, from Whom they are not separated . It is out of the question that they

abandon a body made of Maya's gunas. [...] Krishna's co-players *never* have a body consisting of the three gunas of Maya. [...]

[In his translation of a part of Shrimad-Bhagavata-Mahatmyam, Svami writes: "In the prakata-prakasha, *the* form of being and expression of His realm that becomes manifest (prakata) on earth, in Vraja, in the district of Mathura, we have the eternal co-players, who believe and experience themselves as human beings, and amidst them gopas and gopis are born, who *are* mere human beings, for instance the gopis who could not rush to the rasa-play, but abandoned their guna-maya-body, and then, in the new deha (cit-body) of a parishada (God's co-player) entered the rasa-lila.]

I give you the passage from Uddhava's message here also: "The noble ones, who could not come to Me at night, to the rasa-play, when I played in the woods, and who remained at the cowherd settlement, by complete absorption in My nature and My power (virya), they came to Me." (Bha.X.47.37) "The women of Vraja perceived what their Beloved instructed them to do. Through His message, they remembered this, and deeply gladdened at heart, they told Uddhava ..." etc. Here, Krishna gives the gopis practical instructions on *what* they shall do until He returns to Vraja. [...]

God's realm is everywhere. During particular circumstances and particularly intense serving Love, the gopis perceive that Krishna is present in the realm that never becomes visible on earth [Goloka], and they immediately lose the awareness that they are here on earth and that He is not with them or that they could not be with Him – and the awareness of the gopi *here* becomes one with the identical gopi *in the realm of the Absolute [Goloka]*, and she immediately has rasa-lila etc. with Him in His invisible realm. [...]

According to God's Word Revelation, God's realm, His eternal form, and His eternal co-players are always present; at certain times, His realm becomes visible in the world, it doubles, so to say. The fullness is here; the fullness is there. At certain moments, every prema-bhakta can experience that the eternally present invisible realm becomes visible, that it shines forth. This happens when his longing for service attains a certain intensity. The gopis experience this to a very great extent because they are all Krishna's eternal beloved and wives in eternity and have maha-bhava, anuraga, etc.

In addition to this, just before the rasa-lila[-chapters in the Bhagavatam], you have the account in which Krishna shows them their and His own realm [Goloka], which never becomes manifest in the world [X.28]. [...]

(Sadananda, Corrections, page 214 ff.)