

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

The Rasa Dance

Houston, Texas: June 1, 2007

Yesterday in our Srimad-Bhagavatam class, we spoke about the chapter in Srimad-Bhagavatam called Venu-gita. There, the gopis were fully absorbed in talks about Krsna; it was as if He were there with them. They glorified Him, thinking, “We are worthless, but the deer, cows, calves, peacocks, and even the flute on His lips are very fortunate. The flute is fortunate because it resides on His lips. The deer are very beloved to Krsna, and approaching Him with their husbands just behind them, they worship Him with their love-laden glances.” The gopis think that the birds are actually not birds. They are really sages and wise-men sitting on the branches of trees who, by hearing Krsna’s flute-song and by seeing the sweetness of His form, meditate on Him. The gopis think that the Yamuna River, Manasi Ganga River, and Sarasvati River come to embrace Him with the arms of their waves. But Krsna neglects them, so their waves come down. Then, taking their lotus flowers, they offer them to Krsna’s lotus feet.

In so many ways, the gopis glorify Krsna and think, “We are very unfortunate!” and in this way they remember His sweet pastimes.

Now I will explain the introduction to Krsna’s rasa dance pastimes. The following incidences were the events leading up to it:

When Sita was married to Rama in Janaka-puri, all the young ladies residing there also wanted to marry Him. Rama told them, “You must first appear in Krsna-lila, in the forms of gopis, and then I will fulfill your desires.”

In Vrndavana, there were many kinds of gopis, like yauthiki and ayauthiki, [*See Endnote 1] who were worshipping the goddess Katyayani and praying, “Please make Krsna my most beloved, my husband.” These gopis worshipped in this way for one month, and one day Sri Krsna came to fulfill their desires. He came to them while they were taking bath naked in the Yamuna River. He stole their garments, climbed upon a tree, and began to laugh. The gopis saw Him in the tree with their garments, and a few of His young friends were also present there.

They told Krsna, “Where are our garments? Krsna, give us our garments! If You do not give them to us, we will tell Nanda Maharaja. Then, if You are still not corrected, we will go and complain to Kamsa Maharaja. Kamsa Maharaja will come with his army, he will arrest You, and he will take You to Mathura.” Krsna said, “Oh, you have committed an offense towards Varunadeva, the god of the waters, because You are taking bath naked in the river. Therefore you must touch your foreheads with folded palms and bow down before the demigod Varuna, in order to be excused from this offensive act.” The gopis followed Krsna’s instruction.

What are the truths hidden in this pastime? Krsna is everywhere. When the demons Duryodhana and Dusasana were once trying to disrobe Draupadi by pulling off her garments, Krsna incarnated as her sari, and thus covered her naked body. In other words, Draupadi became wrapped in Krsna. Sri Krsna is everywhere. He has already seen the naked beauty of the gopis because He is everywhere and He sees everything. Therefore, He could not have stolen the gopis’ clothes out of a desire to see them naked. Whether the gopis had appeared naked before Him or not, still He is always surrounding their bodies as their cloth, in the same way as He did with Draupadi. If one covers oneself with anything, even with iron shapes, Krsna must be present there. Nothing is hidden from Him at any time.

There must be some other confidential reason. In Vedic culture, only the husband may see his wife without clothing. So Krsna made the gopis appear naked before Him naked as a token of His accepting them as His beloveds.

Krsna felt that the sense of shyness and shame of the gopis should be gone. He thought, “There should be nothing between Me and My beloved gopis.” Sri Krsna means to say here that in the gopis there is no sense of awe and reverence towards Him. Our Gosvamis have explained this. Krsna told the gopis, “Now, you have become siddha (perfect). Autumn is coming soon, and at that time I will fulfill your desires. You will enter My Rasa-lila along with the eternally perfect (nitya-siddha) gopis, and I will enjoy pastimes with you all.”

I will now explain the superior position of the gopis:

After this incident, one day Krsna went to the border of Mathura and Vrndavana. There was nothing to eat from the trees there; only ashoka trees were present. Baladeva was hungry – but not actually hungry. He was acting in that way only to give mercy to the wives of the brahmanas (the Yajna-patnis) who were performing sacrifices.

The Yajna-patnis came to Krsna with a large amount of foodstuffs. They had left their husbands, children, and relatives, and did not want to return to them. Krsna told them, “You should return to your homes,” and at last they did so.

Hearing the sweet flute-song of Krsna, the gopis also ran to Him and gave up their children, fathers, mothers, husbands, and everything else they owned. Even those gopis who were in the midst of cooking, left that. Even if a chapati was burning on the stove, they left it, and if they were in the midst of giving milk to their children, they left that activity. They left everything and went to Krsna.

When the gopis arrived in Krsna’s presence, He told them, “Return to your homes and remain with your husbands and children.” The gopis argued with Him and defeated Him in that argument, and He was bound to perform Rasa dance with them.

In contrast, the Yajna-patnis had to return home. Why? Krsna cannot perform rasa with brahmana ladies. He has great respect for them, so they were obliged by Krsna’s desire-potency Yogamaya to return to their homes.

When the wives of the brahmanas returned, their husbands began to repent. They said, “Fie on us, fie on us. Although our wives have no qualification to read the Vedas or perform sacrifices and they have no sacred thread (indicating brahmana initiation), they were able to go to Krsna and fulfill His desire. We could not do so, due to our fear of Kamsa.”

What became of the Yajna-patnis? In their brahmani (female brahmana) forms, they were not able to join with Krsna in Rasa-lila. However, because of their desire to do so, it is certain that in their next birth they would become gopis and be accepted by Krsna. If anyone remembers Krsna and His gopi associates at the time of death, that person will surely become like the gopis. Let us take the example of Bharata Maharaja. At the time of death, Bharata Maharaja was thinking of a deer, and thus he became a deer.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja spoke the remainder of his discourse in Hindi, as the Houston Hari-katha Festival was filled with Hindi speaking devotees who had requested him to do so. Every five or ten minutes, he called on Sripad Damodara Maharaja to give the English translation. Below is the English translation:]

Factually, only Sri Krsna can fulfill everyone's desires. He gave benedictions to the sadhana-siddha gopis by saying, "Soon we will meet and perform Rasa-lila." Then, in the autumn, Krsna saw the full moon. At that time, the rays of the setting Sun were reddish and they made the full Moon appear red. The full moon indicated to Krsna a message from the Moon-god: "Previously, I stole the wife of the guru of the demigods, Brhaspati. You are in my dynasty, so You should do the same with the wives of the cowherd men."

From rasa (with a short first 'a') comes Rasa (with a long first 'a' and thus pronounced raasa) [*See Endnote 2]. What is rasa (with a short first 'a')? Worldly rasa is a nectar drink made of a mixture of sugar and water. Spiritual rasa is that feeling of ecstasy felt by the gopis when they see the lotus face of Sri Krsna. When that feeling combines with talking with Him and singing and dancing with Him, that astonishing taste becomes a substance called Rasa (with a long first 'a'). When many ladies dance with one male – Krsna – and their hands are placed around each others necks, this is the Rasa dance.

When Krsna saw the full moon, He remembered this. The season was autumn; so the sky was clear, the rivers were clear, the Moon was full, and the kunjās (secluded groves) were beautifully decorated. All the favorable ingredients for Rasa were present; everything was perfect for the performance of Krsna's pastimes. Then, understanding Krsna's desire, His desire potency, Yogamaya, attracted the gopis.

Krsna created the sound 'klim' (pronounced kling) with His flute. All the pastimes of Krsna are in that sound. That sound crossed the three worlds, including the planet of Lord Brahma. It entered Goloka Vrndavana, and there it entered the ears of the gopis. No gopi in a maternal relationship with Krsna – neither Mother Yasoda and others like her – could hear this sound. Even the ladies in the heavenly planets could not hear that sound. It entered only the ears of the gopis, and from the gopis' ears it went into their hearts and stole their minds. It then returned to Krsna and surrendered the minds of the gopis to Him. To recover their minds, therefore, the gopis ran to the place where Krsna was standing in the forest.

The flute had called each gopi in such a way that was unknown to the other gopis, and now millions of gopis reached the place where Krsna was playing His flute.

Krsna asked the gopis, "Why are you here? You should return home. The gopis replied, "How can we return without our minds? Without our minds, our feet cannot even move."

Before hearing the flute-song of Sri Krsna, the gopis had been performing various household activities. Now they left those activities and went to Sri Krsna. Some gopis had been milking their cows, and they left the cows to go to Krsna. Some had been taking care of their calves while their husbands were milking their cows, and they also left them. Some had been making yoghurt and some had been cooking; they left what they were doing and went to Krsna. Some gopis had been making dalia, but when they heard Krsna's flute-song they said to themselves, "Forget about cooking dalia! I must go to Krsna at once." Some gopis had been serving their husbands and children in different ways, but they left them to go to Krsna. Some had been in the midst of putting kajal (black eye-ointment) on their eyes – and they had just put it on one eye. When they heard the song of Krsna's flute, they left at once, without putting kajal on their second eye.

Some gopis had been cleaning their homes, but they left that. Some had been putting on their garments, but when they heard Krsna's flute-song they were so attracted that they did not complete the task properly. They put their jewellery on their feet instead of their neck. Dressing in a disorderly fashion, they left to meet with Krsna.

When Krsna saw them, He personally put the kajal on their second eye and placed their garments in a proper way.

These gopis did not care for their husbands' objections. Their husbands had been trying to stop them, but they did not listen. They went to meet Krsna.

We should understand that there are four types of gopis. The nitya-siddha gopis, like Lalita, Visakha, and Bhadra, are the manifestations of hladini-sakti (the complete pleasure potency of Krsna), Srimati Radhika. They immediately left their homes; no one could stop them. There were also other gopis, like the muni-cari and rsi-cari gopis, who had previously been great sages.

There were also those ladies who had met Sri Rama in Janakpuri and wanted to marry Him. Sri Rama had told them, "In My next pastime, as Sri Krsna, I will fulfill your desires." Sri Rama had been performing a Rajasujya sacrifice (the sacrifice performed in order to establish the supremacy of the reigning king) every year, with a golden Deity of Sita-devi sitting on His left side. An installation ceremony had been performed each year, wherein a new Deity of Her was installed, and all those manifestations of Sita-devi took birth as gopis.

Those gopis who had associated with the nitya-siddha gopis at once went to join the Rasa dance. On the other hand, those who did not have such association and were not completely purified, could not go. Those who were not married were stopped by their mothers, fathers, or brothers. The hearts of those who could not go immediately were completely attracted by Krsna and His sweet flute-song, and at the same time they were not perfect enough to enter the Rasa dance. Some of those who were married could not go because of their children. [Some sadhana-siddha had children of their own, but no nitya-siddha gopis had children. -ed] Their husbands stopped them. They stayed within their homes, because their houses were locked, but they 'gave up their bodies'. This means that they went with their mind and souls to the place where Krsna was waiting.

Those who were locked in the house by their husbands, fathers and mothers had so much feeling of separation that it was like fire which burnt all their asubha (inauspiciousness). Some say that the words 'asubha' and 'subha' in the Srimad-Bhagavatam mean 'papa' and 'punya' (the reactions to impious and pious activities), but this is not so. They were feeling separation, and that disappeared. *[See endnote 2] When we hear that a gopi left her body, we should not think that she died. This is not a fact. This is an inauspicious thing, and an inauspicious thing could not happen during the most auspicious Rasa-lila. 'Inauspiciousness' (asubha) here means 'the inability of the gopis to meet with Krsna in Rasa-lila.' That was burnt away by the fire of separation.

This Rasa dance took place for the duration of a night of Brahma, which was the duration of four yuga cycles (four billion three hundred and twenty million years) by our time. It was a very long night. By the gopis separation, which was like fire, their asubha disappeared. How? They closed their eyes and began to meditate on Krsna. That day they were obstructed by their family members, but the next day, when they opened their eyes, they met with the nitya-siddha-gopis and became matured. In this way, all the gopis who were blocked by their husbands had the association of nitya-siddha-gopis. They gradually matured and then joined the Rasa.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura gives the example of a mango tree. He explains in his commentary that if one mango is ripe on the tree, a person will pick all the mangos from the tree even if they are not ripe. That person will then bury the unripe mangos with the ripe mango underneath a pile of grains. Then, from the heat of the grains, the mangos will all ripen by the effect of the ripe one, but not all on the same day. As they ripen, they will be ready to eat.

These rasa-lila pastimes were being explained to Pariksit Maharaja by Srila Sukadeva Gosvami. Pariksit Maharaja was watching the audience and he could see that there were many types of listeners. Some were fruitive workers (karmis), some were mental speculators (jnanis), some were impersonalists (advaita-vadis), and some were perfected souls like Narada Muni, Pulastya Rsi and Sri Vedavyasa. There was no doubt in the hearts of those perfected souls, but Pariksit Maharaja could see a doubt in others. To dispel the doubts of the unqualified persons, especially the impersonalists, Pariksit Maharaja told Srila Sukadeva Gosvami, “The gopis did not think of Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead or the Supersoul in all hearts. They saw Him as their beloved paramour. In this world, a woman’s relationship with a man who is not her husband is the most degraded thing. How could the gopis have achieved liberation? How could they have been freed from the cycle of birth and death?”

Srila Sukadeva Gosvami became somewhat angry. He said, “I already explained this to you when I discussed the pastime of Sri Prahlada Maharaja:”

kamad dvesad bhayat snehad
yatha bhaktyesvare manah
avesya tad-aghama hitva
bahavas tad-gatim gatah

[“Many, many persons have attained liberation simply by thinking of Krsna with great attention and giving up sinful activities. This great attention may be due to lusty desires, inimical feelings, fear, affection or devotional service. I shall now explain how one receives Krsna's mercy simply by concentrating one's mind upon Him.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 7.1.30)]

Although Sri Krsna is beyond the material senses and un-manifest to the eyes of the unqualified, He appeared here in this world and, by the mercy of Yogamaya, all could see His pastimes. If one can achieve Krsna as Sisupala did, out of envy, or like Kamsa Maharaja out of fear, why can the gopis not achieve Krsna through their love and affection for Him?

Four types of persons were able to approach Krsna, and the main quality they had in common was their absorption in Him. Of the four moods, envy and fear are to be rejected. Even though Kamsa and Sisupala were absorbed in Krsna, their mood was not favorable for Krsna-bhakti. We leave aside these two moods – the mood of Kamsa and Sisupala – and we accept the two remaining moods – the mood of the gopis, and the mood of the Yadus like Arjuna and the cowherd boys like Subala, in friendship. Srila Sukadeva Gosvami replied to Maharaja Pariksit’s question, “Have no doubt. By absorption in the Supreme Lord, one will achieve Him, so why would this not be true of the gopis? The gopis are Krsna’s potency (sakti), and they appeared in the forms of heroines in Krsna’s pastimes.

When the gopis first came to Krsna, He welcomed them and said, “Welcome most fortunate gopis! Why are you not speaking? Has some problem occurred in Vrndavana? I cannot understand why you have come here.” Being most clever, Krsna was trying to increase their eagerness.

The gopis are not less intelligent than Krsna. They remained silent, waiting to hear Him express His actual intention.

Krsna said, “This forest of Vrndavana is very dark. There are many ferocious beasts like bears and lions. Also, your husbands and friends are looking for you. What if they come here and see us together? This will cause a great disturbance. O gopis, maybe you came here to see the forest, the beauty of the flowers and the chirping of the birds. Now that you have seen these things,

please return home. Your children are crying and the cows need to be milked. If the cows are not milked, they will suffer.

“Perhaps you have come here to see Me, and now you have seen Me. A woman should never abandon her husband, even if he is old, ugly, lame or poor, or a combination of these disqualifications. A lady should always tolerate her husband. If you give up your husbands, all will criticize you; so please go back home. Go back home.”

Some of the gopis manifested anger and a sulky mood. They said, “Oh Krsna, Your flute-song called each of us: “Radha! Lalita! Visakha! Campakalata!” Hearing this, we all left everything for You. We have heard that previously You said:

ye yatha mam prapadyante
tams tathaiva bhajamy aham
mama vartmanuvartante
manusyah partha sarvasah

[“As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Prtha.” (Bhagavad-gita, 4.11)]

“We have given up everything and come to You as lovers. You should reciprocate with us; otherwise You are breaking Your promise.”

Some other gopis said, “We were very happy with our family and friends. It is Your fault that we came here. It is the fault of Your beautiful form and flute-playing. It is not our fault at all. You played Your flute and disturbed our lives. We are women, so it is not astonishing that Your flute attracts us. It astonishes everyone, what to speak of women. Even cows, birds, trees and all other forest creatures become attracted to You when they hear Your flute-playing. When the trees hear the flute-song, even though they are inert and non-moving, their hearts melt and tears come down in the form of honey. Birds are restless by nature, but when they hear Your flute-song, they become like great sages; they close their eyes and meditate on You. The Yamuna is a lifeless river, and yet she offers her heart, in the form of flowers, to Your lotus feet. “Therefore, it is not our fault that we became attracted. It is the fault of Your beauty and flute, so do not blame us.”

Then rasa-lila began.

Krsna is the Supreme Lord and the gopis are hladini-sakti (His pleasure potency) and Her manifestations. Krsna is enjoying pleasure by the association of His hladini-sakti potency, and when the gopis see Him pleased, they experience even more pleasure than Him. In this way, the pleasure of Krsna and the gopis continually increases.

Srimati Radhika was in the middle of the Rasa dance circle, and all the gopis were surrounding Her, and Krsna was dancing with each gopi in the circle. The gopis on the periphery could not see anyone but themselves. They proudly thought, “I am most fortunate because Krsna is dancing only with me. I am even more fortunate than Radha.”

“Srimati Radharani on the other hand, saw all the gopis and Herself dancing with Krsna, and She became transcendently jealous or sulky.

“Krsna is such a rascal,” she thought. “He always says He loves me the most, but now He is dancing with the other gopis while He dances with Me. When I look towards Myself, I see that

He is dancing with Me, and when I look towards the other gopis, I see that He is dancing with them. They are not equal to Me.”

Krsna saw that all the gopis had become proud and that Radharani was in maan, the transcendental sulky mood of thinking “He is treating me the same as the other gopis,” and therefore the Rasa dance temporarily came to an end. Krsna wanted to establish the supremacy of Srimati Radhika, and therefore, seeing that Radhika had left, Krsna also disappeared from the arena of the Rasa dance.

The gopis thought, “Where has He gone? Where has He gone?” They became maddened in His separation and began to remember His pastimes – how He speaks so beautifully, how His form is sweet, and how His flute-playing is all-attractive. Completely absorbed in Krsna and searching for Him, they asked the large trees like pippal, mango and kadamba. “Oh trees, you are like munis. You have performed many austerities and therefore you can see everything. Please tell us which way Krsna went.” The trees did not reply, however, and therefore the gopis told them, “You are males; that is why you are on Krsna’s side.”

Then they approached all the varieties of creatures in the forests. They asked the Tulasi tree, “Oh Tulasi, you are very fortunate. You are always in connection with Krsna, by residing either on His garland or on His feet. So tell us, which way did He go?” Tulasi also did not speak, and therefore the gopis said, “You are so happy that, having met Krsna, you are not able to speak. Or, maybe you are on His side.”

Then they asked a certain tree full with blossoming flowers, “Krsna must have touched you. You are happy, and that is why there are so many flowers on you.” The tree did not say which way Krsna had gone, so again, the gopis thought that tree must be on His side.

The gopis then became so absorbed in Krsna that they began to identify with Him and imitate His activities. One gopi said, “I am Krsna.” She lifted her finger as though she were lifting Govardhana. The gopis did not become one with Krsna in every respect; rather, they entered this mood for the sake of His pastimes. One gopi said, “I am Yasoda.” Another gopi said, “I am Putana,” and they enacted that pastime. There is a secret here. No gopi can accept the mood of Putana. Therefore, Yogamaya manifested a gopi to play the role of Putana and other demons, so that the real gopis could enact Krsna’s pastimes with them.

While imitating Krsna’s pastimes and progressing onwards in their search, the gopis saw Krsna’s footprints in the ground with nineteen symbols, like the elephant-goad, the fish, the water-pot, and the flag. Beside His two footprints were two smaller-sized footprints. Whose feet were they? The gopis who, for the sake of Krsna’s pastimes, act against Srimati Radhika (the vipaksa-gopis) said:

anayaradhito nunam
bhagavan harir isvarah
yan no vihaya govindah
prito yam anayad rahah
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.30.28.)

Those gopis said, “We do not know who this gopi is. Having left all of us, She is alone with Krsna. She has worshipped the Supreme Personality of Godhead more than us, and the evidence is that Krsna has taken Her to a secluded place.”

Those gopis who are on the side of Radhika (svapaksa), like Lalita and Visakha, became most ecstatic. They exclaimed within themselves, “Oh, these are the footprints of our Svamini, Srimati Radhika.”

Further on, the gopis could not see the footprints of that other gopi, and they understood that Krsna must have carried Her at that point. On one tree they saw that the branches were devoid of flowers where there should have been flowers. The front part of Krsna’s feet were imprinted on the ground, but not His heel prints. The gopis surmised that He must have been standing on His toes to pluck the flowers, and had been decorating the hair of that fortunate gopi with those flowers. Krsna thus received a new name – Kesava – He who decorates the ‘kesa,’ or hair, of Srimati Radhika.

Srimati Radhika was thinking, “My friends like Lalita and Visakha have given up everything for Me. If they can share this good fortune, I will be happy. It is not proper that I should be alone with Krsna.” In order to give the other gopis a chance to serve Krsna, She told Him, “I am very tired. I cannot walk. Please take Me wherever You like.”

Krsna could see other gopis coming from behind, and He thought, “If these other gopis see Me alone with Radhika, they will be envious of Her. I have accomplished what I desired: Radharani’s sulky mood (maan) is pacified and the pride of the other gopis has vanished. If I disappear now, the gopis can be together in harmony, and again we can have Rasa.” Thinking in this way, Krsna disappeared.

This Rasa dance pastime actually proves the super-excellence of Srimati Radhika. When Krsna left, Srimati Radhika began to lament and weep and almost fainted. The proof of Her super excellence is that Krsna left the Rasa dance in order to look for Her, because He did not feel that Rasa was complete without Her. Leaving aside all the other gopis, Krsna took Her alone. When all the gopis came weeping and met with Srimati Radhika, even the vipaksa gopis (those opposed) felt compassion for Her, thinking, “She is weeping like us.” All met together and wept with Her.

In the meantime, Krsna went to Imlitala just behind Kesi-ghata and became absorbed in thinking of Radhika:

radha-cinta-nivesana yasya kantir vilopita
sri-krsna-caranam vande radhalingita-vigraham

["I worship the lotus feet of that form of Sri Krsna when, due to being thoroughly immersed in separation from Srimati Radhika (who is displaying mana, Her mood of jealous anger), His own dark complexion vanishes and He assumes Her bright, golden luster; or, I worship the lotus feet of Sri Krsna as He is embraced by Srimati Radhika (after Her mana has broken)."]

Krsna sat alone under the tree and remembered only Srimati Radhika. Remembering Her, He assumed Her complexion and became Sacinandana Gaurahari. All these pastime places – Srngara-vata (where Krsna decorated Srimati Radhika), Seva-kunja (where He served Her), and Imlitala – are in Vrndavana.

Having met together, the gopis began to sing together their songs of lamentation in separation, which is called Gopi-gita. Tomorrow we will hear about that.

Gaura-premanande Hari Hari bol.

[*Endnote 1: The yauthiki gopis took birth in Vraja together, in a group, after being absorbed in the sadhana for attaining that most elevated status. In other words, they are members of a particular group. There are two kinds of yauthiki (groups): muni-caris (those munis who performed austerities and attained the audience of Ramacandra in Dandakaranya forest in their previous life, and the upanisad-cari (the personified Upanisads). The beautiful damsels celebrated by the name ayauthiki were exceptionally attached to gopi-bhava, and performed sadhana with intense eagerness and natural attachment. Some took birth alone, and others in groups of two, three, or even more at the same time. (Taken from Jaiva-Dharma, chapter 32)]

[*Endnote 2: The following explanation is from the Srila Narayana Maharaja's bhavanuvada of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's commentary on Srimad-Bhagavatam Ch. 29 (The Rasa Dance) verse 10:

Srila Sukadeva Gosvami hides the confidential desired goal of the gopis from materialistic people. By the words duhsaha etc., he expresses the external meaning as well as the deep inner meaning that is dear to devotees who have knowledge of confidential devotional service.

[First he speaks for materialistic people:] "Sri Krsna granted liberation to the gopis." This means that when the gopis experienced the acute pain of separation from their most dearly beloved, the inauspiciousness (asubha) in their beings vanished. The result of their auspicious activity (punya) was also destroyed as they experienced the bliss of embracing Acyuta (Krsna) in their meditation. Therefore, the bondage of past activity being destroyed, they attained the Supersoul by thinking of Him as their paramour, and they gave up their bodies made of three modes of nature.

[Now He is speaking for devotees:] At the time of intense meditation, they experienced extreme sorrow due to their fire-like separation from their beloved. They also attained the unparalleled happiness of meeting with Him. In this way their desire was fulfilled. What's more, the immense suffering of separation from their dearest beloved humiliated all inauspiciousness. The intolerable fire of separation for one's beloved exceeds the power of all things that inflict death, beginning with the forest-fire and ending with the kala-kuta poison. In this fire all inauspiciousness renounced its pride in its severity and, conceding defeat, began to tremble.

When the gopis experienced in their meditation the bliss of the embrace given by Acyuta, all material and spiritual auspiciousness was destroyed. [By then, their spiritual body made from prema and endowed with appropriate self-conception was already manifested.] Here, 'auspiciousness' refers to the material happiness in millions of universes and the happiness of thousands of Brahman realizations. When this auspiciousness is compared to the bliss attained by the gopis in their momentary vision of their beloved Krsna embracing them in their heart, it is apparent that it is inferior.

There is also such explanation: "The sorrow of separation from the Lord and the happiness of meeting with Him destroyed their past sins and piety. This is because only when a person suffers or enjoys the consequences of his past activity can his parabdha karma be destroyed." Such explanation cannot be accepted by devotees, because separation or meeting with the Lord is not the result of pious or impious activity. It cannot be said that separation from the Lord results from sinful activity or that meeting with Him is the result of pious activity. The results of past activity of a sadhaka performing bhajana are destroyed when he arrives at the stage of anarthanivrtti. This is the only correct conclusion.

ERRATUM: Please excuse the small error in our last Harikatha, entitled "Reality" (Houston, May 31, 2007). On page 3, it read, "Nanda Baba put Krsna on his lap and gave Him some laglus with gur," but it should have read "...gave Him some 'laddus...'"
Thanks for your understanding.

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