

Who was Sri Radha ?

BY HANUMANPRASAD PODDAR.

A gentleman has asked the following question: "It is stated somewhere in the *Kalyan* that Śrī Rādhā is the *Hlāḍīnī Śakti* (Enrapturing Energy) or *Ādi Śakti* (Prime Energy) of the Lord. If such is the case, what shall we call Śrī Rukmiṇī ? We place Śrī Rukmiṇī on the same rank with Śrī Sitā, whom we recognize as a manifestation of the *Ādi Śakti*. The name of Śrī Rādhā is nowhere to be found in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*; if she was a manifestation of the *Ādi Śakti*, why did she not accompany the Lord ? Moreover, she ought to have been formally married with the Lord."

Another question that he asks is, whether the Love of the milkmaids of Brindabana was pure and free from carnality.

It is very difficult to answer these questions; for my conviction is that Śrī Rādhā *cum* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a supremely divine and transcendental Reality. Their forms as well as their *Līlās* are divine, the scene of those *Līlās* was also divine and they were enacted by divine beings with minds, intellects and bodies made of a purely divine stuff.* One must be endowed with divine eyes, divine ears, divine speech, a divine mind and a divine intellect in order to be able to behold, hear, describe and understand the Divine *Līlā*. How, then, can an earthly creature like myself know this divine truth and how can he expound it through

* Had the Body and the various organs of the Lord been material, i. e., made up of the five great elements evolved from that *Māya* which veils the real nature of things (अवयवरूपा), ascetics and sages who have crossed the ocean of *Māya*, transcended the three *Guṇas* or modes of nature, and who rejoice in the Self, could not have been enchanted by the beauty of His person and the odour of His limbs and could not have eagerly sought the dust of His feet.

earthly speech ? Hence whatever I am going to write on the subject should not lead anyone to believe that whatever I say is the whole and sole truth and that there is nothing beyond it; nor should anyone think that I am casting reflection on any particular viewpoint, or that I am taking up my pen to silence any caviller or that, out of bias, I want to inflict my views on others. It is never my intention that what I write should be accepted by the readers in any case. I am simply making an attempt here to record for my own spiritual benefit my convictions in the matter formed on the basis of the scriptures and discourses heard from the lips of various saints and devotees. I am sincerely grateful to the gentleman through whose insistence I am discussing this subject, inasmuch as it has enabled me, humble though I am, to engage my mind with thoughts of the Lord even for a short while. It is far from my mind to enter into a controversy on the subject. Should anyone challenge my views, I am not prepared to take up the gauntlet, and acknowledge my defeat at the very outset. It is a subject on which I feel the least inclined to enter into a dialectic disputation. If, however, the foundation of my faith is weak, it can be changed only at the will of God.

Just as I do not hold any distinction between Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Most Perfect and Transcendent Supreme Divine possessed of infinite glory, sweetness and beauty and endowed with a divine Form consisting of *Sat* (Existence), *Chit* (Knowledge) and *Ānanda* (Bliss) and the very root of joy, and Bhagavān Śrī Rāmachandra, in the same manner, in my opinion, there is no difference between Śrī Rādhā, Śrī Rukmiṇī, Śrī Sitā, and similar

other manifestations of the Divine Energy. The *Hlāḍim Śakti* (Enrapturing Energy) of the Lord invariably accompanies Him in all His divine Forms manifested for the sake of sport (लीलविग्रह), though called by different names and having a distinctive form in each case. These Śaktis, although known and represented by different Names and Forms, are, truly speaking, manifestations of the same Energy. The Lord Himself once said to Śrī Rādhā:—

“My dear Rādhā, just as You are present in Goloka (the Supreme Divine Abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa) as well as at Gokula in the Form of Śrī Rādhā, similarly in Vaikuṅṭha (the Supreme Abode of Mahāviṣṇu) You are present in the Form of Mahālakṣmī and Saraswatī. As Martyalakṣmī You are the beloved consort of Bhagavān Viṣṇu, who rests on the surface of the Sea of Milk (क्षीरसागरसायी). You are Śānti, an image of Lakṣmī, wife of the son of Dharma. You are the blessed Bhārati, the devoted wife of Kapila, in Bhārata; and You are Rukmiṇī, the Incarnation of Mahālakṣmī at Dwārakā. The virtuous Draupadī is Your shadow. It is You who manifested Yourself as Sitā at Mithilā. It was You in the Form of Sitā, the beloved Consort of Śrī Rāma, who were forcibly carried away by Rāvaṇa.

(*Brahmaivaivartā-Purāṇa, Kṛṣṇa-Khaṇḍa*, Chap. 126)

In reality, it is for the sake of the Blissful Enrapturing Energy (हृदिनीशक्ति) that the Lord manifests Himself through various divine Sportive Forms (लीलविग्रह). It is in order to express more fully and vividly His own Blissful aspect or to taste that delight under newer circumstances that He manifests that spirit of rapture in the form of Images of Love and derives pleasure and delight from those manifestations. Śrī Rādhā, who is Divine Love personified, is a concrete Image of that

spirit of ecstatic rapture of the Lord; in that Form all the different aspects of Love are unified and consolidated. Therefore, Śrī Rādhā is All-Love, and Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is All-Bliss. Where there is Delight, there is Love; and where Love is, there is Delight. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the condensed Form of the essence of Bliss and Śrī Rādhā is the crystallized Form of the essence of Love. Therefore, separation of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is never possible. Neither can remain without the other. The divine and blissful Form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa exists for the sake of Śrī Rādhā, who is Divine Love personified. She is, as it were, the very life-breath of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and *vice versa* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the spring of life of Śrī Rādhā. Being the crystallized Form of the essence of Love, Śrī Rādhā is the embodiment of Supreme Ecstasy (सहस्रभव). In that wise She is an eternal and perennial Source of Delight to the heart of Her dearest Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the very essence of the nectar of Bliss, the Lord of *Rasa* (Divine Joy), the repository of infinite glory, infinite beauty, sweetness, and elegance; endowed with a Form consisting of *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ānanda* solidified; possessed of incomprehensible Power, and the Enchanter of Souls freed from all worldly enchantments. A countless number of subordinate Śaktis subservient to this Enrapturing Energy (हृदिनीशक्ति) also manifest themselves in concrete Forms and are constantly engaged in rendering services to Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the diverse capacities of friends (companions), associates, or messengers. Their sole function is to give delight to Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa and contribute to their happiness. These subordinate Śaktis are the Gopīs.

Now, the question is: How can the desire for happiness or pleasure be conceived in the case of the *Paramātmā* (Soul of souls), the Supreme *Brahma*, who is eternally blissful, eternally

satisfied, eternally existent in one state of Being, and who comprises in Himself countless millions of worlds of creation. Although the question appears quite reasonable, it cannot be accepted as a final conclusion. Rapture (मग्न) and Love (प्रेम) are not different in substance from the *Paramātmā*. Rapture is felt by the Lover in relation to the object of Love, and the object of Love feels rapture in relation to the Lover. The Gopis are Lovers (channels of Love), and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the recipient of Love, the object towards which the Love flows. It is the transcendent Divine Love of the Gopis that gives rise to the transcendent desire for happiness in the Supreme Brahma. It is the Supreme sublimity and purity of that Divine Love which awakens this desire for happiness, this dissatisfaction or sense of want, this manifestation of activity and the craving for delight in the desireless, eternally satisfied, actionless and blissful *Brahma*. Of course, this desire, dissatisfaction or activity, etc. are not born of any craving of the senses, nor are they material like the transient desires, etc. of this material world. For divine Joy and divine Love are inseparable. It is for this reason that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rādhā are eternally inseparable. Śrī Bhagavān says:—

यथा त्वं च तथाहं च भेदो हि नावयोर्ध्रुवम् ।
यथा क्षीरे च धावत्यं यथाग्नौ दाहिका सति ॥
यथा पृथिव्यां गन्धश्च तथाहं त्वयि संततम् ।

“What You are, that I am. There is not the least difference between You and Me. Just as whiteness is always present in milk, the burning capacity in fire and odour in the earth, in the same manner, I always remain in You.”

The same thing holds good in the case of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Sītā; Bhagavān Śrī Mahāviṣṇu and Goddess Mahālakṣmī, the mother of the Universe; Bhagavān

Śrī Śankara and Śrī Gaurī Devi, also known as Mahāmāyā, the Supreme Enchantress. The same thing is true of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rukminī, the mother of all devotees of the Lord. There remains now the question of marriage of Śrī Rādhā; but how can there be a marriage in the worldly sense in the transcendental plane referred to above. The *Līlā* (Sport) of the Lord of Vṛndāvana itself had no nexus with the material world. From the point of view of the world, Śrī Kṛṣṇa left Vraja for Mathura at the age of eleven. It is hard to conceive how the question of gross love with women can arise at such an immature age. Whereas in the state of supernatural or transcendent existence, they are eternally united. In spite of this, with a view to fulfilling the pledge given to Brahmā, the Lord showed the latter in a lonely forest the divine and super-spiritual Form of Śrī Rādhā, consisting of the purest essence of Love, and there, it is mentioned, the Lord of *Rasa* was formally wedded with *Mahābhāva*, Brahmā acting as the officiating priest. Śrī Rādhā, thus married, is the eternal companion of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Of course She remains concealed from view. The supremely enrapturing Forms of this Divine Pair are revealed in exceptional cases to those devotees in the path of Love on whom the particular grace of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa descends. It is true that Śrī Rādhā's name does not find explicit mention in the *Bhāgavata*; but all the same it is there in a disguised form in the same manner as the soul remains concealed within the body. The presence of Śrī Rādhā, the very embodiment of the essence of Love, inspires the divine Love-sports of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the very essence of Joy. Where Śrī Kṛṣṇa is, it is impossible either to state or to imagine that Śrī Rādhā is not. Letting alone people who have a special predilection for dialectical reasoning, those who belong to the class of devotees or hold the Śāstras in

eneration should always bear in mind the following statement of the Lord on this subject:—

“That curse among men, who makes a distinction between us two (Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rādhā), has to rot in the infernal region known by the name of *Kālasūtra* till the sun and the moon are in existence (perform their functions). Seven generations preceding him and seven generations coming after suffer from the effect of this evil *Karma* by retrogression from their state of existence, and the merits earned by him through crores of births are utterly destroyed. The wretch who through ignorance reviles us similarly suffers punishment in the direst hell till the sun and the moon endure.”

(*Brahmavaivarta, Kṛṣṇa-Khaṇḍa, XV. 67-70*)

Now remains the question whether the Love of the Gopīs was pure and free from carnality. In this connection I may refer the reader to the following half-verse in the *Rāsa-Pañcādhyaī* (the five chapters on *Rāsa* in the *Bhāgavata*):—

रेमे रमेशो ब्रजसुन्दरीभि-
यैर्धार्भकः स्वप्रतिबिम्बविभ्रमः ।

“Just as an infant plays with the reflection of its image in a mirror, in the same manner the Lord of Lakṣmī (Goddess of Fortune) sported with the beautiful damsels of Vraja.”

The Lord, who is the very embodiment of the Sport of Love and the perennial source of delight, is by His very nature susceptible to the influence of Love. It was this Spirit of Love which made Him sport with the blessed Gopīs— who were the very images of Love, and were in reality nothing but His own reflections— through His own Blissful Energy. This sport and enjoyment of His was the enjoyment of Self through Self. So far as the Gopīs are concerned, the sole object of the sport was to minister to the happiness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa without any sense of return. Therefore, there was not the least taint of lust or gross sense-enjoyment in this sport of Love between the Gopīs, who were the very images

of love, and the Lord, who is Bliss personified. The Love of the Gopīs represented the purest type of Love in its highest state of expression. Therefore, it is called ‘रूढ महाभाव’ (Supreme Ecstasy in a developed form). The existence of even a taint of sense-gratification cannot be conceived in such a state of ecstasy. Therefore, this divine sport was not the gross earthly sport of lust. It was a purely divine, blissful, unique and mysterious sport, to taste the delight of which the greatest of the gods and liberated souls were extremely eager. It is said that it was for this very purpose that they came and took birth in Vraja as animals, birds, trees and creepers. The capacity to understand and explain either the character of this lustless Love of the Gopīs, or the Supreme Ecstasy (महाभाव) of Śrī Rādhā, the highest among the objects of love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and as to how the desire for sport and happiness arises in the *Paramātmā*, who is eternally full through the joy of His own Being, or how He derived pleasure through sport with His own Śaktis manifested in the form of Love,—can be acquired only through the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, by such devotees as have dedicated their lives to Him and to His worship, and have tasted the nectar of His Love. What light can a person like me, who is steeped in the attractions of the world, throw on the subject? I can only submit my prayer to all with folded hands that none should attribute the impurity of his own heart to the Lord and impugn His transcendent character or call in question His unimpeachable *Līlās*. Discarding all doubt and disbelief, let him accept for meditation any Name or Form of the Lord that may appear attractive to him, and engage with undivided devotion in the worship and service of the Lord of his heart. He should also guard against the belief that the Names and Forms of God, other than the ones chosen by him, are lower in spiritual value or represent a lower spiritual level; on the contrary, he should regard them only as so many Names and Forms of his own Beloved Lord.

