



Contextualising Krishna Lila

To say about young Lord Krishna of hardly eight years of age, playing with Gopis, is sexual in nature, is just profanity which only an uncultured, perverted and distorted mind can think of

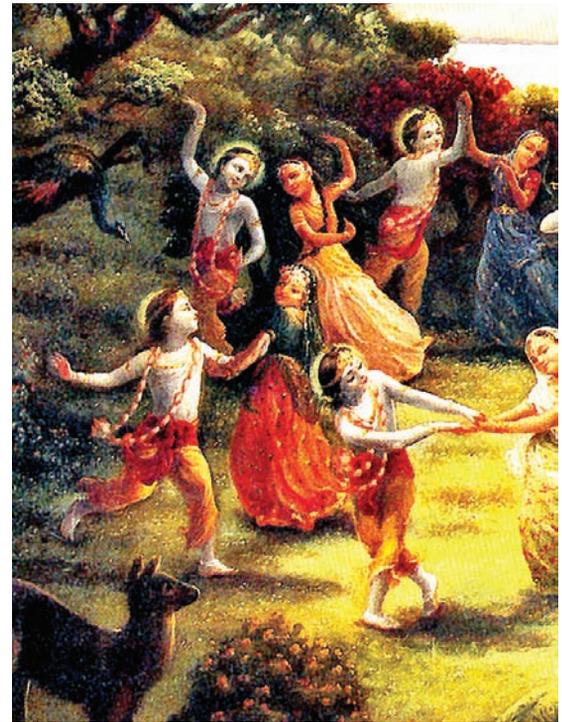
■ Neera Misra

It is often said about Bharat that it lived at various civilisational levels at the same time. In our country that is 'India', there are people who know that they do not know, those who know that they know, but critical is the category of those who are not aware that they do not know, but yet convince others that they know. This last group is normally found among section of the educated professional group and is quite vocal. It causes the biggest damage to our nation by its public display of half baked knowledge. Thoughtless uttering on politics, law or general matters can be ignored, but their comments on sensitive matters of faith, hurting religious beliefs, cannot, and must not be ignored.

Coming to specifics, as the government of Uttar Pradesh started in earnest to find solutions to the 'teasing and harassment' faced by young girls, they formed a special police force to instill a sense of fear among eve teasers, and security among our girls and young women. In this context, one

such educated senior legal professional person suggested that Government must create an anti-Krishna brigade! What a fantastic example of an 'educated' person's pathetic ignorance of his own country's cultural and spiritual ethos. Then comes a prominent writer on *Mahabharata*, who first proudly (on Television) takes Panchala region of Central Uttar Pradesh to Punjab, and now suggests names from *Mahabharata* to name the anti-eve teasing brigade. All this reinforces the belief that a sizable educated class has either no knowledge, or is deliberately insensitive to our culture, history and spirituality, especially of the *Vedic* and *Mahabharata* period, the relevance of *Bhagwat Gita* and ancient Sanskrit texts.

The reference of Sri Krishna was made because, as per their understanding, Sri Krishna was a great eve teaser, thereby 'advocating anti-Krishna Brigade'. Their knowledge comes from their distorted ideas of the stories of the Krishna Lila and Ras Lila, that have been depicted in various forms of arts, songs, dances, paintings, and of



course the popular cinema and theatre too. To know how misplaced, wrong and hurting these comments are, we go to the primary source of Krishna Lila and Ras Lila of Sri Krishna, the *Bhagavata Purana* itself, and the *Vedic* philosophy of attaining *moksha*, salvation, via any of the three means, namely, Knowledge (*Gyan*), Action (*Karma*) and Devotion (*Bhakti*).

From the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad Gita* we learn about Krishna as friend, teacher and diplomat, but the tenth part of *Bhagavata Purana* tells us about Krishna as a child. We know about his miracles, divinity and playfulness with his friend Radha and the Gopis. It shows Krishna simply engaging in *lilas*, or divine and intimate play with his devotees. It presents this intimate relationship with God as the highest goal of human existence. This tenth section of *Bhagavata Purana*, dedicated to Sri Krishna, is responsible for the widespread popularity of the *Bhagavata Purana*, as also, unfortunately, the great misrepresentations, misinterpretations and misperceptions that have crept up in the last thousand odd years. Much damage was also



“Romeo loved just one lady, while Krishna was a legendary eve teaser. Would Adityanath have the guts to call his vigilantes anti Krishna squads”

—Prashant Bhushan said in a tweet on April 2, 2017





INSIGHT



done by Jaydev's *Geet Govinda* of 1170 CE, version wherein he brings in the 'eroticism, in a child's playfulness and attachment for his fellow beings, irrespective of gender bias, showing the poets lack of intellectual sublimation and spiritual insight. It was such distortions that influence the minds of people who do not have that higher level of consciousness, experience and divinity. The brutal attack on traditional ancient religious beliefs and destruction of places of worship in and around Mathura also reinforced the Bhakti Movement, for salvation via Bhakti or devotion. The Supreme God mingles with humans through Krishna Lila and Ras Lila, and shows them the divine path.

Bhagavata Purana includes the most enduring images and stories of Krishna: the mischievous child who steals butter; the God as a child who holds the entire universe within himself; the boy who can slay demons and move an entire mountain with one finger; the cowherd who is the love of all the *gopis*, who are attracted by his spiritual music, follow him to attain divine ecstasy. This is his 'Râslila' and

the term refers to an episode of the devotional text in the *Bhagavata Purana*, in which the divine and youthful Krishna meets the young girls of his hometown, Vrindavana, and dances in divine joy. Krishna had thousands of Gopis who were attracted to him from his childhood, with whom he used to play, dance and also teased them. His dearest Gopi was Radha. As per Swami Sivanada, in *Rasakreeda* Gopis love for Krishna was not a physical passion. It was supreme love. For them Lord Krishna was the living God. He was the moving image of the Supreme Lord. Their faith was intense. When they thought of Lord Krishna they forgot their worldly activities. They were merged in the love of Krishna. Lord Krishna attracted their hearts from His very boyhood. He was a very beautiful child. He was beauty incarnate.

One has to reach a certain level of intellectual and spiritual insight to interpret and understand the Sanskrit texts of ancient India. The ancient *Vedas* evolved through meditation, teaches us to discipline the mind, body and senses.

Krishna comes after the great spiritual churning of *Sat Yuga* and *Treta Yuga*. He is Vishnu himself, revealing his divine nature even as a child. He grew up as an evolved soul who perceives the decline in dharma and spirituality. In *Mahabharata* we see him treat Draupadi as his equal 'intellectual' friend, we see him encourage his own sister Subhadra to marry her beloved Arjuna. Radha was his childhood soul-mate. Radha and Krishna are embodiments of deep platonic love and respect. *Gopis* were all mates whom he used to inspire to feel as equal in society. Many scholars, however, view the *Bhagavata Purana* as a remarkably early literary work that questions and discusses social and gender norms in the 5th to 10th-century Bharat. There is an interesting story on how He challenged Kamdev to prove that his relationship is anything other than platonic. Kamdev lost. To suggest a young Krishna of hardly eight years of age, playing with Gopis, is sexual in nature, is just profanity which only an unevolved, materialistic and distorted mind can think of. Dragging Lord Krishna's name into mundane materialistic actions is great disrespect to Sri Krishna's worshippers.

The *Vedas* teach us that the true nature of all living beings is the soul, which will leave the temporary life on earth, to ultimately go back to the creator, the Brahma. Krishna also reveals his 'Vishwarupa' to Arjuna. Bhakti (spiritual devotion) is the way to connect with God. Krishna Lila and Ras Lila are tales of Supreme Being and his Bhakts.

The song of the Gopis (Gopi Gitam) in *Bhagavata Purana* (Skanda X, Chapter 31) bears ample proof that Gopis regarded Sri Krishna as the Supreme Lord. Ras Lilas are organised during Holi and Janmaashtami, establishes its spiritual nature. While the *Gita* is intellectual Bhakti, *Bhagavata Purana* is emotional Bhakti, where Krishna's Divinity attains full brilliance.

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