

The Rasa Dance begins

- ॐ Thus hearing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, speaking to pacify them, the gopīs became very much pleased.
- ॐ They became completely relieved of the great suffering of separation, not only by hearing the words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead but also by touching His hands and legs.
- ॐ After this, the Supreme Personality of Godhead began His rāsa dance.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa, the supreme mystic, expanded Himself into many forms and stood beside each gopī. Placing His hands on the shoulders of the gopīs on both sides of Him, He began to dance in their midst.
- ॐ The mystic expansions of Kṛṣṇa were not perceived by the gopīs because Kṛṣṇa appeared alone to each of them.
- ॐ Each gopī thought that Kṛṣṇa was dancing with her alone.
- ॐ Above that wonderful dance flew many airplanes carrying the denizens of the heavenly planets, who were very eager to see the wonderful dance of Kṛṣṇa with the gopīs.
- ॐ The Gandharvas and Kinnaras began to sing, and, accompanied by their respective wives, all the Gandharvas began to shower flowers on the dancers.
- ॐ As the gopīs and Kṛṣṇa danced together, a very blissful musical sound was produced from the tinkling of their bells, ornaments and bangles.
- ॐ It appeared that Kṛṣṇa was a greenish sapphire locket in the midst of a golden necklace decorated with valuable stones.
- ॐ While Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs danced, they displayed extraordinary bodily features.
- ॐ The movements of their legs, their placing their hands on one another, the movements of their eyebrows, their smiling, the movements of the breasts of the gopīs and their clothes, their earrings, their cheeks, their hair with flowers—as they sang and danced these combined to appear like clouds, thunder, snow and lightning.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa’s bodily features appeared just like a group of clouds, the gopīs’ songs were like thunder, their beauty appeared to be just like lightning in the sky, and the drops of perspiration visible on their faces appeared like falling snow.
- ॐ The necks of the gopīs became tinted with red due to their desire to enjoy Kṛṣṇa more and more.
- ॐ To satisfy them, Kṛṣṇa began to clap His hands in time with their singing.
- ॐ The gopīs wanted to please Kṛṣṇa, and therefore as Kṛṣṇa sang, they responded and encouraged Him by saying “Well done! Well done!”
- ॐ Sometimes they presented beautiful music for His pleasure, and He responded by praising their singing.
- ॐ When some of the gopīs became very tired from dancing and moving their bodies, they placed their hands on the shoulders of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Description is found
Srimad Bhagavatam
(Krishna Book)

- ॐ Then their hair loosened and flowers fell to the ground.
- ॐ When they placed their hands on Kṛṣṇa's shoulder they became overwhelmed by the fragrance of His body, which emanated from the lotus, other aromatic flowers and the pulp of sandalwood.
- ॐ They became filled with attraction for Him, and they began to kiss Him.
- ॐ Some gopīs touched Kṛṣṇa cheek to cheek, and Kṛṣṇa began to offer them chewed betel nuts from His mouth, which they accepted with great pleasure by kissing.
- ॐ And by accepting those betel nuts, the gopīs advanced spiritually.
- ॐ The gopīs became tired after long singing and dancing.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa was dancing beside them, and to alleviate their fatigue they took Śrī Kṛṣṇa's hand and placed it on their raised breasts.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa's hand, as well as the breasts of the gopīs, are eternally auspicious; therefore when they combined, both of them became spiritually enhanced.
- ॐ The gopīs so enjoyed the company of Kṛṣṇa, the husband of the goddess of fortune, that they forgot that they had any other husbands in the world, and upon being embraced by the arms of Kṛṣṇa and dancing and singing with Him, they forgot everything.
- ॐ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam thus describes the beauty of the gopīs while they were rāsa dancing with Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ There were lotus flowers over both their ears, and their faces were decorated with sandalwood pulp.
- ॐ They wore tilaka, and there were drops of perspiration on their smiling mouths. From their feet came the tinkling sound of ankle bells and bangles.
- ॐ The flowers within their hair were falling to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, and He was very satisfied.
- ॐ When Kṛṣṇa touched the different parts of their bodies, the gopīs felt surcharged with spiritual energy.
- ॐ They could not adjust their loosened clothes, although they tried to keep them adjusted properly.
- ॐ Their hair and garments became scattered, and their ornaments loosened as they forgot themselves in the company of Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ While Kṛṣṇa was enjoying the company of the gopīs in the rāsa dance, the astonished demigods and their wives gathered in the sky.
- ॐ The moon, being afflicted with a sort of lust, began to watch the dance and became stunned with wonder.
- ॐ The gopīs had prayed to the goddess Kātyāyanī to have Kṛṣṇa as their husband. Now Kṛṣṇa was fulfilling their desire by expanding Himself in as many forms as there were gopīs and enjoying them exactly like a husband.
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- ॐ Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has remarked that Kṛṣṇa is self-sufficient—He is ātmārāma. He doesn't need anyone else for His satisfaction.
- ॐ Because the gopīs wanted Kṛṣṇa as their husband, He fulfilled their desire.
- ॐ When Kṛṣṇa saw that the gopīs were tired from dancing with Him, He immediately began to wipe His hands over their faces so that their fatigue would be relieved.
- ॐ In order to reciprocate the kind hospitality of Kṛṣṇa, the gopīs began to look at Him lovingly.
- ॐ They were overjoyed by the auspicious touch of the hand of Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ Their smiling cheeks shone with beauty, and they began to sing the glories of Kṛṣṇa with transcendental pleasure.
- ॐ As pure devotees, the more the gopīs enjoyed Kṛṣṇa's company, the more they became enlightened with His glories, and thus they reciprocated with Him.
- ॐ They wanted to satisfy Kṛṣṇa by glorifying His transcendental pastimes.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of all masters, and the gopīs wanted to worship Him for His unusual exhibition of mercy upon them.
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- ॐ The gopīs and Kṛṣṇa entered the water of the Yamunā just to relieve their fatigue from the rāsa dance.
- ॐ The lily-flower garlands around the necks of the gopīs were strewn to pieces due to the gopīs' embracing the body of Kṛṣṇa, and the flowers were reddish from being smeared with the kuṅkuma on their breasts.
- ॐ The bumblebees were humming about in order to get honey from the flowers.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs entered the water of the Yamunā just as an elephant enters a water tank with his many female companions.
- ॐ Both the gopīs and Kṛṣṇa forgot their real identities, playing in the water, enjoying each other's company and relieving the fatigue of rāsa dancing.
- ॐ The gopīs began to splash water on the body of Kṛṣṇa, all the while smiling, and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed this.
- ॐ As Kṛṣṇa was taking pleasure in the joking words and splashing water, the demigods in the heavenly planets showered flowers.
- ॐ The demigods thus praised the superexcellent rāsa dance of Kṛṣṇa, the supreme enjoyer, and His pastimes with the gopīs in the water of the Yamunā.
- ॐ After this, Lord Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs came out of the water and began to stroll along the bank of the Yamunā, where a nice breeze was blowing, carrying the aroma of different kinds of flowers over the water and land.
- ॐ While strolling on the bank of the Yamunā, Kṛṣṇa recited various kinds of poetry.
- ॐ He thus enjoyed the company of the gopīs in the soothing moonlight of autumn.

Mahārāja Parīkṣit's inquiry

- ॐ In order to clear up further misconceptions about the rāsa dance and the affairs of Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs, Mahārāja Parīkṣit, the hearer of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, told Śukadeva Gosvāmī,
- ॐ “Kṛṣṇa appeared on the earth to establish the regulative principles of religion and to curb the predominance of irreligion.
- ॐ But the behavior of Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs might encourage irreligious principles in the material world.
- ॐ I am simply surprised that He would act in such a way, enjoying the company of others' wives in the dead of night.”
- ॐ *In his statement, Mahārāja Parīkṣit has used several important words which require clarification. The first word, jugupsitam, means “abominable.” The first doubt of Mahārāja Parīkṣit was as follows: Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who had advented Himself to establish religious principles. Why then did He mix with others' wives in the dead of night and enjoy dancing, embracing and kissing? According to the Vedic injunctions, this is not allowed. Also, when the gopīs first came to Him, He gave instructions to them to return to their homes. To call the wives of other persons or young girls and enjoy dancing with them is certainly abominable according to the Vedas. Why should Kṛṣṇa have done this?*
- ॐ *Another word used here is āpta-kāma. Some may take it for granted that Kṛṣṇa was very lusty among young girls, but Parīkṣit Mahārāja said that this was not possible. He could not be lusty. First of all, from the material calculation He was only eight years old. At that age a boy cannot be lusty. Āpta-kāma means that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is self-satisfied. Even if He were lusty, He doesn't need to take help from others to satisfy His lusty desires. The next point is that, although not lusty Himself, He might have been seduced by the lusty desires of the gopīs. But Mahārāja Parīkṣit then used another word, yadu-pati, which indicates that Kṛṣṇa is the most exalted personality in the dynasty of the Yadus. The kings in the dynasty of Yadu were considered to be the most pious, and their descendants were also like that. Having taken birth in that family, how could Kṛṣṇa have been seduced, even by the gopīs? It is concluded, therefore, that it was not possible for Kṛṣṇa to do anything abominable. But Mahārāja Parīkṣit was in doubt as to why Kṛṣṇa acted in that way. What was the real purpose?*
- ॐ *Another word Mahārāja Parīkṣit used when he addressed Śukadeva Gosvāmī is suvrata, which means to take a vow to enact pious activities. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was an educated brahmacārī, and under the circumstances it was not possible for him to indulge in sex. This is strictly prohibited for brahmacārīs, and what to speak of a brahmacārī like Śukadeva Gosvāmī. But because the circumstances of the rāsa dance were very suspect, Mahārāja Parīkṣit inquired for clarification from Śukadeva Gosvāmī.*
- ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī immediately replied that transgressions of religious principles by the supreme controller testify to His great power.

- ॐ For example, fire can consume any abominable thing; that is the manifestation of the supremacy of fire.
- ॐ Similarly, the sun can absorb water from a urinal or from stool, and the sun is not polluted; rather, due to the influence of the sunshine, the polluted, contaminated place becomes disinfected and sterilized.
- ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī further concludes that the great sages and devotees, who are washed clean of all conditioned life, can move freely even within the contamination of material nature by keeping Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, within their hearts.
- ॐ In this way they also do not become subject to the laws of pleasure and pain in the modes of material nature. How, then, is it possible for Kṛṣṇa, who appears by His own internal potency, to be subjected to the laws of karma?
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- ॐ Some ask that if Kṛṣṇa is self-sufficient, why did He at all manifest the pastimes with the gopīs, which are disturbing to the so-called moralists of the world?
- ॐ The answer is that such activities show special mercy to the fallen, conditioned souls. The gopīs are expansions of His internal energy, but because Kṛṣṇa wanted to exhibit the rāsa-līlā, they appeared as ordinary human beings.
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- ॐ Another important point is that none of the gopīs who danced with Kṛṣṇa were in their material bodies.
- ॐ They danced with Kṛṣṇa in their spiritual bodies.
- ॐ All their husbands thought that their wives were sleeping by their sides.
- ॐ The so-called husbands of the gopīs were already enamored with the influence of the external energy of Kṛṣṇa; so by dint of this very energy they could not understand that their wives had gone to dance with Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ What then is the basis of accusing Kṛṣṇa of dancing with others' wives?
- ॐ The bodies of the gopīs, which were their husbands', were lying in bed, but the spiritual parts and parcels of Kṛṣṇa were dancing with Him
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa is the supreme person, the whole spirit, and He danced with the spiritual bodies of the gopīs. There is therefore no reason to accuse Kṛṣṇa in any way.

The dance concludes

- ॐ After the rāsa dance was over, the night (the night of Brahmā, a very, very long period, as mentioned in the Bhagavad-gītā) turned into the brāhma-muhūrta.
- ॐ When that auspicious moment arrived, Kṛṣṇa asked the gopīs to leave.
- ॐ Although His beloveds were not willing to quit His company, they were very obedient to Him.
- ॐ As soon as Kṛṣṇa asked them to go home, they immediately left and returned home.

ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī concludes this episode of the rāsa-līlā by pointing out that if a person hears from the right source about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, who is Viṣṇu Himself, and the gopīs, who are expansions of His energy, then he will be relieved of the most dangerous type of disease, namely lust.

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ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī has used the word *śraddhānvita* for one who is trained in spiritual life. *Śraddhā*, or faith, is the beginning. One who has developed his faith in Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supreme Spirit Soul, can both describe and hear the rāsa-līlā. Śukadeva also uses the word *anuśṛṇuyāt*. One must hear from the disciplic succession. *Anu* means “following,” and *anu* also means “always.” So one must always follow the disciplic succession and not hear from any stray professional reciter, whether a *Māyāvādī* or an ordinary man. *Anuśṛṇuyāt* means that one must hear from an authorized person who is in the disciplic succession and is always engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When a person hears the rāsa-līlā in this way, the effect will be sure: he will be elevated to the highest position of spiritual life.

ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī uses two specific words, *bhaktim* and *parām*. *Bhaktim parām* means execution of devotional service above the neophyte stage. Those who are simply attracted to temple worship but do not know the philosophy of *bhakti* are in the neophyte stage. That sort of *bhakti* is not the perfectional stage. The perfectional stage of *bhakti*, or devotional service, is completely free from material contamination. The most dangerous aspect of contamination is lust, or sex life. *Bhaktim parām* devotional service is so potent that the more one advances in this line, the more he loses his attraction for material life. One who is actually deriving benefit from hearing the rāsa-līlā dance surely achieves the transcendental position. He surely loses all traces of lust in his heart.

ॐ Śrīla Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura points out that according to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Brahmā*’s day and *Brahmā*’s night are periods of solar years expanding to 4,300,000 multiplied by 1,000. According to Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, the rāsa dance was performed during the long period of *Brahmā*’s night, but the gopīs could not understand that. In order to fulfill their desire, Kṛṣṇa extended the night to cover such a great period of time. One may ask how this was possible, and Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura reminds us that Kṛṣṇa, although bound by a small rope, could show His mother the whole universe within His mouth. How was this possible? The answer is that He can do anything for the pleasure of His devotees. Similarly, because the gopīs wanted to enjoy Kṛṣṇa, they were given the opportunity to associate with Him for a long period. This was done according to His promise. When Kṛṣṇa stole the garments of the gopīs while they were taking a bath at *Cīraghāta* on the *Yamunā*, He promised to fulfill their desire in some future night. In one night, therefore, they enjoyed the company of Kṛṣṇa as their beloved husband, but that night was not an ordinary night. It was a night of *Brahmā*, and lasted millions and millions of years. Everything is possible for Kṛṣṇa, for He is the supreme controller.