

# Gender Irrelevant in Cosmic Consciousness

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We are neither male nor female for at core we are spiritual souls, whereas our gender refers only to our shell, the physical body. Our spiritual identity is eternal, our gender is transient.

According to the Bhagavad Gita, we attain in our next life a body as per the thought that predominates our consciousness at the last moment of this life. So a male in this life may become a female in the next life, if the person dearest to him happens to be a female and vice versa. Hence gender is physical misidentification. Only when we distance ourselves from our temporary physical gender we will be freed from the ideological preconceptions that are inevitably dragged into discussion on the gender of God. So in the conventional sense gender refers to bodily gender, so God is neither.

Yet God is both male and female as seen in the worship of divine couples in Vedic tradition. The inclusive Vedic definition of God as the source of everything, the cause of all causes, leads to an egalitarian understanding of God—as both male and female. In Radha-Krishna, Radha personifies the primordial cosmological female principle and Krishna, the primordial cosmological male principle.

Sometimes personification is mistaken to be a mere literary device, but this misconception overlooks the omni-dimensional all-encompassing nature of divinity. So Radha and Krishna are not symbols denoting metaphysical principles. As divine embodiments, they are particular individuals, yet they are universal individuals, being wholly identical with the ontological principles they personify.

Krishna is compared to the sun and Radha, to sunshine. Though sunshine comes from the sun, to say that the sun is superior to or exists prior to the sunshine is

incorrect for sun includes sunshine. The sun has no meaning without sunshine, without heat and light. And heat and light would not exist without the sun. The sun and sunshine coexist, each equally important for the existence of the other. They are simultaneously inconceivably one and different, achintyabhedabheda tattva.

Likewise, the singular Absolute Truth manifests as the plural Radha-Krishna for the sake of loving reciprocation. One person, two personalities; inconceivable identity in diversity. Hence the saint Bhaktivinoda Thakura sings, "Just as there is no sun without sunshine, I do not accept Krishna without Radha".

The Gita explains that God is the source, the essence and the best of everything. Therefore, as Radha, God is the supreme worshipper, and as Krishna, God is the supreme worshipped. In terms of tattva

or philosophical truth, Krishna excels as the supreme controller and so the traditional reference to God as male. But in terms of lila or divine loving exchanges, Radha excels by controlling Krishna with her selfless spiritual love. Krishna is celebrated as Madan-Mohan, who mesmerises everyone, but Radha is glorified as Madan-Mohan-Mohini, the mesmeriser of the mesmeriser for spiritual aspirants, Radha acts as the divine mediatrix, without whom access to Krishna is not possible. So devotees always chant her name before Krishna's, as is also seen with Sita-Rama and Lakshmi-Narayana.

Like the Biblical Bride-of-Christ concept and the Kabbalistic Jewish conception of the Female Divine, the truth behind Radha-Krishna is theologically profound and constitutes the zenith of spiritual awareness. This enlightened God consciousness resolves all confusion, contradiction and conflict caused by misconceptions of sexuality and spirituality.

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## THE SPEAKING TREE