

CONCLUSIONS ON STHAYI-BHAVA (SVARUPA) & “NITYANANDA-SAKTI-AVESA”

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Our main question is why Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada made so many expressions of desire for sakhya-seva and never one single expression of desire for manjari-seva. Some have put forward quotations from Srila Prabhupada's lectures and books where he teaches that entrance into Rasa-lila, or service at Sri Radha-kunda is the ultimate perfection. That he objectively conveyed the full message of our rupanuga parampara - including manjari-bhava as the ultimate goal, is not contested by anyone. Sri Sukadeva Gosvami, who is in dasya-rasa, expertly expressed rasa-pancadhyaya. He spoke what he heard from his gurudeva and that kunj-lila which he directly witnessed from his dasya position as Srimati Radhika's parrot, but his objective preaching doesn't make him a manjari.

Sri Krsna ordered Yudhisthira Maharaja to lie on the battlefield of Kurukstera yet He is Himself the eternal Supreme Truth, satyam param dhimahi. Like Bhagavan, our acaryas are beyond the limits of mundane truthfulness and can say what they must according to time, place and circumstance to gradually establish the Absolute Truth in this world - whether our Srila Gurudeva Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhara Maharaja, or any. However, as there can be apparent inconsistencies and contradictions between them or even in their own statements on a given subject, we cannot pin down their absolute position according to the words they gave in one situation or another without risking to selectively choose only the parts which favor our own view.

Therefore, finally the sastra has to match, and it just doesn't here. There is no scriptural precedent for a manjari-upasana sadhaka to become absorbed in the bhava of nityananda, or sakhya-bhava. It does not discount our beloved holy masters, Srila Gurudeva, Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja, and Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja, if we insist that Srila Rupa Gosvami's definitions are the basis upon which everything we have to discuss depends. Rather than offend them, this will please them so much. So we cannot accept the words of any acarya as more than circumstantial needful-doing or his own subjective transcendental mood if they contradict Srila Rupa Gosvami's conceptual framework, and especially his definitions. Otherwise we are no longer Rupanuga in any sense at all.

What is Srila Rupa's definition of sthayi-bhava?

aviruddhan viruddhams ca bhavan yo vasatam nayan
su-rajeva virajeta sa sthayi bhava ucyate (BRS 2.5.1)

“That bhava which, controlling other favorable bhavas and contradictory bhavas, presides in the manner of an efficient ruler, is called sthayi-bhava.”

Avesa is one thing and svarupa, or sthayi-bhava, is another. Sthayi-bhava rules like a powerful king. If a king is defeated, then he is no longer king; if sthayi-bhava is overtaken by another mood, it cannot be called sthayi-bhava. Sancari-bhavas may occur, a temporary 'avesa' may occur, but that cannot contradict or overtake the sthayi-bhava. If Srila BV Swami Prabhupada can break his manjari sthayi-bhava to absorb in Nityananda's mood, that means manjari-bhava is not his sthayi-bhava. The mathematics of rasa here is non-negotiable, as we shall demonstrate below.

On the basis of his understanding of Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja's commentary, Mukunda prabhu is presenting as permissible in rasa-siddhanta that in verse 8 of his Jaladuta prayer Srila Prabhupada is praying in 'nityananda-avesa', which is represented to mean here not just that he was specially empowered for preaching but that his manjari-bhava was temporarily covered by the mood of Nityananda. Certainly avesha can occur, as in the example given of Pradyumna Brahmachari as an avesha-avatara of Sriman Mahaprabhu. Mahaprabhu is however the object of Pradyumna's worship, but if Srila Prabhupada is a manjari, then what to speak of Nityananda/Balarama Prabhu, even Sri Krsna is not the object of his worshipful absorption. From this angle, this idea of 'nityananda-avesha' can only mean here that Srila Prabhupada is a cowherd boy ecstatically identified with the mood of his worshipful deity Nitai/Baladeva due to intense loving absorption. Consider the example of Mineketana Ramadasa, who due to sakhya-prema would become absorbed in the mood of Nityananda during kirtana; Nityananda was said to enter him at that time.

There is admittedly a problem with this proposal of Srila Prabhupada's sakhya-bhavamayi identification with Sri Nityananda, however. We do not see any example of a devotee experiencing avesa identification with their istadeva and simultaneously lamenting in the mood of a sadhaka. Rather, such avesa is a type of supreme meeting within separation; by vipralambha-bhava the devotee has come so close to his istadeva that he has forgotten himself altogether, so how will he hanker for the perfectional stage of prema-seva? Who then, if Srila Prabhupada is in avesa, is praying? Even Nityananda Prabhu Himself, when He came to Vrndavan, Srngara-vata, although being absorbed in great distress of separation from His Kanhaiya, did not come in any sadhaka-avesa. Nityananda does not pray that "I have forgotten You and now maya is kicking me. O when will I be with You..." He is Bhagavan, and His mood does not come down to sadhaka level. If this is not enough to satisfy you to close the argument, then consider the next point. We were citing Srila Rupa Gosvami's definition of sthayi-bhava as reigning king; any mood or avesa that may come must be compatible and nurturing to the devotee's sthayi-bhava, or else the very definition of sthayi-bhava is destroyed. For example, Srila Visvanatha Cakravartipada explains in his Sarartha-darsini that when the gopis were searching for Sri Krsna when he disappeared from Rasa-lila, they became so absorbed in remembrance of Sri Krsna that they fully identified with Him and enacted His pastimes. However, when the role of Yasoda was required for such enactment, no gopi could take that role without contradicting her own sthayi-bhava, so Yogamaya manifested a gopi in 'yasoda-avesa.' It can be posited that sakhya-bhava is not incompatible with madhurya-rasa like vatsalya-bhava; one gopi could experience a passing virudha-bhava of balaram-avesa within that lila...

First of all, such lila-anurodha (momentary passing identification with the object of worship, Sri Krsna here) is only possible for those gopis of sambhogamayi nature, who have a direct relation with Sri Krsna. Such absorption in Krsna nourishes their permanent mood as his lovers, but manjaris would not experience that avesa because it is fully contrary to the nature of their tat-tad-bhava-icchamayi or bhavollasa sthayi-bhava, centered exclusively on Srimati Radhika. For a manjari to enter Krsna-avesa - what to speak of Balaram-avesa - would kill their 'king'; their sthayi-bhava cannot accommodate that virudha-bhava avesa. Even if such a virudha-bhava came, it cannot conquer and overtake sthayi-bhava in the way proposed by Mukubda prabhu. The only avesa a manjari will experience is that of Srimati Radhika, being tadatmika with Her and fully identified with all She feels and desires.

In conclusion, what Srila BV Swami Prabhupada is expressing is not a sancari-bhava, not a passing wave in the ocean of his heart. The longing to attain his ultimate goal is expressed in classical Gaudiya fashion - "O when will that day be mine??" This is the mood of a sadhaka lamenting for his perfectional stage. If he was absorbed in the identification of Balarama or Nityananda, like the gopis were absorbed in krsna-avesa when Krsna disappeared from Rasa, then Srila Prabhupada would say 'I AM stealing Krsna's lunch and roaming forest to forest grazing cows, I AM doing that seva...' Rather, he is praying for an eternal seva relationship, not expressing a passing nityanada-bhava. It is impossible according to Srila Rupa Gosvami's rasa-siddhanta. Sri Uddhava ji exactly resembles Sri Krsna, and the gopis try to embrace every other black thing - bumblebees, clouds, tamal trees - but not Uddhava, because inside of prema is full knowledge. In no circumstance will prema cross its limits or department. In no circumstance can Srila Prabhupada pray as he has if he is a manjari.

The actual meaning of Srila Prabhupada being glorified as nityananda-saktyavesa is that Nitai's power entered him so that he could deliver the entire world, as he has done. And the actual meaning of his Jaladuta prayers is exactly what he says. IF WE BELIEVE HE IS A MANJARI AND DO SO MUCH HARD BHAJANA, WEEPING, BANGING OUR HEAD ON THE GROUND CALLING TO HIM, HE WILL NEVER COME LIKE THAT BECAUSE THAT IS NOT HIS SVARUPA. IF YOU ACCEPT HIM AS A COWHERD BOY, AS HE IS, THEN HE WILL COME IN HIS OWN SVARUPA AND GIVE MERCY.