

Thakura Bhaktivinoda's Guru Parampara (Part Eleven)

Manasi Seva in Manjari Bhava

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Part Eleven is Dedicated to Lata and Kamal Manjari



Srimati in Summer Dress with Kamal and Lata

As Part Ten briefly presented Radha and Krishna's *astakala lilas*, in Part Eleven we shall tell something about how we can perform *manasi seva* in *manjari bhava* within the *astakala*. But since we are a *seva dasi* of Lata, Kamal and the other manjaris in Sri Ananga Manjari's *yutha* or group, sometimes our *manasi seva* will follow after them too.

Nishanta Lila

3:36 A.M. - 6:00 A.M.

When the night ends, the manjaris are the first to awaken. And as they fathom that their Rasika yugal still lie asleep, they sit up to jest with one another.

"O sakhis!" one *dasi* exclaims, "As you have rested after enjoying with the Nikunja raja, are you now feeling revived?" Due to insufficient sleep, however, their restless eyes whirl like tired bumblebees. But upon glancing over their lotus-like breasts, they smile, as they reveal the pollen-like bruise marks left by Krishna's nails.

Rasa Analysis

This passage is from Visvanath Cakravarti's *Krishna bhavanamrita*. Yet does he mean to say that the manjaris were having loving pastimes with Krishna last night? The explanation that we generally hear for this, however, is that when they saw Krishna marking Radha's breasts with his nails, those same marks appeared on their breasts also due to their complete absorption in Radha! Nevertheless, here Srila Cakravartipada's depiction of the manjaris does seem to indicate that sometimes they do participate in such affairs.



Meanwhile, some manjaris are stringing flower malas as others prepare pan, when a *seva dasi* arrives to exclaim, "O sakhis! Quickly come and see the Youthful couple for whom your flower malas and pan are intended. O just place your beautiful eyes up to the nikunja mandira's window and observe how they are tenderly embracing."

As Radha and Krishna’s dress, ornaments and garlands have all become disheveled, one manjari speaks to another, “Ayi sakhi, look! Doesn’t our Divine couple resemble a dark cloud garlanded by the lightening—as they appear to be bathing in the nectar-shower of their own *madhurya* (glamorous splendor)?”

But the other dasi remarks, “Although it is customary that a master reward his maidservant when she completes here seva, our ‘just reward’ is coming before we can begin.”

Upon rising, Krishna lifts Radha into his lap—although she is listless due to fatigue. Then as Krishna ardently gazes upon her *rupa madhuri* (beautiful figure), Radha pretends to be asleep. Thus feeling tired from *prema keli* she relinquishes her soft and gorgeous limbs unto Shyamasundar.

Although Krishna’s eyes are tired and his body is covered in nail marks, he smells like a fragrant lotus. Curling hairs decorate his forehead and mind-teasing dolphin earrings dance over his glossy cheeks—and herein lies a soft, cunning smile. Seeing Krishna’s face so captivatingly displayed, *padma locana* Radha again becomes pierced by Kamadeva’s arrows.

Taking charge, Vilasa Manjari instructs Kamal to set up the pillows and back-rest for the Rasika yugal. And Lata Manjari requests me to take up a soft cloth (slightly moistened with rose water) to gently clean their delicate faces to shine like a polished mirror. Another *seva dasi* prepares the drink called *piyusa bati* to remove their drowsiness.

But Radha implores, “O hey Sensuous enjoying one! My superb dress and ornaments all got messed up by your indulging proclivities! So quickly redress me before my sakhis arrive to embarrass me.”

When Krishna combs Radha’s lovely hair and paints tilaka over her moon-face, he does a fine job. But when he tries to paint Kamadeva’s *panca-vana** over her stunning *kuca yugal*, his hand starts shaking, and the designs get smudged. Thus in knowing my skill, Kamal Manjari hints with a wink, “Ja! Ja! Quickly go, and do

* *panca-vana*: Kamadeva’s five flower arrows

the needful seva.”

Seeing the sakhis approaching with big smiles and restless, roaming eyes, Radha removes herself from Krishna’s lap, and quickly covers herself with his yellow chaddor.

As the sakhis start teasing Radha, Krishna desires to see the *madhuri*[†] of her contorted face. Thus he openly displays his broad chest and speaks with a grin, “Hey sakhis, look! With the morning’s arrival the star named ‘Radha’ become frightened seeing her sweetheart (the moon) disappearing. So to delay his departure she marked the sky (his chest) with hundreds of moonbeams!”

Observing the laughing sakhis Radha’s robust cheeks light up like a blooming flower. Then as her pensive eyes align with her dancing eyebrows she catapults a crooked side-long glance to strike Krishna’s heart! Radha’s slightly closed reddish eyes fill with tears to convey shyness, fear, restlessness, jealousy, anger, wonder and the thirst for amour. In this intriguing way, she delivers great happiness to her Nagara-nilamani.

As the sakhis and manjaris watch the amusement, they forget the necessity to quickly return home. So Vrinda signals the *sari* (female parrot) Subha to incite Radha’s alarm, and her foreboding words thus churn her heart. So with her minnow-like eyes darting this way and that, Radha leaves the flower bed.

Now the manjaris collect the previous nights’ seva paraphernalia. Guna Manjari carries a golden *lota*, Rasa Manjari picks up a golden handled *camara*, Juthi Manjari picks up the colorful candan box and jeweled pan containers, and Lata instructs me to carry *Manjubhasini*[‡] in her golden cage.

In seeing Radhika-sundari’s blue garment adorning Krishna’s body, and his *pitambara* chaddor covering her, the sakhis giggle. But the two cannot understand why the sakhis are laughing—because as Radha’s blue garment matches Krishna’s complexion, his bright yellow chaddor blends with her golden bodily effulgence.

† *madhuri*: sweetness

‡ *Manjubhasini*: Radha’s pet *sari* (female parrot)

As they exit from the *vilasa mandira*, Krishna begins to amuse Radha by pointing to various sights in the forest. But soon everyone again forgets the need to quickly proceed home. So Vrinda anxiously signals the old female monkey named Kak-khati who shrieks from the treetops—“Jatila is coming!” Thus fear and panic overtake Radhe Shyam. So even though they are still anxious for *prema vilasa*, they separate to quickly run home!

Radha palpitates while thinking that Jatila is close behind. Though her large breasts and broad *nitamba* add to Radha’s difficulty—as they impair her ability to move swiftly. So as Lata holds Radha up from her right side, I hold onto her slender waist to escort her back to Yavata as swiftly as we can. Kamal Manjari’s eyes scan the pathway to make sure that no one will detect Srimati’s secret journey home.

Pratah Lila

6:00 A.M. - 8:24 A.M.

After a brief rest, we wake up in the palace that Vrsabhanu Raja built for Radha and Ananga Manjari (just north of Jalita’s home in Javata). Then after I bathe and dress, Lata Manjari requests me to clean Ananga Manjari’s bedroom, where she is still resting. But as I enter, Ananga’s eyes open. Then she sees me and calls me over. “Can you arrange a palanquin for didi and I this morning?” she asks. “When Radha will go to Nanda bhavan I want to accompany her in this way.”

Before I can answer though, we see Madhumati Sakhi enter the bedroom with a group of sakhis trailing behind her! And with a big smile she exclaims, “O *rasa taranga* Ananga! We would love to hear about how you met with Shyamasundar last night. Can you be merciful and sooth our ears with this *rasa katha*?”

When seeing Ananga Manjari blushing, however, as Madhumati and her sakhis sit around her in a circle, I take this opportunity to go and search for a palanquin. Passing Radha’s bedroom, I peak inside and notice that *rasodgara*[§] has already begun between Radha and her *yuthesvari* friend Shyamala, as many sakhis surround them.

§ *rasodgara*: a discussion of the previous night’s affairs

When coming downstairs and arriving in the courtyard, however, I become surprised to see that our four assistants—Prema, Priya, Citra and Carulata—have already arranged a palanquin! And now they eagerly wait to carry Radha and Ananga to Nanda bhavan. So I cannot help but praise their clairvoyant expertise in *prema seva*. But next I see Kamal Manjari and some others quickly heading towards Javata village’s eastern side. And she exclaims, “Come with us, as Ananga Manjari will soon arrive at Kishori Kund, you can help us bathe and dress her!”

After arriving there and seeing that Ratna, Rāsa, and Kanaka Manjari have almost everything ready, however, Kamal asks me to pick flowers.

Meanwhile, as Ananga Manjari arrives at the ghata, from the flower garden I see that Kamal and Vilasa Manjari are helping her change into her *snana vastra*. And many other sakhis in Ananga’s *yutha* are changing into their *snana vastras* too. Then as everyone enters Kishori Kund the sakhis begin to lightly splash one another. And as the *jala keli* gets more and more intense, Priya and Prema lata watch with me from a padma pavilion as we make garlands and flower ornaments.

When the *jala keli* subsides, Ananga and Ratna Manjari’s superb dress and *srngara* begins in a jeweled pavilion. And as the expert sakhis complete their *seva*, we arrive before them with our flower malas and crowns. Then Rāsa and Kanaka Manjari place the malas around their necks, and nicely fit the flower crowns over their heads. As I hold a full length mirror before Ananga though, *sattvika bhavas* awaken in her as she impatiently views her stunning beauty that will surely topple Govinda’s patience!

Arriving back at the palace, we find Radha waiting outside beside Jatila; she is very anxious to proceed to Nanda bhavan. So after the two sisters take the dust from Jatila’s feet, and step into the palanquin, Lata and I sit behind them to fan with *camaras* as they proceed along. Lalita, Visakha, Rupa Manjari and many others surround the palanquin, as Ananga Manjari’s leading sakhis are coming too.

When Krishna’s majestic palace comes into view, Lata and I watch Radha and Ananga horripulate! And as they contemplate meeting Krishna they profusely perspire. So we carefully fan them with more vigor.

Arriving at the *singhadvara*, Dhanistha is waiting to take Radha and Ananga for meeting Vrajesvari Yashoda. And coming before her, they offer a pranama with bhakti unto her lotus feet. Then she warmly blesses them.

Entering the kitchen, the two sisters begin preparing Krishna's morning bhojan, and many sakhis assist. Then I bring candan wood to keep their stoves burning. Though Lata is busy fanning them as they sweat a lot before the hot stoves.

When the cooking is completed, along with numerous preparations and sweets that include a vast assortment of sliced fruits and drinks, Madhumangala enters the kitchen to arrange everything for Sri Narayan's bhoga offering. And after the arati, Mother Yashoda affectionately calls Krishna, Balarama and the sakhas to enjoy their morning bhojan. Then Yashoda, Rohini and Tungi serve the meal as Radha and Ananga Manjari offer them one by one the delicious dishes they prepared from the kitchen. But when no one is watching, I notice that Radha and Ananga take turns to devastate Krishna with their loving glances. And upon seeing Krishna floating into a daze (and neglecting to eat) Yashoda starts to worry and chides Krishna to eat more! In seeing the amusement the sakhis cannot help but laugh and jest with one another in the kitchen.

After enjoying the meal, Krishna goes to take rest, and the servants Jambul, Rasal and Vilasak offer him pan, massage his body, and fan him with peacock feather fans.

Thereafter, Yashoda calls Radha, Ananga and the sakhis to take prasada—and on Ratna Manjari's request, she lets the manjaris serve. But Dhanistha has previously collected Krishna's remnants that we now mix with the other prasada. So as the two sisters ecstatically relish the meal, it appears that they are directly tasting Krishna's lips!

After dining, Yashoda calls Radha and offers her some jewel ornaments that she was planning to give to Krishna's future bride (for it is Yashoda's cherished dream that someday she will marry Krishna).

When Radha and Ananga Manjari go to take rest, Dhanistha secretly brings them to a hidden cave on Nandisvara’s west side. Then Krishna goes there and enjoys *prema keli* with them.

Radha, Krishna and Ananga Manjari next descend down the Nandisvara hill to the Yoga-pitha mandira located beside Gupta Kund. Upon entering the mandira which is brighter than a million suns and more cooling than a million moons, all of the sakhis and manjaris stand in their respective places in the Yoga-pitha mandala’s lotus petal formation.

[Although Ananga Manjari is placed in the outer circle in most Yoga-pitha pujas, in Ananga Manjari’s parampara we worship her in the center with Radha and Krishna —as she stands on Krishna’s right side.]

So first I prepare two golden trays containing Tulasi, candan, flowers, garlands, incense and a ghee lamp. Then my gurudevi (Lata Manjari) takes the first tray and enters the Yoga-pitha mandala to worship Krishna, Radha and Ananga Manjari. Then she uses their *prasadi* items to worship the asta sakhis headed by Lalita, the priya sakhis headed by Kalavati, and the asta manjaris headed by Rupa. Then she worships the four doorkeepers headed by Vrinda.

When Lata returns, I use the *prasadi* items left on her tray to perform her guru puja. Then with her permission, I enter the Yoga-pitha mandal with the other golden tray to worship everyone in the same order that she did.

Purbahna Lila

8:24 A.M. - 10:48 A.M.

As Vrajanath heads for the forest taking the wealth of his cows and his sakhas, the Vrajavasis feel sad as they will miss his darshan! Arriving at the forest’s edge, Krishna looks back and sees his forlorn mother and father, and stops to console them.

Meanwhile, the Vrajasundaris’ bee-like eyes soar against the heavy breeze of their shyness to land on Krishna’s lotus face. Yet amongst all of them Krishna especially notices Radhika’s dancing eyes which resemble intoxicated humming birds. Thus

he considers, “Today’s journey into the forest will be auspicious, for surely I will achieve my desired goal.”

Then Krishna’s lurking eyes give assurance to Srimati Radharani, “O Sundari! Just be patient. Somehow please slip away and come to your Sri Kunda. And with a tender loving glance Radhika humbly concedes. Thus the arrows of Krishna’s glances pierce her heart, as Radha’s glances pierce Krishna too!

When Krishna looks back and sees his mother and father still following, he again stops to console them, “ O Mother! Please return home and make *rasala* (a delicious drink) and send it to us. O Father, can you go home and make us some more bats for our ball playing?”

Hearing these words from Krishna, Nanda and Yashoda repeatedly kiss his face, embrace him, and look at him with forlorn eyes—with mind, body and words they only desire his welfare. Although the men and women of Vraja feel completely devastated, still they somehow manage to pick up Nanda and Yashoda who have fainted in Krishna’s separation. Thus everyone returns home.

Although Radha and many of her sakhis have fainted too, I somehow manage to revive Lata and Kamal, as Kundalata revives Radha. Then as we all return to Javata and find Jatila busy making cowdung paddies, Kundalata addresses her, “O saintly one, please take my pranama, here is your auspicious daughter-in-law. I have escorted her so carefully that Krishna didn’t even see her shadow. And look, as Yashoda was pleased by her cooking, she rewarded her with these costly clothes and ornaments.”

When Jatila sees that Kundalata protected Radha’s chastity, secured Yashoda’s blessings, and brought home a vast collection of wealth, she places Radha in her care once again, as she will soon leave to perform Surya puja.

When Radha goes to lie down in her room, Vilasa and Kamal Manjari wash her lotus feet, dry them, and begin to massage her. Then Lata carefully fans her with a camara until she falls asleep.

Meanwhile, Radha's friend Narmada arrives from the forest. Vrinda sent her with a vast collection of flowers. So upon rising, Radha employs her artistic skill to make a beautiful *vaijayanti mala* for Krishna. She also prepares a very special pan for him which is called *nagavalli*.

Then Lalita exclaims to Tulasi Manjari, "Take this mala and pan to Krishna, and quickly return to inform us where Radha may meet with Krishna. Thus Tulasi leaves with Kasturi Manjari.

Radha then enters the kitchen with her sakhis to prepare *karpura keli*, *amrita keli*, *laddus* and other sweets for Krishna's mid-day bhojan. Although, Jatila thinks that these items are for her Surya puja bhoga offering.

Even though Radha has sent Tulasi to meet Krishna, and even though she is engaged in his seva, still her intense *anuraga* to meet Krishna tortures her. Hence she imagines just one moment to last a hundred thousand yugas!

When Krishna enters the forest the sakhas become ecstatic and begin to play and speak with him in various ways. And seeing Krishna's arrival, Vrinda directs the Vrindavan forest to display her opulences by saying, "O please show your virtuous qualities to remind Krishna of his beloved Radha. Then you will be duly celebrated as the abode of Radha-Krishna's *prema keli*."

Krishna is like a raincloud because when he places his *mohan Vamsi* to his lips its sweet vibration showers *amrita*. Thus the forest comes back to life after having fainted in his separation! In whichever direction that Krishna glances then, the various limbs of Radha's body vividly appear to him—for the Vrindaban forest becomes *Radhamaya* simply to increase Krishna's ananda. Thus Krishna loses all of his patience in Radha's *viraha*.

Then Dhanistha arrives before Krishna with many maidservants from Nanda bhavan—and they have everything ready for his mid-day meal with the sakhas. As the sakhas bring the dhenus to Manasi Ganga, they enter the water to bathe and enjoy water sporting with Krishna. Then everyone comes out of the water to enjoy mid-day bhojan with him.

Krishna's creeper-like mind has been anxiously searching for a support to join with the tree of Radha's association. And seeing Dhanistha before him he considers, "Here is my best supporter."

After dining, Krishna tells the sakhas, "You can continue to herd the cows with Balarama. I'm going to go sightseeing in the forest with Subal and Madhumangal."

Dhanistha then requests the maidservants, "You can all take the containers and utensils back to Nanda bhavan. I shall return shortly after picking some flowers for Sri Narayan's puja."

Then Vrinda appears and offers Krishna two lovely campaka flowers that remind him of campaka complexioned Radha. So Madhumangal places the two flowers over Krishna's ears.

Just as a raja ponders how to plunder another raja's kingdom, today Krishna feels confident that he will conquer Radha's bodily kingdom seeing his four generals, Madhumangal, Subal, Dhanistha and Vrinda standing before him. Thus taking Madhumangal by the hand, Krishna heads towards *Kusuma sarovara* along with Dhanistha, Vrinda and Subal. But this beautiful environment only increases Krishna's hankering to meet Radha. Thus he starts conversing with them how he can meet her.

Coincidentally, just then Tulasi and Kasturi arrive on the scene. And they become delighted seeing Krishna discussing the means to attain Radha with Madhu, Subal, Vrinda and Dhanistha. Tulasi then opens the jeweled box containing Radha's *puspa mala* and *pan*. And Madhu places Radha's *vaijayanti mala* around Krishna's neck which makes his entire body horripulate! Then Krishna exclaims, "Hey Tulasi! How is your sakhi Radha doing?"

But Tulasi tells a white-lie (hinting that she isn't coming), which makes Krishna feel downtrodden! Thus Vrinda and Dhanistha give Tulasi a chastising eye glance, and she again replies, "O Gokulananda! Cheer up, I was just joking with you. Actually your *priyatamā* Radha is also anxious to meet you, and she is now coming with Kundalata. So please tell me in which *kunja* we shall bring Radha?"

Tulasi's words delight Krishna. So in loving appreciation he removes his own *gunja mala* and places it in her hands. Then Vrindadevi tells Tulasi that today's meeting place will be Madan sukhada Kunja (within Visakha's immense bower).

Just then Candravali's sakhi Saibya arrives and places Candravali's gunja neckless around Krishna's neck! But her heart becomes pierced in seeing Radha's sakhi Tulasi standing beside Vrinda!

So feigning happiness Saibya says, "Hey Tulasi! Today my sakhi Candravali is celebrating Badhra Kali puja, and she has sent me to invite Radha. So I'm lucky to meet you; can you please tell me where Radha is?"

[Saibya tries to pretend that her arrival has nothing to do with Candravali's meeting Krishna. Thus she hopes to cleverly trick Tulasi into disclosing Radha's whereabouts. And if she succeeds she will be able to foil Radha Krishna's *yugal milan*.]

But Tulasi perceives Saibya's trickery and decides to outwit her. "O Saibya! Today Radha has been invited to Shyamala Sakhi's Ambika puja. Thus Lalita sent me to bring Vrinda. So just now we are leaving for Shyamala's house after collecting some forest flowers and fruits. Tulasi thus dupes Saibya, remains indifferent towards Krishna, and leaves with Dhanistha and Vrinda.

[Here we can observe how clever the manjaris are. At this crucial moment Radha's fate for the entire day depends upon Tulasi's maneuvering capacity. Keeping Radha's prestige in the forefront, Tulasi cunningly mounts Saibya on an imaginary dream horse and departs. For Saibya is made to believe that Krishna can easily be led to Candravali's kunja. But later, when Candravali will discover that she has been stood up, the manjaris will smile with Radha's love victory.]

In his great anticipation for getting Radha's *sanga ananda*, Krishna walks along the hidden path and arrives at Radha kund. Aho! He finds it breathtaking to behold. On its four banks precious gemstone steps lead to four jeweled ghats that beautify the water's edge. Beside these ghats are gem vedis, and above the stairways are jeweled mandapas with jeweled cottages behind them. Between each mandap an enchanting *hindola* (swing) hangs from the limbs of two

adjoining desire trees. The *hindolins* are well decorated with flowers and fine cloth and they suspend from bokula, kadamba, campaka and mango trees on the kunda's north, east, south and west shores.

Located in the center of Radha kund is a dazzling *ratna mandira* which appears like a huge lotus floating over the water—and this is the kunjā of Ananga Manjari. From the north and expanding around the kunda to the northwest are the kunjās of Radha's asta sakhis beginning from Lalita's kunjā in the north, Indulekha's kunjā in the southeast, Campaklata's kunjā in the south, Rangadevi's kunjā in the southwest, Tungavidya's kunjā in the west, and Sudevi's kunjā in the northwest.

Then Vrinda personally takes Krishna on a tour, and shows him how she and her *vana devis* expertly decorated each sakhi's kunjā—beginning from Citra's kunjā in the east, and at last arriving at Visakha's kunjā in the northeast. Yet Visakha's Madan sukhada kunjā further arouses Krishna's memory of his previous pastimes with Radha. Thus overtaken with feeling, he exclaims, "O Vrinda! If I am fortunate to meet Radha within this bower, and if our *prema lila* takes place here, then these beautiful banks, this beautiful kunjā, Spring's beautiful influence, and your beautiful decorations will all be crowned successful."

Rasa Analysis

In Bhaktivinoda's manjari parampara we have two *yuthesvaris* or group leaders, Radha and Ananga Manjari. So in the nishanta lila as we followed mostly after Radha, in the pratah lila we mostly followed Ananga Manjari. Then in the purbahna lila we again focused on Radha's pastimes with Krishna. But as we begin the next part (with the madhyahna lila) we will first follow Ananga Manjari.

Because these two sisters both have many sakhi followers of their own, rarely do Radha and Ananga perform pastimes with Krishna together. For they usually remain separate to maintain the super-excellence of their own adopted seva moods with Krishna, which are different.

Since we have a direct connection with Ananga Manjari, however, as members of her manjari parampara, she naturally has lots of affection for us, and considers us her *nija jana* (very own). Thus we can be closer to Ananga Manjari because in

Radha's group she feels closer to her *nīja jana*, who are her asta sakhis and asta manjaris. But Ananga Manjari also has her asta sakhis whose names are: Subhada, Rasada, Rambha, Keli, Kundalika, Nandā, Jayanti and Tulasi. These eight sakhis find a special delight in the intimate rasa keli pastimes, and their divine bodies are exceptionally beautiful. Thus during the Rāsa lila (and at most other times) they sing and play various instruments to awaken Krishna's *rati* moods.

As we previously mentioned, Rupa Manjari, Rati Manjari, Rasa Manjari, Guna Manjari and Mani Manjari (although leading manjaris in Radha's group) also join Ananga Manjari's group in separate *prakasa murtis*. Then they serve her like 'priya sakhis'. Serving under them are the following sakhis: Rupa Manjari leads Rupavati, Rasavati, Rasalika, Ranganeti, Rambhavati, Kalarupa and Nari.

Under Rati Manjari are: Sabdavati, Rasakala, Ramani, Carusila, Lilarati, and Gunavati.

Serving under Rasa Manjari are: Rāsevari, Vidyavati, Rangamala, Rasonnati, Rasamukhya, and Rasabhadra.

Guna Manjari leads: Premada, Priyasi purna, Ananta-vamsika-gurna, Padma, Padmagandha, Premesvari, Parijata and Susambhara.

Serving under Mani Manjari are: Madhukanta, Mandahasi, Madhu, Manju, Madhurasī, Indrā and Kandarpika.

Vrindadevi (and her vanadevis) also join Ananga Manjari's group. And the names of some of the sakhis serving under her are: Kausalya, Kamini, Raga-ballika, Sarīketi, and Pikakanti.



* We shall continue to describe some of the *manjari manasi seva* that we can meditate on in the *astakala* in Part Twelve.