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The insights of multiple marriages of Lord Krishna: A focus on cultural aspects

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Abstract

According to their regal status, the hierarchy of his wives can be categorized into three groups. In the first group, Rukmini, avatar of the Material Prakriti stands for majesty and wealth. Satyabhama, the avatar of the Elemental Prakriti represents the kingdom and Jambavati represents victory (vijaya). The second group represents the Aryavarta (the nobility). Kalindi represents the central kingdoms, Nagnajiti represents the eastern kingdoms (including the Solar dynasty) and Lakshmana represents the western kingdom. The third group of wives (Mitravinda and Bhadra) represents his Yadava clan called Satvata. Lord Krishna got married 8 women during the span of his whole life. The number of Krishna's wives is said to be the 8 forms of Laxmi. It is already known that Krishna was an avatar of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Laxmi is Vishnu's wife. So Vishnu, even in this amorous avatar of Krishna remained faithful and monogamous (technically) as he married the 8 forms of Laxmi in the incarnation of 8 women. However, every time the marriages took place in dramatic situations.

Key words: incarnation, Lord Vishnu, Divine love, cultural aspects

Introduction

Lord Krishna is one of the ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu. He was the son of Mathura king, Vasudeva and queen Devaki. He was born in the jail where his parents were being kept in prison by his maternal uncle Kansa. Soon after his birth, he was moved to Gokula. He spent his childhood in both Gokula and Vrindavan. He was the king of Dwarka in the Dwapara Yuga (epoch). It is said that he had 8 queens and 16000 wives. According to Bhagavata Purana, Lord Krishna had 8 principle wives known as the Ashta-bharya. Ashta-bharya means 8 wives. Lord Krishna married 8 times with 8 incarnations of Laxmi and each time for a unique reason. According to Bhagavata Purana, the eight wives of Krishna are followings:

1. Rukmini
2. Satyabhama
3. Jambavati
4. Kalindi
5. Mitravinda
6. Nagnajiti (also called Satya)
7. Bhadra and
8. Lakshmana (also called Madra)

The followings are the details about them.

1. Rukmini – Rukmini was first wife of Lord Krishna and chief queen of Dwarka. She was an avatar of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. She was the daughter of Bhishmaka who was the king of Vidarbha. Rukmini was in deep love with Krishna from childhood. But, her father and brother wanted her to marry Shishupala, the prince of Chedi Kingdom. He was the cousin brother of Krishna. However, when Rukmini's father came to know about her love for Krishna, he tried to forcefully marry rukmani with Shishupal. So, she wrote a letter to Krishna that she has accepted him as her husband & requested him to rescue her. On her wedding day, Krishna kidnapped rukmini with her consent and got married to her in his kingdom Dwaraka.

2. Satyabhama – Satyabhama was the second wife of Lord Krishna. She was the daughter of Satyajit who was the owner of the divine Syamantaka Mani. She was considered to be the reincarnation of mother earth or bhoomi devi or lakshmi. Her main duty was to kill Narakasura who was the son of bhoomi devi. Narakasura was cursed to be killed by his own mother. It is said that she did severe meditation for years to get shelter in Vaikuntha. Impressed by her dedication, Vishnu granted her the boon of becoming his wife in his next human incarnation. She was skillful in archery. She even accompanied Krishna to kill the demon Narakasura. Krishna also defeats Indra, the king of heaven and the gods and gets the celestial Parijat tree for her. Impressed by the dedication, the Sun-god Surya gave Satyabhama's father the precious diamond Syamantaka mani. The marriage of Satyabhama and Jambavati to Krishna is based on the story. One day, Satyajit's brother prasenjit went for hunting. He took the mani with him. In the forest a lion attacked and killed him. When satyajit came to know this, he accused Krishna of it. So, Krishna went in search of the mani and found the mani with Jambavan. They fought for almost a month and Jambavan finally surrendered to Krishna and requested him to marry his daughter, Jambavati. Krishna had rescued the mani from Jambavan and return it back to King Satyajit. He felt bad for his allegation on Krishna and apologized to Krishna.

3. Jambavati - Jambavati was the third wife of Lord Krishna. She was the daughter of the bear king, Jambavan. Jambavan kill the lion and took the mani and gave it to his daughter to play with. When satyajit came to know about his brother's death and missing syamantaka, he accused Krishna of it. To clear this accusation, Krishna went in search of syamantaka and found the mani with the bear king Jambavan. They fought for almost a month and Jambavan finally surrendered requested Krishna to marry his daughter Jambavati.

4. Kalindi - Kalindi was the 4th wife of Lord Krishna. She was the daughter of Suryadeva and considered to be the Goddess of river Yamuna. Yamuna was a devotee of Vishnu and he blessed her that when he takes birth as Krishna he will marry her. When Krishna and Arjuna had met her on the banks of river Yamuna, she expressed her lifelong desire to get married to Lord Krishna and the Lord agreed to her desire. Kalindi used to live in a forest named Khandava. This was the same forest where Indraprastha was made.

5. Nagnajiti – Nagnajiti or Satya was the fifth wife of Lord Krishna. She was the reincarnation of Swaha Devi. She was the daughter of king Nagnajita of Koshala and the princess of Kosala kingdom. Her father set a condition that anyone who will defeat the seven ferocious bulls in combat can marry his daughter. Lord Krishna then accepted the challenge and defeated the seven bulls and then married Nagnajiti. According to devi mahatmyam, Lord Vishnu blessed her that she will be born as nagnajiti in Dwapara Yuga and Krishna will marry her.

6. Mitravinda – Mitravinda was the sixth wife of Lord Krishna. She was the daughter of Jayasen & Rajadhidevi (paternal aunt of Krishna). She was the Princess of Avantipura and the sister to the Kings of Avantipura. She was the cousin of Lord Krishna who was supposed to marry Kaurava prince Duryodhana. Her father had organised the Swayamvara for her marriage ceremony. Krishna's brother Balarama knew that Mitravinda secretly loved Lord Krishna and so he advised Lord Krishna to abduct and marry her against the wishes of her father and brother. Then, Lord Krishna seized Mitravinda from Swayamvara.

7. Bhadra - Bhadra was the seventh wife of Lord Krishna. She was the daughter of King Dhrishtaketu and queen Shrutakirti. She was the princess of Kekeya and cousin of Lord Krishna by relation. Her five brothers including Santardana wanted her to marry Lord Krishna. So, she chose Krishna as her husband in her swayamvara ceremony.

8. Lakshmana - Lakshmana was the 8th wife of Lord Krishna. She was the daughter of Brihatsena, the King of Madra and the princess of ancient Madras. Her father arranged the swayamvara ceremony for her. But he came to know that Lakshmana was in deep love with Krishna. So, became worried as the invitation had already gone everywhere. So he decided to set a tough condition that anyone who will win the archery contest can marry Lakshmana. Both Arjuna and Duryodhana were invited to her swayamvara but they purposely failed the test out of respect for Krishna. Thus, Krishna married Lakshmana by winning the archery contest.

The other 16000 wives of Krishna – It is said that Lord Krishna had 16000 wives other than the 8 queens.

According to Bhagavata Purana, a demon Narakasura, the king of Pragiyotisha has kidnapped 16100 princesses and kept in his palace. It was believed that he was the son of Bhumi devi and also called Bhauma or Bhaumasura. So, Krishna killed him to rescue them from the demon. But the husbands/ families refused to accept them back. So, Krishna married the 16100 princesses to protect their dignity and honour.

Radha – In Hinduism, Radha was the Gopi (milkmaid) who became the consort of the god Krishna when he lived in Vrindavana. Radha was the wife of another gopa but was the most beloved of Krishna's consorts. Krishna never marries Radha but he is worshipped with his lover Radha. Radha was considered to be the avatar of the goddess Lakshmi. Gopis are considered as Radha's many forms and manifestations. And along with Radha are many milkmaids who dance around Krishna while he plays the flute in the forest of Madhu-vana at night.

Summary - On scrutinizing the personal life of Lord Krishna, it has been noticed that he always respected women's desire. The marriage with Rukmini and Mitravinda are great examples of his nobility. While respecting their wishes, Lord Krishna had kidnapped them from Swayamvara against their brothers wishes. Satya and Lakshmana from their swayamvara but with their families consent and Satyabhama, Bhadra, Jambavati were offered by their father's as bride to Krishna. Kalindi did severe meditation to get Krishna as her husband. By marrying Satyabhama Krishna became the legal owner of syamantaka mani and its wealth.

It is just impossible for mortals to evaluate the character of Krishna — the Lord incarnate, politician, counsellor, diplomat, philosopher, Yogeeswara, the expounder of the Geeta., the destroyer of the wicked and the protector of the pure people. Whatever be the opinions of modern scholars, there is no doubt about the fact that Krishna was a historical reality. A mere literary creation cannot by any stretch of imagination move millions of human beings and bring solace to countless souls. The clue to His personality can be found in the manner the benefics and malefic are disposed in His horoscope and the spheres of influences involved. It is revealed that Sri Krishna was a historical reality. The so-called-scholars and modern politicians who argue that Sri Krishna was not epic hero but only fantasy figure must be opposed. Even photographs taken

recently from satellites and sub-marines revealed unequivocally the remains of the city of Dwaraka and its palaces submerged under the Arabian sea on the west coast in Sourashtra region. To conclude, it should be mentioned here that the discovery of the ruins of the city of Dwaraka by the renowned archaeologist Dr. S. R. Rao, under the Arabian Sea, provides another strong evidence that Lord Krishna and the story of Mahabharata were a reality and not simply poet's fancy and it is proved with evidences now.. The meaning of what He did can only progressively reveal itself to the generations that follow Him. The immortal Bhagavad-Gita, preached by the Lord, when Arjuna became uncertain to do his duty, he has inspired and influenced the moral and spiritual thought and actions of innumerable persons and offered such persons to have solutions for their problems according to their own stage in evolution.

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