Sri Balarama ji's Updesha to Srimati Rukmini devi – Bhagavat Purana, Skanda 10, Adhyaya 54

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Introduction

Namaste,

Sri Balarama ji's updesha to Srimati Rukmini devi occurs in Skanda 10, Chapter 54, slokas 42-49. There are times when, for the sake of devotees, avatars too display human emotions like anger, guilt, fear, compassion, etc so as to teach us something. Unlike Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads, Puranas teach us through stories. The teaching of this discourse is to stay neutral by staying detached and by simultaneously rooting one's Self in Self. Those who have experienced detachment will understand the importance of this teaching. Life puts us in certain situation that even an advanced sadhaka goes through an experience of being overpowered by emotions like anger, frustration, compassion, etc. In such situation, when one realises that one is under the sway of emotions, be it positive or negative, these instructions become valuable. Following them will bring one's car back on track. Even a short instruction given in few slokas are more than enough to remind one of what one has to do in order to stay detached from any incident. The instructions are suited to those practising advaita vedanta.

Instructions are a part of the Krishna-Rukmini Vivaha (Marriage) Prasanga (episode). The episode occurs in Chapters 52-54. To cut short the incident, when Krishna and Rukmini were both running away to avoid Rukmini's forced marriage to Shishupala, Rukmi, the eldest brother of Rukmini who hated Krishna, stopped them and challenged Krishna for the dual. Krishna accepted the dual and repelled all the attacks of Rukmi. Finally, when Rukmi armed with sword charged towards Krishna, Krishna shattered his sword and shield into pieces and then armed himself with a sharp edged sword to kill Rukmi. Seeing this site, Rukmini trembled with fear, and fell at the feet of Krishna and begged him not to kill her brother. Krishna dropped the plan to kill him and instead humiliated Rukmi by partially trimming hair, moustache and beard which is considered as equivalent to killing a Kshatriya, who is also a relative. In this moment Sri Balarama ji consoled her (slokas 38-41) and taught Rukmini, who is verily Maa Lakshmi, the Vidya Shakti, the one holding the knowledge of Atma-Jnana (Self-Realisation), the art of detachment and rooting in Self. Before imparting Tattva-Jnana, it is necessary for the disciple or seeker to have a receptive mind for which one has to be calm and composed. Hence it was necessary first to console her to calm her down so that she can grasp the essence of instructions.

For those interested to know more about how the whole episode unfolded, please continue to read, others may skip to sloka 38 or even to sloka 42 from which the actual discourse starts.

It is encouraged to read the entire episode in detail verse-by-verse. It is worth reading as it produces Bhāva within the heart of a sincere devotee. Listening to their glories and Lilas will purify the devotee's heart and fill it with devotion.. Hence, for an average devotee, listening to any devotional hymn, stuti, stotra or even a praise will trigger one's faith and spiritual love for their Ishta Devata. Devotions fills the heart of devotee thereby cleansing it and purifying it of any worldly matters.

Rukmi decides to marry Rukmini against her wishes to Shishupala

BP 10.52.21 onwards: Maharaj Bhishmaka was the king of Vidharbha desha. He has five sons and a beautiful daughter named Sati Rukmini. Eldest of brothers was Rukmi who hated Krishna. Other four brothers were Rukmastha, Rukmabāhu, Rukmakesha and RukmamālĪ. **Rukmini liked Krishna and had mentally accepted Krishna as her husband. Krishna too liked Rukmini due to her excellent qualities and made up his mind to marry Rukmini. Both of them had never met each other.** Except Rukmi, father and four brother were in favour of marrying their beloved sister Rukmini to Krishna. King Bhishmaka was also a devotee of Krishna. However, out of sheer envy, Rukmi forcefully arranged marriage of Rukmini to arch enemy of Krishna named Shishupala. His father Bhishmaka though unhappy could not oppose his son as he was attached to him.

Musings: Puranas teach us in a friendly way. They talk to us in the form of stories. This is the best way to memorise, learn and implement. We have to interpret Puranas and their teachings in such a way that it is helpful to us and there is inner transformation and inner purification. In current case, Rukmini represents Jiva and Krishna represents Parabrahman. Balarama plays the role of the guru.

Rukmini didn't see Krishna but just by hearing about him, his beauty and glory, she mentally got attracted and accepted him as her husband. In case of sadhaka too, initially, one does see or experience Ishvara. Still, walking on the path prescribed by shastras, sadhaka, depending upon path meditates on Ishvara, and keeps recalling his divine glories, his divine lilas (divines karma), as avatars are not born on earth due to ripening of karmas but their lives and their karmas are divine and nor normal says Bhagavan in Gita BG 4.9 says, 'Janma karma cha me divyam' (जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यम्). Hence they do karma for kalyana (benefit) of sadhaka and the whole of samsara. Initially, a devotee simply believes in Ishvara and contemplates on him. So a devotee is extending his / her hand towards Ishvara. But when Ishvara, too gets the attention of his devotee and extends his hand towards his beloved devotee and holds his devotees hand, then it is the duty of Ishvara to make the devotee cross the ocean of samsara and know one's True nature (Atma-Jnana). The special attention given by Ishvara is represented by Krishna too liking Rukmini and mentally made up his mind to marry her. Marriage means union. It is not physical union, but it is union of Jiva and Brahman or Atma and Paramatman. Hence this union is permanent and inseparable.

When a devotee prays from the bottom of the heart, then the prayer reaches Ishvara. This is conveyed in story form in next slokas.

Rukmini acknowledges her love for Krishna and appeals Krishna to abduct her

Knowing this Rukmini devised a plan and accordingly sent a message through a trusted Brahmin to Krishna. Brahmin was well received by Krishna, given respect and offered food. After Brahin had his lunch, Krishna politely asked the reason for coming here. Brahmin replied, he has been sent by Rukmini and passes on Rukmini's message to Krishna.

BP 10.52.37-43: In the message, Brahmin says that she admitted her love for Krishna and also admitted that she has mentally accepted Krishna as her husband. Rukmini said she has already surrendered unconditionally to Krishna mentally and sees him as her 'AntaryāmĪ'. Hence Krishna must come to Rukmini and abduct her, failing which she would not be able to live any longer and would fast until death.

Rukmini also said that if she has collected enough merits in her past life / lives by doing meritorious work like building wells, lakes, performing Yajnas, given donations, observed religious vows and fastings, and worshipped Ishvara through serving her Guru and Brahmins, then please shower your grace upon me and save me from Shishupala by abducting me and marrying me.

Musings: This is worth noting that her mind was already purified through her meritorious deeds (karmas) in her past lives. Maa Lakshmi is Adi Shakti herself, Ishvara's Maya and so she does not have any past birth. Her birth as Rukmini devi is not due to Prarabhdha but is for divine purpose, as Krishna in Gita BG 4.9 says, 'Janma karma cha me divyam' (जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यम्). Hence these instructions are suited for those who have purified mind and intellect. This statement of hers also indicates the true love for the beloved Krishna whom she had already surrendered unconditionally and hence she wished nothing more or nothing less than Krishna is Antaryami i.e. Atmasvarupa. This indicates that disciple has already understood the purport of vedanta which is to realise Brahman as Atmasvarupa. Krishna here represents Brahman and Rukmini plays the role of a matured disciple who is always surrendered to Brahman through Bhakti and Jnana.

Rukmini sends Brahmin to send her message. Brahmin here represents the prayer by purified heart. Brahmin means - that which 'abides in Brahman'. Hence this incident of choosing Brahmin symbolises prayer of purified heart directed at the Antaryami. This is the state of highly advanced seeker of truth. Such a prayer always reaches Ishvara and is well received by him. Ishvara always responds positively to such prayer of his beloved devotee.

Rukmini's request to abduct her symbolizes her yearning. Her firm faith in Ishvara, Krishna, is displayed by her pledge that she will fast until death but won't marry anyone. Shishupala represents ego. She does not wish to attach herself with ego which is symbolised by marriage – attachment.

She informed that since she would be heavily guarded, it would not be possible for Krishna to enter the capital city. So she devised a plan and informed Krishna that it is their family's tradition to visit the temple of Kula-devi which is at the outskirts of the main city. In this place security will be relaxed.

BP 10.53.2 onwards: Krishna at once acknowledged her love for him and promised to abduct her. Accordingly, he ordered a chariot to be ready and went to the kingdom of Vidarbha alone. Brahmin too followed him and carried Krishna's message to Rukmini. Balarama came to know that Krishna has left alone. He also knew there will be an army not only of Rukmi but also of other kings including Shishupala who were invited by Rukmi. Balarama readied an army joined Krishna. Krishna and Balarama reached the city. When King Bhishmaka came to know, he himself welcomed both Krishna and Balarama (along with his army) with utmost respect as he considered them as guests (atithi). He also offered Madhuparka (mixture of curd and honey, generally given to esteemed guests like bride-groom prior to marriage, etc). Likewise, the king also welcomed other kings like Jarasandha, etc and gave them deserving respect and honour. Knowing that Krishna has arrived in their city, villagers too came to meet Krishna and have his darshan which is highly meritorious and has purifying effect on mind and intellect.

Musings: After one surrenders to Ishvara, a devotee does not need to do anything, it is the Ishvara who takes on the responsibility for liberating devotee from the clutches of samsara which cannot function with ego. Krishna, the Parabrahman, acknowledges Rukmini's love and her prayer. Without delay he set forth to liberate Rukmini, her beloved devotee.

Krishna being well received by the King and villagers indicates Krishna is Prem Lahiri, Ananda Lahiri and Saundarya Lahiri. Ishvara manifests through his devotees who are respected and loved by all except the haters who are filled with ego. Such a devotee earns respect by all. The other kings along with Shishupala and Rukmi represents Ego and other worldly senses which Rukmini is not interested and avoids them. Her heart and mind is filled with love, which is the highest form of devotion and such a devotee does not wish anything else in tis or other worlds like svarga, etc. Here the love is physical. It does not represent lust. It is devotional love. It represents the intensity of attraction towards Ishvara. Just like a faithful and loving married couple cannot even image to separate from each other as such a separation is unbearable, the spiritual love indicates the intensity of attraction towards beloved Bhagavan and a devotee is so much filled with devotion, faith and the surrender to Ishvara is so strong and unconditional that the mind can no longer, even for a moment think of something else. No other thought is strong enough to disturb this spiritual bonding. It is the state of Devotional Love intoxicated heart and mind. Rukmini represents such an exalted devotee. Other devotees are Shrimati Radha Rani and other Gopis. Sri Chaiytanya Mahaprabhu, Srimati Meerabai and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa also experienced this type of devotional love. Devotional love is not just Bhāva, it is 'Mahā-bhāva' or 'great-devotion or 'highest devotional love'. Cultivation and manifestation of Mahābhāva is rare amongst devotees too. The hearts of these devotees were indeed abducted by Krishna. Their minds transformed into Krishna. From within they were Krishna, only from outer worldly perspective they had retained their separate identity. Their mind would project Krishna everywhere and they used to naturally stay in this exalted state. Coming down to normal human plane was impossible for them. They could not do it on their own. Only by the wish of Krishna and for the Kalyana (benefit) of devotees, to show them the path of bhakti, these divine saints would bring their consciousness down to the level in which they can interact with devotees and patiently guide them with love, caring and compassion but with the spirit of detachment.

Krishna abducts Rukmini - Rukmini-haraṇa Prasanga (Episode of Abduction of Rukmini)

Rukmini prayed to Maa Parvati to bless her so that Krishna becomes her consort. When Rukmini was worshipping in temple, she became anxious as time was running by and she didn't hear of either Krishna or his trusted Brahmin. Finally, Krishna came to the temple along with other guests and kings. At the same time, Brahmin too reached out to her. Brahmin seemed very happy. Judging from the body language of Brahmin, she immediately came to know that Krishna is coming for her and she became happy and came out of temple. She stepped out of temple and She saw Krishna. Rukmini was very beautiful. Even the modest people would get attracted towards her beauty. When other saw Rukmini, they were so much attracted by her beauty that they were hypnotised and they unconsciously dropped their weapons and even fell down from their chariots, horses and elephants. She set her hair to get a clear vision which were on her side to the back and saw other kings with a blush. At once, Krishna reached out to her, and took her along with him to his chariot with emblem Garuda (eagle) right in front of the kings and began to flee away with her in his chariot with Balarama leading with his army.

Kings left embarrassed as though they had expected something like this would happen and so they had come prepared with their armies. Though armed, they failed to stop that cowherd Krishna who took Rukmini, the future bride of their friend Shishupala, right in front of their eyes and they couldn't do anything. So they decided to charge Krishna. Balarama too came prepared along with other Yadava allies. War broke out and Balarama defeated the allies of Rukmi.

Musings: A time comes when a devotee even after surrendering and having faith in Ishvara, at one point, may begin to doubt – Has my prayer reached by Bhagavan? Will he respond? Why am I not getting any response from him? Is there any short coming in my devotion? Time is running out, I cannot hold on any longer. In such phase of mind, a devotee often loses patience and the bearing of separation becomes difficult with each passing moment. A matured devotee with purified heart and mind does not have to wait long. Rukmini too receives Brahmin i.e. response from Ishvara. From the body language of Brahmin who seemed very happy i.e. his heart and his entire being was filled with happiness (Bliss) Rukmini could judge that her pledge had reached Krishna and he is coming for her liberation. The happy-hearted Brahmin represents the exalted spiritual bhāva, the bliss that a devotee experiences and it makes the devotee feel that Ishvara is very near to her.

Her shyness in seeing other kings which represent ego and worldly sense objects represents detachment. She was not interested in him, but only in Krishna. Without any delay, Krishna reached out to her and pulled her in front of the kings and mounted her on his Chariot with the emblem Garuda. This incident happened very fast and no king was in a position to do resist this act of Krishna though they were armed. Though the sense objects were armed, i.e. ready to attract and defend Rukmini, the Jiva from Krishna and so wished to tie her down with ego and in this world, Rukmini was uninterested which symbolises vairagya. When samsara is not in the mind, then only Ishvara exist. Krishna didn't took time and overpowered all kings and abducted her. This act indicates that Ishvara takes control of mind of his beloved devotee and does not allow her to get attached with mind-body-ego and senses. In no time, Ishvara merges the mind of devotee within himself. Sense objects have no power whatsoever.

The chariot is well represented in Katha Upanishad Ka.Up. 1.3.3-5. This whole Valli 3 is worth reading. The Horses represents senses, reins the mind, the charioteer (driver) represents mind, the body of chariot represents the body and the owner of chariot is Jiva. Here, the owner of chariot is not Jiva but Brahman, Krishna. The emblem Garuda (eagle) on Chariot has its own symbolic meaning. It is the vehicle of Vishnu. It symbolises lower animal nature. Since Vishnu rides on Garuda (eagle), it has total control over the king of birds. This indicates Vishnu's total control over worldly objects and lower animal nature. Mounting of Rukmini on chariot indicates that now she does not have her own chariot, her chariot, her home, her body is Ishvara, Krishna. This indicates non-duality, Advaita. There is not two but one. Everything is in the control of Krishna from hereon. Such a devotee is blessed with Ishvara darshan which is followed by merging in Ishvara as taught by Kapila Bhagavan in Sri Kapila Gita. A devotee therefore must always make an attempt to surrender to Krishna, Ishvara and should develop dispassion for the samsara, the worldly objects and issues.

Jarasandha consoles Shishupala

BP 10.54.10-14: While fighting Balarama and Krishna, their arch enemy Shishupala too was defeated. Helpless, he saw his future bride Rukmini taken away right in front of her. Disappointed Shishupala was consoled by Jarasandha stating that all this is the will of Kala (Time, another name for Ishvara) and we are only here to act in the play like puppets. Huge army of the allies of Rukmi was defeated by relatively smaller army of Balarama, Krishna and their Yadava allies.

Sloka wise translation:

शिशुपालं समभ्येत्य हृतदारमिवातुरम् नष्टत्विषं गतोत्साहं शुष्यद्वदनमब्रुवन् १०
भो भोः पुरुषशार्दूल दौर्मनस्यमिदं त्यज न प्रियाप्रिययो राजन्निष्ठा देहिषु दृश्यते ११
यथा दारुमयी योषिन्नृत्यते कुहकेच्छया एवमीश्वरतन्त्रोऽयमीहते सुखदुःखयोः १२
शौरेः सप्तदशाहं वै संयुगानि पराजितः त्रयोविंशतिभिः सैन्यैर्जिग्ये एकमहं परम् १३
तथाप्यहं न शोचामि न प्रहृष्यामि कर्हिचित् कालेन दैवयुक्तेन जानन्विद्रावितं जगत् १४

Approaching Sisupala—who felt distressed as though his wedded wife had been abducted and was cheerless and dispirited, and with embarrassed face full of sadness—Jarasandha and others spoke to him (as follows):—(10) **"O tiger among men, shake off this despondency. Permanence of joy and sorrow is not seen in embodied beings, O king ! (11) (Just) as a puppet dances to the will of the showman, likewise does this creature act according to the Prarabhdha (will of Providence) so as to reap joy and sorrow. (12) Having sustained defeat at the hands of Krishna [a scion of Sura] in as many as seventeen encounters, though followed by twenty-three Aksauhinis [each time], I won only one battle (viz., the last one). (13) Yet I never grieve [over defeat] nor exult [over victory]**, knowing as I do the world to be ravaged by Them coupled with destiny. (14)

Musings: Consolation by the mighty Jarasandha who too was arch enemy of Krishna shows that the villains too had knowledge of shastras and had faith in them.

Sloka 13 coincides with the popular story of Maharana Pratap forgiving Muhammad Gori 16 times after defeating him while lost the 17th time by fraud and was killed.

This incident reminds us that nothing can be done against the will of Ishvara. All attempts are bound to fail. This is symbolised by the crushing defeat of powerful kings with huge army by relatively smaller army of Krishna, Balarama and their allies.

Every devotee passes through this internal tussle. The fight between good and evil is represented in stories and in Puranas is happening wince time immemorial. This fight between daivi (divine) and asuri (lower animal nature, qualities) happens in the mind of each devotee. By constant practice, one is able to control the mind and focus on Ishvara and does not fall under the sway of sense objects and emotions like anger, hatred, irritation, etc. Bhagavan Kapila informs us to use Karma, Bhakti, Jnana and Yoga to purify and overcome these negative extrovert qualities. Surrendering to extrovert tendencies is considered as a spiritual sin. One must be aware and always try to surrender to Ishvara and not develop dispassion for worldly objects and issues. A devotee must not lose hope and faith in Ishvara in these testing times.

Defeat of Rukmi

BP 10.54.18 onwards: Rukmi could not digest the defeat of his allies and was filled with rage. He hurried his chariot towards Krishna, chased him and challenged him for a dual. In front of all the kings, Rukmi armed himself and took a vow that if he is not able to [defeat and] kill Krishna and take back Rukmini to his kingdom, he would never ever return to the capital city of kingdom Vidarbha Kuṇḍinpura. The powerful Rukmi along with huge army then attacked Krishna. After fierce battle, Krishna managed to bring down his chariot.

Musings: It is the ego which gives a tough fight. Ego and mind are connected. Ego retains its individual identity and mind tries to attach itself to body which is not real as it is of temporary nature. It is a question of life and death for both ego and mind. Without thoughts mind ceases to exist. Without mind there is no ego. When ego ceases to exist, there is no retention of individuality. Mind too cannot exist in this state. Both are dependent upon each other. The final destination of a devotee is moving beyond gunas, beyond mind and senses and dissolve ego into Krishna, Brahman. Once ego, which is represented by Shishupala, is defeated (dissolved) it never returns back again. Jiva bhava is destroyed. This is explained in later slokas after Balarama gives Rukmini instructions on detachment and Atma Jnana. This part is not covered in this article. Rukmi too never returns back to the capitol city but establishes another city and starts living in it. He can no longer has any sway or control over Rukmini. She now belongs to Krishna.

Next few slokas represent a phase in life of a devotee in which almost all attachments are destroyed, but still the ego is retained as the devotee is still not able to detach oneself completely from one's own body and mind. There is still a sense of individuality. Somehow a devotee does not wish to detach form own body, though she may have detached her mind from other relatives.

In order to explain this state, Bhagavata Purana explains the reluctance of a devotee and a fear of losing one's own body and so indirectly wishing to retain the physical body. Hence ego is retained.

Rest episode is mentioned sloka wise.

Rukmini pleads for life of her brother

BP 10.54.30 onwards:

ततो रथादवप्लुत्य खड्गपाणिर्जिघांसया कृष्णमभ्यद्रवत्क्रुद्धः पतङ्ग इव पावकम् ३०
तस्य चापततः खड्गं तिलशश्चर्म चेषुभिः छित्त्वासिमाददे तिग्मं रुक्मिणं हन्तुमुद्यतः ३१
दृष्ट्वा भ्रातृवधोद्योगं रुक्मिणी भयविह्वला **पति**त्वा पादयोर्भर्तुरुवाच करुणं सती ३२
श्रीरुक्मिण्युवाच
योगेश्वराप्रमेयात्मन्देवदेव जगत्पते हन्तुं नार्हसि कल्याण भ्रातरं मे महाभुज ३३

{योगेश्वर-(अप्रमेय-आत्मा)-देवदेव जगत-पते}

{yogeshvara–(aprameya–ātmā)-devadeva jagata-pate}

Then, leaping down from the chariot, sword in hand, he (Rukmi, Rukmini's Brother) rushed in rage towards Sri Krishna with intent to kill Him, [just] as a moth would into a flame. (30) While he was [thus] rushing [towards Him], Sri Krishna shot arrows that broke his sword and shield (too) into sesamum like small pieces and picked up a sharp-edged sword and prepared to kill Rukmi. (31) Overwhelmed with fear upon seeing Krishna getting ready to kill her brother, the virtuous (Sati) Rukmini fell at the feet of her consort (Pati, **पति**) *[1]* and pitifully prayed (as follows):—(32) "**O Yogeshvara (योगेश्वर, Master of Yoga), O Aprameya-Atman (अप्रमेय-आत्मा, Incomprehensible Atman, Immeasurable Atman), O Mahadeva *[2]* (देवदेव, Ishvara of Devas), O Jagat-pate! (जगत-पते, Master of the worlds),** O Maha-bhuja (O mighty-armed one), please do not kill my brother, be benevolent [and spare his life]" (33)

*[1] The word consort (Pati, **पति**) i.e. spouse or Husband is used because both Krishna and Rukmini had mentally accepted each other as Husband and Wife. The word spouse which represents worldly Husband is used to reflect to the fact that both are spiritual consorts as Vishnu and Lakshmi, hence they are eternally married. This is why even in later slokas the word Srimati is used for Rukmini and not Sushri. Sushri and Kumari are used as titles for unmarried girl. Srimati is generally used as a salutation to married women, but at times it is used for unmarried too.*

[2] The epithet 'Deva-deva' refers to Mahadeva and is commonly associated with Bhagavan Shankara. However here, Bhagavan Krishna is eulogised as 'Aprameya-Atman' meaning 'incomprehensible or immeasurable Atman' indicating the formless nature of Krishna. He is also referred to as Yogeshvara, Master or God of Yoga, which is also a common epithet of Bhagavan Shiva. In Gita, Bhagavan Krishna is known as Yogeshvara. Both Krishna (Vishnu) and Shiva represent all

three types of Brahman - Saguna-Sakara Brahman, Saguna-Nirakara Brahman and Nirguna-Nirakara Brahman, and when eulogised in such terms other than their primary function to Protect and Destroy the universe, then it has to be taken as 'Formless Brahman' or as Atman or Atma-svarupa, as Puranas and Gita has to be understood in context with Upanishads. Hence these epithets like Yogeshvara and Mahadeva which traditionally belong to Shiva can be also applied to Krishna. They are taken as adjectives (qualities) and not as a proper noun i.e. referring to a quality of person and not person himself. This sloka beautifully covers all three aspects of Brahman. Even if these adjectives are taken as qualities of Saguna-Sakara Brahman, no harm is done. They help establish Krishna in our hearts.

Musings: When Krishna was about to kill Rukmi, Rukmini, trembling with fear, fell at the feet of Krishna and begged Krishna to spare her brother's life. She held on Krishna's legs tightly with the hope that Krishna will spare her brother's life.

A devotee does not wish for ego to completely and wishes to enjoy the bliss that she experiences through devotion and chanting the holy name of beloved Bhagavan.

श्रीशुक उवाच

तया परित्रासविकम्पिताङ्गया शुचावशुष्यन्मुखरुद्धकण्ठया कातर्यविस्रंसितहेममालया गृहीतपादः करुणो न्यवर्तत ३४

चैलेन बद्ध्वा तमसाधुकारिणं सश्मश्रुकेशं प्रवपन्व्यरूपयत् तावन्ममर्दुः परसैन्यमद्भुतं यदुप्रवीरा नलिनीं यथा गजाः ३५

कृष्णान्तिकमुपव्रज्य ददृशुस्तत्र रुक्मिणम् तथाभूतं हतप्रायं दृष्ट्वा सङ्कर्षणो विभुः विमुच्य बद्धं करुणो भगवान्कृष्णमब्रवीत् ३६

असाध्विदं त्वया कृष्ण कृतमस्मज्जुगुप्सितम् वपनं श्मश्रुकेशानां वैरूप्यं सुहृदो वधः ३७

Sri Suka said : With His feet thus held strongly by Rukmini—whose limbs were perceptibly shaking with fear, whose mouth was being parched and throat choked through grief and whose gold necklace had been displaced through nervousness—the merciful Bhagavan gave up the idea [to kill Rukmi]. (34) Binding the evil-doer [Rukmi] with [his own] scarf (cloth), Sri Krishna disfigured him by shaving him (with the blade of His sword) in such a way as to leave (intact) a part of his moustaches and hairlocks. Meanwhile the prominent amongst the Yadava warriors (led by Balarama) crushed the extra ordinary [huge] army of the enemy [like] elephants would trample a lotus plant. (35) Making their way into the presence of Sri Krishna, they found Rukmi reduced to that (humiliating) plight and as good as dead (through shame). Filled with pity to see him bound, the almighty Bhagavan Shankarsana (Balarama) released him and spoke to Sri Krishna (thus):—(36) "Krishna ! you have perpetrated an impious act abhorred by our race. (Partially) removing the moustaches and (curly) locks of a relative and (thereby) disfiguring him is as good as killing him. (37)

Musings: This incident is created on purpose. It is to impart the teaching of Jnana and Vairagya. Hence such an incident is created. Krishna annihilated Rukmi, i.e. ego, thereby liberating Rukmini. The last bond was broken and she will now be eternally be with Ishvara. When such a Self Realised Bhakti still retains the physical body and mind, it is the pseudo ego and mind and not the real one. This ego is only there to keep a connection with physical body. Just like a burned rope will retain its shape but cannot be used to trying, such a ego cannot do any harm. Until the body exist, Jnani Bhakti retains the ego of 'bhakta' i.e. devotee or ego of Jnana (Knowledge of Brahman) for the sake of devotees to assist in their spiritual progress.

In this state of fear of losing individual identity, the final attachment is broken by the guru, here represented by Sri Balarama ji. Sri Balarama ji consoles Rukmini and calms her down.

Balarama ji Consoles Rukmini devi

मैवास्मान्साध्व्यसूयेथा भ्रातुर्वैरूप्यचिन्तया सुखदुःखदो न चान्योऽस्ति यतः स्वकृतभुक्पुमान् ३८
बन्धुर्वधार्हदोषोऽपि न बन्धोर्वधमर्हति त्याज्यः स्वेनैव दोषेण हतः किं हन्यते पुनः ३९
क्षत्रियाणामयं धर्मः प्रजापतिविनिर्मितः भ्रातापि भ्रातरं हन्याद्येन घोरतमस्ततः ४०
राज्यस्य भूमेर्वित्तस्य स्त्रियो मानस्य तेजसः मानिनोऽन्यस्य वा हेतोः श्रीमदान्धाः क्षिपन्ति हि ४१

(Turning towards Rukmini,) please do not take offence with us, O good lady, thinking of the disfiguration of your brother. None else is responsible for one's joy and sorrow; for a man reaps the fruit of his own doings (in the shape of pleasurable and painful experiences). (38) A relative does not deserve death at the hands of his relative even if he has committed an offence deserving such treatment and should be let off. Why should he who stands killed by his own offence be killed again? (39) Such is the dharma (code of conduct) specially prescribed for the Kshatriya race by Brahma ji (the creator), by virtue of which even a brother is permitted to kill his (own brother). Hence it is [so] exceedingly cruel. (40) (Reverting to Sri Krishna,) Blinded by pride of fortune, proud men offend others for the sake of dominion, land, [other movable] property, women, honour, dignity, authority or any such other consideration. (41)

Musings: Sri Balaram ji, the guru, which is technically not different from Ishvara, calms down Rukmini and prepares her mind for Tattva Jnana. Guru reminds disciple the selfish, material nature of samsara and samsarin (house holders) thereby producing vairagya in disciple.

Sri Balarama ji's Instructions to Shrimati Rukmini devi

तवेयं विषमा बुद्धिः सर्वभूतेषु दुर्हृदाम् यन्मन्यसे सदाभद्रं सुहृदां भद्रमज्ञवत् ४२
आत्ममोहो नृणामेव कल्पते देवमायया सुहृद्दुर्हृदुदासीन इति देहात्ममानिनाम् ४३
एक एव परो ह्यात्मा सर्वेषामपि देहिनाम् नानेव गृह्यते मूढैर्यथा ज्योतिर्यथा नभः ४४
देह आद्यन्तवानेष द्रव्यप्राणगुणात्मकः आत्मन्यविद्यया क्लृप्तः संसारयति देहिनम् ४५
नात्मनोऽन्येन संयोगो वियोगश्च सतः सति तद्धेतुत्वात्ततप्रसिद्धेर्ग्रूपाभ्यां यथा रवेः ४६
जन्मादयस्तु देहस्य विक्रिया नात्मनः क्वचित् कलानामिव नैवेन्दोर्मृतिर्ह्यस्य कुहूरिव ४७
यथा शयान आत्मानं विषयान्फलमेव च अनुभुङ्क्तेऽप्यसत्यर्थे तथाप्नोत्यबुधो भवम् ४८
तस्मादज्ञानजं शोकमात्मशोषविमोहनम् तत्त्वज्ञानेन निर्हृत्य स्वस्था भव शुचिस्मिते ४९

(Turning to Rukmini once more) It is your improper biased outlook through which you are acting like an ignorant person - constantly bear ill-will towards those who are ill-disposed to you, and wish well to those who are kind towards you [and remaining neutral to those who are indifferent to you]. (42) By the Bhagavan's Maya (deluding shakti) is engendered this self-deception in the mind of those who are identified with the body, that a certain individual is your friend, another your enemy and a third, neutral to you. (43) **Indeed the Supreme Atman, which is only one [Self reflected] in all embodied beings, is [erroneously] perceived due to the ignorance (avidya) as many**, even as a luminary (such as the sun or the moon) is viewed as different (in relation to the different vessels full of water in which, the luminary is reflected), or as the sky (Nabha, Akasha, space) is conceived as different (in relation to the different apartments or pots in which it is enclosed). *[1]* (44) This [objective] body, constituted of five elements (earth, water, fire, wind and space), the [five] senses and the objects of their perception (viz., sound, touch, sight, taste and smell), and three gunas; has a beginning and an end, and which has been projected on [eternally free] Atman through ignorance which causes the embodied Atman i.e. Jiva to [be trapped in] the cycle of samsara (birth and death). (45) **There is no union or disunion of the Self with or from any other substance** (such as the body i.e. form, or the eye with which it is perceived), there being no such substance (other than the Self), O virtuous lady, the Self is the cause of such appearances just like the Sun is not connected or remains untouched with eye and vision (form), though it is only due to Sun (Light) that eyes can see the form. *[2]* (46) **Changes commencing from birth (and ending in death) pertain to the body alone and never to the Atman,** [just] as waxing and waning etc., pertain to the phases [of the moon] and not to the moon itself [which is ever the same]. And indeed death [of the body] is attributed to the Atman in the same way as the total disappearance of moon is spoken of as Amavasya (new moon, denoting the disappearance of the moon itself). *[3]* (47) [Just] as a dreaming man perceives himself, the sense objects of enjoyment, and experiences the fruit (experiences), i.e. pleasure, pain, etc even though none of these things exists in reality similarly, an ignorant person undergoes the unending cycle of birth and death (samsara) *[4]* (48) **Therefore, through realization of Truth, completely eliminate the grief born of ignorance, that deludes the Atman. Be comforted and serene, O young lady of beautiful smiles !** *[5]* **(49)**

[1] The Supreme Atman or Self or Brahman is only one. This same Atman is present in all living beings. It is not many (i.e. divided). However, under influence of Maya it is erroneously experienced as many just like Sun or Moon or Sky. The reflection Sun or moon is seen in different pots filled with water. Though reflections appear as many, in reality, there is only one Sun or Moon. Similarly, sky (Nabha, Akasha, space) though one appears to be divided as many in empty closed containers like pots. When the pot is broken, the sky or space (Ghatakasha) present in pot merges in the vast sky (Mahakasha) and becomes indistinguishable. In reality there was only one sky but due to pot, it appeared as if the space within pot is isolated (different) from the outer vast sky or space.

[2] Atman is untouched by Prakriti, Maya and everything that is created from it like Body, Five senses (mouth, skin, eyes, tongue and nose) and their functions (Vishayas) like shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa and gandha (speech, touch, form, taste and smell), three Gunas (Sattva, Rajasa and Tamasa), etc. When this untouched Atman, under the influence of Maya, falsely associates itself with mind-body-senses and Gunas then it becomes Doer or karta. Developing attachment with them cause Ahamkara. Thus by association with Mind-Body-Senses and Ahamkara, Atman becomes Jiva. Jiva, assumes the doership and so gets trapped in the unending cycle of birth and death. Eyes can see form due to light (Sun), however, the Sun is not connected to eyes or form. It remains untouched. Similarly, Atman truly is and remains untouched. The idea here is to break the false notion 'I' attributed to body-mind-senses and Ahamkara. This is the purport of the sloka.

[3] Atman is changeless. Changes appearing in body like birth and death are not to be understood as changes in Atman itself. They are limited to body only. Just like Moon appears in different sizes each night during waxing and waning, in reality moon never ever changes its size, similarly, Atman remains changeless though body is born and dies. Just like in the night of new moon (Amavasya), there is no sight of moon, but in reality the moon remains unaffected, the body dies, but Atman continues to exist.

The purport of this sloka is - Atman is unchangeable and does not undergo transformation nor does it ever die. It is only the body that is born and dies.

[4] Objects in dream appears real within a dream, but upon waking up they do not exist. Suppose a person had a discussion with his friend and the discussion ends without any conclusion, then the person may in dream recreate the whole scene and try to convince his friend. The conversation ends when the friend gets convinced. In this dream, the creator is one's own mind, the person himself plays an active role along with other character, the dream scene is sustained until conversation is going on and finally the dream ends. There is creation, preservation and destruction of dream world, but you as a person is not affected by it and were probably lying on your bed all this time. Similarly, the waking state is also like a dream. The only difference is that the dreams are abstract while waking state continues the next day. Atman remains untouched. This untouched nature of Atman which is just a witness and not a doer is stressed in all slokas so as to produce detachment.

[5] Hence, one must detach oneself i.e. 'I' from the Mind-Body-Ego-Senses complex and establish oneself in truth i.e. in one's own Self and attain mukti. Sri Balarama ji cheered up young Rukmini devi (by complimenting her beautiful smile) and reminded her to detach and abide in her own Self, Krishna Tattva, which is present in her heart as antaryami.

Musings: When any Sadhaka or a Yogi faces such a situation and experiences sorrow and grief, one must remember the instructions of Sri Baladeva ji and Abide in Self like Shrimati Rukmini devi did. Attachment with non-Self (Anātman) is very necessary. Atman is untouched by the three gunas (sattva, Rajasa and Tamas). One must also get beyond Sattva guna which has qualities like compassion, etc and completely detach from mind and establish oneself in Antaryami Krishna, one's very own Self.

Rukmini Devi detaches herself from emotions and abides in Self through reasoning

श्रीशुक उवाच

एवं भगवता तन्वी रामेण प्रतिबोधिता वैमनस्यं परित्यज्य मनो बुद्ध्या समादधे ५०

When the beautiful slim lady was thus enlightened by the glorious Bhagavan Balarama ji, she overcame her grief, [sorrow and depression] and attained equipoise her mind through Tattva Jnana (logical reasoning). *[1]* (50)

[1] Rukmini devi, when cheered and encouraged by Sri Balarama ji detached herself from the situation and became witness through the tattva Jnana i.e. the process of Advaita – neti-neti.

Musings: Rukmini didn't actually saw Krishna in person. Still her mind was fully occupied in his beauty. This indicates that the seeker is a matured one and though has not achieved Self Realisation, firmly believes in existence of Ishvara without an iota of doubt and has unconditionally surrendered to the beloved Ishvara. Mind of such a devotee is always occupied with thoughts about beloved Ishta devata, Bhagvan Krishna in this case, indicating one-pointed devotion and firmness in belief of him residing in heart as Antaryami or Atmasvarupa. This is the best type of devotion. A devotee often forgets one's own being unaware of surroundings totally engrossed in Ishvara-chintan i.e. thinking constantly about Ishvara. Such a devotee or Yogi does not think about the opinion of others including family members. This blissful state very near to Self Realisation. The meeting of Krishna and Rukmini symbolically indicates merging of Self in Brahman.

Knowing Ishvara without seeing him in person is known as Jnana and seeing Ishvara in person is known as Vignana (Vigyana) as mentioned in Gita Chapter 7 Jnana-Vigyana Yoga. Here Jnana i.e. the knowledge of Brahman refers to knowledge derived from shastras while Vigyana refers to abiding in the state of Self Realisation i.e. Abiding in Brahman.

When a matured devotee faces adverse situation, through Tattva-Jnana, one can detach oneself from the situation and be a witness.

Puranas through such stories help us to cultivate love for Ishvara and through their teachings, help us develop vairagya and give us Jnana through logical reasoning. Puranas teach both Ishvara-paridhana and Vairagya – two wings needed for a bird to fly into the infinite sky of Atma Jnana

Ending Prayer

May we all become matured devotees all by the grace of compassionate mother Maa Rukmini devi and attain Krishan tattva in this life, in this physical body itself.

May the blessings of both Rukmini and Krishna be upon us.

May we all attain Param Gati, and realise Krishna as our very own Self.

|| Śrī Kṛṣṇa parabrahmārpaṇamastu ||

Salutations to Sri Krishna, the Parabrahman

|| Hari OM Tat Sat ||

Hari is OM, the formless Brahman. That Brahman (tat) is Sat (Truth).

'Rukmini-harana' - Musings on the name of Episode

Though this episode is known as Rukmini-Harana i.e. abduction / kidnapping of Rukmini (BP 10.54.59), on practical sense it is Rukmini who fled with Krishna. Krishna just fulfilled her wish. This incident reminds of BG 9.29 where Bhagavan says that in his eyes all devotees are equal but pays more attention to those who approach him. Adi Shankaracharya ji has explained that Ishvara is like a bonfire. It gives warmth to all those who are near it without any bias, but those who are away from fire cannot experience its warmth. Hence Bhagavan in Gita BG 3.34 instructs one to surrender and stay devoted to Ishvara. Such a devotee is very dear to him. The point is that the first step of extending hand towards Ishvara has to be taken by devotee. Ishvara has given us free will and so it is our own choice to approach Ishvara or live a worldly life. In order to feel the warmth, a person has to make an effort and come near the fire. As one gets closer to fire, one experiences warmth. Similarly, as a devotee renounces samsara in his / her mind and devotes herself to Ishvara, Ishvara comes closer to her and finally after attaining sufficient inner purity, Ishvara is so near that he immediately responds to the prayer which comes from the heart purified with constantly longing for the darshan of beloved Krishna, the Ishta devata.

However, the title is justified from spiritual standpoint. Generally, it is the devotee who extends his / her towards Ishvara which Rukmini did. However, in some cases or in case of selected matured devotee, it is Ishvara himself who extended his hand towards his / her chosen devotee. Not only he extends his hand towards devotee, Ishvara grabs the hand so now devotee has no choice but to get pulled towards Ishvara. Sri Ganesha is depicted as holding a rope. This rope represents Ishvara (Ganesha) tying devotee with his rope. It symbolizes that Ishvara has himself chosen the devotee and taken his devotee's responsibility. Ishvara will himself see to it that the devotee does not get side tracked. It is Ishvara's responsibility to raise the consciousness of his beloved devotee so that the devotee can reach the final destination (param pada) and attain mukti.

In this episode, Krishna accepts the appeal or prayer of Rukmini, who plays the role of disciple / devotee and he decides to take her with him. The bond between them is so strong that it cannot be broken and no human interference is capable of breaking it. Finally, Krishna, the Bhagavan himself, marries Rukmini thereby establishing the union of Jiva and Paramatman. They are no more two separate identities. They are one. Rukmini's spiritual journey has come to an end and she i.e. her mind is completely transformed into Krishna or say Krishna consciousness which is nothing but Atma-sthiti. She got established in her own Self, which is so dear and near to her and resides in her own heart that it is not separate from her. Ishvara, Krishna, is her very own Self.

In the next chapter 55, sloka 1, it is said that Kamadeva was born out of Rukmini. He was born as son of Krishna and Rukmini. He was named Pradyumna. In Skanda 3, Kapila Gita (BP 3.26.29) occurs which corelates the 24 tattvas of Sankhya with different devi-devatas (deities). Here, Pradyumna is the Buddhi. Buddhi in this context is an awakened Intellect or Jnana or Pragya. This coincides with the Mahavakya Pragyanam Brahma (Prajñānam Brahma, प्रज्ञानम् ब्रह्म - Consciousness is Brahman - Rig Veda, Aitreya Upanishad 3.3). Rest story follows and Kamadeva meets his wife Rati, etc, etc.

The second manifestation of Prakriti as per Sankhya is Ahamkara (Ego) also identified as Sankarṣaṇa (संकर्षण). Here, in sloka 36 (BP 10.54.36), Balarama is identified as Sankarashana (Sankarṣaṇa). Though here he plays the role of a guru and instructs Rukmini. Ego originates from Mahat Tattva which originates from Prakriti, which in turn is under the control of Ishvara, from vedanta view point. The ego, here is just another reflection of Ishvara, Krishna which appears separate due to Krishna's maya. Hence in reality, it would not be wrong to conclude that it was Krishna who was thus speaking

through Balarama. Balarama, from Practical view point, since is an avatar of Shesha Naga and elder brother of Krishna, he too knows the true essence of Krishna Tattva. It is only for the sake of service, out of devotion that he retains individual identity.

Krishna and Shiva

Krishna is also known as Prem-Lahiri, Ananda-Lahiri and Saundarya-Lahiri. Lahiri or lahara means waves. So Krishna is [infinite] waves of Love, [infinite] waves of Bliss and [infinite] waves of beauty.

Similarly, Shiva represents three types of Shaktis – Iccha Shakti, Vidya Shakti and Kriya Shakti, each represented by Vigyanamaya Kosha, Manomaya Kosha and Annamaya Kosha. Pranamaya kosha is the bridge between Annamaya and Manomaya kosha.

Iccha shakti means power of thought

Vida shakti means power of knowledge

Kriya shakti means power of kriya (action) i.e. power to act.

Without these shaktis, nothing can be done.

We need the blessings of both Krishna and Shiva. Shiva and Krishna (Vishnu) are each others devotees. They reside in each other's heart. They are one as Brahman. As shaktis (energies) they appear as different. Each has unique personality.

Q: Can a Devotee of Shiva or Ganesha read and benefit from reading glories of Krishna?

A: Yes, it helps an average devotee. Though each form of Ishvara have their distinctive qualities and personality, in reality, they are one as Brahman. There is no difference between them

If someone argues that how can glories of Krishna help a Shiva devotee, then the reply is, it will help in the same way as reading Bhagavad Gita does. Bhagavad Gita is not only for Krishna Bhaktas, it is for all. However, japa of only one mantra is advised.

Devotion or faith in Ishvara is one Sattvika quality. Reading glories of Bhagavan helps cultivate and intensify this quality. It does not harm he devotee. Infact, a Shiva devotee will develop respect for Krishna and vice versa. The qualities of Bhagavan will enter into the heart of devotee and will thus enrich devotee's heart and one will experience a different kind of energy in them. There will be an emotional nourishment, a sense of emotional fulfilment.

One pointedness is necessary and so one can have only one Ishta Devata. The japa mantra too can be only one, however listening to glories of other devi-devatas helps one on emotional, mental, spiritual and social level.

Is description of Rukmini's beauty an indication of lust?

If we read this episode sloka wise, then there is a detailed description of Rukmini's beauty. There are some who would take meaning not intended to be taught in Bhagavat Purana. Her beauty represents Maya as she is verily the Maya. Maya deludes Jivas no matter how much powerful they are or no matter if they are good person or noble person. We have heard of stories of great Rishis like Vishvamitra an even Sages Narada who could not avoid them falling in trap of maya and enjoyed their marital life. Bharthruhari, a great king and one of the 84 siddhas of Natha Sampradaya too was mesmerised with the beauty of his queen. But upon the grace of Maha Yogi Guru Gorakshananth, he finally came out of this maya-jala or web of maya and attained his true nature. He finally wrote Vairagya Shatakam, hundred slokas on Vairagya (dispassion in worldly matters). This was the same king who had earlier composed Shringara Shatakam (hundred slokas on objects of adornment worn by woe=men). It talks about kamini-kanchan meaning the slokas focusing on expression of women, their attitude, etc is given.

The description of physical beauty describing different body parts and wearing of jewels etc is not to generate lust in the heart of devotees. The purpose of such description is that the maya is such that it is unavoidable. The kings were so much mesmerized by her beauty that they fell unconscious or rather went in trance. They never knew when their hands dropped weapons. They could not even figure out when they fell from their chariots, horses and elephants. Only Krishna and others under the protection of Bhagavan, the controller of Maya, i.e. Balarama, their allies and their army didn't fell for her. This same beauty didn't infatuate them. Balarama never saw her with an eye of lust, but rather through compassion as he reminded of rooting in her true nature.

Often it is described that woman is the cause of downfall for men. This is not just to be taken physically or with lustful intent. Even the soft corner for a girl, though pure without lust, will also make one bound in samsara. It is true that a person who is attracted towards woman will not be able to detach himself from maya as he lacks vairagya (dispassion). Puranas, Itihasa, Gita and Upanishads teach us Brahma-Jnana or the knowledge of Brahman. They focus on the fourth purushartha – moksha. The message of the shastras is to be interpreted in this context. When it is written that it is sin to do so and so, it is to be interpreted that if a person does not make any effort in walking on spiritual path then it is a sin. Jnana and Vairagya are the lakshyartha (destination) of all the shastras.

Coming back to topic, the simple inference from description of Rukmini's beauty and kings getting mesmerized with her beauty is that they all fell in trap of maya. Even the modest kings and people fall in trap of maya. This indicates that even noble, kind hearted people are also bound in the unending cycle of birth and death. Only Ishvara and his representative, Guru can help one rise above maya. This happens all by the grace of maya too, as she and Ishvara are two sides of same coin. The spiritual path is to detach from worldly senses objects and issues and meditate on Ishvara with bhava (spiritual emotion).

Interpretations of Rukmini' Beauty

There can be many interpretations of kings getting mesmerised after seeing Rukmini's beauty.

Interpretation #1 – Symbolic interpretation from Devotional viewpoint

The simple explanation is that without the grace of Krishna, Maya, Lord's eternal potency, is inescapable even for modest and noble men well versed in shastras. The description of beauty symbolises her deluding attractive power. It keeps men bound in samsara (material world filled with sense objects) and veils one's true nature.

Interpretation #2 – Symbolic interpretation from Advaita viewpoint

Kings and their army represents material worldly objects for senses. Krishna and Balarama's Army represents divine Sattvika qualities. Krishna is Parabrahman. Balarama is awakened Intellect or pragya or Guru. Rukmini represents Jiva and her beauty, her charm represents Maya. Kings and their army getting mesmerised by Rumkini's beauty i.e. maya and become unconscious. This indicates that senses are under the inescapable influence of maya. Only Krishna, Balarama and their army remains awake as are detached from the sense objects and so are pure, Sattvika in nature. Kings regaining consciousness indicates that only after the maya allows them then they can act. Since sense objects are too many, their army is depicted as large and Balarama's army is relatively small as one needs only sattvika qualities to detach and stay rooted in Parabrahman. Rukmini's wish to marry Krishna represents devotion of Jiva towards Parabrahman and Krishna accepting Rukmini and deciding to marry her indicates that Ishvara has decided to take of his beloved devotee himself. Brahmin represents prayer from the bottom of the heart of Rukmini, a longing for Ishvara. Rukmini only prayed. Everything was done by Krishna. Initially only Rukmini extended her hand towards Krishna. But now even Krishna (Bhagavan) has grabbed her hand. This indicates that now it is up to Krishna to do the needful. Now even if the devotee tries to get astray, Ishvara will not let it happen as he has taken the responsibility. He is not leaving the hand. This is the beauty of Bhakti, the path of devotion and so it is the recommended path for Kaliyuga i.e. in our times. The act of abducting indicates that Krishna will use his power and will not let her get astray especially in the hands of Shishupala who represents ego. With Krishna's grace, their relatively smaller army defeated the bigger mightier army with mighty heroic kings. This represents that when Ishvara is by your side, even the strongest of attractions will not be able to drag you back to samsara. Rukmini's fear indicates that though she has been pure, she still has not get rid of her attachment towards few people like her family members. It indicates that a pure devotee may have a few traces of attachments and some desires left even if the devotee has renounced the samsara. They are dormant and one does not know if one is attached or not. One comes to know only when the situation arises like in case of Rukmini when Krishna got ready to kill Rukmi, her elder brother. But she was a matured devotee and so her awakened intellect, personified by Balarama became her own guru and reminded her of detaching her and getting rooted in her true Self. It doesn't take much time for Rukmini to implement it and she too renounced the attachment and became free from dualities like joy and sorrow and established herself in her own Self. Attachment is due to ego, sense of individuality. This is represented by Rukmi who took

wrong decision due to his ego as he was envious to Krishna. Krishna leaving Rukmi alive indicates that the original ego, represented by Rukmi though is dead, an ego for the sake of devotion exits until the material earthly body lasts. It is like a burned rope. A burned rope retains the shape of rope but cannot be used to tie objects. It is the pseudo ego.

Let us try to interpret this incident the way Gaudiyas would accept.

Interpretation #3 – Possible interpretation by Gaudiyas

Gaudiyas believe that there are two bodies – physical (material) and subtle spiritual body. Devotees of Krishna wishes to ascend to Goloka and be in eternal company of their beloved Krishna in their subtle spiritual bodies (as one cannot be in physical body). They wish to experience bliss by watching his eternal divine lilas (sports / acts) which he does in Goloka. Rukmini is his spiritual consort, it is his energy, power or potency. She is Maya Shakti the illusionary power or deluding power. Krishna performs Lilas with the help of her potency Rukmini or he does Lila in company of Maya, the wonderful creative energy. So both Krishna and Rukmini had material and spiritual body, one connected to the material world and other to Goloka. This divine form of theirs cannot be seen by non-devotees. Impure devotees who have not sufficiently purified their heart and mind cannot perceive their divine form or Goloka. Even if somehow, they manage to see the divine form of the Lord or Maa Rukmini, a devotee will be overwhelmed and will fell unconscious. Arjuna once wished to see the divine form of Krishna. Krishna granted him spiritual divine eyes, and Arjuna saw his divine macrocosmic form. But he soon trembled with fear and pleaded to the Lord to take back this divine vision and that he is happy to see Krishna's physical body.

Subtle Divine body of divine beings are so strong and they have so bright opulence and halo that it is too overwhelming for a lay devotee. The higher worlds like svarga, Vaikuntha, etc are not accessible to laymen. They are so bright and the bliss and experience is so overwhelming that a person cannot bear it for long.

So the interpretation the Gaudiya way would be -

Thus, when Kings saw Rukmini's beauty, both material and inner beauty i.e. spiritual beauty having great eye blinding glow (halo) which was intensely blissful, they were overwhelmed with Bliss and fell unconscious as they were not pure enough to see her divine form having great opulence. The kings too were attracted towards Rukmini devi, the deluding maya shakti, but since their mind was attached to worldly objects their attraction was not purely spiritual like Jiva attracted to Ishvara, but it was polluted by lust. Unable to bear the intensity of pure bliss mixed with lust they fell unconsciousness. Such is the grace of Ishvara and the compassionate mother Rukmini that she gave them the taste of spiritual bliss though unasked by them. The effect was that they were not been able to fight relatively small army. After losing the battle, Jarasandha consoles Shishupala and giving him knowledge that all is in the hands of Maya and their Prarabhdha and we are just puppets of Prarabhdha, so do not grieve for the loss. This indicates that even the villains did had the knowledge of scriptures but they were not able to get rid of their lower animal qualities like pride, ego, hatred, and their attachment with their body and kingship.

Interpretation #4 – Another possible Gaudiya Interpretation

Krishna and Rukmini have two bodies – one material and another subtle (divine spiritual body). Non devotees cannot perceive her subtle divine body. So kings were attracted only to her physical beauty which is just a pale reflection of her glorious bright glowing subtle divine body of Rukmini. This wonderful bright body can be seen by Krishna, some fortunate Bhagavatas and by the inhibitants of Goloka, a divine spiritual kingdom where Krishna lives eternally. Mesmerized by the beauty, under the influence of Maya, which is Rukmini herself, they all fell unconscious. Their hands loosened their grips and weapons fell from their hands. The kings and the army fell from their mounts like elephants, horses and even chariots. Immediately, Krishna reached out to Rukmini and took her to his Chariot having flag with emblem Garuda and mounted her on it. He started fleeing with her and the army led by Balarama. This is the state of all the states

It is left to readers to accept whichever interpretation they agree.

Is the symbolic interpretation allowed? Is it in line with shastras?

Yes, symbolic interpretation is allowed and it is in line with shastras.

Chariot Analogy in Katha Upanishad 1.3.3-5

Katha Upanishad 1.3.3-5 describes ratha rupaka meaning Chariot analogy. Horses are Indriyas (senses), reins the mind, Charioteer (driver) is Buddhi (intellect), Body of chariot is Body. Owner of Chariot is Bhokta Atman (Jiva).

The analogy describes Chariot -
Ātmā (Jīva) is the Rathī (owner),
Ratha (Chariot) is the Body
Sārathi (charioteer, driver of car) is the Buddhi (Intellect)
Pragah (reins) – rope used to control horses) is the Mana (mind)
Horses represent Indriyas (5 senses)
If we imagine horses as senses, then their viṣhayas (subject matter) is the road. The road represents the path (of 5 senses) i.e. path which 5 senses drag the mind
And Ātman associated with body, 5 senses and mind is the Bhoktā enjoyer (of subject matter). i.e. Bhoktā-Ātman is the Jīva.

Personification of 24 Tattvas of Sankhya Darshan in Bhagavat Purana BP 3.26.26-31 (Kapila Gita)

Kapila Gita, which is a part of Bhagavat Purana teaches 24 tattvas of Sankhya Darshan in 3.26 and assigns presiding deities to each tattva which is not found in Sankhya Karika of Ishvara Krishna. Two main tattvas are Purusha (as 25th Tattva) and Prakriti.

BP 3.26.26-31 -
Mahat Tattva (Cosmic Intelligence, undifferentiated Buddhi) = Vāsudeva, वासुदेव
Ahamkara (Ego) = Sankarṣaṇa, संकर्षण
Indriyas and Mana (Mind) = Aniruddha, अनिरुद्ध
Buddhi (Intellect) = Pradyumna, प्रद्युम्न

Creation of various organs, their functions and then their Presiding deities

From BP 3.26.54-61

Tattvas – Functions – Presiding Deities

Following where created in order -

1. Mouth - speech - Agni deva (God of Fire)
2. Nostrils - smell - Vayu deva (God of Air)
3. Eyes - sight - Dig devata (dig or dik means disha means directions i.e. God of directions)
4. Skin - hair - Aushadhiya, etc meaning herbs and food products / Ashvinikumars Gods of medicines
5. Generative organ - Semen - Aapa dev (jala deva, God of water)
6. Anus - apaana Vayu - Yama deva, God of death
7. Hands - strength, grasping - Indra deva (King of Demi-Gods)
8. Feet - Gati (power of movement) - Vishnu deva
9. Nerves - Blood - Various River Goddess
10. Stomach - feeling of thirst, hunger - samudra devata (God of Ocean)
11. Heart - mind - Chandra deva / Soma deva (Moon God)
12. Heart - intellect - Brahma deva (Brahma ji the creator)
13. Ego - Rudra deva
14. Chitta (memory, retention power) - Kshetrajna (knower, as witness)

Note: Both mind and intellect are born out of Heart. After Ego Rudra deva was created. After Chitta, Kshetrajna was created as these three do not have any special organs of functions or Tanmatras.

Presiding deities were created after creation of Indriyas and their functions. Gods exists both inside us and outside us. i.e. they have both microcosmic and macrocosmic presence (Pindanda and Brahmanda). Within body, they are present as energy points in subtle bodies.

For more details, please read Sri Kapila Gita.

Interpretation of shastras is to be done in such a way it points to the path of Self Realisation. One has to realise Ishvara as Antaryāmī, our very own Self.

Sole Purpose for the composition of Srimad Bhagavat Purana is Kaivalya Mukti

Bhagavat Purana in slokas 12.13.11-12 describes the purpose of the Purana.

आदिमध्यावसानेषु वैराग्याख्यानसंयुतम् । हरिलीलाकथाव्रातामृतानन्दितसत्सुरम् ॥ ११ ॥
सर्ववेदान्तसारं यद ब्रह्मात्मैकत्वलक्षणम् । वस्त्वद्वितीयं तन्निष्ठं कैवल्यैकप्रयोजनम् ॥ १२ ॥

BP 12.13.11 Beginning, middle and end [of this Purana] is filled with stories cultivating vairagya (dispassion) [in the hearts of devotees]. This Maha-Purana which contains the divine Lilas of Sri Hari is like drinking nectar of immortality (Amrut – elixir of immortality). Listening it and contemplating on it gives delight to pious men as well as celestials (devatas).

BP 12.13.12 You all *[1]* know that the essence of Upanishads is 'Brahman and Atman are one. It is non-dual (one without second) Truth'. This is the central or underlying message [of Srimad Bhagavad Purana] too. The sole purpose of composing Srimad Bhagavat Purana is Kaivalya [mukti] (Advaita-Sthiti, Non-dual Self Realisation).

[1] King Parikshit, Rishi Shaunak ji and other saints listening to the discourse on Bhagavat Purana

|| Śrī Kṛṣṇa parabrahmārpaṇamastu ||

Salutations to Sri Krishna, the Parabrahman

|| Hari OM Tat Sat ||

Hari is OM, the formless Brahman. That Brahman (tat) is Sat (Truth).