Rasīli Braja Yatra

Nectarean Journey Through Braja

Braja is but a group of people mad in the transcendental love of Godhead.

"Dadhivikrayartham yantyastah Krishna-Krishneti chabruvan,
Krishne hi premsansakta bhramantyah kunjamandale"

Gopis take a long journey in the tranquil forest groves of Braja, carrying earthen pots of curd on their heads for sale; but they are so attached in their love and devotion to Lord Sri Krishna that they are shouting, "Is there anybody here to purchase, Krishna..Krishna?" Braja is a community of people who have ecstatic love for Sri Krishna. They are in deep love for Krishna. Krishna is everything for them. Gopis carry earthen pots filled with curds for sale in the groves of Braja; but who will be there to purchase curds in forests of Braja? Even great yogis and scholars cannot understand this obsession and intoxication of love of God. Gopis raise their voices imploring Krishna. They even forget the word 'curds' and shout, "Is there anyone to purchase, Krishna?"They even forget where they are! They do not know whether they are in Barsana or in Sanket or in Nandagaon. They only remember Krishna. We can not understand what pleasure they derive from this unusual journey. They are simply engrossed in the ecstasy of deep love.

In our minds, thoughts and observations, if we are absorbed exclusively in Krishna on our journey to Holy Braja dham, then, that is the most enchanting, and enlightening pilgrimage to Braja.

"ananyaḥ sarvata śrī Kṛṣṇa dṛṣṭi"

With this mood, to travel in Braja is known as real travelling in Braja.

hari ananta hari katha anantā

"**Infinite and eternal ocean of nectar and essence are assuming the form of a book....."**





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Nectarean Journey Through Braja

Written under the direct guidance and inspiration of

Padmaśrī Param Pūjya Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj

by
Pūjyā Śrī Murlikaji Sharma

About This Book (Sacred Guide)

This book is composed from the pure wisdom of the world-renowned saint **Padmaśrī Param Pūjya Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj**, who is deeply immersed in the eternal nectar of Braj. Under his divine guidance, the **Śrī Rādhārāṇī Braj Yātrā** has successfully completed forty years.
On this sacred and auspicious occasion, this work is presented in the form of a book for all those who yearn for deeper knowledge and understanding of Brajabhūmi.

Gratitude

Jai Shree Radhe
Few words of gratitude:

With folded hands, I offer my heartfelt gratitude to each devotee who, in quiet humility and often unseen, lovingly gave their time and wisdom to translate *Rasili Braj Yatra* into English, and to the late **Śrī Piyush Bhai Shah**, whose divine vision and gentle inspiration lit the path for this translation of this sacred work.

Muralika Sharma

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"Rasili Braj Yatra" is an exclusive granth written by Pūjyā Śrī Murlikaji Sharma", who took birth in Gahvar Van, the holy place in the vicinity of Shri Dham Barsana. But how can the almighty be expressed in wordly words. The great poet Nand das ji has also said the same in other words.....

"Nanddas chatak ki chonch put sab ghan kaise samaaat."

Shri Nand das ji said that no matter how much we write, recite the whole life, we can not write about complete beauty of the Divine couple just like a cuckoo can not have an enormous amount of wealth in his small beak. In this way, although this book is a pathfinder for the rich glory of Brajdham, it is not possible for this book to conclude the entire glamour of Brajdham.

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Foreword

Brajabhumi is one of the holiest places in India and as such, it naturally remains a place of attraction for the Indians. This is the land where Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared in human form on earth and spent His childhood in this sacred land. Millions of devotees from India consider it as one of the most holy places for pilgrimage and come to see this place out of devotion. Devotees from all over India and the rest of the world come here for darśana (visiting or seeing) Lord Kṛṣṇa and for parikrama (circumambulation) of the holy *dhāma* (abode of the Lord).

The father of this creation, Brahmā walked around Braja to purify himself of the sin he committed when he kidnapped the calves and the cowherd boys. He atoned for this sin by circumambulating the holy Brajabhumi.

In this age known as Kaliyuga, even grave sinners are transformed through purification, and attain moksha (liberation) by simply coming in contact with the dust from the soil of Braja (Brajaraj). Since no other virtuous deed is as glorious and exalted as the circumambulation of this holy dhāma, many great saints, sages, and kings are known to have renounced their caste, creed, and wealth, to take shelter at this place. Unfortunately, in the current age the destruction of Braja has been going on continuously for years and therefore it continues to remain a matter of serious concern for the saints of this holy land.

Kaliyuga adversely affects all holy places. In Kaliyuga, great personalities such as Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Vajranābha, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, and others came to chant and reveal the significance of this holy place to devotees and to uphold its sanctity. With the appearance of high-rise buildings, our pursuance of modern comforts and, above all, with our vain ambitions, we have tried to distort and destroy its sanctity. However, the glory and culture of this land is *sanātana* (eternal) and cannot ever be polluted.

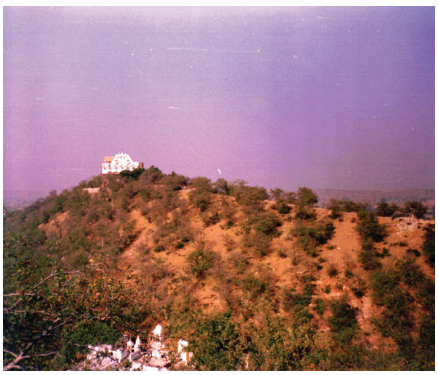
Sri Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, helps to maintain the holy traditions for the welfare of humans through the appearance of saints on this earth. Such is the case also with the great soul, a renunciant, and most worshipable Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj, who was born in the holy land of Prayāga. He dreamt of Braja-worship from his childhood. He accepted renunciation at a tender age and took refuge at Sri Barṣāṇa Dham in the deteriorated ruins of the temple of Mānini (Sri Radha) also known as Śrī Maan Mandir (temple), located on the top of Mount Brahmāchala.

In those days, it was a haunted place and a hideout for robbers and dacoits. Śrī Ramesh Bābā's sheer presence was sufficient to exemplify the statement that great men sanctify the people around them by their holy association and divine aura. He, along with the robbers and dacoits, also started to take physical care of this place as soon as he arrived. For over 60 years, he has been working with dedication and devotion to preserve the holy land of Braja for us, and every Hindu must be grateful to him for his great vision and accomplishments.

Rasīli Braja Yatra is a treatise of manifold activities that was initiated by Sri Ramesh Bābā Mahārāj. This has been very eloquently presented in its present format for everyone's benefit by Pūjyā Śrī Murlikaji Sharma.

Conservation of Forests of Braja

The charming land of Braja is replete with enchanting greeneries, beautiful forests, parks, and groves. The Lord does not perform His līlās or pastimes in big buildings and cities, rather, these forests and gardens are His playful places. However, as mentioned above, the forests were slowly





being destroyed, and the few that remained were being grabbed by land mafias. Among such groves is Gahvarvana. It was originally planted and nurtured by Srimati Rādhārāṇī's own divine hands. This sacred forest and others places are being gradually destroyed for commercial developments. His Holī ness Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj of Śrī Maan Mandir Seva Sansthān saved this abode after 40 long years of incessant struggle.

Although he was being constantly opposed by the local people, Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj with the support my father Śrī Prakashji, the then village-head and a staunch follower of Bābā Śrī, presented their deep concern to the Government. As a result of their sincere efforts for an extremely noble cause as ordained by Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa, the land was declared a Reserved Forest. Though it is presently under government protection (Department of Forests), this woodland is lovingly nurtured by Maan Mandir Sansthān and has now developed into a most worthy location in the holy land for visiting and staying.

Its conservation was no simple task; it took over 46 years of tireless effort which encountered strong opposition from the local people. However, Śrīji was able to bring success to this noble mission. Similarly, many more forests, namely Pāṇḍava Gaṅgā (Bathain), Naubari-Chaubari (Dabhara), Darśanavana, Kalavata (Kāmyavana) were not only preserved, but are now densely forested.

Reforestation in Braja

At present, over several million trees have been planted by Yamunā Rākṣak Dal, the youth wing of Śrī Maan Mandir, thus making the forests lively again with dense trees.



Conservation of Lakes and Ponds in Braja

Many kuṇḍas (ponds) of Braja were witness to the transcendental lilās (pastimes) of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa where They would bathe and play. Innumerable ponds existed in Braja; in Nandagaon alone there were 56 kuṇḍas and Kāmyavana had 74 kuṇḍas. Gradually these bodies of water also became the objects of people's greed.

Many kuṇḍas of Braja have been renovated and restored by Śrī Māan Mandir (under direction and supervision of Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj). In Dabhara, one kuṇḍa, Ratna- kuṇḍa was identified based upon the scriptural description and consequently it was purchased from a farmer and restored.

The following ponds have been restored by Śrī Māan Mandir:

1. Ratna-kuṇḍa (Dabhara)
2. Gram Ghamari kuṇḍa (Dhamāri)
3. Vihval kuṇḍa (Sanket)
4. Gomati Gaṅgā (Kosi kala)
5. Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa (Nandagaon)
6. Lalitā-kuṇḍa (Kamai)
7. Bichuva-kuṇḍa (Bichor)
8. Loharwari-kuṇḍa
9. Gaya-kuṇḍa (Kāmyavana)
10. Nayan sarovara (Seu)
11. Lāla-kuṇḍa (Dudavali)
12. Bichua kund (Jatipura)
13. Gopāla-kuṇḍa (Dīg)
14. Menhadala-kuṇḍa (Hatana)
15. Rudra-kuṇḍa (Jatipura)

Protection of Divine Hills of Braja

The trinity (Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Maheshwara) is always present in Braja: Girirāja Govardhana is Bhagavān Viṣṇu Himself; Mahesh (Śaṅkara) is present as Nandīśvara in Nandagaon and Brahmā as Brahmāchala in Barṣāṇā. Further, many devas (gods) and celestial beings have descended here taking the form of highlands like Aśtakoot, Adibadri, Kanakachala, Sakhīgiri, Ranku parvat, etc.

These holy hills have become the target of unscrupulous mining and are being indiscriminately excavated with modern powerful machines and explosives. Śrī Māan Mandir strongly opposes such blind acts, but the wealthy and arrogant tycoons, with government support, attempt to ruin these significant arenas of our spiritual and historical heritage. No one has ever gained victory over the governmental power. However, our Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj, the savior of Braja, was successful after taking a vow of protecting these divine hills, and sitting in a hunger strike with the support of many elderly Brajavāsis on the Sakhīgiri mountain.

Some fifty years ago, with the help of Śrī Sampūrnānand, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh at that time, the mining of these hills was stopped. Ultimately 5,232 hectares of land was declared as a Reserved Forest Area. Thus, a herculean task of protecting the heritage sites of Braja was accomplished. Many determined devotees, unafraid of the consequences, happily faced tough opposition to protect and save their beloved līlā-sthalīs (pastime places) in Braja. Their efforts were no less than a penance, worship, and adoration of Lord Kṛṣṇa.



Protection of The Mother Cow

The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, known as Gopāla loves cows the most. Five thousand years ago, Śrī Kṛṣṇa arranged Girirāja-worship for this reason alone. He grazed the cows barefooted and lovingly nurtured them.

However, we are all aware of the miserable plight of the cows in Gopāl's Braja today. We passively observe that cows (equal to our mothers) are either wandering hungry in the streets or being killed by butchers in violation of her sanctity and right to exist. Nevertheless, these mother cows still provide us with milk and butter without any complaint.

For this very reason, Sri Ramesh Bāba Mahārāj initiated a special campaign in 2007 for cow protection from Śrī Māan Mandir by establishing Mātā Gauvansh Sansthān where the abandoned cows of Braja are given shelter and looked after lovingly. Moreover, cows in distress from other parts of the country are also welcome here.

This is the only cow-shelter of its kind where no cow is denied entry. In just a span of 5 to 6 years this Gośāla (cow shelter) has become the largest in the state of Uttar Pradesh where over 65,000 cows are being cared for with love and compassion.

One of the main focuses of this organization is to empower the Brajavāsis through the sale of byproducts from the Gośāla such as pancha gavyas. Pancha gavyas refer to the five sacred ingredients from mother cow such as cow milk, yogurt or curd, ghee, cow-dung, and cow-urine. These products help to improve its economical and physical well-being. Determined efforts are made in this direction. Brajavāsis, Brajabhumi and Bhagavān – all are inseparable; hence to serve all three is our main objective.



Initiative to Save Sri Yamunā Mahārāṇī

Mahārāṇī, Śrī Rādha, the Queen of Braja would not live on this earth without the company of Yamunā and her sanctifying presence, but for some reason, the Yamunā river is almost absent from Braja today. Therefore, research has been undertaken by Śrī Māan Mandir to discover the cause of her absence.



A march by foot from Prayāga to Delhi was organized to create awareness amongst the masses. Yamunā waters had stopped flowing at Hathini-kuṇḍa in Haryana. For a 140 km stretch, not even a drop of Yamunā water flowed in the Yamunā river.

All sewage discharge of Delhi reaches Braja in the guise of the Yamunā. There was a time when all of Braja was nurtured by the pure, clean waters of Yamunā, but presently that sacred water has turned into poison.

A solid attempt was made by Śrī Māan Mandir to restore the lost glory of the Yamunā. Thousands of Brajavāsis, devotees, and faithful people marched on foot to Delhi, but the hollow promises of the government did



not yield any concrete result. However, we fully trust that divine power and intervention will surely bring fulfillment to this auspicious resolve of Bābā Śrī, whose previous campaigns have been successful. The center-stage for all of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes revolved around Śrī Yamunā Mahārāṇī, so it is essential that we get pure water flowing into Yamunā again.

Dissemination of Harinama (Lord's Name):

The person who remains in constant remembrance of Kṛṣṇa, in effect, is a true bhakta (devotee) and true Brajavāsi. The goal of all Braja gopī activity is Kṛṣṇa alone.

The modern culture has totally erased the ancient, glorious form of Braja. Looking at such a pathetic degeneration of a glorious and godly culure, merciful and worshipable Śrī Ramesh Bābājī resolved to spread the Lord's name in every nook and corner of this region.

In Braja and other regions of India, he has introduced '*Prabhat Pheris*' (morning congregational chanting of Lord's name on the streets) in over 32,000 villages. Through this enormous movement, the Lord's name reaches every household and helps a divine consciousness to emerge in everyone.

Śrī Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra

Amongst the work of Braja-seva undertaken by Śrī Bāba Mahārāj, *Śrī Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra* is unparalleled. Bābā Śrī could not bear to see any



devotee desirous of undertaking this pilgrimage be deprived of it for lack of financial resources. With this in mind, Bābā Śrī started an annual free Braja Yatra program in 1988. Every year over 20,000 such devotees are most fortunate participants of this *Braja Yatra*.

Śrī Mān Mandir Seva Sansthān arranges for the food, shelter, medical-aid etc., for all such pilgrims free of cost. Unbroken *harināma sankirtan* (congregational chanting) keeps the pilgrims in an absorbed state of ecstatic devotion. The significance of all sacred places of Braja is daily narrated in detail by Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj after the evening *nṛtya-arādhāna*. This pilgrimage has sown the seeds of single-minded devotion to Rādhā-Mādhava in the participants and helps to free them forever from worldly bondages.

The author of this '*Rasīli Braja Yatra*' book, is a young and scholarly Pūjyā Śrī Murlikaji Sharma. She acquired deep-rooted impressions and divine inspiration from these highly charged pilgrimages and, with the blessings of Śrī Bābājī Mahārāj, is amongst the most knowledgeable speakers on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in the country.

Pūjyā Śrī Murlikaji Sharma has contributed significantly to this *Braja Yatra* for quite some time now. The funds collected during the *Bhāgavata Saptāha Kathās* are fully utilized for selfless service to Braja. Not only this, the members of her family raise funds in many unique ways to fulfil the needs of distributing free daily prasadam (sacred or blessed food or offerings) to hundreds of Vaiṣṇavas, saints, and devotees.

Likewise, whatever service is being rendered under the guidance of Śrī Mān Mandir, infuses devotion to the Lord, devotion to Braja and its devotees. With this sole objective these thoughts have been shared here.

Rādhā Kānt Śāstri

Śrī Mān Mandir Seva Sansthān Gahvarvan, Barṣāṇā, District Mathura, Uttar Pradesh – 281405, INDIA



Chapter 1
Introduction

"vandau charaṇa kamala hari rāī" ।

I pay my homage to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa!

In the garden of kindness of the most celebrated, excellent, beloved and spirituality-enlightened preceptor, can a beatific jasmine, irrigated nurtured by the water of His affection, discharge its debt? Utterly not-but lowering its head in devotion can only bow down to Him. This is its only strength and life. If the swiftly blowing ever-present winds of His mercy even gently caress, it becomes capable to even speak.

jākī kṛpā pangu giri lañghe andhe ko saba kachu darasāī ॥
bahiro sune mūka puni bole ranka chale sira chatra dharāī ।
'Sūradāsa' swāmī karunāmaya bāra bāra vandau tehi pāī ॥

(Sūradasa Ji)

"When endowed by the power of His mercy, even an inert and handicapped entity is enlivened and invigorated."

Dhruva Uvāca

yo 'ntaḥ praviśya mama vācam imāṁ prasuptāṁ ।
sañjīvayaty akhila-śakti-dharaḥ sva-dhāmnā ॥
anyāñsca hasta-caraṇa-śravaṇa-tvag-ādīn ।
prāṇān namo bhagavate puruṣāya tubhyam ॥

"Dhruva Mahārāj prayed to the Lord: O My Lord, possessor of all potencies, After entering within me, You have enlivened all my sleeping senses — my hands, legs, ears, touch sensation, life force and especially my power of speech. Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto You." (ŚB.. 4.9.6)

Look, how many are nurtured and nourished by the mercy of Sri Sri Ramesh Baba Ji Maharaj! *Śrī Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra* was inaugurated in 1988 and is still continuing. It has become a boon and blessing to researchers of Braja Bhūmi and a treasured wish for the inquirers who are curious about the dignity and grandeur of Braja. During the yatra or pilgrimage, at so many places, Sri Baba Maharaj reveals knowledge of the majesty and virtues of those particular sites. However, many affectionate devotees and appreciators of Braja humbly requested all this information in the form of a book reference for the *yatra*.

After each *yatra*, the pilgrims returned empty handed, but pacified with the promise that such a book would be made available in a forthcoming *yatra*. The task of publishing such a book was vast and mammoth, but the motivating mercy of Sri Sri Baba Maharaj made the unattainable task easy to achieve and fulfilled the desire of sincere devotees yearning to relish this nectar. Only the powerful mercy of Sri Sri Baba Maharaj has facilitated the impossible task of writing this book.

Therefore, it can be said without hesitation that this literary work of *Rasili Braja Yatra* is completely devoid of personal spiritual opinions and sectarian narrow-mindedness. Keeping any sectarian and personal opinions aside, an attempt is made here to publish authoritative and truthful information only. This is important because considering superiority of one's personal sectoral opinion over others leads to misinformation with regards to the grandeur of these pastime places. Free from sectarian narrow-mindedness, an attempt is made here to expose the inquisitive readers to a smoke free genuine truth through the medium of a transparent and accurate literary work with authoritative evidence. Unfortunately, It is because of this sectoral biasness that some divine pastimes of the Divine Couple(Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa) are perceived as mere imagination. In the narration and explanation of same text from different religious sects lies a permanent gap.

There have been deliberate attempts to make even the original pastime affairs of the Supreme Lord a subject of controversy and analysis: for example, that the wedding of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as not authentic; or Sri Rādhā not being born in Barṣāṇā, or that Java Vata (banyan tree) not

being the place of the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. That is why the motive of this book is to eradicate all the misleading controversies and only mention those topics, which are based on scriptural evidence and authority.

hari ananta hari katha anantā

"**The Supreme Lord is eternal and endless and His legend is eternal and endless."**

How can we describe the Supreme Lord's limitless pastimes on earth with the limited capacity of words available in our literature? Though, It is not possible to confine the divine pastimes in the enclosure of our words, but the described pastimes certainly present the essence or the 'supreme spirit' of the eternal Divine Couple.

The founder and backbone of *Śrī Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra*, Śrī Ramesh Baba Mahārāj had found so many hidden Lila places (places of pastimes of the Divine couple). Even Brajabasis were not aware of them. Baba Mahārāj worked very hard to locate and preserve them. For example Rasoli- which Jiva Goswami narrated in his reference book to the *Bhagavatam* 10/29/3. *Badrola Lila* narrated in *Sur Sagar*, Saugandhini Shila, Vindhyachal Giri, Gandhmaadan Giri and many other leela places have been authoritatively revealed in this book.

In the history of the Braja Yatra's, there have been numerous versions between the different *sampradayas* about Braja. Here, we are trying to provide accurate information from various scriptures with original verses and importance about each place. In this way, the curious devotees get the privilege to absorb themselves in the divine pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

This book acquaints the reader with the Supreme Lord in many ways. It is an inundating sweetness of love towards the Supreme Lord and thus named *Rasili Braja Yatra*. Nevertheless, to move the pen and blacken the paper is only carried out by the human. So, any inaccuracies present in this book are only the fault of my intelligence devoid of knowledge. I humbly plead with the Vaiṣhṇava readers to overlook any such inadequacies.

hamare prabhu avaguna chitt na dharo ।

"Oh Lord, please do not mind my faults." (Sū.Vi.Pa.)

krupa sindhi aparādha aparimit, chhamau sur se sab bigari
(Sū.Vi.Pa.)

"Oh Lord, the ocean of mercy, my offenses are unlimited; Suradāsa is requesting You to forgive all my faults." (Suradās)

As this work belongs to respected Gurudev, admittance is not in question. Nevertheless, there is one desire.

nath sako to mohi ubaro ।

"Oh Lord, if possible please deliver me." (Sū.Vi.Pa.)

Power of Lord's Grace

If you are holding this book *Rasili Braja Yatra* (Nectarean Journey through Braja or the Sweet Pilgrimage of Braja) in your hand and are one of the pilgrims making this holy journey, your virtues and spiritual merits are on the rise. Do not doubt this because it can only happen as a result of acquiring great mercy from the spiritual benefactor. From the past and present lives of the living entities, the mountain of accumulated sins place incessant obstacles towards progress on this path.

Yatra Niyama (Rules of Pilgrimage)

How does an inquisitive devotees execute the pilgrimage?

He should observe the expounded regulations with self-control and restraint.

1) The Lord is delighted with the simplicity and innocence.

2) We should emotionally see and honor each pilgrim as Kṛṣṇa.

3) Devotees should give up comforts and conveniences on the pilgrimage. To carry out the parikrama by a car or a bus is not a pilgrimage, but simply a countryside picnic tour. We should perform the pilgrimage on foot (by walking) and if possible, barefoot (without slippers or shoes). If a stone, pebble, or a thorn of this Braja bhumi (land of Braja) stings or pierces our feet, that awards the highest bliss and blessings, which is not attainable elsewhere. This is the same holy land of Braja where Sri Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa used to play and walk bare footed while tending the cows.

4) This holy land is eternal and majestic and we cannot perceive its eternal divine form with our mundane eyes. Do not be disturbed by the dirt and filth around. Keep the holy land clean and neat and do not become the cause of its uncleanliness.

5) Do not utter harsh or bitter words. Do not be angry. Do not engage in pushing and jostling other pilgrims.

6) Prior to visiting a pastime place, study the chapter describing that līlā (pastime) in this book and meditate on that *līlā*.

7) During Yatra, the name of the Supreme Lord is sung congregationally with devotion 24 hours a day. We have come to perform a spiritual journey, so do not waste time in pointless idle talks but continuously relish the name of the Supreme Lord with faith and deep devotional feelings.

8) As mentioned in the chapter *Dhāmopāsanā*, there is a regulation to bathe three times a day during Yatra. So one should bathe in these holy kunds as much as possible. The rasik sanits of Braj-bhumi advise that if we cannot bathe often in the holy waters due to lack of time or health conditions, then we can lie down and roll in the Braja-raja (the dust of Braja). Even better will be to pay your obeisance to the Braja-raja where devotees have danced and chanted the name of the Lord.

9) For ladies, the monthly period is not an obstruction in this pilgrimage. Pay obeisance in the Braja-raja and be absorbed in chanting of the holy name. The name of the Supreme is easily accessible to a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśyā, śudra, non-aryan, non-believer, meat-eater, outcast, cruel sinner or even a man of the lowest caste. There is no restriction or prohibition in the chanting of the holy name.

10) In this book, all the pastime areas of Braja, temples, consecrated holy kuṇḍs, mountains, places associated with different ṛiṣis and saints, prayer chants, mantras for ceremonial sipping of water from the palm of the right hand (*ācamana*), and chants for viewing with reverence or devotional glance of a deity or a sacred place (*darśana*), are described for all holy places associated with the pastimes of the Supreme Divine Couple, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmati Rādhārāni. These are all proven and authenticated chants and their miracles are clearly perceivable by our senses.

mahi bhanu sutā yaiva kirtidāyai namo namaḥ /
sarvadā gokule vruddhi prayacha mama kānkshitām // (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

The revered Bābā Mahārāj urged all Yatris to invoke these sacred hymns in Barsana and as a result of their miraculous endowment, there are over 50,000 cows in Mātāji Gośhala at present. When we reach these holy places of pastimes, we must recite these Vedic hymns (prayers, chants or mantras) with utmost faith and devotion as outlined in this book, associated with those līlā-sthalīs (places of pastimes).

11) Our observances of the various external regulations are considered appropriate and efficient only when we are strictly following the internal and inherent devotional regulations. For example, we may be bathing three times daily, but if while bathing, we are engrossed in enjoying the material surroundings instead of praying, chanting or thinking of the Lord; such behavior is prohibited. Let us save ourselves from such deceptive behavior; unfortunately, we can deceive others and ourselves, but ultimately, we must recognize that we cannot deceive the Supreme Lord.

12) The pilgrimage of Braja is a great sacrificial ceremonial ritual, in which the most powerful holy name of the Supreme Lord is chanted continuously. These holy names of the Lord have the potency to destroy the sins from even all our previous lives. What are the resources and means that a human being should be employing to attain the mercy of the Supreme eternal Lord? In this age of Kali, the congregational and devotional chanting of the holy name along with remembering Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Their pastimes in the association of pure devotees are the only ways for us to safely and quickly achieve our ultimate aim of God realization. The living entities can only chant the holy name, if they are subject to the merciful glance of a saint or a great devotee of the Lord.

So, may all of us enjoy the blissful and sweet atmosphere of this pilgrimage! May all the intelligent and sincere readers attentively read this book in order to relish the sweet pastimes of the Lord!

Bhāgavat Prīti

ya idam paramam guhyam mad-bhaktesv abhidhasyati ।
bhaktim mayi param krtva mam evaisyaty asamsayah ॥

My loving devotee who explains the supreme secret to the devotees, will surely attain my abode, there is no doubt in this.

(BG. 18.68)

na ca tasman manusyesu kascin me priya-krttamah ।
bhavita na ca me tasmad anyah priyataro bhuvi ॥

"There is no one more dearer to me in this world than he, nor will there ever be one more dear." (BG. 18.69)

The Supreme Lord is certainly pleased to see that we progress on this path, but He is even more satisfied by seeing that we mercifully help others in their spiritual journey. The long perennial demand of the pilgrims and those devoted to the service of Braja has finally materialized in the form of this book. And I am experiencing boundless bliss [happiness without limit] in its presentation.

Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj

As I was considering how to even begin or accomplish the valuable description of the most learned, effulgent character of our most reverent Gurudev Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj, my slow and dull-witted mind became quite numb in this regard. He, an excellent spiritual mentor, possessing a distinct grandeur, is the treasure of all excellent virtues, an ocean of mercy who has incarnated according to the desire of the Divine Couple. How could I do him justice?

vidhi hari har kavi kovid bāni, kahat sādhu mahimā sakuchāni ॥
so mo san kahi jāt na kaise, sāk banik mani gun gan jaise ॥
[Rāmāyaṇa Bāla-kāṇḍa doha 37]

jo sukh hot, gopal hi gāye ।
so sukh hot na jap tap kinhe, kotik tirath nahāye।
[Suradāsji]

or
ras sāgar govinda nām hai rasnā jo tu gāye !
to jad jiva janam ki teri bigadi hu ban jāye!
janam - janam ki jāye malintā ujjawaltā ā jāye!
[written by Bābāji - collection from Braja Bhāva Mālika]

The objective of describing his divine character is for my own purification as well as for the welfare of people. The scholarly readers are informed that this article is only giving a symbolic introduction of the highly revered Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj. How can a biography of this exalted personality, endowed with all great virtues, be the subject of writing or speaking?

"karni karunā sindhu ki mukh kahat na āve"
[Suradāsji]

One without internal purity has no capacity to actually comprehend the genuine character of this accomplished saint. So, it is definitely most difficult to write about him or describe him with my limited vocabulary. Nevertheless, numerous people expressed a keen desire to hear about the nectarean narration of the life of this famous devotional personality. In this context, I make a humble attempt to describe His great divine character in words.

This great personality gave the good fortune to Prayaga, the king of all pilgrimage places, and blessed it as his birthplace. Being the only son born to his parents, he naturally received extreme special affection from his parents.

The primary cause of your manifestation was a specific plan of the Lord. When the blessed couple - Śrī Baladeva Prasād Śhukla[renowned as Śhukla Bhagavān] and Śrīmatī Hemeśvari Devī did not have an offspring for some time, they went to Tarkeśvara Mahādeva near Kolkata and fervently prayed for a child. This resulted in the incarnation of a precious daughter Śrī Tarkeshwari devi [didi]- on the seventh day of paush month [according to Indian calendar] in year -1930.

Later, the couple strongly aspired to beget a son. With this goal, they went on a difficult pilgrimage and reached Rāmeśvaram. While fasting from food and water, they engrossed themselves in worshiping Lord Śiva. They performed a great yajña (fire sacrifice) with a desire to get a son. Lord Rameśvara, Who is easily pleased, was delighted and reciprocated with their intense worship. On the third night, He appeared and gave the boon to Hemeśvari devi to have a son. In due course, she gave birth to an amazing son at noon in the Abhijit muhurta on the seventh day of Kṛṣṇa pakśa(waning phase), during the month of Pausha in 1938. His father, Baladeva Prasāda, who was a very great and renowned teacher of astrology, looked at the forehead of this astonishing child, and said: "This child will never marry and will become a devoted mendicant. He has appeared strictly for the purpose of giving all living beings the opportunity to achieve devotion to the Lord." The father's prediction came true. Later, he followed in the family tradition and went out to learn and study. He completed his studies in a very short time.

alpa kāl vidhyā bahu pāyi

In a very short time, he became a master in his studies. Due to his humble nature, he only gave credit to his teachers, as they were his

instructors. Expert in all fields, he surprised even the great music maestros with his brilliance and expertise in the fine arts of singing and playing musical instruments. Even Prayāgarāja could cherish the presence of such an extraordinary grandeur for a short period.

In order to fulfill the purpose of his incarnation, he attempted twice to run away from his native land to go to Braja, but the holding power of his mother's affection was so strong that he could not succeed. However, on the third attempt, beyond the level of the senses, in one move, like uprooting grass, he relinquished everything and proceeded towards Braja, unimpeded.

On His journey to Braja, He first wandered around the inhabited forests of Chitrakut, abandoning any concern for life. This was the residential forest region for Lord Śrī Rama, the jewel of the Sun dynasty, and also became the residence of Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj. He wandered fearlessly in these dangerous forests, exposed to the possible attack by the cruel and ferocious animals, with his strong belief and mood that "*sa rakshita rakshati yo hi garbhe;"* He, who protected me in the womb, will always protect me.

With thirsty eyes and a devoted heart, longing to see and obtain the adorable, worshipful Supreme Lord, Śrī Bābājī Mahārāj kept moving towards Śrī Barṣāṇā Dhāma, Rādhārāṇī's abode, and he finally arrived there. On the way, he faced so many extraordinary difficult situations. Although the collective narration of these events is most captivating, inspiring, and excellent, a detailed discussion of these ventures is only possible by writing a separate book. Therefore, only a brief discussion is presented here.

After coming to Barṣāṇā, his body, mind, vision, and self, focused only towards a spiritual direction. With Śrīji's blessings, he became the disciple of the most exalted Śrī Priya Sharanji Mahārāj, the lecturer and publisher of a profound book, known as *Mahāvāni*. Śrī Priya Sharan Bābā was constantly absorbed in the nectarean ocean of Rādhārāṇī's sweet essence and protected by Her; his mind illuminated by Her bright and radiant splendor, was always revolving around the blissful service of the Divine Couple, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

'bis kos vrinda vipin pur -vrishbhanu udār,
tāme gahvar vātikā, jāme nitya vihār»

In Braja-Bhamini's Barṣāṇā (Rādhārāṇī's birth place), there is a small Gahvaravan, created by Her own hands. This particular Gahvarvana, which is 20 kosa or 40 square miles, is included in Śrī Vṛṣabhānu's city, Barṣāṇā. And it is in Gahvarvana, in which Śrī Māan mandir, one of Her favorite relaxing places is located. The honorable Śrī Bābājī Mahārāj felt most comfortable at Śrī Māan Mandir.

Māangarh, one of the four peaks of Brahmāchala hill has a tall summit. In those days, because of inherent dreadful danger, no one would even dare to enter the courtyard of the temple. Gangs of thieves were using the principal inner area of the temple to hide stolen goods, but how can the thieves cause fear in the heart of this super-human Śrī Bābājī Mahārāj, who was engaged in worshiping the greatest Thief of all, Lord Kṛṣṇa?

He was fearless because of his realizations, 'taskarānām na pataye namaḥ' - respectful greeting to the true leader of thieves, Who is the Thief of our sins as well as the Thief of all our worldly possessions. We should be ready to honor even a thief, if he is Brajavāsī (resident of Braja). Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj is imbued with this most loving and all-encompassing perception and represents goodwill personified. He has never looked upon even an aggressive person with hostility or enmity. His surcharged presence and divine spiritual character gradually reawakened this place to its original status.

Throughout his divine life, he always engaged innumerable souls in the welfare of the world and encouraged countless others in the glorious path of achieving spiritual perfection. He is still continuing this even to this day. As Srī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu caused a nectarean river of the holy name to flow in order to wash away the impurities of Kali yuga, Śrī Bābā Mahārāj also made continual efforts to propagate the holy name of the Supreme Lord. Today, it is echoing all over 32,000 villages through the medium of Prabhat pheris, the auspicious congregational chanting of the holy name at dawn, while dancing in the streets.

He not only protected the divine forests, lakes, and mountains associated with Kṛṣṇa's pastimes; but also nicely decorated and beautified them by planting thousands of trees. Not so long ago in the year 2009, during Rādhārāṇī Braja yatra, Śrī Bābājī Mahārāj himself, along with other Brajavāsīs, went on a hunger strike for the protection of the mountains of Braja. With strong determination, he fasted from even water until the government halted the blasting of the holy mountains of Braja, which are associated with Sri Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

Throughout its duration, the Braja pilgrims faithfully joined the hunger strike and started the congregational dancing and chanting of the Lord's holy names. This continued enthusiastically with unflinching faith in the holy name of the Supreme Lord. As a result, the news of their victory was delivered in just twelve hours. The imitation government had to bow down in defeat against the extraordinary power of this celestial personality.

In 2007, in order to protect the cows, he founded the Mataji Gośhala, a building to keep and maintain the cows. In no time, that seed sprouted and grew in the form of a giant tree. In the shadow and protection of that tree, fifty-five thousand cows are nourished and properly maintained, well respected and treated as mothers today. For this great personality, who always avoids any collection or acceptance, his only wealth and property is the Divine and Sublime Holy Name of the Supreme Lord.

Even being a renounced saint, he completed the greatest of tasks and dedicated his life to protect, preserve and enliven the culture of Braja. With this mission, He has been residing in Braja since last 60 years and has taken an oath not to leave Braja ever. Braja, the people of Braja (The Brajwasis) and the Lord of Braja are everything to Sri Baba Maharaj. Only people with the mercy of God can understand his magnificent, humble, and saintly personality. It is impossible to comprehend His inner strength of devotion. Devotees can experience an unlimited education from his lectures which are filled with deep knowledge and devotion. The books, '*Rasiyaa Raseshwari*', 'Swar Banshi ke', 'Braja bhav Malika', 'Bhakta hridaya charitra' are filled with love and devotion of the divine. Sri Baba Maharaj gives spiritual discourses without fail three times a day. Anyone can come and attend. So many sadhus and spiritual aspirants get spiritual strength by means of His lectures. Many have just left their homes and come to live here. This auspicious land (greenery) of Gahvarvan in Braja is always decorated with auspicious flowers in every season in the service of divine couple! We pray that with God's mercy, these jewel-like saints will always bestow upon us this precious knowledge, the strength to understand the divine, and blessings to traverse safely upon this devotional path to follow the footsteps of Sri Sri Baba Maharaj !!

I offer my humble obeisances again and again to the dust of the lotus feet of Sri Sri Baba Maharaj which is capable of developing the love of Divine couple.





Śrī Ramesh Babaji Mahārāj

The one and only protector and preserver of Brajabhūmi culture. The one who is the highest scholar in Indian classical music, learned in dancing, a scholar in Sanskrit and above all, the most merciful devotee of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. For more than 60 years, he has been giving *satsang* thrice a day to all Vaiṣṇavas while singing and teaching of original melodious *bhajans* in His lectures. One can understand his inner devotion through his own written poetries and *bhajans*. So many people have changed their lives just by listening to Babaji's *bhajans* and *satsangs*. Such changes in life are rare, even after listening to lectures from many others. This is how a true saint influences one's life.

Little Krishna, the Supreme Personality, dances even for little bit of buttermilk from the gopīs, because of their pure love for Krishna. So, Paramanand dasji says, "***gopī prem ki dhvaja***," gopīs are symbol of pure love.

Some might say, why does a gopī have to ask Krishna to dance? She should have just given Him buttermilk. There is no answer to that. Strange things happens in love. Love is not unconscious, it is always with pure consciousness. Love laughs, speaks and acts.

Once, Naradji went to Braja. He saw one gopī sitting and meditating under a tree. So he was wondering, "why is she meditating? Usually, one meditates to achieve God. And God is infront of her, then what is the reason?"

After a little bit, when she got up, Narada asked her, why was she meditating? Gopi replied, "I am trying to do a little deep meditation."
Narada asked, "why?"
Gopi replied, "to let Krishna out of my mind! He never gets out!"
Who can understand this purest love of these gopīs? Great yogis and rishis meditates for thousands of years to attain Him and His mercy. But here, the gopī is thinking, if she can get Him out of her mind, soul, even for a second? (*Śrī Vidagdha Madhava*, Chapter 2, 63, Sh bh 10/29/34)

In the rasa dance, Śrī Krishna told the gopīs, "all of you go home!" Gopis were saying, "how can we? All the senses work according to mind and You possess our mind. We are even unable to move."

This is the highest form of love. The love created stiffness in them, they became just like stone. But love is so strong, it makes even God dance, it even ties God with rope. When Krishna told them to leave, the Gopis replied that even though we want to do as You said but our legs won't walk!

visrjati hrdayam na yasya saksad
dharir avasabhihito 'py aghaugha-nasah /
pranaya-rasanaya dhrtanghri-padmah
sa bhavati bhagavata-pradhana uktah // (Sh bh 11/02/55)

With the rope of love, God's hands-feet all get tied up. That's how strong the love is! It is due to this strength of love that Krishna has surrendered to Rādhārāṇī. To explain the strength of love, Sri Krsna once told Durvasa Muni that people think He is independent from everything, but it's not true.

aham bhakta-paradhino
hy asvatantra iva dvija |
sadhubhir grasta-hrdayo
bhaktair bhakta-jana-priyah || (Sh bh 9/4/63)

No one would be more dependent than Me. I am dependent on My devotees. I am not independent, even My heart is stolen by My devotees. So, what can I say about these Gopis? That's the reason Gopis can make Him dance for buttermilk, merely an insignificant thing. Some times Gopis tempt little Krishna with toys, so He would play the flute and dance.

Nand ke toye khilauna de dungi, mère angana mein naach nachay||
gopibhih stobhito 'nrtyad
bhagavan balavat kvacit |
udgayati kvacin mugdhas
tad-vaso daru-yantravat || (Sh bh 10/11/07)

Here the word 'stobhito' refers to 'tempting' Little Krsna. Sri Krsna dances, plays flute and when He asks for toys, Gopi raises her hand up with the toy and makes Him dance more to get the toy.

Gopi tempts the one who is Omnipotent'*purna kam*', the one who is all mighty, who is absolute truth, supersoul. See, this pure love creates the thirst inside Krsna to relish the pure feelings of his devotees.

Śrī Ramesh babaji Maharaj gave satsang about the lila which is mentioned above on Sept 27, 2007, which has been detailed with bhajan "Nand ke toye khilauna le dungi" from ashta chhap Mahakavi Śrī Parmanand dasji. You can listen on our website www.maanmandir.org/wp-content/uploads/rsn-27-09-2007.mp3

All recorded satsang of Sri Baba maharaj from past few years are available at this website – satsang.MaanMandir.org. Even a little bit of satsang from a saint is enough to take us on the right path of our life.

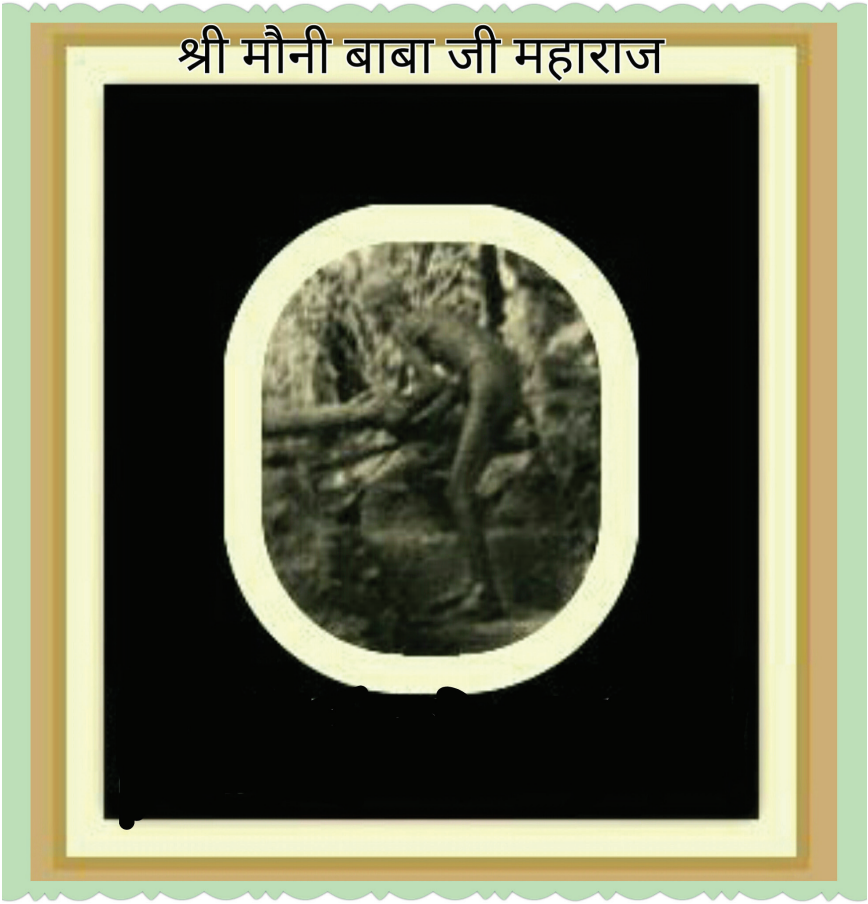
You never know when Baba Shri's divine words will change your life completely. Otherwise there are people, who just do their routine worship, reading, chanting etc., and still do not experience change in their thinking lifelong.

In babaji's words, "some get knowledge, some get degrees, some earn big names in the world but where are they heading to – in endless darkness." Sometimes even after reaching a certain stage, a person can have a false ego and they live with ego for the rest of their life.

Saints explain to us that 'serving' is not just an activity, it is an emotion which leads a devotee on the path of realizing the love of Sri Krsna. Even after putting tilak on forehead, having tulsi mala around the neck, having mantra from guru, and even wearing simple clothes, if one doesn't leave anger, lust, ego, then we are just saints by appearance.

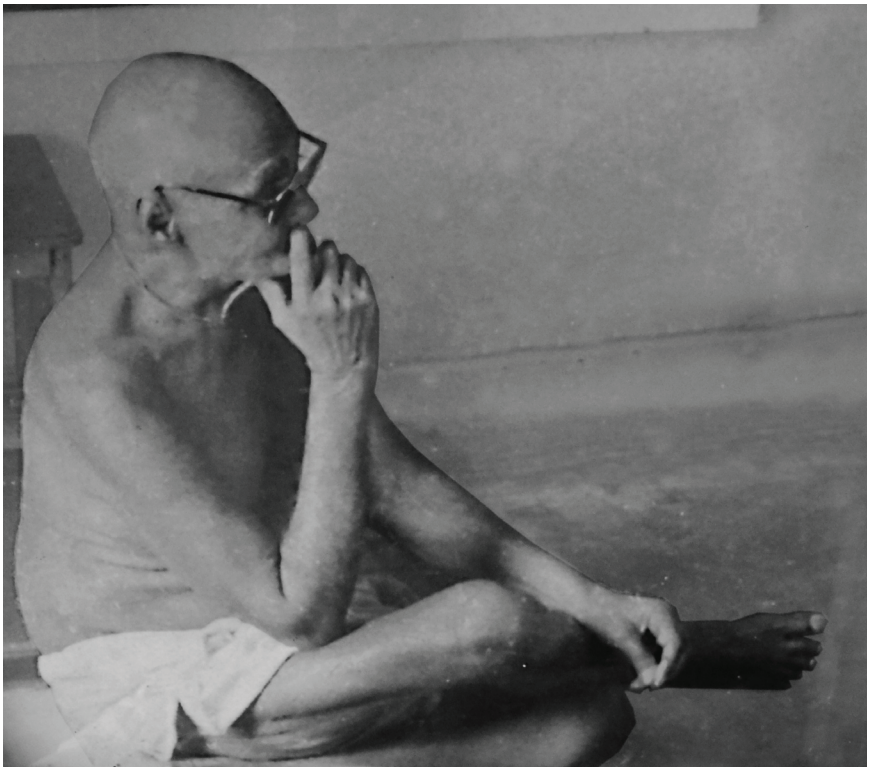
One doesn't need to go far away to the Himalayas in search of a guru. Sri Baba Maharaj's satsang is an easy way to taste the divine nectar. Try to listen, then after sometime, you will know the difference.

Time to time, God almighty sends His own consorts, in the form of saints on this earth to spread the path of devotion. As much as possible, try to get Babaji's satsang to reap the benefit. Although it seems very easy but one can only get it with Lord's mercy.



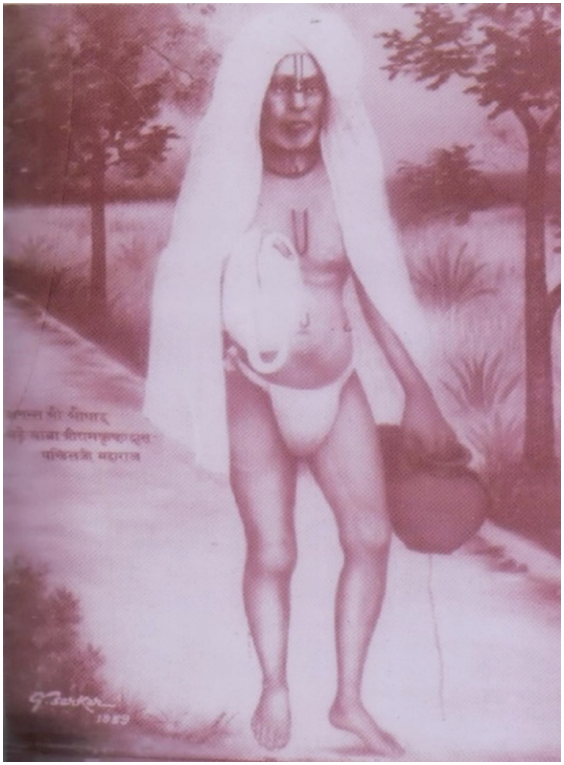
Śrī Mauni Baba Mahārāj

Śrī Mauni Baba Mahārāj was such a realized saint that once fire started from his body due to his extra-ordinary feelings of love of Divine Couple. He used to eat only the fallen leaves of greenery from Gahvarvan and take water as his diet. He lived all his life in Gahvarvan and worshipped Śrī Śrī Radha Krishna. He never wanted to own anything. Such an extraordinary, pious saint was a beautiful unique flower of the greenery of Gahvarvan.



Śrī Priya Sharan Baba Mahārāj

Śrī Priya Sharan Baba Mahārāj was the scholar in knowledge of different sampradayas (religious sects). A scholar in various Puranas, He was the publisher of the great literary work 'Mahavani' and guide to 'Mahavani's deep knowledge. Mahāvāni is one of the most famous treatises composed in poetic glorification of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. He was guru, and spiritual master of Śrī Ramesh Babaji Mahārāj. Such excellent were his oratory skills that when Sri Priya Sharan Baba Mahārāj would begin his nectarian and soothing to ear lectures (*satsang*); many renounced saints, masters had to leave their places to listen.



Pandit Śrī RamKrishna Baba Mahārāj

The bright shining sun of Gaudeshwar sampradaya, Śrī Baba RamKrishna Dasji Mahārāj was the Guruji of Śrī Priya Sharanji Mahārāj. In 1929, Gandhiji and the iron man of the country, Śrī Sardar Vallabha Bhai Patel came to meet baba. Priyasharan baba was also right there. At that time Gandhiji asked a question to babaji, 'Even though the freedom fight for India has started from before 1857, how come we are not getting any success even till now?' Pundit baba replied, "Success can not be achieved without the chanting of holy names (daily *sankirtana*)." The instructions coming from a prominent saint went deep down in the heart of Gandhiji. Gandhiji even started chanting '*raghupati raghava raja ram*' as he was leaving Braja. And anyone can see the result of it in 1947.

Chapter 2
Dhāma Upāsanā

Devotional Practice While Residing in Braja

Braja-raja is a direct expansion of Brahmā-raja, "Brahmā" means almighty and "raja" means dust; so the dust which comes from His lotus feet is Brajaraja. 'raja me rāja hoy milu braja me' [Let me be a particle of the dust which touches the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.]. To fulfill this desire, many excellent learned scholars, who are absorbed in devotion, reside here for their entire lifetime.

braja ki raj me dhur banu mai , aisi kripa karo mahārāja ॥
dhur banu hari charnan pau,
uud uud ke angan me lagu
bār bār yehi mai magu,
mope vihre shyam radhika , sab dukh jāve bhāja ॥
komal charan radhika pyari,
uur dhari seve chhel bihari
aiso ras charanan me bhāri,
vāku pāu banu dhanya vṛndāvana ras sartāj ॥
raj me khele rang machāve,
raj me hilmil ras rachāve
raj me fulan sej bichhave,
raj me kare vilas jugal mili janai rasik samaj ॥
braj ki dhur shyam ko pyāri,
khāi bāl kṛṣṇa mukh dāri,
dhamkave jashoda mahtāri,
mākhan dudh dahi taj rovai raj khāvan ke kāj ॥

(Rasiya Raseswari)

God's name, beauty, pastimes, qualities, devotees, holy places, and presiding deities are all identical and equally potent. When God incarnates, all other features [name, beauty, qualities etc.], holy places or pilgrimage sites, and devotees also incarnate. In *Goloka-kāṇḍa* of *Garga-saṁhitā*, it is mentioned that Brahmā, Śiva and other devotees go to Goloka and pray to Śrī Kṛṣṇa to incarnate on earth. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, showering His mercy immediately, granted the request. But seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa ready to depart, Śrī Rādha, who showers infinite mercy, could not bear separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa and fainted. This separation was completely unbearable for Her.

Observing Śrīji in distress, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "My compassionate beloved! You also depart this place and come with Me!" Śrīji then replies:

yatra vṛindāvanam nāsti yatra no yamunā nadee ।
yatra govardhano nāsti, tatra me na manah sukham ॥

"Where there is no Vṛindāvana, no Yamunā river (Sun God's daughter), where there is no Govardhan - my mind will not be pleased there by any means!" (Ga.Sa.Gol.Kha. 3.32)

vedanāga krosha bhumim swadhaamnah śrīharihi swayam ।
govardhanam cha yamunām preshayaamāsa bhoopari ॥

"Braja is Her personal abode, which is so dear and precious to Her as life. So Rādhārāṇī, beloved of Śyāmasundar, clearly refused. Then to please Śrīji (Rādhārāṇī), God pleasantly sent all 84 kośa – the entire celestial abode which contains Girirājajī and Yamunaji, to earth.

[*Garga-saṁhitā*, Goloka-kāṇḍa 3.33]

In this way, the holy places descended to earth before God. Along with the holy places, Nanda, Yaśodā, Vṛṣabhānu, Kirti, friends, and all His paraphernalia appeared. This information is discussed twice in the *Garga-saṁhitā*, firstly in the third chapter of *Goloka-kāṇḍ*a and again in the second chapter of *Vṛindāvana-kāṇḍa*.

Dhāma is Superior to The Lord

The way, loving devotees of Lord consider the Lord's name superior to the Lord Himself or devotees of Lord are considered superior to the Lord, in the same manner, a genuine place of pilgrimage is considered superior to the Lord, Who resides there. The Supreme Lord Himself has said:

mad-bhakta-pūjābhyadhikā mayi sanjayate bhaktih ।

"Worshiping My devotees is better than worshiping Me. For by this, devotion to me naturally arises." (ŚB.. 11.19.21)

The Lord Himself said:

panchayojanamevāsti vanam me deha rupakam ।

(Bru. Gau. Ta.)

The Divine place of pilgrimage is same as the Lord Himself. The author of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam has said the same.

harer nivāsātma-guṇai ramākrīḍam abhūn nṛpa ।

(ŚB. 10.5.18)

This Braja Maṇḍala (entire delightful Braja) becomes the place of residence for Ramā, Lakṣmī Devi, for three distinct reasons:

1. *Harer nivāsa* - it is the Eternal Abode of the Supreme Lord.
2. *Ātma* - it is the body of Supreme Lord.
3. *Guṇa* - the qualities of the Supreme Lord are eternally manifested there

And even going further, Bhakti-devi, the Goddess of Devotion says:

vṛindāvanam punah prāpya navineva suroopini ।
jātāham yuvatee samyakoshtharupaa tu sāmpratam ॥

"I went through Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat and became old, but when I reached Vṛindāvana, I regained my youth as a beautiful, gorgeous, young lady once again." (Bhā. Ma. 1.50)

vṛindāvanasya sanyogat punastvam tarunee navā ।
dhanyam vṛindāvanam ten bhaktir nrutyati yatra cha ॥

"Nārada confirms the same story by saying that this Vṛindāvana pilgrimage place is so virtuous that simply by its association, Bhakti-devi, the Goddess of Devotion again recovers her youth and dances with joy." (*Śrīmad Bhāgavata Māhātmya* 1.61)

Dhāma Mahimā: The Glories of Dhāma in Mahāvāni

The glories of a pilgrimage place in Mahāvāni:

yahi hai yahi hai bhuli bharmo na kou, bhuli bharme te bhav bhatak mariho l
lādili lāl ke nitya sukhsār bin kaun vidhi vār te pār pariho ll
ek ananya ki tek uur me dharo, pariharo marma jyo phūl phariho l
'śrī hari priya' ke parampad pās hi, āsu anivās hi vās kariho ll
[Mahāvāni -215]

Glories of Braja dhāma by Chhitta Swamiji

aho vidhnā tope achrā pasāri māngo janmu janmu dije yahi braj basibo l
ahir ki jāti, samip nand ghar, ghari ghari shyam heri heri hasibo ll
dadhi ke dān mis braj ki beethin mein, jhaka jhorani anga anga ko parasibo l
'chhit swami' giridharan śrī vitthal, sarad raini ras-rās kou bilaśivau ll

Glories of Braja dham by Govind Swami

kaha karo vaikunth hi jāy l
jahā nahi banśivat yamuna, girigovardhan nanda ki gāy ll
jahā nahi yah kunj latā drum, mand sugandh bahat nahi vāy l
kokil hans mor nahi kunjat, tako basibo kāhi suhāy ll
jahā nahi banshi dhuni bājat, kṛṣṇa na purbat adhar lagāy l
prema pulak romanch na upajat, man bach kram āvat nahi dhāy ll
jahā nahi yah bhumi vṛndāvana, bābā nanda yaśomati māya l
'govinda' prabhu taji nand suvan ko, braja taji vahā meri basai balāy ll

gopya ūcuḥ
jayati te 'dhikaṁ janmanā vrajaḥ,
śrayata indirā śaśvad atra hi l
dayita dṛśyatāṁ dikṣu tāvakās,
tvayi dhṛtāsavas tvāṁ vicinvate ll

"The gopīs said: O Lord, because of your birth in this land of Braja, this land has become extremely glorious and thus Indirā, the

Goddess of Fortune, always resides here. O beloved Lord ! It is only for Your sake that we, Your devoted servants, maintain our lives. We have been searching everywhere for You, so please show Yourself to us. (ŚB. 10.31.1)

That is why the Goddess of Fortune has now taken permanent shelter in Braja.

When the Supreme God was so pleased with Brahmāji, He explained His profound secret to him.

yāvān ahaṁ yathā-bhāvo yad-rūpa-guṇa-karmakaḥ ।
tathaiva tattva-vijñānam astu te mad-anugrahāt ॥

"All of Me, namely My original eternal form and My transcendental existence, color, qualities and activities — let all that knowledge be awakened within you by factual realization, out of My causeless mercy." (ŚB. 2.9.32)

yāvān ahaṁ: "The whole of Me, Here whole includes My divine eternal abode and their residents along with My paraphernalia"

The eternally omnipresent Supreme Lord's beauty, qualities, and pastimes are also equal to the Supreme Lord Himself.

Mother Kunti said:

bhagavad līlā gāne se ati shigra bhagavad prapti ho jati hai ।

"One can easily obtain God by singing His glories."

The facilitation of these glorious pastimes is impossible without the holy places and the Supreme Lord's paraphernalia. Thus the divine abode of Goloka, Braja-Vṛindāvana descends on Earth only because of the immeasurable merciful favor of Rādhārāṇī Herself, the embodiment of Mercy, the delightful splendor of the *rāsa* (divine sentiment) festival.

When the earth was situated on the end of the tusks of Lord Varāha, she (Pruthvi) asked, "The whole world is submerged in the devastating floods of the Pralaya. Then where will you put me down and place me?" The Lord said, "You will be placed where trees will be visible." She replied,

"But Lord! How will there be trees without me? I am their one and only shelter. Is there any other land on earth besides me?" Meanwhile rows of trees became visible.

Pruthvi was very surprised and asked, "Oh Lord! Which place is this?"

madhuram maṇḍalam divyam drashya te 'gre nitambini ।
goloka bhoomi samyuktam, pralayepi na samhrutam ॥

"The Supreme Lord said, "This is my very own Braja Maṇḍala, which connects with my eternal abode, Goloka. Even in the devastating Pralaya, it is never destroyed." (*Garga-saṁhitā* 1.53)

phani par ravi tar nahi virat mah nahi sandhya nahi prāt ।
māyā kāl rahit nit nutan, kabahu nahi nasāt ।।

[Vyāsa Ji]

"This divine abode [pilgrim place-Braja], surpasses the influence of my illusory energy, it is even beyond kāla [time] and anyone who takes its shelter, overcomes even the influence of time."

Because it is easily achievable, it is even superior to Vaikuṇṭha.

aho madhupuri ramya vaikuṇṭhashch gariyasi । (Va. Pu.)

For the sake of residing in this abode, Braja, The Supreme Lord even abandons His eternal divine abode Vaikuṇṭha.

harirapi nijlokam sarvathato vihāy ।
pravishati hradi tesham bhakti sutropanadhya ।।

(Bhā.Mā. 3.73)

"Vaikuṇṭha is unattainable; but this descended holy place - 84 kośa of Braja is attainable; this is the manner in which the Supreme Lord incarnates on earth, for the welfare of mankind." (Bhā.Mā. 3.73)

soi jas gāī bhagat bhav tarahi ।
krupasindhu jana hit tanu dharahi ।।

(Rā.Ba.Ka. 122)

"In the same manner, the dhama – the divine eternal abode also descends showering mercy on the wicked sinners." (Rā.Ba.Ka. 122)

ye kruara api pāpino na cha satām sammbhāshya drushyāscha ye ।
sarvan vastutayā nireekshya parama svārādhya buddhir mama ॥
(Rā.Su.Ni. 264)

It is not possible to understand the inconceivable greatness of such a grand and munificent transcendental abode without the mercy of the Supreme Lord. One is most fortunate to reside in Braja. When he tolerates the anger and envy of all living souls in Braja, then this holy place rewards him the eternal divine abode of Goloka. Just by staying in this holy place, one obtains the eternal divine abode automatically.

The Lord said:

janma bhumi mama puri suhāvani । uttar disi baha sarju pāvani ।।
jā majjan te binahi prayāsā । mama samipa nara pāvahi bāsā ।।
(Rā.U.Kā. 4)

With the grace and mercy of the holy place [Braja], one can naturally achieve the eternal divine abode [Goloka] and relish the eternal divine pastimes.

ya esho antarā ditye hiranmayah purusho drshyate ।
hiranyashmashrur hiranyakesha āpranasvaatsarva eva suvarnah ।।

"This golden man is divine, eternal, and entirely radiant with divinity. Just like in the Sun planet, the Sun is inherently visible, the Supreme Lord's eternal form becomes visible through His divine grace in this divine pilgrimage place." (Chā.Upa. 1.6.6)

satyam jnānam anantam brahm
yo veda nihitam guhāyām parame vyoman ।
so 'snute sarvān kāmān saha brahmanāvipasciteti ॥

Parame vyoman means - dhāma, or holy place. In the dhāma, the presiding Lord of dhāma assumes a visible form. Also, the individual soul can experience the personal feature of Supreme Brahman like

His divine fragrance, sound, touch etc. That is why the grandeur of the dhāma is not easy to understand. (Taitt.Upa. 2.1.2)

yad radhā-pada kinkari kruta hridāsamyag bhaved gocharam dhyeyam ।
naiva kadāpi yadhrdi vinā tasyāh krupa sparshatah ॥
yat prema amruta sindhu sār rasadam pāpika bhājām apy ।
tad vṛindāvana dush praveshya mahimāshcharyam hradi sphurjatu ॥

"May the wonderful and rare glory of Vrindavana, glory that is seen in the hearts of the gopīs who serve Rādha's feet, glory that cannot be understood by a heart untouched by Rādha's mercy, glory that floods even sinners with the sweet nectar of spiritual love, appear in my heart." (Ra.Su.Ni. 265)

Residing in Dhāma is never fruitless. Even after millions of years, auspicious results manifest - just as was obtained by Kaga Bhushandiji. Once, because of famine, he went to Ujjain and worshiped Lord Śiva. At the same time, he offended Viṣṇu. His spiritual mentor explained this but because of disobedience, he reacted negatively towards his mentor. Under the covering of ananyatā, single-minded absorption, he displayed a narrow mentality, committing offenses towards his teacher. Once, he did not even greet his spiritual master respectfully. The generous hearted teacher did not even pay attention to that, but Lord Śiva, who wears the moon on his head, could not tolerate this offensive narrow-mindedness and cursed him by saying, "You will take birth one thousand times under the influence of mode of ignorance."

Learning about the curse, the tender-hearted teacher anguished for Kaga. He prayed to Śiva with 'Rudrashtaka'. "O Śambhu! He is a poor soul, have mercy on him!" Observing the pity of the teacher, Śambhu was pleased and said, "He will definitely take birth and rebirth for one thousand times; but he will be free from intolerable suffering and moreover, in every birth, his knowledge will never be lost."

Śiva explained to Kaga Bhushandiji, "O śūdra! For various reasons, you have been fortunate to receive this unique mercy."

raghupati puri janma tab bhayahu ।
puni tai mama sevā mana dayahu ।।
[Rāmāyaṇa Uttara- kāṇḍa 109]

"First of all, you were born in the holy place, where Śrī Raghvendra (Lord Rāma) ruled. Secondly, you engaged your mind in Me. By the mercy of the holy place and My grace, devotion for the Lord will manifest in your heart." (Rā.U.Ka. 109)

One thousand years of the curse were about to finish, during his final birth he took birth as a crow due to the curse. As He never opposed the curse, so Lomesh Ṛṣi was pleased and gave Him the Rama mantra along with many other rare benedictions. One was that he will advance in the devotion for Lord Rāma. Secondly, he will die only when he so desire. Thirdly, he will be the storehouse of knowledge and renunciation. Further, wherever he will reside, the illusory energy of the Lord (Māyā) will keep a distance of at least one yojana (7.64 miles) from he. In addition, he will have complete knowledge of the Supreme Lord without much effort. The main reason responsible for obtaining these many precious blessings was due to his residing in the holy place.

Kaga Bhushandiji said, "Whenever Lord Rāma appears in the place of His incarnation, Avadhpuri (Ayodhyā), I also reach there to relish His pastimes and obtain the divine bliss of seeing Him."

jab jab avadhpuri raghubira , dharahi bhagat hit manuja sarirā ।
tab tab jāii rām pur rahahu , sisulila biloki sukh lahahu ॥

(Ra.U.Ka.114)

This was the discussion of worship of Lord Rāma. Now we can see greatness in worship of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa. In *Garga Saṁhitā*, *Giriraja Khanda*, there is discussion about a *brāhmaṇa* named Vijay, a demon who was a very rich man in his past life. After so many lifecycles of pain and suffering, he was elevated by the power of just a touch of a stone of Giriraja mountain. This story is given in detail in the Giriraja khanda of Garga Saṁhitā. The sublime point is that result of staying or living in the land of Lord's abode is astonishing and always beneficial. Even after so many lives, its benefits are everlasting. Sri Kṛṣṇa also appears in dhāma to shower us with His grace.

anugrahāya bhaktānāṁ mānuṣaṁ deham āsthitaḥ ।
bhajate tādṛśīḥ krīḍa yāḥ śrutvā tat-paro bhavet ॥

"To shower mercy to his devotees, Lord assumes a humanlike body and He engages in such pastimes as will attract those who hear about them to become dedicated to Him." (ŚB. 10.33.37)

Here '*tādṛśīḥ krīḍa*' means, in Lord's incarnation, He acts in such a way so that the souls get attracted to go back to Him. He dances for devotees. He asks for butter and gets up to mischief. He even serves His devotees. He even entered the womb of Uttar***ā***. He even cleaned the filth for His devotee, Madhava dasa. He eats the leftover food from cowherd boys. He even ate the berries tasted by Shabari. These pastimes are designed to shower His grace on His loving devotees. The holy dhāma, the land of His pastimes, is the indispensible part of His Leela's. The land of His pastimes manifests due to the Lord's wish.

cāri khāni jaga jeeva apārā ।
Avadh taje tanu nahi samsārā ॥ (Ra.Ba.Ka. 35)

The Lord wishes that soul could come near to Him without hardship or waiting long. In Dhruv-Stuti, Lord is called "Anugrah-Katar" - one who is very eager to shower His blessing to His devotees.

satyāśiṣo hi bhagavaṁs tava pāda-padmam ।
māśīs tathānubhajataḥ puruṣārtha-mūrteḥ ॥
apy evam arya bhagavān paripāti dīnān ।
vāśreva vatsakam anugraha-kātaro 'sman ॥ *(ŚB. 4.9.17)*

O Lord, for those, who constantly adores You as an embodiment of Supreme Bliss, Your lotus feet are the only true blessings as compared with other boons. Nevertheless, out of your love and affection, You are the protector and the maintainer of Your devotees like me, just like a cow, who nourishes its newly born calf by supplying milk and protects it from all dangers.

Here the Lord is called '*vashra*'. *Vashra* means cow that had just given birth to a calf. Due to so much love, a mother cow cleans all the filth from the calf with her own tongue. She feels so much affectionate even in cleaning all this filth and makes the baby cow clean and pure. In the same way, the holy place licks away all the unpardonable faults and sins [of the living beings who reside in the dhāma].

pranavau pur nar -nāri bahori ।
mamatā jinha par prabhuhi na thori ॥
siya nindaka agha ogha nasaaye ।
loka bisoka banaai basaae ॥

(Ra.Ba.Ka. 16)

Lord Brahmā's offence of stealing the cowherd boys and calves, was also destroyed by circumambulation of Lord's abode. He did three circumambulation of whole Braj-Bhumi.

śrī-śuka uvāca
ity abhiṣṭūya bhūmānaṁ triḥ parikramya pādayoḥ ।
natvābhīṣṭaṁ jagad-dhātā sva-dhāma pratyapadyata ॥

"**Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: After offering his prayers, Brahmā circumambulated his worshipable Lord three times and bowed down at His lotus feet. The appointed creator of the universe then returned to his own residence.**" (ŚB. 10.14.41)

A holy place is even more merciful and affectionate than the Supreme Lord. That is why Lord Śrī Rāma said:

jadhyapi sab vaikuṇṭha bakhānā ved purān bidit jagu jānā ।
avadhpuri sam priya nāhi sou yaha prāsang jānaii kou kouā ॥

"Again and again, this holy place (Avadhpuri or Ayodhyā) is addressed as Vaikuṇṭha. Only faithful devotees know of its great glory. Irreligious mentality impedes the vision of the majestic nature of the holy place." (Rā.U.kā. 4)

ṛṣe vidanti munayaḥ praśāntātmendriyāśayāḥ ।
yadā tad evāsat-tarkais tirodhīyeta viplutam ॥

"O great sage Nārada, only those who are completely freed from all material hankerings and are undisturbed by the conditions of the body, senses and mind, know Him. Otherwise, by untenable arguments, all is distorted, and the Lord disappears from our sight." (ŚB. 2.6.40)

That is why, it is said, "*yah prāsang jānahi kou kou,*" only faithful virtuous people trust these statements without argument. In every *kalpa*,

when the eternal divine abode descends on earth, it becomes an exalted and recognized place.

"rāma dhāmadā puri suhāvani loka samasta bīdīta ati pavani" ।

For example, Sāket became renowned as Avadhpuri. (Rā.Bā.Kā. 35)

aho madhupuri dhanyā vaikuṇṭhaashcha gariyasi ।
The eighty-four kośa of Goloka that descends became renowned as Madhupuri. (Va. Pu.)

ati priya mohi ihanke vāsee mama dhāmadā puri sukha rāsee । (Ra.U.Ka. 4)

These places are eternal abodes. They descend on earth only to liberate sinners. By taking shelter of the mercy of the holy place or residing there or bathing in or taking **ā**camana in the rivers at these holy places all the sins are destroyed and the living beings become very dear to the Supreme Lord.

daras paras majjan aru pānā, haraī pāpa kaha veda purānā ।

"Śrī Rāma said: These holy places are eternal pilgrimage arenas where simply seeing, touching, bathing or drinking waters of the holy rivers flowing here, all offenses and sins are destroyed." (Rā.U.Ka. 4)

nadī puneeta amita mahimā atī, kahī na sakaii sāradā bimala matī ।

"Even goddess Sarasvatī (Goddess of Learning) was unable to describe a portion of the glory of these places; what to speak of others?" (Ra.Ba.Ka. 35)

kadā vā khelantau Braja nagar vithishu hridayam ।
harantau śrīradha brajapati kumarau sukrutinah ॥
akasmāt kaumare prakata nava kaishor vibhavau ।
prapashayan poornah syām rahasi pari hāsādinīratau ॥

"It is inconceivable to comprehend how the glory of the holy pilgrimage site can award the highest love even to the greatest of sinners. Because of the influence of these sacred places, the moonlight of the earth's glory spreads in all directions." (Rā.Su.Ni. 65)

vṛindāvanaṁ sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīrtiṁ ।
yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi ॥
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtya ।
prekṣyādri-sānu-avaratānya-samasta sattvam ॥

"O friend, Vṛindāvana is enhancing the glory of earth as the land of Vṛindāvana has been graced by the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī. The peacocks dance madly when they hear Govinda's flute and when other creatures see them from the hilltops, they all becomed stunned." (ŚB. 10.21.10)

saba vidhī puri manohar jānī, sakal siddhi prada mangala khānee ।
(Ra.Ba.Ka. 35)

The pastimes of the Lord surcharge these areas. Even wicked sinners who enter these holy places become happy and prosper. Serving with faith in these holy places, one obtains entry into the divine Eternal Abode of the Supreme Lord.

The holy land that descends on earth settles in a specific predetermined locality. When Bharata gathered the waters from so many spiritual places and oceans and Chitrakut for the coronation of Lord Rāma. He did not accept the coronation ceremony Himself. Then the question was raised, where could the gathered water from the pilgrimages be stored? Then Atri Muni said:

atrīkaheu taba bhārata sana sail samīpa sukūpa ।
rākhia tiratha toya tahan pāvan amīa anūpa ॥

"There is a well near this mountain. Please pour this nectarean water in that well. This well later became known as Bharata Kūpa (well)." (Rā.Ayo.Ka. 309-310)

tāta anādī siddha thala ehu, lopeu kāla bīdīt nahi kou । (Ra.Ayo.Ka.310)

This manifested holy place is endowed with spiritual powers. With the influence of time, it had disappeared. No one recognizes these places. The sites of divine pastime will exist on earth, but the realized, great souls make them visible again. In the same manner, the holy land of Braja, has vanished many times and from time to time, the realized souls and

spiritual preceptors reveal it again and again. These sacred grounds are endowed with spiritual powers and cannot be relocated; just as Bharataji has to place the spiritual waters within that well.

Raja (Divine Dust) Mahātmya: Importance of divine dust or Braja-raja

Śrī Ādya Śankarāchārya

When Ādya Śankarācārya, the incarnation of Śaṅkara, revived the flow of devotion in the 'Land of Bhārata' [India and world], the people and their minds were infused with devotion. The composer of *Bhaktamālā*, Śrī Nābhaji Mahārāj described Śankarāchārya's spreading of Kṛṣṇa devotion as:

kali-yuga dharma pālak pragat ācāryarāja śaṅkara subhat । (*Bhaktamāla*)

To re-establish the religion, Ādya Śankarāchārya appeared in Kali-yuga.

Also, the renowned commentator of *Bhaktamālā*, Śrī Priyadāsaji said:

vimukha samuha laike kiye sanmukha śyāma ati abhirām lilā jaga vistāri hai ।

He spread devotion for Kṛṣṇa even amongst the atheists. With his divine influence, Śrī Ādya Sankarācārya converted people who were atheists to Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Supreme Lord. He refuted atheism and glorified the pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He composed *Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam* (*Charpata Panjarikā*), in which Ādya Sankarācārya, through enlightened instruction, has captivatingly stressed devotion to Brajarāja, ŚrīKṛṣṇa. In his book Prabhodā Sudhākara, he clearly presented the majesty of Śrī Kṛṣṇa identifying Him as the original Supreme Lord.

yadhyapi sākāropyām tathaika deshi vībhātī yadunathah ।
sarva gatah sarvātmā tathāppyam sachchidānandah ॥
(Prabodha Sudhakara)

When he traveled across 'Bhārata', reaching near to Brajabhumi, land of Braja, with his disciples, he executed an extraordinary violation in self-

imposed rules. During the travel wherever the spiritual preceptor sat, the disciples dug an area of the soil, smeared it with mud, and sprinkled water on it to purify the dust in the area. But when he approached closer to Braja, he stopped them from digging the land and purifying the dust around.

The group of disciples were surprised at what had happened to their spiritual master. They thought, "If he says no to digging, then at least let us purify the dust with water!" He simply sat on a fairly clean seat. When they came even closer to Braja, he would sit on the land that is purified with water only and when they entered the holy land of Braja, his heart sublimed in deep devotion to Krsna and he said: "Now there is no need to even purify the dust by sprinkling water."

Soon after, he embraced the divine dust of Braja and began rolling again and again in 'Brajarāja'. The assemblage of disciples inquired, "O Spiritual master, what are you doing? Please tell us." Inspired with devotion to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, he sang in very emotional voice the famous *Govindāṣṭakam*.

goshtha pranganaringana lola manāyāsam paarmāyāsam ।
(*Govindāshtkam*)

All glories to this most sanctifying dust of Braja, anointed by the divine lotus feet of Yugal Kishore, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, which is desired by Surendra (Indrā), what to speak of the other gods.

Śrīmad Vallabhāchārya Ji

In the stories of the eighty-four Vaiṣṇavas, the spiritual preceptor of Pushti principles, Mahaprabhu Śrī Vallabhāchārya also clearly expounded this opinion. Once the founder of Pushti marg, Mahaprabhu Śrī Vallabhāchārya was on Braj pilgrimage with a devotee named Prabhudāsa Jalota. They came to Govardhana and Mahaprabhu ji offered food to Gopal-Lāla and instructed Prabhudāsa, "Please, take the remnants of this offered food." Prabhudāsa responded, 'Jaya Jaya, Oh reverent master! I cannot accept this offering as I have not taken a bath and so I am not clean." Hearing this response, the spiritual master was surprised and said with a smile on his face:

vrukshe vrukshe venudhāri, patre patre chaturbhujah ।
yatra vṛindāvana tatra, lakshyā lakshya kathā kutah ॥
jalād api rājah punyam rājaso api jalam varam ।
yatra vṛndāvanam tatra, snātvā snātvā kathākuta ॥

(*Chaurasee Vaiṣṇava Vārtā*)

By saying this, Mahaprabhu Śrī Vallabhāchārya ji showed the divine form of Braja to Prabhudāsaji.

"Prabhudāsa, look. Kṛṣṇa is always present here, playing His flute on every tree; Kṛṣṇa appears on every leaf in His opulent four-handed form. Though it is forbidden to perceive the four-handed form in Braja, they clearly love His two-handed form only. Here the divine dust is superior to water and water is superior to dust (all divine). So, it is no use to think about bathing or not bathing, clean or unclean; just accept these remnants of the Supreme Lord." The spiritual preceptor instructed Prabhudāsa to receive the offered remnants of food without taking bath. (*Chaurasee Vaiṣṇava Vārtā*)

tāvaṅghri-yugmam anukṛṣya sarīsṛpantau ।
ghoṣa-praghoṣa-ruciraṁ vraja-kardameṣu ॥
tan-nāda-hṛṣṭa-manasāu anusṛtya lokaṁ ।
mugdha-prabhītavad upeyatur anti mātroḥ ॥

"When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, crawled like snakes in the muddy places in BrajBhumi which were created by cow dung and cow urine, and the sound of Their ankle bells was very charming. Very much pleased by the sound of these ankle bells, They used to follow people passing by as if going to Their mothers, but when They saw that these were other people, They returned to Their real mothers, Yaśodā and Rohiṇī like innocent and terrified babies." (ŚB. 10.8.22)

Even after mother Yaśodā had given Him bath, the Lord would roll into the divine Brajaraja with delight!

While in Braja, in order to advance spiritually, one should humbly depend on the mercy of the holy land and of the great devotees living there.

Viduraji ki Braja Yatra

pureṣviti mathurādi nagareṣu,
parmeśvara krīdā sthānatvāt gokul nikata ।
vṛndāvanādi upavanāni adrir govardhanādih
kunjā milatāgruhāh sarvānyetāni ॥
bhagvat sambandhāt punya janakanyapi ।
bhakti jankāni apankto yeṣvitī
kṛṣṇa jala krīdadi yogyeṣu saritām ॥
sarassu kaliyādi hrideṣu paryatane
nimittam ananta murte rāsādi krīdana ।
chinhaih samyag alankruteṣu jala sthala
pradhāneṣvekākī charatīsmetyarthah ॥

"The places of eternal divine pastimes of Vrajenda-nandana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are the source of bliss, the Supreme Ananda. The places consisting of cities like Mathura, forests like Vṛindāvana, auspicious gardens and hills like Govardhana and groves like Gahvar are the meeting places for Śrīji and Thakurji. Kṛṣṇa's favourite location for playing water sports in the Yamunā river not only awards spiritual merits but also grants devotion to the Lord."

(*Bhāgavata Subodhini* 3.1.18)

All other pilgrimage places produce spiritual virtues but because of eternal association with Thakurji, Braja dhāma not only provides spiritual merits, but also devotion to the Lord. Vidura wandered in all these holy places of Braja in search of this.

tan mañju-ghoṣāli-mṛga-dvijākulaṁ
mahan-manaḥ-prakhya-payaḥ-sarasvatā ।
vātena juṣṭaṁ śata-patra-gandhinā
nirīkṣya rantuṁ bhagavān mano dadhe ॥

"The Lord was pleased by looking over the forest, which resounded with the charming sounds of bees, animals and birds, and which was enhanced by a lake whose clear water resembled the minds of great souls and by a breeze carrying the fragrance of hundred-petaled lotuses. Seeing all these, Lord Kṛṣṇa made up His mind to sport there." (ŚB. 10.15.3)

Just as the minds of great souls are so pure, the waters of all Braja sarovaras (lakes and ponds) were very clean, and the Supreme Lord was very pleased to see them. For Thakurji's watersports, there are appropriate places like 'Kāliya Hradā' etc. And on the hill, bejeweled with the rāsa festival, there are markings of the lotus feet of the Lord.

punaḥ punaḥ smārayanti nanda-gopa-sutam bata ।
śrī-niketais tat-padakair vismartuṁ naiva śaknumaḥ ॥

"Indeed, these footprints of Kṛṣṇa which are abode of all charm and prosperity, again and again remind us about Him and we can never forget Him." (ŚB. 10.47.50)

Each particle of Braja is marked with the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. The best of the Kuru dynasty, Vidura, delightfully visited all these places of Braja. He revealed that there are two distinct types of pilgrimage places.

1. Water oriented 2. Land oriented

Water oriented–like Yamunaji etc..
Land oriented–like Vṛndāvana, Barṣāṇā etc.

Viduraji travelled to all these pilgrimage areas while observing all internal and external regulations.

Yātra ke antar bāhya niyama

kṛṣṇa prāsya bhāvāt virahena tatprāptaya eva
vratāni krutvān atraivankramah ।
anveṣanārtha prathamam paryatanam
tarto tarvahirniyamātatopi vratāni ॥
tatra madhye ekānte dhyānadyartham upaveshnādi rupāsthitiryasyeti….
vātri kālasnāna bhushavanābhyang varjanādayastrayogunā doṣatraya
nivārikāh nanvenkar ne vandhubhih kathanna vaddhastatrāha alakshitah
swairiti tatraheturavadhuta veṣah krutrima veṣdhārī vratāni chatvāri
ekādashya dyupvāsah sarva bhuta dayā- yathaa lābha santoṣah sarvendriyo
pashamshcheti etāni bhagvattosha hetubhootāni ॥

*(*ŚB. 3.1.19 Subo.)

How Can We Perform Yatra?

To make a *yatra*, one should be '*ananya*,' that is the *yatra* should be done with our mind entirely devoted to the Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

***ananyah sarvatra śrīkrushnaika drashti* ।**

We should not pay attention to faults but focus only on the Supreme Lord. We should maintain vows that purify our consciousness.

In our heart, we should feel the pain of separation from the Lord. We should perform the yatra (travel) with a strong desire to find Him, have His darśana and inquire about Him. We should visit the holy places, Gokula, Vṛindāvana, Barṣāṇā, and others with this single purpose of finding Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes we should meditate on the Supreme Lord in a secluded place, adorn the deities, perform bhajan, sing devotional songs, and chant (repeating the holy names of the Lord), and read devotional books about Him and His devotees. We should try to eat only once a day the food offered to the deities (bhoga or prasada), bathe three times a day, and sleep on the ground. It is forbidden to wear perfumed substances, decorations, ornaments, or massage the body; all these are prohibited. Following these regulations, one would avoid three offences:

1. Bathing three times a day frees one from impurities.
2. Controlled diet avoids laziness.
3. Avoiding make-up and decoration of the body prevents contemplation of the body.
4. One should wear attire that is simple and appropriate for such travel to these pilgrimage sites. One should observe these four vows that will please the Supreme Lord:
    a) Fasting on *Ekādaśī*' (eleventh day of every fortnight), or similarly accepted fasting days in the Vaiṣṇava calendar.
    b) *Sarva bhuta dayā* - being compassionate towards every living being.
    c) Being content with whatever we receive.
    d) Having control over all the senses (Five senses of action and five senses of knowledge).

All these vows are strictly observed to please the Lord.

During yatra, it is essential to listen to the spiritual discourse given by saints and having regular congregational chanting of His names. When all regulations and actions are dedicated to Him, they transform into spiritual activities and lead us on the true path to the Supreme Lord.

Nārada said:

idaṁ hi puṁsas tapasaḥ śrutasya vā
sviṣṭasya sūktasya ca buddhi-dattayoḥ ।
avicyuto 'rthaḥ kavibhir nirūpito
yad-uttamaśloka-guṇānuvarṇanam ॥ (ŚB. 1.5.22)

The objective of severe penances, reading, and studying the Vedas, self-study of devotional literature, acquiring true knowledge, charity, and virtuous actions is to glorify Sri Rādha and Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Brahmā said:

puṁsām ato vividha-karmabhir adhvarādyair
dānena cogra-tapasā paricaryayā ca ।
ārādhanaṁ bhagavatas tava sat-kriyārtho
dharmo 'rpitaḥ karhicid mriyate na yatra ॥

"Highest reward of all different pious activities of the people, such as performance of Vedic rituals, charity, austere penances and observing sacred vows, is to please and worship You. All these activities that has been dedicated to you, never go in vain." (ŚB. 3.9.13)

Every action dedicated to the Supreme Lord becomes eternal, and never gets destroyed. It is infallible religion.

The ultimate reward of all sacrifice, charity and severe penance etc., is to please the Lord. Once He is pleased or favourable towards us, there is nothing unattainable. Without having full dedication in surrendering to the Lord, it is not possible for us to obtain transcendental prosperity and tranquility.

Śuka said:

so 'mṛtasyābhayasyeśo martyam annam yad atyagāt ।
mahimaiṣa tato brahman puruṣasya duratyayaḥ ॥

"The Supreme Lord, the controller of immortality and fearlessness, is transcendental to death and the fruitive actions of the material world. O Nārada, O brāhmaṇa, it is therefore difficult to measure the glories of the Supreme Person." (ŚB.. 2.6.17)

yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat ।
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam ॥

"Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you give away, and whatever austerities you perform – do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me." (BG. 9.27)

Even penance and charity are not necessarily beneficial and cannot bring happiness, if they are not dedicated to the Supreme Lord. So, whatever action is performed be it sacrifice, charity, penance, gross actions of eating, walking, wandering etc.; even insignificant actions - all should be dedicated to the Supreme Lord. In this way, visiting holy places, singing bhajans (devotional songs), congregational chanting, worshiping the deities etc., all will award ultimate happiness and fearlessness for the soul. While in pilgrimage, whatever may be our devotional activities, if we are experiencing the presence of the Divine Lord or the Holy Places as the personification of the Supreme Lord, then in the association of devotees, yatra will become truly meaningful and fruitful.

How can one feel the presence of the Lord and attain the blissful state in which one would affectionately serve on Him? Every one of us may not be able to immediately experience the presence of the Supreme Lord, but definitely, as soon as the worshipful Deity of the Holy Name is pleased with our sincere endeavor and mercifully gives us the qualification to perform pure devotional service, we would become eligible to attain this divine experience.

The name of the Supreme Lord is so powerful that just by hearing and chanting His Name repeatedly, one experiences His presence. All the

potencies of God (as adhidaiva) are eternally inherent and present in the Name. The attainment of feeling the presence of the name adhidaiva is equal to the attainment of feeling the presence of our worshipful Lord, Who has been represented by that name. This is why all doctrines state that ultimate success of our life lies in the performance of nāma-sankirtana, the congregational and devotional chanting of the holy name of the Lord.

mantratas tantrataś chidraṁ deśa-kālārha-vastutaḥ ।
sarvaṁ karoti niśchidram nāma saṅkīrtanaṁ tava ॥

"The very chanting of Your Name neutralizes all defects and discrepancies in pronouncing the mantras, observing the regulative principles, or discrepancies with regards to time, place, person and paraphernalia." (ŚB. 8.23.16)

The most perfect example for us to see is the beacon of light, which is emanating from the *Śrī Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra*, conducted by Śrī Māan mandir.

There is continuous Sankirtana in yatra 24 hours a day (Congregational Chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord with Devotion).

As heard directly from Babashri, seventy years ago, Braja yatras were in abundance and were all quite blissful. This is not the case today. Earlier all yatras were performed on foot. Nowadays, very few are left and the majority of them use vehicles. The reason for this is not only bodily weakness but also due to lack of intensity in spiritual emotions and feelings. During ancient yatras (pilgrimages), every Vaiṣhṇava used to continually sing or chant *'Śrī Kṛṣṇah Saraṇaṁ Mama,'* but not anymore. Not feeling the presence of the Lord, not worshiping in the association of devotees, much interest and benefit has been lost.

Our venerable Śrī Bābā Mahārāj said that seventy years ago, Swami Śrī Harināma dāsa Mahārāj from Raman Reti used to organize Braja Yatra adhering to strict regulations. Non-stop singing of Hari-Naam (Nectarian names of the Lord), devotional songs in praise of Supreme Lord, was going on. Each pilgrim or devotee would make a vow to at least chant the devotional songs two hours daily. Today, during most yatras, this tradition is ignored and lightly observed. Śrī Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra, organized from Śrī Maān Mandir, started only twenty-four years ago, and not only exhibits

deep immersion in devotional feelings, but also engages in various other sublime activities. Here, pilgrims associate with the name of the Lord. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also emphasized that association with the name of the Lord is equivalent to the association with the Supreme Lord:

nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ

O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have hundreds and millions of names, like Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O my Lord, out of kindness You enable us to easily approach You by Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them. [Śikṣāṣṭakam 2]

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare ।
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare ॥

The presiding Deities of this Mahā-Mantra, (Supreme Hymn), are also the Divine couple [Śrī Rādhārāṇī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa].

sarva cheto harah krushna stasya vhittam haratyasau /
vaida gdhi sār vistār rairato radha harā matā //

Definition of the Mahā-mantra by Jīva Gosvāmī

With Her supreme beauty, one who captivates everyone's mind and captures the mind of the Supreme Lord with Her sagacity and devotion: that is Harā. [Harā=captive charmer]. The reasons for the name 'Harā,' some of them are quoted here as: 'being captured by Śrī Kṛṣṇa,' by addressing Śrī Kṛṣṇa as 'Hari Hari', and also because the flute was taken by Śrīji. Sri Radha is the remover of devotee obstacles and arrester of the serenity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; these all mean 'Harā.' 'Harā' is also spoken as 'Hare.' [Rādhā=Rādhe] Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu called upon 'Rādhe' as 'Hare'

to keep His mind equipoised, as by just hearing the name 'Rādhe', - an ocean of love used to stir up with boundless emotions in His heart.

According to Padma Purāṇa:

Once Śiva himself told Nārada Devarṣhi : "The Supreme Brahman, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself instructed me to chant *Śrī Yugala Mantra*"

Rādhe Kṛṣṇa Rādhe Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Rādhe Rādhe
Rādhe Śyāma Rādhe Śyāma Śyāma Śyāma Rādhe Rādhe ।

"Once the Lord of Lakṣmī, Lord Nārāyaṇa, was pleased with me and offered a boon, so I requested, 'Grant me the vision of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.'"

Lord Nārāyaṇa advised me to go to Vṛindāvana. After reaching Vṛindāvana, I had the good fortune of the highest spiritual vision of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, surrounded by the wise and pious companions of Śrī Rādhārāṇī. The sight was so majestic and rare to envision - the mixture of radiance, the luster of the bluish lotus face of ŚrīKṛṣṇa and the golden face of Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī, creating an ever-fresh divine greenish effulgence. Delighted, Śrī Hari disclosed a very guarded secret. 'Hey Rudra!' If you wish to enchant Me, take the shelter of the controller of My soul, Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī and remain in My divine abode and always chant *Śrī Yugala Mantra*. Meanwhile, the Supreme abode of mercy, the Supreme Lord spoke the divine Yugala Mantra in my ears and disappeared.

Rādhe Kṛṣṇa Rādhe Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Rādhe Rādhe ।
Rādhe Śyāma Rādhe Śyāma Śyāma Śyāma Rādhe Rādhe ॥

Without worshiping the Divine Couple, Yugala Sārakāra through the Yugala Mantra, bestowed to Rudra by the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the ultimate attainment of perfection is not possible. From the beginning of creation, the worship of the primeval Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues. Even the first couple in Satya-yuga, Manu and his wife Śatarupā (procreators of mankind) attained Lord Śrī Rāma by chanting the *dvādasa akṣara mantra*. (Rā.Bā.Kā.143)

dvādash achchhar mantra puni japahi sahita anurāg ।
vāsudeva pada pankruha dampati mana ati lāg ॥ (Ra.Ba.Kan. 143)

Even though there is a lot of discussion, arguments, and counter arguments on this subject, the *'dvādasa mantra'* (the accepted mantra with twelve letters) is already an undisputed, irrefutable fact. *Oṁ -na mo- bha- ga va- te vā su- de-vā-ya.*

Dvādasa means that which contains twelve letters. The son of Vasudeva, Vāsudeva is the desired Lord of this 'dvādasa mantra.' In the pastimes, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa plays the role of a son to Vasudeva.

sattvaṁ viśuddhaṁ vāsudeva-śabditaṁ
yad īyate tatra pumān apāvṛtaḥ ।
sattve ca tasmin bhagavān vāsudevo hy
adhokṣajo me namasāvidhīyate ॥

"Lord Shiva prayed: I am always engaged in offering obeisances to Lord Vāsudeva in pure consciousness, in which the Supreme Lord, known as Vāsudeva, is revealed without any covering." (ŚB. 4.3.23)

The purest and sacred entity in existence is known as Vāsudeva who is eternal and beyond the quality of passion and goodness. He is divine and eternal, '*viśuddha-tattva*.' Persons under the influence of māyā (illusory energy) perceive the quality of goodness as '*viśuddha-sattva*' or 'transcendental goodness'; but in reality, this sacred feature of purity is beyond the characteristic of goodness, which is still under the effect of the Lord's illusory energy. This purity is immune to the Lord's illusory energy; that is *'viśuddha-sattva*,' a sanctified purity. The quality of goodness (*sattva*), the quality of passion (*rājas*) and the quality of ignorance or darkness (*tamas*) are all under the influence of the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord's '*māyā*', while there is no influence of the illusory energy on *viśuddha-sattva*. *Vishuddha-sattva* is recognized as Vāsudeva.

Vāsudeva is the perfection of purity, Who resides in the divine abode, 'Goloka-Vṛindāvana' which is beyond the influence of the illusory energy, and the effect of time.

"Chidānand maya deha tumhahāri"
pravartate yatra rajas tamas tayoḥ sattvaṁ ca miśraṁ na ca kāla-vikramaḥ |
na yatra māyā kim utāpare harer anuvratā yatra surāsurārcitāḥ ||

"In that personal abode of the Lord, the material modes of ignorance and passion do not prevail, nor is there any influence of mode of goodness. There is no predominance of the influence of time, so what to speak of the illusory, external energy; it cannot enter that region. The attendants of Lord in that abode are adored alike by both demigods and demons." (ŚB. 2.9.10)

As mentioned earlier, Lord Śrī Rāma and Śrī Sitaji were pleased with Manu and only gave him Their audience because of the chanting (japa) of the *dvādasa akṣara mantra*, "Oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya." Lord Rāma and Śrī Sitaji were very pleased and granted the boon to Manu and Śatarupa, so Manu and Śatarupa became King Daśaratha and Kauśalya in future life and Lord Śrī Raghavendra incarnated as their son, Śrī Rāma.

Śrī Nāradaji instructed Dhruva to worship Kṛṣṇa

tat tāta gaccha bhadraṁ te yamunāyās taṭaṁ śuci |
puṇyaṁ madhuvanaṁ yatra sānnidhyaṁ nityadā hareḥ ||

Śrī Nāradaji instructed Dhruva: My dear child, I wish all good fortune to you. You should go to the holy bank of Yamunā, where there is a virtuous forest named Madhuvana. Be purified there. Just by going there, one draws nearer to the Supreme Lord, who always lives there." (ŚB. 4.8.42)

Śrī Nārada Muni ordered, "Dhruva! Do not carry out your penance chanting the dvādasa mantra on the bank of river Ganges, rather go to Braja and perform your austerities there, in Madhuvana, and your worship will be blessed and successful. Wherever the holy place descends, the Supreme Lord is quickly attained. The religious abode naturally appears unmanifest to our material eyes, but it is not ordinary. In this holy arena, there is an immense hidden power, which awards perfection very quickly. The Supreme Lord is fully present in the vicinity of the holy place; He is never so intimately found elsewhere. That is the reason millions of pilgrims visit Braja (the descended holy place) every year.

Nāradaji says, "*Sānidhyām nityadā hareh*." This truth was much before the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It was not only before 'Dvāpara-yuga' but also before 'Treta-yuga'; worship of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the primeval worship. Nāradaji said, "In the Holy Place, one can always feel the presence of the Supreme Lord." After mentioning the eternal Presence of the Supreme Lord in the holy abode, Nāradaji also confirmed the eternal manifestation of the Divine pastimes of the Lord.

ity uktas taṁ parikramya praṇamya ca nṛpārbhakaḥ ।
yayau madhuvanaṁ puṇyaṁ hareś caraṇa-carcitam ॥

"Thus instructed by Nārada, prince Dhruva, the son of the King, circumambulated the sage and bowed down to him. Then he proceeded to the holy tract of Madhuvana, which is always adorned with the footprints of Lord Kṛṣṇa." (ŚB. 4.8.62).

Nāradaji said, "This is the same Madhuvana, where the Lord relished divine pastimes. Meditate on the Supreme Lord's activities performed here. This place is sanctified throughout with the markings of impressions from His līlās. Here all divine activities took place."

svecchāvatāra-caritair acintya-nija-māyayā ।
kariṣyaty uttamaślokas tad dhyāyed dhṛdayaṁ-gamam ॥

"My dear Dhruva, you should meditate upon the transcendental activities of the Supreme Lord in His different incarnations, as exhibited by His supreme independent will and His own incomprehensible personal potencies." (ŚB. 4.8.57)

In the previous ślokas Nārada referred to the pastimes which had happened in past but in this śloka He instructed Dhruva to meditate on the pastimes which will happen in future. Nārada said, "Dhruva, after reaching Madhuvana, you should contemplate the līlās of the Lord that will take place here. In this way, your mind will be immediately engrossed in the Supreme." Only in the divine holy place, the Supreme Lord's enchanting pastimes continuously take place. These relishable līlās of the Lord are performed even more powerfully in the descended holy places than even in Vaikuṇṭha. The Supreme Lord appeared before Dhruva in a very short

time, because Dhruva chanted the *Dvādasa Akṣara Mantra*, addressing Lord Vāsudeva (**Śrī Kṛṣṇa**).

ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam ।
indrāri-vyākulaṁ lokaṁ mṛḍayanti yuge yuge ॥

"All these, however, are either part manifestations or rays of the Supreme Person, but Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord Himself. All these manifestations of the Lord appear on planets whenever there is a disturbance created by the atheists. The Lord incarnates to protect the theists." (ŚB. 1.3.28)

ichchhamaya naravesh sanvāre hoi haun pragata niketa tumhāre ।
ansanh sahit deha dhari tātā karihaun charita bhagat sukhdātaa ॥
(Rā.Bā.Kā. 152)

yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujośākhāḥ ।
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇāṁ tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā ॥

"As watering roots of the tree nourishes the trunk, branches, twigs and everything else, and as supplying food to the stomach enlivens the senses and limbs of the body, simply worshiping the Supreme Lord through devotional service automatically satisfies all other gods, who are parts of that Supreme Lord." (ŚB. 4.31.14)

Every one's primeval source is only Śrī Kṛṣṇa. By worshiping that infallible Lord Kṛṣṇa, all other gods are automatically worshipped, similar to when one waters the root, the water automatically reaches the entire tree. By worshiping the root of the tree, "taror mūla" , every part of the tree; branches, leaves, and flowers are revered simultaneously. It is, therefore, of a great importance to worship the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the source and origin of every living being and of every god.

sadṛśaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛter jñānavān api ।
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati ॥

" Everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes, even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature. What can be accomplished through repression?" (BG. 3.33)

Until the interior or wicked nature changes, the attempt to subdue the senses will fail. On the other hand, association with devotees and chanting and singing bhajans congregationally, will automatically redirect this nature. Then persons become free from devilish, monstrous, and bewitching dispositions just by good association with devotees.

mahātmānas tu māṁ pārtha daivīṁ prakṛtim āśritāḥ ।
bhajanty ananya-manaso jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam ॥

"O son of Pṛthā, the great souls, who have adopted the divine nature, engage themselves fully in my devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Lord, eternal and inexhaustible." (BG. 9.13)

To maintain good association with devotees and to facilitate congregational chanting during Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra, the sound systems are continuously engaged. Clear sound reaches all directions, making every pilgrim's yatra fruitful and successful; and devotees are engaged in worshipping the Supreme Lord while singing devotional songs and chants. Sublimation sprouts from good association.

Yatra nishulka kyon? Why is the Yatra free?

dūreṇa hy avaraṁ karma buddhi-yogād dhanañ-jaya ।
buddhau śaranam anviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phala-hetavaḥ ॥

"O Dhanañjaya, actions performed with attachment of fruits are far inferior than duties performed with equipoised mind renouncing any attachment. Those who want to enjoy the fruits of their work are misers." (BG. 2.49)

The Supreme Lord said here that work done for gain is definitely inferior to work done without desires. To even see the face of a greedy person, who works only for the sake of results, is like committing a sin or a great offense. Only the person who shuns such desires is one whose mind is fixed in knowledge of the highest truth. He is called "sthitaprajna". Desires make the mind unsteady. Forsaking these intense desires empowers the one in work.

Seventy years ago, thirty thousand pilgrims used to perform the yatra on foot in a group together, even the wells on the yatra path became empty. Nowadays, most of the yatra groups have dissolved. The mode of passion has overtaken the mode of goodness and the circumstances are not the same.

At the place of Śrī Krupalu Mahārāj (Barṣāṇā), there used to be uninterrupted chanting of the divine names of the Supreme Lord. Our spiritual master, Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj fell in love with that uninterrupted kirtan with music and resolved to stay in Barṣāṇā. Many others were fascinated with the continuous chanting and glorification with music and preferred to stay in Braja.

Śrī Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra is completely free and because of the uninterrupted chanting of the divine names of the Lord, it is divinely empowered and truly reaches a distinct transcendental plateau.

The learned men of spiritual wisdom who aspire for liberation should renounce all the desires for results and begin with the devout chanting of the supremely divine and powerful names of the Supreme Lord.

oṁ tat sad iti nirdeśo brahmaṇas tri-vidhaḥ smṛtaḥ ।
brāhmaṇās tena vedāś ca yajñāś ca vihitāḥ purā ॥

"From the beginning of creation, the three words, "Oṁ tat sat" were used to indicate the Supreme Absolute Truth. Using these three syllables, brāhmaṇas, Vedas and yajñāś (all the fire sacrifices) glorify the Supreme." (BG. 17.23)

Any *yajña*, any penances, and all favourable actions should always begin with the auspicious names of the Supreme Lord such as *Om*, *Tat* and *Sat*.

yasyāvatāra-guṇa-karma-viḍambanāni
nāmāni ye 'su-vigame vivaśā gṛṇanti ।
te 'naika-janma-śamalaṁ sahasaiva hitvā
saṁyānty apāvṛtāmṛtaṁ tam ajaṁ prapadye ॥

"Let me take shelter of the lotus feet of Him who is unborn and whose incarnations, qualities and activities are beyond worldly affairs. One who invokes His transcendental names, even unconsciously, at the time he quits this life, is certainly washed immediately of the sins of many, many births and attains Him without fail." (ŚB. 3.9.15)

When there is no distinction between '*nāma*' (the transcendental name of the Lord) and '*nāmi*' (the Supreme Lord), why should there be a distinction between one '*nāma*' to another? "*Nāma*" could refer to a particular incarnation: "*avatāra sambandhi*" like Nandanandana, Devakinandana or '*nāma*' could be "*guna sambandhi*" or related to quality or virtue like "*Dīna-bandhu"* or friend of the poor, "*bhakta-vatsala*" or affectionate toward devotees. "*Nāma*" could refer to "līlā *sambandhi*" like "*mākhanchor*" or butter-thief or "*giridhāri*" or one who lifted Govardhan mountain.

Who has Implicit Faith in the Dhāma?

One who can give up the narrow thinking of superiority of his own sect over others and can give equal respect to all devotees of Lord, can become devoted to the dhāma or holy place of pilgrimage. Sometimes one attains residence of the dhāma as a result of curses from great sages:

kasyānubhāvo 'sya na deva vidmahe tavāṅghri-reṇu-sparaśādhikāraḥ ।
yad-vāñchayā śrīr lalanācarat tapo vihāya kāmān su-ciraṁ dhṛta-vratā ॥

"O, Lord, we do not know how the serpent Kāliya has attained this great opportunity of being touched by the dust of Your lotus feet. For this end, the Goddess of Fortune performed austerities for centuries, giving up all other desires and observing austere vows." (ŚB. 10.16.36)

puṁsāṁ ślāghyatamaṁ manye daṇḍam arhattamārpitam ।
yaṁ na mātā pitā bhrātā suhṛdaś cādiśanti hi ॥

"Bali Maharaja said: O Lord, I regard the punishment You have given me as most exalted. Infact it is a blessing in disguise which no mother, father, brother or friends can mete out."

(ŚB. 8.22.4)

Residence in dhāma eliminates bad reactions from committing an offense against the dhāma.

Often people advise not to go to the dhāma or at least to not stay in the dhāma for a longer duration otherwise we may end up committing an

offense against the dhāma. An offence against the dhāma is very serious and inexcusable. But the Supreme Lord told Arjuna that in this world every action is also associated with faults. Even while performing sevā (service or worship) one may commit thirty-two kind of offenses. Does this mean that we should give up our *sevā*? By staying in the abode of the Lord, one can clear the offense against the Abode.

kari mana vrindavana son heta ।
nisi dina chin Chāya jini chāndahi, rasikana kau rakha kheta ॥
jahan Srī Radha Mohana viharata, kari kunjani sanketa ।
pulina rāsa rasa ranjita dekhata, mana matha hota aceta ॥
Vrindāvana taji je sukha cāhata, teee rācchasa preta ।
'Vyāsa' dāsa ke ura mai baithyau, Mohana kahi-kahi deta ॥ (Vyāsaji)

Śrī Hari Rāma Vyāsa ji says that true peace, love, and happiness is only available in Vṛndāvana in relation to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Seeking it elsewhere will be futile and make one crazy.

saha-jaṁ karma kaunteya sa-doṣam api na tyajet ।
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ ॥

"Every endeavour is covered by some fault in the beginning as there is smoke before beginning of fire. Therefore, one should not give up the work born of his nature, even though it has a measure of fault in it." (BG. 18.48)

Even while uttering a name, one may commit ***nāmāparādha*** (ten different offenses). However, don't avoid residence in the *dhāma*, because of the fear of committing an offense against dhāma. Would we quit serving a devotee out of fear of committing *bhaktāparādha* (an offense against the devotee)? If that is the case, we should avoid putting on cloths to avoid making the clothes dirty!

The *dhāma* is capable of clearing any kind of offenses. Brahmā committed very serious offenses by stealing the calves and cowherd boys, but his offenses were cleared by circumambulating the *dhāma*.

"vrindāvan taji je sukha chāhat tei rācchas preta
'vyāsa' ke ura men bethyo mohana kahi–kahi deta" (Vyāsavani)

Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu sent Rupa, Sanātana the other Goswāmis to go to Vrindavana dhāma, to stay there and restore the *dhāma* and its numerous places of pilgrimage. Lord Chaitanya and the six Goswāmis revealed various pilgrimage places in their original divine forms. Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu Himself revealed Radhākuṇḍa.

In Braja, there are so many divine places blessed with the Lord's pastimes, like, Bhandir Kupa (Matsya Kupa). Simply by taking bath there, one gets benedictions of relishing pastimes of Lord's fourteen incarnations. Sri Nārāyan Bhataji revealed three streams in Triveni Kupa, which is a place of pilgrimage from time immemorial. The Lord arranges the dhāma to reappear and disappear, one cannot fathom its mystery by speculation.

Every village, every path in Braja is blessed with pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Every house in Braja was blessed with childhood pastimes of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa.

Sūradāsaji says:

prathama karī hari mākhana chorī |
gwalini mana icchā kari purana, āpu bhaje vraja khorī ||
mana me yahai vichāra karata hari, braja ghara ghara saba jaun |
gokula janama liyo sukha kāran, sabakain mākhan khaun ||
bāla roopa Jasumati mohi jānai, gopīni mili sukha bhoga |
'Sūradāsa' prabhu kahata prema so, ye mere braja loga ||

Sūradāsaji makes us aware about Kṛṣṇa's promise that no house or no village in Braja will be deprived of His pastimes.

No one knows on which path and in which village we may see the Divine Couple

Yugala Sarakāra or Lord Kṛṣṇa and Sri Rādhārāni

kadā vā khelantau braja-nagara-vithīshu hridayam |
harantau shrī-rādhā-vrajapatikumārau sukritinah ||
akasmāt kaumāre prakata-nava-kishora-vibhavau |
prapashyan pūrnah syam rahasi parihāsādi-niratau (Ra Su.Ni. 65)

"When, staying in a secluded place, will I become fulfilled as I see Sri Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, even though They are only children, suddenly become teenagers, enjoying playful joking words and many other

pastimes in Braja village's pathways, teenagers who roam in the hearts of devotees?" (Ra.Su.Ni. 66)

oṁ pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate ।
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate ॥

"The Supreme Lord is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the Complete Whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the Complete Whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance." (*Śrī Īśopaniṣad*, Invocation)

sad-yogīndra-su-drishya-sāndra-rasadānandaika-san-murtayah
sarve 'py adbhuta-san-mahimni madhure vrindāvane sangatā ।
ye krurā api pāpino na ca satām sambhāshya drishyāshca ye
sarvān vastutayā nirikshya parama-svārādhya-buddhir mama ॥

"Even cruel sinners, whom saintly persons will refuse to see or talk with, are glorious in all respects since they have the association with wonderful, charming Vrindavan. They will attain transcendental forms and will give bliss to the great yogīs. When I see them, I know in my heart that they should be worshipped with great care." (Sri Hita Harivansh, Ra.Su.Ni. 265)

yadvā vyutkramena manobhāvasthāpanabala karanāpattah ।
ādyeshu svata eva bhāvotpatterārādhyatā
dvitīyeshu laukika bhāvadehādidarśanādbhāvanābalena svārādhyatā
trutīyeshubahih prayāntam api bhāvam bahusiddhantabalena
sthāpanāt paramasvārādhyateti । (rasakulyaakaara)

The power of faith generates three distinct forces

1. Manobala: In the minds of devotees of the Lord, there is an instinctive emotion of adoration and worship for Lord and his eternal associates, this is *manobala* (power of mind).

2) Bhavanābala: Observing *brajabhāva of Brajavasis* and seeing tough physical hardships for Braja by Brajavāsins, feeling adoration for them is bhāvanābala (power of emotions).

3) Sthapanābala: Where the mind does not accept or emotions do not conquer, only sthāpnābala (power of status) succeeds.

For those, who are not even not qualified to offer adoration on the basis of position or association ,having a sense of respect to them for the sake of principle only signifies *sthapanābala*.

For example, "*dhana-dhana vrindāvana ke gadahaa pyāre*'
or "d*hana-dhana nandagaun ke swan"*
or
vrindāvan ke shvapach ki juthan khāiye māng ।
vyāsa mithāī vipra kī tame lāgo āga ॥ (Vyasaji)
or
*dhana dhana nandgaon ke svaa*n ।
bhora sānjah suna ishta āratī nitya nikāsat bhaun bhaun tāna ॥
(Sri Abhayarama Ji)

shrī rādhe rānī mohe apnī kara lījai ।
aur kachu mohe bhavat nāhi, sri Vrindāvana raja dījai ॥
khaga mruga pashu panchī ya vana ke, charan sharan rakh lījai ।
'vyāsa' swaminī ki chabi nirakhat , mahal tahalanī dījai ॥ (Shrī vyāsajī)

hā kālindi tvayi mama nidhih preyasa khelitabhut
bho bho divyādbhuta-tanu-latās tat-kara-sparsha-bhajah ।
he Rādhā ya rati-griha-shuka he mriga he mayura
bhuyo bhuyah pranatibhir aham prārthaye vo 'nukampam ॥
(Ra.Su.Ni. 263)

"O Yamunā, in your waters, She, who is my treasure, enjoyed pastimes with Her beloved. O splendid, wonderful, spiritual trees and vines touched by Their hands! O pet parrots, who stay in Rādhā's pāstime-cottage! O deer! O peacocks! Again and again, I bow down before You and beg for Your mercy."

Chapter 3
Barsānā

Barsānā is known by various names such as Barsānā itself, for the incessant flow of loving delights, Barṣāṇu due to it's having the best of mountain ridges, Vṛṣabhānupura for being the capital city of King Vṛṣabhānu and Bṛuhatsānu for it's highest peak amongst the Braja mountains. Although, a part of greater Vṛndāvana, Barṣāṇā alone charms all of Vrindavana with mellows of devotion simply because it is a permanent residential place of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Tasyā namostu vrshbhānubhuvo disopi (Ra.Su.Ni. 2)

Obeisance unto the direction of Vrishabhānupura where Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī presides, who by mere offering of obeisance unto Her fulfills one's desires, Who is topmost amongst the gopīs, the crest jewel of King Vṛṣabhānu's lineage, the cooling gem of parexcellance in pacifying Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the deepest seperation and great love for Her. She is the object of our worship, the wealth of our very hearts.

In the whole nectarean Vrindāvana which is so vast, Vyāsaji did not find Sri Kṛṣṇa there, but he found Sri Kṛṣṇa in Barsānā.

lāgi rata rādhā rādhā nāma ।
dhundhi firi vrindāvana sabaro, nanda thithona shyāma ॥
ke mohana ke khora sānkri, ke mohana nandgaun ।
'vyāsa dāsa' ki jivana rādhe dhani barasāno gaun ॥

(Vyāsaji)

cintamanih pranamatam vraja-nagarinam
cudamanih kula-manir vrishabhanu-namnah ।
sa shyama-kama-vara-shanti-manir nikunjabhusha-manir
hridaya-samputa-san-manir nah ॥

(Rā.Su.Ni. 26)

She is the cintāmani jewel of the surrendered devotees, the crest jewel of the girls of Vraja, the jewel of King Vrishabhānu's family, the jewel that pacifies Lord Kṛṣṇa's desires, the jewel that decorates the forest groves, the splendid jewel we keep in the jewelry chest of our hearts.

Lord Śiva and Lord Śeṣa also aspire to reside in this Holy land of Barṣāṇā.

barasane ke vāsa ko āsa kare śiva śesha ।
yahān ki mahimā ko kahe jahān kṛṣṇa dhare sakhi vesha ॥

The jewel of entire Vṛndāvana resides in the palace of King Vṛsabhānu and out of great allurement, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of full knowledge, bliss, and eternal existence, visits Barṣāṇā incognito in the garb of a sakhī, a female friend.

braja me ratana rādhikā gori ।
hara lini vrishabhānu bhavana te nandasuvana ki chori ॥
(Kṛṣṇa dāsa ji)

SUBHAG GORI KE GORE PAAV …….!!

Barṣāṇā dhāma is more fortunate being blessed by the dust of lotus feet of the daughter of King Vṛsabhānu, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. The nectar of Mādhurya-rāsa came from Barṣāṇā to Vṛndāvana through Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Why does Śrī Kṛṣṇa visit Barsānā in a hidden form? Why is Barṣāṇā so adored?

Śrī Hita Harivansh Mahaprabhu ji advises everyone to live in Barṣāṇā. Khora [saṅkari-narrow]; Giri [Brahmācala]; Khirak [shelter for cows]; Vana [Gahvaravana- a dense forest] – all of these four exist in Barṣāṇā. Swami Haridāsaji has sung many songs on līlās of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa performed here at Gahvarvana and Saṅkari Khora. He has also sung the songs on Mayura līlā, peacock pastimes of the Lord.

pyāri ju āgain chali, āgain chali, āgain chali ।
gahavara vana bhītara jahān bole koyala rī ॥
ati hi vicitra phūla patran ki sejyā rachī ।
rucira sanwārī tahān tuba soila rī ॥
chin chin pala pala terīe kahāni tuva maga joil rī ।
'śrī haridas' ke swāmī shyāma kahata chabilo kāma rasa bhoila rī ॥
(Swami Sri Haridas Ji)

In order to fulfill his desire, Lord Brahmā was advised to take a form of a mountain here to rejoice in the loving pastimes of the Divine Couple. At the end of Satya-yuga, Brahmā ji appealed to Lord Kṛṣṇa that Krsna should conduct his pastimes with Gopis, on Brahmā's body. The Lord advises Brahmā to go to Barsānā and become a mountain to witness these pastimes. Thus, Brahmā accepted the form of this mountain.

Glorification of Vriṣabhānupura in Varāha Purāṇa and Padma Purāṇa

purākruta yugasyānte brahmanā prārthito harih ।
mamopari sadā tvamhi rāsa krīdam karishyati ॥
sarvābhir brajagopībhih prāvrutkāle krutārtha kurta ।

tato brahman vrajam gatvā vriṣabhānupuram gatah ।
parvato bhavasi tvam hi mama kridām ca paśyasi ॥
yasmād brahmā parvato'bhud vriṣabhānupure sthitah ।

(Bra. Bha.Vi.)

There is another story about these mountains of Barasānā. Once, the trinity (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Mahesh) decided to verify the chastity of a great lady, Sati Anasūyā. Being annoyed over their indecent act, Anasūyā cursed them all, transforming them into these mountains, which were named Trika.

The Suryavamśa dynasty of Sun god, in which Mahāraja Dilīpa was born, was very devoted to cows. Śrimatī Rādhārāṇī, as well as Lord Śrī Rāmacandra, appeared in the Sūryavamśa. This is how his lineage goes. Up to King Dilīpa the same dynasty continues. Dilīpa became a great devotee of the cows because Kāmadhenu, a heavenly cow who can fulfill all desires, once cursed him. Once, it so happened, that King Dilīpa went to the heavenly planets and being in a hurry, failed to offer his respects to Kāmadhenu. By the will of Providence, she cursed the king saying that although he was returning home desiring to beget a son, he will not be able to do so.

Unfortunately, the King did not hear this curse since at that time elephant Airāvata, Indrā's carrier, was playing in the celestial sky making a very loud noise. King Dilīpa, unable to beget a son for a long time approached sage Vasiṣṭha, the spiritual master of the Raghu dynasty. The sage meditated for a while and revealed to the king that he would never beget a son, as he had been given an irrefutable curse by Kāmadhenu. Vasiṣṭha said, "You should diligently serve the cows. Kāmadhenu's

daughter, Nandinī, is with me in my ashram and is also a Kāmadhenu. She alone can mitigate the curse." Then Dilīpa began to perform selfless service to this cow.

One day, King Dilīpa was put to the test. A lion attacked Nandinī, the daughter of Kāmadenu. In order to give her protection, in exchange, the king offered his own body as prey to the lion, who said, "I am appointed by Pārvati. Why do you wish to sacrifice your valuable body for this insignificant cow? While living in the world, you could perform so many austerities to achieve opulence."

Dilīpa replied, "It is of no benefit to survive in this world, if I cannot protect the cow. One should only live in the world as long as one can execute his duties truthfully just like fire within a flame. Otherwise, it is best to die. The lion then said, "As you desire. Get ready to die." Dilīpa immediately prepared himself. The lion jumped up high in the sky. Dilīpa sat down without moving, knowing very well that the lion is attacking. Soon what he sees is a floral garland falling on him from the sky instead. He then observed that Nandinī was standing in front of him with a smiling face. She said to him, "I was testing you and you have satisfied me. You can go now, as you are free from the curse given by my mother. Soon you will beget a glorious son, who will become famous and will be named Raghu."

Dharma, the youngest son of King Dilīpa impressed with the glory of serving cows, said that he did not want a kingdom or anything else. He simply wanted to spend the remaining time of his life serving the cows. In the same lineage, Abhayakarṇa was born. When Lord Śatrughna visited Braja, he also brought Abhayakarṇa with him, knowing his great devotion to the cows. Śatrughna knew that this land of Braja was best suited for the upkeep and nourishment of the cows.

In this context, a narration appears in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. During Their journey of 14 years in exile, while crossing the river Yamunā, Mother Sītā offered reverential prayers to her, knowing that she was flowing from Braja. Sītāji said, "Oh, mother! I shall serve you with thousands of cows." This also emphasizes the fact that even Sītā Devi was greatly devoted to Braja (Valmiki Ramyan, Ayodhya Kand, 55/19-20).

When Abhayakarṇa came to Braja, he was very pleased and started to serve the cows. Thus, his succession was another lineage of Raghuvaṅśa. Śrī Raśanga was born in this lineage and later established this village of Barasānā. King Vṛṣabhānu and Radhārāni appeared in Raśangaji's lineage.

This is the history of Barasānā. Rādhā belongs to Sūryavaṁśa while Kṛṣṇa belongs to Candravaṁśa.

Supremely blessed is Mahārāṇī Kīrtida, Rādhā's mother, who is not an ordinary human being as she descended as an incarnation of Kalāvatī. Before the present advent, she was one of the three daughters of Pitṛiśvaras, the Lord of ancestors. This story is found in the Śiva Purāṇa, Pārvatī-kāṇḍa, Chapter 2.

When they went to Śvetadvīpa, the 4 Kumāras [Brahmā's sons], headed by Sanaka, also arrived there. Upon their arrival, these three sisters did not get up to offer them respects. The sages cursed them by saying that they will all be born as humans. The Lord Himself came and explained that actually this was not a curse but a blessing in disguise as they would be getting an opportunity to become the parents of three of His eternal, Divine potencies. Later, they appeared on the earth planet as Sunayanā, from whom Sītā was born, Mainā, from whom Pārvatī was born, and Kalāvatī, from whom Rādhikā was born.

Kalāvatī was the queen of King Suchandra. Both of them performed the utmost severe penances. Being thus pleased, Brahmāji appeared before them and offered a boon. This is how Mahārāj Suchandra received the benediction to get liberation. Being quite angry, Kalāvatī told Brahmā that she would be cursing him. "How can my husband be granted the boon of liberation, while I am still alive?" Brahmāji became frightened because she was a mahāsati, a very chaste woman. He promptly replied, "Suchandra would stay here for some time and you will get the honor of parenting Golokeśwari, Rādhā and then return with him to the Eternal Abode." This Mahārāj Suchandra and Kalāvatī again incarnated here. Kalāvati became Kīrtidā from whom Sri Rādhārāni appeared on the eighth bright day in the month of Bhādra (August-September).

Nanda-nandana, the glorious son of Mahārāj Nanda, Kṛṣṇa, is always residing here at Barṣāṇā, captivated by the charming beauty of Rādhikā. The village of Barṣāṇā is located at the foothills of mount Brahmāchala, which is an embodiment of Brahmāji. Each of these four peaks represent one of Brahmā's heads, on which four forts are situated, namely: 1) Mānagaḍha, 2) Dānagaḍha. 3) Vilāsagaḍha, and 4) Bhānugaḍha. Māna līlā, Dāna līlā, and Jhulana-vilāsa pastimes take place respectively in Mānagaḍha, Dānagaḍha and Vilāsagaḍha; and Vṛṣabhānu's palace is located on Bhanugarh. In Siṅhapaura, there is the deity of Brahmāji to

whom devotees first offer their obeisances before moving on to offer respects to remaining of the forts.

The prayer mantra to offer obeisances while worshiping Radhā-Kṛṣṇa is:

namah priyāyai rādhāyai brahmano vara dāyine ।
sarveshta phala ramyāya rādhā kṛṣṇāya murtaye ॥ (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

'Obeisance unto Rādhārāṇī-Priya and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the granter of boon to Brahmā. By taking darśana of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa at this place, one's desires are fulfilled.

Here, Brahmā takes the form of a mountain to receive the dust of Rādhārāṇī's lotus feet. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes: Brahmāji desires the dust of anyone residing in Braja, the dust of those who have no one else but Lord Kṛṣṇa as their very life and soul. The dust hankered for by śrutis was thus attained by Brahmā with the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

tad bhūri-bhāgyam iha janma kim apy aṭavyāṁ
yad gokule 'pi katamāṅghri-rajo-'bhiṣekam ।
yaj-jīvitaṁ tu nikhilaṁ bhagavān mukuṇḍas
tv adyāpi yat-pada-rajaḥ śruti-mṛgyam eva ॥

"My greatest possible good fortune would be to take a birth whatsoever in this forest of Gokula with the privilege of bathing in the dust of feet of any of its residents whose entire life and everything of course is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Mukunda, the dust of whose lotus feet is still being searched for in the Vedic mantras."

(ŚB. 10.14.34)

Prayer Mantra to offer obeisances while observing Vṛṣabhānupura

mahī bhānu sutāyaiva kirtidāyai namo namah ।
sarvadā gokule vṛddhim prayaccha mama kānkshitām ॥

"Obeisance unto Vṛṣabhānu and Kīrtijī. May my aspirations be fulfilled in Gokula [Braja]." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

This village is surrounded by forests and groves such as Premavana, Manangitavana, Mayuravana, Gahvaravana, etc. Therefore the sakhīs, girl friends, request Lādalīji to shower Her loving grace upon Kṛṣṇa to fulfill His desire to always reside in Barsānā.

Bhanugarh

Mahārāj Vṛṣabhānu's most opulent palace was built on Bhānugarh, where Rādhā's appearance, childhood, and early adolescent pastimes were enacted.

yat prādurasti kṛpayā vṛṣabhānu gehe ।
syāt kinkari bhavitumeva mamābhilaṣah ॥ (Ra Su.Ni. 40)

I pray that birth after birth I may serve King Vṛṣabhānu's daughter, whose form is a shoreless ocean of nectar pastimes.

sa kacid vrishabhanu-veshmani sakhi-malasu balavalimaulih ।
khelati vishva-mohana-maha-sarupyam acinvati ॥

With unmatched beauty to captivate the world, the principle of all beautiful Braj Gopies, the undescribable Sri Radha plays with Her friends in the palace of King Vṛṣabhānu. (Ra.Su.Ni. 225)

nandigrame bruhatsanau karya rajyasthitistvaya ॥ (Bha.Ma.Ska,Pu. 1.38)

and from Vṛṣabhānupuraśataka:

jayatyaśeṣadbhuta mādhurīi sā -. purī vṛṣāttaskararājakasya ।
yannāma śṛnvannanunandasīīnur vṛjatyavasthām jadimābhidhānām ॥
(Vr.Pū.Sha.)

Barsānā is decorated with the sweetest enchanting palaces to proclaim victory over all other areas because by merely hearing its name, Kṛṣṇa faints in a loving trance.

Vṛṣabhānu Bhavana

The brilliance of Vṛṣabhānu's palace was purer than thousands of moon rays, which reached the distant palace of Mahārāj Nanda, where little Kṛṣṇa enjoyed playing; this brightness made Nanda's place glitter like a most dazzling diamond. The sentiment is that Kṛṣṇa should not suffer due to feeling any separation from Rādhā. Thus, the golden rays

of Bhanubhavana amazingly reached and covered Nandabhavana, which enabled Him to feel the constant company of Rādhā.

The present temple was renovated on five occasions. The earlier four structures remain adjacent to the present one. It is, however, not practical to narrate the histories of these temples in this book; the location of these temples is the same as in early times.

The greatness of Barsānā can be known from this verse in *Śrī Braja Bhakti Vilāsa* :

tato rādha priyam kṛṣṇam vākyam uche kṛtārtha kṛt ।
mama pitṛ pure tvam hi mayā saha pratishthatu ॥ (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

At this place, Rādhārāṇī said to Śyāmasundara that from Her father's village, Barsānā, the nectar of transcendental delight always overflows. Even for today the nectar continues to shower incessently! No place in the greater Braja can possibly rival such a splendor. Śrīji said, "Please live here at my father's village along with Me. Thus, Lord Brahmā will be graced by Your presence. My love would also be nourished." Therefore, Kṛṣṇa also lived in Barsānā though He covered Himself with feminine clothing to remain unnoticed. The great personalities mention that there are only a few places in the world where Kṛṣṇa can be seen in the form of a gopī. Barṣāṇa is one of these places where the Supreme Lord chooses to become a gopī in order to be intimately associated with Rādhārāṇī.

Appearance of Śrī Lādalīji

The present Deity of Śrī Lādalīji was established by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa in the month of July-August 1626. During that time, Śrī Bhaṭṭaji revealed many more deities. The devotees of Braja will always remain indebted to him for his constant loving labor in revealing the true and glorious identity of Braja and compiling priceless literatures.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa: An Exceptional Personality

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, one of the prominent Braja-ācāryas is one of these great personalities who revealed the spiritual form of Braja to the masses, which was even lying hidden from Mother earth. A scholarly Brahmin of Bhrigu lineage, Srivatsa Gotra and follower of Ṛg Veda lived in Madurapattam in southern India in the state of Andhra; He

was a staunch devotee of Kṛṣṇa and a follower of Madhvā lineage. His son was Raṅganātha whose life history is narrated in the Bhaviśyottara Purāṇa. Ranganāthaji's son was Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara. Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara begot two brilliant sons, Gopala and Nārāyaṇa. It is this Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, who later became an instrument in introducing Braja's glories to the common population. He was not an ordinary human being, but an incarnation of Nārada, the Lord's personal associate. He was also a manifestation of the expertise of Rañgadevī, one of the closest friends of Rādhārani. Being blessed with supernatural abilities, he composed Śrī Braja Bhakti Vilāsa, a priceless literature which is sufficient in itself to give a glimpse of his personality.

Glorification of Nārāyana Bhaṭṭa Goswāmi

Sri Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's birth added a glory to Lord Narasiṁha's appearance day in the month of April 1588. At the age of twelve, he completed his education from his father Shankar Bhaṭṭa. In 1602, he reached Braja and studied the confidential truths of the Vaiṣnava tradition from his spiritual master Brahmāchāri by living in his proximity. While exploring the holy places in Braja, he finished the unparalled book Śrī Braja Bhakti Vilāsa and in 1612, he completed another book, named *Brajotsava Chandrika*. Sri Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa revealed the deity of Radhārāni in 1626 on the second auspicious day of Ashādha. Sri Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa returned to the spiritual abode in the year 1700 on the appearance day of Lord Vāmana. In the words of Śrī Nabhaji, the creator Brahmā brought this exalted personality, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa from outside the realm of his creation to reveal the various places of pastimes mentioned in the conversation between Lord Varāha and Bhudevī (Mother Earth) in the Varāha Purāṇa.

In words of Sri Nābhāji:

brajbhūmi upasak bhatt so rachi pachi hari ekai kiyo ॥
gopya sthal mathura mandal jite varaha bakhaane ।
te kiye narayan pragat prasiddha pruthvi me jaane ॥
bhakti sudha ko sindhu sada satsang samaajan ।
param rasagna ananya krushna līlā kau bhajan ॥
gyaan smaarat pachchha ko naahin kou khandan biyo ।
brajbhūmi upaasak bhatt so rachi pachi hari ekai kiyo ॥

(Sri Nābhāji)

Sri Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa discovered this Brajabhumi, the land of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, which are exclusive to Lord Brahmā's creation; these unique pastimes of Braja are described in Varāha Purāṇa as a dialogue between Lord Varāha and Bhudevi.

Method of Revelation

Once, while he was bathing in river Godavari, Yugala Sarkāra, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa appeared and instructed him thus, "Bhaṭṭa, you must immediately proceed to Braja and uncover the places of our pastimes." While handing over to him the deity Ladileya, (baby Kṛṣṇa) They told him, "Please take with you this childlike form, who will reveal to you the confidential secrets of our Braja pastimes." After receiving these orders from Rādha and Kṛṣṇa, Bhaṭṭa immediately left for Braja. It took almost two and a half years before he could reach Govardhana. At this time, Madan Mohan, the deity of Sanātana Gosvāmī was also there; Sanātanaji and Kṛṣṇadāsa Brahmācārī were serving Him.

Madan Mohan had just been put to rest after having been offered rāja-bhoga (royal sumptuous offering), when Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa arrived at the temple. All of a sudden, the doors of the temple opened independently. The Lord personally initiated him in the Yugala-mantra while blessing him by keeping His hand on his head. Śrī Rādhikārāṇī also bestowed upon him devotion embued with pure love. When this discussion was going on, both Sanātanaji and Brahmācārī woke up and witnessed this divine union of the Lord with His devotee. The Lord directed Kṛṣṇadāsa to instruct Bhaṭṭa about the siddhantās (conclusive truths) contained in his sampradāya (disciplic succession). Bhaṭṭaji thus received the teachings of the Gaudya sampradāya.

As Bhaṭṭaji stayed in Braja absorbed in the mood of its worship, the Līlā Vihārī, Kṛṣṇa would personally come and reveal the sacred places (deities, kundas, forests). Sri Bhaṭṭa would then gather pure hearted children and have them enact the pastimes of the Lord pertaining to those places. Once, a few pilgrims were on their way to take a sacred dip in Triveṇī in the month of December (Māgha). Noticing that they were going out of Braja, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa spontaneously said, "Why are you leaving for other places of pilgrimage and dishonoring Triveṇī, which is also flowing here in Braja?" "Is there a Triveṇī in Braja?" asked the surprised pilgrims. Bhaṭṭa said, "Yes, it is in Śri Unchagaon." Sri Bhaṭṭa brought them all to

Unchagaon, and unearthed a small portion of land and showed the three streams of the hidden river Triveṇī. Triveni spoke to them, "Bhaṭṭa! From the day I was invited and given a place of residence in Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa by Hari Himself, I have never left Braja Dhāma. Since then, I have been flowing, freely wandering within Braja."

Once, Bhaṭṭa sang the glories of Braja in such a way that even Prayāga, the king amongst all the holy places was forced to bow down. The Brajavāsis also helped to reveal the pastime places. Thus impressed with such an exalted service, the King of Delhi, Akbar sent his finance minister, Todarmal, to offer all required assistance. Todarmal said, "Oh great soul! Is there any service that we can offer to help you?" Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa replied, "If you have an ardent desire to serve, then, please help to conserve the already manifested pastime places of the Lord in their original glories and beautify them." On receiving these nectarean instructions, Todarmal gladly renovated the holy places in a most elegant and artistic way.

Rādhārāṇī in Barṣāṇā and Dāujī in Unchagaon are the most devotedly worshiped deities amongst the deities revealed by Sri Bhaṭṭa. He served them with his own hands. Later, he was married as per his father's request and begot a son named Damodara. Vaiṣhṇavas bestowed upon him the title of Brajāchārya. Many Rāsa-līlās (pastimes of the highest ecstatic emotion) were enacted according to his desire at various places in Braja. After staying at Rādhā-kuṇḍa for twelve years, he spent the rest of his life in Unchagaon. A pilgrimage site of supreme importance revealed by Śrī Bhaṭṭa is Mānasī Gaṅgā. (*Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*, page 2)

Texts composed by Śrī Bhaṭṭa Ji

Braja Bhakti Vilāsa
Braja Dīpikā
Brajotsava Chandrika
Braja Mahodadhi
Brajotsava Hlādinī
Brihad Braja Gunotsava
Braja Prakash

He wrote these seven pieces of literature under the direction of Madana-Mohan, while residing at Rādhā-kuṇḍa in the holy association

of his Guru, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Brahmācārī. After moving to Unchagaon, he authored another 52 texts.

In Sanket Vat, Śrī Rādhā Ramanaji, the Lord Himself inspired him to write a commentary on the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. He then also composed the commentary entitled *Rasikāhaladini*. Sri Bhaṭṭa authored Premankur Nāṭaka, in which the dāna, mān, magrokani, nonk-jhonk, bhand-phorni, nikuñja-rachana, nikuñja-bhed and mataki-phod, and burahi pastimes, are described, which happened on the thirteenth bright day in Chiksoli, Barṣāṇā. Presently, both these important texts, i.e., Premankur Natak and Brihad Braja Gunotsava are unavailable. The primeval Vigrahas (deities) revealed by Śrī Bhaṭṭa are the following:

Śrī Lādalījī – Barṣāṇā
Śrī Dāujī – Unchagaon
Śrī gopīnathji - Khaira
Śrī Sanket Devī and Rādhāramanji – Sanket
Śrī Puorha Nath – Śeṣayī
Śrī Baladevaji – Dāujī
Śrī Caturbhujaji – Paintha
Śrī Mahāvidyā – Mathura

There are many more examples: Maha-Viṣṇu, Varāha Bhagavān, Ādi Badri, Kāmeśvara Mahādeva, etc. Śrī Lādalīyaji, his eternal companion, and worshipful deity is presently in Nīmrana, district Alwar in Rajasthan. Śrī Lādalīyaji is now lovingly served and worshiped by descendants of his paramparā.

Disciplic succession of Bhaṭṭa's Gurus

gosāin Sanatan ju madanmohan rūpa mathe
padharaye kahi seva nīki kījiye ।
janau kṛṣṇadāsa brahmacārī adhikari bhaye
bhaṭṭaśrī nārāyaṇa ju śishya kiye rījhiye ॥

(Sri Priyādāsa Ji)

This starts from Sriman Chaitanyadeva Mahāprabhu, whose disciple was Śrī Gadādhar Pandit, then Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Brahmacārī and from him Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa received initiation. The worship of Yugal Sarka, Rādhā-Krsna, is supreme in your sampradāya.

The entire Vaishṇava community is eternally grateful to Sri Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa for revealing the lost places of pastimes of Braja. For more details, one may refer to *Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Charitamrita*.

Rangili Gali

A mention of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa wedding līlā pastime appears in many scriptures. In the first part of Padma Purāṇa, a detailed account is given of Kṛṣṇa visiting Braja. After killing Dantavakra (an incarnation of Kumbhakarna, Rāvaṇa's brother), Kṛṣṇa came to meet the Brajavāsis. In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇa's arrival in Braja from Dvārakā is mentioned.

yarhy ambujākṣāpasasāra bho bhavān
kurūn madhūn vātha suhṛd-didṛkṣayā ।
tatrābda-koṭi-pratimaḥ kṣaṇo bhaved
raviṁ vinākṣṇor iva nas tavācyuta ॥

O lotus-eyed Lord, whenever You go away to Mathurā, Vṛindāvana or Hastināpura to meet Your friends and relatives, every moment of Your absence appears to us like millions of years. O infallible one, at that time our eyes become useless, as if bereft of sun. (ŚB. 1.11.9)

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī has sung of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's wedding in a scripture called *Gopāl Campū*. This wedding pastime has been sung in Harivilāsa līlā Tantra, Ādi Purāṇa, and Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa as well. After the wedding, Kṛṣṇa comes to Barṣāṇā for Holī , where Brahmā, Rudra, Sanakadi, Śukadeva, Nārada, and all His merry entourage accompany Him. Kāmadeva comes in the intriguing guise of a *kāminī*, an enchantingly beautiful maiden. Lalitā cleverly arranges Vṛṣabhānu's marriage with her. Queen Kīrtida (mother of Rādhā) also receives many gifts in this pastime. This unique *barāt* (marriage troupe) is described beautifully in the following verse:

Sāche swāgani sāji sabe samūh suhāyo ।
Chāri badan kau swāg chatur chaturānan lyāyau ॥
Ghūmat āyo indra swāg unmatta janāyoan ।
Dekhi nanda ke lāl gāl ghari jantra bajāyo ॥
Sanakādik chārayoni sajyoan sanyās suhāyo ।
Tathā vyās kau pūt dhūt shukadev banāyau ॥

***Mahādev paṭatār det yah paṭ ju machāyo* ।**
***Harī kau he bāvaroan su nārad nāchat āyau* ॥**
***Braj bīthinu ke bīchi kīch mean loṭ luṭāyoan* ।**
***Māyā ne pūtanā he le nārad dularāyo* ॥**
***Kām kāminī banyo sabani kau chitta churāyoan* ।**
***Gaṭhijorā vṛuṣhabhānu jān soan jāi karāyo* ॥**
***Lalitā jorī gāanṭhi bhān kean byāh rachāyo* ।**
***Pīt pichhorī tāanni rangīlo manḍap chhāyo* ॥**
***Naval ām ke maur kau maurī maur banāyo* ।**
***Nag nyauchhāvar kīnean kīrati kalash gharāyoau* ॥**
***Man kī bhāvari dīnī chit kau chauk purāyo* ।**
***Horī kī aṭhavārī kari dūlah ḍhularāyo* ॥**
***Nīkī banī barāt barātini ranga baḍhaāyoau* ।**
***Horī kī gārin kau shāṣhā chāri paḍhaāyo* ॥**

On Rangli Holi day, the friends and relatives of Lord Kṛṣṇa went from Nandagram to Barṣāṇā accompanied by demigods like Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, Nārada Muni, the four Kumāras, Śukadeva, and Indrā. Kāmadeva dressed up as Kamini and tried to steal everyone's hearts. All these exalted devotees used their talents to instil love and laughter to the people of Vṛndāvana.

Indrā, Śiva, and Brahmā came with their entourage; the celestial nymphs with Indrā; Goddess Durgā, Gaṇeśa and Skanda with Śiva; and Goddess Sarasvatī along with Brahmā. (Śṛ. Ra. Sā. 117)

savanaśas tad upadhārya sureśāḥ
śakra-śarva-parameṣṭhi-purogāḥ ।
kavaya ānata-kandhara-cittāḥ
kaśmalaṁ yayur aniścita-tattvāḥ ॥

"Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and other chief gods become confused upon hearing the sound of flute played by Kṛṣṇa. Although they are the most learned authorities, they cannot ascertain the essence of that music, and thus they bow down their heads and hearts." (ŚB. 10.35.15)

Kṛṣṇa also kindly bestowed upon the four Kumāras the privilege to witness this charming pastime. All the demigods join this procession in disguise by assuming funny forms.

(ŚB. 10.33.4, 19, 24 and 10.18.11 refer to this pastime)

A similar incidence happened at Śrī Rāmacandra's wedding. Lakṣmī and Pārvatī came in the guise of native women; "*kapat nāri bara besha banaii*" (Rā.Bā.Kā. 318), "*brahmādi suravara vipra vesha banāi"* (Rā. Bā.Kā. 319), and "*laha kauri gauri sikhāya Rāmahi siya sam sārad kahain*" (Ra.Ba.Ka. 317).

Brahmā and others came as Brāhmaṇas; Pārvatī tutored Śrī Rāma; and Sarasvatī was with Sītā guiding Them in the performance of the rituals. In Barsānā, the gods are attracted by these sweet pastimes. The next day after Rangīli Holī (playing with colors) comes Lathmār Holī (the unique holi of braj in which the gopīs are beating the gopas with sticks). The gopas of Nandgaon come to play Holi at Barṣāṇā and are beaten up by the gopīs with sticks. The gopas try to save themselves by using shields for their protection.

Many of our rasikā acharyas, the Vaiṣṇavas who are fully versed in the science of relishing the different mellows have given a vivid description of this glorious pastime where Kṛṣṇa very graciously accepted His defeat. One of the reasons for this pastime is that when a hero is acting in a shrewd and arrogant manner, only a stick can check such behavior!

By Mādhavadāsa:

ho ho bolat dolat Mohan khelat hori ।
bans liye gopī hāth bhare rang bhājan fori ॥
māra pari muri āya tike brajarāja ki pauri । (Mādhava Dāsa Ji)

There is a popular dhamār (a musical measure used in Indian classical music) by Śrī Vithal Dās ji. A dhrupad (a genre of Indian classical music) style song set in Dhamār tala, which has a specific pattern of 14, is sung at Holī , the spring festival of colors, depicting various antics of Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs. Here, the defeat of the hero imparts sweetness. Kṛṣṇa brings a garland of hār, flowers, for Śrīji and in return, Śrīji glorifies Kṛṣṇa with defeat [hār]! There is a popular dhamār by Śrī Syama Dāsa that beautifully brings out this bhāva (sentimental mood). This Holī is then celebrated in Nandagaon the next day, which will be described in the chapter on Nandagaon. A brief narration of this Holī is presented here.

Famous hori poetry By Vitthaldas

braj me hori rang badhyau ho ।
taba nandnandan fagua den misa pyari sanmukh āya ॥
mrugmat kesar aur argaja bhije ura laptāya ।
taba sakuchi gopī sab kanak lakut lai hātha ॥
pakaran dhāii chabile lāla ko khasat jhine patabhata ।
bhaage sakal sakhā sang ke tab mohan leene gher ॥
achan utha gayi le piya ko fir chitavat mukh fer ॥ (Sri Vitthaldasa ji)

In another song by Govardhaneshji

Kṛṣṇa getting defeated by Rādhārāṇī increases the (*rasa*) nectar. Sri Kṛṣṇa goes with a garland for Rādhārāṇī and she gives Him the garland of defeat in Hori to increase the nectar of *līlā*.

On 10th day its Hori for Nandgaon. Here is a short story.

Gopas gather at Pīli Pokhar and are planning:

"barṣāṇe chalo khelen holi barṣāṇe"

Let's go to Barṣāṇā and play Holi there! Why go to Barṣāṇā?

Because Lāla, Kṛṣṇa, lives there with Rādhārāṇī!

After reaching Barṣāṇā, they invite Rādhārāṇī to join them:

"darśana de nikas ata mein te"

May we have Your darshan from Your balcony!

Śrīji came to Her balcony. Nandalāla, Kṛṣṇa is standing below. Śyāmasundara's pichkari (spraying syringe) failed to drench Sriji with color due to the balcony's height. When the water doesn't reach her, He sends His loving glance as color of love to Her.

Rangīli Holī in Barṣāṇā is over 5,000 years old. The written proof can be found in *Garga-saṁhitā*. There were five Upanandas, prominent residents in Braja, who were prosperous, virtuous, and benevolent. They gave birth to lovely girls who became the close friends and followers of Rādhārāṇī in due course of time. In springtime, all the girls wanted to celebrate with colors. But how could they start the celebration? Rādhārāṇī was not in a festive mood! All friends, together, approached Rādhārāṇī and pleaded with Her, "O Rādhe! O lustrous beauty! O sweet Manini! Please listen, this is now the time for the Holī festival, the crest jewel of Braja, Nīlamani (resembling a blue sapphire) Nandalāla has come to your palace for celebrations and He is looking so gorgeous!

"O, Rādhe! Brajarāja, King of Braja is such a charming young lad. His enchanting eyes are dancing amidst His dark curly tresses, which are dangling over His lovely round cheeks. He is magnificently dressed, wearing a flowing yellow garment and golden inlaid anklets, which are tinkling so sweetly, and He is rapidly coming in the direction of Barṣāṇā. Yaśodā Maiyā has decorated Him with a glittering crown. His earrings are shining through His garland like adorning lightening in dark clouds! Holding a pichkāri in His hands, He is fully drenched in red color. O Radhe! He is waiting for you." Her friends requested Rādhā to drop Her displeasure and join the festivities. Nandadāsa blissfully sings this pastime of Holī . "O, Rādhe, it is a lovely moonlit night. How can You be sitting inside? O Rādhe! Groups of gopīs and gopas from all over Braja have gathered here."

Śyāmasundara finally reached Barṣāṇā and His eyes were moving here and there, desperately searching for Radha amongst the thousands of beautiful girls and boys, but in vain! Rādhārāṇī was not there! His eyes were filled with agony and He then secretly requested Viśākhā to bring Śrīji. Viśākhā instantly goes to Rādhā and pleads, "Śyāmasundara has come to Barṣāṇā, fully prepared for the festival. Now please do not delay. Let's go!" Śrīji smiles. Viśākhā joyously holds Her arm and takes Her along. Viśākhā prepares Śrīji for the celebrations by decorating Her with fashionable ornaments. Śrīji moved elegantly. Sublime was Her beauty and She looked like the glow of a blazing fire. The wind softly caressed Her and released a tress onto Her face, which caught on the pearl of Her nose pin. Nandadāsa says, "In order to catch a fish, the fisherman puts bait on the hook. Likewise, the loosened tress is stuck in the pearl of the nose pin, and the fish is caught! Who was the fish? Śyāmasundara's heart!

Śrīji moved around, surrounded by Her lovely friends, as if a moon traversed through a pond of lilies. Today, the moon has landed on earth! The Holī festivities began first by throwing gulāl (red color powder made of rose petals). Śyāmasundara's team was losing. To save His team from being defeated, Śyāmasundara deceptively sprayed color over Rādhārāṇī's eyes with His spraying syringe. This was not acceptable. It was clearly cheating. Rādhārāṇī was annoyed. Why was He so deceitful? Obviously, this was just designed to save Himself from defeat!

The game was disrupted. All the excitement and cheers vanished in an instant. The case was taken to Lalitā's court. Lalitā said, "Yes, Śyāmasundara has certainly cheated; He should be appropriately punished.

It is a common practice for Śyāmasundara, that whenever He is losing a game, He cheats" Śrīji was well aware of this devious trait of His. She was ever vigilant. That time also, when Śyāmasundara tried to sprinkle color with His spraying syringe, She stopped the spray with Her hand. Still, some of the spray streaked Her lovely face and enhanced Her sublime beauty all the more. Śyāmasundara's eyes immediately focused on this enchanting sight and He completely forgot the game! Realizing that, She became extremely displeased with His behavior, He tried to satisfy Her by asking for Her pardon, but She was not in a mood to forgive! Now look, what is the punishment pronounced by Lalitāji:

"Color His eyes with kajal (a black mascara preparation specially for lining the eyes). The kajal in Holī is not delicately applied but pasted very thickly! What a sweet revenge! Śrīji took kajal with two of Her fingers. She tries to apply kajal around His eyes. The moment She tried, He turned His head away. The fight was on, then, finally Śrīji holds Him with Her arm around His neck and applied kajal! After the kajal was applied on Kṛṣṇa, He presented His pataka (waistband) to Śrīji and returned back home. It was the rule that the loser in this event had to surrender their waistband.

When the gopīs from Barsānā go to Nandagaon for Hori, they are singing as follows:

***darśan de mora mukuta wāre darśan de* ।**

Canda suraja tero dhyāna dharat hain, dhyān dhare nau lakh tāre । gala baijanti mālā sohe, kānana mein kuṇḍāla ware ।

Give us your darśan (audience). You wear a crown with a peacock feather! The moon, sun and millions of stars also meditate on Your unique personality. The earrings in Your ears and the garland around Your neck made out of Vaijayanti flowers look very wonderful.

It is written that for the Rangīli Hori of Barsāṇā, Kṛṣṇa goes there and celebrates hori in complete delight. Is this the ecstasy which is derived from His youthful nature? No! It is something else. Actually, it is the most enchanting and vibrant arrogance of youth! The virtues and beauty of Rādhā fill Kṛṣṇa with pride and ecstasy.

"*laḍalo gori ke guṇa garvilo*"

This is a unique rasa (nectarean sentiment). Kṛṣṇa's eyes are dancing in ecstasy. His curly tresses also drop and dance on His shining cheeks, as fine chunari (apparel) would accompany a delicate maiden in her movements! In this way, Kṛṣṇa manifests His splendor and comes to

Barṣāṇā after wearing fascinating garments and golden inlaid anklets which ring melodiously. He is attractively bedecked with a crown on His head.

kanha dhare re mukut khele hori ।
utate āye kunvar kanhaiyā, itate rādhā gori ॥
fenta gulāla hātha picakāri, mārata bhara bhara jhori ।
'rasika govinda' abhirāma śyāma dhana juga jivo yaha jori! ॥
('Govinda')

There is one very beautiful poem that describes Kṛṣṇa's procession from Nandagaon going to Barsānā for Hori. All the other gods, Brahmā, Śiva, Śukadeva, Sanakadi and others enthusiastically join the 'bārāta'(procession) in colorful hori attire. The colorful celebration is beautifully depicted in "*Śṛingar rasa sāgar.*" This tradition is still followed in Barsānā.

On the eighth bright day of phalgun month, paṇdeji came with an invitation from Nandagaon. That day, the gopīs encircled paṇdeji and completely soaked him with pots and pots of colored water. Poor paṇdeji shouted, "Rādhe! Radhe! Help me! Save me from these Barṣāṇā's gopīs…!" Rādhārāṇī became compassionate and brought him to her palace and draped him with Her father's quilted coat. Ma Kirtī offered him hot milk and Pandeji sang Rādhārāṇī's glories with great happiness and satisfaction. He then went back to Nandagaon.

The next day, on 'Navami' or the ninth day, Śri Kṛṣṇa's procession went from Nandgaon to Barṣāṇā to play hori. In this procession, all demigods act funny and make merry.

There is beautiful bhajan in *Śṛingar rasa sāgar*,

"nandgaon ko pande braja barsane āyo ।
bhari hori ke bicha sajan samadhyane dhayau ॥….." (Śṛ.Ra.Sa.)

In this procession, in front, Brahmā's four heads shuffled and danced. On seeing this funny display, all the Brajavāsis delightfully enjoyed and joked, "Who is this four headed comic! After all, a four-headed man can never look handsome. How can any maiden love such a man? To which head would she talk, the front, the right, the back or the left one?" Next to Brahmā was Indrā, making funny sounds like a mad man. Everyone began to laugh as this was Kṛṣṇa's glorious procession! Sri Śukadeva Ji,

who is sixteen years old and extremely beautiful walks naked leading the procession! Mahādeva started beating wildly upon his ḍamaru (drum). Nārada frantically rolled in the sublime dust of Braja. Māya, Kṛṣṇa's illusory potency also joined the celebration in the guise of Pūtanā. Previously, Pūtanā had taken a very attractive form, but this Pūtanā came as a full-sized giant, and lifted Nārada in her lap like an infant! See, when Kṛṣṇa was small, just about six days old, Pūtanā took a correspondingly charming form. On this day she was also proportionate to Nārada's size, and was big enough to be holding him in her lap! So, this is the Holī procession of Thakurji!

In *hori ki barat*, all the gods have come to participate:

sanche swangani saji sabia samuha ॥
chari badankau swanga chatura chaturanan lyayau । (Śṛ.Ra.Sā)

There is one more Hori pastime during which Kṛṣṇa came to Barsānā on Vasanta Panchami (spring festival) day in the guise of a yogī. Kṛṣṇa wore a lion-skin blanket and came alone, smeared with bluish ashes all over Himself and blew on His conch shell in Barsānā.

"bāghambar odhe sānvaro"

Kṛṣṇa wrapped around lion-skin.

Sensing that all the gopīs along with Rādhārāni were approaching, He sat in padmāsana (lotus position) and shut His eyes as if He was in samādhi (deep meditation). Śrīji says, "Look, how beautiful is this yogī. It appears that Nārada himself is here! He is also having a kamandalu (water pot)." One gopī commented, "Look, beneath is a deer skin and above a lion skin!" A second gopī said, "His eyebrows are very shapely!" A third one suggested, "Let us ask Him where He came from" All of them came closer and together addressed Him, "Bābājī , *pranām* (obeisance) to You. One gopī inquired, "Mahārāj, can you tell us where you came from?" A second gopī asked, "And where do you go from here?"

Yogīrāja was silent and did not move. All the gopīs began talking. One of them said, "This *mahātmā* (saint) looks great!" Another one commented, "He appears to be in deep *samādhi*." Once again, they loudly shouted, "Yogīrāj! Mahārāj! Where did you come from?" Slowly opening His eyes, He answered, "I have come from the south." "Oh! He is coming

from Girirājaji's side. Girirāja is south from here!" Kiśorīji showed a sarcastic smile and said, "Yogīrājaji, Bābās usually live in forests; if you could not live there, why have you become a yogī? Why should you put a yogī's form to shame? Blowing on a conch shell, roaming in the streets of Barṣāṇā, and wandering door to door are not really the conduct of a *tapasvī* (mendicant)."

All the gopīs burst out laughing and proudly proclaimed, "O yes, just see, our glorious Rādhārāṇī is proficient in all the 64 arts." Rādhā further added, "Yogīs apply ashes on their body, but instead, you have smeared this fragrant sandal powder! Is there any connection between yogīs and cosmetics? Look, with such delicate and tender limbs, according to My mind, it appears as if Goddess Bhagavati has come herself in the guise of this yogī! Moreover, yogīs are serious and equipoised, but He is becoming disturbed simply by hearing the sound of our anklets! While watching us approach, He is pretending to be meditating."

The gopīs spoke in unison, "Yes Rādhe, you are right. He is not a yogī but a bhogī (worldly man) and unsteady. You have revealed His treachery." Yogīrāja was by then in a hurry to run away as soon as possible. The longer He stayed, the more He would be disgraced. He could not even get angry, as He would be ridiculed again; yogīs should never get angry. Forgiveness and compassion are the basic characteristics of a saint. Yogīrāja said, "Though you are making fun of Me, I do not mind. I forgive you. Take this *prasādam*." He gave them ashes as *prasādam* and left. But, in doing so, Kṛṣṇa took their hearts with Him! All the gopīs, charmed by this resplendent yogī, were wishing for His presence once again.

There is one more pastime mentioned in garg-samhita madhurya-khand where Kṛṣṇa came in the garb of a yogī. One of Rādhārāṇī's friends asked Him, "Who are You?" "I am a *siddha* (saint). My name is Siddha Yogī," the yogī replied. The gopīs enquired, "Where do You live?" The yogī said, "I live in the Māna Sarovara (lake) in the Himālayas." The gopīs asked, "Mahārāj, shall we bring some food for you?" The yogi replied, "I do not eat anything; I live without food." The gopīs exclaimed in wonder, "If you are performing such austerities, then you surely must have some siddhi!" The yogī said, "Yes, I have been granted with *divya-drishti* (divine vision)." One gopī enquired, "What is the benefit of such a siddhi?" The yogī said, "I can see past, present and future!" On hearing this, all the gopīs came closer. One of them asked, "Mahārāj, do You know any tantra (yogīc power to fulfill one's material desires) also?" I know

everything, "uccatana, mohinī, mārana, mana-vaśikarana…(these are names of various siddhis/yogīc powers)."

A gopī boldly asked, "Then tell me, Mahārāj, what is in my mind?" He closed His eyes and said, "I cannot tell you this in public! I will whisper this secret in your ear." Immediately, the gopīs concluded that He is as truthful as Nārada. They were all bound with Kṛṣṇa-prema (love for Kṛṣṇa), and such a thing could not be proclaimed openly! They said, "All right, we accept that you are a siddha. Now tell us one more thing. Can You call anyone to come here simply by wishing for it?" The yogī said, "Yes, Should I call for a man, god or goddess? Whom shall I call?" Then gopīs shyly said, "Then call that One who is always in our minds!" The yogī said, "Oh! This is a very difficult task. Let Me try. Now, you close your eyes. As soon as I clap My hands, open your eyes." All the gopīs closed their eyes. Upon hearing the clap, they opened their eyes and lo! Kṛṣṇa was standing right in front of them, smiling.

Mayura Kuti
Prayer Mantra for ('Darsana') audience of Mayura Kuti

kiritine namastubhyam mayura priyavallabha ।
suramyāye mahā kutye śikhandi padaveśmane ॥ (ā.vā.pu,)

"We offer our obeisance unto thee, Mayura-kuti, who is loved by the peacocks and by Kṛṣṇa, whose crown is adorned with a peacock feather."

Mayura-kuti is located a little further from Dāngarh on the same hillock. Many pastimes took place here. Once, both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa danced like peacocks. In order to please Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa took the form of a peacock and began to dance. Attracted by this peculiar peacock, Rādhā said, "O dear peacock, my beloved dances exactly like you!" After hearing this, peacock revealed himself saying "I am your beloved one and none other" Both smiled and happily united started dancing as peacock couple. In another pastime, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa chose Their favorite peacocks and organized a dance competition. Both competed for their candidate's victory! There are many such pastimes connected with Mayura Kuti.

Prayer Mantra for Rasa Mandal at Mayura Koti

namah sakhi sametāya rādhā kṛṣṇayate namah ।
vimalotsava devāya braja mangal hetave ॥

"We offer our prostrations to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their entire entourage." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

jahan mora kācha bāndhe nritya karata । (Kelimāl 14)
hoda pari morani aru syāma hi ॥ (Kelimāl 82)
nāchat morani sang syāma mudita syamahi rijhāvata ॥ (Kelimāl 96)

Śri Gahvaravana

The small valley between Mayur Kuti and Māna Mandir peaks is known as Gahvaravana, the perennial abode of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their eternal pastimes.

Prayer Mantra for Gahvaravana

gahvarākhyāya ramyāya kṛṣṇa leelā vidhāyine ।
gopī ramana saukhyāya vanāya ca namo namah ॥ (Bṛhannāṛadiya)

"O attractive Gahvaravana, many of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes take place here and bestow great happiness upon Kṛṣṇa, who freely wanders here with the gopīs, we offer our obeisance unto you!"

Respectful greeting mantra for Gahvaravana

yatra gahvarakam nāma vanam dwanda manoharam ।
nitya keli vilāsena nirmitam rādhayā swayam ॥ (Vṛ. Pu. Śa)

Nitya-vihāra refers to a place where there is no separation, not even for a moment. It is recognized as *nitya-vihāra* because Rādhārāni has made Gahvaravana with her own hands during various *keli-vilasa* (pleasant pastimes).

The *upāsanā* (practice) in svakīya (relationship within the marital bond) is different from parakīya (relationship between lovers). In

the *svakīya* relation, the bride mostly feels separation from her beloved husband on account of going to her parent's house. In the parakīya relation, the endeavor to attain union with her beloved is full of obstacles and with rare chance of meetings, thus creating an almost permanent state of separation.

Our perseverance in the endeavor to conquer countless obstacles to serve the person we love, is one of the symptoms of true love. The followers of svakīya practice, desire the constant union of the Divine Couple. They cannot tolerate even a moment of *parakīya* sentiment in their *upāsanā* (practice, meditation). This is called ananya upāsanā. This is the reason that the rasikās (one who is relishing the highest ecstasy of devotional mellows) in Gahvarvana, glorify nitya milan (eternal union), in their compositions, based on their personal experiences, where the existence of the Divine Couple is so interdependent, delicate, and sublime that even a momentary separation is most intolerable.

However, without this feeling of separation, there cannot be a deep appreciation of the blissful upcoming union, this too holds true. Thus, the rasikās have sung about this subtle form of viraha (pain of separation) here. This viraha helps to enhance the thirst for union while in the state of oneness.

yoge viyukta vanmani lalitaikaśrayam svayam /
m karunaśakti sampurnam gauram Neelam ca gahvare ॥ (Vṛ. Pu. Śa)
viyojyate viyuktam van a kadapi viyokshyate /
ha kshanarddha satkotiyugam yugalam tat gahvare // (Vṛ. Pu. Śa

In Gahvaravan, divine couple feels millions and millions of years just like a moment in thirst of love for each other. In *Śrīmad Radha Sudha Nidhi* which is the ocean of Rādhārāṇī's pastimes, svakīya and parakīya are all presented according to individual belief, but true devotees respect all paddhatis and just relish the divine love. Only people with dirty minds spend time in arguments against different *paddhatis*.

In *Radha Sudha Nidhi,* 253, it is mentioned that what to say of separation, even a semblance of separation burns within Yugal

Sarkār like a calamitous fire. Such is the intensity of Their love, where even a thought of tenuous separation is enough to arouse the utmost desire to express Their love for each other. At times, even while experiencing union, they have the feeling of unison and separation at the same time. (Ra.Su.Ni. 146, 126). The critics of both approaches for svakīya and parakīya accept Lakṣhmī, Pārvatī, Indranī, and others as expansions of Rādhikā. Since in tattva (reality), there is no difference between Them; all these forms are connected with Rādhikā, either as part or as a whole. Hence, there is no reason to be bewildered by the innumerable female forms who are participating in Rādhā's countless pastimes.

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 10.33.26, a bold declaration is made: *sarvāh śarat kavyakathā rasāśrayāh*, implying that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are relishing all varieties of experiences and sentiments whether it is *svakīya*, *parakīya* or *nityadampatya*.

Undoubtedly, Śrīji participates in many sports in the arbors, gardens, and ponds of Barṣāṇā. Within the Gahvarvan forest, is Śrī Rādhā Sarovara, the place of Her childhood and adolescent pastimes. Rādhā Sarovar, is the place where the participating yatris (pilgrims) of Sri RadhaRani Braj Yatra make a *saṅkalpa* (resolve). Rādhārāṇī and Her friends conduct various pastimes here, hence the name 'Rādhā-*sarovara*' or 'Rādhāsara'.

Prayer Mantra for snāna (bathing) and ācamana (sipping) from 'Rādhāsara'

deva krutartha rupāye śrī rādha sarase namah ।
trailokya pada mokshāya ramya tirthāya te namah ॥ (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"O, most beautiful place of pilgrimage, to you even the gods are grateful! As You have the power to grant salvation to the entire three planetary systems, we offer our respects to You!"

Prayer Mantra for Sri Rāsa Mandala

vilāsa rāsa kreedāya kṛṣṇāya ramaṇāya cha ।
daśa varṣa swarupāya namo bhānupure hare ॥ (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"We offer our salutations to Kṛṣṇa who is ten years old and comes to Barsānā for His pastimes."

Some *granthas* like *Kelimaal* and *Hit Chaturasi*, umongst others, contain so many poems with beautiful lyrics referring to Gahvarvana that we cannot add all of them here in English. However, one can get from original Hindi book.

Childhood and Adolescent Pastimes

One day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa started from Nandgaon and searched for Śrī Rādhā while She was playing in Gahvarvan. Upon arrival, He met Lalitā, who asked Him, "O Nanda-lāla, why have You come here?" Kṛṣṇa replied, "Lalitāji, I have come to meet Rādhā." Teasingly Lalitā said, "You cannot meet Her today!" Kṛṣṇa asked, "Why not?" Lalitā answered, "Because She is not here, She is in Her palace!" Such were Lādalīji's friends; they talked jokingly with this crooked Thakur! Rasikās thus wrote:

hama hai rādhe ju ke bala abhimāni ।
ṭedhe rahe Mohan rasiya son, bolata aṭapaṭa bāni ॥
(Bharatendu Hariscandra)

Lalitā ji said, "Kiśoriji is not coming now."

In response to this, Kṛṣṇa said, "Since you are calling Me *chora* (thief, deceiver), you should know that you cannot deceive a *chora*. Your tricks will not work on Me!" Lalitā then said, "Well, I am not trying to deceive You." Kṛṣṇa said, "Look friend, Rādhā is coming." Lalitā inquired, "How do You know?" Kṛṣṇa sweetly replied, "When Kiśorīji comes, Her aroma permeates the air. This fragrance reveals Her proximity. How can you cover the moon with your hands? I am fully aware of your tricks. So Śrīji comes here to play with Her dear friends." These are the same trees, vines, and creepers of Gahvarvana in their same original form. As Rādhārāṇī approaches Gahvarvana, Her fragrance is carried by the wind and it reached Kṛṣṇa, Who felt blessed by relishing this scent! Not only greatly fortunate, but eternally sanctified! Kṛṣṇa, Who is Param Brahmā Himself felt fully satisfied and complete only after meeting Rādhārāṇī.

This Gahvarvana is of a great significance because Rādhārāṇī decorated these groves with Her own lotus hands for Their eternal pastimes. A seat of Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhāchārya is found in Gahvarvana. Śaṅkha-śilā (stone in form of a conch shell) can be seen here. One day, the gopas expressed their wish to see the conch shell; Krsna fullfilled their request, blew the conch and put it back on the rock. It was due to this act that the Shila took the form of a conch. Later Krsna ate butter and rubbed His hands on this rock which made its texture smooth and glossy.

There are 108 seats in total throughout Braja from where Mahaprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya propagated devotional service. From the seat in Gahvarvana, our revered Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhāchārya ji recited the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 108 times. Upon reaching that place, he witnessed a bizarre sight; innumerable ants were devouring a python. Responding to the curiosity raised by his disciples, he explained in this way: those, who pose as sādhus (saints) and misappropriate providential funds for the fulfillment of their personal desires, are thus heavily punished by Providence!

***harahi śiṣya dhana śoka na harahi, te guru ghora naraka me parahi* ।**

This python was a mahanta (spiritual director), who used the money meant for spreading the Lord's Name, to sattisfy his own desires. He has, therefore, fallen into this predicament by taking birth as a snake. Now his disciples are thriving on his flesh as ants. Everyone should be very careful about this point. Deceiving others and coveting other people's wealth are most serious and unpardonable sins.

The narration of such an incidence appears in *Vaiṣṇava Vartas* 252 (stories of 252 vaishnavas), affirming this point. Śyāma Dāsa was a very dear and sincere disciple of Gosāin Śrī Vithalnātha. One day Lāladāsa, a Brahmin came to Gosāinji with a request. He said, "Mahārāj, my mind is very flickering. What shall I do?" Gosāinji replied, "You should go and simply render service to Śyāma Dāsa for one year." Thus, Lāladāsa very obediently began to live with Śyāma Dāsa to serve him.

One day, Śyāma Dāsa expressed his desire to travel to a distant place. Lāladāsa immediately prepared for the journey to accompany his master. On their way, after walking a long distance, they reached a village where a Vaiṣhṇava devotee was conducting a feast for 500 devotees. The organizers invited these two also to take prasādam. They took their seats and the

moment the plates were offered to them, Śyāma Dāsa immediately got up from his seat and left! In that plate, instead of food, he saw hundreds of worms! He felt the Lord in his heart dictating him: "ShyamDas you should not accept this offering because it is obtained by commiting the terrible act of trading a girl. Even I have not accepted this offering."

It was obvious that God did not accept that food. But, Lāladāsa did not pay attention to his master's behavior. Instead, he ate the food until his belly was full, all the while offensively thinking that his master did not behave properly by rejecting the prasādam and insulting so many Vaiṣhṇavas. Later, Lāladāsa rejoined his master for further travels, but Śyāma Dāsa would not talk to him anymore. One year passed, and both of them met their Holy master, Śrī Vithalnathji. Being quite disturbed, Lāladāsa anxiously requested, "Jai, Jai! Please answer my one query."

"As we were traveling, one day, I saw Śyāma dāsa rejecting Mahaprasādam and not honoring the request of so many Vaiṣṇavas. Was his action proper or not?" Gosāinji replied thus: "Lāladāsa, you have disobeyed my instruction as well as that of Śyāma Dāsa. I have asked you to follow and serve him for one full year. You have disobeyed us both and followed the words of those Vaiṣhṇavas. The food that you ate was obtained by sinful means, definitely not worthy of being offered to Thakurji. Now, you have to serve Śyāma Dāsa for two more years to become worthy of receiving Thakurji's grace!"

This is the result of accepting food contaminated with sin. Therefore, we should always be very cautious while accepting food from others. This issue of sanctified, pure food has been dealt with in detail, not only in *Varta*, but in many other places. For example, in *Bhakta-māla*, there is a mysterious and significant incident from the life of Tulasidāsji, author of *Rāmacharita Mānasa*. It is written that one time, after performing pradakṣina (circumambulation) of Kamadgiri in Chitrakoot, he came to Lakṣhmaṇa Pahadi. He witnessed a unique scene there. A white snake was resting on the path and was trying to say something, "Santa darasa te pātaka taraii"

Simply by seeing Tulasidās, the snake was freed from his immense suffering. It began to speak, "O Mahāmuni! Kindly bless me with your Holy touch." Instantly, by contact with Tulsidāsaji, he transformed into a saint. Tulasidāsji asked, "Holy man, who are you?" The holy man replied, "I am known by the name Yoga Śrīmuni." Tulasidās further inquired, "How did you become a snake?" The holy man said, "Since I misused the

funds collected for the service of the Lord and the saints, I fell into this lower birth." Misuse of wealth incidentally guarantees entry into hell.

"paradhana nava jhale hāth re" (one should never touch other's wealth)

sadā santuṣṭa-manasaḥ sarvāḥ śivamayā diśaḥ ।
śarkarā-kaṇṭakādibhyo yathopānat-padaḥ śivam ॥

"For one, who is ever contended in mind, there is happiness everywhere. Just like a person who has suitable shoes on his feet, there is no danger even when he walks on pebbles and thorns. For him, everything is auspicious." (ŚB. 7.15.17)

santuṣṭaḥ kena vā rājan na vartetāpi vāriṇā ।
aupasthya-jaihvya-kārpaṇyād gṛha-pālāyate janaḥ ॥

"My dear King, a self-satisfied person can be happy even with only drinking water. However, one driven by the senses, especially by the tongue and genitals, must accept the position of a household dog to satisfy his senses." (ŚB. 7.15.18)

puṁso 'yaṁ saṁsṛter hetur asantoṣo 'rtha-kāmayoḥ ।
yadṛcchayopapannena santoṣo muktaye smṛtaḥ ॥

"This discontentment with wealth and sense-enjoyment is the cause for the continuation of material life, which is full of repeated birth and death. But one who is satisfied by that which is obtained by destiny is fit for liberation from this material existence." (ŚB. 8.19.25)

yadṛcchā-lābha-tuṣṭasya tejo viprasya vardhate ।
tat praśāmyaty asantoṣād ambhasevāśuśukṣaṇiḥ ॥

"The glory of a brāhmaṇa grows who is satisfied with whatever is providentially obtained. Through discontent however it disappears, as fire diminishes in potency when water is sprinkled upon it."
(ŚB. 8.19.26)

It is stated that people with such low and degraded propensities are condemned like a dog! And if one is content with one's own self, then

radiance, fame and prosperity grows within him! Discontentment leads to depreciation of one's virtues. In the fourth volume of *Bhakta-māla*, the character of Śrī Mādhava dāsa enlightens us on this issue. Therefore, one should always exercise caution. This is a very significant and crucial point, and so, it is stressed here.

Lord Himself says:

pratigrahaṁ manyamānas tapas-tejo-yaśo-nudam ।
anyābhyām eva jīveta śilair vā doṣa-dṛk tayoḥ ॥

"A brāhmaṇa who considers that accepting charity from others will destroy his austerity, spiritual influence and fame should maintain himself by the other two brahminical occupations, namely teaching Vedic knowledge and performing sacrifice. If the brāhmaṇa considers that those two occupations also compromise his spiritual position, then he should collect rejected grains left by the owner of agricultural fields after reaping the crop." (ŚB. 11.17.41)

According to the author of *Braja Bhakti-Vilāsa*, there are two mountains in Barṣāṇā: Brahmā and Viṣṇu. On the Viṣṇu mount, Vilāsagarh is located. At the juncture of the two is Sankari Khora, where the dadhi-dāna (collecting taxes) pastime took place. Sankari means narrow and Khor/gali means lane. All ācāryas, holy masters, scholars, have sung the līlās of Sankari Khor: e.g., in Hit Chaturasi, verse 49. An ashtachhāp poet, Śrī Paramananda ji has beautifully sung this pastime. (Paramananda Sagar pad 273).

Prayer Mantra for Sankari Khora:

dadhi bhajan shirsastāh gopīkāh kṛṣṇa rundhitah ।
tāsām gamā gamau sthāno tābhyam nityam namascharet ॥

"We offer obeisance daily to this place, where the gopīs regularly traverse, with pots of curd on their heads and where Kṛṣṇa blocks their way." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

Sankari gali is a lane, where the gopīs, carrying pots of curd on their heads, can only cross one at a time, since the passage is narrow. Here,

Śyāmasundara charged dāna (tax or toll) from them. He, with His battalion of friends, tried to collect the tax! What was that tax? It was curd! Sometimes they requested for it, sometimes they looted it and at other times they ask for it. The side, named after Rādhārāṇī, on which She would sit, is lighter in color compared to the adjoining one, where Śyāmasundara would sit, which is called Śyāma pahadi (dark hillock).

First, one comes to Rādhā's umbrella, next is Kṛṣṇa's umbrella and then Mansukha's umbrella. This is where the pastime of collecting taxes took place. Kṛṣṇa and His friends came from Nandagaon to collect curds from the gopīs of Barṣāṇā. The gopīs once tied their chotis, locks. On top, Kṛṣṇa was tied and down below was Mansukha, who called aloud, "O Kānāi! Please quickly come and help me, these gopīs have tied my hair." Śyāmasundara called back, "O, buddy! How can I help you? I am also tied." The gopīs then also tied all His other friend's locks, so that they could not untie each other. The gopīs made it very clear to them that no one was going to help them. They had to fully surrender to Rādhārāṇī, only She could grant them freedom. Śyāmasundara and all of His friends surrendered to Śrīji, whose heart melted on seeing Śyāmasundara in agony, and on Her order, the gopīs released them. However, the gopīs felt that the cowherd boys were entitled to this kind of treatment on account of their naughtiness. (Hit Chaturasi, pada 49, 59, Kelimāl, pada 62)

The daan-lila pastime is enacted here on the third day after Rādhāṣṭami, i.e. Ekadāsī day, and on Trayodaśī day, two days after Ekadāsī, Mataki-phod pastime is celebrated. The pastime happened as follows. One day, all the gopas accompanied Kṛṣṇa from Nandagaon to Sankari gali. Śrīji and Her sakhīs came with their pots of curd towards Sankari gali.

Śyāmasundara inquires, "Where are you going with these pots of curd?" The gopīs, rather than answering the question, asked a counter-question, "Does this curd belong to your father? We may carry our pots of curds anywhere, it is none of your concern."

Śyāmasundara walked along with them, gossiping very sweetly. As they came near Chiksoli village, He understood that the gopīs were not going to give Him any curd, so He naughtily broke their pots. This pastime took place at Śyāma umbrella. This spot is still smooth and greasy from the spilled curd and it is a significant place of that pastime.

At Sankari khor, the marks of Kṛṣṇa's hand and stick, which are over 5000 years old, are still clearly visible. This location is most famous for the pastime of collecting taxes, though similar pastimes occurred at other places also. Two other places are also famous, Dāna Ghāṭi in Govardhana and Vaṁśīvat in Vṛindāvana. Sankari khor is best known for this pastime, and since the same pastime is enacted here year after year, the hand and stick markings bring this divine pastime to life. Five days after the Rādhāṣṭami celebrations, the Gosvāmīs from Nandagaon come to Barṣāṇā to sing the glorious pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

"barasāno asala sasurāla hamāro nyāro nāto" ।

Barṣāṇā is Kṛṣṇa's in-laws's house. His relationship with this place is unique. On the day of Rangīli Holī , this ancient connection between Nandagaon and Barṣāṇā becomes all the more apparent. Nanda-lāla comes to His in-laws (Vṛṣhabhānu's house) to celebrate Holi. The gopīs beat Him with sticks and profusely abuse Him. In turn, He happily accepts the beating and enjoys the chastisement. The Gosvāmīs from Nandagaon come to Barṣāṇā Temple every year and the women here collectively beat them, and they in turn applaud them, asking for further abuses! This is the unique loving pastime of this place. They gladly take the beating, jumping, dancing, and asking for more! Such is the bonding between Barṣāṇā and Nandagaon.

Dāna līlā of Sānkari Khora

While reading of or listening to this pastime with absolute attention, we can personally experience this event within our heart. The gopīs went towards Sankari khor with curd laden pots on their heads and came across Kṛṣṇa. They became so attracted at first sight, and lost their hearts to Him. They delightfully talked like this:

One gopī asked another gopī, "Well! It appears to me that you have sold your heart, to whom and at what price?"

She replied, "Nanda-nandana has bought me for free! I have written off all my possessions to Him: my wealth, body, mind, soul; everything belongs to Him now. When I was going through Sankari-Khor, I saw a dark blue boy with charming eyes like a blue lotus, wearing a yellow pitambara (garment). He abruptly jumps up and stands in My way. I blush and He

suddenly lifts my veil! He asks my husband's name and also my father's." This gopī was unable to speak, blushing, and, Śyāma lifted her veil!

This gopī further said, "The whole world is just like poison for me since the day I first saw Him. Where to go, what to do, I do not know. Day in and day out, wherever I look, I see Him only. At home, my mother and sister-in-law worry about my failing health. They called a doctor for me. The doctor observed my pulse and found that my only ailment is the presence of an intense desire in my heart! I will present a sapphire to whomever can unite me with my beloved Śyāmasundara, I will give him all my wealth."

This is the same Braja. Most mysteriously, Kṛṣṇa keeps on appearing. This is why people keep coming to Braja. People are searching for God everywhere. Here, God is searching everywhere for the gopīs and the bhaktas (devotees). This is the same Braja.

There is one more very sweet pastimes of Sankari khor. One day, Rādhārāṇī was sitting in Her home, in Vṛṣabhānu's palace. Lalitā and Viśākhā came to see Her and said, "O Lādalī! Nanda-nandana, whom you remember day and night regularly visits Barṣāṇā! He is very beautiful and possesses the sweetest charm." Rādhārāṇī immediately asked, "How do you know that I think of Whom? Love is always secretly kept in the innermost chamber of one's heart."

Lalitā and Viśākhā laughed and said, "We know this well."

Śrīji was shy but asked, "Then tell Me, who is that person that I always think about?"

Immediately, they drew a lovely portrait of Kṛṣṇa and showed it to Śrīji. Śrī Lādalīji, holding the picture in Her hands, said, "both of you are my intimate friends. I can hide nothing from you."

Once while gazing at the picture without blinking, lying on Her bed, lost in His thoughts, She falls into the sweet lap of a deep sleep. She then experienced a wonderful dream. At Bhāṇḍiravana, on the lovely banks of the Yamunā, Kṛṣṇa was dancing. She was enjoying the blissful scene, but abruptly, the dream ended, and She opened Her eyes. Not finding Kṛṣṇa by Her side filled Her heart with great sadness. At the same time, Lalitā entered Her room, and asked Her to open the window and look down onto the path. As She looked in that direction, Her eyes met with the soothing sight of Her beloved Kṛṣṇa, standing in the Sankari gali. She was informed that Kṛṣṇa visit this street daily. Śrīji looked down from the window of Her palace and She saw Kṛṣṇa standing under His umbrella at Sankari khor.

She immediately got stunned and fainted, enchanted by His beauty. As soon as She regained Her consciousness, She said to Lalitā, "What have you shown Me! How can I be hold Myself back now?"

Lalitā went to Kṛṣṇa and invited Him to come to the palace to meet Śrīji. Kṛṣṇa gladly accepted the invitation.

Kṛṣṇa says sweetly, "O Lalite! The love which has developed between Śrīji and I at Bhandiravana is most marvelous! There is no difference between the two of Us just as milk and its whiteness are inseparable. Only those with a pure heart have complete faith in this truth.

Śaṅkara tells the same thing in *Sammohan Tantra*:

gaura tejo bina yastu shyāmam tejah samarchayet |
japed va dhyāyate vāpi sa bhavet pātaki shive || (Śankar Ji)

"Hey Pārvatī! Those who worship Kṛṣṇa without Rādhārāṇī are condemned as they could never gain the privilege to serve Him."

Garga Saṁhitā Vṛndavana Khanda Chapter 13

Lalitā rushed to Chandranana and asked Her to perform a rite by which Kṛṣṇa can be tamed! Chandranana reminds them the glory of tulasī worship as explained by Rsi Garga. Rādhārāṇī worships tulasīji from Aśvinī-pūrṇimā till Kārtika-pūrṇimā with the blessings of Garga Ṛṣi. Tulasīji, pleased with Her worship, appears and embraces Her saying, 'O Rādhey! You will unite with Śrī Kṛṣṇa very soon.' Just about then, Kṛṣṇa went to Vṛṣabhānu's palace in the guise of a Braja-gopī, who appeared most mystical, wearing exquisite ornaments, with an unprecedented beauty, and a delicate flower garland tied onto Her well-braided hair. This gopī form of Kṛṣṇa has been described by Garga Ṛṣi. Sriji's palace was walled from all sides and the gates were guarded. As no man had access to the palace, Sri Krsna cleverly took the form of a gopī. On entering this majestic fortress, He observed that many gopīs were expertly playing on various musical instruments, creating superb melodies for the pleasure of Rādhārāṇī. Celestial flowers, vines and creepers were all vibrant and pleasingly fill the whole palace with an amazing fragrance while the birds were blissfully chanting Srimati Rādhārani's name. Rādhārāṇī was walking around and when She saw this attractive and charming gopī, She immediately called Her and invited Her to come and sit with Her. Rādhārāṇī embraced the

Gopi and asked, "When did you come to Braja? I have never seen such beauty before! That place is blessed, where a maiden like You live. Please come here daily. You have a very close resemblance to Kṛṣṇa." Śrīji could not figure out Her true identity; this was a mysterious pastime. Śrīji said, "I do not know why, but I feel more and more attracted to You! Please sit close to Me."

Sitting next to Rādhārāṇī, this gopī said, "O, Rādhey! I live north from here (Nandagaon is north of Barṣāṇā) and My name is Gopadevī. I have heard a lot about Your beauty, so I came here to see You in person. Your palace looks so majestic with all these fragrant flowers and decorations." After this formal introduction, both began to play with a ball unaware of the passage of time. When twilight had already come! Gopadevī said, "It is late now and I have to go back home. I will come again tomorrow." The moment She got ready to leave, Rādhārani's heart skipped a beat. With tears in her eyes and pained at the thought of losing Her company, Rādhārāṇī pleadingly said, "O, beautiful one! Why should you go?" But Gopadevī left with a promise to come again the next morning. Śrīji restlessly spent the whole night waiting for Her!

In Nandagaon, Nanda-nandana also spent a restless night. The next morning, He again in the disguise of Gopadevī, arrived at Vṛṣabhānu's palace. Rādhārāṇī affectionately greeted Her. Rādhārāṇī, observing Gopadevī's mood, said, "You look very sad today. What is wrong with You?" Gopadevī, shyly replied, "Yes, there is something which is disturbing me, and I do not know of anyone who can vanquish the cause of My suffering." Rādhārāṇī tried to comfort Gopadevī by saying, "Do not speak like this, please tell Me. What is the cause of Your distress? I am sure I can find a remedy to relieve Your agony!" Gopadevī further added, "O Rādhe, there is nobody in this world capable of punishing that rascal who caused My trouble." Śrīji again persuasively replied, "At least, tell Me His name." In a compromising mood, Gopadevī said, "All right, then listen."

"One day, as I was passing through Sankari gali, Nanda's son was standing there. He was holding a flute in one hand and a stick in the other. Suddenly, He intercepted me and held my wrist, telling me He was the king of this place and charged tax from whoever was passing in that pathway. Immediately I shouted at Him, "You rascal! Get out of my way. I am not paying any tax." And instantly, He snatched my pot of curd and drank it.

After drinking all my curd, He snatched my choonar (veil) and ran away laughing."

"O, Rādhe, You have unfortunately given Your love to such an unworthy person. For Your own good, You should forget Him. Throw away Your attachment for this most cunning person from Your heart!" Then, Gopadevī severely criticized Kṛṣṇa, saying, "He is just a cowherd boy, dark complexioned, neither good-looking nor wealthy nor brave." After patiently listening to Her, Rādhārāṇī asked, "O Gopadevī, who has named You so? You should know that even Brahmā and Śiva worship Kṛṣṇa." Here Rādhārāṇī most beautifully emphasized Kṛṣṇa's lordship by saying, "All incarnations like Dattatreya, Śukadeva, Kapila Bhagavān etc., are all worshiping Kṛṣṇa, and You say that He is just a dark, black cowherd boy!"

"Who else can be more sanctified than Him? He bathes in the holy stream of cow-dust everyday without a miss. Is there anyone who can be as pious as Him? Is there anything in this world which is more sanctified than the cow?" Rādhārāṇī is such a staunch devotee of the cow that when Kṛṣṇa killed Ariṣṭāsura, Rādhārāṇī and all the gopīs refused to touch Kṛṣṇa, who had become a sinner and thus impure because of killing a bull!" Such is Rādhārāṇī's devotion for the cows.

Rādhārāṇī angrily said, "Gopadevī, look, You are insulting Him unnecessarily! He chants the cow's names daily and lives with them day and night. The race of cowherds is superior to all other known races. You know why? Because, they tend the cows! You say that there is not even a trace of beauty found in His body. I challenge You to find anyone or anything more beautiful than Him. Lord Śiva, whose neck is blue due to drinking poison, who is the all-powerful god with matted hair, and who accepts the flow of Ganga coming down from the outer covering of this universe on his head and wears poisonous snakes as ornaments – that Bābā always tries to have darśan of this dark blue boy in Braja to offer Him his obeisance, and You call Him worthless!"

"The whole universe yearns for Lakṣmīji and she performs austerities to attain a place at His lotus feet; and You say that He is a poor cowherd boy. You say that He has no radiance and no power? Tell Me, how can the slayer of Bakāsura, Ariṣṭāsura, Aghāsura, Pūtanā, and tamer of Kaliya be feeble? He is the creator of the infinite universes and You call Him powerless? All devotees worship Him and You think that He is destitute? He passionately runs after those who love Him and seeks the dust of their feet, and You call Him merciless?"

Hearing such praising words, Gopadevī said, "O Rādhe! Your experience and mine are different. He may have tamed Kaliya, but what kind of modesty is this, to hold my wrist when I was all-alone? Is this a virtue?" Rādhārāṇī then told Gopadevī, "Even though You are so beautiful, You could not understand His love. You are most unfortunate. You had the privilege to have His association, but being unlucky, You are not aware of the sweetness of His love and find Him unfair. No one can be more unfortunate than you!"

Gopadevī then asked, "What should have I done? Should I consider myself fortune for being offered to pollute my modesty?"

Rādhārāṇī said, "Oh! Listen! The essence of all civility and all religion is Kṛṣṇa himself; and You foolishly consider His activities to be illicit!"

As the argument between the two was heating up, Gopadevī finally said, "If Kṛṣṇa could appear right now on Your call, I will believe that His love for You is true and that He is not merciless! And if He does not come, then what will You do?"

Rādhārāṇī, said, "I will call Him right now and if He does not come, then I will become Your servant. I will serve You with all My wealth, body and mind!" Instantly, Śrīji sat with Her eyes closed and in lotus posture, invoking Kṛṣṇa deep within Her heart calling Him and chanting His various names.

***shyameti sundar vareti manohareti kandarpa koti laliteti sunagareti* |**
***sauta kantha mahi grunati muhura kulakshi sa rādhikā mayi kada nu bavet prasanna* ||** (Ra.Su.Ni. 37)

The meaning of this verse was once explained by Śrī Bābā Mahārāj in the words of Pandit Harishchandraji, as follows:

Initially, Rādhārāṇī chanted one of Kṛṣṇa's names, Śyāma, and she immediately added the word "sundara", so Śyāma does not imply darkness. Instantly, She balanced it by adding the word sundara (beautiful). Then She thought that there might be many beautiful ones, but if the heart and the mind are not bewildered, then what is the use of such beauty! Next, she added the word "Madana" (He who enchants everyone's minds), but again, even an infant can enchant one's mind. So, the method of enchanting the mind should be different. It should be very sweet, as sweetness is essential in love; She further added the word 'Manohara' (He who captures and lives in every one's heart in a sweet manner)!

This is how she invoked Kṛṣṇa. Gopadevī was sitting in front of Her. As the appeal of Her love intensified, Her body shook a little. Kṛṣṇa understood that He would not be able to hide His true identity any longer. Love has such mysterious powers. Kṛṣṇa saw Rādhārāṇī's eyes fill with tears as She softly whispered, "Kṛṣṇa…Kṛṣṇa…Kṛṣṇa..,Kṛṣṇa…Kṛṣṇa…" Immediately, He assumed His natural form and called, "Rādhe!" Rādhārāṇī opened her eyes and saw Kṛṣṇa standing right in front of Her. Kṛṣṇa innocently asked, "Hey Lādalīji, Why are You calling Me? What is the matter? Rādhārāṇī started looking around for Gopadevī. Kṛṣṇa innocently asked: What are You looking for? I am standing right in front of you?" Rādhārāṇī was a little confused but said, "I am looking for Gopadevī. Where has She gone?" Kṛṣṇa feigningly asked, "Who is this Gopadevi? Some gopī went out when I came in." Rādhārāṇī then narrated the whole story. Pretending to be concerned, He said, "You are very innocent. Never let such venomous women enter your palace."

This lilā and the hair braiding lilā, all these took place every year here on Bhadra Śukla Ekādaśī day. And *dadhi dāna* (the lilā of giving milk and yogurt to the gopīs) takes place on trayodashi (13th day).

Vihar kuṇḍa.

Vihar-kuṇḍa is also known as Maheśvari-*sarovara*.

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Acaman for Vihār Kuṇḍa

swarnābha jala ramyāya parvati sarse namah ।
rudra helā samadbhuta tirtha rāja vara prade ॥
krosharddha parimānena pradakshinam athākarot ।

"O King of all pilgrimage! O Pārvatī-sarovara, who is filled with golden waters, and who is manifested by the grace of Rudra, the possessor of transcendental beauty, we offer obeisance unto You!" (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

One should circumambulate this forest which is half a kosa (1.54 km or about 0.96 miles) in measurement. This kuṇḍa is known by Pārvatī's name, Maheśwari. All supernatural powers, Uma, Rāma, Sarasvatī and

others come to Barṣāṇā to chant the prayer and invoke Rādhārāṇī's kripa kataksha (blessing).

This implies that, Lakṣmī, Pārvatī, Indrāni, Sarasvatī and all others worship Rādhārānī because She is their iṣṭa-deva (worshipful deity).

Dohanī Kuṇḍa

Prayer Mantra for Dohanī Kuṇḍa

rakta neel sitā dhumrā pītā go dohana prada ।
vriṣhbhāhnu krutastirtha namstubhyam prasida me ॥

"O Vṛuṣabhānu Bābā! To you, who transformed this place into a pilgrimage site by milking multitude of red, white, brown, and black cows here. O Dohanī-kuṇḍa, I offer my obeisance unto you! Be pleased with me and bless me." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

Vṛiṣhabhānu's multitude of cows lived here. This was the place for milking his cows.

Mānagarh

Prayer Mantra for Māna Mandir

deva gandharva ramyāya rādhā māna vidhāyine ।
māna mandir sanjyāya namaste ratna bhumaye ॥

"We offer obeisance to Śrī Maān Mandir which is most attractive and is filled with the complimentary presence of the Devas and Gandharvas , at this most auspicious place Śrī Mānini, Rādhā becomes annoyed." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

Māngarh is situated west from Śrī Vallabhācārya's sitting place on a peak. Śyāmasundara came here to appease Rādhārāṇī. In this place, Kṛṣṇa relished one of the particular nuances of love, when She was in a resentful mood. (ŚB. 10.30.39)

mānagarh chaḍhata sakhi kata āju ।
'vyāsa' vachan suni kuvari nivājyo, shyāma layou sira tāju ॥
(Vya.Va.Pada 164)

This pastime thus contributed to its name, Mānagarh; "*mān*" means resentment or annoyance. Kṛṣṇa tried to appease Her in many ways: by bowing down to Her feet, asking for pardon, trying to make Her feel comfortable by fanning Her, showing Her a mirror, and offering requests. He was unable to bring back a smile on Rādhārāṇī's face. Finally, He took help from the gopīs. Actually, that bitterness was not for any worldly reason; that was also a loving pastime! Rādhārāṇī performed this pastime to increase the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. In this way, Śrī Māna Bihari Lālaji is worshiped in Mān Mandir. Śrī Priyāji, Rādhā, saw Her own reflection in Kṛṣṇa's chest and became irritated, mistaking it to be one of Her rivals, sitting in Kṛṣṇa's bosom. That was the reason for Her displeasure; but the anger of our compassionate Rādhārāṇī is always short-lived. If this resentment persisted, then it would be resolved in various ways at Mānagarh.

1. Śrī Kṛṣṇa cajoles Her with His requests and service.
2. In the guise of vīṇā vādini, a female musician playing on a string instrument – vīṇā, He entertains Priyaji and then reveals His true identity.
3. In the guise of a sakhī, He guides Her: At 'vidagdha-mādhava in guise of nikuñja vidyā and at 'saimari' as Śyāmali sakhī and as 'kinnari' where He asks for 'mān ratna' instead of a 'ratna mala' as a gift!
4. With the help of other sakhīs – as Śrī Govinda Swami has written:

Śrīji became annoyed and stood at the bottom of the hill, where Śyāmasundara tried to appease Her, she tried to go away from Him, and gradually maneuvered up the hill. When Śrīji reached the top, Śyāmasundara took help from the gopīs. He requested Viśākhā and Lalitā to cajole Her after failing despite all His power. Śrī Rādhā refused to accede to their request. They went back to Śyāmasundara, who was waiting for them at the bottom of the hill. He sent them back for another try. This happened many times, but to no avail. Lastly, one gopī, became so fatigued due to running up and down the hill, she complained to Rādhārāṇī, "O Rādhe! So many times I have climbed up and down this hill; now I am totally exhausted."

***āvata jāta houn hāra pari ree* ।**
***jyo jyo pyāro vinati kara pathavat, tyo tyo tu garh māna chadhi ree* ॥**
***Tihāre bich pare soi bāvari, ho chogān ki gaind bhari ree* ।**
***'govind' prabhu ko vega mila bhāmini, subhaga yāmini jāta bahi ree* ॥**

(Govind Swami)

"Still, You do not want to reunite! For how long can I run like this? You send me down and from there again I am sent back to You. Like a ball in the game of Chougān, Śyāmasundara and You, are hitting me from one end of the playground to the other. (Unlike cricket, in the game of chougān, the ball is hit by many players). Please go and meet Śyāmasundara now; the night is rapidly passing!"

Śrīji finally relinquished Her annoyance and went down the hill to meet Śyāmasundara.

"*tu risa chāndi ri* Rādhey ! Rādhey !" (Kelimāl 17)

(*Kelimāl* pad nos. 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 22, 25, 39, 43, 45, 57, 59, 69, 76, 78, 79, 80 and *Śrī Chaturasi* 16, 37, 38, 40, 45, 74, 75, 83)

Vilāsagarh

Vilāsagarh is situated above Sānkari Khor.

Prayer Mantra for-Vilāsagarh

Vilāsa rupine tubhyam namah Kṛṣṇāya te namaḥ ।
Sakhi varga sukhaptāya kridā vimala darshine ॥

"We pay obeisance unto Kṛṣṇa, whose spotless pastimes are meant for the happiness of the gopīs." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"Vilāsa" implies luxury or bliss. The word itself indicates the pastime of this place. Here, Śrīji played the role of a king and therefore sat under a very opulent umbrella. Lalitā is Her chief-minister and Viśākhā is Her personal escort. A thief((Kṛṣṇa) was brought into in the King's court, whom Śrīji mercifully forgave. In the king's court, someone brought Him gifts; another entered the court as an ambassador and some others performed music and dance for the king's pleasure. There were so many servants, security guards, etc., busy in the service of Śrī Mahārāj! The Vilāsa and the Jhulan (swing) pastimes are described in *Braja Premānanda Sāgar*. (Chapter 18, verse 68 to 73)

This location is famous for the swing pastime of Rādhārāṇī with Her friends. There are two pillars on the hill on which the swing is tied and where the pastime is enacted.

Dānagarh

'Dāna līlā' occurred at two places in Barṣāṇā: Sankari khor and Dānagarh. On the opposite side of Vilāsagarh is Dānagarh, also known as Ratidāna sthalī, "rati" implies absolutely blissful and intense attachment in divine love. This is the place of ratidāna (gift of divine love). Thakurji begged from Rādhārāṇī to grant Him the privilege of blissfully and affectionately serving Her. How did He request? He begged most humbly at Her lotus feet.

Prayer Mantra for Dāna Mandir

dāna vesha dharāyaiva dadhyupasyābhilāṣiṇe ।
rādhā nirmit sitāyaiva kṛṣṇāya satatam namaḥ ॥

"Kṛṣṇa, who due to being afflicted by the separation of Rādhārāṇī prays to Her, who is the embodiment of generosity, for Her Divine love. We prostrate unto You." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

There is one pada, poem in which He begged for charity by touching Rādhārāṇī's feet. Thakurji said, "O Rādhey! You are so generous that no one has ever returned empty-handed from Barṣāṇā." Here Rādhārāṇī is called Mahadānai, one who gives liberally. The one who gets the grace of RadhaRani, receives the nectar of most ecstatic and blissful loving service to Her lotus feet. Even Thakurji cannot bestow this precious gift to His devotees since He Himself begs it from Her! He said, "O Mahadānai Rādhey, kindly shower Your grace upon Me. O Rādhey, My eyes are so thirsty that I humbly and simply ask You to please kindly lift Your veil so that I may be able to see You, Whose generous heart always overflows with the utmost loving compassion. As You are most expert in loving exchanges, please understand My humble request." Saying this, Thākurji fell at Her feet and said, "Please honor My word. I am sitting at Your feet, humbly requesting You in everyone's presence! Be pleased and bless Me with the gift of divine and blissful love." This is the pastime of Dānagarh.

In the *dāna* pastime, the gopīs told Kṛṣṇa, "You constantly beg gifts from us! You continuously harass us for countless reasons! You should know that to covet other's possessions is a grave sin. Because of Your

innumerable sinful acts, Your complexion is darkening! How will You be released from these sins, Nanda-lāla?

"*lālā yāhi te kare bhaye*" ।

"We have never seen You sing the Lord's glories nor take a holy dip in pilgrimage places. How will Your sins be cleansed?" Śyāmasundara, with a smile on His face, replied, "None can be as religious as Me! No one in this world can practice virtue, glorify the Lord or take a holy dip as I do. O gopīs! Is there any pilgrimage which is superior to the holy dust of a cow's feet?"

Kṛṣṇa declared in *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa* that all gods are residing in the cow's body, all pilgrimages are within the cow's hoof prints, and Lakṣmī Devi is residing in cow-dung. Simply by applying a little cow-dust on the forehead, one gets the benefit of visiting all the places of pilgrimage! He told the gopīs, "I am constantly chanting the names of the cows, O Kali! O Dholi! Who is there that can be as chaste as Me?" Sarcastically, Śrīji said, "This kingdom belongs to My father, Bābā Vṛṣabhānu. We gave You shelter in Barsānā and this is how You pay back the price of our generosity? You are a robber. If someone gives shelter to a robber, he will rob that house only. My bābā is giving You shelter and You are now looting our house!"

Gopis further said: "Initially, the Lordship of Braja was with Bābā Vṛṣabhānu dynasty, but Mahibhānu, out of love and goodwill, gave away a part of His kingdom to Your father. Otherwise, this entire Braja belongs to Vṛṣabhānu Bābā. This is How we reap the fruit of our generous act? We protect Braja and You simply wander around and enjoy freely! Truth has to be acknowledged."

Gravely, Śyāmasundara said, "Yes, You are definitely right in Your statement that this entire Braja belongs to Your father, but listen, O Rādhey! The whole country belongs to the dear daughter of Vṛṣabhānu, meaning You! You are his dear daughter and while tying Your knot with Me, presented everything to Me in dowry!"

Next to Dānagarh is Jaipur Temple. Little further, on the way to Śrīji Temple, is the site where the present Deity of Śrīji appeared, and nearby at Bhānugarh is Śrīji Temple. Brahmā stands here as the gatekeeper and blissfully enjoys the various pastimes. Footmarks of Śrīji's present deity, Kamadhenu's teats and a deity of Brahmā at Sinhpaura can also be seen here.

Pīrī Pokhara

Pīrī Pokhara (yellow pond) is in Barsānā and is also known as Priyā-kuṇḍa. An abundance of Pīlu trees, a native tree here also contributes to its name as Pīrī Pokhar. A mention of Śrīji picking the pīlu fruits from this place appears in *Bhakti-Ratnākara*.

ei pilu khora ethā pilu phala chale ।
sakhi saha rāi kānu kridā kutuhale ॥ (Bha. Ra.)

The water of this kuṇḍa acquired a golden glow from the turmeric paste, which was applied to Śrīji on Her wedding with Nanda-nandana. Traditionally, the bride is bathed with ubatana (turmeric paste) before the wedding takes place. The gopas, after coming from Nandagaon to Barsānā for the Holī celebrations set up their camp here; they refresh themselves and get ready with their helmets and shields. Then they move forward to Munhmidi, where they are warmly received by the Barsānā residents. Till today, this ancient tradition is followed in a most magnificent manner. In many Purāṇas, Śrīji's wedding is described. Many people question the authenticity of the wedding of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The Śrīmad Bhāgavatam also indicates this; the word "vadhū" (bride) is used here instead of the direct mention of Rādhā's name; for example, in maharāsa, the word vadhū occurs thrice. In *Rāsa-panchādhyāyī*, chapter-30, verses-26, 32, 39, the word vadhū is used.

tais taiḥ padais tat-padavīm anvicchantyo 'grato 'balāḥ ।
vadhvāḥ padaiḥ su-pṛktāni vilokyārtāḥ samabruvan ॥

"The gopīs began following Kṛṣṇa's path, as shown by His many footprints, but when they saw that these footprints were interspersed with those of His dearmost consort, they became perturbed and spoke as follows." (ŚB. 10.30.26)

imāny adhika-magnāni padāni vahato vadhūm gopyaḥ paśyata kṛṣṇasya ।
bhārākrāntasya kāminaḥ atrāvaropitā kāntā puṣpa-hetor mahātmanā ॥

"Please observe, my dear gopīs, how in this place lusty Kṛṣṇa's footprints are pressed more deeply into the ground. Carrying the

weight of His beloved must have been difficult for Him. And over here that intelligent boy must have put Her down for the sake of gathering flowers." (ŚB. 10.30.32)

evam uktaḥ priyām āha skandha āruhyatām iti ।
tataś cāntardadhe kṛṣṇaḥ sā vadhūr anvatapyata ॥

"Thus requested, Lord Kṛṣṇa replied, "Just climb on My shoulder." But as soon as He said this, He disappeared. His beloved consort then immediately felt great remorse." (ŚB. 10.30.39)

In other scriptures, this wedding pastime is described; and in this present book, there is a detailed description with authentic proofs in chapter 5. This Pīri Pokhar is popularly known as Priya Kuṇḍa, as it is a favorite place of Śrīji for Her pastimes in its lovely, clear waters (jala keli pastimes). The most significant annual celebration at this pond happens on the Rangīli Holī day, with the arrival of the residents from Nandagaon.

Nārada visited this location to witness the childhood pastimes of little Rādharani. He entertained Śrīji and Her friends with his vīṇā. After circumambulating them, he asked for *bhikṣā* (alms). Being most generous, Rādhikā gave him all the dry fruits which were available in Her hand at that time. Overwhelmed by Her kind gesture, Nārada began to roll wildly in the soil, blessed by the dust of Rādhikā's lotus feet. Tears incessantly rolled down his cheeks. On seeing this scene, Śrīji was frightened and ran away with Her friends like a deer on sensing danger! Reaching home, panting and out of breath, with frightened eyes, She went and sat in Mother Kīrtida's lap.

Curious, Her mother asked the reason for Her fear; Rādhikā narrated the whole incidence of Nārada's visit at Pīri Pokhara. Mother Kīrtida pampered her little daughter and reassured Her that there was nothing to fear. She said, "My dear child, this sage had come to bless You on Your birth also. He blessed You with a wristband giving You protection from all evil spirits. Since then, You never became scared even in Your dreams!" Kirtida then fed Rādhikā affectionately with delicious laddus (sweet balls). (*Braja Premanand Sagar*, part 18, verses 49-63)

Vṛṣabhānu Sarovar

After bathing here in Vṛṣabhānu Kuṇḍa, Vṛṣabhānu ji used to go to worship Brajeśvara Mahādeva from here; this kuṇḍa is also known by the name Bhānukhar and was built by him.

Prayer Mantra for Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa

nirdhyut kilvishayaiva gopa raja krutayate ।
vṛṣabhanu maharaja krutaya sarase namah ॥

"O glorious Bhānukhar! Simply by paying respect to you and taking bath here, all sins produced by wrong thoughts, words, and deeds are removed. We are offering obeisance to you. (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

Swami Haridāsa has sung the pastime of this pond. Śrīji went to bathe in Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa. Nanda-lāla walked around this kuṇḍa. Although Nanda-lāla was clearly aware that only Vṛṣabhānu's daughter was entitled to take bath in this kuṇḍa, He inquired from the gopīs, "Whose daughter is She? What is Her name?"

Braja Premananda Sagar

kabahu bhan sarovar tat me jhule phulai sakhi sanghat me ।
sri rādha ati mithat bolani pur upavan vana khelan dolani ॥
kabahu sakhi sang lai bheer khelan jaai sarovar teer ।

She came with such grandeur! After listening to His request, Lalitā came forward pushing the other gopīs away, and remarked, "Let me answer His query. She spoke very sternly. There are only crazy people living in Nandagaon. Just go back to Your village!" Śyāmasundara was quiet; He was left with no other option than to remain silent! After this incident, the gopīs ignored Him and all of them started playing among themselves.

Here we must realize how loving and compassionate Rādhārāṇī is, Who felt that such behavior on the part of Her friends was not fair. He was only asking a question out of courtesy and they reciprocated with such rudeness! Seeing that all of Her friends were fully engrossed in their game, She told them that She will take bath in the other corner of the kuṇḍa. Śrīji

went to the other side, which gave Śyāmasundara an opportunity, who came all the way from a distant place to meet Her. The moment Śrīji dove into the kuṇḍa, Śyāmasundara showed up from under the water right in front of Her! Śrīji was pleasantly surprised. What a sublime pastime!

Kīrti Sarovar

Prayer Mantra for Kīrtida Sarovar

kīrtishcha yatra gopīrbhih saha snanam samacharet /
saubhagya sut dhania adi sukha mapnoti manavah ॥
yato kirti sarah khyatam sakaleshta pradayakam । (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

At Kīrtida-sarovara, Kīrti Devī used to take bath daily along with the gopīs. By taking bath in this lake, one will be blessed with good fortune, sons, and wealth, and the fulfillment of one's desires.

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana for Kīrti Sarovar

namah kirti maha bhage sarvesham gau brajoka sham ।
sarva saubhagyade tirthe sukirti sarse namah ॥

"O blessed Kīrti! O Kīrti Sarovara! Who bestows all good fortune to Vṛṣabhānu, the beloved king of the gopas, and to all the Brajavāsis by fulfilling all their desires, we offer our obeisance unto thee!" (Bra. Bha.Vi.)

A little ahead of this is Brajeśvara-Mahādeva, Mahā-Rudra, who bestows auspiciousness to all the Brajavāsis. We all bow to Brajeśvara Bābā, who is infinite. It is said that once some Brajavāsīs tried to shift the lingam to some other spot, but as they dug deeper, the depth of the lingam kept on deluding them! They could not reach its bottom. Finally, they repented for their unholy act and requested pardon from Mahādeva with full devotion and consecrated the lingam here again with all the proper religious rites! Vṛṣabhānu baba used to daily worship him after bathing in Vṛṣabhānu Kuṇḍa.

Prayer Mantra for Brajeshvarakhya Maharudra

brajeshvaraya te tubhyam mahā rudrāya te namah ।
brajoksam shiāarthāya namaste shiva rupine ॥

"We bow to that Mahādeva, whose name is Brajeśvara, who is present here for the welfare of the Brajavāsis and who is Śiva Himself." (Bra.Bha.Vi.Gauri Tantra)

This is a very ancient temple which has been present here since the time of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāj.

Rābar Vana

Here, Kṛṣṇa drank chach-rābri (buttermilk-millet porridge), thus, it is called Rābarvana. Another forest called Pādaravana is located close by.

Pādara Vana

This place is full of pādar bushes which provide plenty of fresh and fragrant flowers. Thākurji came here in the guise of a gopī to meet Rādhārāṇī, when She went there to collect flowers for the Sānjhi (ancestor worship) pastime with her friends. The Sānjhi pastime is very popular in Braja. Even today, many young girls celebrate this festival in Pitrupaksha, the fortnight when deceased ancestors are remembered by worshiping Sānjhi Devī. Śrīji used fresh cow dung to create a Sānjhi, a representation of a Deity made with cow dung, and adorned it with flowers; and Thākurji, in the garb of a priestess (holy woman) performed the pujā of Sānjhi Devī for Śrīji.

phulvā bīne rādhā piyāri, bhori rang rangili bāl ।
(Rasiya Rasesvari)

There is one pastime in Pādaravana: One day, Śyāmasundara was expertly singing one of His compositions in Pādaravana. Hearing Him sing, many peacocks gathered around Him and joined Him in singing. The clouds also could no longer hold back and joined the performance. Lo! Kṛṣṇa was singing in the middle; the peacocks blissfully danced all around Him; and the clouds gently rumbled and sprinkled showers of ecstasy on

every soul below! In this mysterious, blissful atmosphere, His pitambara (yellow apparel) also became drenched, sticking tightly to His body. The gopīs enviously said, "Look! Kānāi is soaked and so is His garment. Still this mischievous flute does not stop playing. Undeterred, it continuously plays! Look, how forcefully it is playing, as if intoxicated! All the gopīs eagerly watched this most exalted and ecstatic pastime in such a divine atmosphere! There is rāsa-mandala in this Pādaravana, (Mandala is a circular space). (*Braja Premananda Sagar*)

kabahu padar khandi jahan ।
i rachain hindoro eehi vidhi taha ॥
(Bra.Pre.Sa.Lahari10.Chau71)

Prema Sarovar

Prema Sarovara is situated one kilometer from Barṣāṇā towards Nandagaon. This kuṇḍa which looks just like a boat and is surrounded on all sides with Kadamba trees, has a mystical atmosphere. Most mysterious is the sacred path of love!

prema sarovar prema ki bhari rahat din rain ।
jahān jahān piyari pug dharat shyām dharat dou nain ॥

The name itself says a lot! The embodiment of Supreme Love, Śrīji and the Supreme Contender of Love, Nanda-tanaya (Kṛṣṇa) met here for the first time! The eternal stream of love in all its glory originated from here. This is the sacred path of love laid over a sublime backdrop of Divine sacrifice and is absolutely free from even the shadow of mundane passion! Rasikācārya, Śrī Dhruvadāsa, describes the sublime pastime of this place in an inspiring manner. He endorses that this is the place of the Divine Couple's first meeting.

One day, Nanda-nandana heared that crest jewel of Vṛṣabhānu dynasty, the spotless beautiful Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī, comes to Prema Sarovara to play with Her friends. Similarly Kīrti-kumāri (Kīrti's daughter), Rādhā also heard about the son of Nanda from Nandagaon, whose beauty causes even Kāmadeva to be hiding out of shame!

Śrīji came from Barṣāṇā to Premavana to play hide and seek with Her friends. Nanda Kulachandra, Kṛṣṇa also arrived there. The dense *Kalpa* trees appeared to be anxious to receive the Divine Couple and they

expertly constructed many lovely nikuñjas (cottages) by gently bending down and clustering their branches. Nanda-lāla hid Himself under a dense thicket hoping to get a glimpse of this divine damsel. Sriji started to play hide and seek with her friends.

The rules of this game were that one fellow played the role of a thief and closed his eyes while the others hid. At the sound of a clap from one of the players, the thief opened his eyes and searched for the other players. Whoever got caught becomes the thief. The game went on for some time. Śyāmasundara's eyes searched cautiously for Kiśorīji while His heart throbbed in excitement! Suddenly, at one point His gaze becomes fixed, Their eyes met, beholding each other, like a cloud and lightning! Beholding this amazing beauty, Kṛṣṇa, the expert flutist, became immersed in delight and lost all consciousness, and fell flat on the ground.

By seeing the unparalleled beauty of His beloved, His flute dropped from His hands, His crown bedecked with peacock feather slanted over; and His yellow pitambar slipped. After this initial meeting, this amazing situation kept reoccurring. And, there was an occasion in which this unconscious external state prevailed for so long, it was only by the great effort of the gopas that He regained His equilibrium. "Kānāi…. O Kānāi…! Look, the cows have moved so far and the sun is about to set, get up fast, we can't wait here anymore! Mother Yaśodā is anxiously waiting for Your return. Just look at Your mysterious state! What is happening with You? Get up and get going quickly."

Rādhā's friends also told Her that it was time to leave. Rādhā was unwilling to leave Śyāmasundara in that unconscious state, but finally accompanied Her friends in a fully disappointed state. The sakhīs inquired, "Rādhā! What is the matter? Have You lost something?" Radha replied, "No, nothing!" The sakhīs asked, "Then, what is happening? Why are You sad?" Radha said, "No, No, I am all right." Barely able to conceal Her emotions, She kept quiet.

Two days later, Her dear friend Lalitā confidentially asked, "Rādhā, tell me, what is on Your mind?" Radha explained, "Dear Lalitā, you remember that day when we were playing hide and seek in Premavana? While hiding in a grove, I saw a resplendent glowing sapphire! He is extremely beautiful, bringing the brightness of a million stars to dullness! He was holding a flute in one of His hand, as His gaze became fixed on Me, He suddenly fainted!

venuh karan nipatitah skhalitam shikhandam brashtam ca pitavasanam brajarajasunoh | yasyah katakshasharapata vimurchitasya tam radhikam paricharani kada rasen ||

(Ra.Su.Ni.38)

"His flute fell. His pitambar (yellow garment) became loose and slipped down. This immensely attractive and most wonderful personality has permanently and mysteriously taken residence in My heart! When you told me that it was time for us to leave, this wonderful personality, shining with the most dazzling blue effulgence, was still lying unconscious. Unwillingly leaving Him behind, I accompanied all of you back to Barṣāṇā. Who knows when He regained His awareness?"

Lalitā wanted to help and asked Her, "Is there some noticeable features of His identity which You may recall?" Radha replied, "Yes, He wore a lovely peacock-feather in His crown and shining earrings danced on His cheeks. He held a flute in His hands and His bodily color was just like a fresh new cloud. Lalitā said, "Ok, now, You can stop worrying. I know who He is." Rādhā anxiously asked, "Who is this manmohana (enchanter of My mind)? Lalitā replied, "O Rādhā! He is Nanda-lāla. I will go just now and bring Him back with me." Lalitā went straight to Nanda's palace. Mother Yaśodā affectionately greeted Her, "O Lalitā, what is it that brings you here today?"

Lalitā, replied, "Mother, today I have come here in order to fulfil your wish!" Yaśodā was a little surprised and asked, "What do you mean by fulfilling my wish?" Lalitā said, "Yes mother, I know everything! You just send your *lāla* with me and do not worry. I will take care of everything." Yaśodā said, "All right, take Him along." She called out, "Kanhaiya… Kānāi…!" As if waiting for her call, Kṛṣṇa immediately responded, "Yes, Mā." Yaśodā said, "Lalitā wants to take You along. Please go with her." All this time, Kṛṣṇa was ready to go and immediately accompanied Lalitā.

On reaching at a kuṇḍa midway, she draped Him in the dress of a gopī and said, "Look Kṛṣṇa, today, Your and Rādhā's wish will be fulfilled and my work also will be complete. Do You remember the day in Premavana when You fainted?" Kṛṣṇa excitedly said, "Yes, Lalitā, I clearly remember. When I regained My awareness, there was no one around. I too am anxious to meet Kishoriji." Lalitā said, "But You cannot enter Barṣāṇā like this!

Entry to Barṣāṇā is restricted. For that, You will have to assume the form of a sakhī."

barṣāṇe ke vās ki ās karen śivaśesh ।
yahan ki mahima ko kahe jahan śyām dhare sakhī vesh ॥

Then, while changing Kṛṣṇa's clothes, Lalitā draped Him in a lehenga and choonar (gopī's dress). Thus, in the garb of a gopī, Lalitā took Him along to Barṣāṇā. On the stairs outside the palace, all the Bhanus were sitting with their wives. Lalitā covered Kṛṣṇa's face with the choonar. On seeing this new young maiden, they inquired, "Lalitā, who is this lovely damsel?" Lalitā replied, "She is the daughter of Upananda. She met me at Sankari khor and since it is already late in the evening, I have brought her with me, asking Her to stay back at Barṣāṇā tonight with us." Bhanu's wife said, "Yes, yes, it is good you brought Her here. Look after Her properly!" Lalitā immediately brought this exalted and intoxicated lover face to face with His beloved Śrīji. Both of Them became ecstatic as if to fulfill each other's desires !

na ādi na ant vihar karen dou lāl priya mein bhai na chinhāri ।
nayee nayee bhanti nayee nayee kanti nayee abla nav neh bihāri ।
rahe mukh chāh diye chit āh pare ras preet jo granthi mahāri ।
rahe ik pās karen mridu hās suno dhruv prem akath kathāri ।

Prayer Mantra for Prema Sarovar

prema latāya ramyāya paramoksha swarupine ।
kadamba kusuma kirna premāhya namostu te ॥

"We bow to Premavana, which is picturesque, blooming with loving, enchanting kadamba flowers."

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Acaman for Prema Sarovar

lalita prema sambhute premakhya sarase namah ।
prema pradāya tirthāya kautilya pada nāshaka ।

"We bow down to Prema Sarovara, which emanated from the Divine Couple's love for each other, who bestows ecstatic love and destroys all obstacles."

Madhuri dāsa has written thus: While being in the presence of Kṛṣṇa, the thought of separation from Him entered Śrīji's heart. A stream of tears rolled down Her cheeks, and She fainted. Her tears formed this Prema Sarovara. Seeing Her in this state, Kṛṣṇa also lost His consciousness. The whole atmosphere soon became divinely electrified and all the sahacharis (close associates) also deeply entered into the most divine ecstasy. With the inspiration of Vrinda, all the parrots sweetly chanted, "Rādhā! Rādhā! With this most enchanting sound vibration, all associates immediately regained their external consciousness and then enjoyed a boat-ride.

Śrī Sañket

Śrīji came to Prema Sarovara for collecting flowers for Sanjhī.

pahunci prema sarovar tira kusuma bahata pai bhavanrani bhira

(Bra.Pre.Sa.Lahari Chau 9)

On that same day, Ma Yaśodā went from Nandagaon to Sañketvana to offer her worship to Sañket Devī. Rādhārāṇī and Her friends came across Her in this forest. Ma Yaśodā's casual gaze fell upon lovely Kiśorī. She instantly felt inspired to speak to Her. After a formal introduction, Ma Yaśodā said, "Rādhā, even before I could offer and perform my worshipful rites today, Sañket Devī has fulfilled my wish!" Rādhā innocently asked, "What is that, Mother?" Yaśodā's heart filled with a loving admiration exclaimed, "Oh! With Sañket Devī's grace, I am able to meet You, I was there in Barsānā when You were born. Today, fortunately, I am meeting You again. Lalitā, remind dear Kīrti of her promise with me, though we, the people of Nandgaon are no match to their grandeur. Also, don't forget to pay my respects to her."

nāma hitā to māi kau suni ati ladi vṛṣabhāna ।
kahiyo pā lāgana ju, mama dai ke bahu sanamāna ॥

(Bra.Pre.Sa.Laharī 12.42)

That day Kiśorīji and Her friends arrived home much later than usual. Ma Kīrtida inquired, "Dear, did You go very far today?" Rādhā replied.

"Ma, today I went with My friends to collect flowers for Sanjhi in Prema Sarovara, where we met Ma Yaśodā, who was there to worship Sañket Devī." Gladly, Kīrtida asked further, 'What did Yaśodāji say to you?' Rādhā said, "Lalitā will tell you about that." Lalitā replied, "Yaśodā felt very happy upon meeting all of us. She invited Rādhā and all of us to Nandagaon and she sent her respects to you. Also, she told me to remind you of your promise."

hama bana gaī phūlani torana heta ।
mahari ju āī pūjibai devi vata sañket ॥ (Bra.Pre.Sa.Laharī 12.69)
āī chaturā nāri ek hama son gayi batarāya ।
bhed bhav un mahrikosabahi diyo jataii ॥ (Bra.Pre.Sa.Laharī 12.71)
vachan kiye je paraspar ham tum khile su chittū ।
rani te sudhi kijiyo hau sudhi karat ju nit ॥ (Bra.Pre.Sa.Laharī 12.78)

The promise goes like this: Once, Mother Kīrtida and Mother Yaśodā both were pregnant. They met each other at the bank of Sri Yamunā river. Having great adoration for one another, they made a promise that if a girl and a boy would ever be born to them, they will perform their marriage. Remembering this promise that they made at the banks of Yamunā, Kīrtida reflected upon her old memories. Her love and ecstasy manifested physically in the form of feeding her dear daughter with the most delicious sweets!

The opinion of the author of *Braja Premānanda Sagar* is that the first meeting between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa took place in Sañketvana.

One day, Nanda-lāla persisted on taking the cows for grazing instead of the calves. The whole scheme was designed only to meet Rādhārāṇī! Tending the calves meant that He never went beyond Nandagaon, and therefore, had no scope for the possibility of meeting Her. So, the following is the description of His plan: A Vatspala, one who herds the calves can be promoted to be a Gopala, one who herds the cows! With the cows, He would have the freedom to go near Barṣāṇā, where Rādhā would daily play with Her friends.

First, He secretly grabbed many handfuls of sweets from Nandbhavan. He enticed His friends and said, "I am not giving you all these sweets for nothing! Today, you should assist Me in My endeavor to get promotion as a Gopala." His friends replied in unison, "Kānāi, why are You worrying. We all are with You!" Madhumaṅgala said. It was the eighth day in the Hindu lunar calendar of the Kārtika month and Ṛṣi Garga mentioned that

this day is most auspicious for gau-chāran (taking the cow out for grazing). This day is popularly celebrated as Gopāṣṭamī." After getting permission, Nanda-nandana and all His friends, on His first Gopāṣṭamī day, left for Barṣāṇā with their cows.

Hiding from the gaze of His friends, Kṛṣṇa reached near the kuṇḍa at Premavana. Prema Sarovara is in Premavana, which is located near Sañketvana. Sri Radha was collecting flowers there, spreading Her wonderful magic all around. She adorned a lovely and attractive blue dress and Her buoyant golden glow fell upon Kṛṣṇa, like an electric current! He began twirling like a juggler.

Subahu, one of His friends, humorously asked, "Kānāi, how are You dancing so frantically with no beat or rhythm? Are You reeling out of hunger?" Another friend sarcastically remarked, "What miracle are You going to show us on this first day of taking the cows for grazing?" Another one teasingly said, "Nandagaon is constantly humming with the glories of Your mischief, and here, what kind of new act are You going to perform?" One more friend enthusiastically said, "Hey Lāla! Hey Kānāi! Please speak up. What is happening with You?" Kṛṣṇa nervously replied," No! I will not tell you! I cannot tell you because you may disclose it to My Bābā!"

His friends wittingly said, "Even if You do not tell us, we all very well know Your secret! Your beloved has already left for Barṣāṇā. You can not see her now." Kṛṣṇa pleadingly asked, "Brother Subahu, please take Me to Her! My heart cannot withstand any more." Subahu sarcastically replied, "Kānāi, don't talk nonsense! You have totally lost your mind and senses." Now Kṛṣṇa, cheerfully remarked, "A good omen is happening on this first day of cow herding; the whole forest is glowing on account of Her admirable, unprecedented beauty. This proves that our gau-chāran will become much more blissful. Brother! Now enquire about Her name, abode etc. My heart is bleeding, hurt with the arrow of Her magnanimous beauty!"

A friend said, "O drunkard! where has the arrow hit You? You are unnecessarily creating such a fuss and cry!" Kṛṣṇa became very anxious and pleaded, "Brother, do not be so harsh with Me! Instead kindly tell Me the name of that god which I should worship to get Her as my bride!" All His friends had a hearty laugh after hearing this and suggested to Him, "There is only one way out, simply take a dip in this holy kuṇḍa and worship Girirājaji, Your wish will be surely fulfilled. The one whose gaze has pierced you through, is Vṛṣabhānu's daughter, Rādhā. Barṣāṇā

is Her home. Fortunately, Your reputation was saved today as You did not confront Her directly. Otherwise, all Her friends would have made fun of You, looking at Your incoherent and deplorable condition!" Sportingly, Mansukha said, "Kānāi, You should not worry. Your mother has already been worshiping Girirājaji, Sañket Devī, and Nārāyaṇa for the benediction of finding a suitable wife for Your wedding!" (Bra.Pre.Sa. Lahri 22.35, 40, 69, 79, 80, 81)

This is how Vṛindāvana Dāsaji sang the eternal loving pastimes of Yugala-Kishora. Ma Yaśodā met Śrījі here for the second time and Kṛṣṇa also had the first glimpse of Kiśorījі at this location. Gosvāmī Vithalnath's sitting place is also found here.

Sañket Devi

tato sañket samsthanaṁ, gopīka kṛṣṇa sañgamam ।
yatra sañsthāpaye devīṁ, sañket priya kārinīm ॥
mathurā mañdale sañsthā, devakī nirmiteshvarīm ।
(*Markandeya Purāṇa*)

The place is known as Sañket, the meeting place for gopīkas and Kṛṣṇa. Sañket Devi resided here and assisted the divine couple in their pleasing pastimes via the medium of Sañketvana. In that place in Mathuramandal, the deity of Sañket Devi was established by Yaśodā. In this verse, the name Devakī is used in place of Yashoda. (In *Bruhattoshani* compiled by Srimat Sanatana Goswami, in the analysis of *Śrīmad Bhagavatam* 10.21.10)

dve namne nandabharyaya yasoda devakityapi ।
atah sakhyamabhootasya devakya shaurijayaya ॥
(*Bṛhat Toṣaṇi* 10.21.10)

Yashoda Ji has two names Devakī and Yaśodā.

Prayer Mantra for Sañketeshwari:

dampatyo ha pritide nityam chirjaat viyogīni ।
namaste varde devi sanket faldaayini ॥ (*Markandeya Purāṇa*)

iti mantram chaturbhihi pathan chaturnamaskaram kuryat ।
chiram stri punsayorvairo yatra mukto bhavishyati ॥

ityeka dashmakhyata ha devta tirthe sangyakah ।
swakunde devki sthapyah Kṛṣṇa kridartha hetave ॥
(*Markendeya Purāṇa*)

Sūrya Kuṇḍa

There are many kuṇḍas by this name in Braja and all have distinct significance. On account of Rādhā's lineage from the Sūryavaṁśa, Surya Kuṇḍa exists in Barsānā. It is said that the Sun god came there to have the vision of Rādhārāṇī. Another reason is that the Sun god showered his blessings upon those who tend the cows with love.

Chosen few Blossoms of Śrī Gahvaravana

Gahvarvan is a garden which is sustained and noursihed by the lotus hands of Sri Kisoriji Herself. The most fortunate flowers of this garden, adorned with the divine love of Sri Radha, are constantly touched, kissed and relished by the honeybee of that divine nectar Sri Krsna Himself.

Śrī Kiśorī Aliji

Because of intense love for Lādalījī, Kisori Aliji never left this soil for the rest of his life. Incidently, his wife's name was also Kiśorī. After her death, Kiśorī Aliji was sad and cried for her. In that hour of desperation, he called her name loudly, "Ha Kiśorī!" Hearing his heart-felt call, Kiśorījī appeared to console him and blessed him with Her darśan of Her svarūpa!

Śrī Gulab Sakhī

Śrī Priyaji blessed him with this lovely name; he was the rose of Śrījī's garden. Though born into a Mohammedan family, he became a perfect instrument for spreading Śrījī's sweet name! His daughter's name was Rādhā. She was married and living in Nandagaon. Once, on a hot summer day, he was going to visit her. On the way, in the middle of the forest, he felt very thirsty, but there was no source of water near him. There Śrījī, in the guise of his daughter, Rādhā appeared to quench his thirst. She said, "Bābā, please take this water!" He asked, "Dear Rādhā, how have you come here? How did you know that I was very thirsty?" When he finished

speaking these words, his daughter, then suddenly disappeared leaving him quite puzzled.

Owing to Her soft heart, Śrīji could never allow a flower of Her garden to wilt for lack of water! No, not at all! She is so compassionate that this could never happen. On reaching Rādhā's home, he found out that she did not go to the forest with water! Then he realized, "Oh! Śrīji Herself kindly appeared to quench my thirst!" From that day, he daily cleaned the stairs of the Śrīji Temple with his beard and entertained Her with his sweet melodious sarangi (musical instrument). From that day, that was his only occupation. Even after he left his physical body, the Brajavāsis used to see him sitting at the lotus feet of Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī offering his loving service to Her, showing that Śrīji accepted his service in Her eternal pastimes!

Pandit Śrī Harishchandra Mahārāj

He was a full blossomed and fragrant flower of Śrīji's garden! The sweet fragrance of his sincere devotion was transcendental and will inspire devotees for eternity! Pandit Harishchandraji Mahārāj was a great saint who lived in Gahvarvana and was a follower of Pushti-marg. His absolutely dispassionate life of solitude was endowed with complete faith in Śrīji. He would remain awake all night with a burning emotion of viraha (separation), for his beloved Rādhārāṇī. He knew no sleep even during the nights.

"dāsat hi gai beet nisa kabahu na nāth neend bhar soya" ।
(Tulsidasa Ji Vinay Patrika)

This line from Tulsi dāsaji's *Vinay Patrika* forms the foundation of his life. One who never sleeps is actually a true lover of God. This remarkable state of total and permanent awakening was expressed in his life. The whole night, he would spend gazing at Gahvarvana from his window.

Once, a great scholar from Kāśi came to visit him. Pandit Harishchandraji asked him to narrate some Kṛṣṇa katha (pastimes). The scholar began explaining the meeting of Uddhava and the gopīs; the gopīs said this and the gopīs said that! He spoke for quite some time, but Pandit Harishchandraji remained quiet during the whole narration. The scholar finally remarked, "Panditji, you did not say anything about my narration." Then Punditji replied, "There is only one thing which comes to my mind.

The gopīs did not speak to Uddhava at all. Whatever they spoke was nothing but their *'premalap'* (crying of their hearts out in love for Kṛṣṇa)!"

This episode appears in the *Bhramar-gītā*. The gopīs did not know what they were saying to Uddhava. The previous *ācāryas* of the *Gaudiya sampradāya* have also said that all the visible emotions of the gopīs's intense love, for example, *prema*, *gān*, *praṇaya*, *rāganurāga*, *mahābhāva*, *mohanākhyā*, *mādanākhyābhāva*, *citra-jalpa*, *sañjalpa*, *divyonmad* etc., had emanated within their own in the state of transcendental love; where criticism, jealousy, mockery, and sarcasm only appear to have been spoken against Kṛṣṇa!

gopī uvāca -
madhupa kitava-bandho mā spṛśaṅghriṁ sapatnyāḥ
kuca-vilulita-mālā-kuṅkuma-śmaśrubhir naḥ ।
vahatu madhu-patis tan-māninīnāṁ prasādaṁ
yadu-sadasi viḍambyaṁ yasya dūtas tvam īdṛk ॥

"The gopīs said: O honeybee, O friend of a cheater, don't touch our feet with your whiskers, which are smeared with the kuṅkuma that rubbed onto Kṛṣṇa's garland when it got crushed by the breasts of a rival lover! Let Kṛṣṇa satisfy the women of Mathurā. One who sends a messenger like you will certainly be ridiculed in the Yadus' assembly." (ŚB. 10.47.12)

"O Bhramara! You are a brother of that pretender!" They called Kṛṣṇa a *kitava* (pretender, scoundrel). This was their native expression. They did not say so with wrong intent.

This is the height of sarcasm and mockery, what could be more insulting to Him? But the gopīs spoke all this from a most highly exalted state. Uddhava was amazed by what he saw; not what he heard. They behaved like drunkards in hysterical affection, immersed in love for Kṛṣṇa.

The state of love:

na jane kaun si dhun mein tera diwana āta hai ।
urhata khak sar pe jhoomta mastana āta hai ॥
surahi kahe kaha utthi payala muskurata hai ।
hazaron ungalian uthati tera diwana jāta hai ॥

The state of hysterical lovers can't be described:

meri zanjire pa se awāz āti hai ।
hato diwana āta hai hato diwana āta hai ॥

Pandit Harishchandraji pointed out that in such frenzy of love, the gopīs did not know what they were saying. They were in a most elevated state of consciousness, transcending all physical awareness. This is what ecstatic love is all-about!

Even today, Gahvaravana emanates this fragrance of devotion from the great saints.

Śrī Maunījī Mahārāj

Fire emanated from Śrī Mauni's body. He used to churn dried fallen leaves in water and drink. All his life, he performed his devotional service at Gahvarvana. He was a great, asangrahi (a non-hoarder saint), and a rare flower within this sacred orchard.

Śrī Priyā Sharana jī Mahārāj

Śrī Priyasharanji Mahārāj, guru of our revered gurudeva Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj, was a staunch devotee of Śrīji. By making Prema Sarovara his abode, he increased the sanctity of this place, where he lived his long, devotional life of over a hundred years at the lotus feet of Śrīji.

barsano hamari rajdhani re ।
maharaj vrushabhanu nrupati jaha, kirtida shubh rani re ॥
gopī gop aop so rajat, bolat madhuri baani re ।
rasik mukut mani kuvari radhika, ved puran bakhani re ॥
khor sankri mohan dhundhyo, daan keli rat thaani re ।
gahvar giri van vithin viharat, gadh vilas sukh daani re ॥
dudh dahi makhan ras ghar ghar, rasna rahti lubhani re ।
paan karan ko amrut sar par, bhanokhari ko pani re ॥
sada sarvada parvat upar, shobhit Sri thakurani re ।
ashta siddhi nav nidhi kar jore, kamla nirkhi lajaani re ॥
diye let nahi chari padarath, jaachat jan abhimani re ।



Bhanu Garh – Sriji Mandir



Barsana – Latthmaar Holi and Rangili Holi



Bhanu Garh – Top - Barsana Brahma,
Below – Barsana Kamdhenu Gau ke Stan



Left – Nagri Das Samadhi, Right – Sriji Appearance Place



Top - Jaipur Mandir, Below – Daan Garh

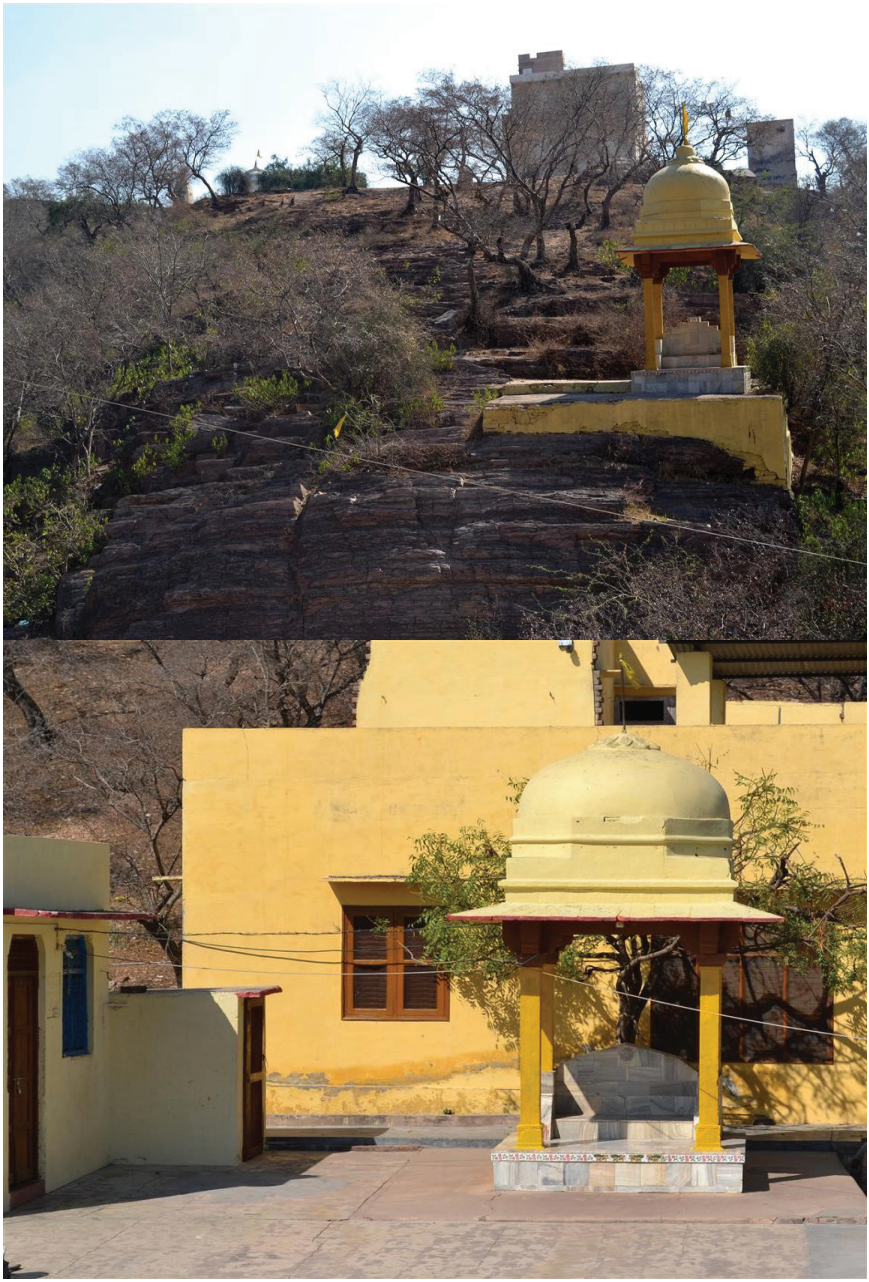


Top – Mor Kuti, Below – Sankari Khor





Barsana – Rangili Hori Samaaj



Daan Garh – Shri Krishna and Shri Radha 's sitting place



Shri Maangarh



Shri Mangarh – Gahvar Van



Shri Gahvar Van and Radha Sarovar



Top Left – Gahvarvan Baithak, Top Right – Ajgar Uddhar Lila,
Below – Vallabhacharya ji and Shankh Shila



Top – Vrishbhanu Kunda, Below – Kirti Kunda





Top – Brajeshwar Mahadev, Below – Piri Pokhar (Priya Kunda)



Top – Prem Sarovar, Below – Vallabhacharya Ji Baithak



Sanket : Top- Gopal Bhatt Bhajan Kutir, Below – Sanket Bihari and Sanketeswari Devi





Top- Shri Radharaman Mandir Sanket , Below – Pt. Harish Chandra Ji Kutiya



Sanket – Vihval Kund and Krishna Kund

Chapter 4
Vivāha Līlā

One of the supreme pastimes in *śṛṅgāra-rāsa* (conjugal love) is the wedding of Priyā–Priyatam, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The majority of people are completely unaware of Their wedding and therefore raise foolish queries about whether Rādha and Kṛṣṇa ever got married? They are under the illusory conception that the wedding never took place. In order to dispel such doubts and establish the truth, the nectarean pastime of Their wedding as narrated by exalted devotees, who experienced the Divine, is presented here in their own words. This will certainly help to elevate both the writer and reader into an ocean of bliss. We should never try to assess the divine pastimes of Rādha and Kṛṣṇa with our limited awareness.

Although every pastime enacted by Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is certainly captivating and sweet. Yet rasik saints of Vrindavan have accepted the lead characters of this wedding pastime, Kṛṣṇa as the groom and Rādhā as His bride, as their worshipable deities. For example, founder of Śrī RadhaVallabh sampradaya, Śrī Hit Harivansh Mahaprabhuji established the worship of Lādalī-Lāla in the form of the Eternal groom and bride as His object of worship.

"khelat rāsa dulhini-dūlah"
nanda aur vṛṣabhanu ghar sajan sagarat riti ।
sri harivansh ju man khanchi Ihi nate dradha priti ॥
(Hita Chaturasi, 62)

From amongst all His infinite activities, the Lord's form in His wedding pastime attracts Śrī Hit the most. Previous acharyas and rasik sanits of Vrindavan have sung the beautiful wedding pastime of the divine couple, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, not once but many times and at numerous places.

The wedding pastime activities of the Divine Couple occurred at five locations: 1. Barṣāṇā, 2. Nandagaon, 3. Vṛndāvana, 4. Bhāndiravana, and 5. Sanket.

Wedding in Barsāna

kimaham varnaye bhagyam rādhayah paramadbhutam ।
brahmadayopi binduha parmanandamandiram ॥
tato vivaham kroda vrushbhanur gunodayaha ।
vaishakhe shita pakshe tu trutiya chaksha ya hya ॥
rohini svaraksha samyukta jayaalagna shubhavaha ।
paari vahardikam datva vastramanna samruddhimat ॥
(Ā.Pu. 12.10,11,12)

How can we describe the unparalleled fortune of Śrījī? Even the devas like Brahmā cannot understand the magnitude of Her blissful fortune. On the *akṣaya tritiya* day in the month of Vaiśākha (April), when the auspicious Rohiṇī nakṣatra (planetary formation) is at the most suitable time, Śrī Vṛṣabhānu performed his daughter's wedding. In this festivity, fashionable gifts, sweets, clothes, and many other items were distributed. Chacha Vṛndāvana dāsji glorified the wedding pastime in Nandagaon and Barṣāṇā elaborately in his compositions entitled *Laād Sagar* and *Braja Premānanda*.

Upon the arrival of the handsome groom (Sri Kṛṣṇa) along with His wedding entourage from Nandagaon to Barsānā, the gopīs gathered in large numbers to have a glimpse of their dearest friend, Rādhā's groom in the courtyard of Bhanu's palace. This wedding ceremony was quite charming and filled with the sounds of the holy Vedic hymns recited by the eminent brāhmaṇas. The women of Braja sang melodious and traditional wedding songs which the joyous gopas and children enjoyed with great delight.

"dina dulaha nandnandan, dulhin radhika" । (Chacha Vṛndavandasa Ji)

In words of Sri Kṛṣṇa dasa:

bhavri bhavan bhanu kai sajni hot hai aaj dekho kije ।
jori gaur shyam hai sajni nirkhi nirkhinainani sukh lije ॥

In the courtyard of Bhanu's palace, this wedding ceremony is very charming amidst the sounds of the holy Vedic chants by Brahmin scholars, sweet Braja wedding songs by the women folk, and the laughter of merry gopas and children.

rasa raskani hit vistaranpragate saval gaur /
ya ras binu dujo kaha ho rasikani ki thor ॥ (Chācha Vrindāvan dās)

Wedding in Nandagaon

In the words of the supreme aṣṭachap poet, Paramānandaji and Surdāsaji have described with great detail the beauty of Rādhikā as a bride. Brajavāsis celebrated this divine union in Nanda's palace with great joy. Ma Yaśodā distributed gifts to the visitors on this divine and joyous occasion with great delight. The great aṣṭachap poet laureate, Sri Paramānanda dāsa writes:

mange savasani bar rukai ।
zagarat arat karat kautuhal cheer jivo mero veer kanhaii ॥
cheer jivo vrushabhanu nandini rup sheel gunsagar bhaii ।
nirkhi nirkhi mukh ji je sajni yahi neg badi sampati paii ॥
dini ghor ghumari piyar aru tako tiyar pahiraii ।
fir sabhin ko mahari jasomati maiya modak god bharaii ॥
aarati kari liye rattan chok me baithare sundar sukhdayii ।
'paramanand' anand nand ke bhag bade ghar nau nidhi ayii ॥

Wedding in Sanketvana

Sanketvana is located midway between Barṣāṇā and Nandagaon. Brahmāji conducted the divine couple's wedding ceremony here. The wedding pavilion was created by Brahmāji for this occasion and it is a great sight for us to see. The gopas accompanied Kṛṣṇa as members of the groom's entourage. The actual wedding that included the tying of the knot, the circumambulation, and chanting of Vedic mantras were all conducted by Brahmāji.

Even today Brajvāsis sing:

dulhan pyari rādhārāni, jako dulha nand kumār ।
nandgaon hari gay charaii ॥

jaha Sri rādhai khelan aii ।
god bhari bhaii shyam sagaii ॥
sanket vat me bhayo byahulo nandgaon sasural ।

In words of Sri Bhaṭṭa Devāchārya

rang rangile gat ke sang barati gwaal ।
dulah roop anoop hainit viharat nandalal ॥
lashe ali nit viharat nandlaal ।
rang rangile ang ang komal, sang barati gwal ॥
dulha Sri brajraj ladilo, dulhin rādha bal ।
jai Sri bhatta ballabi jugal ke gave geet rasal ॥

Wedding in Bhāṇḍiravana

The wedding episode of this place is described in *Garga Saṁhitā*, Goloka khāṇḍa, Chapter 16 and also in the *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇa Janma Kāṇḍa, Chapter 15. The content of the two texts is quite similar.

One day, Nanda Bābā with his little son, Kṛṣṇa, in his lap took the cows out to graze in Bhāndirvana. By the will of *Līlā-bihari* (the Lord of all pastimes), a strong wind suddenly blew. Nandaji became frightened by the storm. Because of strong winds, the leaves and branches from the trees began to fall; the sky was covered with dust. Suddenly, dark threatening clouds covered the sky and caused the forest to become dark and scary. Pretending to be frightened Nanda-lāla (Kṛṣṇa), began to cry clinging tightly to Nanda Bābā.

His *bhaya-līlā* (pastime of being afraid) was also very pleasant.

evaṁ dhārṣṭyāny uśati kurute mehanādīni vāstau ।
steyopāyair viracita-kṛtiḥ supratīko yathāst ॥
itthaṁ strībhiḥ sa-bhaya-nayana-śrī-mukhālokinībhir ।
vyākhyātārthā prahasita-mukhī na hy upālabdhum aicchat ॥

““When Kṛṣṇa is caught in His naughty activities in the houses of cowherd gopis, they chastise Him.

Gopis said to Mother Yashoda: Sometimes, being angry, Kṛṣṇa passes urine and stool in a neat, clean place in our houses. But now, our dear friend Yaśodā, this expert thief is sitting before you like a very good boy.” Sometimes all the gopīs would look at Kṛṣṇa sitting

there, His eyes fearful so that His mother would not chastise Him, and when they saw Kṛṣṇa's beautiful face, instead of chastising Him they would simply look upon His face and enjoy transcendental bliss. Mother Yaśodā would mildly smile at all this fun, and she would not want to chastise her blessed transcendental child." (ŚB. 10.8.31)

Mother Kuntī also beholds the enchantment of His fearfulness.

gopy ādade tvayi kṛtāgasi dāma tāvad ।
yā te daśāśru-kalilāñjana-sambhramākṣam ।
vaktraṁ ninīya bhaya-bhāvanayā sthitasya ।
sā māṁ vimohayati bhīr api yad bibheti ।

"My dear Kṛṣṇa, Yaśodā took up a rope to bind You when You offended her by breaking the pot of curd. You stood there full of fear, with Your face cast down and Your perturbed eyes overflooded with tears, which washed the mascara from Your eyes. You were so stricken with fear, though fear personified is afraid of You. This sight is bewildering to me." (ŚB. 1.8.31)

The gopīs also enacted His sweet pastime of being afraid.

baddhānyayā srajā kācit ।
tanvī tatra ulūkhale ।
badhnāmi bhāṇḍa-bhettāraṁ ।
haiyaṅgava-muṣaṁ tv iti ।
bhītā su-dṛk pidhāyāsyaṁ ।
bheje bhīti-viḍambanam ।

"One gopī tied up her slender companion with a flower garland and said, "Now I will bind this boy to the grinding mortar beacuse He has broken the butter pots and stolen the butter." The second gopī then covered her face and beautiful eyes, pretending to be afraid." (ŚB. 10.30.23)

While Nanda Bābā was thinking about how to take Kṛṣṇa back home, suddenly, the most effulgent Rādhā in a blue dress appeared before him. Looking at the glowing form of Śrīji, Nanda bowed down to Her with

folded hands and said, "O Radhe! Garga told me that Kṛṣṇa is Your consort and You are His beloved." For the sake of establishing this pastime, He appeared to be fearful. "Now, You alone are capable of taking Him back home." Also, Nandaji asked for a boon from Śrī Rādhā of devotion to Yugala's lotus feet and love for the saints. Śrīji granted the boon, took Nanda-lāla into Her arms from Nandaji's lap; and then left to go to Bhāṇḍiravana.

Bhudevī (mother earth), Vṛindāvana, Yamunā, and Govardhana hill all suddenly looked very magnificent with green and blossoming decorations. Immediately, Kṛṣṇa manifested His youthful form of an adolescent and presented Himself before Rādhā. They looked so beautiful; the ornaments obtained beauty from Them! Lālaji held Śrīji's hand and stepped into the wedding pavilion. Brahmā appeared and addressed Them in this way "By Your will alone and to reveal the glories of conjugal love, this wedding pastime is enacted by both of You. Thus, You fulfill the desires of devotees and deliver the fallen souls by attracting them with the sweetness of Your divine pastimes. Now, as requested by You, I will execute this wedding ceremony according to Vedic injunctions and as per the social customs."

sa vahyamasa hari ca radikam pradakshinam saptahiranyaretasah ।
tatasca tau tam pranamya vedavittau pathyamasa ca saptamantrakam ॥

(Ga.Sa.Go.Kha, 16.31)

As Brahmā was chanting the Vedic mantras and performing the ceremonial rite, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa sat before the sacred fire. Bowing down, Brahmā instructed Them to chant the seven Vedic mantras loudly and clearly.

kautukam karayamasa saptadha ca pradakshinam ।
punah pradakshinam radham karayitva hutashanam ॥

(Bra.Vai.Pu. – Kru Ja Kha.15.125-126)

After circumambulating the sacred fire seven times, Brahmā ji made them recite the vedic mantra with Śrīji's hand on Kṛṣṇa's chest and Kṛṣṇa's hand on Śrīji's back. Then placing a lovely, fragrant, white garland of pārijāta flowers into Śrīji's hands, Brahmā asked Her to garland Kṛṣṇa and also requested Kṛṣṇa to garland Śrīji.

After this, the wedded couple offered obeisances to the sacred fire. Then Brahmā served as the father of the bride, offered Śrīji to Kṛṣṇa, the most eligible groom in the universe! As he was offering Śrīji's hand to Kṛṣṇa, devas showered flowers and the heavenly damsels danced and sang auspicious songs, melodiously glorifying Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The sound from various musical instruments filled the whole atmosphere. Brahmā asked for devotion to Their lotus-feet as his dakṣiṇa (remuneration offered to a priest). Thus, Brahmā performed the wedding of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Bhāndirvana. (*Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇa Janma Khānda, 15.125-126)

Wedding in Vṛindāvana

The wedding of the Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛindāvana took place at Vaṁśīvaṭa. After the Holī festival, the gopīs brought Śrīji and Thakurji to Vaṁśīvaṭa and celebrated Their wedding joyfully by tying the knot between Nīlāmbara (one who is wearing blue garment) and Pītambara (one who is wearing yellow garment). Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī sang this glorious wedding pastime in his highly-esteemed composition *Gopāla Champu*, 35. 63-66. Śrīji's golden aura was more dazzling than thousands of suns and Śyāmasundara's soft and bluish aura was more attractive than the combination of a fresh rain cloud and a glowing sapphire. Their bodies were shining like mirrors which reflected each other's image, increasing their effulgence in an unlimited manner. Everybody was wonderstruck at Their infinite beauty which caused the remaining procedures of the wedding ceremonies to come to a virtual halt.

nilamber pitamber so gathi jori ke ।
dulhu dulhuni nirkhi taruni trun tori ke ।
mor banayo sees aam ke mor ko ।
byah rachyo banshivat mangal thor ko ।
geet punit sunit su kokil gav hi ।
thorni thorni bhor subheri bajavahi ।
Sri braj nari ghamarni garini gavhi ।
thorni thorni kokil phag manavahi ।
ho balihari jau biharini nam ke ।
nitya vihara ko har kanth ghanshyam ke-

(Shrungar Rasa Sagar, p.130)

The elders, who were supervising the wedding advised the bride and groom to tie Their garments in a knot and to circumambulate the holy fire. Those fortunate souls present on that auspicious occasion were entirely lost in the bliss of this majestic sight. Everyone's eyes were moving around the holy fire along with the movement of each step of the Divine Couple. A detailed description of this wedding is found in *Śrī Hari Vilāsa Līlāmrita Tantra*. The supremely fortunate Vṛṣabhānu invited many brāhmaṇas and inquired about the most auspicious day and time for the wedding. All Rasikācharyas, in their own words have desribed this Divine Wedding in various ways.





Top - Sanket - Vivaah Ki Vedi - Marriage Altar. Bottom - Sanket - Jhula

Chapter 5
Rādhā's Eight Principal Consorts

Lalitā, Viśhākhā, Champakalatā, Chitralekhā, Tuṅgavidyā, Indulekhā, Rañgadevī, and Sudevī are the eight principal consorts of Rādhārāṇī.

Description of Lalitā's Abode in Unchagaon

lalita lalita vani rādhaiaya atyanta vallabha ।
mukhya sakhi samakhyata sarvada sarddha gamini ॥ (Va.Pu.)

Lalitā's glories are described in *Adi Purāṇa*, *Narada Panch Ratra*, *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa* and others.

Lalitā sakhi lived on the top of the Sakhīgiri hill and she was one of the principal associates of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Their various pastimes. Lalitā, who always accompanied Śrīji was considered to be one of Her closest friends. Śrīji accepted and appreciated Lalitā's instructions. Gopa Mahābhanu who was also known as Ashok and his wife Śāradī lived in Unchagaon on the hilltop. Śāradī gave birth to a daughter named Lalitā two days before Rādhā, on the 6th day of the bright half of Bhādrapadā, July-August, in the Viśākhā nakṣatra. The time of her birth is 4 hours 24 minutes after sunrise. Sumana, Sushupa, Kanchi, Dīpikā, Pradīpikā, Nagri, Pravala, and Gaurī are Lalitā's eight friends. They are also known by other names in the local folklore. The procedure for Lalitā's *abhiṣeka* (bathing ceremony) is described in the scriptures.

The markings on Sakhīgiri hill include the Sun, Moon, *kīrā-katora* (sweet-rice bowl), dahi kaṭora (curd bowl), pushkarini (a *kuṇḍa*), and Rāsa Maṇḍala (circular arena). These marks are worth seeing as these are significant markings dating from Kṛṣṇa's time. An ancient well exists near

this hill from which the gopīs used to offer water to Kṛṣṇa. Phisalani śilā is a rock found nearby that remains a center of attraction for visitors to see even today. Kṛṣṇa used to slide on this rock while playing. The wedding place of Lalitā where Kṛṣṇa married her is located nearby. According to Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭaji, Kṛṣṇa wedded all the sakhīs. When the gopīs walked with fresh henna (natural reddish colored dye) applied on their feet, the rock became tinted with henna. This can be seen even to this day, as an evidence of this pastime of the Lord. A little further is Lalitā Ata (Atore hill), where Kṛṣṇa and Lalitā played together.

At the bottom of this hill is a kuṇḍa called Deh-kuṇḍa where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed the deh-dāna (pastime of giving each other in charity). A tradition of dāna, submission in charity, is prevalent here. While existing in this material body, the greatest offering is the chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord, happily engaging ourselves in Their divine service, and relinquishing all of our vices, such as not consuming forbidden substances: cigarettes, tobacco, and alcohol, drugs, meats, fish and eggs. We should maintain high moral standards. All subtle contaminations such as kāma, krodha, mada, moha, lobha, and mātsarya, (lust, anger, ego, attachment, greed, and hatred) and finding faults in others, must also be given up.

Uchagaon

gopa nam mahabhanu: sardi nam gopīni ।
uccha gramame prava stavyo dampati pravato pari ॥
tayoha kanya bhavishyati lalita nam vishruta ।
manohara cha gauranga krushna chinhena lachhita ॥
tasya gramasya pashchim bhagatah sakhi giri nam parvatosti ।
tasyo pari chaika pushkarini sthita ॥

Adi Purāne

bhadrasya shukra shashthi tu vishakha rusha samyuta ।
par vidhya sada karya purva vidhya na kahirchita ॥
suryodaya tsma ramye ekadash ghatikah gatah ।

Nārada Pancharātre

bhadrasya shukla pakshya dwadashi shravananvita ।
vyatita ghatika shatcha suryodaya pravartita ॥
tatkshane lalita tatra agta sakhibhih samam ।
ashtabhi sakhibhi sardha sumana dibhi samyuta ॥

Brahmā Vaivarta Purāna, Rādhā khande

sumana sushuopa kanchi dipika cha pradipika ।
nagari pravalagauni lalitaya upasakhi ॥
bhashaya loka anya namani vadanti ityapvadah ॥

Vāyu Purāne

lalita lalitavani rādhaiya atyant vallabha ।
mukhya sakhi sama khyata sarvada sardha gamini ॥

On the other side of this hill is Phisalani-śilā, where Kṛṣṇa used to go to slide with His friends on this flat boulder. On the 12th day of the bright half of July-August in the Śravaṇa nakṣatra at 6 ghātī (2 hours 24 minutes; 1 ghātī = 24 minutes) from the sunrise, Lalitā arrived there with her eight girlfriends. Lalitā played with her friends at Phisalani-śilā. Later, Nanda-nandana wedded Lalitāji; decorating the bride and groom with floral ornaments, all the devas were present on that occasion. The wedding was duly performed with the chanting of prescribed Vedic mantras.

Later, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's friends, coming from the western side, joined in the celebration. And, Lalitāji, accompanied by her eight sakhīs came there. All of them played together for some time, tired, rested for a while, and then bathed in the cool waters there, the origin of 'deh-kuṇḍa'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa presented gifts of gold and returned home with His friends. On the other side, the sakhīs narrated the entire incident to mother Saradī. Then Mahābhanu gopa invited Nanda Bābā and offered many exquisite wedding gifts, seating Śrī Kṛṣṇa on the throne with Lalitā on His right side.

Śrīji always appreciates Lalitāji's words. She is considered to be Śrīji's principal sakhī and always accompanies Her.

Description of Viśākhā's Abode in Anjanavana (Ānjnonh)

anjapure samakhyatesubharnup gopah samsthitah ।
devda niti vikhyata gopīni nimishasuta ॥
tayoh sutasamutpanna vishakha nam vishruta ।
guna rupvati krushna sarva lakshana lakshita ॥

(Ā.Vā.Pu.)

Ādi Varāha Purāna

According to *Ādi Varāha Purāṇa*, Subhanu Gopa lived in the village of Ānjnonh with his wife Nimiṣa-Nandinī Devadani. The couple was blessed with a virtuous and beautiful daughter bearing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's attributes, whom they named Viśākhā. Her glories are described in *Adi Varāha Purāṇa*, *Bhavishyottara Purāṇa*, *Matsya Purāṇa*, to name a few.

Bhavishyottara Purāṇa

According to *Bhaviṣyottara Purāṇa*, Viśākhā was born on the same day as Rādhā, on the eighth bright day merging with the ninth, in the month of Bhādrapadā, July-August, in the Purvaśada-nakṣatra.

Matsya Purāṇa

According to *Mātāsya Purāṇa*, the eight friends of Viśākhā are Sumanohara, Maṅgala, Sumukhi, Bahupatra, Supadma, Padmalekhā, Supatra and Padma. They are also known by other names in the pastimes. Viśākhā's place is on the right side of Kṛṣṇa.

Brihat Gautamiya Tantra

Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, took Viśākhāji's hand in His own, and went to Garjapur [Gazipur]. According to Brahmā Gautamiya-tantra, Lalitā ji also arrived there with her eight sakhīs. Lalitā Ji invoked Viśvakarmā, a divine architect and instructed him to construct a temple for her where she sat under a magnificent (umbrella). Kṛṣṇa held Viśākhā's hand during the wedding. At Anjanpura, Kṛṣṇa, from whose heart a constant shower of love emanates, accepted Viśākhā as His consort at the time of sunset, and then all of them played together in the water. Because of Kṛṣṇa's amorous pastimes in love (*prema*), this place is known as 'Prema Kuṇḍa' or Prema Sarovara. Kṛṣṇa gave this beautiful temple to Lalitā Ji. Here, Viśākhā Ji is at the south (*dakshina*) of Kṛṣṇa. Viśākhā Ji later left for home with her female friends.

nāyaṁ sukhāpo bhagavān dehināṁ gopīkā-sutaḥ ।
jñāninām cātma-bhūtānāṁ yathā bhaktimatām iha ॥

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the son of mother Yaśodā, is accessible to devotees engaged in spontaneous loving service, but He is not easily accessible to mental speculators or to those striving for self-realization by severe austerities and penances, or to those who consider the body the same as the self." (ŚB. 10.9.21)

Once the gopīs in Anjanavana anxiously waited till midnight for Śyāmasundara. As soon as Śyāmasundara arrived, one of them held His hand and another placed a garland on His neck. A third gopī could not help but ask, "Why did You come so late today?" Śyāmasundara replied, "My guru, Śrī Durvāsa had come to Bhāṇḍiravana today. I got delayed as I was serving him." The gopīs exclaimed, "We too would like to meet Your Gurudeva and serve him by offering some food." Śyāmasundara said, "My guru is durvahari, meaning that he takes only grass juice. But since your love is straightforward and innocent and the whole world recognizes your pure devotion, it is possible that Gurudeva may accept your offering." The gopīs asked, "Śyāmasundara, how can we go? The Yamunā is flowing so high in this month of Śravaṇa (rainy season)!" Śyāmasundara suggested, "You tell Yamunā that if Kṛṣṇa is *bal-brahmachārī* (one who is celibate from birth), then give way to us. You will then be able to go across the river."

bhadre mase shite pakshe navmi samyuta ashtami ।
purvahadhyutagrahya purva vidhya tu karyet ॥
param vidhya sada tyajyavishakha janma sangyaka ।
kadatchit samaya krushnahgo charan mishen cha ॥
rādha priti kari krushnago dhumo pam samsthitam ।
phani gruhitva hasten garja pur mu pagatih/ ॥
(*Bhavishyottara Puranam*)

mangala sumukhi padhmasupadhma sumanohara
supatra bahupatra cha padhma lekheti tah smrutah
iti vishakhaya upsakhya bhashaya anyanamani vadanti
ituadauvishakhayah sthan varna nam (*Matsya Purāṇa*)

It so happened on that midnight, when the gopīs said, "O Yamunā! If Kṛṣṇa is a true celibate, then give way to us." Instantly, Yamunā opened a path for them and they all were able to traverse across. On reaching the place of Durvāsa, they spoke thus, "Mahāraja, we have come here to have your audience and to offer you some food." Durvāsā replied, "I am a paramahaṁsa (one is beyond all rules) beyond karma and always content. Even though I do not need food, since you wish, you may feed me with your own hands." The gopīs were feeding the Ṛṣi bite by bite. Suddenly, his mouth expanded so much that they were able to put whole bowl full into his mouth. Thus, all the food was quickly consumed." The gopīs said, "Mahāraja, how do we go back?" Durvāsa replied, "Go as you have come!" The gopīs explained, "While coming here, we told Yamunā that if Kṛṣṇa is a true celibate, she should let us go through and by saying so, we crossed the river." Durvāsā said, "All right, this time you should say, "If Durvāsa is Pavanhari (one who is living on air alone,), then give us the way." The gopīs wondered, "How ironic is this. He has just eaten tons of food from our hands and is calling himself pavanhari?" It appeared to them that the disciple and guru were similar in their actions. Reaching the banks of Yamunā, they repeat as they were told and lo! Yamunā cleared the way for them!

They crossed over and immediately went to Kṛṣṇa and told Him, "After due consideration, we have concluded that both You and Your guru are liars! You are calling Yourself a *Bala-brahmacārī*, whereas You sing and dance with us day and night. Those who are celibate do not even look towards women. And, how can Your guru call himself *pavanhari*? He gulped all the foods we gave him and still he claimed that he does not eat anything! Are these two statements not blatant lies?" Śyāmasundara replied, "O gopīs! In truth, when there is no presence of false ego in a man, the actions performed by him become inaction and then even the forbidden actions performed by him do not bind him."

The seed of the *Bhagavd-gītā* was sown here, which later grew as the *Mahābhārata* at Kurukṣhetra.

yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāma-saṅkalpa-varjitāḥ ।
jñānāgni-dagdha-karmāṇaṁ tam āhuḥ paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ ॥

"One is understood to be in full knowledge, whose all endeavours are free from the desire of sense gratification. He is said a perfect Yogi by sages whose all actions have been burned up by the fire of perfect knowledge." (BG. 4.19)

Kajroti-śilā is in Śrī Anjanavana. Once, Śrīji forgets to apply anjan (mascara), around Her eyes; Viśākhā produced a kajroti-śilā (stone) from which Śrīji took the mascara by rubbing Her finger against it and applied on Her eyes. Even today, this stone is famous because mascara is obtained after rubbing finger on it.

Prayer Mantra for Aanjanapuravana

deva gandharva lokanam ramya vaihar rupine ।
vaichitra murtayetubhyam anjana puh vanahaya ॥

"O magnificent Anjanavana! We offer obeisance unto you. You are an attractive and entertaining forest and a suitable place of residence for the devas, the gandharvas, and humans."

Mantra for snanam and achmana: (bathing and sipping water) at Kishori Kuṇḍa

kishori ranna aramyaya pita rakta jalapluta ।
tirtha raja namastubhyam kṛṣṇa krida vidhayine ॥

"O Tirtharaja Kishori kuṇḍa, the one filled with yellow and reddish water from the bathing of Sri Kishori (Rādhārāni), we offer our obeisance to you."

Prayer Mantra for Kṛṣṇa-Kishori Darshan

yashodanand krushnaya priyayai satatam namah ।
kishor rupine tubhyam vallabhaye namostute ॥

"O Śrī Priya-Prīyatām, who kindly and eternally bestows bliss unto Yaśodā, we offer our obeisance." (*Kurma Purāṇa*)

Description of Indulekhā's Abode in Rankoli (Rankpur)

asyāḥ sakhyaḥ samākhyātāḥ kāncanen samanvitāḥ ।
sulekhā padhmavadanā vichitrā kāmakuntalā ॥
sughandha nāgakeśi ca katisaindhri sulatikā ।
lekhayāsta upāsakhya ashtau cha kathitāḥ śubhāḥ ॥
indulekhayaḥ sthānam śrī kṛṣṇasya vamabhage ।
śrī rādhāyāḥ nikatopaveśanam ityadav indulekhāyaḥ sthāna varṇanam ॥
(*Viṣṇu Rahasya*)

According to Viṣṇurahasya Purāṇa

The names of her friends adorned with gold ornaments are: Sulekha, Padmavadana, Vichitra, Kāmakuntala, Sugandha, Nāgkeshi, Katisaindhari, and Sulatika. Endowed with auspicious attributes, all of them have been described as Indulekhā's companions. Indulekhā's place is to the left of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, next to Śrīji.

Gautamiya-tantra

One eminent Gopa named Randhir lived in Rankpur, Rankoli, located on the southern side. Sumukhi was his wife. They were blessed with a lovely daughter and named her Indulekhā. Indulekhā was born on the Ekādaśī, eleventh day merged with daśamī, on the bright half of Bhādrapadā at auspicious moment after 16 *ghāṭi*, 6 hrs 24 mins, had passed from the time of sunrise.

Description of Campakalata's Abode in Karhala (Karhapur)

Brhan Naradiya Purane

bhadre mase shite pakshesaptami cha ashtami yuta ।
anurādhai yuta chapi shubha yoga samanvita ॥

In Gautamiya Tatra

champaklata sakhi bhirashtabhi svagruham gata ।
champaklataya sthanam sri krushnasya dakshine bhage ॥
sukeshi padhma nayana sunetra kam dipika ।

pradipika sukarni cha rag saiyukta venika ॥
navneet priya chashto champakaya upasakhya ।
bhashayam anya namani vadanti
ityado champaklataya sthanam varnam ।

A famous Gopa, by the name of Manubhupa lived with his wife, Sukanthi in Karhapur village (Karhala). Campakalatā, a girl with all auspicious qualities, was their beloved daughter, who was the third principal companion of Śrīji. According to *Brhan Nāradiya Purāṇa*, she was born on the 7th bright day of Bhādrapadā month, July-August, 5 hours and 36 minutes after sunrise when Anurādhā nakṣatra was in the auspicious planetary arrangement. According to *Gautamiya*, the place of Campakalatā is on the right side of Kṛṣṇa. The names of her eight friends were Padmanayana, Sunetra, Kāmadīpikā, Navanītapriya, Pradīpikā, Sukarni, Rāgsanyuktavenika, and Sukeśī. Nanda-nandana comes here to enjoy amorous pastime with her.

Prayer Mantra for Champaklata

trailokya mohnayaivanamaste karha bhidha ।
gandharva sukha vasaya vishvav surprada ॥

"O Karahvana! O most charming forest in the three worlds, as you are a comfortable abode for the Gandharvas and granter of all material wealth, we bow down to you to offer our respectful obeisance." (*Bhavishyottara Purāṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for snāna and ācamana for Lalitā-sarovara

lalita snapanod bhuta tirthraja namostute ।
lalita sarse tubhyam saubhagya var dayine ॥

"O King of all pilgrimage! You are one of Lalitā's bathing places and liberally grant prosperity, we bow down to offer our respectful obeisance." (*Bhavishyottara Purāṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for Rāsa Mandal

lalita mahad utsah gopīka nritya rupine ।
krṣṇa krida bhi ramyaaya mandalaaya namostute ॥

"O most charming arena of the dancing festivities, where Kṛṣṇa enjoys amorous pastimes with Lalitā and her numerous friends, we bow down to you." (*Bhavishyottara Purāṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for Kadam Khand

kṛṣṇa gopal rupaygopī bhiralam krutah ।
kadam khaṇḍa goshthay saukhya dhamne namostute ॥

"O Kadamkhandi! O most delightful place, where Gopāla Kṛṣṇa meets with many of His friends, we bow down to you." (*Bhavishyottara Purāṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for Hindol

rādha kṛṣṇa mahotsah lalitotsava hetave ।
brāhmaṇa nirmita yaiva hindolay namostute ॥

"O Hindole, created by Brahmā, specifically for the celebration of Lalitā's great festival arranged for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pleasure, we bow down to you." (*Bhavishyottara Purāṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for the Place of Wedding

bhadra devi sakhi ramya vivahotsava mangalyaih ।
lalita granthi dattaya namo vaivaha rupine ॥ (*Bhavishyottara Purāṇa*)

Bhadra sakhī tied a knot between Lalitā and Kṛṣṇa during Their marriage at this location. The most significant thing was that the enacting of the Ras-Lila pastime was initiated in Karhala by Śrī Uddhavadeva Āchārya, a disciple of Harivyāsā Devāchārya. After revealing this pastime, he moved to Vaṁśīvata in Vṛindāvana. He was very proud of the Lord's Grace, and thus people called him by the name 'Ghamand', but that proud was not due to his false ego, but was an outcome of his true deep love for the divine couple.

Sri Dhruvadasa Ji

Rās bihārī lāl drigan te dūr bhayo jaba|
Timir grasit bho bhāv nahīn jāne koū tab ||

Shrī swāmī haridās khās lalitā vapu tinko |
Prakaṭ karan bhaī rās mahal te ājnyā jinako ||

Nām ghamanḍa sanakādi sampradā rasamaya jinakī |
Adhikārī ras maī samujhi niramal budhi tinaki ||

Shrī madhupurī samīp ghāṭ vishrāanta nām tahā |
Shrī āchāraj viṣhṇu swāmi mat poshak hai jah ||

Kahī chalau tin pas aas meri ve pujave |
Sevā rīt alaukik pragaṭī hai tin braj mein ||

After Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Rāsabihari-lāla, concluded His divine pastimes in Braja, people gradually forgot about devotion to Him. Braja has become hidden and lifeless.

Śrī swami Haridāsa khaas Lālaitā vapu - Swami Haridāsa, who is said to be an incarnation of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's close friend, Lālaitā-sakhī, sought permission from Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa of the Nikuñja Palace to re-enact the Rāsa-līlā for the people of Braja. Śrī Ghamananda Devacārya of the Nimbārkā sampradāya, a devotional scholar and saint, was also present there and chosen to do the work.

Śrī madhupuri samip ghat vishrant - Viṣṇu Swami, the original preceptor of the Rudra Sampradāya (later known as Puṣṭimārga), was living there. Śrī Haridāsa Swami ji accompanied by Śrī Ghamanandji, then went to seek the blessings and guidance of Śrī Viṣṇu Swami for the rāsa-līlā performance since he understood all the intricacies of this exalted and divine service.

Tin ḍhianga swāmī gae kushal pūchhī beṭhāre |
Kaho priye sakhi kavan hetu yahā charaṇ padhāre ||
Tab swāmī haridās kahyo prabhu antarajāmī |
Tumate kachhu nahi chhipau kahā pūchhat jagaswāmī ||

Aiso karo upāya rās ras pragaṭe jan mean |
Jo kachhu ichchhā rahī kaho tum āge man mean ||
Koī parva nimit rahe tahan vāman rājā |
Shrī goswāmī kahayo lehu kachhu in soan kājā ||
Prāṇāyām chaḍhaāya roki dasahū indri taba |
Kachhu din pīchhe kahyo suno mere tum jan ab ||
Nabh te utarat mukuṭ sabe vishvās dṛuḍhāvan |
Saptatāl vistarit jag magat ati nagvargan||

Sabako darshan bhayo mukuṭ jab bhūpar āyo |
dhūpa-dīp nevedya saban le tāhi Chaḍhāyau ||
Sabare bhūpan praṣhna kiyau tāhi chhin prabhu soan |
Kihi kāraṇ āgaman bhayo so kaho kin hamasoan ||

Rās kīḍaā karo kahī yah bāt jatāvana |
Nahian yāmean kachhu dos yahī hai hamarī kāman ||
Tāmra patra mean muhar karo sabare tumahu kin |
Ke kachhu shankā hoya karo meṭū yāhi chhin ||
Apanī-apanī muhar sabī kar gaye des kū |
Mānat rehean sadā mokṣhadātā hai hamakū ||

Sabahī dekhat gupta mukaṭ mo tā hī arasā |
Jai-je nabh dhuni bhaī suran karī puṣhpan barasā ||
Tab swāmī haridās kahī ab der karat kit |
Chhin pal hamako koṭi-kalpa sam bītat hai it ||

Māthur bhakti parāyaṇ tinakau nikat bulayo |
Param mato ham deu aṣhṭa bālak man bhāye ||

Upon their arrival in Mathura, Śrī Viṣṇu Swami asked Haridāsa Swami and Ghamanandji; “What is the purpose of your visit?” Haridāsa Swami smiled and replied, “You know everything, Prabhu! Since you are the intermediary between the Supreme Lord and others. Haridāsa Swami then requested Śrī Viṣṇu Swami, “Please have mercy upon us. Display the nectar of rāsalīlā to everyone so that they may become enlightened.” Śrī Viṣṇu Swami replied, “Gather some qualified brāhmaṇas and righteous kings. Perform pranayama for a few days. When you do this, all will be ready and we will be connected in friendship.”

Then two divine crowns for Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Mādhava descended from the sky. They were shining and studded with precious diamonds. Seeing

this astonishing sight, the people's faith in Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was rekindled. They bowed down, offered prayers, and gave proper homage to the Supreme Lord and His Consort's personal belongings.

Sabre bhupan prashna kiyo - The kings then inquired from the two crowns about their purpose in coming to earth? The crowns informed the kings that it was their wish that the kings organize a rāsa-līlā.

All of you, put your sign and stamp here. If anyone has a doubt, then ask us. We will clear your doubt immediately. All kings provided their accreditation and went back to their kingdom. They were assured that they would receive the Lord's blessings for ever more through those crowns.

Sab hi dekhat gupt Mukut - Everyone was having darśana of divine crowns. There was the divine sounds of "Jaya, jaya" emanating from the skies and the demigods were showering flower petals. Seeing this, Swami Haridāsaji asked, "Now what are we waiting for? Every moment is like a yuga. Swamiji asked the devotee brāhmaṇas of Mathura, to select and give him eight, attractive, and beautiful children. Soon the brāhmaṇas came before him as requested. Who could understand divine destiny of those kids, having been chosen by the Lord.

Shrī swāmī haridās kiyoan siangār priyā koau |
Shrī āchāraj dev kiyo mohan rasiyā kau ||
Puni bṛundāvan āya rās maṇḍal niramānyoan |
Ved purāṇ shāstra tantran jā rīt baravānyoan ||
Tā madhi jugal kisor thāpi puni sakhi padharāī |
Āpun kiyo samāj kṛuṣhṇa līlā tab gāī ||
Mahārās tab kiyo lāl bhaye aantaradhyānā |
Vana-van ḍhūnḍhat fire sakhī kara-kar gun gānā ||
Mukhiyā sakhi ju sanga tāhi piya chhoḍa gaye jab |
Jo jo jahā kī tahāan rahī pāī nāahī tab ||
Rasik janan ke hṛudaya bhayo ati hi dukh daavan|

Pratham grās mean bhayo makṣhikā ko yah pātan |
Māthur apane putran ko māangan jab āye ||
Tab unasoan yah kyoan nahīn hamakūan kahūan pāye |
ati jhagaro tin kiyo tabe yah kari vaarta |
Tumhare putran ko jū bhaī hai tadākāratā ||
Hamako nishchean hoya karo soī kṛutya gusāin |

Tab unake sab putra lāl ḍhinga diye dikhāī ||
Apane- apane gharan māthuran kiye palāyan |
Ghamanḍa dev so kahyon sunoan guru bhakti parayan ||

Tum braj ke bāsīn māanhi kījean shiṣh shāṣhā |
Tin soan yah mārag ju chalāo sunī mam bhāṣhā ||
Aisean ājnyā daī gaye apane-apane thala |
Pun ghamanḍaswāmī gayegrām karahalā māhi ||
Udayakaraṇ aru khemakaraṇ dvai bhrātā dvijavar |
Tinahīan soan yah rās prathā chalī suno rasikavar ||
(rās sarvasva, dvitiya nidhi, Swāmī Rādhākṛuṣhṇa)

Swami Haridāsaji chose one child to adorn him as Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Śrī Viṣṇu Swamiji decorated another as beautiful Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then both of these great devotees made a rāsa-mandal (an area for the 'rāsa' dance) in Vṛndāvana. This arena was made exactly according to the Vedas, Purāṇas, and scriptures. In the middle, there was a vicinity for Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then the sakhīs (consorts of both) entered. Swami Haridāsaji and Viṣṇu Swamiji had the spectators (a crowd of devotees) sit and sing a song of Kṛṣṇa-līlā. Śrī Śrī Rasbihari Lālaji began the maha-rāsa; then towards the end, Śrī Rāsa Bihari Lāla (the child who acted as Kṛṣṇa) disappeared and the sakhīs started to look for Them while praising Them. At this time, the children who were consorts of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in this rāsa-līlā, they too disappeared. The people were unhappy to see this. They were absorbed in the festive nectar and suddenly it had vanished.

When the brāhmaṇas asked for their offspring, even Haridāsaji and Viṣṇu Swamiji could not find them. Learning about their disappearance, the brāhmaṇas inquired from these saints. They were told, "Your kids are with Lālaji Śrī Kṛṣṇa'." The Brāhmaṇas asked, if that's true then show us the proof. These great saints showed them how their children were actually with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. After seeing this miracle the brāhmaṇas went to their places. They approached Śrī Ghamand devajii and requested, "Oh most pious devotee, Gurudeva, please have mercy on brajabāsīs and let them be your disciples; so through them the teachings of the rāsa-līlā began and now continues. The Mathura brāhmaṇas went to their own places after requesting to Ghamand devaji. Then he went to the village of Karhala in Braja, where there were two excellent brāhmaṇa brothers named Udaykaran and Khemkaran. They are the ones who initiated the study of rāsa-līlā.

Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's Appreciation for Rāsa

thor thor raas ke vilas le pragat kiye ।
jiye yo rasik jan koti such pae hai ॥

Priya Dāsa Ji, who wrote a comment on *Bhakta-māla*, notes that Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa ji was not only a lover of Divine sentiment of rās but also arranged for those rās-lila pastimes expressing the divine sentiment to be enacted at various places. This made him a favourite among the people. A great devotee, Śrī Dhruva dāsaji, who lived between 1650 and 1698, also highly praised Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's interest in relishing these divine sentiments.

Later, Ācārya Nārāyaṇaji, being inspired by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, selected a Brahmin boy-child for Kṛṣṇa's role, an innocent girl-child as Rādhā, and other children dressed as gopīs. He used to take them to various places to perform many pastimes depicting the scenes like Kṛṣṇa tending the calves, subduing Kāliya, the python, or the Sanjhi pastime. He is considered to be an incarnation of Nārada and he presented many of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

bhatt narayan ati saras braj mandal sau hetu ।
thor thor rachna kari prakat kiyo sanket ॥

Ath nārāyaṇāchāryah shrīkṛuṣhṇajnyāpraṇoditah ।
Brāhmaṇan sundar bālan kṛuṣhṇaveṣhanvidhāya cha ॥
Rāghāveṣham tathā chekam gopīveṣhāanstathāparān ।
Rāsalīlāan sa sarvatra kārayāmās dīkṣhitah ॥
Kutrachit gopaveṣhen govatsānchārayan hariah ।
Tathā līlāan ch kṛutavān kālīyadamanādijām ॥
Sāanzikā rachanan kāpi rādhāgopibhirev cha ।
Anyā bahuvidhā līlāyā yāah kṛuṣhṇashrakārah ॥
Sarva līlānukaraṇan kārayāmās nāradah ।
Channāpurdevatāahsarve Munayo vā ghṛutavṛutāah ॥
Tatmāpurmanujāah sarve līlādashanajan sukham ।
Yasmin dine yadakṣhe vā kṛuṣhṇo līlāan chakārah ॥
Tasmin dine sthale tasmin bhaṭṭo bhāskar sanbhavah ।
Kārayāmās tāan līlāan vāleah kṛuṣhṇadiveṣhibhiah ॥
Tatah Prabhūti sarvatra Vaneṣhūpavaneṣhuch ।
Braje tithesu kunjesu rāsalīlā vabhūvah ॥

These pastimes, which even munis could not have witnessed, became easily available to the masses. Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, with a group of trained children, presented the same pastimes at the matching place and day as Kṛṣṇa did. From then onwards, these wonderful pastimes are being enacted in many different places. In the pilgrimages conducted by the Vallabhā sect, the pastimes are specially organized at various significant places.

Karhavan is one of the model woodlands. Karhala is said to be the originator of rāsa. Also, it is said that the grandmother of Candrāvalī, whose name is Karala, was born here, hence the place draws its name from her. There are many baithaks, sitting platforms, of Śrī Nāthajī in Braja which he visited while accompanying Mahaprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya Ji. One such place is this. We also see the sitting place of Gosāinji and Gokul Nāthajī here. Adjoining this is Kankan-kuṇḍa, also called Kankanpur. A kankan (bracelet), was tied to Kṛṣṇa in Rās-Līlā pastime at this place. A crown descended from the skies at a nearby location Haveli (Maroi). Ghamand devaji started the tradition of Rās-Līlā using this crown only. This crown which is shown to the visitors once in a year, is worth seeing in Haveli (Maroi). The samādhi (tomb) of Vrajanābha is also found there which has been restored from its deplorable state by Śrī Māna Bihāri Lāl Ji (residing deity) through Śrī Māna Mandir Seva Sansthan.

Description of Citralekhā's Abode in Chiksoli (Cikitsāpur)

A gopa by the name of Brajodar resided in the village of Chikitspura, Chiksoli. He had three wives: Indi, Kanchi, and Avantika. A lovely girl, Citralekhā was born to Avantika on the ninth-tenth day in the Uttarāshada nakṣatra of the bright half of the month of Bhādrapadā. As told by Śrī Gargācārya, her birth was 2 to 3 hours after the sunrise. Citralekhā's abode is further described in 'Viṣṇuyamal', 'Padma' and Gautamiya Tantra. According to Gautamiya Tantra, Citralekhā's 8 intimate friends are Rangvalli, Suvalli, Padvalli, Marichika, Śivanīli, Sadhvi, Sati, and Brahmāvalli, who also had other names in the pastimes. The place of Citralekhāji is on the right side of Kṛṣṇa. Once, she came to Sankari. The celestial residents played auspicious music at her wedding. Later, Citralekhā returned home with her eight friends.

Other pastimes

Nagri dāsaji recorded the important pastimes of this place. Once, as Nanda-lāla was stealing green chickpeas from some field, a woman rebuked Him. But later, she repented and affectionately fed Kṛṣṇa with green chickpeas from her own hands in Gahvaravana. The experiences of the saints are as true as the pastimes, and they are eternal as we also will read that Śrī Nātha ji also stole butter taking Caturbhuja dāsa along.

Description of Tuṅgavidyā's Abode in Kāmā (Kamaī)

According to *Sammohan Tantra*, there is the village of Kāmā, east of Barsānā, where a gopa named Angad lived with his wife, Brahmā-karani. A daughter named Tuṅgavidyā who was endowed with all auspicious signs was born to this couple. The child was born during the Swati *nakṣatra* on the 6th bright day of the month of Bhādrapadā, 5 hours after sunrise. According to *Brahmā Purāṇa* her eight friends are: Vīradevī, Bhadradevī, Manodevī, Manotsava, Kāmadevī, Nridevī, Snehadevī, and Manorāma. Tuṅgavidyā occupies a place on Śrīji's side, on the left of Kṛṣṇa.

Description of Rangadevī's Abode in Dabhārā

Viṣṇu Purāṇa

According to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* there is a village called Dabhārā, south from Barṣāṇā. Vīrabhanu Gopa, who is well known for his wisdom, lived there with his virtuous wife Suryavati. They were blessed with a beautiful daughter and named her Rangadevī. This girl was born on the 13th day of the bright half of the month of Bhādrapadā, in the auspicious nakṣatra of Dhanishta, 8 ½ hours after sunrise.

Devi Purāṇa

According to the *Devī Purāṇa*, she has eight intimate friends: Kāmalasana, Validevī, Mahādevī, Ranjanaye, Śrīdevī, Kaliranjana, Kāmadevī, Kalakanta, who are all very beautiful. Her position is next to Śrīji on the left side of Kṛṣṇa.

The name Dabhārā originates from the pastime during which Kṛṣṇa was looking at Rādhā with *ḍabḍabai aankhe* (tearful eyes).

dabhraro gram aee krishner e khane ।
bharil nayane ashru radhika darśane ॥ (*Bhakti Rātnakar*)

According to *Braj Premānanda Sagar*, Śrīji plays with dolls at Naubari-Chaubari. Near to here is a water-body called Sūrya-kuṇḍa, which was created by Rādhā. In essence, the Sun receives its effulgent form from Śrī Bhanunandinī Rādhā. In his text *Tribhangi*, Śrī Vithal Nātha mentions that Naubari and Chaubari are two goddesses. Some broken deities were also found there. Close to this is 'Śyāma śilā' and big boulders are present, on which Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma sat while tending the cows. From here, Kṛṣṇa used to get a clear view of Rādhā playing with Her dolls. Ratna-kuṇḍa is found nearby, which draws its parallel from Moti-kuṇḍa of Nandagaon.

Prayer Mantra for Ratna Kuṇḍa

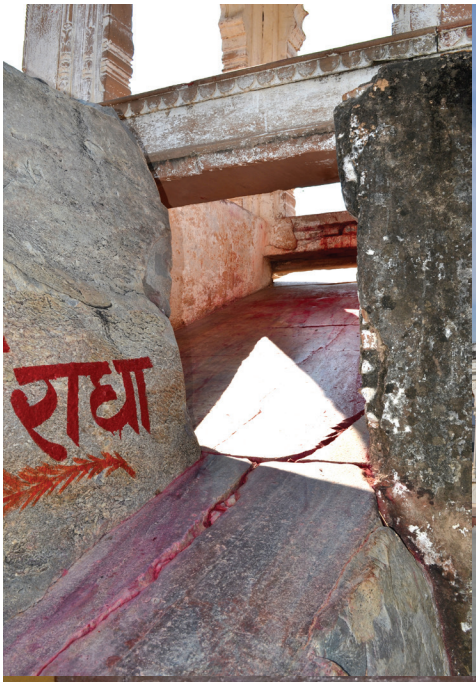
ratna bhumi maye tirthe ratna kuṇḍa samahya ।
kṛṣṇa strapana sambhut ratnod bhava namostute ॥

O Ratna-kuṇḍa! From, whom so many precious jewels appear! O you, who are the most fortunate lake due to Kṛṣṇa bathing in your water, we bow down to you.

'Ratnodbhāva' implies an 'origin place of precious jewels'. The pearls sent by Nanda Bābā as gifts for their would-be daughter-in-law, Rādhārani, have their origin from Mukta-kuṇḍa; these pearls were so exquisite that Śrī Vṛṣabhānu and Kīrtida were in great anxiety as to how they could respond to such extraordinary gifts. They had nothing close to such pearls to offer as a gift to their future son-in-law, Kṛṣṇa! To help Her parents overcome this problem, Rādhā manifested superior jewels from this Ratna-kuṇḍa. At Her wedding, Her parents used these magnificent jewels as gifts to Kṛṣṇa.



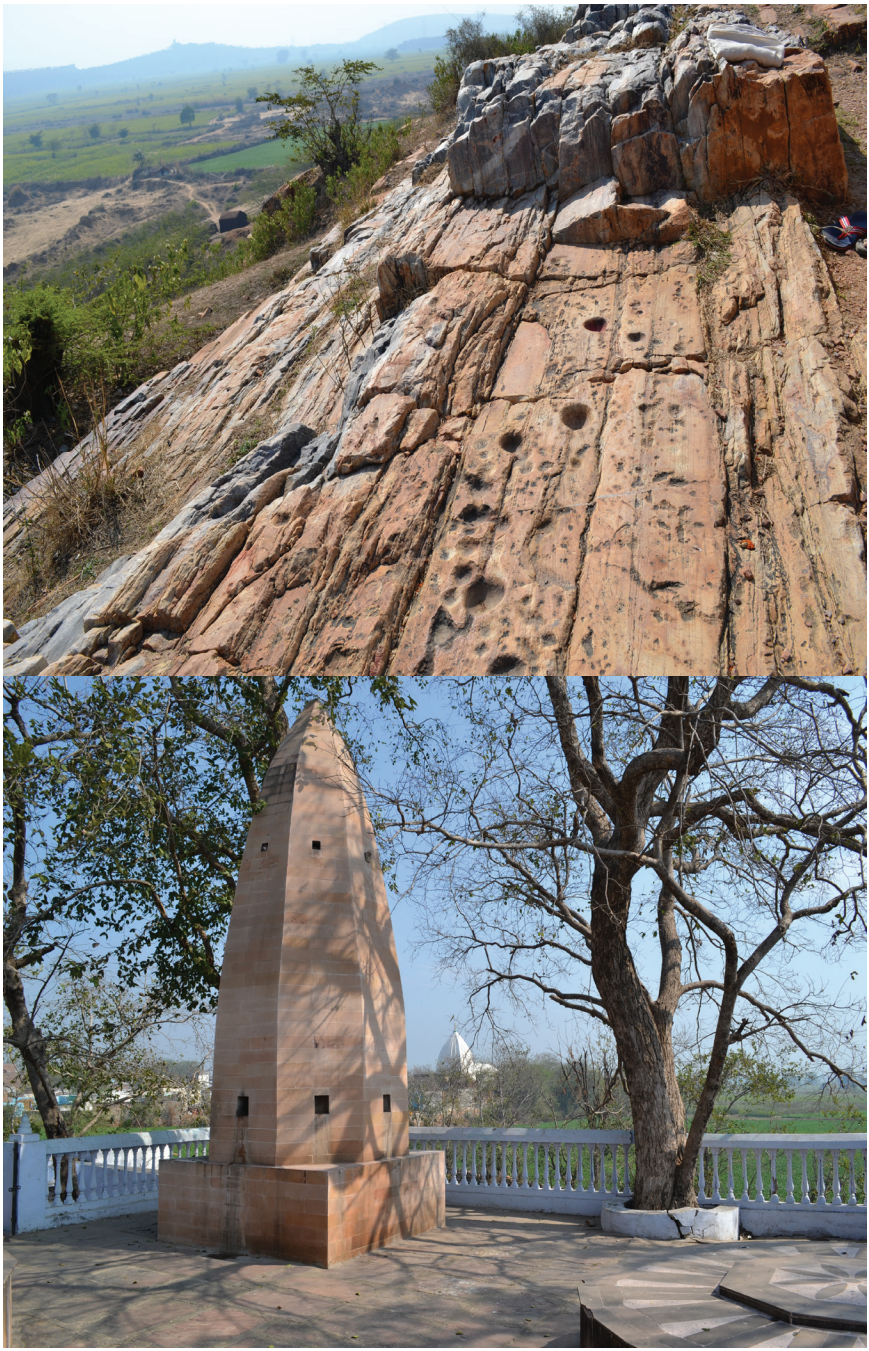
Top - Chiksauli Maheswari sarovar. Below - Chiksauli - Dohini kunda







Top - left -Byalula Khisalni Shila, right - Lalita Ata. Below - Dauji temple



Top - Marks on the Sakhi Giri Hill. Below - Samadhir Narayan Bhatt

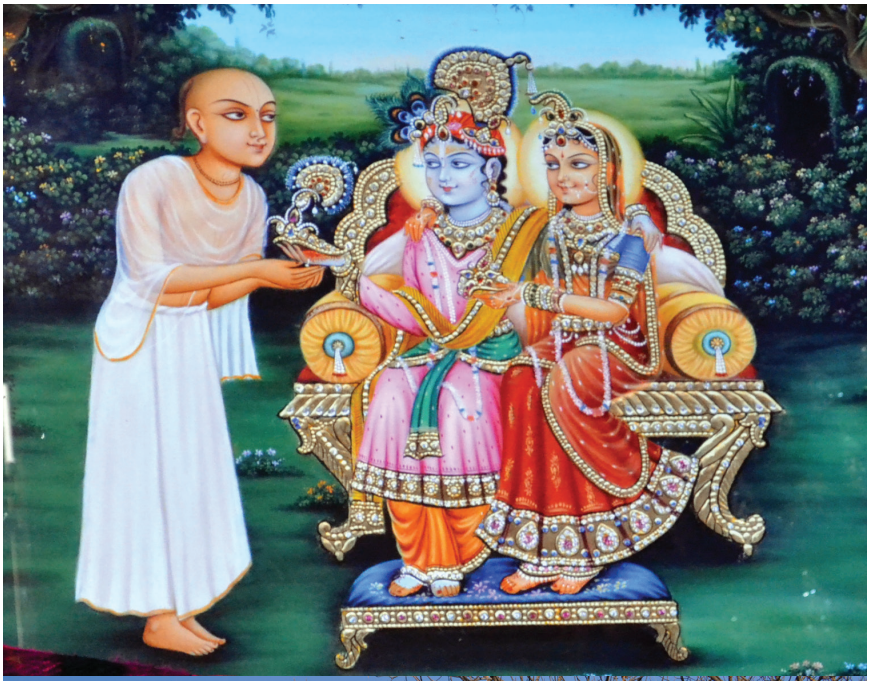




Top - Sakhi koop. Below - Anjanokh - Anjam sila



Top - Pila pokhara. Below - Left- Mahaprabhu Baithak, Right - Goswami Vitthalnath ji Baithak





Top - Karahla - Mukut Lila. Below - Karahla -Raasmandal



Top - Lalita kunda - Kankana kunda. Below - Vajranabh Samadhi



Top - Anjanokh - Kankana kunda. Below -left-Naubari Chaubari, right - Surya kunda



Top - Dabhara - Syam shila. Below - Dabhara - Ratna kunda

Thus this water-body became known as Ratna-kuṇḍa. With the līlā of Ratna-kuṇḍa and Mukta-kuṇḍa, the wedding of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with Śrī Rādhā is confirmed. This tradition between Barṣāṇā and Nandagaon is honoured to this day.

Description of Sudevī's Abode in Sunehrā (Svarṇapur)

Padma Purāṇa

According to the *Padma Purāṇa*, there is a village known as Svarnpur (Sunehrā) located west of Barṣāṇā. Gaurbhanu was a prominent gopa who lived here with his wife Kalavati. This village is situated on the Svaranchala hill. On the hilltop, a Rāsa-Maṇḍala (arena where divine pastimes are enacted) also exists. In Gaurbhanu's house, a lovely girl named Sudevī was born to Kalavati on the 4th day of the bright half of the month of Bhādrapadā in the Chitra nakṣatra, an hour after sunrise.

Nārada Pancarātra

According to to *Nārada Pañcaratra*, Her eight intimate friends are: Ratikrida, Vishāla, Komalangi, Kāma, Lalitā, Nivra, Mahālīlā and Antika. Sudevī's place is on the left side of Kṛṣṇa near Śrī Priya ju.

uche gaon lalita sakhi vishakha ju ajnoka me ।
chitra ju chiksaoli me saba karaja sambhare hai ॥
champakalata karhala me pragat bhai rangdevi ।
dabhara me sang sukh sare me ॥
sunahara sudevi indulekha ju rakoli me ।
tungvidhya ju kamaii dhāma dhare hai ॥
kahat kavi 'deva' sri rādha ju ki ashta sakhi ।
tinake gaon dhāma nama uchare hain ॥ **(Kavi Deva')**

In Braja Maṇḍala, Śrī Lālita Sakhī resides in Uncha Gaon. Viśākhā Sakhī lives in Anjanokh. Śrī Chitralekhā Sakhī appeared in Chiksoli to assist in the pastimes of Their Lordships. Śrī Campakalatā-sakhī appeared in Karhala, Rañgadevī in Dabhara, Śrī Sudevī in Sunhera, Śrī Indulekhāji in Rankoli, and Śrī Tuṅgavidyā in Kamai. The poet prays to all the assistant sakhīs to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, for their help in learning to please Śrī Śrī Radha Kṛṣṇa by remembering their names and their places of residence.



Top - Rithora - Radha Vinodbihari. Below - Chandravali Sakhi

Chapter 6
Description of Chandrāvalī's Abode in Rithora (Riṇthapur)

The Sanskrit name for Rithora is Rinthpura. This is Chandrāvalī sakhī's village. Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭaji, in his text *Braja Bhakti-vilāsa*, mentioned a forest land by the name Chandrāvalīvana and a village called Rinthpura located in this forest. The prayer for this place is found in the *Śaunakiya Tantra*. Chandrāvalī is mentioned in many pastimes in different forms. In *Dhamār Holī* her name is significant, and mentioned in many padas.

Viṣṇurahasya

According to *Viṣṇurahasya*, there is a village known as Rinthpura located to the northwest of Barṣāṇā, where many gopa families lived. Suryabhanu gopa also lived there along with his wife Sumantha. She belonged to the Gurjar creed (milkmen). Chandrāvalī was their daughter, who is Kṛṣṇa's ninth *sakhī*. She was born on the 3rd bright day in Bhādrapadā, July-August, 2 hours after sunset in the Uttarā phalgūni nakṣatra called Śivayoga constellation formation. Her eight friends are: Rāgalekhā, Padmāvatī, Pālikā, Manorama, Mahotsaha, Ullasika, Kalkeli, and Vishalika. Once, while visiting this place, Kṛṣṇa held Her hand and played in the water accompanied by Her eight girlfriends; then she affectionately embraced Kṛṣṇa. Her sweet words pleased the Lord and He blessed her by saying, "O Devī! I am pleased with you, may you live here forever."

Prayer Mantra for Chandrāvalīvana

kṛṣṇa saukhya mahotsah gun roop kalanidhe ।
Chandrāvalīvana nivasaya namaste kṛṣṇa vallabha ॥ (Śaunaka)

"O Chandrāvalīvana! O you, who are so dear to Kṛṣṇa, who are so eagerly filling His heart with a sublime happiness, as you are a reservoir of the most exquisite beauty and the glorious abode of Chandrāvalī, we offer our obeisance to you."

Prayer Mantra for snāna and ācamana for Chandravalisar

pita rakta sita shyama jala krida manorame ।
vimalotsava rupaya chandrabha sarase namah ॥

"O pure and dedicated Chandrāvalī Sarovara! O magnificent kuṇḍa! whose clear water is yellow, red and white colors, is most suitable for water pastimes. We bow down to you."

Brahmāṇda Puraṇa

astabhih sakhibhihsarddham ramya pushkarini sthita ।
pattarani prtak-tvena yatraham punaragatah ॥ (*Brahmāṇda Puraṇa*)

Chapter 7
Various Group of the Damsels of Braja

gopyas tu śrutayo jñeyā ।
ṛṣi-jā gopa-kanyakāḥ ॥
deva-kanyāśca viprendra ।
na mānuṣyāḥ kathañcana ॥

"It is understood that some of the gopīs are personified Vedic mantras, while others are reborn sages, daughters of cowherds, or gwala maidens. But by no means, my dear King, are any of them ordinary humans. Here we are informed that although the gopīs appeared to be human cowherd girls, they actually were not. Thus, the contention that they are mortals is refuted." (*Padma Purāṇa*)

The gopīs were not of this world; to consider so is a big mistake.

tam eva paramātmānaṁ jāra-buddhyāpi saṅgatāḥ ।
jahur guṇa-mayaṁ dehaṁ sadyaḥ prakṣīṇa-bandhanāḥ ॥

"Although Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Soul, these girls simply thought of Him as their male lover and associated with Him in that intimate mood. Thus their karmic bondage was nullified and they united Kṛṣṇa abandoning their gross material bodies." (ŚB. 10.29.11)

vedanagakroshbhumim svadhamnah sri harih svayan |
govarddhanam ca yaunam preshayamasa bhupaari || (Ga.Sa.gGo.Kha. 3.33*)*

shrutarupa rishirupa maithilah koshalastatha |
ayodhyapurvasinyo yatra sita pulindakah || (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha. 4.16)

However, though the gopīs had passionately desired Śrī Kṛṣṇa, God's grace works independent of sentiment. Gopīs entertained such a desire for Godhead alone! After all, to attain His association was the only desire existing in the heart of the gopīs! Therefore, shedding off their elemental physical form which is cound by the laws of cause and effect, they attained spiritual forms fit for entering into the Mahā-rāsa. (Ga.Sa.Go.Khā. 3.33, 4.16)

All of Goloka's entourage and various groups of gopīs descended to the 84-*kośa*s of Braja to participate in the supreme and blissful pastimes of the Divine Couple. These several groups of gopīs lived in various nearby villages, as they were being blessed by the Lord's previous incarnations, to appear in this era to participate in the *mahā-rāsa* (the greatest of all Divine sentiment) with Kṛṣṇa in Braja.

On account of observing severe austerities in Śvetadvīpa and obtaining a boon from the Lord to have Him as their consort, the hymns of the Vedas appeared as gopīs in Vṛindāvana. Those Vedic hymns, in the guise of gopīs, took birth in the greater Vṛindāvana.

Lord Rāmāchandra's entourage included all the womenfolk of Ayodhyā, Janakapuri, and Kauśal, the Yagya Sītās who participated in the sacrificial fire, the tribal women of Pañchavati, the *ṛṣis* and munis of Dandaka forest, the womenfolk of Jalandhar city, Lakṣmīji and her associates from Vaikuṇṭha, the girls from Śvetadvīpa, the women from the upper Vaikuṇṭha, the mountain dwelling women of various lokas, the companions of Lakṣmī, the daughter of Ocean. The infatuated wives of the gods, the medicinal herbs in love with the Dhanvantari incarnation of Śrī Hari, the mermaids attracted to the Matsya incarnation, the womenfolk of the town of Bahirshmati, who were charmed by the Prthu incarnation, the angels of heaven who were blessed by Lord Nara-Nārāyaṇa, the womenfolk of Sutala-loka infatuated by the Vāmana incarnation, the female serpents who were attracted to Lord Śeṣa, and others all appeared on the earth with Kṛṣṇa. (Ga.Sa.Go.Khā. 5. 1, 2, 3)

Śyāmasundara showered His grace upon the completely surrendered gopīs by performing the Supreme pastime of the Divine *mahā-rāsa* (greatest diversity of Divine sentiment) in Śrī Vṛindāvana. By the grace of Kṛṣṇa, many groups who fully surrendered to Him appeared as gopīs in Braja. These groups included the associates of Goddess Lakṣmī of Vaikuṇṭha; the friends from Śvetadvīpa; the womenfolk of Śrī Viṣhṇu's upper Vaikuṇṭha; the dwellers of Lokachala Mountains; and Śrī Lakṣmī's friends from the seas. As a result of their pious activities performed in previous births, all these fortunate women became gopīs, attaining spiritual forms. (Ga.Sa.Ma.Kha. 11.2-11. 5, 6)

All these females were born in the homes of the six Bhānus, namely Nitivit, Margad, Śukla, Pantang, Divyavahan, and Gopesht in the surrounding villages of Barṣāṇā. These Braja damsels fasted in the month of Māgha (January) for the attainment of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's conjugal love. One day, Śyāmasundara tested the intensity of their love by taking a form of a yogī. The full details of this pastime are presented in the chapter on Barṣāṇā. (Ga.Sa.Ma.Khā. 12. 2, 4, and Ga.Sa.Go.Kha. 5.3)

By the influence of their previous virtuous deeds, the divine and earthly women were born in the families of 9 Upanandas namely Vitihotra, Agnibhuk, Sambha, Śrīkar, Gopati, Shrut, Brajesh, Pāvana and Shant. Most significantly, all these girls were dear friends of Kīrtida's sublime and beautiful daughter, Śrī Rādhā. All of them celebrated Holī (the festival of colors) with Prīya-Prīyatām. When all the directions were filled with the bountiful colors of Nature, Lāla Bihari, the colorful Son of Braja came to Barṣāṇā. The gopīs requested Śrīji to ornament the colorful festivities of Holī with Her gracious presence: "O Rādhe! He, whose forehead and cheeks are colorfully decorated and whose whole body is dyed with fragrant *kesari* (saffron) color and He who holds a *pichkari* (water color syringe) in hand, and whose gaze is fixed on Bhānu's palace, is impatiently waiting for Your appearance."

"O dear lovely damsel! You are gracious by very nature. Now strain Your little delicately decorated lotus feet, and quickly come out of the palace and shower Your grace upon this bhāmār, honey bee–Kṛṣṇa." This lovely damsel, whose beauty puts even lightening to shame, whose lips are more luscious than blooming red-berries, and who speaks in a voice sweeter than the cuckoo's singing, softer than lotus petals, cooler than the moon, spreading an aroma more fragrant than thousand garlands of flowers, came out with Her friends carrying colorful pots filled with

fragrant colored waters, aiming sharp arrows with Her darting looks towards Her eternal lover, then She inaugurated the colorful war of Holī . The agile gopīs surround Lāl Bihari imprisoning Him in their strong human-chain, making it impossible for Him to run away from their grip. Now this prisoner is warmly welcomed and thoroughly entertained. First, everyone liberally applied red and yellow powders on His face and then poured hundreds of pots full of colored water over Him. Lastly, Śrījī Herself applied thick black, kajal, paste around Kṛṣṇa's dilated lotus eyes. Even after all this coloring and pasting, the beauty refused to leave this Nandakul Candra, who was beauty personified. Later, Kṛṣṇa presented His new yellow garment to the gopīs as a Holī *phagua* (gift), admitting His defeat.

The Gopīkas of Mithilā

sita swayamvaram gatva dhanurbhangam chakara sah ।
uvaha janaki sitam ramo rajiva lochanah ॥
tam drashtava maithilah sarvah purandhyo mumuhurvidhe ।
rahasyau churmahatmanam bharta no bhava he prabho ॥
tamaha raghvendrastu ma shokam kuruta striyah ।
dwaparante karishyami bhavatinam manoratham ॥

(Ga.Sa.Go.Khā. 36,37,38)

In Tretā-yuga, Śrī Rāmā broke the mighty bow of Śiva in Mithilā and married Śrī Jānaki. The women of Mithilā, captivated by the sublime beauty of Raghunāth expressed their desire to attain Him and the Lord blessed them to take birth as gopīs. (Garga Sa.Ma.Kha. 3.2, 3, Rā.Bā.Kā. 220)

With the blessings of Śrī Rāmāchandra, these women appeared in the families of the nine Nandas as their daughters. In the month of Margashish, they performed Kātyāyanī vrata on the banks of Śrī Yamunā (at Chīra *-ghāṭa*). They got up at *Brahmā-muhūrta*, 4 am, took bath in the Yamunā and worshipped Kātyāyanī devi with a sole resolve to attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa's conjugal love.

kātyāyani mahā-māye mahā-yogīny adhīśvari ।
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devi patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ ॥

Each of the young unmarried girls performed her worship while chanting the following mantra, "O Goddess Kātyāyanī, O great potency of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic power and mighty controller of all, please make the son of Nanda Mahārāj my husband. I offer my obeisance unto you." (ŚB. 10.22.4)

One day, these Braja damsels were bathing in the Yamunā, without any clothes. At that instant, Śyāmasundara came and stole their clothes from the riverbank and climbed into a Kadamba tree. Coming out of the water and not finding their clothes on the riverside, they became disturbed. When they saw that Nanda-nandana was sitting up on the tree with all their garments, they pleaded from Him to throw their garments down.

śyāmasundara te dāsyaḥ karavāma tavoditam ।
dehi vāsāṁsi dharma-jña no ced rājñe bruvāmahe ॥

The gopīs said, "O Śyāmasundara, we are Your maidservants and must do whatever You say. But give us back our clothing. You know the principles of righteousness and if You do not give us our clothes we will have to tell the king. Please!" (ŚB. 10.22.15)

Śyāmasundara said, "If you are My maid-servants, then why are you not following My command? You should come out of water, one by one, and take your garments." Shivering with cold, all these young gopīs shyly came out of water to take their garments. Knowing the content of their hearts and understanding the purpose of their austerity, Kṛṣṇa promised kindly to fulfill their desire very soon.

The Women of Kauśala

The womenfolk of Kauśala lost their hearts to Śrī Raghunāth's handsome, gentle smile as He was going with Śrī Jānaki from Mithilā and passing through Kauśala. Omniscient Śrī Rāmā, reading their minds, blessed them to take birth as gopīs in Dvāpara-yuga, where they would attain fulfillment of their desires. (Ga.Sa.Go.Khā. 4.41, 42)

kauśalānām gopīkānām varṇanam śṛṇu maithila ।
sarva pāpa haram puṇyam śri kṛṣṇa caritāmrtam ॥
(Ga.Sa.Ma.Kha. 4.7)

These virtuous women belonged to the padmini class, implying that they were of sattvic (goodness) nature and emitted a fragrance of lotuses. Later in time, those blessed women of Kauśala took birth in the family of the nine Nandas. Even though they were married to other gopas, their minds remained unflinchingly fixed on Nanda-nandana. Therefore, they had a strong relationship with Śyāmasundara, defying their wedded status. Mādhava, moving around in the streets of Braja and always speaking sweetly and jokingly with these gopīs, distributed His enchanting smiles all around. These exalted maidens of Braja, immersed in the ecstasy of their love as they sold curds said, "'Please take Kṛṣṇa', instead of, 'please take curds!'" They were always exhibiting the eight pure ecstatic emotions of love (shedding tear, sweating, trembling, faltering of voice etc.). Externally and internally, Śyāmasundara was the only object of their vision, whatever they glanced at, they only saw Him! They thought, "Wherever I look, Śyāma is there; everywhere, in the pleasure groves, in the forests, and at the Yamunā and in my heart, I see Him only."

***"jit dekho tita shyam mayi hai* ।**
***shyam kunja vana Yamunā shyama"* ॥**

In such an absorbed and elevated state of love for Kṛṣṇa, they no longer identified with their material body and discarded all worldly cares. As they casually rested their arms on Kṛṣṇa's shoulders and on account of their hearts being filled with the Divine sentiment of pure affection, Kṛṣṇa was completely under their control. Such is the glory and greatness of the Braja gopīs!

kācid rāsa-pariśrāntā pārśva-sthasya gadā-bhṛtaḥ ।
jagrāha bāhunā skandhaṁ ślathad-valaya-mallikā ॥

"Fully tired by rāsa dance, gopī turned to Kṛṣṇa and standing at His side, grasped His shoulder with Her arm. The dancing had loosened Her bangles and the jasmine flowers in Her hair."

(ŚB. 10.33.11)

Women of Ayodhyā

Śrī Nārada explained the story of gopīs of Ayodhyā as follows. In the famous city of Champaka, in the Sindhu province, there lived a virtuous

king named Vimala. He had 6,000 queens but was always distressed due to not having any children. One day, Maharṣhi Yajñavalakya came to his palace, and the king revealed his heart to him. Maharṣhi, replied, "O King! Due to your destiny, you will not be bearing a son in this life, but you will certainly beget many daughters." The king asks, "Maharṣhi! How can I pay my debts towards my ancestors without begetting a son?"

Reassuring him, Yajñavalakya replied, "O King! After 115 years of your rule, Śrī Hari Himself will be appearing in Mathurā bearing distinctive marks on His chest and four arms. At that time, offer all your daughters to Him and you will be freed from all debts." (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha. 4.43, 44, 45)

devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇāṁ pitṝṇāṁ ।
na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan ॥
sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇaṁ śaraṇyaṁ ।
gato mukuṇḍaṁ parihṛtya kartam ॥

"O King, one who has given up all material duties and has taken full shelter of the lotus feet of Mukuṇḍa, who offers shelter to all, is not anymore indebted to the gods, great sages, ordinary living beings, relatives, friends, mankind or even one's forefathers who have passed away. Since Supreme Lord is situated in all living beings, one who has surrendered to the Lord's service has no need to serve such persons separately." (ŚB. 11.5.41)

"One, who surrenders everything to Kṛṣṇa is essentially free from all debts." Saying so, accepting due respects from the king, Maharṣhi Yajñavalakya left. Over a period of time, the women of Ayodhyā, according to their desires and with the blessings of Śrī Rāmā, were born to King Vimala's queens as their daughters. When they attained marriageable age, the king eagerly sent his messenger to Vāsudeva in Mathurā, giving him the details of Śrī Hari's form as told by Yajñavalakya. The messenger, on reaching Mathurā, found that no one was willing to speak of Vasudeva or his sons, as the people of Mathurā were all terrified by the atrocities of Kaṁsa.

One wise man took him to a quiet corner and narrated the sad story of the killing of Vasudeva's sons by Kaṁsa. Lastly, a daughter was born who flew into the skies and disappeared. The messenger returned and reported the whole situation to King Vimala, "Mahārāj, on my way back from

Mathurā, I came across a beautiful blue boy bearing the appropriate marks on His chest, but He had only two arms, not four." The king was confused wondering how Maharṣi's words could be wrong? While king was puzzled at what to do next, at that time, the most virtuous, honorable Śrī Bhīṣma arrived in Sindhu and met King Vimala. The king welcomed him and after paying his due respects and honoring him with exquisite gifts, expressed his doubt before him. Śrī Bhīṣma explains, "O King! I have heard from Vyāsaji that the son of Vasudeva is playing at Vṛindāvana in the garb of the son of Nanda. Under the cover of darkness at midnight, Vasudeva has left his son in Gokula."

King Vimala again sent his messenger to Kṛṣṇa. Arriving there and prostrating before Kṛṣṇa, the messenger told Him about the purpose of his visit and described the virtuous King Vimala and his many daughters, who have performed so much austerities with the sole aim to attain Him. He also expressed the king's wish to offer Him all his lovely daughters in marriage. Instantly agreeing to his request, Kṛṣṇa went to Champaka with the messenger. The king jubilantly performed the proper sacrificial rites and gratefully offered everything at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Kṛṣṇa, granted shelter to King Vimala and his 6,000 queens in His eternal abode, and brought all His wives to Braja. All these lovely gopīs lived happily in a magnificent building in Kāmavana. Śyāmasundara, adopted as many forms as there were gopīs and enjoyed amorous pastimes with them. In that most auspicious arena, surcharged with blissful and divine sentiments, those daughters of King Vimala shed so many tears of joy that they created Vimala-kuṇḍa. By taking bath in this kuṇḍa, one certainly attains Goloka dhāma. (*Garga Samhitā* Mathurā. Khānda 7.29,30)

Ṛṣis of Daṇḍaka Forest

The *ṛṣis* living in the Dandaka forest meditated on the Lord's Divine pastimes in their heart and faithfully worshiped Gopāla. Śrī Rāmā, while being in exile, wandered in the Dandaka forest with Śrī Janaki and Lakṣmaṇa. Seeing their Gopāla in Śrī Rāmā, the *ṛṣis* were awe-struck, "Look! Today Gopāla came without flute and stick!" They affectionately welcomed their Lord, putting their heads at His lotus feet and by offering prayers. As the Lord inquired about their desires, all of them replied in unison, "O Lord! As Janaki has received your love, may we also attain the same!"

Śrī Rama answered, "If you wish to receive brotherly love like Lakshmana, you may do so now. But if you want a conjugal relationship like Janaki, it cannot be bestowed upon all of you in this incarnation as I have taken a vow to accept only one wife to set an ideal. For the fulfillment of your wish, you will be born as gopīs towards the end of Dvāpara-yuga and all your wishes will be fulfilled by Me at that time." (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha 4.47, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54)

At a later period, a scholarly gopa named Mangal lived in Bengal. He owned 900,000 cows. With the blessings of Śrī Rāmā, the *ṛṣis* of Dandaka forest were born as daughters of the 5,000 wives of Mangal. A time came when he lost all his wealth and cows. It became very difficult for him to sustain his large family. Gopa Mangal remained always worried for his daughter's marriage. One day, he decided to give all his daughters to some affluent king. He was told by a gopa from Mathurā about the splendor of the King of Braja, Nandaji. So, he arranged to send his lovely, delicate daughters to Braja to work in Nandaji's cowsheds and serve the cows. While engaged in this way, they came across the pearl of Nanda's palace, Kṛṣṇa, and instantly the memory of their previous birth was revived. Then, in order to attain Him, early in the morning after bathing in Śrī Yamunā, they sat in meditation focusing all their thoughts on Kṛṣṇa, praying for Yamunā's grace. Yamunā was pleased with the purity of their aspiration and blessed them to attain Kṛṣṇa. On the full moon night of the month of Kārtika, November-December, all of them had the privilege of participating in Kṛṣṇa's blissful and amorous pastimes.

Numerous golden idols of Sītā made for yajnas

In the temple, where *yajnas* or fire sacrifices were performed, the population of golden idols representing Sītā increased with each *yajna*. One day all the golden idols of Sītā came to life and they appeared before Lord Śrī Rāma with an intent to serve Him. Then, Śrī Raghunāthji, confirming His *ananya prema* (love) for Śrī Jānkiji, said, "O noble ladies, for this lifetime I have taken a solemn oath for being faithful to one wife only and I cannot accept anyone else." The noble ladies, in love, said, "You are a very religious and virtuous person. You have already accepted us as Your wife during the *yajna* ceremony, how can You talk with irreligion and not accept us now?" (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha. 4.64-65)

Lord Śrī Rāma said, "Right now, I am bound by My oath but at the end of the Dvāpara age, you will become gopīs in Vrindavana and your cherished aim will be fulfilled" To satisfy Śrī Raghunatha's promise those golden idols became gopīs. (Ga.Sa.Go,Kha. 4.66-67)

Tribal women of Panchavati

Lord Rāmā moved on to Panchavati after fulfilling the desires of the *ṛṣis* living in the Dandaka forest. At the resplendently attractive sight of Śrī Raghunātha, the tribal women of Panchavati offered their hearts to Him. Their aspirations to attain the Lord reached such a height that they were ready to unequivocally shed their mortal frames. In order to appease them, Śrī Rāmā went to them in the guise of a *brahmachārī* and told them with His sweet and gentle words, "O Devīs! There is no need to unnecessarily end your lives, as your desire will certainly be fulfilled towards the end of Dvāpara Yuga." After declaring this, that *brahmachārī* simply disappeared. (Gar.Sa.Go.Kha. 4.56, 57, 58)

Later, those women took birth into the tribal families of the Vindhyāchala forests. Those tribesmen were valiant warriors. They were looting the rich and helping the poor. The strong ruling dynasty of Vindhyā became angry with them, and dispatched a large army comprising of chariots, elephants, horses, and soldiers to arrest them. The king's army surrounded the tribal warriors from all sides and fiercely fought with them. The tribal warriors were terrified and sent a message to Kaṁsa, asking him for help. Kaṁsa immediately dispatched Pralambāsura who possessed a huge body and made terrifying sounds. He quickly destroyed the king's army. The soldiers fled the battlefield and Pralambāsura brought all the tribesmen and their families to Mathurā, where they became Kaṁsa's followers. In the hills of Kāmavana, they adopted a new lifestyle, and the tribal girls, who were blessed by Śrī Rāmā, took birth in their homes. These girls of virtuous qualities were as beautiful as Lakṣmī. As they were tending the cows in the forests of Kāmavana, they saw the attractive form of Kṛṣṇa, and were captivated by His divine form. Their hearts, minds, and thoughts remained completely fixed on Kṛṣṇa. Seeing their state of deep love, other groups of gopīs in Braja, praised their good fortune.

(Ga.Sa.Ma.Kha 10.13, 14)

pūrṇāḥ pulindya urugāya-padābja-rāga ।
śrī-kuṅkumena dayitā-stana-maṇḍitena ॥
tad-darśana-smara-rujas tṛṇa-rūṣitena ।
limpantya ānana-kuceṣu jahus tad-ādhim ॥

"The minds of aborigine women of Śabara tribe in Vṛindāvana were disturbed by lust when they see the grass marked with reddish kuṅkuma powder, which, before, was adorning Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. This powder was originally decorating the breasts of His beloveds, and when these aborigine women smear it on their faces and breasts, they feel fully satisfied and gave up all their agony." (ŚB. 10.21.17)

Śyāmasundara, on the night of Śarad pūrṇimā, fulfilled their desires in the divine pastime of dancing with countless gopīs and, on account of their pure love for Kṛṣṇa, all attained eternal shelter at His lotus feet. Nārada also praised the good fortune of these girls by saying, "These girls of Panchavati are most fortunate to attain Kṛṣṇa, who is unattainable even for the goddesses."

Women of Jalandhar

The royal women of Jalandhar city offered their hearts to the beautiful form of the Lord. One day, they heard an omen which instructed them to simply worship Kamalāpati, Śrī Viṣṇu, and they would soon become the beloved gopīs of Vṛindāvana Bihari, Kṛṣṇa. On the banks of the river Saptanadi, there was a thriving city of Raṅgapattana, which was ruled by a mighty gopa named, Raṅgoji. He used to pay a hundred million gold coins to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, King of Hastinapur, as a yearly tax. Once, Raṇgoji not only disregarded the payment of tax, but also stopped paying a courtesy visit to the king. Dhṛtarāṣṭra was annoyed by his negligence and arrested him. He remained in jail for quite some time, but still that greedy gopa did not pay the tax.

One night, finding an opportunity, he ran away from the prison and reached his city. A few days later, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's powerful armies attacked Raṅgapattna city. Raṅgoji lost all his men in the battle and was left alone. He called for help from Kaṁsa who came with a large army of demons, riding his ferocious Kuvalayāpīḍa elephant, and killed innumerable soldiers of the enemy in no time. Victorious, Kaṁsa brought Raṅgoji gopa

to Mathurā and gave him a beautiful area to live which was on the border of Braja. The Kauravas retreated and remained quiet.

With the Lord's grace, the royal women of Jalandhar city were later born as Raṅgoji's many daughters. In due course of time, they were given in marriage to gopas, but in their heart, all these girls had love for Kṛṣṇa only. So, in the sacred land of Vrindāvana, they enjoyed divine pastimes with Sri Kṛṣṇa defying social customs and conventions and tasted the bliss of conjugal love with Kṛṣṇa.

Devanganas

When Yajña Puruṣa emerged from Prajapati Ruchi's sacrificial fire, all devanganas (beautiful ladies of heavenly planets) were attracted towards Him. Later as per the instructions of Devala Muni, they undertook severe penances in in the Himālayas and took birth as Braja gopīs by the grace of Lord. The character of these beautiful heavenly women who all became gopīs was most extraordinary. Nanda Divaspati of Malavadeśa was a devout and intelligent gopa. Once, while on pilgrimage with his one thousand queens, he reached Mathurā. He came to Gokula to meet Brajapati Mahārāj Nanda and was highly impressed with the unprecedented splendor of Braja. On the suggestion of Nanda, he lived on a piece of land with his family and cows. As a result of Devala muni's blessings, all those heavenly women appeared as Divaspati's daughters. They performed 'Magh vrata' for the attainment of supremely charming Damodara Kṛṣṇa. They would bathe in Yamunaji before sunrise and sat for worshipping their Lord, deeply immersed in blissful thoughts of Yaśodā-nandana and vividly and blissfully singing of His glories.

One day, Giridhari Gopāla was pleased with their devotion and appeared before them and asked them, "What is your desire?" The gopīs replied, "May You always reside within the courtyard of our eyes; this is our sole desire." This is how those heavenly women attained Kṛṣṇa. (Ga. Sa.Go.Kha, chapter 5, and chapter 13)

Medicinal Herbs

All the medicinal herbs became attracted to Lord Dhanvantari, from whom, *amṛta* (life-giving nectar) manifested. They felt that their existence in the land of Bhāratavarṣa was meaningless. They acquired feminine

forms and performed austerities for a very long time. As a result of their severe penances, they received the Lord's *darśan* to whom they expressed their desire. Fulfilling their desire, the Lord said, "Towards the end of Dvāpara-yuga, you will become lovely vines in Braja and will soon attain fulfillment of your wish." (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha, chapter 5)

The Women from Prithu's Era

Mahārāj Prithu, a partial incarnation of Viṣṇu had a highly charismatic personality. The women of Barhishmati city were attracted by Prithu's majestic personality and for the fulfillment of their objective, they milked the earth as a cow under the direction of Atri muni; the milking pot was their heart and the milk their desire. They too became Braja gopīs. (Ga. Sa.Go.Kha, Chapter 5 and Ga.Sa.Ma.Kha, chapter 14)

Apsarās of Heaven

The best of the sublimely beautiful damsels of heaven tried to attract Lord Nārāyaṇa with their captivating sexual appeal by visiting Him at Gandhamādana mountain. The Lord gave them a glimpse of His original form and the angels instead of winning the Lord over lost their hearts to Him. They became restless with a strong desire to attain Him. The Lord blessed them to take birth as gopīs in Braja. (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha, Chapter 5)

The Girls of Sutala Loka

The demoniac women of Sutala-loka, a planet below the earthly domain were attracted by Lord Vāmana's incarnation and they also took birth in Braja. Maharṣi Durvāsā instructed them to perform Kṛṣṇa Panchāng, a five-fold system of worship, by which they worshiped Śrī Yamunā and with her blessings attained Kṛṣṇa's blissful association. In the Holy land of Vṛindāvana, when the trees and vines were richly laden with fragrant colorful flowers, they participated in the swing pastime on the banks of the Yamunā. Those swings were made from soft silken Kadamba branches. Kṛṣṇa enjoyed blissful moments with these gopīs. (Ga.Sa.Go. Kha, Chapter 5 and Chapter 15)

Serpent Girls

The hearts of serpent girls were captivated by the Lord in His Śeṣa incarnation. With Śeṣa's blessings, they became gopīs of Dāujī 's group in Braja. They received instructions of BalBhadra Panchāng from Gargācārya Rsi and as the fruit of perfecting their worship in the months of Chaitra and Vaiśākha, March-April in spring season, they spent two blissful months on the magnificent banks of Yamunā with Dāujī (Balarāma). (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha, Chapter 15, and Ra.Ba.Kā. Chapter 9)

Śrutis as gopīs

Once, the *śrutis* were singing the praises of Parambrahma in Śvetadvīpa. The Lord was pleased by their glorifications and requested them to ask for a boon. The *śrutis* requested for the blissful audience of Lord, Who was beyond the reach of words and mind. The Lord showed them Goloka, the Eternal Abode of Kiśora-Kiśori which is beyond the realm of Māyā. There is sacred Vṛindāvana with the Holy Yamunā and many gopīs. The Lord inquired about their desires and the *śrutis* said, "O Lord! We also desire to attain Your eternal association as gopīs and serve You forever. Looking at Your immensely attractive form, an intense attraction for Your loving association is arising within us. Kindly fulfill our aspirations and satisfy our desire immediately." The merciful Lord replied, "On the completion of Sarasvatī *Kalpa*, all of you will become gopīs in the land of Braja. At that time, you will receive My grace at Śrī Vṛindāvana in the district of Mathurā. You will develop an intense longing for My attainment." The *śrutis* as gopīs worshiped Śrī Vrinda Devī for Kṛṣṇa's attainment, Thakurji provided passage for these gopīs through Yamunā by proving His Gurudeva Durvāsā as *Pawanhari* (surviving on air alone) and Himself as *Bāla-brahmachārī* (lifelong celibate).

Chapter 8
Hathia Gaon

The legendary name of Hathia is Kadalivana. When Uddhava came to deliver Kṛṣṇa's message, the gopīs were eager to know about Kṛṣṇa's well-being. They brought Uddhava to Kadalivana where agonized Śrī Radha was sitting with an intense feeling of separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

guptam hi prashtu kushalam santapte nītvoddhavam tah kadakivanam gatah ||
[Garga-saṁhitā, Mathura kāṇḍa – 15.16]

The entire Kadalivana swelters away with the heat of Śrīji's pangs of separation. Uddhava paid his homage to Śrīji and delivered the letter written by Kṛṣṇa, trying to convince Her that She should not be sad as Kṛṣṇa would certainly return to Braja.

According to Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa

Kṛṣṇa requested Nanda and Yaśodā in Dwāraka to return to Braja, where His beloved Rādhā would bestow the highest devotional knowledge upon them. He told them to never consider Her to be an ordinary human being. Following Kṛṣṇa's instruction, Nanda and Yaśodā came back to Kadalivana where Śrīji explained the highest precepts of devotion to the Divine, revealing the deep meanings of various names of the Lord Nārāyaṇa, Ananta, Mukuṇḍa, Madhusudana, Kṛṣṇa, Keśava, Kansare, Hare, Vaikuṇṭha, and Vāmana etc. On Yaśodā's persistent request, She even disclosed the secret of Her own sweet name.

(Bra.Vai.Kṛ.Ja.Kha. 110)

Prayer Mantra for Kadalivana

śakrayay devadevāy vrutrāghne sharma dāayine ।
kadali vana sangyay namaste karidāyine ॥ **(Bra.Bha.Vi.)**

"O Kadalivana! You are the supreme deva, destroyer of Vritrasura, and fulfiller of Indrā's wishes and grantor of elephantine wealth. We bow down to thee"

Devashirṣa

Sakarva is 3 km west of Govardhana and 3 km from Doseras (Devashirṣa).

ār aei līlāsthali atitejamay ।
dekho 'devashirsh' sthan kuṇḍa sushobhaya ॥
sakhasah dekhiya kṛṣṇer gocharan ।
etha mahaharsha stuti kaila devagan ॥ (ŚB. Ra.)

"Look at the beauty of the Devashirṣa kuṇḍa; the gods, witnessing the Gauchāran pastime of Kṛṣṇa with His boyfriends here glorify this blissful experience."

Munishirṣa

Munishirṣa is 4 km from Devashirṣa.

dekho munisirsha sthana-kuṇḍa sumadhuri ।
etha kṛṣṇe paila munigana tapa kari ॥

"Look at this sweet Munishirṣa kuṇḍa; the munis attained Kṛṣṇa after performing austerity here."

Chapter 9
Khaira

Khaira (Khadiravana) is a significant place of pastimes. In *Brihan Nāradiya Purāṇa*, Lord Nārāyaṇa is mentioned as the presiding Deity of Khadiravana. In *Viṣṇu Rahasya*, the entire 84-*kośa* area of Braja Maṇḍala is compared with the Lord's physical manifested form, and Khadiravana is said to be His shoulder. According to *Ādi Varāha Purāṇa*, one should pray with a pure heart in Khadiravana on the 4th day of the bright half of Bhadra month. This seventh forest is famously known on this earth by the name of Khadir. Any person that comes here ultimately reaches the Lord's Abode.

Pradakshina Mantra for Khadiravana

bhādra shukla chaturthaya tu gatva khadra vanam shubham ।
prarthnam kurute yastu shuchir bhutva samaSrita ॥ (Aa.Va.Pu.)

"O Khadirvana! O You, who holds so many various attributes! Who bestows boons to the gods, Gandharvas and humans, we pay obeisance to thee."

One attains salvation after the fulfillment of all his desires by prostrating nine times while chanting this potent mantra. Mādhava-kuṇḍa is also located here.

Prayer Mantra for Khadiravana

namah khadra vanāyaiva nānā ramya vibhutaye ।
deva gandharva lokānām vardāya namo'stute ॥
iti mantram sammuchārya navabhih pranatim charet ।
sarva kāmān avāpnoti muktimāpnoti mānavah ॥ (Aa.Va.Pu.)

Prayer Mantra for Mādhava kuṇḍa

tirtha rāja namastubhyam mādhav strapannodbhava ।
trivarga phaladā yaiva namaste moksha dāyine ॥
iti dwādasa bhirmantram majjana aachamanairnaman ।
parmaish padam labdhwa vishnu sayujyamaapnuyat ॥
sapada krosh sankhyen pradakshinam athacharet ।
iti khadra vana syapi kuryaat sang pradakshina ॥
iti khadir vana pradakshina ॥
saptamantu vanam bhumau khadiram loka vishrutam ।
tatra gatva naro bhadre mamlokam sagachchati ॥ (Aa.Va.Pu.)

'O Tīrtharāja Madhava-kuṇḍa! We offer our respects unto thee. You originate from Madhava's bathing and grant all desires and salvation.'

Chanting this mantra 12 times after taking bath and bowing down to Madhava-kuṇḍa, one achieves great wealth and attains union with Lord Viṣṇu. Its circumambulation comprises of one and a quarter kośa, i.e., around 3.8 km.

Adi Purāṇa mentions the name of the most significant pond of this place as 'Madhava-kuṇḍa'.

The origin of this kuṇḍa is explained as follows: Giving bath to Mādhava implies that Mādhava was bathed by someone here, directly pointing out that the gopīs of Braja must have performed water pastimes with Kṛṣṇa in this kuṇḍa and bathed Him. Therefore, in some other scriptures the name of this kuṇḍa is mentioned as Sangam-kuṇḍa where *sangam* (union) between Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs took place. This is the place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's cow grazing pastimes. There were dense plantations in Khadiravana in those days; *khadir* means "kattha" (catechu). The story of Khadiravana (Khaira) is as follows.

Once, Kṛṣṇa brought His calves to drink water from this vast kuṇḍa and a demon called Bakāsura reached this location. According to *Garga Saṁhitā*, this pastime is said to have taken place on the Yamunā's banks, but as per *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, it took place near this kuṇḍa. After becoming a calf-tender, Kṛṣṇa killed three demons: Vatsāsura, Bakāsura, and Aghāsura. Some also call Khadiravana as Khirakavana. It is said that Upananda, the elder brother of Nanda Bābā kept his cows here. This tradition is alive to this day. In Nandagaon, on Gopāṣṭamī day, when Kṛṣṇa returns after caring for the cows, this song is recited: *khaire kau ave kurta topi lave* – implying that gifts are received from Khaira.

When Kṛṣṇa started to graze cows on Gopāṣṭamī day, Upananda was very pleased and sent many gifts to Him. Kṛṣṇa used to pass through Khaira on His return to Nandgaon. It is interesting to note the authenticity of this pastime in *Braja Premananda Sagar*, 26th *lahari*, 8th quatrain, it says:

"dhamsinga ju khidirvan avo ihi vidhi gainu aju charavo"

With the blessings of Lord Rāma, the women of Kauśala state were born as gopīs in this Khadiravana to the nine Upanandas who lived in the surrounding area.

The incidence of gopīs enjoying water pastimes with Kṛṣṇa has already been narrated earlier in the context of Mādhava-kuṇḍa.

kauśalanām gopīkānām varnanam śrunu maithila ।
sarva pāpa haram punyam Sri kṛṣṇam charitamrutam ॥
navopa nanda geheshu jātāram vara dhvajeā ।
parinita gopījanai ratna bhushana bhushitā ॥

(Ga.Sa.Ma.Kha. 4.1, 2 and 4.41, 42)

Khadiravana is the place of the Śṛṅgāra (dressing and decorating) pastime and Mahā-rāsa līlā. According to *Garga Saṁhitā*, Kṛṣṇa, after leaving all the gopīs behind, came with Rādhārāṇī through Sanket to Khadiravana. The people of Khaira called this place Madhuvana and Bakāthara was known by them as Barkota. As stated in *Bhakti Ratnākara*, the kuṇḍa, east of this village, is the place of Bakā's killing.

Sri kṛṣṇa kuntale neele vakratvam radhikā karot ।
chitra patravali krushna purnendu mukha mandale ॥
evam kṛṣṇo bhadra vanam khadiranām vanam mahat ।
bilvanashch vanam pashyan kokilakhyam vanam gatah ॥

(Ga.Sa.Vai.Vr. Kha. 21.1)

The pastime of Vatsāsura's slaying took place on the banks of the Yamunā. (ŚB.. 10.11.41) *kadachid Yamunātīre*. Later, the pastime of Bakāsura occured near a kuṇḍa (ŚB. 10.11.46) *gatva jalashaya bhyasham*. Similarly, Aghāsura's death takes place in the forest of Vṛndāvana.

panchojanamevāsti vanam me deharūpakam ।
kalindiyam sushumnakhyaporāmamritvahinse ॥
[Bri. Go. Tantra]

As mentioned here, the pastimes described in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam occured in greater Vṛindāvana. Brahmā planned to test Kṛṣṇa at Parkham, stole the calves at Vatsāvana, kidnapped the cowherd boys at Balahara, pindered at Sei on witnessing those boy expansions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in His own image, and then at Chaumuha paid homage to Kṛṣṇa. All these pastimes occured in Vṛindāvana.

At Pasoli (Sarpasthalī), Aghāsura swallowed all the gopas. This village is 5 km north of Parkham. The gods celebrated the killing of Aghāsura by Kṛṣṇa by playing the various celestial musical instruments and loudly glorifying the Lord in Jaint village. This glorification by gods was heard by Brahmā in Brahmaloka. All this happened in Vṛindāvana. (Bh. 10.12-34, 35, 36)

And when Bakāsura swallowed Kṛṣṇa, the terrified gopas cried, *khaio re…. khaio re…!* Kṛṣṇa. On seeing the frightened faces of the gopas, He manifested in a fiery form and Bakāsura's palate burned with the blaze of that unbearable heat. He instantly spat Him out. Kṛṣṇa then pushed him with a sudden thrust. Thus, another name of this place is Khadedvana, *khaded* means to push. In Bakāthara, Kṛṣṇa split his beak into two pieces with His bare hands. Bakā implies Bakāsura and Thara or Tara means deliverance, deliverance from this body forever! Therefore, another name of Bakāthara is Chilli. (ŚB. 10.11.50-51)

Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu extensively travelled in these areas in a state of trance. These pilgrimages are described in *Chaitanya*

Charitāmṛita, though only a few important names are mentioned. Among those significant forests is Khadiravana. The famous Gosvāmīs performed their devotional practices at these places for the simple reason that Mahāprabhu had visited them. All of them are great divine souls. Two of those Gosvāmīs, Śrī Lokanath Gosvāmī and Śrī Bhugarbha Gosvāmī performed their devotional practices in Khaira. A brief description of these events is described below.

Śrī Lokanath Gosvāmī

Padmanābha Chakravarti was his father and his mother was Sītā Devī. He was born in East Bengal in the year 1483. His father was one of the initial students in Śrī Advaitā Acārya's school, Advaitā Pāriṣad. His mother was also quite learned. After studying initially from his father, he studied *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures based on Kṛṣṇa's pastimes from Śrī Advaitācārya. Advaitācāryaji after giving him mantra-initiation, handed him over to Gauranga Mahāprabhu. He soon became a very close associate of Nimai.

After the demise of his parents, Lokanath Gosvāmī became a mendicant. He again took refuge at Āchārya's Holy feet, who again sent him to Gauranga. During those days, a holy stream of Nimai's kirtana was flowing in Navadvipa. Nimai was 24 years of age and 2 years older than Lokanath. Gauranga commanded him to go to Vṛindāvana saying that after a few days he will also be there. Nimai said, "He will leave his home in Magha (January) and will become a mendicant." Lokanath came to Vṛindāvana accompanied with a disciple of Pandit Gadādhara Gosvāmī, Śrī Bhugarbha. From Vṛindāvana, he went to Śrī Rangam in South India on the banks of the river Kṛṣṇa, understanding that Chaitanya Mahāprabhu will be staying for 4 months at Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa's home in Śrī Rangam. However, Lokanath could not meet Him there as Mahāprabhu had already moved on. On coming back to Vṛindāvana, again he could not have Mahāprabhu's audience and thus he decided to proceed to Prayāga to meet Mahāprabhu. Continuously being frustrated in his attempts to meet Mahāprabhu, he was strongly contemplating that without getting his audience, he would end his life.

One night, in a dream, Mahāprabhu instructed him to go to Vṛindāvana, as he would be going from Prayāga to Nīlāchala. On Mahāprabhu's instruction, he spent all his life in Vṛindāvana. He did not move out of

Vṛindāvana (vast all-inclusive Vṛindāvana of 5 yojana or 61.5 km or 38.2 miles – Śrī Girirāja, Śrī Nandagaon, Śrī Barṣāṇā) at any time. After restoring 333 sacred places in Braja and then feeling intense separation from the Lord, he lived under a Tamal tree on the bank of Kiśorī-kuṇḍa in the village Umrao, Tehsil Chhata. One day, the Lord, fulfilling his heart's longings, told him, "Take Me out from Kiśorī-kuṇḍa. I have been hungry for ages." He took the Deity out of the water and enshrined Him as Śrī Rādhai Vinod and offered Him some food.

Being quite a recluse, he would place Thakur either in his bead-bag or on some tree-trunk. He had a disciple who was doing the cooking for Thakur Ji Bhoga. One time, disciple became sick and Lokanath Goswami had to cook for few days. One day, in the bliss of his trance, he completely forgot to cook and the Lord Himself came to cook, taking his form. Witnessing his master being at two places simultaneously, the disciple rushed to him and tried to bring him back to external consciousness and informed him about this. When he rushed back to the kitchen, the Lord in the guise of Lokanath had vanished. Everybody noticed the smile on Śrī Rādhai Vinodji's face that day!

When Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja came to take his blessings before taking up the task of writing *Chaitanya Charitāmṛita*, Lokanath instantly asked him to refrain from mentioning his name or glory. Lokanath's earthly manifestation ended in the year 1587 in the month of Śravaṇa (June-July) on Kṛṣṇa ashtami, the eighth day of the dark half of the month, in the village Khaira. His holy *samādhi* (tomb) was built in Rādhā Gokulananda Temple in Vṛindāvana. In Braja, in his eternal form, he is Līlā-manjari.

Śrī Bhugarbha Gosvāmī

Born in Munger, Bhugarbha left his home while still a student and reached Nīlācala. He took refuge under Gadhādhara Pandit and studied scriptures like the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and other devotional books. There, he became completely immersed in Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *saṅkīrtana*. When Lokanath Gosvāmī embarked to Vṛindāvana, following Mahāprabhu's instruction, Gadhādhara Pandit sent his disciple Bhugarbha along because he could speak Hindi and was familiar with the route. He was honored by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, as being equivalent to Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī. He instructed Kavirāja Kṛṣṇadāsa to glorify the pastimes of Lord Caitanya, and thus, *Caitanya Charitāmṛita* came into

existence. This fact has been mentioned in Adi kāṇḍa, chapter 68, and verse 72.

Once, Śrī Bhugarbha's foot got injured while circumambulating Girirāja. Śrī Thakurji in the guise of a devotee carried him over His shoulders and vanished after leaving him at his cottage. Bhugarbha suddenly realized that this was none other than Kṛṣṇa Himself and fell in great anxiety. The Lord replied, "You are serving Me every day and if I carry you once on My shoulders, what is the problem, you should not feel bad about this!" He also performed his devotional practice in Khaira. In this way, the entire Braja always remains the *tapobhūmi* (land of austerity) of many great personalities. In Braja, in his eternal form, He is Prema Mañjarī.





Top - Bhajan Kutir of Loknath Goswami. Bottom - Madhav Kund

Chapter 10
Lodhauli (Lohanga Vana)

The actual name of Lodhauli is Lohangvana. Lohang Ṛṣi performed austerity at this place. Close by is Girish-kuṇḍa, where Lord Mahādeva came personally, thus the name 'Girish kuṇḍa'. All these are 5,000 years old līlā-sthalīs, which few people know.

Prayer Mantra for Lohangavana:

lohang muni sambhutah tapse brahm rupine ।
yamalokan nashaya namo loha vanay te ॥

"O most glorious Lohavana, where Lohang muni becomes the embodiment of austerity! To you, who frees us from being transferred to Yamarāja's planet! To such Lohavana, we offer our obeisance."

Prayer Mantra for Girish Kuṇḍa

namo girish kundāya tirtha rāja vara prada ।
prabandha mokshine tubhyam sarvadā shiva dayine ॥

"O king of all pilgrimage, who bestows countless boons and auspiciousness to the moksharthi (those desiring of salvation), we bow down to you."

Śrī Pipāsavana (Piyasa)

This dense forest is a very mysterious place even today. If anyone carries home some wood or tree branches from here, either his house catches on fire or calamities befall him.

Once, Kṛṣṇa felt thirsty there. This thirst was unique in quality, being an instrument in generating divine sentiment of love. Chatur Bihari beautifully describes this. Thirsty Śyāmasundara went to the house of a Brajavāsini to satiate His thirst. The sweet damsel affectionately brought a pot full of water. Śyāmasundara with cupped hands begged for water. The moment the stream of water fell on His hands, He loosened His clasp and as she was pouring water, He let it flow. He instead was drinking the beauty of that lovely maiden with His unblinking eyes, since He was not thirsty for water but for the sweetness of her beauty. As that golden pot became empty, she brought another pot and again the same event repeated itself.

Many pots of water were emptied but Śyāmasundara was still standing with His hands held close to His lips and gazing upon her face. At that point, realizing His smartness, she said, "Śyāmasundara, now I understand what You are thirsty for! You are not thirsty for water but for my beauty!"

jala kyo na piye lalan jo ho piya tum pyase ।
bhara lai yamunodak shitala pibata kyo alasate ॥
jala ke mis tum dolata ghar-ghar naval nit rasmate ।
'chatur bihari' piya pyase ho to pani piyo ho jivana ke mate ॥
(Chatur Bihari)

The Lord gave this abode to Akāsa Gaṅgā there in Mandākini-kuṇḍa.

Prayer Mantra for Mandākini Kuṇḍa

mandākini viyatpāte sambhavāya namostute ।
krushna krida vihar trudshantaye mukti dāyine ॥ (*Sauparna Saṁhitā*)

"O Mandākini, king of all pilgrimage! Who descended from the celestial abode and brought relief to Kṛṣṇa by fulfilling His desire to enjoy amorous pastimes. To you, the bestower of liberation, we bow down."

Prayer Mantra for Rāsa Maṇḍala

vihāra such rupāya mandalāya namostute ।
lokānanda pramodāya gopīka vallabhāya cha ॥

"O Rāsa Maṇḍala, ocean of sublime joy, appearing in the form of gopī Vallabha! We bow down to thee."

This *Rāsa Maṇḍala* (sporting ground) is situated in the midst of a dense forest, where the intimate devotees can still hear the sweet, soft sound of the *nūpura* (ankle bells) of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In Vajranābha's era, and until not too long ago, this forest was densely covered with trees and creepers. But now this forest land is on the verge of gradual destruction. When Aśvatthāmā, son of Dronācārya, attempted to kill Uttarā's progeny in her womb by releasing the Brahmāstra (similar to a nuclear bomb), he was cursed by the Lord to suffer from decaying leprosy for eternity. Cursed Aśvatthāmā was relieved from his grave sin by taking refuge in this woodland. This *patita-pāvani* (savior of the fallen soul) pastureland of Braja is more compassionate than Kṛṣṇa, having delivered him from his sin and pain, and by giving him shelter. The temple of Aśvatthāmā is located there.

Bhadawal

The village of Bhadawal is 2 miles northwest from Ranwari. Nanda Mahārāj's storing rooms were also situated there. By bathing in this kuṇḍa, one receives the fruit of enjoying all the luxuries of Vidyādhara-loka.







Top - Lodholi - Girish Kund. Bottom_Left- Pisaya - Ashwatthama Ki Jhari. Bottom Right - Pisaya - Ashwatthama



Top- Pisaya - Raasmandal.
Bottom - Pisaya - Kishori or Mandakini Kund

Chapter 11
Nandagaon

Verse Composed by Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī from Nandīśvara Sataka.

yat saubhagam bhagvata dharni bhrutapi na prāpyate surgirisa hi ko varakah ।
nand svayam vasati yatra saputra dāro nandishvarah sa mad manda mudam dadhātu ।

"May Śrī Nandīśvara Hill kindly bestow unlimited showers of bliss upon all of us! On account of Śrī Nanda dwelling here with Yaśodā and Kṛṣṇa, Nandīśvara, being greatly fortunate, has fully attained Kṛṣṇa's mercy."

In Padma Purāṇa

yatraham parvato bhuya bāla krushna sute namah ।
nand dhatru sametsavam mamopari virājate ॥ (*Padma Purāṇa*)

Lord Śiva was granted the favor to have the form of a hill in Nandagaon. He was blessed to have Yaśodā, Nanda Bābā, and their son Kṛṣṇa, to reside on his body. First, before describing the history of Nandagaon and its sacred grounds, we should understand the relationship between Barṣāṇā and Nandagaon since they are non-different from Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

In my eyes dwell two stars; one, Vṛṣabhānu's daughter, has a golden aura and the other, Nanda's son, has the bluish hue of a fresh rain cloud.

baso mere nainanme dou chand ।
***gaur varan vrushabhanu nandini shyam varan nand nand ॥* (Śrī Bhaṭṭaji)**

There is a golden radiance emanating from within Barṣāṇā, and a bluish effulgence emanating from within Nandagaon. There, Brahmā became a hill in Barṣāṇā, and Mahādeva resided here in Nandagaon in form of a hill. The expert devotees consider the relationship between these two villages as the most festive on earth. Festive celebrations take place in Braja with the advent of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and all the gopīs praised and bless little Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Once, someone asked revered Bābā Śrī Priyasharan Ji Mahārāj that here is no evident proof of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, Kṛṣṇa's presence, existence of His flute, His gopīs, or gopas. Bābā Mahārāj replied as follows: "The obvious evidence of Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes is Braja land itself. Each and every aspect of this land including every forest, garden, creeper, and tree are associated with the pastimes of the Divine Couple. The ancient history pervades within each and every atom of this place. How can anyone write a complete history of Braja?"

rādha-keli-kalasu saksini kada vrindāvane pavane ।
vatsyāmi sphutam ujjvaladbhuta-rase premaika-mattakrtih ॥
tejo-rupa-nikunja eva kalayan netradi-pinda-sthitam ।
tadrk svocita-divya-komala-vapuh sviyam samālokaye ॥ (Ra.Su.Ni. 266)

"When will I reside in wonderful, sweet, effulgent, purifying Vrindāvana forest, the witness of Sri Rādhā's pastimes? When, maddened with spiritual love, with my own eyes will I see the graceful, splendid, appropriate spiritual form in effulgent Vrindāvana forest?"

aho te mi kunjas tad anupama-rasa-sthalam idam ।
giri-droni saiva sphurati rati-range pranayini ॥
na vikse sri-rādhaim hara hara kuto piti satadha ।
vidiryeta pranesvari mama kada hanta hrdayam ॥ (Ra.Su.Ni. 209)

"Here are the forest groves. Here is the peerless rāsa-dance circle. Here is the valley where Sri Rādhā enjoys amorous pastimes with her beloved Sri Kṛṣṇa. Alas! Alas! I do not see Sri Rādhā anywhere. Alas! O life and soul of Sri Krsna, my heart now breaks into hundred pieces." (Ra.Su.Ni. 209)

ihaivabhut kunje nava-rati-kala mohana-tanor ।
aho atranrtyad dayita-sahita sa rasa-nidhih ॥
iti smaram smaram tava carita-piyusa-laharim ।
kada syam sri-radhe cakita iha vrindavana-bhuvi ॥

"In this forest, Sri Rādha enjoyed new amorous pastimes. In this place, She who is an ocean of nectar danced with Her beloved. O Sri Rādha, when will I tremble in love remembering the nectarean waves of your pastimes in this land of Vrindavana." (Ra.Su.Ni. 210)

Chitta Swami

aho vidhna toso achra pasar mango ।
janam janam dijo mohi yahi braj basibo ॥ (Chitta swami)

Sri Harivansji

"sri harivansh anant sachu nahin bina ya raja liye" । (Sri Harivansji)

Sri Haridasaji

"braja vithin dijai sohani" । (Sri Haridasaji)

Sri Vallābhāchāryaji

Comprehensibility of this eternal divine history is hidden in every particle there.

"Vṛukshe vṛukshe Venudhari..."

The traditional wedding relationship of Rādhā with Kṛṣṇa is celebrated even till today at Nandagaon and Barṣāṇā. A priest from Barṣāṇā goes to Nandagaon with an invitation for the Holī celebration. In response, a priest from Nandagaon comes to Barṣāṇā on the eighth bright day of the Phalgun month (March) announcing Yaśodā's (Rādhā's mother-in-law) visit to the house of her daughter-in-law the next day. Kṛṣṇa, Who came with His mother, smiled hearing the satirical words of the gopīs.

This tradition continues year after year. After Rādhā, no girl from Barṣāṇā was given in marriage to Nandagaon, and the young boys of Nandagaon joyously sang the following songs, even today. Barṣāṇā is our real in-laws home and our relationship is unique.

barsāno to asal sasurāl hamāro nyāro nāto ।
kirata ke kanya bhai, yashoda ke hai gayo lāla ॥
gayo bulauā nand ke , nandishwar āye dhāy ।
eka lakh to ghodā dinhe , dwai lakh dinhi gāya ॥

(*Lokagita* – Nandagaon)

Millions of people watch this traditional Rangīli Holī every year. Does such a tradition exist anywhere else even in Braja? Though Holī is widely celebrated in Braja, this sweet relation is not found anywhere else. Therefore, the festival of Holī in Barṣāṇā attracts innumerable devotees every year and still is an impressive time of blissful celebrations. Maintaining this annual tradition of 'Mataki-phor-līlā' on the thirteenth bright day, **Ś**ukla Trayodaśī in the month of Bhadra (August), the boys from Nandagaon enact this pastime of breaking the pots of curd at Sankari Khor in Chitra sakhī's village, Chiksoli. All the guests from Nandagaon are given a warm welcome at Rādhā Rāsa Mandir. Two days prior, on Ekadāsī day, the gopīs tie the chotis (hair lock) of Kṛṣṇa and His friends at Sankari Khor. On this day, not even a single soul from Nandagaon dares to enter Barṣāṇā! As they do not like to be insulted in their in-laws's house. What may be better evidence than this?

Śrī Rādhikārāṇī as Nandalala's bride and beloved one is mentioned throughout the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam as the word «vadhu» is being used at several places* :

tais taiḥ padais tat-padavīm anvicchantyo 'grato'balāḥ |
vadhvāḥ padaiḥ su-pṛktāni vilokyārtāḥ samabruvan ||

"The gopīs began following Kṛṣṇa's path, as shown by His many footprints, but when they saw that these footprints were interspersed with those of His dearmost consort, they became perturbed and spoke as follows." (ŚB. 10.30.26)

imāny adhika-magnāni padāni vahato vadhūm |
gopyaḥ paśyata kṛṣṇasya bhārākrāntasya kāminaḥ ||

"Please observe, my dear gopīs, how in this place lusty Kṛṣṇa's footprints are pressed more deeply into the ground. Carrying the weight of His beloved must have been difficult for Him. And over here that intelligent boy must have put Her down for the sake of gathering flowers." (ŚB. 10.30.31)

evam uktaḥ priyām āha skandha āruhyatām iti |
tataś cāntardadhe kṛṣṇaḥ sā vadhūr anvatapyata ||

Thus requested, Lord Kṛṣṇa replied, "Just climb on My shoulder." But as soon as He said this, He disappeared. His beloved consort then immediately felt great remorse. (ŚB. 10.30.38)

hā nātha ramaṇa preṣṭha kvāsi kvāsi mahā-bhuja ।
dāsyās te kṛpaṇāyā me sakhe darśaya sannidhim ॥

"She cried out: O master! My most beloved Lord! O dearmost, where are You? Where are You? O mighty-armed one, O friend, please show Yourself to Me, Your poor servant!" (ŚB. 10.30.39)

api bata madhu-puryām ārya-putro 'dhunāste ।
smarati sa pitṛ-gehān saumya bandhūṁś ca gopān ॥
kvacid api sa kathā naḥ kiṅkarīṇāṁ gṛṇīte ।
bhujam aguru-sugandhaṁ mūrdhny adhāsyat kadā nu ॥ (ŚB. 10.47.21)

"O Uddhava! It is indeed regrettable that Kṛṣṇa resides in Mathurā. Does He remember His father's household affairs and His friends, the cowherd boys? O great soul! Does He ever talk about us, His maidservants? When will He lay on our heads His aguru-scented hand?" (ŚB. 10.47.21)

Śrī Rādhā addresses Śrī Kṛṣṇa as 'Aryaputra'; the way brides conventionally speak to their spouse. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī describes Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's wedding in his composition titled, *Gopāla Champu*. He quotes from the *Padma Purāṇa* as the basis. After killing Dantavaktra, Kṛṣṇa again came to Braja. And, again the sweet nectarean pastime of Kṛṣṇa's wedding began there. All 35 verses of *Gopāla Champu*, Uttarā-khaṇḍa and verses 74-77 of *Hari Vilāsa Līlā* Tantra describe the wedding pastime.

Śrī Sūradāsa

lalita laal ko sehro, zagmagi rahyo hai ri bhaii ।
janani nyochchhavar kare, baje bajat badhaii ॥
sur banita jaki-thaki rahi ras murat hai paii ।
dhani jasumati suta sanvaro, dulah kuvar kanhaii ॥
raj kuvari radhika, naval dulhani paii ।
yah jas gave sarda, jinke bhag badaii ॥
yah anand jinke hiye, surdas bali jaii ॥ (Śrī Sūradāsa)

Śrī Paramānand Dāsa

māngai savāsani bāra rukāī ।
zagarat arat karat kautuhal chīrjīvou mero vīra kanhāī ॥
chīra jivou vṛshabhānunandinī rupashīla guna sāgar bhāī ।
'parmānand' ānand nand ke bhga bade ghara nou nidhi pāī ॥

(Śrī Paramānand Dāsa)

The opulence of Nanda's palace increased many-fold by the auspicious arrival of Śrīji as the bride. Yaśodā distributed gifts happily on this auspicious occasion. Two famous works of Chacha Vṛindāvana dāsji (a prominent saint of the Rādhā-Vallabha community of Vaiṣṇavas), namely *Lād Sagar* and *Braja Premananda*, contain compositions depicting Barṣāṇā and Nandagaon's unique relationship. The wedding of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is described in the *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa*, where Brahmā performed the wedding ceremony. But here, a reference is made from the *Ādi Purāṇa* describing the wedding ceremony arranged by Vṛṣabhānu on Akṣaya Trītīyā, before Kṛṣṇa leaves for Mathura. This is the pastime of Barṣāṇā and Nandagaon.

In *Ādi Purāṇa* 12.20,21, 22, *Śrī Yugala Shataka* by Śrī Bhaṭṭa poem 99 and 144, *Śrī Mahavani Utsah* verse 141 and 155/42, *in Bayalis Līla Sabha Mandala* by Dhruva dāsa, the wedding pastime is also depicted in Sur Sagar's 58, 60, 61; in Swami Hari dāsa's *Kelimāl* 48, in Viharin deva *Rahasya ke pad* 136, and in Harivanshji *Hit Chaurasi* 62.

All these authoritative verses from works of Vaiṣṇavas have been cited here as evidence for the wedding of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. These realized saints of Braja did not compose these verses from their imaginary speculation, rather, these are their realized experiences which should be taken as authentic proofs.

Māhavāni

sri rādhā kṛṣṇa vivāha sukha sarbasa mangala mūla ।
nita nita rachata saheliyan bhari prema parafūla ॥
dampaati sampati sahaja sukha dulhina dūlaha lāla ।
tadapi byāha bidhi birachahin bibidha binodani bāla ॥

(Mahāvani, utsāha sukh,141)

History of Nandagaon

Devamedha begot two sons from two queens: Sūrsena from Kshatrāni and Parjanya from Vaishyāni. Vasudeva was Sūrsena's son and Nanda was Parjanya's son. On Nārada's instruction, Parjanya performed austerity at Nandīśvara. There he heard a heavenly voice which declared that Parjanya will beget five sons from his wife Variyasi. Later, Parjanya terrified by the Keśī demon, moved his residence to Mahāvana, where he was blessed with five sons, Nanda ji being his third son. Nanda Maharaj tired of Kaṁsa's cruel deeds left Mahāvana and came back to his ancestral place Nandīśvara. (*Srugara Rasa Sagar Rūpalal Ji*)

***yatravapi surariha giridharah pautrau gunaikakarah* ।**
***kshunnaharataya prasiddhabhavanau tanme tasagam gatih* ॥**
(Vra.Vi.Stanavali-60)

Nandagaon is Nanda Bābā's residence. In the Śrīmad *Bhāgavatam*, Mahāvana is mentioned as his residence. He shifts from there to Nandagaon as many demons like Pūtanā, Saktasura, Bakāsura, to name a few, were creating havoc in Mahāvana. Therefore if anyone is referring to the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* alone, will not have complete information about Nanda Bābā's residence. One will only learn that Nanda Bābā, along with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma came to Nandagaon from Mahāvana. The reader is advised to refer to other *Purāṇas* also to get comprehensive evidence. The history of Nandagaon shows that their ancestors had shifted from Nandagaon to Mahāvana because of Keśī's disturbance. As mentioned above, from Mahāvana, Nanda Maharaj later returned to his ancestor's land in Nandagaon.

During Kṛṣṇa's wedding, the people from Barṣāṇā sang all kinds of wedding songs in sarcasm. For example, they sang questioning why Kṛṣṇa is shyam, while Nanda and Yaśodā both are fair skinned?

Gāri in vogue in SriJi Mandira

***gore nand yasodā maiyā, tuma kare koun ke jaiyā* ।**
***teri mānya yasodā rāni, kahu kare son rati māni* ॥**
***hai patala teri nāni vakā bata na hamson chāni* ।**

Nandagaon is named after Nandabāba, and it is located on the mountain called Nandīśvara which is a form of Lord Śiva.

nandishwaraya devaya bhirotpati hitaya cha ।
yaśoda sukha dayaiva mahadevaya te namaha ॥

"O Mahadev in the form of Nandisvara Hill, obeisances unto you! Bless us, as you are situated in the holy land of Braja to give pleasure to Krsna and Mother Yashoda." (Skanda Purāṇa)

yatro nando pa nandaste prati nandadhi nandana ।
chakrurvasam sukha sthana yato nanda bhi dhanakam ॥
(*Ādi puraṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for Nanda Bhavan

nandar dhat namastubhyam, yaśodāyai namo namah ।
namah kṛṣṇay balaya balbhadrāya te namaha ॥

"Our obeisance to Śrī Nanda, Yaśodā, Kṛṣṇa and Balarama." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

Jīva Gosvāmī writes about Nanda's palace in his commentary on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, based on *Padma Purāṇa* Uttarā-khaṇḍa.

gatādhvāna-śramau tatra majjanonmardanādibhiḥ ।
nīvīṁ vasitvā rucirāṁ divya-srag-gandha-maṇḍitau ॥ (*Padma Puraṇa*)

"After taking bath and being massaged, the two young Lords are relieved of the weariness caused by walking on the country roads. Then, They are dressed in attractive robes and are decorated with transcendental garlands." (Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's *Vaiṣhṇava-toṣaṇī* 10,15,45)

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāmā slept on a soft floral bed in the majestic diamond-studded palace of Nanda. Though the temples were built with time again and again, the site remains the same. Until some 550 years ago, Nanda's palace was situated on Nandīśvara Hill inside a cave and was visited by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as described in the *Caitanya Charitāmṛita*,

Madhya līlā, chapter 18.51-57). On touching these Deities, He danced there in trance. This incident happened in the year 1458.

Anandghana Bābā – (Time – approximately in the year 1285)

There were three deities enshrined on Nandīśvara at that time, whose worship was started by Anandaghana Bābā in the year 1285. This service continues to the present. At this temple, Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, Nanda, Yaśodā, Śrīji, and two of Kṛṣṇa's friends are worshiped. Nandagaon is like a jewel which beacme even more precious after Krsna's arrival from Mahavan.

tata ārabhya nandasya vrajaḥ sarva-samṛddhimān |
harer nivāsātma-guṇai ramākrīḍam abhūn nṛpa ||

"O Mahārāj Parīkṣit, Yet beginning from Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance, the home of Nanda Mahārāj, the abode of the Supreme Lord and His transcendental qualities, became the place for all prosperity and the pastimes of the goddess of fortune." (ŚB. 10.5.18)

Three things make this land special: 1. Residence, 2. Form, and 3. Attributes.

Kṛṣṇa resides here eternally. This is also His form. Subsequently, the 'Dhāma' acquires all the attributes of Godhead. By sincerely serving this abode, one is serving Kṛṣṇa Himself. Since for most of us, Kṛṣṇa is invisible, therefore it is easier to serve His abode which is visible. While in Dwārakā, the Lord Himself says, "*mohi braja bisrat nahin.*" I cannot forget Braja. Even though He is eternally present in Nandagaon, but in His manifest līlā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa yearns for the land of Braj in His Dwarka-leela.

The route of the Rādhārāṇī Braja Yatra there turns away from Uddhava Kyari towards Nanda-baithak [Nanda's sitting place] – here Nanda Bābā waits for Kṛṣṇa's return with the cowherds in the evening. A picture here depicts Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma sitting in Nanda Bābā's lap. Nanda-kuṇḍa is also located there.

Gaucāran Pastime

Our little four-year-old Brajakumāra (Braja's prince) requested the permission from Mother Yaśodā to take the cows out for grazing. Yaśodā

got worried and out of love, she refused to give her approval. "No, Kānāi. What if a cow hits Your tummy full with milk with her horn?" That day, Yaśodā's dear child remained silent. But when He turned five years of age, Kṛṣṇa held His mother's sari and relentlessly pleaded, "Now I will not go with calves to the forest." Affectionately caressing His rich curls, Mother Yaśodā says, "Why?" Kānāi replied, "Now I have grown up and I will take Kapila, Kāmada, Padmagandha, Śyāma, Aruna, Shubhravarna, Nandinī and the others out for grazing." Mother Yaśodā questioned, "Who will take the calves out for grazing?" Kānāi replied, "Well, Dau bhaiya (big brother) will take the calves." She had a hearty laugh! That very instant, Kānāi ran into the cowsheds and Mother Yaśodā, Dau, Bābā, and His uncles, everyone followed. Little Gopāl released the ropes from the ground anchors and took control of the cows. The cows affectionately licked this lovely blue boy. Watching this, not only Nanda but also all His uncles granted permission for Him to take the cows out for grazing.

On that Thursday, on the eighth bright day of Kārtika month (November), Shandilya Ṛṣi, ceremoniously initiated all the little gopas for Gauchāran (taking the cow out for grazing). The gopas were already waiting to go with Kānāi.

śrī-śuka uvāca
tataś ca paugaṇḍa-vayaḥ-śrītau vraje ।
babhūvatus tau paśu-pāla-sammatau ॥
gāś cārayantau sakhibhiḥ samaṁ padair ।
vṛndāvanaṁ puṇyam atīva cakratuḥ ॥

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: When Lord Rāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa attained the age of paugaṇḍa [six to ten] while living in Vṛndāvana, the cowherd men allowed Them to take up the task of tending the cows. Engaging thus in the company of Their friends, the two boys rendered the land of Vṛndāvana most sacred by imprinting it with Their footprints." (ŚB. 10.15.1)

ajā gāvo mahiṣyaś ca nirviśantyo vanād vanam ।
īṣīkāṭavīṁ nirviviśuḥ krandantyo dāva-tarṣitāḥ ॥
(ŚB. 10.19.2)

Gopāla and all the cowherd boys marched forward joyously, leaving their tiny footmarks on the soil of Vṛndāvana. There were over a hundred

thousand cows. Kānāi and His little friends with their small delicate hands were tending those cows. They tied small musical bells around the cow's necks, decorated the horns with garlands, and applied red powder on their foreheads, the entire cow dynasty became so fortunate! Throughout the entire day, the Gau Nāmāvali (various names of the cows) was chanted. Kṛṣṇa said, *"pyari gau raja gaṅgā nhat hau"* and *"japat gauan ke nām."*

tan mādhavo veṇum udīrayan vṛto ।
gopair gṛṇadbhiḥ sva-yaśo balānvitaḥ ॥
paśūn puraskṛtya paśavyam āviśad ।
vihartu-kāmaḥ kusumākaraṁ vanam ॥

"Thus desiring to enjoy pastimes, Lord Mādhava, playing on His flute, surrounded by cowherd boys who were singing His praises, and accompanied by Lord Baladeva, kept the cows before Him and entered the Vṛndāvana forest, which was full of flowers and rich with nourishment for the animals." (ŚB. 10.15.2)

Without tilling-sowing, the soil of Vṛindāvana was automatically suitable for cows. Soft green grass was growing all around along with majestic trees laden with fruits and flowers. The universal mother cow walked in the front and behind a big group of cowherd boys walked, singing Kṛṣṇa's praises. In their midst, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma walk. Kṛṣṇa played on His flute while Balarāma put His arm resting on Śyāma's shoulders.

The glorious tradition of Gopāṣṭamī is still whole-heartedly practiced by the Gosvāmīs of Nandagāon till now. On the eighth bright day of Kārtika month, two small boys decorated as Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, accompanied by a group of young boys, go door-to-door. They are greeted by every household and are offered delicious sweets.

āge gāya pāche gāya īta gāya utt gāya ।
govinda ko gayan me basvo hi bhave ॥
gayan ke sang dhave gayani me sa chu pave ।
gayanī ki khur renu anga liptave ॥
gayan so braj chhayo vaikunth visrayo ।
gayan ke het giri kar le uthave ॥
'chīta swamī giridharī vitthalesh vapu dharī ।
***gwariya ko bheshu dhare gayan me aave ॥* (Chīta Swāmi)**

Even today, this pastime, along with Kānāi's (Kṛṣṇa) childhood pranks, is observed in Nandagaon, recreating the Gopāṣṭamī pastime in every household.

And why should it not be so? The prankster Nandalala is so dear to all the people of Nandagaon; every festival related with Kānāi is celebrated not only in Nanda's palace, but festivities take place throughout Nandagaon. After guiding the herd from Tera Kadamba, Kṛṣṇa returned home via Jalahari near Āseśvara and the little gopas tried to amuse tired Kṛṣṇa, by singing funny poems. (Bra.Pre.Sa. 4.56)

Since Krsna started cow-herding, his day has become quite busy. He is completely engaged in comforting the cows. An incident is cited below from Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja's composition *Govinda-līlāmrita*.

One day, Mother Yaśodā lovingly said to Kānāi, "Dear son! We have many servants who are able to tend the cows. You have supervised them for many days, now, refrain from Your endeavor. Look, You go to the forest without an umbrella over Your head and shoes on Your feet. You roam around in rough forests full of thorns and sharp stones, my heart is saddened with this." Pacifying His mother, Kṛṣṇa gave a profound message here. He said, "Mother! It is the prime duty of the cowherds to tend the cows. When mother cow, the universal mother is not using an umbrella and shoes, how can I do so? If you can provide umbrellas and shoes to all these hundreds and thousand of cows, I too will happily accept them. For now, I am duty-bound to walk like this. By following one's religion, naturally age and fame grows. One who protects dharma (religious code), dharma provides protection to him. So, the only glorious way to become fearless is to follow one's religion. Then why shall I forego my duty?" Then both Mother Yaśodā and Nanda Bābā told Kānāi about the precautions to be taken while tending the cows. (*Govinda Līlāmrita*, sarg 5.28, 29)

The gopīs also glorify Kṛṣṇa's devotion for the cows in the *gopī-gīta*, verse 11

calasi yad vrajāc cārayan paśūn nalina-sundaraṁ nātha te padam ।
śila-tṛṇāṅkuraiḥ sīdatīti naḥ kalilatāṁ manaḥ kānta gacchati ॥

"O beloved Lord, when you go for herding the cows, our minds are disturbed with the thought that Your feet, more beautiful than a lotus, will be pricked by the spiked husks of grain and the rough grass and plants." (ŚB. 10.31.11)

Śrī Lalitā Kuṇḍa

Prayer Mantra for Lalitā Kuṇḍa

lalite snapanne ramye swarg dwar vidhayine ।
namaha bimal toyay tirthraj namostute ॥

"O King of all pilgrimage, which is filled with cool water! O lovely place established by Lalitā! O you, who bestow residence in heaven! We offer our obeisances to you."

The story of Lalitā Kuṇḍa has been narrated in detail by Dhruva dāsaji in '42 Līlā'.

Rādhārāṇī used to come to Prema-sarovara and Sanketvana to play hide-and-seek with Her friends. According to Dhruva dāsaji, the first meeting of the Divine Couple took place at Prema-sarovara. One day, Kṛṣṇa was informed that Vṛṣabhānu's princess, who is extremely beautiful would comes here to play. Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa eagerly went there to meet Her, who is the very reason of His existence. Rādhā also had heard about Nanda's charming son from Nandagaon. Even though they have not met one another before, a very strong attraction and a mood to fulfill each other's desire is present in Their hearts. This is the beautiful introduction to Their sublime eternal relationship. And, when They finally met, They were fascinated and could not take Their eyes away from each other! Such is the attractive beauty of the Divine Couple. Their transcendental and most exquisite beauty is always fresh, continuously acquiring new forms and superseding the previous one, and each meeting appears new as if it is the first time! This pastime is narrated in greater detail in Chapter 3 on Prema-sarovara of this book.

Sri Domilavana

In local language, '*do*' (pronounced as dau) means two and '*meel*' means met. So, the name itself reveals this pastime, where the two Divine personalities met. Who are those two? These two are Rādha and Mādhava. This *vana* is the place where *Yugal Sarkar* (divine couple) met. Sometimes it is referred to as "Domana vana" but the meaning is the same. *Mana* means mind. The two of Them met or two minds met. Near the caves

of Paurṇamāsī in this forest, there is a Sri Hanumān temple and 'Runki-Zunki' kunj (an arbor used as a meeting place) for friends of Rādhārāni. These two friends were helping Rādha and Mādhava meet there. There is a kuṇḍa named after these two friends. In order to reach Domilavana, one has to travel about 3 miles south from Akrūra ghāt, and then pass through '*vastra kuṇḍa*.'

Paurṇamāsī

Right outside of Nandagaon, Paurṇamāsī chose that place. For her, the noise from cowherd boys and their mischief was an obstacle in her daily service and worship. This place was full of flowers and fruits and it was the best for her to stay alone. She was like a sister to Maharishi Śāndilya. She was the elder sister of Sāndipani. She came from Kāsi to Gokul because one of Kṛṣṇa closest friends was with her. His original name was Madhumangal, but everyone used to call him Mansukha due to his witty, smiling nature that always gave pleasure to Kṛṣṇa.

Mansukha was not her son. Paurṇamāsī's father gave her hand in marriage to a *brāhmaṇa*. Soon after, the *brāhmaṇa kumār* left his body. Little Mansukha was his first wife's son. He is Sri Kṛṣṇa's best friend. Ever since she came to Braja, every child received her blessings. Even little Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma went to Paurṇamāsī to get blessings before going to herd the cows. This mother always had two things: love and blessings.

In spite of being very old, she was overwhelmed with love on seeing Kṛṣṇa and Balrama and showered blessings on Them. Once she starts to give blessings to Them, she would only stop after blessing Their twenty-one generations. Later, she even helped to arrange the wedding of Sri Kṛṣṇa to Rādhārāni. She was everything to all Brijavasis, young and old. No one would pass by her without getting blessings from her. To be a part in Sri Bāla Kṛṣṇa's līlā, she came from Kāsi to Nandagaon and stayed there for rest of her divine life.

Uddhava Kyara

uvāsa katicin māsān gopīnāṁ vinudan śucaḥ
kṛṣṇa-līlā-kathāṁ gāyan ramayām āsa gokulam

"Uddhava remained there for several months, dispelling the gopīs's sorrow by blissfully chanting the topics of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Thus, he gave relief and brought great pleasure to the entire village of Gokula." (ŚB. 10.47.54)

Uddhavaji stayed in Braja for quite some time, almost four months. He arrived during the Vasanta season (March) and then the summers passed (June), but he did not wish to leave that place. In Mathura, he would only have Kṛṣṇa's association once in a while, but here in Braja, His Lord was always present amidst the gopīs. The Braja gopīs took him along and showed this erudite scholar the various locations of their lover's amorous deeds and narrated all the incidents in detail. Here in this poem, the stories of Kṛṣṇa killing the various demons, the stealing of the cows by Brahmā and the lifting of Govardhana Hill, all were narrated. In the end, Suradāsaji says, "After hearing all these divine pastimes, the scholarship of Uddhava vanished. He ecstatically rolled in the sacred soil of Braja enjoying eternal peace and bliss."

Ihāan hari jū bahu kīḍaā karī / so to chitate jāt n ṭarī ॥
Ihā paya pīvat bakī sanhārī / shakaṭ ṭruṇāvatan ihāan hari mārī ॥
Vatsāsur ko ihāan nipātyo / bakā aghā ihā hari jī ghātyo ॥
Haladhar mārayo dhenuk ko ihā / dekho ūdhagho hatyo pralumba jahā ॥
Ihā te bahma hamako gayo hari / aur kiye hari lagī n palak ghari ॥
Te sab rākhe sanpati narhari / tab ihā brahmā āya astute kari ॥
Ihā hari kālī urga nikāsyo / lageḍau jarāvan anal soan nāsyo ॥
Vastra hamāre hari ju ihāan hari / kahā lagī kahie je kautuk kari ॥
Hari haladhar ihāan bhojan kiye / bipra striyan ko ati such diye ॥
Iha govardhan kar hari dhārayo / megh vāri te hame nivārayoan॥
Sharad nishā mean rās rachyo ihāan / so sukh hamape baraṇyo jāt kahā ॥
Vṛuṣhabh asur ko ihāan sanhārayo / bhrum arū keshī ihāan pachhārayo ॥
Ihāan hari khelat ākha muchāī / kahāan lagi baranean hari līlā gāī ॥
Suni-suni ūdho prem magan bhayo / loṭat ghar par jnyān garab gayo ॥
Nirakhat braj bhūmi ati such pave / sūra' prabhu ko puni puni gāve ॥

The gopīs said to Uddhava, "Lord Hari has performed so many wonderful pastimes in Vṛndāvana that we can't help but constantly remember Him and miss His presence! Look! Here is where He killed the witch Pūtanā by drinking her breast milk. And over there is where He liberated Śakaṭāsura and the whirlwind demon Trinavarta! Here is the place He bifurcated the beak of the demon Bakāsura and there He

vanquished Vatsāsura who tried to disguise himself as one of His calves. That area is where Śrī Kṛṣṇa at five-years-old rescued the cowherd boys from the jaws of the huge snake-demon Aghāsura. And there Śrī Balarāma defeated Dhenukāsura and Pralambāsura." While taking lunch with His cowherd friends there on the bank of the Yamuna, the calves wandered off and Kṛṣṇa, not wanting to disturb His friend's lunch, went to bring them back. Brahmāji then kidnapped the calves and cowherd friends of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, without wasting a moment, expanded Himself into all those cowherd boys and calves so that their mothers wouldn't be alarmed. Shortly thereafter, seeing the same cowherd boys and calves Brahmā thought he had kidnapped the boys and calves playing with Kṛṣṇa, "How can they be here??" Then, Brahmāji realized his foolishness and prayed to Kṛṣṇa for forgiveness. There is Kaliya Ghat where , Kṛṣṇa chastised Kāliya and sent him away from the Yamuna. And here is where Lord Kṛṣṇa gobbled up the forest fire to protect his devotees. That tree on the bank of the Yamuna is where Śrī Kṛṣṇa stole our garments and held them from us. That forest grove is where Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Balarama, and the cowherd boys accepted the food offerings from the wives of the brāhmaṇas who were performing Vedic sacrifice. And there is the very dear Govardhana Hill that Śrī Kṛṣṇa lifted with His left hand to protect all of us brajabāsīs from the torrential rains sent by Indrā. And this is where Śrī Kṛṣṇa played His flute on the full moon night of the sarad (fall) season, inviting us to dance with Him in rāsa-lila! We were so happy to please Him with our dancing! Here, He killed Vrishbhāsura (Aristāsura), here Bhaumāsura and over there He liberated Keśī. Here He played hide and seek with us closing His eyes. We are overwhelmed with feelings of love when remembering all these pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Sūradāsajii says hearing the accounts from the gopīs and seeing their deep and unconditional love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Uddhavaji understood that the gopīs were the most exalted and dear devotees of all to his Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus, he gave up his pride, fell down and offered obeisances to the pious land of Vṛndāvana again and again. He realized it was Lord Kṛṣṇa's special mercy to have sent him to Vṛndāvana to witness the unparalleled devotion of the residents and felt extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to set foot in Braja. He thus kept on singing the praises of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Lost in love, he went to the banks of Yamunā and smeared the mud all over him. He wandered through the forests in madness, climbed over

Govardhana, became lost in watching the trees laden with soft leaves, flowers and fruits as he was lost in ecstasy feeling the Divine presence of Kṛṣṇa. In this way, Uddhava experienced Kṛṣṇa's places of pastime and merged in the ecstasy of the gopīs's sublime love. His *jñāna* (scholarship) became a mockery that disappeared within the strong current of the stream of the gopīs' love! Braja pastimes never stop as this is the eternal playground of the Lord. This was shown to Uddhava by the gopīs. One gopī, holding Uddhava's hand told him, "This is the river where Kṛṣṇa goes boating!"

sarid-vana-giri-droṇīr vīkṣan kusumitān drumān ।
kṛṣṇaṁ saṁsmārayan reme hari-dāso vrajaukasām ॥

"Dear Uddhava, when Kṛṣṇa was here, He enjoyed all these rivers, hills, forests, cows and flute sounds in the company of Saṅkarṣaṇa." (ŚB. 10.47.56)

saric-chaila-vanoddeśā gāvo veṇu-ravā ime ।
saṅkarṣaṇa-sahāyena kṛṣṇenācaritāḥ prabho ॥

"Dear Uddhava Prabhu, when Kṛṣṇa was here in the company of Saṅkarṣaṇa, He enjoyed all these rivers, hills, forests, cows and flute sounds." (ŚB. 10.47.49)

Another gopī pulled him in an opposite direction and said, "This is the Hill which He would climb over and play His divine melodious flute; many times even at midnight. I do not know what is on His mind, but the enchanting and mystical melodies of His flute appeared as if He is calling us by our individual names!" Another one took him to an isolated, quiet grove and told him, "This is that forest, where He would perform amorous pastimes with us. Just see these fortunate cows cared for by Kṛṣṇa, who spent the entire day with them. Uddhava! Do not ever think that all these pastimes only happened in the past."

punaḥ punaḥ smārayanti nanda-gopa-sutaṁ bata ।
śrī-niketais tat-padakair vismartuṁ naiva śaknumaḥ ॥

"All these remind us constantly of Nanda's son. Indeed, we see Kṛṣṇa's footprints, which are abode of all charm and prosperity, and we can never forget Him." (ŚB. 10.47.50)

"These pastimes happen with us daily. If we separate from Him, we would not be able to remain alive!" she concluded. This pastime is recited by Suradāsaji, depicting the eternal nature of these pastimes. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Braja līlā continues forever, never stopping and observing this, Uddhava also accepted this truth.

mai briwāsin ki balihāri ।
jinke sang sadā hai kridat Sri govardhandhāri ॥
kinhū ke ghar mākhan chorat kinhu ke sang dāni ।
kinhū ke sang dhenu charāvat hari ki akatha kahāni ॥
kinhū ke sang yamunā ke tata bansi ter sunāvat ।
sūrdasa bali bali charnan ki iha sukh mohi neet bhavat. ॥ **(Sūradasa Ji)**

I repeatedly bow down to the Brajabāsīs who are always protected by the arms Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Although He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He steals butter from the elderly gopīs and begs milk and buttermilk from them. He is a friend to the myriad of cowherd boys who accompany Him into the Vṛndāvana forest with their cows. With some friends He wanders on the bank of the river Yamuna and plays His flute. His activities are rich and unfathomable and just hearing about them cleanses the heart. Uddhava and Surdāsa always relish hearing about how Lord Kṛṣṇa bestows His unlimited mercy upon the residents of Vṛndāvana .

Uddhava wishes for the dust of the gopīs's feet:

āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syāṁ ।
vṛindāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhīnām ॥
yā dustyajaṁ sva-janam ārya-pathaṁ ca hitvā ।
bhejur mukuṇḍa-padavīṁ śrutibhir vimṛgyām ॥

"The gopīs of Vṛndāvana have given up the association of their husbands, sons and other family members, who are very difficult to give up, and they have forsaken the path of chastity to take shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, Kṛṣṇa, which one should search for by Vedic knowledge. Oh, let me be fortunate enough to be one of the bushes, creepers or herbs in the land of Vṛndāvana, so that I can be blessed with the dust of the lotus feet of these gopīs." (ŚB. 10.47.61)

"How would I, Uddhava, get a tiny particle of this dust?" This thought was agitating his mind. "It would be my great fortune, if I may get a chance to become a blade of grass, vine, shrub, tree, stone or anything else in this sacred land. Then, I may lie down on the path on which these gopīs, while going to sell curds etc., would step with their delicate feet. Oh! How blissful…my many-many lives would become meaningful.

They had attained that Divine dust of Kṛṣṇa's feet, which even the gods, headed by Brahmā, were trying to achieve since time immemorial and still were deprived of this divine bliss. Every day is a grand festival in Braja with Kṛṣṇa's eternal association. The gopīs decorated their homes daily by placing banana stems and tying beautiful floral strings on their entrance doors. Why? They said to themselves, "Little Kṛṣṇa has gone for gauchāran, and will be back soon. Oh, no! I have seen Him in Prabhavati's house, busy stealing milk and curd. Then I should also quickly churn fresh butter and keep it for Him. If He comes here and does not get anything, then what would be the use of my existence?"

Uddhava was most amazed by seeing this elevated state of the gopīs, who had reached the pinnacle of love. He was charmed by their absorptions and instructions.

Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa

Four months had passed and Kṛṣṇa's *ardhangini* (better half), Rādhā saw the approaching monsoon clouds and reminded Uddhava that he should go back soon. "Your friend, My beloved Kṛṣṇa must be waiting for you, so do not cause inconvenience for Him." Until Rādhārāṇī's reminder, Uddhava had completely forgotten his entire life in Mathura! In Braja, he had heart- rendering dialogues with the gopīs at many places; those abodes have become famous. For example, in Jñāna Gūdari in Vṛindāvana, where his 'jñāna' [philosophy/knowledge] falls short and hisknowledge failed to convince them. One such famous place in Nandagaon is Uddhava Kyara, which consisted of 56 groves of Kadamba trees. Over time, the Kadamba trees have disappeared and the place was invaded by thorny Babul trees.

Yaśodā Kuṇḍa

Prayer Mantra for Yashoda Kuṇḍa

dhan dhania sukham dehi tirthraj namostute ।
vaikuntha pada labhay prartha yami namostute ॥

"O King of all pilgrimage! May you grant us prosperity in this life and the benediction to enter the Lord's Eternal Abode! O you, who can free us from the cycle of birth and death! We offer our obeisance to you again and again."

Prayer Mantra for snāna in Yaśodā Kuṇḍa

yashoda kurute snanam nityam evam din prati ।
yato sanjayate kuṇḍa yasoda sangyakam shubham ॥

This *kuṇḍa* came to be known by Yaśodā's name because she took bath here daily and both brothers followed Their mother along with Their friends. Bathing here grants prosperity and a permanent residence in Vaikuṇṭha thereafter.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa played all pranks at the pond and Mother, to control His naughtiness, scared Him with Hau-Bilau (an imaginary ghost). Little Kṛṣṇa being frightened, immediately hid in Mother's sarī. Mother was delighted with Hau's impact and had a special affection for Hau-Bilau.

Prayer Mantra for Hau Pranam

namah krishneksha kastubhyam dharma kamartha mokshinah ।
pashan rupino devah yasoda ashish sansthitah ॥

'O grantor of Kṛṣṇa darśana and provider of the four objectives of human life (dharma, arthaḥ, kāma and mokṣa), established with Yaśodāji's blessings, O Deva in stone form! We offer daṇḍavats to thee.'

Kājal Kuṇḍa

Karelovana is the forest where Kajal-kuṇḍa is situated. The gopīs applied kājal on Kṛṣṇa's eyes at this place.

Mānta

On the way from Nanda's sitting place (Nanda-baithak) to Nandagaon, Yaśodā's curd's pot can be seen. Two pots are present here. The bigger

one is for curd and the other one for butter. These pots are located near Yaśodā-kuṇḍa. When little Kṛṣṇa used to herd calves on the outskirts of the village. At that time, Yaśodā used to come here to churn the curd and get fresh butter for His midday meal.

Pranāma Mantra for audience of Mānta

-

kamni suta karya sumishta dadhi bhajano ।
namas tavamruta rupaya devanam moksha hetave ॥

"O sweet and nectarine curd-pot of Yaśodā! You bestow salvation even to devas, we offer our obeisances unto you."

Khunta

This is one of those anchors with which Nanda Bābā used to tie his cows.

Madhusūdana Kuṇḍa

The name of Madhusūdana kuṇḍa is derived from one of Kṛṣṇa's other names, Madhusūdana. Madhusūdana means He who killed the demon, Madhu or it can also mean the enjoyer of nectar. One obtains long life by taking bath in this kuṇḍa.

Prayer Mantra for Madhusudan Kuṇḍa

keshvay namastubhyam parmayuvi vardhane ।
madhusudan kṛṣṇay devanam heet karine ॥ (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"O Madhusūdana Kuṇḍa! O well-wisher of the gods! O you, by whose worship, one obtains long life, we offer obeisances unto you."

Charana Paharī

Kṛṣṇa's footprints are present in Charana Pahari in Nandagaon. The mention of these markings appears twice in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The first one is on Akrūra's arrival and second time on Uddhava's arrival.

At the time of Akrūra Jī 's arrival

śrī śuka uvaca
iti sañcintayan kṛṣṇaṁ śvaphalka-tanayo 'dhvani ।
rathena gokulaṁ prāptaḥ sūryaś cāsta-giriṁ nṛpa ॥

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: Thus contemplating on Śrī Kṛṣṇa all the way, Akrura the son of Śvaphalka, arrived in Braja. He reached Gokula as the sun was beginning to set." (ŚB. 10.38.24)

padāni tasyākhila-loka-pāla-kirīṭa-juṣṭāmala-pāda-reṇoḥ ।
dadarśa goṣṭhe kṣiti-kautukāni vilakṣitāny abja-yavāṅkuśādyaiḥ ॥

"In the cowherd pasture, Akrūra saw the footprints of Śrī Kṛṣṇa , the sacred dust of whose feet
is borne on their crowns by the guardians of all the planets. Those footprints of the Lord, which served as the ornaments of the earth, were distinguished by the marks of lotus, barleycorn and elephant goad and so on. (ŚB. 10.38.25)

Akrūra saw the footmarks after reaching Nandagaon. He noticed the imprints of lotus, barleycorn, etc., in those footmarks, which are worshiped by the lokapalakas (controller of the eight directions). Thinking of Kṛṣṇa on the way, Akrūra reached Gokula by evening. The word Gokula usually represents the entire Braja, and here it implies Nandagaon. Gokula is indicative of Vṛindāvana or all of Braja.

śrī śuka uvaca
itthaṁ maghavatājñaptā meghā nirmukta-bandhanāḥ ।
nanda-gokulam āsāraiḥ pīḍayām āsur ojasā ॥

Next, this reference comes as a dialogue between Uddhava and the Braja gopīs. The gopīs said, "O Uddhava! This soil of Braja, marked with Kṛṣṇa's footprints, brings Him to life right before our eyes. How can we forget Him, seeing these impressions?"

punaḥ punaḥ smārayanti nanda-gopa-sutaṁ bata ।
śrī-niketais tat-padakair vismartuṁ naiva śaknumaḥ ॥

"All these constantly remind us of Nanda's son. Because we see Kṛṣṇa's auspicious footprints, which are abode of all charm and prosperity, we can never forget Him." (ŚB. 10.47.50)

One thing is clear, whether it is Akrūra, Uddhava, the Brajavāsis or the gopīs, they saw the entire Braja imprinted with Kṛṣṇa's footprints and those feet bestowed nectar and opulence to that land. It is clear from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* that these transcendental indentations can only be seen by those whose hearts are immersed in the ocean of Divine love.

Panihārī Kuṇḍa

Kānāi loved this kuṇḍa. He did not eat anything till He got water from Panihari kuṇḍa. He loved its sweet water, so Yaśodā herself went to fetch a big pot full of this sweet water for her dear Kānāi. Not only Kṛṣṇa, but all Brajavāsis also quenched their thirst with its cool, clear water. In the evening, many groups of gopīs gossiping (the center of all their gossips and actions is only one, Kānāi), went to Panihari kuṇḍa with pots on their heads. The Brajavāsis liked to call it Panghat kuṇḍa.

jala bharne ko gopī chalī hai, gagar uthakar panghat niketī ।
bahate hue jala ne yaha gīta gāyā, rādhā rasik shyāma rādhā bihārī ॥
(Bra.Bha.Ma. by Sri Ramesh Bābā Mahārāj).

This kuṇḍa was an ideal spot for the meeting of the gopīs with Kṛṣṇa. The lovely maidens went there to fetch life-giving water, but, if they got that life-giver, Kṛṣṇa, then who cares for water? In truth, while talking with their beloved, they forgot all about the water! Do not be surprised! The true meaning of the name Panghat is the vow to meet Kṛṣṇa. A gopī damsel incited with love says:

panghat jān de ri pan ghat jāt hai, implying, 'Let me go to panghat lest my vow may break.' Here, the word Panghat has a double meaning: the common usage is for the banks of a river or a kuṇḍa from where clean drinking water can be taken; the second usage is significant as 'pan' means vow and 'ghat' means to diminish or break.

One more significance of this Kunda is that the gopīs bathed Nandalāla in the waters of this kuṇḍa before His wedding and decorated Him at that

location. This Panihari kuṇḍa is surrounded with Kadamba trees. In a corner of this kuṇḍa is a temple with the deities of the Divine Couple.

Vṛindā Devī

There are many Vṛindā Devīs.

1. Tulasī, King Kushadhvaja's daughter, is known by the name Vṛindā. She is married to Śankhachuda – a partial incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. This story appears in Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa, Kṛṣṇa Janma-kaṇḍha 17.

2. Jalandhar's wife is also Vṛindā.

3. The presiding deity of Vṛindāvana is also Vṛindā.

4. One Vṛindā is the daughter of King Kedar.

Generally, there is a confusion over which Vṛindā is being referred to here. This has been clearly explained below. A little further from Charan Pahari, visible from quite a distance to the north, in the midst of the tall trees, is the abode of Vṛindā, Kedar's daughter. According to *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇa Janma-khāṇḍa, Chapter 86, Thakurji narrated this wonderful story to Nanda Bābā.

In a previous age, Uttānapāda was born from Brahmā's son, Svāyambhuva, from Uttānapāda, Dhruva was born, and from Dhruva, Nandisavarni was born. Mahārāj Kedar is Nandisavarni's son. As a Rāja Ṛṣi (devout and scholarly king), he used to feed the brāhmaṇas, donated cows to them every day, and performed all activities as an offering to the Lord. One day, Lakṣhmīji appeared from his sacrificial fire as a divinely beautiful girl and wished to marry Kṛṣṇa. She proceeded to a forest to perform austerity on the banks of the holy Yamuna which later came to be known as Vṛindāvana. Brahmāji was pleased with her austerities and came to bless her, "O beautiful girl! You will certainly achieve your goal very soon." Later, he assigned Dharmarāja to test the integrity of her aspiration. Dharma came to her as a handsome young *brāhmaṇa* and asks Vṛindā, "O lovely damsel! What is the objective of your ardent austerities? I am capable of fulfilling your wish, simply ask, what do you want?" Vṛindā humbly replied, "O Supreme *brāhmaṇa*! My sole objective is to marry Kṛṣṇacandra." Dharma said, "O beautiful girl! To have the Supreme Lord as your spouse is almost impossible. In this regard, only very few have been successful in their attempt; Ramā, Sharada, and Rādhārāṇī, who reside in

Goloka. Rādhārāṇī is His beautiful eternal consort, His internal potency and eternally resides in His heart. Kṛṣṇa has two forms. As Kṛṣṇa, He is Golokādhipati with two arms, and as Nārāyana, He is Vaikuṇṭhadhipati with four arms (Caturbhuja). Brahmā's duration of age is just a small tiny insignificant fraction of His existence. The four Kumārās headed by Sanaka, all their life remain engaged in remembrance of that all-pervading Lord. Śeṣa with his thousand mouths constantly sings of His glory. Still, all of them are unable to attain Him."

"So, how will you attain Him, o Vrinde?" He continued, "As Kṛṣṇacandra is unattainable by you, why don't you marry me!" Hearing his words, Vṛindā got so angry that she pronounced a curse against him, "You, boastful brāhmaṇa! My Lord is my only protector. You have uttered such shameful, highly reprehensible words before me. Since brāhmaṇas are not to be killed; therefore, I curse you, '*kshayo bhava! kshayo bhava! kshayo bhava*!' Be destroyed! Be destroyed! Be destroyed!"

She said it thrice, and was about to say it the fourth time, when the Sun god appeared and stopped her, "Devī! He is Dharmarāja himself who has come to test your integrity. With his destruction, all religiosity in this world will be destroyed. Therefore, spare his life." Dharmarāja's wife Murti, with her head bowing down in shame, also prayed for her husband's life. The Lord said to Vṛindā, "O beautiful girl! You have performed austerity for 108 yugas, and have attained a long life. Now, kindly donate the duration of your life to Dharmarāja and quickly proceed to Goloka. In the Varāha *kalpa*, you will be born in Śrī Rādhā's image as Vṛṣabhānu's daughter, and will marry My partial incarnation Rayan Gopa. The sinful, disillusioned people will consider you as the real Rādhā, though Rādhā is My eternal consort and without Her grace, Her audience is inaccessible."

After listening to the Lord's delightful sweet words, Vṛindā gave her life's duration to Dharmarāja, who stood up instantly and immediately afterwards, she proceeded to Goloka. However, the infallible curse, which She has pronounced thrice still manifested itself as follows. In Satya yuga, Dharma was complete, in Tretā-yuga, it is left with only three legs, in Dvāpara, two legs remain, in the beginning of Kali yuga just one leg remains and towards the end of Kali, even this also will diminish in the last 16th part of Kali Yuga. Rejoicing in the bliss of Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes, Śrī Vṛinda Devī is established here in Nandagaon as Vana Devī. In front of the Temple, a scenic pond exists, in which she would bathe. This is known by her name, Vṛindā Devī-kuṇḍa.

Śrī Pāvana Sarovara

Prayer Mantra for Pāvana Sarovara

namah pavan rupaya devanam kalmasha paham ।
nand dipavana yaiva tirtharaj namostute ॥ (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"O King of all pilgrimage! You vanquish the sins of demigods. You bestow auspiciousness to Nanda and all the other gopas. To your holy form, we offer our salutations."

In the middle of this kunda, there is a well with Yaśodā's name. It is called Yaśodā Kupa. By drinking its water, one is blessed to have a virtuous son like Kṛṣṇa.

tanneva sarto madhye yasoda kupa mutkhanat ।
yatra kupam pibetoyam kṛṣṇa tulyam suto bhavet ॥
kāmaseni suta kupa suputra phala dāyakah ।
namah pāvana tirthay gopīkayai namostute ॥ (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"O Holy well of Kāmaseni's daughter (Yaśodā)! By your mercy one can give birth to a virtuous son. To you and the gopīs, we offer our utmost respects." (All ślokas from *Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*)

On the Kāmavana-Kosi highway, in the north of Nandagaon, behind Inter College, Pāvana Sarovara is situated and it is one amongst the five important sarovaras (lakes) in Braja.

Pāvana Sarovara was one of Thakurji's favorite places. Śyāmasundara used to play in its water with the gopīs there and while returning from *gauchāran*, he quenched the thirst of His dear cows Kajari, Bahula, Kapila, Kanchana, Śyāma, etc. with its water. Along with His friends He took bath in the refreshing cool waters of this lake. It is said that Vṛṣabhānu Bābā built one majestic palace for his dear daughter Rādhārāṇī on the northern bank of this lake where She enjoyed playing with Her friends. Moreover, she rejoiced at the sight of Nandalāla from that place.

Regarding Pāvana Sarovara, it is said that even if a bird flew over this lake, it would certainly be liberated. Various holy places, capable of granting salvation to all, come to Braja for their own salvation. According

to *Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*, at this Pāvan Sar, Bābā Nanda Raiji and Ma Yaśodā took bath together with *anchar bandhan* (tying the knot with each other's cloth) and donated 125,000 cows during Kṛṣṇa's birthday celebration at Pāvana Sarovara. Hence, the lake's glory is unparalleled. Taking bath in its water and doing *āchamana*, releases one from the burden of all sins.

Place of Devotional Practice of Sanātana

Śrī Sanātana Goswami, the elder brother of Śrī Rūpa Goswami chose the south-east corner of this lake as a favorable place for his devotional practices. He performed very strict *vairāgya* (renunciation) and sometimes he would sit for many days without even a slight movement. Once, it so happened that for four to five days, he did not come out from his *samādhi* (total internal absorption). A divine aura shone all around him. Without food and water, his physical condition was slowly deteriorating. The compassionate Lord came in the form of a small boy with a glass of milk in His hand. He shook him slightly with his hand saying, "O Bābā!" He came out of his meditative trance and opened his eyes. The Lord told him, "Drink this milk, and come for *bhikṣha* (begging alms) because the gopīs of Nandagaon are daily waiting for you." That was all He said and then disappeared. This is the place where that great devotee performed such intense meditation that the Lord personally came to give him milk. In Braja, he is considered to be Lavanga-manjari in his eternal form. Till today, many Gauḍīya devotees come here to execute their devotional practices. From the *Caitanya Caritāmṛita*, one learns that while on his visit to Braja, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu arrived at this location after Kāmyavāna. Upon reaching here, He entered into trance and later took bath in this lake.

taha lilasthali dekhi gela nandishvar ।
nandishvar dekhi prem haila vihval ॥
pavana adi sab kunde snānakariya ।
loker puchhilparvat upare jaaiyaa ।।
(Cai.cha m.li. pari.18.51, 52)

Śrī Vallabhācārya's Sitting Place

On the western side of the sarovara, Śrī Vallabhācārya's baithak, sitting place, is located. He stayed here for six months and recited

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. A Mughal received his grace and in just two lives, he was granted Lord's eternal association. There is a tree nearby, popularly called Nanda Chonkar. Nandaji performs Dussera worship here every year.

Phulvari Kuṇḍa

It is also called Puṣpa Vātika-kuṇḍa. Nanda dāsa has recited the sweet pastime of this place in pure and profound words. Looking at the natural agility of this sweet, graceful and happy girl, Yaśodā's mind got captured! Yaśodā was lost in a whirlpool of thoughts about Her. "What if this girl, who is the reservoir of all beauty, becomes my Kṛṣṇa's bride! I will immediately send a proposal to Kīrtida today." She did not waste a moment as she called for a priestly woman from the village. Disclosing her wish, she sent her off to Barsānā with her proposal. The priestly woman was also glad to carry this message to Barsānā, since Kṛṣṇa is not only Yaśodā's darling but everyone's darling.

na khalu gopīkā-nandano bhavan ।
akhila-dehinām antarātma-dṛk ॥
vikhanasārthito viśva-guptaye ।
sakha udeyivān sātvatāṁ kule ॥

"O friend, You are not merely the son of the gopī Yaśodā, but rather the indwelling witness in the hearts of all embodied souls. Because Lord Brahmā prayed for You to come and protect the universe, You have now appeared in the Sātvata dynasty." (ŚB. 10.31.4)

The priestly woman of Nandīśvara came with a proposal from Yaśodā and she was welcomed in Barsānā like an intimate family member. She directly informed Kīrtida about Yaśodā's wish, which was also the desire of all the people of Nandagaon. "I have come here to ask for your lovely daughter's hand in marriage to Kṛṣṇa. With no hesitation and delay, please fix her marriage with Śyāma and make your daughter Śyāma's Swamini (wife)." Kīrtida said, "Dear sister! Yaśodā is my childhood friend. We both love each other, but my daughter is very simple by nature and Nanda-kumara is an absolute rogue, dark complexioned, boy known as a butter

thief, and stealer of the gopīs' garments. So, I am unable to accept this offer." The priestly woman went back to Nandagaon and narrated the whole incident to Yaśodā. Upon hearing this, she was totally devastated. But, how could this incident be hidden from Kṛṣṇa, the Omniscient Lord? Yaśodā sat with her eyes closed. She was lost in thought and sat with her head in her hands. She felt sad and depressed and there comes the All-knowing Supreme! Lifting Ma's chin gently with His soft touch, asked Ma the reason for her sadness. Ma said, "My dear Kṛṣṇa, I am worried about You. You are stealing curd and butter daily from our neighbors' houses, even though there is no shortage of this at home and every other day, You wrangle with the gopīs. Today, I sent a message to Barsānā to arrange Your marriage to Rādhā and Kīrtida refused on the basis of Your bad behavior. We feel so much pain in our heart after hearing her reply." Kṛṣṇa smilingly said, "Mother, you do not worry. Do not worry! I tell you, now you just wait and watch. Mother Kīrtida will definitely send her proposal to you."

He went to Phulvari-kuṇḍa and sat down in a lonely grove. Rādhārāṇī arrived there with Her friends. She saw Śyāma sitting behind the bushes. She could see His dazzling peacock feather lightly wafting. His beautiful smile and amorous sidelong glances stole Her heart. The whole atmosphere of Puṣpa Vatika was pervaded with Nīlacandra's bluish effulgence. Rādhā's delicate heart was attracted to Śyāma Who was the embodiment of all beauty, like iron-filings to a magnet! Covering Her face with Her silken blue shawl, She hid Herself in a thick grove and began to sob. When Her friends saw Her in that condition, they suggested a plan, "There is one way You may get Kṛṣṇa. Let's go back home. You become unconscious and we will tell Mother that a black snake has bitten You and that we know of one person who is an expert at removing the venom." They immediately went back to Barsānā and Śrīji exactly followed their plan.

Her friends frantically told Kīrtida that a snake had just bitten Rādhā. Finding her dear daughter in an unconscious state, Kīrtida's heart began to shudder. Absolutely perturbed, she called many *garudis* (one who removes a snake's venom), but to no avail. She held Rādhā's hand in her hand and started to cry.

sakhi kahati samujhāii kaho to gokul jauu ।
manmohan ghanshyam turat vako le aauu ॥
vaha dhota ati sohno pathve vaki maii ।
bado garudii nanda ko turat bhali kari jaii ॥
(*Nandadasa kṛta syama sagāi*)

Lalitā said, "Listen Ma! There is one great *garudi*, whom I know. Had He been called before, Rādhā would have recovered by now!" Kīrtida inquired, "Who is that, Lalitā? Please call him immediately!" Lalitā said, "Ma! He is Nanda-kumara who controlled the most venomous snake, Kāliya. But, there is one problem, you refused Rādhā's engagement to him. Feeling insulted, He may not easily agree to come!"

Kīrtida cried, "Lalitā! I committed a big blunder. You immediately go and submissively tell Him that if He can save Rādhā's life, I will immediately consent to Their engagement."

Lalitā said, "Right Ma! I will go and try to bring Him. Nanda-kumara usually respects my word." Lalitā immediately left for Nandagaon.

Arriving there, Lalitā happily entered Nanda's palace. Lalitā called, "Nandanandana! The drama has succeeded. Let us go, do not delay." Now, Nandanandana became hysterical. He said, "Lalitā, I will not go!" Lalitā insisted, "Come immediately, or else Your situation will remain like this."

Holding a pouch of ashes, *garudi* Nandakumara accompanied Lalitā. They entered Vṛṣabhānu's palace. Ma Kīrtida felt greatly relieved. Kṛṣṇa held Śrīji's soft fair hand in His dark red and examined Her pulse and said, "Oh! The venom is quite strong, the situation is looking grim. All of you listen carefully, I will remove the venom but anyone standing around Her will absorb it, so none of you can stand here. I will treat Her in solitude." Ma Kīrtida and all the gopīs vacated the room. When all have gone, Śyāmasundara whispered in Śrīji's ear, "O crest-jewel of Braja! O lovely damsel! Get up now, I have come. Our drama has been successful."

Instantly, Rādhārāṇī got up. Thakurji, making a sound with His clap, called everyone to come in. Ma Kīrtida was extremely pleased. She profusely praised Kṛṣṇa. Lalitā brought a decorated tray and said, "Ma, now, you have to fulfill your promise."

Kīrtida said, "Yes Lalitā! You are right, give me the tray. Why delay a good deed? I will fix this auspicious relationship right now!"

Instantly, Kīrtida applied tilak (clay marking) on Kṛṣṇa's forehead. This indicated that He has now become her son-in-law.

***sunati sagaiishyam gwal sab angani phule* ।**
***nachat gavat chale prem ras me anukule* ॥**
***jasumati rani ghar sajyo motin chauk puraii* ।**
***bajati badhaii nand ke 'nand das' bali jaii* ॥ **(Kirtida)**

Kshunnahar Kuṇḍa

Nanda Raiji's father, Parjanyaji performed austerity here. As a fruit of his austerity, he begets Nanda, Upananda, and his other sons.

Moti Kuṇḍa

According to *Garga-saṁhitā*, after Kṛṣṇa lifted Govardhana Hill, the talk of His valor spread in Braja like a forest fire. A delegation of gopas went to Nanda's palace and said, "Mahārāj! How is it that in your family such a mighty boy was born who can hold up such an expansive mountain of seven Kos for seven days at such a tender age? You yourself cannot lift even a small rock. How is it that your son gained such supernatural powers? One more thing intrigues us, you and Ma Yaśodā have fair skin, whereas Kṛṣṇa has a dark complexion. How is Kṛṣṇa born with such opposing characteristics compared to both of you? Where has this child come from? Tell us the truth or the entire gopa community will boycott you."

Nandaji then divulged the details that Garga Muni told him during the *nāmakarana* ceremony (selecting the name of a newborn child). "He is no ordinary child. All the *avatāras* (the Lord's incarnations) who descended on earth hold only a fraction of His power. He is the Absolute from whom everything else is created. He has already appeared in white, red and yellow forms. Presently, He bears a dark (Śyāma) complexion. Since He is the Lord of all matter, His other name is Vāsudeva, and is also Rādhāpati, the Lord of Vṛṣabhānu's divinely beautiful daughter, Rādhikārāṇī. He has come to relieve the earth from her burden."

Listening to all that Garga Muni had foretold, they became further annoyed and said, "Nanda! We find your behavior highly objectionable; you performed your son's name giving ceremony secretly! If not all of us, you should have invited at least some of us."

All those gopas then went to Vṛṣabhānu's palace and told him, "Gopeśvara! Let us excommunicate Nanda from our group!" Vṛṣabhānu was shocked and asked, "Why? What is his fault? He is so dear to us. Why are you speaking like this?" They became angry at him and said, "If you do not boycott him, we will boycott you also." Vṛṣabhānu asked, "What is my mistake?" The gopas replied, "Your daughter has already attained marriageable age and you have not arranged Her marriage so far. This is

a grave mistake." Then Vṛṣabhānu patiently explained to them, "Look, Gargaji has already foretold that my daughter's marriage with Kṛṣṇa is divinely planned. Both are eternal consorts and have appeared to manifest Their pastimes here on this earthly plane." The gopas said, "Vṛṣabhānu! If Kṛṣṇa is truly Bhagavān (the Supreme Lord), then you at least once test His opulence for our satisfaction!"

To do so, Vṛṣabhānu sent many messangers with beautifully decorated trays and baskets filled with exquisite, expensive gems and pearls to Nanda's palace. Presenting those splendid gifts to Nanda Mahārāj, they said, "Nandaji! Vṛṣabhānuji is asking for your son's hand for his dear daughter Rādhā and as the tradition goes, has sent these gifts as a token of love and blessings for your dear son Kṛṣṇa. Kindly accept these gifts and give your consent. As per the tradition in our community, you must give us appropriate gifts in return for the bride-to-be as an acceptance of this proposition."

Nandaji has never before in his life seen such rare gems and also in such abundance! He was worried and spoke to Yaśodā. She became awe-struck with the sight of such exquisite gifts and expressed her inability to present anything that could match those! So, what was to be done? The pride of their clan was at stake. At that time, Kṛṣṇa came forward. He took a hundred strings of gems and went away. He sowed those gems in a field. When the time for sending the agreement and gifts approached, Nanda became more worried, because so many strings were missing. By then, Kṛṣṇa could not restrain Himself and said, "Bābā! Do not worry. As we are farmers, I have cultivated some gems in the field." Nanda Bābā became furious and said, "Kṛṣṇa, You are so foolish! Are gems a crop which can be grown?" Disgusted over Kṛṣṇa's childish act, Nanda Bābā ordered his helpers to search for whatever they could find in the field.

To their astonishment, they saw hundreds of trees bearing shining gem as their fruits. Those trees stood tall in the field and were laden with innumerable exquisitely shining gems, even more beautiful than the original ones. Nanda Bābā's joy found no bounds. Now Nanda Bābā happily sent many more baskets full of those transcendentally shining gems with the messengers for Rādhikārāṇī in Barṣāṇā. Observing this miraculous incident, all doubts from the gopas's minds vanished. A kuṇḍa appeared at the place where Nandanandana sowed the gems. It became

popular as Mukta Sarovara or Moti Kuṇḍa and is considered as the King of all pilgrimage. By giving one *moti* (gem) in charity at this place, one gets the fruit of donating a hundred thousand gems.

Chācha Kuṇḍa

Buttermilk (chach) from Nanda Bābā's 900,000 cows was collected at this spot, which Ma Rohiṇī used to distribute to the gopīs. This is located on Kaman road on the village side. Presently, hardly any remains are left of this significant place.

Mora Kuṇḍa

On the request of the Braja gopīs, Kṛṣṇa performed the peacock dance here. This is situated near Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa on the Koṣi Road.

Kṛṣṇa Kuṇḍa

Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa is one of His favorite places for water sports. For this ancient location, a reference is found in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. On arriving in Braja, Uddhava went to Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa to take bath. In the morning, when the gopīs saw a golden chariot parked in front of the gate of Nanda's palace, they enquired from each other who it was that came on that chariot.

bhagavaty udite sūrye nanda-dvāri vrajaukasaḥ ।
dṛṣṭvā rathaṁ śātakaumbhaṁ kasyāyam iti cābruvan ॥

"When the godly sun had risen, the people of Vraja noticed the golden chariot parked in front of Nanda Mahārāj's doorway. "Who does this belong to?" they asked." (ŚB. 10.46.47)

Discussing thus, they went to Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa. There, they found Uddhava. From there, they proceded towards Uddhava Kyara, where the famous dialogue between Uddhava and the gopīs occured and *Bhrāmar-gītā* was recited. Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭaji describes Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa and Lalitā-kuṇḍa respectively in his treatise entitled *Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*. On one side

of Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa is Thakur Śrī Nritya Gopāla's Temple. At sunset, while the cows returned from Ter Kadamba, Kṛṣṇa counted the cows by calling each cow by name and keeping a tally on the beads of His necklace, and after each count He joyously danced.

maṇi-dharaḥ kvacid āgaṇayan gā mālayā dayita-gandha-tulasyāḥ ।
praṇayino 'nucarasya kadāṁse prakṣipan bhujam agāyata yatra ॥

Now, Kṛṣṇa standing and resting His arm over the shoulder of an affectionate cowherd boyfriend, is counting His cows on a string of gems. He wears a garland of Tulasī flowers whose fragrance is so dear to Him. (ŚB. 10.35.18)

Mohana Kuṇḍa

Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭaji mentions Mohana Kuṇḍa again with Lalitā Kuṇḍa. (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

lalitā snapanam kṛtvā mohanekṣaṇamicchati ।
tatastu tatsamipe tu snapitam kṛṣṇa mokṣayet ॥
(Bra.Bha.Vi. 16)

Āseśvara

Mahādeva went to Nanda's palace for Nandalala's audience. Ma Yaśodā refused, saying that her little child will be frightened at his sight. So Mahādeva reluctantly left and sat at this place with *āsa* (the hope) that his Lord will hear his heart's appeal and grant him audience. Since he sat there with hope, he became Āsesvara (possessing all hope) at this place. At Nanda's palace, the moment Mahādeva left, Lāla immediately began to cry. Ma Yaśodā tried to pacify Him by all means, but nothing worked. Others told her that there was one miraculous Bābā sitting close by, on the outskirts of the village, with a moon shining on his forehead and the Ganges flowing from his braided tresses. He might be able to cure Lāla. Ma Yaśodā immediately sent for him. Śiva came and began to sing Rādhā's glory before Śyāmasundara and Lāla kept nodding. The

moment Mahādeva stopped, He again began crying. Ma asked, "Why is He crying?" She could not understand, but Śiva understood that it was the magic of Rādhā's name. Yaśodā said, "Yogi! Please do something to make my Lāla happy." Śiva replied, "Yes, I will instantly make Him calm and happy! He touched Kṛṣṇa's forehead and sang Rādhā's numerous names. Immediately, Kṛṣṇa became quiet. This is the pastime of this beautiful and serene place. Āseśvara Sarovara is situated here.

Tera Kadambavana

At this place, Kṛṣṇa used to climb over a Kadamba tree and call for His cows and they used to come running, hearing Krsna's voice. On Gopāṣṭamī day, this pastime of taking the cows out for grazing is enacted here. This place partially reflects the ancient glory of Braja with its thick rows of trees, bushes, and creepers even today. In the middle of this forest, a kuṇḍa by the name of Ter Kadamba-kuṇḍa is located.

Prayer Mantra for Tera Kadambavana

gopīkā vallabhāyaiva kṛṣṇa gopāla rupine ।
namaste sukh rupay yasoda nandanāya cha ॥

"The beloved of the gopīs is Gopāla (one who tends the cows), Our salutations to that auspicious Yaśodā-nandana!"

This was one of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's sitting places (Bhajan Sthali). His cottage is located here. His elder brother, Sanātana Goswami's cottage is at Pāvana Sarovara. Both brothers left their high positions and enormous wealth to lead a life of devotion and dispassion. Having been impressed with their intense devotion, the merciful Lord and His eternal consort blessed them both. Śrī Govindadevaji, Who is presently enshrined and worshiped in Jaipur, reappeared on account of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's devotion. Thousands of people daily visit this temple. As long as Govindadevaji remained in Braja, He was the King of Braja. When Meera came to Braja, Govindadevaji was in Vṛindāvana and Meera recited melodious prayers in her sweet and sincere words.

mhane lage vrindāvan neeko ।
ghar ghar tulsi thākur pujā darśan govind ji ko ॥ (Meerābai Ji)

While living here in Ter Kadamba, Rūpa Gosvāmī was absorbed in constant devotional service and attained the ultimate goal of life at this very place. Once, his elder brother Sanātana Goswami came to Ter Kadamba where the two brothers met after a long time. Rūpa Goswami affectionately welcomed him and gave him a grass cushion to sit on, but his eyes were looking at the frail frame of his brother. Rupa Goswami thought, "My brother has become very weak." This thought was disturbing him. Sanātana Goswami only went for bhikṣha (begging) occasionally, as he was always engrossed in the bliss of God's remembrance. But Rūpa Goswami became quite worried at his weak physical condition.

The next morning, a thought to serve his brother with wholesome sweet rice arose in his mind. But how would he procure milk, rice, and sugar in this desolate forest? By then, gracious Rādhārāṇī appeared as a little village girl with a pot full of milk. Rūpa Goswami was sitting in deep meditation with his eyes closed but his mind was absorbed in the thoughts of his brother's warm reception!

Śrīji said, "Bābā, O Rūpa Bābā!" Bāba did not open his eyes and with his eyes still closed, he asked, "Who is this?" Śrīji said, "Bābā! It's me, Ma has sent some milk for you." Rūpa responded, "Very nice Lālī, please keep it here in the corner." Śrīji sweetly said, "Bābā, she has given rice and sugar also. If you wish, you may prepare some sweet rice."

Even then Rupa did not recognise his *iṣṭa-deva*. He still did not open his eyes nor did he realize that the manifest fruit of his meditation is present right before him! Śrīji again said, "Bābā! Ma said that if Bābā is busy in his meditation, then I should cook for you."

Rūpa replied, "All right Lālī, you may cook." How much time was required to cook the sweet rice?

She instantly prepared the sweet rice and kept it in a safe corner and Śrīji returned home.

After some time, Sanātana Goswami after finishing his daily routine of devotional practice, came and told Rupa that he want to leave now. Suddenly, it occurred to Rūpa that a girl had cooked some sweet rice. He wanted to serve this preparation to his brother. Rūpa said, "Brother!

Today I have offered sweet rice to my Lord, please stay and take some *prāsadam*."

As soon as Sanātana took some sweet rice from the pot and put it in his mouth, he became immersed with divine bliss! Watching his state, Rūpa loudly called, "Bhaiya! Bhaiya!" After a moment, Sanātana asked Rupa, "From where did you get this sweet rice?" Rūpa replied, "Today, I wanted to serve you sweet rice. I was sitting in meditation, then suddenly a village girl came and cooked it."

Sanātana now understood the whole episode and exclaimed, "Rūpa! She was no ordinary village girl! She was none other than, Vṛiṣhabhānunandini, Śrī Rādhā Herself!" Saying so, he began to cry profusely, "Rūpa! You have done a very wrong thing. You wanted to serve this paltry material body? You have troubled your Lord? Never repeat such a mistake again." Rūpa also cried in repentance and later both ate the divine remnants in great ecstasy.

In Braja, he is considered as Rupa Manjari in his eternal form.

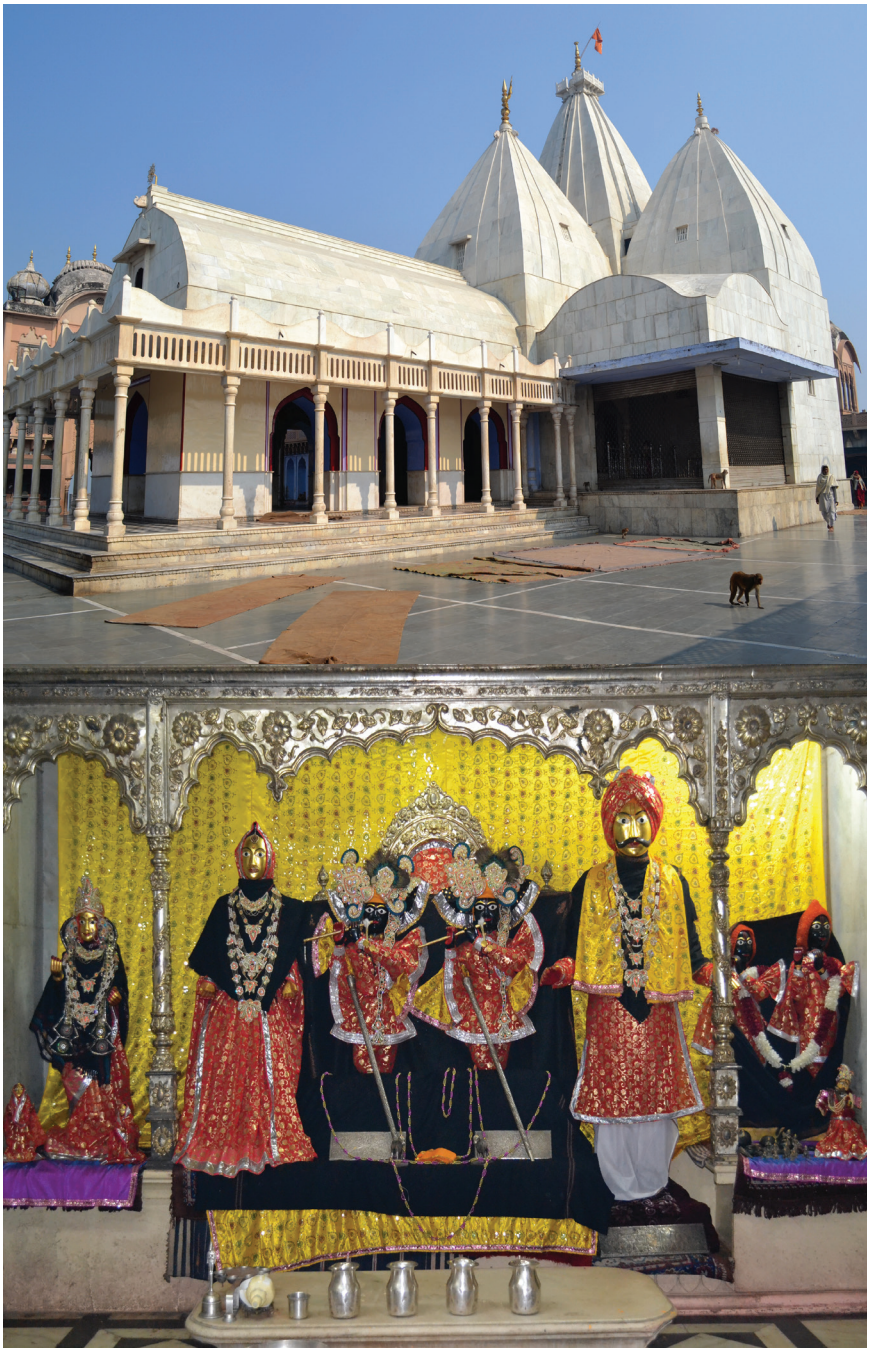
56 Kuṇḍas of Nandagaon

A description of 56 kuṇḍas in Nandāgaon is available in the scriptures.





Top - Nandgaon - Ter Kadamba, Below - Krishna Kund



Top and Below: Nandabhavan





Top and Below: Charan Pahari

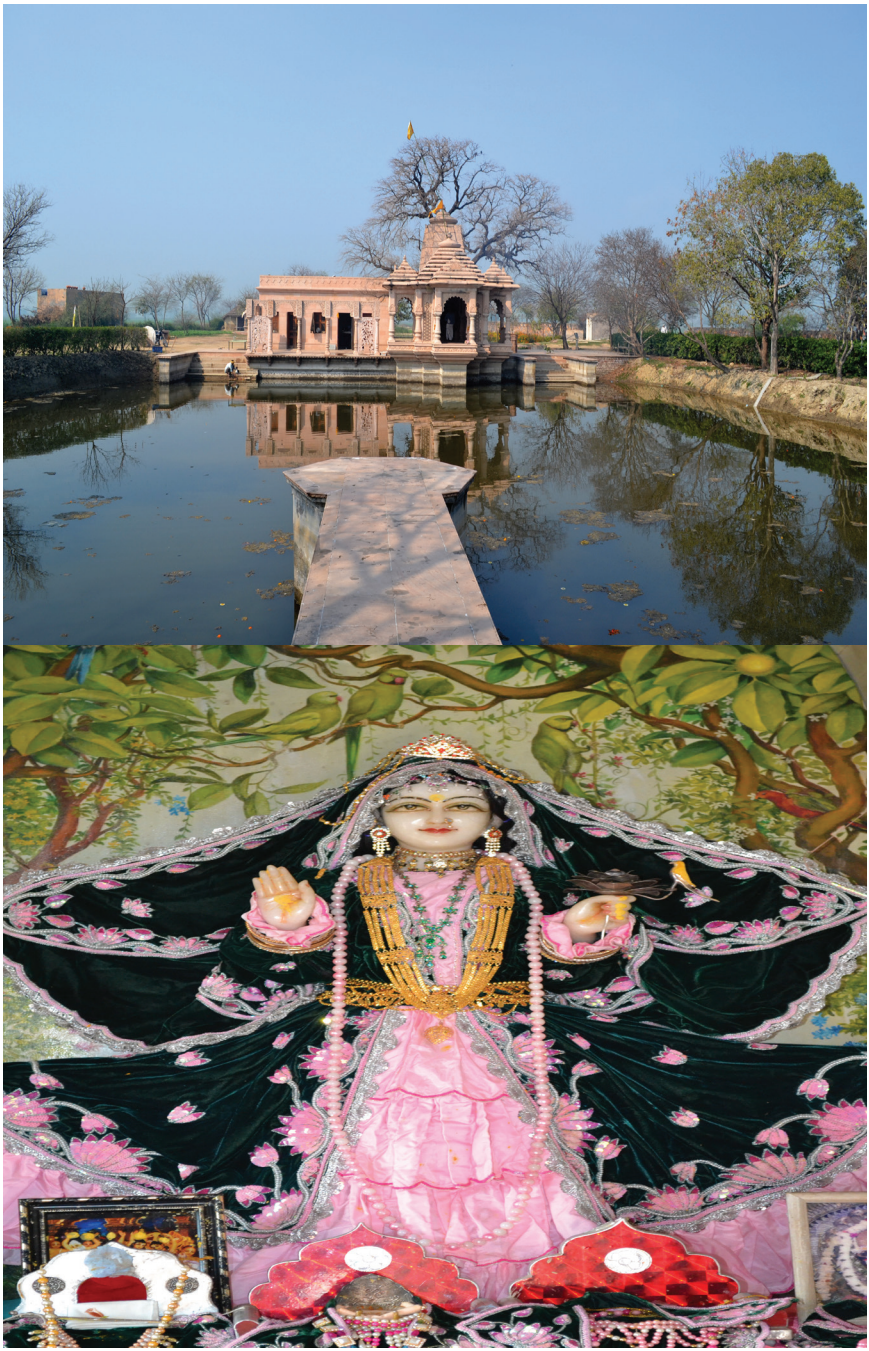




Top and Below: Ter Kadambha



Top - Rupa Goswami bhajan kutir. Below- Sanatana Goswami bhajan kutir



Top - Vrinda Kunda Below - Vrinda Devi





Top - Aseshwar Mahadev. Below - Aseshwar Kunda





Top - Moti Kunda. Below - Mayur Kunda





Top - Hau Bilau. Below - Yasoda Kunda







Top - Nanda Baithak. Below - Yashodaji Ka Mant and Khunta

Chapter 12
Bijwari

Bijwari is a very sacred place. It is also known by the name of Bajrawari and Vidyun Nagar. As Akrūra was taking Kṛṣṇa to Mathura, some of the gopīs tried to stop them by holding the reins of the horses, while some others clinged to the wheels of the chariot. At that instant, by Kṛṣṇa's will, Yogamāyā flashed a bright light there, thus the place is known as 'Bijuari':

bijuriri punj jnana hael sawar |
ei hetu bījari nām se ihār |
[Bhakti Ratnakar]

There is one more legend related to the name of Bajravari; the pastime of killing Bakāsura. A thorough account of this pastime is mentioned in the *Garga-saṁhitā*. When Bakāsura arrived there, the demigods, Brahmā, Śiva, and Indrā, amongst others, came there to assist Kṛṣṇa in annihilating Bakāsura by using their invincible weapons, but they all failed in their attempts. In that battle, Indrā used his potent Vajra weapon, thus the name Bajravari.

The most significant pastime of this abode is that of Akrūra taking Kṛṣṇa to Mathura. Kṛṣṇa eleven years, six months and five days old, was going to Mathura with His elder brother Balarāma, on the Phalgun Kṛṣṇa Trayodaśī, 13th day of the dark half of the month of Feb-March. They were followed from Nandagaon to Bijwari

by the little cowherd boys with sticks in their hands, and by gopīs carrying pots brimming with *gorasa* (milk, curd, butter etc.).

gopās tam anvasajjanta nandādyāḥ śakaṭais tataḥ ।
ādāyopāyanaṁ bhūri kumbhān go-rasa-sambhṛtān ॥
(ŚB. 10.39.33)

The gopīs, overwhelmed by the pangs of separation, stood there with a hope of getting some parting message from their beloved. As Akrūraji pulled the reins of the horses, starting his journey towards Mathura, Kṛṣṇa consoled them, by saying, "I am always with you." While leaving for Mathura, Kṛṣṇa gave solace to the gopīs, whereas Akrūraji did not show any sympathy towards them. His attitude towards the gopīs remained quite ruthless. Due to his heart being hard like a stone or a *vajra* (thunderbolt), this place became known as Vajravari. Jīva Gosvāmī interprets this Bajra sentiment in his *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* quoting the context from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*:

strīṇām evaṁ rudantīnām udite savitary atha ।
akrūraś codayām āsa kṛta-maitrādiko ratham ॥

"While the womens of Braja were crying out in this way, Akrūra, having performed His morning worship and other regular duties at sunrise, began to drive the chariot." (ŚB. 10.39.32.)

Akrūra, however, had to bear the consequences of this harshness. Later on, in Dvārakā, he developed the greed for acquiring the precious Śyāmantaka jewel. Because of this, he misbehaved in his relation with the Lord and consequently had to suffer.

yāvad ālakṣyate ketur yāvad reṇū rathasya ca ।
anuprasthāpitātmāno lekhyānīvopalakṣitāḥ ॥

"Sending their minds after Kṛṣṇa, the gopīs stood as motionless as figures in a painting. They remained there as long as the flag atop the chariot was visible, and so long as the dust raised by the chariot wheels continued to be seen." (ŚB. 10.39.36)

These exalted gopīs were then overwhelmed by the pain of separation, and they stood there, motionless for as long as they could see the flag on the chariot and the unsettled dust rising from its wheels. Their hearts have gone with Manmohana, only lifeless bodies remain behind.

tā nirāśā nivavṛtur govinda-vinivartane ।
viśokā ahanī ninyur gāyantyaḥ priya-ceṣṭitam ॥

"The gopīs then turned back, without hope that Govinda would ever return to them. Full of sorrow, they began to spend their days and nights chanting about the pastimes of their beloved lord."

(ŚB. 10.39.37)

This hope that Kṛṣṇa may return from the border of Braja compelled them to remain standing there! But eventually this hope transformed into despair, and those damsels returned to their houses. Somehow, they were able to soothe their pain a little bit by constantly singing of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

Viyoga-kuṇḍa or Bichhor-kuṇḍa

As Kṛṣṇa left for Mathura, the gopīs shed so many tears. This is the place where the kuṇḍa, Viyoga kuṇḍa was created by their tears.

Vidyun Nagar

The third name given to this place is Vidyun Nagar. This is connected to the Mahā-rāsa pastime. Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā disappeared from the Mahā-rāsa and came to Sanketvana where Sri Krsna caressed Sriji's hair. Thereafter, on their way to Khadirvana, at this place, Śrījī's effulgence was shining like vidyut, lightning, and thus this place became popular by the name Vidyun Nagar. (*Garga Saṁhitā* Vrindavana Khanda, 21.18

Chapter 13
Śrī Jāva Vaṭa

Śrī Jāva Vata is 3 km east of Nandagaon. This is one of the 12 significant forests of Braja. This place expresses the truth about the unity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

sa vai naiv reme tasmadekaki na rāmate sa dvitiyamaichhat |
(Br.Upa. Chaturtha Br.1.3)

Even though both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are single substance but for the purpose of giving pleasure to His Devotees and to shower love nectar on them, the Supreme Lord assumed two forms; one Rādhā and another Krsna. Initially He appears alone, therefore besides assuming a form, finds Himself ill-equipped to perform nectarine līlā, He reveals from His left-side His inner potency Śrī Rādhā, His hladini-śakti, thus though One principle, for the sake of līlā, He appears as Two:

yeyam rādhā yasch krishno rāsābdhirdeha shwaikah kridnartham dvidhabhoot |
(Radhopanishad)

rādhākṛṣṇayoh ekasanam eka buddhih ekam manah ekam jnanam |
ekatma ekam padam ekasrītih ekam brahm atra dvayornbhedah ||

By doing so, His singularity is not affected or diminished. The Lord Himself proclaims, "Lalite! Those who do not differentiate between Myself as Kṛṣṇa and My beloved as Rādhā and consider Us

inseparable as milk and its whiteness, in their hearts pure devotion automatically sprouts. By My grace, they directly attain My abode. Those who entangle themselves in the concept of duality have to remain in this hellish material world to suffer." (*Rādhopaniṣad*)

"dvishvaiko na bhavet bhedo dugdh dhavallyoryatha" ।

We should never perceive Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to be different from each other. As it is impossible to separate milk from its whiteness, similarly, it is a grave offense to even imagine that there is a distinction between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, such a sentiment is prohibited. They are two bodies but one soul and miraculously there is single substance in These two bodies.

rāse sambhuya goloke sa dadhva hare purah ।
ten rādhā samakhyata puravidbhirdvijottama ॥
(Ga.Sa.Vṛ.Kha. 15.32, 33)

Although, fundamentally One, Kṛṣṇa appears in the form of Rādhā, essentially to drink the most inconceivable sweet flow of nectar.

In order to eliminate physical differentiation, one side of the body acquires Śrī Rādhā's form and the second half that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (Subalopaniṣad 2–1)

harerardhtanurādhā radhikardh tanu harih ।

Although, there is only one heart beating in both of these bodies, it simultaneously manifests itself in both of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's form. (*Nārada Panchrātra*)

na kinchidavyorbhinnmekang sarvdaiva hi ।

"Kṛṣṇa proclaims: There is never any difference between the two of Us; We are eternally One. And, the rasikās of Braja present a very emotionally charged interpretation of this One Principle that is only comprehensible through unflinching devotion. (Bra.Vai.Kṛ Ja.Kha. 6.67)

First, Kṛṣṇa says, "Hey Lādalī! You are My body, I am Your body!" Then He ponders, "Here, differentiation between our hearts and minds still remains." To overcome this, He says, "You are in My Heart, I am in Your heart!" But some difference still remains and correcting this, Kṛṣṇa then says, "I am Yours, You are Mine!"

"yah kṛṣṇah sapi rādhā yo rādhā kṛṣṇa eva sah" **।**

(Bra.Sam.)

A small amount of differentiation is still felt; thus He declares, "This utilization of I and You is still creating a feeling of separation, between Us, this usage of I and You should not be occurring, and this would be the best. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa is Rādhā and Rādhā is Kṛṣṇa."

"krishnen aradhyate iti rādhā" **।** *(Radhopanishad)*

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are fundamentally and eternally One. The expert devotees of Braja believe that if any differentiation exists, it means that Rādhā is the Supreme Lord and Kṛṣṇa is Her worshiper! This implies that Rādhā attains supremacy over Kṛṣṇa. And, this is the only perceivable difference! (*Rādhopaniṣad*)

rāsabhoga pradanen rādhā vriddhikrīmata **। (Taiti.Upa.)**

bade bhaye ho bihari yahi chhanha te **। (Swami Śrī Haridās Ji)**

Taitiriya Śruti proclaims: The delectable object is nectar alone and blissful for all and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is that Nectar Absolute. The One that is the source of Nectar for Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself is the Ocean of Bliss Śrī Rādhā.

Śrī Jāva Vaṭa is the place where such a pastime is enacted with this spirit.

rādhā pāda talādyatra javakah skhalito' bhavat **।**
yasmajjāvavatam nāma vikhyātam pṛthivī tale **॥**

(*Brhad Gautamiya Tantra*)

Kṛṣṇa worshiped Rādhā's lotus feet here. Jāvka, the red lac from Śrījī's soles faded at this place, thus it became popular as Jāv Vata. There, the best of the gopīs, Rādhā enacted various pleasurable pastimes. With pure love, Kṛṣṇa affectionately applied this red lac with His own hands on Śrījī's lotus feet.

Rasikācārya Mahāprabhu Śrī Hit Harivanshji also renders this līlā as follows:

Without any distraction, Kṛṣṇa held both of Her feet in His lap and applied this red lac very artistically in complete concentration, with unblinking eyes.

Kṛṣṇa was thus engaged in Śrīji's service. In this pastime of decorating Śrīji's feet with this red lac, the expert among Rasik Devotees Śrī Vyāsa ji has offered Krsna as gift on the red decorated feet of Sri Radha.

kāman tulikayā kareṇa hariṇā yālaktakair ankitā ।
nānā-keli-vidagdha-gopa-ramaṇī-vṛndais tathā vanditā ॥
yā sanguptatayā tathopanisadām hṛdy eva vidyotite ।
sā rādhā-carana-dvayī mama gatir lāsyaika-lilāmayī ॥

Śrī Rādhā's playful, dancing feet which Kṛṣṇa painted with red lac, those feet to which the playful, intelligent, and beautiful gopīs offer Their obeisance, and which are splendid, glorious, and hidden in the heart of the Upānīshads are the only goal of my life.

(Rā.Su.Ni. 205)

Gauḍīya Ācāryas accept this specific pastime, which took place in Jāva Vata and a few other locations, as the culmination of the exhibition of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's sublime love for each other.

javaka yuta yuga charana lali ke ।
manjul mrudul manohar sukh nidhi subhaga singara nikunja gali ke ॥
adbhut amala anupa diwakara mohana manasa kanj kali ke ।
surataru kamadhenu chintamani bhagvadu rasika ananya ali ke ॥

(Bhagavad Rasika Ji)

Subhag Gori ke gore paav….!

Oh! Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's complexion is like molten gold. Her form is indescribably beautiful with Her effulgent and soft lotus-petaled feet. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa desires to always keep Her very close. Even the tip of the nails of Her toes are brighter than billions of moons. Her gait is gentle and graceful, reminiscent of the topmost swans. Śyāmasundara stops playing His flute and just listens to the charming sound of Her ankle bells. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Madan Mohan, the conqueror of cupid, is conquered by the soft decorated lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Prayer Mantra for Circumambulating Jāva Vaṭa

rādha javak sambhut saubhagya sukha vardhana ।
rati keli sukharthaya namo java vataya cha ॥
yatra rādhai karo snanam chatu sakhi shashti bhi ssa ।
rakta neer sama krantam kinchit peet sama koolam ॥
rati keli sukham nruna mati saubhagya vardhanam ।

O Jāva Vaṭa! All glories to you, who are originating from the red lac of Rādhā's feet! As You are the abode of the most delightful and loving pastimes, we bow down to you. (*Brhad Gautamiya Tantra*)

Here is Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, filled with red-yellow waters, bestower of good fortune and grantor of loving pastimes. Śrī Kiśorīji takes bath here with Her 64 sakhīs,

Prayer Mantra for Kishori Kuṇḍa

rādhaiye satatam tubhyam lalitayai namo namah ।
krishnen saha kridaye rādhai kuṇḍay te namah ॥

"O Radhe! O Lalite! O Rādhā-kuṇḍa, who appeared to assist Kṛṣṇa in His pastimes, we offer our obeisance unto you and Kṛṣṇa!"

Liberation of Kaṁsa

gopyah kamad bhayat kamso

It is true that Kaṁsa attained Kṛṣṇa out of fear, however this fear was not of death because his bravery and strength was most astonishing.

According to Garga-saṁhitā

Once, as Paraśurāma was sitting in deep meditation on Mahendragiri mountain, Kaṁsa came and easily lifted that mountain a hundred times. Paraśurāmaji was disturbed and said, "If you are so mighty, prove it by pulling the Vaiṣhṇava bow. It has the weight of 120,000 tons!" Kaṁsa effortlessly did so, not just once but many times! Impressed with his amazing power, Paraśurāmaji presents the bow to Kaṁsa, saying, "Keep this bow with you and remember, whoever will break it, he will also not spare you!" (*Garga Saṁhita*)

In Rāma's incarnation, the battle between Śrī Rāma and Rāvaṇa was not so fierce. The powerful Jāmbavān embarrassed Rāvaṇa and Meghanāda just by his foot-strokes.

marisi meghnad kai chhati,para bhumi dhurmit sur ghati ।
puni resan gahi charan phirayo mahi pachhari nijbal dekhrayo ॥
(Ra.Lan.Ka. 74)

Jāmbavān struck Meghanāda's chest with his trident and as he fell, Jāmbavān lifted him with his foot and fiercely twirled and dashed him to the ground. Later in Kṛṣṇa's incarnation, the Lord satisfied the fighting spirit of all these mighty warriors. (Ra.Ba.Ka. 261, 283)

The bow used at the occasion of Mother Sītā's ceremony for selecting Her husband belonged to Śiva. That bow was stronger than a thunderbolt. Rāvaṇa and Bāṇāsura did not even dare to touch it, but it was broken with Śrī Rāma's touch alone.

Śrī Paraśurāma did not perceive Śrī Rāma as the Supreme God although He easily lifted and restrained that mighty bow. He challenged Sri Rama and said, "O Lakṣmīkant! Hold this Vaiṣhṇava bow and pull its string, and then only my doubt will be dispelled, since none other than the Lord Himself can lift this bow. Prove Yourself by pulling the string of this bow." To the great astonishment of Paraśurāmaji, that bow moved towards Śrī Rāma on its own. The Vaiṣhṇava bow was many times heavier than Śiva's bow. Paraśurāmaji presented that infallible bow to Kaṁsa and Kṛṣṇa had broken that bow.

The intent of this narration is to show that the strength of Kaṁsa is far greater than that of Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa could not even touch Śiva's bow whereas Kaṁsa could lift the Vaiṣhṇava bow a hundred times! The Sudarśana chakra of Lord Viṣṇu just after touching mighty Ravana's head returns without harming him, showing that Rāvaṇa is also a strong person. The Sudarśana cakra which has the power to destroy the whole creation could not injure Rāvaṇa. Paraśurāmaji later annihilated Sahasrabahu who held Rāvaṇa captive under his arm. However that Paraśurāmaji is impressed by the valor of Kaṁsa. Kaṁsa's strength was greater than that of those two mighty warriors, Śiśupāla and Hiraṇyakaśipu.

After obtaining a boon from Śiva and winning over all the *devas* and demons, the mighty Śiśupāla ridiculed the power of Rāvaṇa and many others. (*Maha-kavi Māgha Śiśupāla Vadha* 1.54)

Even Hiraṇyakaśipu was no less powerful. He reached Vaikuṇṭha while searching for Śrī Hari. Śrī Hari had to hide Himself in Hiraṇyakaśipu's heart after realizing that he would follow Him anywhere and everywhere except the secret chambers of his own heart.

evaṁ sa niścitya ripoḥ śarīram ādhāvato nirviviśe 'surendra ।
śvāsānilāntarhita-sūkṣma-dehas tat-prāṇa-randhreṇa vivigna-cetāḥ ॥

"Lord Vāmanadeva continued: O King of the demons, after Lord Viṣṇu made this decision, He entered the body of His enemy Hiraṇyakaśipu, who was rushing towards Him.. In a subtle body inconceivable to Hiraṇyakaśipu, Lord Viṣṇu, who was in great anxiety, entered Hiraṇyakaśipu's nostril along with his breath." (ŚB. 8.19.10)

When Śrī Hari entered Hiraṇyakaśipu's heart, the demigods were distraught with his ruthlessness and went to Brahmā Loka to take shelter.

tena taptā divaṁ tyaktvā brahmalokaṁ yayuḥ surāḥ ।
dhātre vijñāpayām āsur deva-deva jagat-pate ॥
daityendra-tapasā taptā divi sthātuṁ na śaknumaḥ ।

"Scorched and extremely disturbed because of Hiraṇyakaśipu's severe penances, all the gods left their planets and went to the planet of Lord Brahmā, where they informed the creator as follows: O lord of the demigods, O master of the universe, because of the fire emanating from Hiraṇyakaśipu's head as a result of his severe austerities, we have become so disturbed that we could not stay in our planets but have come to you." (ŚB. 7.3.6)

But the gods defeated by Kaṁsa could not find anyone to rescue them and thus took refuge under Kaṁsa himself, implying that even Brahmāji was not capable of relieving the gods from Kaṁsa's atrocities.

kecit prāñjalayo dīnā nyasta-śastrā divaukasaḥ ।
mukta-kaccha-śikhāḥ kecid bhītāḥ sma iti vādinaḥ ॥

"Defeated and bereft of all weapons, some of the gods of heaven gave up fighting and praised you with folded hands, and some of them, appearing before you with loosened garments and hair, said, 'O lord, we are very much afraid of you.'" (ŚB. 10.4.34)

Victory of Kaṁsa over the Universe

Kaṁsa's victory over the universe is not described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, but *Garga Saṁhitā* and other related scriptures describe this event in greater detail. Kaṁsa threw the mighty Kuvalayāpīḍa, the elephant of Jarāsandha, who had the power of a thousand elephants, for thousands of miles. He also won over the five strong wrestler sons of the mighty King Mahishpati, Chāṇūra, Muṣṭika, Kūt, Śalya and Tośala. He churned the bones of Dvivida Monkey to powder, he took control over the mighty Keśī and made friends with many demons like Aghā, Ariṣṭā, Naraka, Pralambā, Bhaumā, Dhenukā, Trinavarta, and Bakā and others, all of them were victorious over devas.

After defeating Vyomā, Bāṇā, Vatsā, Kālayavana and others, Kaṁsa controlled the gods and completely destroyed the so-called infallible Vajra of Devarāja Indrā. He also subdued Airāvata with just one blow of his hand, tossing him away by holding his trunk. (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha. 7.53)

The demigods could not find any place to run away to, therefore, they loosened their hair and took refuge of Kaṁsa. Even after establishing his supremacy all over the world, such a mighty warrior as Kaṁsa, due to Śrīji's influence, was greatly afraid of the effulgence of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāj!

The Brajavāsis said, "O King! You have rightly said that Your daughter Rādhā is Śrī Hari's consort. Due to Her influence, your opulence appears greater than that of Nanda's. Kaṁsa remains at bay due to Her power alone. This supremacy and opulence is nowhere to be found around Nanda." This Braja's folklore relating to Rādhārāṇī's influence is absolutely true! (Ga. Sa.Go.Kha. 6.2, 5)

Just see the power of the Absolute power. After making innumerable attempts, the terror of cruel Kaṁsa could not approach Kiśorīji. Once, while attempting to go to Braja to put an end to both Nanda and Vṛṣabhānu, he went through Jāva's village. The locals narrate an interesting story.

When Kaṁsa arrived there in Jav-vat, he had to go across Kiśorī-kuṇḍa near Kiśorī vata and the moment he entered the water, he was turned into a huge, fat female, Motallisakhī! Close by, Kiśorīji was busy playing. Her dear friend Lalitā, on seeing this fat woman, asked her, "O Motalli! Where have you come from?" Seeing Śrīji, Kaṁsa's bravery was defeated by Her grandeur. (*Garga Saṁhitā* Goloka Khanda 6.5) Out of shyness, he

cannot even utter a word. Having been transformed into a female body, he could not even run away to Mathura, so he stood there with folded hands. Motalli said, "O Radhe! Please forgive me, kindly give me shelter." Upon hearing this, Lalitā came forward and said, "O Motalli! If you really want to be forgiven, just sitting there with folded hands will not do. You need to quickly get up and start making dung-cakes. Our Vṛṣabhānu Bāba possesses thousands of cows and dung is plentiful here. So, do some work and your body may gain a little agility."

In Braja, the hearsay goes like this: The gopīs made Kaṁsa work in this way for 6 months. One day, Kaṁsa pleaded, "Swamini, please have mercy!" Lalitā said, "Go and take bath in this kuṇḍa and never again attempt to walk across to this side." Taking bath in the kuṇḍa, Kaṁsa regained his original masculine form, and ran away without looking back. (Ga.Sa.Go.Kha. 6.7)

The Brajavāsis, discussing the unmatched glories of Rādhārāṇī, said, "Vrushabhānu ji! You possess a kind of majesty that does not even exist in Nanda Bāba. Then how can we expect Krsna to equalize this glory of Sri Radha?"

The heroic prowess of Nandanandana was such that every day one or two demons would enter Braja and He, without ever taking support of any weapons, would annihilate them. The power of Śrīji was so amazing that all these demons like Aghā, Bakā and others come up only to Gokula, Mahavana and Vṛindāvana, but they did not dare to go anywhere close to the border of Barṣāṇā because of a deep-rooted fear in their hearts of being transformed into females! And, who knew how long these gopīs would employ them in making dung-cakes!

gopyaḥ kāmād bhayāt kaṁso dveṣāc caidyādayo nṛpāḥ ।
sambandhād vṛṣṇayaḥ snehād yūyaṁ bhaktyā vayaṁ vibho ॥

"My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, the gopīs by their lusty desires, Kaṁsa by his fear, Śiśupāla and other kings by envy, the Yadus by their familial relationship with Kṛṣṇa, you Pāṇḍavas by your great affection for Kṛṣṇa, and we, devotees, by our devotion, have obtained the mercy of Kṛṣṇa." (ŚB. 7.1.29)

kāmād dveṣād bhayāt snehād yathā bhaktyeśvare manaḥ ।
āveśya tad-aghaṁ hitvā bahavas tad-gatiṁ gatāḥ ॥

"Many, many persons have attained liberation simply by fixing their mind on the almighty Lord through devotion and giving up sinful activities. This great attention may be due to lusty desires, inimical feelings, fear, affection, or devotional service. I shall now explain how one receives Kṛṣṇa's mercy simply by concentrating one's mind upon Him." (ŚB. 7.1.30)

The meaning of: *'bhayat kaṁso'* is that Kaṁsa attained liberation out of his fear. That fear was not from Kṛṣṇa alone, but also from Rādhā's friends, since he was defeated by Vṛṣabhānuja's (Rādhā) amazing power. Due to his defeat, his fear increased unlimitedly.



Chapter 14
Dhāmasinga

This is the village of Rādhārāni's friend Dhaniṣṭhā .

Sri Giḍoha (Gānavana)

Prayer Mantra for Gānavana

gopyutsaha krutodwan krishne gita vidhayine ।
sarvadotsava rupaya namo ganbanay te ॥

(*Kurma Purāṇa*)

"O Gānavana! Where the gopas, immersed in bliss, are showing their expertise in the fine art of singing and where so many pastimes are being performed for the pleasure of the Divine Couple. As you are the abode of ecstatic celebration, we bow down unto you."

This is the legendary place called Gānavana. Singing pastimes take place here. While tending the cows, the cowherd boys and Kānāi used to sit together at this place for their musical performances. Every one of Kānāi's friends were equally proficient, colorfully smart music instructor. The great musicians, Gandharvas' master Tumburu and Tumburu's great master Pralayankar Śaṅkara and other maestros – are openly challenged by these little gopa boys in their musical feasts.

"bhaiya jaku harve kau shauk hai vo ā jaye"
"Brother! Whoever wants to taste defeat, is welcome!"

gopa-jāti-praticchannā devā gopāla-rūpiṇau ।
īḍire kṛṣṇa-rāmau ca naṭā iva naṭaṁ nṛpa ॥

"O King, demigods disguised themselves as members of the cowherd community and just as dancers would praise their chief, they worshiped Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who were also appearing as cowherd boys." (ŚB. 10.18.11)

Many *devas* came as cowherd boys to participate in His friendship pastimes and enjoy this bliss. Those devas who did not possess the capacity to come down, showered flowers from the sky on such occasions, bowing down to the little gopas from a distance, verily praising them. Blessed is this land where these naughty, agile tiny-tots, Kṛṣṇa's friends, who have yet not grown-up enough to even put on underwear by themselves, don't hesitate in pulling down the great ones to shame. Prostrations to them and to their beloved master, Kṛṣṇa.

One time, these little gopas even cornered Brahmā. When Brahmā kidnapped the cowherd boys and calves, they remained quiet in Brahmāloka, fearing that with their uproar, Brahmā's planet may fall to Earth. At the same time, they resolved that whenever that ignorant Brahmā came back to Braja, they would not spare him.

The moment these agile little boys reach Braja, they first met Kānāiya with warm hugs. suddenly, it occured to Mansukha as he regained his memory that he was 2 years older than Dau.

He said, 'Lāla Kānāiya! Touch my feet….'

Ṛṣabha thought, though 2 days younger than Dau, I am elder to Kṛṣṇa, he says, 'Kānāiya! Lāla massage my legs…..'

And this Lord, lover of His devotees, ministers to all.

In order to remove the doubt of Brahmā, Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Brahman, revealed His opulent form, unveiling the true form of Braja. Brahmā, was about to leave after paying homage to Kṛṣṇa, but one smart little boy pulled at his beard and asked with great authority, "Why are you running away?" Then, pointing with his tiny hand, he said, "Sit here silently in this dust." This little boy further said, "Learn something from us."

By then, one boy brought a flute and asked, "Have you ever played on a flute?" Sarcastically, a third boy added, "Lāla! Ask him whether he has ever seen a flute in his life." A fourth boy humorously said, "If ever he gets a break from studying his books, then only will he know other things." All together, they said, "Our leader will now play the flute. Listen with rapt attention." By then Pañcanana-Śiva (five-headed Śiva) also arrived. One boy got up and welcomed him, saying, "Bholey! You sit here. Look, if you know any melodies, then sing something. As you possess five heads, show us your talent! Otherwise, you all, who have four, five, or thousands of heads (Caturanana, Pañcanana and Sahasrananas) will be defeated by us, we only have one head." All the *devas* sat silently. This is what a music conference looked like in Braja.

Here, for those among us who desire to enter into the reality of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, it is not only beneficial but compulsory to accept the instructions of the Brajavasis.

The Apsarās were ready to dance, the Kinnaras held their musical instruments, the Gandharvas opened their mouths ready to sing and all stood still, transcending bodily consciousness. Every one was sitting silently. Not only the *devas* and all the perfected souls came, but the wild animals too came from far and wide and assembled in close proximity, creating a perfect picture scene. All the birds, lined up in the big trees, looked and listened with rapt attention, as if they too were significant delegates of that conference.

Actually, it is a fact that these birds were no ordinary beings (ŚB. 10.21.14) but were great munis appearing there to bring fruition to their sādhanas of many-many long years. Witnessing this gathering, Śrī **Śukadeva** muni devoted one full chapter of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam on Kṛṣṇa's flute which is known by the name Venu-gītā (song of the flute). Surdāsaji also describes this pastime beautifully.

Hari ke barābar veṇu koū n bajāve ।
Jag jīvan bidit munin nāch jo nachāve ॥
Chaturānan panchānan sahasānan dhyāve ।
Gvāl bāl lie jamun kachchha bachh charāve ॥
Sur nar muni akhil lok kou n pār pāve ।
Tāran taran aginit gun nigam neti gave ॥
Tin koan jasumati aangan tāl de nachāve ।
'sūraja' prabhu kṛupā dhām bhakta bas kahāve ॥

No one can play the flute as expertly as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The melodious sound not only captivates the minds of the gopīs but also all living creatures who hear it. Great ṛṣis immediately get up from their meditation and begin to dance upon hearing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute song. Even four- faced Lord Brahmā, five-faced Lord Śiva, Ananta Śeṣa and all the denizens of heaven and their wives, become attracted when they hear the transcendental sound of Lord Kṛṣṇa's flute. That same Śrī Kṛṣṇa plays with the calves and cowherd boys on the bank of the Yamuna. The deep meaning of His pastimes bewilder the minds of humans, sages, and even the demigods. He is the giver of liberation and has countless virtues. All the teachings of the Vedas are meant to understand Him. Yet, that same Kṛṣṇa dances for the pleasure of Mother Yaśodā. Suradāsaji says: "This is my God. He shows unlimited and causeless mercy to those who seek it and He always abides in the love of His devotees.

Brahmā thus spoke:

aho bhāgyam aho bhāgyaṁ nanda-gopa-vrajaukasām ।
yan-mitraṁ paramānandaṁ pūrṇaṁ brahma sanātanam ॥

"How greatly fortunate are Nanda Mahārāj, the "O infallible Supreme Lord, yet even of Vrajabhūmi! There is no limit to their good fortune, because the Absolute Truth, the source of transcendental bliss, the eternal Supreme Brahman, has become their friend." (ŚB.10.14.32)

eṣāṁ tu bhāgya-mahimācyuta tāvad āstām ।
ekādaśaiva hi vayaṁ bata bhūri-bhāgāḥ ॥
etad-dhṛṣīka-caṣakair asakṛt pibāmaḥ ।
śarvādayo 'ṅghry-udaja-madhv-amṛtāsavaṁ te ॥

"Yet even though the extent of the good fortune of these residents of Vṛndāvana is inconceivable, we eleven presiding deities of the various senses, headed by Lord Śiva, are also most fortunate, because the senses of these devotees of Vṛndāvana are the cups through which we repeatedly drink the nectarean, intoxicating beverage of the honey of Your lotus feet." (ŚB. 10.14.33)

tad bhūri-bhāgyam iha janma kim apy aṭavyāṁ ।
yad gokule 'pi katamāṅghri-rajo-'bhiṣekam ॥
yaj-jīvitaṁ tu nikhilaṁ bhagavān mukuṇḍas ।
tv adyāpi yat-pada-rajaḥ śruti-mṛgyam eva ॥

"My greatest possible good fortune would be to take a birth whatsoever in this forest of Gokula with the privilege of bathing in the dust of feet of any of its residents whose entire life and everything of course is the Supreme Lord, Mukuṇḍa, the dust of whose lotus feet is still being searched for in the Vedic mantras." (ŚB. 10.14.34)

Such is this magnificent place!

Gandharva Kuṇḍa

Prayer Mantra for Gandharva Kuṇḍa

shubharatya miramay tirthraj namostute ।
vishvavsu krutasnan sukanth varadayine ॥

"O King of all pilgrimages! The beautiful Gandharva Viśvāvasu filled with love for the divine, takes bath here. You, who have gifted him with the most melodious voice, we offer our obeisance unto you." (*Kurma Purāna*)

There are many sacred kuṇḍas in this vast forested kingdom, a majority of them have vanished from our vision over the years. Presently there is only one Gandharva-kuṇḍa that remains protected. Gendokhar-kuṇḍa is in the northeast quarter, Gaudharvana-kuṇḍa in the east, Belavana-kuṇḍa in the south, gopī-kuṇḍa in the southeast corner, Jalabhara-kuṇḍa in the west and Vihar-kuṇḍa is situated in the southwest corner.

Maharānā

Maharānā is the *pihara* (parental house) of Mahārāni Yaśodā. Even if a barber from Yaśodā's village arrived, her *sasural* (her in-laws' house) showed exceptional care in welcoming him like a deva. On the arrival of Kṛṣṇa to Mother Yaśodā's lap, the *nanihal* (maternal side) came to Nandagaon. All the men and women of Maharānā were respected equally

with Nani Patula and Nana Sumukha (Yaśodā's mother and father). One *brāhmaṇa* priest of Maharānā, who used to pamper Lali Yaśodā as his own daughter, wished to see her newly born. He thought, "Look, how fortunate is our daughter, she came from Maharana and also is the Queen here." Mother Yaśodā was elated to receive the revered *brāhmaṇa* priest from her village. After offering him water and washing his feet, she made him sit comfortably in a room neatly mopped with cow-dung. Then she cooked a delicious meal for him. The *brāhmaṇa* is happy to note that although a little late, God has blessed him with a divine grandson. Remembering that he relishes sweet rice, Yaśodā herself brought fresh milk and prepared a well-cooked, pink colored, delicious sweet rice.

She served the sweet rice in a bowl and the *brāhmaṇa* closed his eyes and invoked Śrī Bhagavān for eating the offering. How was it possible for him to understand that Bhagavān was his grandson! Thus, on his invocation, Nanda-lāla, crawled on his knees and began to eat the sweet rice. The *brāhmaṇa* shouted, "O Yaśodā! Look! Your son is defiling the offering!" Mother Yaśodā came running and pleaded lovingly, "Please do not worry! I will get some more milk and cook fresh sweet rice." She again cooked, but Nandalāla spoiled the offering again and the *brāhmaṇa* got irritated by this repetition. Naughty Nandanandana was forbidden by His mother, but he became mischievous again. Mother Yaśodā said, "Lāla! Why do You contaminate the offering every time? Now do not go there while our respected *brāhmaṇa* is offering food to his Lord." Lāla replied, "Mother, why are you blaming Me? He is invoking Me again and again, calling Me by My name. Now you tell Me, I should not answer my *brāhmaṇa* Nana's calls?"

This *līlā* (Sri Kṛṣṇa's pastime) is composed as a beautiful bhajan by Sūradasa.

Sāncholī

Another name for Sancholi is Śikṣāvana.

Prayer Mantra for Śikṣāvana

gopī sikshā prasadaya vāsudeva vara prada |
namah sikshā vanayaiva sau buddhi varadāyine ||

"O Śikṣāvana , who is purified by the gopīs's instructions, who grants benediction to Vasudeva and to whom, by simply paying homage, one achieves pure intelligence and perfection in understanding and reciting Vedic incantations, we offer our obeisances.

The Prayer Mantra for Sip and Bath in Kamasara

gopīka kam purnay kamakhya sarse namah ।
dev gandharva lokanam kalakamartha dayine ॥

"O Kāma Sarovara! To you, who fulfills the desires of the gopīs and grants the gods, the gandharvas, and others all prosperity, the knowledge of the various art of how to perform proper action, we pay our obeisance."



Gidoh - Gendokhar Kund

Chapter 15
Śrī Kokilāvana

Among the 137 forests of Braja, this is among one of the 12 significant forests. According to the Gauḍīya scripture, *Śrī Bhakti Ratnākara*, the location of this forest is a distance of 3 kilometers west of Yavaṭa.

jāvater paschime ai vana manohara|
lakha-lakha kokile kuhure nirantara ||

Prayer Mantra for Kokilāvana

devarshi kinnara kirna kokilā nirmataya cha |
vana ahlad purnay namaste susvar prada ||

"O Kokilāvana, where, during the spring season, the lovely damsels of Braja please their beloved Brajendra-nandana, by expressing their love by melodiously singing their emotionally surcharged lamentations, amidst the background singing of countless birds and ultimately meet Śrī Kokilā-Bihari." (*Narada Pancarātra*)

According to *Garga Saṁhitā*, this divine gathering started on Vaiśākha Panchami tithi. In the middle of this nectarean pastime, Kṛṣṇa suddenly disappeared. The gopīs roamed in the jungles and searched for Him looking far and wide; and they inquire the creepers, trees, mother Earth, animals, and Śrī Yamunā about the passage of their beloved Kṛṣṇa. Nanda dāsa says,

"ko jada ko chetan na jānat virahi jana" **। (Sri Nandadāsa Ji)**

This is the unique state of separation where the difference between living and non-living goes way. "Where is Kṛṣṇa! Mādhava… Govinda… Prāṇanātha… please appear soon before our eyes!" This echo alone was heard in all directions. Alas! The moon seemed like a scorching sun to them. That cool, thick forest, with fragrant and soft petaled flowers, jasmine, mogra, and juhi, appeared like a forest of sharp blades of grass and the cool breezes were hitting them like blazing arrows.

Rāni Madayanti grieved immensely on King Saudasa's becoming a *brahma rākṣasa* (powerful ghost) because of Vasiṣṭha's curse. Queen Damayantī's grief was many-fold greater for King Nala. Much more than this was the grief of Mother Janakī, Śrī Rāma's consort and the grief felt by the Braja gopīs was many times greater than this. Their pain of separation was beyond imagination and our effort to express it with a pen is pure foolishness. This state of intense separation is unlimited, unfathomable, inexpressible, and unimaginable and this state is what would eventually bring Kṛṣṇa back to the gopīs. As a result of the exalted singing of *gopī-gītā* rendered at this sacred Kokilāvana, the damsels of Braja attained Kṛṣṇa. According to *Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*, Ratnakara Sarovara and Rāsa Maṇḍala are situated in Kokilāvana. There, Śrī Vallabhācharya Mahaprabhu's sitting place (baithak Ji) is also present for the Vaiṣṇavas to take Darshan.

According to Braja Bhakti Vilāsa

Here in this large forest, there is Rātnakara Sarovara and Rāsa Maṇḍala.

Prayer Mantra for Ratnākar Sarovara

sakhyaha kshir sambhuta ratnākar sarovare **।**
nānā prakāra ratnāna mudbhave varade namah **॥**

"O Ratnākara Sarovara! To you, who produces so many types of jewels, and who is created by the gopīs from milk and who grants countless benedictions, we offer our humble obeisances." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

Prayer Mantra for Rāsamandal

rāsa krida pradiptāya gopī ramana sundara ।

namah sukha manoramya sthalāya siddhi rupine ॥

"O Rāsamandal! To you, who attained perfection by being the location of the supreme and blissful dancing festivity of the graceful gopīs and who bestows upon us an unlimited shower of the most sublime and nectarean happiness, we most gratefully offer our respectful obeisances." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

Glories of a Vaisnava from Varta Ji

According to Varta, one day, there was a Vaiṣṇava, who was travelling in Braja. On his way to Kokilāvana he subsisted on whatever he got by begging. When he arrived at Kokilāvana, he cooked some food, offered it to the Lord and ate the *prasadam*. That day was tthe 'phul dol utsava' - the floral-swing festival. Somehow, by Kṛṣṇa's desire, he forgot all about this until after he honored *prasadam*. He suddenly remembered and repented for his negligence. Immediately, he quickly tied a creeper to a strong branch and affectionately rocked the Lord in that improvised swing. After this, he cooked *dal-bati* (baked bread with lentil soup) and offered it to the



Kokila Van - Panihari kunda



Kokila Van - Vallabha baithak

Lord. On that day, he made three offerings of *dal-bati* to the Lord. Greatly satisfied by this special offering, Śrī Nathji told Śrī Gosain Ji in Govardhan, "Jaya! Jaya! Today I partook a very delicious offering." Śrī Gosain was a little surprised and inquired, "Jaya! Jaya! What is that offering?"

Śrī Nathji said, "***Dal-bati***."

Gosain asked, "Jaya! Jaya! Where did it come from?"

Śrī Nathji replied, "One Vaiṣṇava in Kokilāvana prepared this offering on the occasion of the swing festival."

Śrī Nathji became very pleased with that offering. One day, that Vaiṣṇava came to Govardhan and paid homage to Gosain, who very happily received him by saying, "Please! Come! Come! You are most fortunate. Lāla was very happy with your offering." The Vaiṣṇava humbly replied, "Jaya! Jaya! This is only due to your mercy that Lālaji showered such grace upon me, since I definitely do not have such qualification. This incident only took place by the mercy of this sacred land."

Kṛṣṇa's Great Devotee - Śanideva

Śanideva is a great devotee of the Lord of Kokilāvana Vihari. Every Saturday, hundreds and thousands of people come here to benefit from his audience, which grants devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Just as Hanumān reigns supreme with regards to devotion to Śrī Rāma, likewise, Śanideva has excelled in such supreme devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Surya (the Sun God) was his father and Chāya (Shadow) was his mother.

According to Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa

Śanideva is fixed in his vow and constantly engages in the remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. He does not open his eyes to look at anyone. He always keeps his eyes closed. Once, when Gaṇeśa was born to Bhāgavati Parvati Devi, all the gods arrived to congratulate and pay homage on that occasion and receive their desired gifts. All the gods occupied their seats. Śanideva, the son of the Sun God was also invited and he also went there to have audience of Śaṅkara's son. After bowing down to Mother Pārvatī and to all others present there, he inquired about the child's well-being.

Mother Pārvatī then said, "Śanideva! Since you have arrived, you have had your eyes closed. Why are you not looking at my son?" Śani replied,

"O Śaṅkaravallabhey! The influence of my vision is not auspicious." Parvati asked, "Why do you say so, dear Śani? What is the reason?" Śani replied, "Since I was a child, I have been a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. I do not want to talk or look at any other personality than Kṛṣṇa and I want to keep absolutely free from all desires. My father, the Sun God, performed my marriage to the worthy daughter of Chitraratha. She is a great and bright lady. Since every wife has the desire have communion with her husband, she looked at my indifference towards her and cursed me by saying that because I do not look towards her, whoever I look at, from that moment onwards, would be instantly destroyed. Since then I do not lift my head for any reason."

Pārvati laughed after listening to Śani's story and said, "You must look at my son." Śani hesitantly said, "But I do not wish to incur any harm to the child." Pārvati said, "By all means, you should follow my command." Śani lifted his head slowly and the moment his glance fell on the child, instantly the child's head separated from the body and flew directly to Goloka. Now, only the torso remained, profusely bleeding in Pārvatī's lap! She felt intense grief, but the all-merciful Śrī Hari immediately appeared, bringing the head of an elephant and fixed it onto the torso. The bleeding stopped and the child came back to life. This same child is the most worshipable Gaṇeśa.

Being quite angry, Pārvatīji cursed Śanideva, "Go away from here, and from now on, you will be without bodily parts!" Because he was a great devotee, he was not disturbed by the curse, nor did he want revenge or retribution. This is the attribute of those who are devoted to Kṛṣṇa, and very few are as qualified as Śanideva.

With the sole aim of achieving devotion to Kṛṣṇa, one should go for Śanideva's beneficial audience, as he is worshiped in Braja as a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Considering him to be a malefic planet is neither wise nor proper. Nowadays people who look upon him as a harmful planet are not aware of his actual identity as an exalted devotee of Kṛṣṇa.



Bathain Kalan - Dauji temple





Top - Choti Bathain - Charan Ganga. Below - Charan Pahadi Mour Kunda



Top - Charan pahadi - cows mark. Below - Charan pahadi - cows mark





Top - Laksmi Narayana temple. Below - Balbhadra kunda

Chapter 16
Bathain

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sitting place, baithak is Bathain. This village is 4 kilometers northeast of Kokilāvana. When Kṛṣṇa was tired after playing with His friends, He sat there to relieve His fatigue. Kṛṣṇa's admirable bravery had become an everyday talk among the gopas, but that day Balarāma also performed a commendable feat of dashing the most powerful Dhenuka like a tiny calf! The little gopas started to loudly hail Balarāma. Pushing aside those flattering gopas, Kṛṣṇa came forward and said to Dāu, "Dada, You could not kill a single demon until today, and today You have killed one, that even donkey!" Dāujī said, "Kṛṣṇa! Did You not see how powerful that demon was?" Kṛṣṇa responded, "Dāda, but it was just a donkey! Truly, the killing of a donkey is not such a great deed." Dāujī became angry and said, "Kṛṣṇa! You keep Your cows separate. From today I will not graze my cows with yours. My cows will be separate and Yours will be separate." Instantly, clever Mansukha segregated the cows. Why delay a good deed?

Dāujī also acted in a childish manner and started to speak in a irritating voice to Kṛṣṇa. Dāujī said, "Kṛṣṇa! Maiyā Yaśodā and I have bought You from the market." All the boys laughed heartily at what Dāujī was saying. He added, "Look I am fair, Maiyā and Bābā are also fair-complexioned, and You!" All the cowherd boys spoke in unison, "Kala-kaluta, absolutely black."

Little Kṛṣṇa complained to Maiyā, "Today, Brother has greatly irritated Me." Both the brothers, sat separately after fighting with each other. The place where Kṛṣṇa sat is called Laghu Vishrama-sthalī or Chhoti Bathain and the place where His big brother rested is called Brihad Vishrama-sthalī or Badi Bathain.

According to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Balarāma killed Dhenukāsura. The two places are about half a kilometer apart. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple and Kuntal-kuṇḍa are located in Chhoti Bathain. Śrī Dāujī 's Temple and Balabhadra-kuṇḍa are in Badi Bathain. These sacred places are most attractive. The pastime of Bathain was rendered into beautiful verse by Paramānanda dāsa.

calori sakhi nandgaon jay basiye khiraka khelata brajachandra so hansiye ।
base bathaina sabe sukha bhai eka kathin dukha door kanhaii ॥
mākhan chora dura dura dekhu jivana janma suphala kar lekhun ।
jalchara lochan chin chin pyāsā kathin priti paramānand dāsā ॥

(Sri Paramānanda dāsa Ji)

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī also performed his devotional practice in Bathain village for some time.

Horangā of Bathain

Among the ancient Holī festivals of Braja, Horanga of Bathain is famous. It is played between the gopas of Jāva and the gopīs of Bathain. A divine atmosphere is created at the Dāujī Temple with the pulsing musical sounds of beating drums on the day of Holi Festival in Bathain. After three days from the Holī festival, the gopas from Jāva goes to Bathain and the gopīs of Bathain beat them with sticks. They protect themselves with the help of the thorny branches of Acasia. The center of this game of Horanga is a flag. The gopīs struck out with sticks in order to reach the flag by crossing the barriers of thorny branches.

Chapter 17
Pāndava Gaṅgā

While in exile, the Pāṇḍavas also lived in Braja and their many imprints are found in Kāmyavana. In the foothills is the temple of Bhima's wife Hidimbi. They roamed around while living in Braja and Pāṇḍava Gaṅgā is one of such place found in Braja. This is a very sacred place which had almost disintegrated. With Śrī Rādhā Mānbihari Lālaji's grace, its restoration work has been completed. A thick plantation has been established to make this one of the most beautiful places in Braja.

Kāmar

Once, with a deep desire to meet Radhika, Kṛṣṇa began to play Rādha-Rādha very intensely on His flute. As a result, Śrīji arrived there accompanied by Her friends. This place is presently known as Kamer. One more pastime is associated with this abode. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's kali kamar, black garment, is stolen here. This is beautifully described by Surdāsaji in his rendition below.

***maiya meri kamer chor layi* ।**
***mai ban jat charavat gaiya suni dekh laii* ॥**
***ek kahe kanha teri kamer jamuna jat bahii* ।**
***ek kahe kanha teri kamer surbhi khay laii* ॥**
***ek kahe nacho mere agelei dau aur naii* ।**
***'surdasa' jasumati ke age asuvan dhar bahii* ।**

Nanda-lāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa complained to Mother Yasoda, "Maiya (mother), a gopī stole My chaddar (shawl)! When I asked for it back another gopī said she saw it floating in the river Yamuna. A third gopī said she saw it being chewed upon by one of Your cows." Then another gopī laughed and

said: "If you dance for us I will bring back your chaddar." Surdāsaji says, "Just see how little Kṛṣṇa cries and acts just like an ordinary boy in front of Mother Yaśodā."

Prayer Mantra for Kāmaru Vana (Kaumarye)

gandharva apsarasa ahlad devarshi sukha vardhine
kamru sukha dhamne ca namaste ramya bhumaye

"O Kāmaruvana! You bring pleasure to the Gandharvas, Apsarās, and Devarṣis. Your beauty is most delightful to behold! We pay our obeisances to you."

Prayer Mantra for Visvesvara Kund

vishvesvara hari snānatirth sangyay ten amah
trailokya vardayaiva akhand saukhya pradayine.

"O King of all pilgrimages! You came into existence on account of the bathing of Visveśvara Hari, one who grant a boon to Triloki and graces everyone with permanent happiness. We offer our humble obeisances to you."

All these places, gopī-kuṇḍa, Hari-kuṇḍa, Mohan-kuṇḍa, Śuka Kuṇḍa, Vyāsa Kuṇḍa, Mohanji temple, and Durvāsā's shrub are worth seeing here.

Śuka Kuṇḍa – Vyāsa Kuṇḍa

When the Supreme Brahman incarnates in human form, all the gods, ṛṣis-maharṣis-brahmārṣis glorify their own good fortune for the time has arrived after a long wait, they would get a chance to taste the nectarean līlās of the Lord – may this be Brāja-līlā, Mathura-līlā or Dvārakā-līlā.

Kṛṣṇa had not as yet arrived in Braja, but Śandilya muni already settled in Braja. He knew that as the Supreme enjoyer of all pastimes, Kṛṣṇa might appear at any moment. When midnight arrived, Śandilya celebrated the Lord's appearance with full dedication. All gods descended in Braja from the heavenly planets to participate in these celebrations. Whenever Kṛṣṇa descends on Earth, gods try their best to come in His close proximity. On Nandotsava, it is said that the entire Heaven becomes vacant because all gods come down to Earth.

Look at the *ṛṣi*'s community in Braja pastimes.

gopa-jāti-praticchannā devā gopāla-rūpiṇau ।
īḍire kṛṣṇa-rāmau ca naṭā iva naṭaṁ nṛpa ॥

"O King, devas disguise themselves as members of the cowherd community and just as dancers would praise their chief, they worship Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who also appeared as cowherd boys."
(ŚB. 10.18.11)

To gain entry into His pastimes, they come either in the form of gopas or at times even become birds.

prāyo batāmba vihagā munayo vane
'smin kṛṣṇekṣitaṁ tad-uditaṁ kala-veṇu-gītam ।
āruhya ye druma-bhujān rucira-pravālān
śṛṇvanti mīlita-dṛśo vigatānya-vācaḥ ॥

"O mother, birds dwelling in this forest fly to the beautiful branches of the trees to see Kṛṣṇa. With closed eyes, they are simply listening in silence to the sweet vibrations of His flute, and they are not attracted by any other sound. Surely these birds are no other than the great sages." (ŚB. 10.21.14)

karmāni puṇya-nivahāni su-maṅgalāni gāyaj-jagat-kali-malāpaharāṇi kṛtvā ।
kālātmanā nivasatā yadu-deva-gehe piṇḍārakaṁ samagaman munayo nisṛṣṭāḥ ॥
viśvāmitro 'sitaḥ kaṇvo durvāsā bhṛgur aṅgirāḥ ।
kaśyapo vāmadevo 'trir vasiṣṭho nāradādayaḥ ॥
(ŚB. 11.1.11-12)

nārado vāmadevo 'triḥ kṛṣṇo rāmo 'sito 'ruṇiḥ ।
ahaṁ bṛhaspatiḥ kaṇvo maitreyaś cyavanādayaḥ ॥

"Among these sages are Nārada, Vāmadeva, Atri, Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vyāsa, Paraśurāma, Asita, Aruṇi, myself, Bṛhaspati, Kaṇva, Maitreya and Cyavana." (ŚB. 10.86.18)

And, in Braja-Līlā, they chose their desired abodes, for example:

Mārkeṇḍeya chose to live in the village of Mādhava,
Laudhang lived in Lodhauli,
Gargācārya went to Gaṅgārole, and

Durvāsā chose to live in Bamnari. Durvāsā stayed in Kamergram also. Śrī Śuka-kuṇḍa, and Vyāsa-kuṇḍa are worth seeing near Kamer, where the *ātmārāma munis* like Vyāsa and Śukadeva, who are self-realized, left their *nirguṇa-upāsanā* (meditation on the formless Brahman), to come here to taste the bliss of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. The attributes of the little Kānāi were so enchanting that it lead a *yogī* to forget his practice of yoga, a *jñānī* to forget his practice of *jñāna* and a *karma-kāṇḍi* to forget his *karma-kāṇḍa* practice.

sūta uvāca
ātmārāmāś ca munayo nirgranthā apy urukrame ।
kurvanty ahaitukīṁ bhaktim ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ ॥

"Sūta Gosvāmī said: All different sages who are established in self-relization and delight in self alone, who are also freed from all kinds of material bondage, desire to render unalloyed devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead. This means that the Lord possesses transcendental qualities and therefore can attract everyone, including liberated souls." (ŚB. 1.7.10)



Pandav Ganga

Thus at many places in Braja, Maharṣis descended to enjoy the bliss and nectar of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

The Secret of Śrī Śuka

Once, the Bhramāra (black bee), Śrīji's constant associate in Mān Līlā, saw a śuka (a parrot) sitting in a small hole inside a grove. Śuka also looked at the *bhramara* and they began their conversation.

"ten suken bhamarchaturey nirikshaya tasya nikunjdeveyah
kripam nirikshaya atyashcharye prapede"

(*Sāma Rahasyopaniṣad*)

Greatly astonished, the bhramara asked, "Who are you and what is your past history?" Śuka replied, "I was a *brāhmaṇa* before, constantly engaged in meditating on Kṛṣṇa. It was my dearest occupation. One day, I went to the Lord's abode, where I experienced the bliss of the company of devotees. They were happily engaged in exclusive devotion to the Lord and with their blessings, I was able to experience the Lord's secret nikuñja-līlā."

tannaristeśrī rādhā kṛṣṇapushkarinyud bhavam
mrittikam bhakshayat tatra nirantarkridasthalam
maya shrutam purvam asya mrittikayah
māhātmyam mahalīlāyah prapte karanam

(*Sāma Rahasyopaniṣad*)

"From the Pushkarini pond of Yugala Sarkar Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, I took some of its mud (Braja-raja) which has the potency to grant the vision of the Divine Couple's transcendental pastimes. It is only on account of the transcendental potency of the dust of Vrindavana that I was granted entrance into the Eternal Abode and given the privilege to experience the eternal pastimes. Not only this, I was also extremely blessed to envision the most sublime and transcendental pastime of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa dancing with Their friends."

"asya sthānasya mrittika mayā anubhuta ।
tenedam pushtam sadhansiddham jātam" ॥

(*Sāma Rahasyopaniṣad*)

In the words of Gosvāmī Ji:

" ja majjan te binahi prayasa, mama samipa nara pavahi vasa ।" (Goswami Ji)

""One should live here with the faith that simply by coming in contact with the dust of the pasture lands of Vrindavana, I would gain shelter in the Eternal Abode."

The Secret of the Black Bee

Do you know who the black bee is? According to *S*āmarahasyopaniṣhad, Śuka enquired, "Who are you and what is your past history?" Bhramara replied, "Śuka! In the past, I was a Kayastha by caste, a Vaiṣṇava by nature, and as I was hearing about the path of devotion, I began to constantly taste its nectar. Then, I fortunately came in contact with the devotees. As I was listening to their preaching, the nectarean ambrosia (heavenly food) of their instructions, sank deep into my heart. I gained entrance into the Sublime pastimes. Thus, I came to Braja in the association of devotees. How much time passed in that transcendental experience? Being absorbed in mind and speech, I cannot recall. My heart was fully immersed in the ocean of these transcendental emotions and my body also attained its perfection in the desired form of a *bhramara* in the divine pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Not only this, I also received the abode of my choice. Since then, I live in this grove singing of Her glories in the form of a *bhramara*." *(Sāma Rahasyopaniṣad)*





Top- Kamar - Mohanji Temple. Bottom - Kamar - Mohan Kund





Top Left - Kamar - Shuk Kund. Top Right - Kamar - Vyaas Kund. Bottom - Kamar - Durwasa Muni Kund

Chapter 18
Śrī Kotavana

Kotavana is located between Koṣi and Hodal, on Delhi-Mathura National Highway. This was the pasturing land for Krsna's cows. Once, as Kṛṣṇa was calling the cows on His flute, Yaśodā arrived at Kotavana soaked in perspiration as she was walking the path from her palace to the forest. Kṛṣṇa became very compassionate and to mitigate her fatigue, He suggested, "Maiyā! Take bath in the cool water of this kuṇḍa." She refreshed herself by bathing there and therefore Śītal-kuṇḍa is present here.

Later, Maiyā expressed her desire to witness His pastime of dancing with millions of gopīs, Kṛṣṇa was very surprised by her request and thought, "How can the gopīs perform this most magnificent pastime, in which they freely express their most sublime love for Me, in front of Maiyā?"

Kot means fort. Thus, Yaśodā witnessed this divine pastime hiding behind the fort and the gopīs being unaware of her presence, did not feel shy. In this way, Yaśodā's wish was fulfilled. Thus this place became known as Kotavana. While circumambulating Braja, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also went there and then proceeded to the village Śeṣaṣaiya.

Besides Śītal-kuṇḍa, the valuable places to see here include Surya-kuṇḍa and the baithak temple of Śrī Nathji, and Śrī Vallabhācārya Mahaprabhu ji.





Top - Kotvan - Vallabha baithak. Below - Kotvan - Shital kunda

Chapter 19
Dadhigrām

The women of Kośala were born as gopīs in Braja with Śrī Rāmā's blessings. Though married, they were fully devoted to Kṛṣṇa. In the streets of Braja, Kṛṣṇa was always exchanging friendly words with them. They thought constantly about Śyāmasundara. Wandering in the woods, they



Dahgaon - Dadhi Hari Temple



Top - Dahgaon - Dadhi kunda. Below - Brajbhushan temple

saw Kṛṣṇa everywhere. They possessed the attributes of pure, divine love. In this way, they were absorbed in an exalted state.

dadhivikrayārtham yāntyastāh krisna-krishneti cābruvan ।
krishnehi premsansakāa bhramantyah kunjamandale ॥
(Ga.Sa.Ma.Kha. 4. 6)

Braja is a community of divine lovers under the spell of the most sublime madness. With pots of curd on their heads, the gopīs went to the forest to sell the curd, but who will buy curd in the forest? This is the exalted state of love elusive to even great yogīs and jñānīs. These gopīs forgot what exactly they were selling, curd or something else. They were shouting, "Is there anybody here to purchase Kṛṣṇa...Kṛṣṇa?" Kṛṣṇa was the only one on their minds! They were forgetful of their physical surroundings and all of its implications because of being engrossed in the object of their love. Having lost all sense of place or direction, they were not sure if they were in Barṣāṇā or Sanket or Nandagaon, nothing else mattered to them. The bliss they are experiencing – only they know.

This is the symptom of the love of any gopī. A gopī openly spoke the intimate secrets of her heart. As she was walking, she was disclosing all that was hidden in the innermost chambers of her heart. This gopī said, "Śyāma, why have You come here? I know that You have come here to meet me. Well then, why do You not say this?" She herself uttered the secret! She had brought a ball of fresh butter kept in buttermilk, especially for Kṛṣṇa. As long as butter remains in the buttermilk, it is soft, but the moment it is taken out, it solidifies. There were butter and also buttermilk in her pot. The pot on her head slightly tilted and the buttermilk was dripping. A white stream flowed down her lovely shawl and dress, but she was absolutely unaware.

This is called Love. In love, one's state of mind is *prema-vaichitri*. This is similar to how a gopī might have felt the pain of separation when Kṛṣṇa was not around. Still in this separation, there is the presence of unification with Him. If Kṛṣṇa sat next to her, she would become frightened by the thought of losing Him. This implies that Kṛṣṇa, either in separation or in union, remained always present for His lovers in their thoughts and emotions.

A gopī would get lost within herself. Feeling blissful, she would laugh and say, "O Śyāmasundara, it is so nice that You have come!" The next

moment she would feel the burning pain of separation and she would express her heartburn by saying, "Why is He so late? I have been waiting for Him for so long, holding this pot of curd." Then, because of intense desire for His association, she would signal Him to come closer. Then, a few minutes later, she would ask Him to go away lest she be defiled, "You are so daring and naughty! Do not tease me, because I am a chaste housewife." This alone is called *prema-samādhi*: in this way, she would transcend her 'self' and the world! For her, the entire world became Kṛṣṇa!

The supreme bliss experienced by gopīs is pure, whole-hearted, and dedicated love for Kṛṣṇa. This pure love is the highest manifestation of our true love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. If we were at that point, our lives would be at the Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa. We cannot understand what pleasure they derived from this unusual journey. They were simply engrossed in the ecstasy of deep love. In their minds, thoughts and observations, the gopīs were only absorbed exclusively in serving Kṛṣṇa. They had no other desire.

Then, let us all take a pilgrimage to the sweet, savory, enchanting, enlightening, and the most sacred, Holy Braja dhama. In the infinite and eternal ocean of nectar and essence of Divine Love and Vedic thought, the gopīs love for Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa is beyond our limits to describe fully in our human word of expression.

premanjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena
santah sadaiva hrdayesu vilokayanti

While walking in the Braja Yatra through the woodlands and groves of Braja and as we call aloud the name of our Lord Gopāl, even if it is an artificial call, the joy we get is unforgettable. Let us imagine when our love would be true and pure love, how much more blissful the experience would be!

At Dadhi-kuṇḍa, there is Braja Bhushanji's temple. Also, one can see the marks of a crown on the tree and take darshan of Dadhihari devī.

Chapter 20
Śrī Rāsolī

Prayer Mantra for Rāsolī

rāsa krīda pradiptāya gopī ramana sundara ।
namah sukhah manoramya sthalāya siddhi rupine ॥
(Bra.Bha.Vi.)

Rāsolī is between Charan Pahārī and Kotavana, where Kṛṣṇa executed the *Śaradīya-rāsa*, the sublime festival of dancing with countless groups of gopīs on the day of the autumn full moon.

In Rāsolī, Kṛṣṇa, as Rāseśvara, (the ultimate source of all Divine sentiment) performed His *śaradīya rāsa* dance with countless groups of gopīs. Although most of the woodlands in Braja have vanished over time, this Holy land is still covered with thick plantations that remind us of the natural beauty of Braja which was available in Kṛṣṇa's time.

This is the only place left free from the wrath of the crooked hands of the greedy industrialists. It was about to fall into devious hands but due to Śrī Rādhā Mānbihārī Laljī's compassion, it was rescued in time. Rāsavana is one of the 24 forests which are mentioned in *Rādhopanishad*.

According to Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's *Vaiṣhṇava-toṣaṇī*, a commentary on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, this all-encompassing and sublime pastime of Rās was performed at Rāsolī. Upon hearing the sweet, enthralling music emanating from Kṛṣṇa's enchanting flute, the Braja gopīs immediately rushed towards the pleasure groves on the bank of the Yamunā. The most pleasant autumn evening eagerly descended to Earth, accompanied by all her companions. The night was impatiently waiting to descend and serve her Master, but dusk was not willing to depart, as if she resolved never to leave! The Moon thought, "Why should I lose my chance?" Thus, he appeared in the skies in his full glory at dusk. How magnificent was this

union of dusk and night? Neither of the two were willing to admit defeat. The Moon was not willing to delay his service and spontaneously he spread his milky white rays on this sacred land in all directions.

Rāsabihari Kṛṣṇa (Lord of all divine sentiments) arrived at that divine location presently known as Rāsolī and immediately played the most amazing and transcendental music on His jewel-bedecked flute. Generally, it is accepted that Kṛṣṇa played His flute at Vaṁśī-ghāṭ in Vṛindāvana, but this too is true. Jīva Gosvāmī confirmed that the pastime begins at Rāsolī with Kṛṣṇa's flute-playing. In ancient times, Kalindi-nandini Yamunā used to flow near that place. This forest was filled with countless pleasure groves and it used to be situated on the Yamunā's banks, but with time, the Yamunā gradually moved outward from Braja itself.

Thousands of groups of gopīs arrived there in Rāsoli to join the blissful and all-encompassing pastime. This forested place of pastime was restored by Śrī Vajranābha Mahārāj and it is still as dense as ever. Śrī Nāthji's sitting place and Rāsa-kuṇḍa are located here. We pay our obeisance again and again.

"Śrī Rāsabihari Lāla ki Jaya!"
"Śrī Rāsabihari Lāla ki Jaya!"



Raasoli Kund





Top - Raasoli Raas Mandal Jhula. Bottom - Raasoli Vallabha Baithak

Chapter 21
Śrī Hatānā

Cupid overcomes everyone. However, in Śrī Hatānā Brajeśvara Kṛṣṇa crushed Cupid's pride, who was so arrogantly confident in his attempt to defeat Kṛṣṇa, Whose beauty is unparalleled and incomparable!

tāsām āvirabhūc chauriḥ smayamāna-mukhāmbujaḥ ।
pītāmbara-dharaḥ sragvī sākṣān manmatha-manmathaḥ ॥

"Then Lord Kṛṣṇa, a smile on His lotus face, appeared before the gopīs. Adorned with a garland and a yellow garment, He directly appeared as one who can bewilder the mind of Cupid, who himself bewilders the minds of ordinary people." (ŚB. 10.32.2)

The author of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* refers to Kṛṣṇa as *Manmatha-manmatha*: He who enchants the mind of Kāmadeva. Cupid was in an inferior position against a much more powerful and unparalleled adversary, Kṛṣṇa. Kamdeva came at the wrong place. Menakā, Punjakasthala, Rambhā and other beautiful women who stay with him, if come across Sri Krsna Gopikas, would appear unfortunate. Particularly, Candrāvali, one of Kṛṣṇa's beloved gopīs would have completely over-powered the beauty of Cupid's allies, what to speak of the beauty and supremacy of Rājeśvari Rādhārāṇī, whose smile defeats all the combined opulence and powers of this world.

The learned sages said:

radhīkā sama nāgari navīna ko pravīna sakhī ।
rūpa guna suhāga bhāga āgarī na nāri ॥
varuṇa nāga loka bhūmi devaloka kī kumāri ।
pyārī joo ke roma upara darau saba vāri ॥
ānanda kanda nanda nandana jāke rāsa ranga rachyau ।

anga vara sugandha nāchati mānatu hai ati hāri ॥
tāke bala garva bhare rāsika vyāsa se na dare ।
loka veda karna dharma chhandi mukuti chhāri ॥

Rādhārāṇī is unparalleled in Her beauty, qualities, opulence, and skills, as Kṛṣṇa's consort. She gives immense bliss to Rājeśvara Kṛṣṇa with Her exquisite dance, beauty, and enchanting aroma. The entire world cannot be compared to even a single hair on Her body, She who so magnanimously awards libération. Śrīla Vyāsadeva prays, "That even a lowly person like myself becomes fearless and derides liberation just so I can touch the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī."

sa eṣa nara-loke 'sminn avatīrṇaḥ sva-māyayā ।
reme strī-ratna-kūṭastho bhagavān prākṛto yathā ॥

"That Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, out of His causeless mercy, appeared on this planet by His internal potency and enjoyed amongst competent women in His own playful way as if He was engaging in mundane affairs." (ŚB. 1.11.35)

Kāmadeva was defeated here by these simple gopīs engaged with Kṛṣṇa in the middle of the rāsa dance. Hata means hurt hence the name *Hatānā*.

Chapter 22
Chamelīvana

According to *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, this is the same forest where the gopīs, suffering from pangs of separation, wandered from one forest to another and searched for Kṛṣṇa after His disappearance from *rāsa* dance. They went to Mālativana, Mallikāvana, and then Jātivana (Chamelīvana), where they finally found Kṛṣṇa. Here they observed beautiful and fragrant Chamelī flowers which exuded the most amazing, sweetest aroma. The gopīs concluded that it would only have been possible for these flowers to blossom so much, only if they had received the divine touch of the beautiful Lord having the color and beauty of a newborn cloud.

mālaty adarśi vaḥ kaccin mallike jāti-yūthike ।
prītiṁ vo janayan yātaḥ kara-sparśena mādhavaḥ ॥

O mālati, O mallikā, O jāti and yūthikā, has Mādhava gone by here, causing delight to you with the touch of His hand? (ŚB. 10.30.8)

Because of suffering the pangs of separation, the gopīs began to ask everyone in the most emotional voice if anyone had seen Kṛṣṇa. They were addressing the trees, the creepers, Tulasi, mother earth, the wife of the deer. The gopīs felt that all of them, due to having been touched by Kṛṣṇa, might be able to help them to find out where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were hiding.

naveli he chameli tu praphul hai druman me ।
bina piya mile alee na phul ho hiyan me ॥

bata kaha kanhaii ree hame na chen pran me ।
pukarti hari hari hari hari latan me ॥
(Pandit Harish Chandra Ji)

Kapivana Prayer

Kapivana is located very close to Chamelī vana, and as the name suggests, a large number of monkeys reside in Kapivana.

Prayer Mantra for Kapivana

nānā kapisamākīrna krīdāvimalarūpine ।
namaḥ kapivanāyaiva gopīramana hetave ॥

"O most attractive playground of Kapivana, the abode of purity, populated with innumerable monkeys; I offer my obeisance to you, who provide such delight to the gopīs."

There is also a temple of Hanumān here.

Prayer Mantra for the Audience of Hanumān

tapasam nibhaye tubhyam sarva dārishta nāshine ।
namaḥ kaivalya nāthāya vajranga vara dāyine ॥
O taponidhi vipattināśaka **!**

"My respectful greetings are unto you, as you are an integral part of Braja and the Lord of liberation."

Right behind the vicinity of the temple is Anjanī-kuṇḍa.

Prayer Mantra for Bathing and Acamana at Anjanī Kuṇḍa

anjanī snānasambhūta tapāḥ siddhi svarūpine ।
vāyuvaimalya rūpāya tīrtharāja namo'stu te ॥



Chameli Van

Chapter 23
Nandanavana

The Brajavāsis expressed their desire to see the Nandanavana situated in heaven, so Kṛṣṇa showed them Nandanavana here. One can also see Nandanandana Sarovara here.

Prayer Mantra for Nandanavana

paricharyānvita devesh nirmtāya vanāya te ।
nandanāya namastubhyam nandanākhya vanopama ॥

"O Nandavana! Who is always eager to serve and was created by Indra, the king of the devas, we offer our obeisances to you."

Prayer Mantra for snāna and ācamana in Nandanandana Kuṇḍa

kṛṣṇābhiṣheka ramyāya tīrtharāja namatu te ।
nandanandana kuṇḍāya gopānām varadāyine ॥

"O king of all pilgrimages, who is glorified on account of the abhiṣekha of Kṛṣṇa that took place here. O Nandanandana kuṇḍa, who bestows benedictions to all the cowherd boys, we offer our obeisances to you."



Top - Sheshshayi - NandaYasoda temple. Below - Nandanandan van

Chapter 24
Śeṣāśāyī

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu was immersed in ecstatic love after seeing Gopalji and went to Nandagaon through Kāmyavana. After visiting the ponds and worshiping the deities in Nandīśvara, who were at the time residing in a cave, He was absorbed in internal consciousness and went to Barṣāṇa. Barṣāṇa that time was not yet revealed and, thus, is not mentioned in Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta. Even the Deities of Śrī Madan-Mohanji and Śrī Govindadevaji have also not manifested at that time. Therefore, They are also not mentioned. But that does not mean that Mahāprabhu did not go to Vṛindāvana or Barṣāṇā. Without visiting Barṣāṇā, how can Mahāprabhuji complete His pilgrimage? While going from Nandagaon to Khayra, Mahāprabhu had to pass through Barṣāṇā.

Long after Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Ji came to Barṣāṇā and established Lādalīji's Deity there. After that, everyone acknowledged a visit to Barṣāṇā as a must inorder to complete his or her pilgrimage. Barṣāṇā's sanctifying dust is not easily available to even Brahmā, Śiva or Lakṣhmī. How can mortal people achieve it so easily!! It was only made possible through extremely pious and devoted saints of Sri Radha-Madhav like Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Ji.

nemaṁ viriñco na bhavo na śrīr apy aṅga-saṁśrayā ।
prasādaṁ lebhire gopī yat tat prāpa vimuktidāt ॥

"Neither Lord Brahmā, nor Lord Śiva, nor even the goddess of fortune, who has her abode on His chest, received such grace from Śri

Kṛṣṇa, the deliverer from this material world, such mercy as received by mother Yaśodā." (ŚB. 10.9.20)

It is only available to those who are devout to Brāja and reverent to Śrī Rādhārāṇī. This is the remarkable glory of Braja.

nāyaṁ sukhāpo bhagavān dehināṁ gopīkā-sutaḥ ।
jñāninām cātma-bhūtānāṁ yathā bhaktimatām iha ॥

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the son of mother Yaśodā, is accessible to devotees engaged in spontaneous loving service, but He is not easily accessible to mental speculators or to those striving for self-realization by severe austerities and penances, or to those who consider the body the same as the self." (ŚB. 10.9.21)

Even for those who are learned or even for gods like Brahmā or Śiva, Barṣāṇā's sanctifying dust is not so easily attainable. It is only available to those who are inspired by devotion towards Braja. One, who is in awe of Kṛṣṇa's godly magnificence, cannot attain this divine dust. When Yaśodā was momentarily overwhelmed with Kṛṣṇa's divinity, Gopalji immediately concealed His divinity and manifested Himself again as the object of her parental affection.

itthaṁ vidita-tattvāyāṁ gopīkāyāṁ sa īśvaraḥ ।
vaiṣṇavīṁ vyatanon māyāṁ putra-snehamayīṁ vibhuḥ ॥

"Mother Yaśodā thus realized the truth by the grace of the Lord. But then again, the supreme Lord, by the influence of His internal potency, Yoga-māyā, inspired her to become absorbed in intense maternal affection for her son." (ŚB. 10.8.43)

nāhaṁ na yūyaṁ yad-ṛtāṁ gatiṁ vidur na vāmadevaḥ kim utāpare surāḥ ।
tan-māyayā mohita-buddhayas tv idaṁ vinirmitaṁ cātma-samaṁ vicakṣmahe ॥

"Lord Brahma said: Neither myself nor you nor even Lord Siva knows His true nature, how can other demigods know it? And because all of us are bewildered by the illusory, external energy of the Supreme Lord, we can only see this manifested cosmos according to our individual ability." (ŚB. 2.6.37)

ṛṣe vidanti munayaḥ praśāntātmendriyāśayāḥ ।
yadā tad evāsat-tarkais tirodhīyeta viplutam ॥

"O Nārada, O great sage, the great thinkers can only know Him when they have perfectly subdued their body, senses and mind and are completely freed from all material desires. Otherwise, by untenable arguments, all is distorted, and the Lord disappears from our sight." (ŚB. 2.6.40)

Only those devotees, who have strong faith only, are capable of attaining Barṣāṇā's dust, on the strength of their conviction, which is difficult to achieve by even Brahmā and Śiva. As long as there remain doubts or speculations in our heart, it would be impossible for us to attain this dust. Prahlāda Maharaj taught the same principle to the asura children.

bhavatām api bhūyān me yadi śraddadhate vacaḥ ।
vaiśāradī dhīḥ śraddhātaḥ strī-bālānāṁ ca me yathā ॥

"Prahlāda Mahārāj continues: My dear friends, if you have faith in my words, simply by that faith you can also understand transcendental knowledge, just like me, although you are small children. Similarly, a woman can also understand transcendental knowledge and what is the difference between spirit and matter."

(ŚB. 7.7.17)

Thus all *ācāryas* rush to Barṣāṇā and Nandgaon, each one favoring a specific location for their devotional practice in order to relish the auspicious influence of this most Holy dust.

Therefore, one of Mahaprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya's sitting places is in Gahvarvana, Barṣāṇā. All the six Gosvāmīs did their bhajans at various location in Nandgaon and Barṣāṇā. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa chanted in Sānketavana, Sanātana Gosvāmī chanted at Pavana-sarovara, Rūpa Gosvāmī at Ter Kadamba in Nandagāon, Bhugarbha Gosvāmī and Lokanatha Gosvāmī at Khayra, and Nagridāsa, Nehi Nagridāsa and even king of Kṛṣṇa gadh, Nagridāsa Ji, all of them also did their Bhajan in Barṣāṇā. After Barṣāṇā, Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to the famous place of pastime of Śeṣaśāyī in Braja. For the Brajavāsīs, the name is Paudhanath, in Khadiravana. At the

sight of Śeṣaśāyī He uttered this verse of *gopī-gītā*, which is inspired by devotion towards Rādhārāṇī.

yat te sujāta-caraṇāmburuhaṁ staneṣu
bhītāḥ śanaiḥ priya dadhīmahi karkaśeṣu ।
tenāṭavīm aṭasi tad vyathate na kiṁ svit
kūrpādibhir bhramati dhīr bhavad-āyuṣāṁ naḥ ॥

"O dearly beloved! Your lotus feet are so soft that we fear of injuring them when we place them gently on our breasts. Our life rests only in You. Our minds, therefore, are filled with anxiety when you traverse the forest on those tender lotus-like feet." (ŚB. 10.31.19)

In fact, the majority of the people believed that the Deity at Śeṣaśāyī represents Viṣṇu lying on a bed of snakes, but they do not understand that in the pastime of Kṛṣṇa in Brāja, there is no role of Lakṣmī or Nārāyaṇa.

Sūradasa says, "*Murli dhuna vaikuntha gayii"*



Sheshshayi - Laxmi Narayan - Khirsagar kunda

Rādhārāni and Sri Kṛṣṇa have acted as Lakṣmi and Viṣnu to show those forms to gopīs, but it is mainly Kṛṣṇa in the center. (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

kamlā sukha ramyāya siesha sayan hetave ।
namah kamal kinjalka vāsase haraye namah ॥
(*Kūrma Purāṇa*)

"The one who is happy with Śri Lakṣmi by His side, the one who has Śeṣa as His bed and the one who is adorned by yellow garment made by petals of lotus, O Hari ! My obeisances to you."

Mahodadhi kuṇḍa here represents the ocean of milk or *kṣira sāgara*.

Prayer Mantra for Mahodadhi Kuṇḍa

panchāmruta samuttpanna panchāmrutamyaya te ।
lakṣmi krutāya tirthāya namo mukti mahodadhe ॥
(*Kūrma Purāṇa***)**

"My obeisances to you, the one who was generated from the five amrutas (nectars), the one who was made by Lakṣmi, the one who is representer of the ocean."

Here, the name of Sri Kṛṣṇa is Praudha Lakṣmī Nārāyana.

Prayer Mantra for Praudha Lakṣmi Nārāyana

sayansthāya devāya lakshmi seva parāya cha ।
namo praudha swarupāya lakṣmi nārāyanāya te ॥
(*Kūrma Purāṇa*)

"My obeisances to You, O Praudha rupa Lakṣmī Nārāyana, the Lord with Śeṣa as His bed and served by Lakṣmi."

This is the reason the name here is Praudha Lakśmi Nārāyana. In *Maheshvari tantra*, there is a chapter where Lakṣmi asks Nārāyana with curiosity about Sri Rādha and Sri Kṛṣṇa. Because of being in trance, Lord Nārāyaṇa did not reply. Then Lakṣmi performed austerity on Mount Ketumaal. Brahmā, Śiva, and other gods prayed to the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha

to please Lakṣmi. "Maanvati tapah leena" – Then Lord of Vaikuṇṭha went to Mount Ketumaal and said to Lakṣmi, "O devi! I was meditating on pastimes of Sri Vrindavana vihari, so I was quiet then." Listening to this, Lakṣmi also prayed and wished to have that vision of the lotus feet of Sri Rādhārāni. She wished very much to have love of Rādhārāni.

kantadhyashcarya-kanta-kula-mani-kamala-koti-kamyaika-padambhoja-
bhrajan-nakhendu-cchavi-lava-vibhava kapy agamya kishori ।
unmaryada-pravriddha-pranaya-rasa-mahambhodhi-gambhira-līlā
madhuryoêjrimbhitangi mayi kim api kripa-rangam angi-karotu ॥

Will a certain unattainable girl, who is wonderfully glorious in Her lover's company, who is the jewel of saintly and beautiful girls, whose toenail moons on Her lotus feet shine with great moonlight, a single ray of which is more glorious than millions of goddesses of fortune, who enjoys pastimes in the nectar ocean of fathomless love, and whose limbs blossom with sweetness and charm, be merciful to me? (Ra.Su.Ni. 92)

After Sri Kṛṣṇa disappeared and then reappeared, Braja gopīs questioned Sri Kṛṣṇa, "Where did you go after you left us here?"

evaṁ mad-arthojjhita-loka-veda svānām hi vo mayy anuvṛttaye 'balāḥ ।
mayāparokṣaṁ bhajatā tirohitaṁ māsūyituṁ mārhatha tat priyaṁ priyāḥ ॥

O gopīs! you left everything for Me. So, I went away specially to remember you. You should not doubt this because My love for you is beyond worldly. It is for your happiness only. "*tat sukha sukhitā*"

nāhaṁ tu sakhyo bhajato 'pi jantūn bhajāmy amīṣām anuvṛtti-vṛttaye ।
yathādhano labdha-dhane vinaṣṭe tac-cintayānyan nibhṛto na veda ॥

"In order to intensify their loving devotion, I do not immediately reciprocate the affection of living beings even when they worship Me, O gopīs. They then become like a poor man who has gained some wealth and then lost it, and who thus becomes so anxious about it that he can think of nothing else." (ŚB. 10.32.20)

na pāraye 'haṁ niravadya-saṁyujāṁ sva-sādhu-kṛtyaṁ vibudhāyuṣāpi vaḥ ।
yā mābhajan durjara-geha-śṛṅkhalāḥ saṁvṛścya tad vaḥ pratiyātu sādhunā ॥

"I cannot repay My debt for your spotless service, even within a lifetime of Brahmā. Your connection with Me is absolutely free from blemish. You have worshiped Me, cutting off all domestic ties, which are difficult to break. Therefore, please let your own glorious deeds be your compensation." (ŚB. 10.32.22)

Kṛṣṇa said, "I cannot repay a pure love like yours, even in one age of Brahmā. The attachments of life are unperishable. They do not get destroyed even one one's death bed or even when the body is in fire. But all of you destroyed those attachments and came to me. You left your parents for Me but I cannot leave Nanda Bābā or Yaśodā Ma. I cannot do what you did. That is why I was praying, I was remembering you. Now, you asked Me why I was late in returning? Let me reply. O gopīs, at Puṣkaradvipa (island), in the ocean called Dadhimandod, one great sage named Hansa has been performing austerity for Me for millions of years. Today, a giant demon came in the form of a gigantic fish of about 4 miles long and swallowed him. The sage was also always chanting My name with unflinching devotion.

ananyāś cintayanto māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate ।
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham ॥

"For those devotees who always meditate upon me and worship Me with exclusive devotion, I take care of all their needs." (BG 9:22)

Kṛṣṇa said, "I have to protect him. That is My vow. Because worshiping Me gives one the highest abode and shelter."

śrī-kavir uvāca
manye 'kutaścid-bhayam acyutasya pādāmbujopāsanam atra nityam
udvigna-buddher asad-ātma-bhāvād viśvātmanā yatra nivartate bhīḥ

"Śrī Kavi said: I consider that one whose intelligence is constantly disturbed by his falsely identifying himself with the temporary material world can achieve real freedom from fear only by worshiping the lotus

feet of the infallible Supreme Lord. In such devotional service, all fear ceases entirely." (ŚB. 11.2.33)

"To protect My vow, I killed that demon with My *cakra* and relocated the great sage Hansa and went back to the white ocean (Śvetadvipa)." (Ga. Sam.Vṛ.Kha. 22/23)

Kṛṣṇa concluded, "After I rested on **Śeṣa** I am here to please you. Because I am always dependent on My devotees, only My devotees understand the selfless love."

Gopīs then requested, "Mādhava! Please grant us the vision of You resting on **Śeṣa** as Your bed." (Ga.Sam.Vṛ.Kha. 22/25, 26, 28, 29)

Then, Sri Kṛṣṇa became Nārāyana with eight hands and Rādhārāni became Lakṣmi. Seṣa from *kṣira sāgar* appeared. Then Mādhava in the form of Nārāyaṇa rested on His Seṣa bed and Lakṣmi served His lotus feet. The gopīs were astonished by having the vision of the divine form which was as glorious and bright as millions of suns.

Laghu Śeṣa Śayanvana

Prayer Mantra for Laghu Śeṣa Śayanvana

seṣa śayan sri kṛṣṇasukha vas swarupine ।
lakṣmi pada hi sevyāya namaste kamala priye ॥

"I offer my obeisances to the place dear to Sri Kṛṣṇa and Lakṣmi, where Śri Lakṣmi is serving His lotus feet."

Prayer Mantra for Lakṣmi Kuṇḍa

kamala snapannoda bhuta pitambhas lilay te ।
namah kaivalya nāthāya trai varga phala dāyine ॥

"I offer my obeisances to you, which is created by Lakṣmi bathing with the water that is yellow. You are the bestower of Kaivalya Nath and fruitive benedictions of all three classes."



Sheshshayi - Laxmi Narayan Temple

Chapter 25
Supano, Koṣi, Kharot, Falen

Supano

At this place, Rādhārāṇī had a strange dream. Sri Rādhārāṇī told Sri Kṛṣṇa what She saw in the dream, "An angry *brahmaṇa* had snatched away My parasol and tossed Myself into an ocean. Waves were throwing Me here and there. Fragments of moon fell from the sky. The Sun also fell to earth and Rahu was devouring both (sun and moon). I became sad as that angry brahmaṇa took away My beloved from Me. The flower I had in My hand fell down and My bejeweled mirror fell on the ground and was crushed into pieces. My beloved was harshly telling Me, "Radhe! I am leaving You and going away from here."

Then, Sri Kṛṣṇa lifted Sri Rādhārāṇī in His arms as She was telling Him, "Don't leave Me. When I am with You, I become energized and illuminated like fire from an offering of ghee."

Sri Kṛṣṇa said, "Beloved, don't be afraid. Did You forget Śrīdāmā's curse? After the curse has run its course, We will be together again and return to our eternal divine abode of Goloka. Just like milk and its dazzling whiteness cannot be separated, We cannot be separated. The gigantic Universal Form is part and parcel of Me. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa emanate from only a small part of Me. In Vaikuṇṭha, Lord Nārāyaṇa emanates from a small part of Me and Lakṣmī emanates from a small

part of You. We are each other's soul and the cause and effect of these universes or *brahmandas*."

Then, Sri Kṛṣṇa embraced Srimait Rādhārāṇī with affection and consoled Her. This Svapna or dream was their amazing pastime at Sopano.

Svapnavana

Prayer Mantra for Svapna Vana

susvapna darśanarthaya duhsvapna nashnaya te ।
akrura varada shreshtha svapnakhyay namo namah ॥
(Bra.Vai.Pu. Cha.66)

"We offer our obeisances to Svapnavana, where Akrūra received the benediction that he would only experience good dreams and not bad ones."

Prayer for Mantra for Akrūra Kuṇḍa

krura akrura kritārthāya durbuddhi samanāya te ।
akrura snapano dbhuta tīrtha rāja namostute ॥

"We offer our obeisances to Akrūra-kuṇḍa, which manifested from Akrūra's bath and who, by sharpening Akrūra's dull intelligence brought peace to his cruel heart."

Koṣi (Kusha Vana)

kushalashcha tannaiva punya papa haram shubhamā ।
tatra snato naro devi brhma loke mahiyate
apatro munchate pranan mama lokam sa gachchati ॥
(Va.Pu.)

Koṣi is situated five and a half kilometers west from Goheta. Śrī Kuśavana, Koṣi is one of Kṛṣṇa's favorite pasturing grounds for taking care of His cows. When Vrajendra Nandana, Kṛṣṇa, turned five years old, He was promoted from being a vatsapala to a Gopala. Since then, He daily

visited Kuśavana, which was attractively filled with various trees and creepers.

"ramye kush vane saumye latā jāl samanvite"
(Garga Saṁhitā)

There is also another opinion that another name of this forest, Kośa-sthalī, comes from Śrī Nanda baba's koṣa, treasury, kept here.

Once, Nanda Bābā expressed the desire to go on pilgrimage and visit all the Holy places. Kṛṣṇa stopped him and requested him not to go outside of Braja. Immediately, He invited all the holy pilgrimages to come to Braja and establish their abodes here, and showed all the tīrthas to Nanda Bābā in Brāja itself.

Later on, Nanda Bābā also expressed his desire to see golden Dvārakā. Dvārakā's other name is 'Kuśa-sthalī. Kṛṣṇa invited Dvārakā to come to Braja and brought Dvārakā in Koṣi along with Raivataka mountain and the Gomatī river. Now Brajavāsīs regularly visit Raivataka mountain, Ratnakara Sagar, and Gomatī-kuṇḍa in Koṣi, which was beautifully restored just 13 years ago by Śrī Rādhā Mān Bihari Lālaji through the medium of regular chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Holy *Nama Sankirtana*.

On the bank of Gomatī-kuṇḍa, there is also Mahaprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya's memorial baithak temple and a beautiful Bhagavati Devī temple. To recover the Syamantaka jewel and wipe out the accusations of Satrājit that He stole this jewel, Kṛṣṇa entered Jāmbavān's cave. The accompanying Dwārakāvāsīs waited for Kṛṣṇa at the entrance. Many days passed and then, the waiting Dwārakāvasīs thought some undesirable event had happened. With tears in their eyes, they went to Mata-Durgā to pray for auspicious blessings.

satrajitam shapan taste dukhita dvarakaukasah |
upasthura mahā mayam durgām krushno pa labdhaye ||
(ŚB. 10.56.35)

"Cursing Satrājit, the grief stricken residents of Dvārakā worshipped the deity of goddess Durgā known by the name Chandrabhāgā and prayed to her for Kṛṣṇa's return."

Their prayers were answered and after fighting with Jāmbavān for twenty-eight days, Dwārakādīśa Kṛṣṇa came out along with His second *patrani* (principal queen), Jāmbavati. She is the same Bhāgavati Devī to

whom the distressed Dwārakāvāsīs prayed. With time, Kuśa-sthalī became Koṣi. Here, one can see and enjoy other holy and memorable places such as Śrī Visakha-kuṇḍa, Śrī Mān-kuṇḍa, Mavāi-kuṇḍa, and the temple of Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Bihariji, Śrī Dāujī , Śrī Rāma, Pañchamukha Hanumān, Rādhā-Vallabhā temple, Rādhā-Mādhava temple, Rādhā-kānta temple and Śrī Riddhi-Siddhi temple.

Prayer Mantra for Kuśavana

punaya pun rupaya pāvnay namo namaḥ ।
akshaya phaldāiva namaḥ kuśa vanay te ॥
(*Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*)

"O everlasting magnanimous Kuśavana! O righteousness personified! O most sanctifying one! I offer my obeisance unto you."

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana for Mān-sarovara

mānsikya ghanasaya muktaye mukti rupine ।
āhlad manase tubhyam namaste mānsavahye ॥

O destroyer of mental sin! O salvation personified Mān sarovar; you are the bestower of bliss to the mind! I offer my obeisance to you!

Prayer Mantra for snāna and ācamana for Gomati

Gomati Mansorthaya sarva-kaam-pradayine ।
Tapasam siddhaye tubhyam tirthraj namostu te ॥

"O Gomatī! O king of all pilgrimage! O you, who fulfills our intense desires and ambitions and helping us to achieve success in all of our penances, I offer my obeisance to you."

Kharota

There, the lotus feet of Kānāi experienced an itching sensation, so this place is known as Kharota.

Falen

Here, Thakurji showed Brajavāsīs the pastime of Prahlāda. That tradition still takes place today. The priest of the Prahlāda Temple fasts for one month and chants the Prahlāda incantation. At the end of the month, he comes out on the full moon day at night and takes a bath in Prahlāda-kuṇḍa. A fire with ten-foot tall flames is lit up and in front of thousands of onlookers, who come from all parts of the world, the priest safely walks through the fire and goes back to the temple to the utter astonishment of the audience. The flames do not harm the priest because of the power attained from chanting the Prahlāda mantra.



Top - Kosi - Gomti Ganga. Bottom - Kosi - Ratnakar Kund



Top-Left- Falen - Narasingh Dev Mandir. Top-Right - Falen - Narasingh Dev Mandir. Bottom-Falen - Prahlad Kund



Kosi - Vallabha Baithak

Chapter 26
Payagaon or Paigaon

The meaning of Paya (pronounced as Pai) is *pāyasam* or milk. Paigaon is Nagaji's village. Nagaji was an accomplished great personality. In one day, Nagaji used to circumambulate the full 84 *kośa* of Braja Maṇḍala. Today, no one will believe this statement. It is related to an emotional concentration. Just as there is mental worry towards a particular material object, there is an emotional excitement in devotional practice. If we have a strong desire for sense gratification, we do not think whether it is proper or improper.

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, ninth Canto, it is mentioned that when we are so immersed in the mode of passion, we become blind and do not identify the other as being a member of our family. Sensual emotion drives us to fulfil our sensual need to such a great extent that we cannot even perceive our proper relationship with others and we then behave like an animal. In our devotional practice, when our emotions become very intense, it can also empower us to perform extraordinary feats. The divine experience reaches such a level that for instance, when Chaitanya Mahāprabhu danced in ecstasy, tears from His eyes shot out like a stream. Sometimes His body expanded, sometime His limbs retracted inside His body. Such is the power of divine emotion.

Once, in *bhāva* (engrossed in spiritual emotion), He ran to Chataka Mountain thinking that it was Girirāja. On another occasion, in an emotional outburst, He jumped into the ocean, thinking it to be the

Yamunā river. Being protected by His intense absorption in the Divine, nothing happened to Him. The common sensuous men cannot understand this concept. It is like when we are being overpowered by intense sensual urges, we cannot understand what is proper and what is improper anymore and we are forced to act.

In devotional absorption, there is so much power that Hanumān jumped across the ocean. When Lord Rāma's army reached the sea, Jaṭāyu's brother, Sampāti who had very powerful eyesight, could see Sītā from the ocean shore and said, "Sītā is sitting across the ocean. Whoever is capable to cross the ocean, he may observe mother Sītā sitting down in the Aśoka Vātika." Hearing this, everyone began to think. Someone said, "I can jump across 10 *kośa*." A 100 yojanas is equal to 400 *kośa*. Another said, "I can jump across 20 *kośa*." Someone else said, "50 *kośa*." Aṅgada said, "I can jump 400 *kośa* and cross the ocean, but I am doubtful that I can jump another 400 *kośa* to come back." Hanumān was sitting quietly. Jāmbavān understood that only a person with enough devotional passion can accomplish this. He said, "O son of the wind! You are like the wind. Why are you sitting so quietly?" Hanumān experienced intense emotional excitement. Because of bodily motivation, his strength magnified. Just like a sensuous person experiences sensual intoxication, a devotee experiences a devotional fervor. Hanumān said. "If you instruct me so, I will uproot Laṅkā and bring it here. I think of Laṅkā as a gūlar fruit." Jāmbavān said, "Do not uproot Laṅkā, just inquire how Sītā is and return." Hanumān said, "All right." He climbed a hill and jumped. His jump was so powerful that the hill went down to Pātāla loka. Such is the strength of spiritual emotion and excitement.

Once Nagaji, while circumambulating Braja Maṇḍala in such an emotional fervor, reached Kadam Kāṇḍai. In Kadam Kāṇḍai, there were so many dense bushes. There were so many curved thorns that became trapped in Nagaji's hair and he was unable to untangle them. This pastime is described in Chapter 73 under Nagaji's *Kadam kāṇḍai*.

Second Lilā

hans hans dudh pivat nāth ।
kanak katora bharyo amrut diyo lalita hāth ॥

Lalitāji took a bowl of milk and handed it to Śyāmasundar because she knew that if she gives the bowl of milk first to Rādhārāṇī, then She would first give it to Śyāmasundar to drink. Therefore thinking that, 'If I give the bowl of milk to Kṛṣṇa then He would first let Rādhārāṇī drink the milk. When Lalitā gave Him the bowl of milk, Śyāmasundara could not help laughing. Lalitā is so smart.

"madhur komal vachan kahi- kahi pran pyāri sāth"

Lalitā gave the golden bowl of milk to Kṛṣṇa but what did He do?

"lādalī anchvāy pahle pāchhe āp aghāt"

Śyāmasundara brought the bowl of milk to Rādhārāṇī's lips. Śrīji refused, "No, first You drink, because Lalitā gave it to You first." She said this very sweetly. Kṛṣṇa answered, "You drink first, then only shall I drink."

"cintāmaṇi chit basyo sajni nirkhi piya muskāt"

First Kṛṣṇa made Her drink and then only He drank. Why did He do that? Because, the only thing that is always in His mind is to bring pleasure to Rādhārāṇī.

Upon seeing this, Rādhārāṇī smiled and thought, "Love should only be like His love."

Paya means milk, so this village is named Payagaon or Paigaon.

"uhe dekh paya gram śrī krishna e khane
paya pāte kela sarva sakhā gan sane"

Prayer Mantra for Circumambulating Āhutvana

kṛṣṇa vākya samāhuta samāgama vidhāyine ।
go gopāla sukhā rāmāhuta sankhyāy te namaḥ ॥

(Adi Purāṇa)

"Being aroused by Kṛṣṇa's speech and with a purpose to join with the happy cows and cowherd boys, I offer my obeisance to Āhutvana."

Prayer Mantra for Bathing and Purifying Oneself in Dhyan-kuṇḍa

gopī dhyana samāhuta, kṛṣṇa ceshta vidhayine ।
dhyana kuṇḍa namastubhyam, lokānām ishta dāyine ॥

"To one who enlivens the movements of Kṛṣṇa, Who is called upon in the gopī's meditations, I offer my obeisance to Dhyana-kuṇḍa, which fulfills everyone's desires."







Top right - Nagaji temple, top left - Nagaji. Below - Gopal kunda

Chapter 27
Uzānī

The melodious tunes from Kṛṣṇa's flute charmed the aquatic animals, terrestrial animals, flying birds, and bewildered the inert souls. The Yamunā even began flowing in the opposite direction. So, this village is named Uzānee. After all, Yamunā Mahārāṇī is one of the principal queens of Kṛṣṇa, so it was impossible that she would not be allured by the melodious tunes of Kṛṣṇa's flute.

Śrī Śeragaḍha

Śergadha is counted within the twelve secondary forests of Braja. Śergadha's ancient name was Gadhavana and some rasik saints of Vrindavan even named it Khelānavana (to play games). Under the rule of the foreigners, there were so many changes in India and this forest was named after the ruler of that time, Śershah Suri. But the devotees have beautifully narrated the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in Khelanavana so nicely.

sakhī mai doun kī ruchi pāī ।
khelānavana khelata rasabhogī barasata rang mahāī ॥
mora paksha Mohana cunilāye mukuta racata lakha māī ।
pyārī ke sira dharī candrika apne hātha banāī ॥

Once, both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī desired to play. Usually the Divine couple always sported in secluded groves around the paths of Vṛindāvana, but there was an unusual scene in Khelānavana. There was a mountain, which was filled with the most colorful vegetation. On that mountain named Bajrakila, beautiful peacocks sat on those plants, and drank the mesmerizing beauty of Kṛṣṇa with their unflinching gaze. While

intoxicated from Kṛṣṇa's beauty and diving into the ocean of bliss, they spread their colorful feathers and so created an amazing sight.

"nirmāya caru mukutam nava candra kena
gunjābhi rārachita hāra mupāharantī ।
vrindātavi nava nikunja gruhadhidevyaḥ
śrī rādhike tava kadā bhavitasmi dāsī" ॥

The beautiful gopīs, always used to collect the peacock feathers to make attractive crowns which they presented to Rādhārāṇī, who would then adorn Kṛṣṇa with them. But that day, Kṛṣṇa Himself collected the peacock feathers and started making a crown with His own hands! All Rādhārāṇī's friends were always collectively engaged in adorning Kṛṣṇa, but that day's pastime was quite different. Kṛṣṇa decorated Rādhārāṇī with a crest of feathers and beautified Rādhārāṇī in a festive manner. The Divine young couple, being always innovative, continuously created new loving pastimes. Kṛṣṇa made an amazing *candrikā* and decorated Rādhārāṇī's hair in such a way that it neither resembled Rādhārāṇī's usual decoration nor Kṛṣṇa's usual decoration, but it was an elegant mixture of both. This place is called Khelānavana because this playful pastime took place here.

According to Brahmā Purāṇa

Vyomāsura established the Bajrakīla Mountain here and made many attempts to kill Balarāma. He established his house on the deep cliffs of the mountain and secured the mountain with hard diamonds. This place is therefore known as Bajrakīla (pronounced as "bajrakeel"). The meaning of *bajra* is diamond and *kīla* means to nail down. After Dauji Mahārāj killed Vyomāsura, this place became the playground for Rādhā-Mādhava and hence is a worshipable place. According to *Garga Saṁhitā*, Vyomāsura was killed by Kṛṣṇa, but according to *Brahmā Vaivarta* and *Bhaviṣya Purāṇas*, Balarāma killed Vyomāsura. The fact is that in different *kalpas*, there are some variations in these pastimes. For example, on account of the curse of the Kumārās, Jaya and Vijaya became Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa. In another *kalpa*, Jalandhara became Rāvaṇa, in another, Pratāpa Bhānu became Rāvaṇa. In yet another Rudra's servant became Rāvaṇa. All these variations are acceptable. Kṛṣṇa kills Vyomāsura and Balarāma kills Vyomāsura, both are acceptable as it happened in different *kalpas*.

According to Bhavishya Purāṇa

Once Vyomāsura came to Gokula and carried Balarāmaji on his broad shoulders into sky. Being quite strong, Vyomāsura was whirling around in the sky with Balarāma sitting on his broad shoulders. Seeing his frightening monstrous body, Balarāma realized that he is an *asura*. When the cowherd boys saw Balarāma in trouble, they began to cry. Kṛṣṇa knew His brother's immeasurable strength and smiled. How could one *asura* conquer almighty Balarāma, who has Ananta Śeṣa as one of His incarnations? Vyomāsura had come to Balarāma and his death was imminent. When Balarāma saw how scared the cowherd boys were, He strongly pushed on Vyomāsura's shoulders. He immediately fell straight down to the ground here and left his body.

Śrī Dāujī 's temple is located just past the Balabhadra-kuṇḍa. There are also Deities of Śrī Madan-Mohan and Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha.



Khelan Van(SherGarh) - Balbhadra Kund

Chapter 28
Encha Dauji (Obe)

This pastime is described in the Chapter 65, Canto 10 of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. There it is written that Dāujī came to Braja riding in a chariot and stayed here for two months. One day, Dāujī was engaged in the pastime of the rāsa-dance with the gopīs of His own group. When He arrived on the bank of Yamunā. He invited her saying, "Come, we will play in your water." Yamunā did not respond to His invitation. Dāujī saw her careless attitude and being quite angry, he rebuked, "Oh! How is it you are not obeying My instructions! Now just see! I will drag you with my plough and break you into pieces!"

halarekhā kritārthāya shesha rosha nirīshaka ।
baladeva sthalāyaiv namate dhānya vardhana ॥

I offer my obeisance to this pastime place of the Yamuna that has the good fortune to observe the anger of Dauji and is marked by His powerful weapon, the plough. Because of you the crops prosper." (*Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*)

The eight spiritual preceptors wrote in their commentaries on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* that Dāujī was actually not scolding Yamunaji but one of her many forms. Yamunaji has so many forms and one of them is the wife of the ocean. Dauji, with His plough, dragged the wife of ocean, not the Yamunaji. Kālindī also stays in the water of the Yamuna River. Echa means when Dauji dragged the Yamuna; its flow became crooked. Yamunaji's flow is straight forward but because of being dragged by Dauji, she bent and her flow began to meander. That is why this place is called 'Echa Dauji'. Here, after frolicking in the water, when Dāujī came out, Lakṣmī appeared and offered Him a beautiful blue outfit and a big golden necklace, which became more beautiful from being touched by Dāujī 's body. Also, a sweet stream of honey sprouted up as a present from Śrī Varuṇadeva and Śrīmatī Varunidevī. To symbolize this incident, the Brajavasis prepare an intoxicating drink made of hemp leaves (bhang) which is offered to Dāujī . Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭaji also narrated another pastime of Dāujī .

Vākyavana

Prayer Mantra to offer Obeisance to Vākyavana

kṛṣṇa vākya samud bhuta, badhirandh vināshana ।
sarvadā rogya lābhāya vākya namne namostute ॥
parvato pari sansthitya, vākyai kṛṣṇa samāhyan ।
gopalānshch sakhī natra, vākya nāmām vadhvanshch ॥

"As you are manifesting from Kṛṣṇa's words, which destroy deafness and blindness, and awards good health, I offer my obeisance to you." (Bra.Bha.Vi.)

This place is known as Vākyavana. Vākya means sentence. Kṛṣṇa says sentences with astonishing words that are described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. The gopīs talk with each other, "Oh! My dear friend, just see! As Kṛṣṇa plays on His flute on the bank of the Yamunā, the splendor of His smile appears like a garland of diamonds that decorates His chest and the sparkles from the pearls of that garland light up His torso. When Kṛṣṇa smiles, the luster of His teeth appears like a bright garland."

One day, Kṛṣṇa affectionately called the cows in His sweet voice, "O beautiful ones, now that you have finished drinking water, let us go

back." At that time, Yamunā, hearing His sweet melodious words, stopped flowing! It is written that Yamunā actually is a manifestation of the ocean of love which emanates from Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

tarhi bhagna-gatayaḥ sarito vai ।
tat-padāmbuja-rajo 'nila-nītam ॥
spṛhayatīr vayam ivābahu-puṇyāḥ ।
prema-vepita-bhujāḥ stimitāpaḥ ॥

(ŚB. 10.35.7)

After Yamunā had stopped flowing, she desired to have His association and wondered how to get the dust from Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. By Kṛṣṇa's grace, winds always blew and carried the dust of His lotus feet from the banks. Just like Yamunā always desired the divine dust, so did the gopīs. As a response to the sweet words expressed by Kṛṣṇa, her waves suddenly stopped and caused her water level to rise which appeared as if Yamunā was raising her hands asking for the divine dust from Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. At times, Kṛṣṇa played melodious tunes on His flute that appealed to Yamunā. As Kṛṣṇa's words to the Yamunā and to the cows were so sweet, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa called this place Vākyavana.





Top - Aincha Dauji - Yamunaji. Below - Aincha Dauji - Dauji Temple

Chapter 29
Vihāravana

At this place, Kṛṣṇa blissfully performed sublime and divine amorous pastimes with one billion gopīs. Their inspirational, resounding, and charming words create a passion for Vihāra or pure devotional and recreational strolling in the realm of innumerable loving exchanges. Thus this place is most appropriately named Vihāravana. Because of Kṛṣṇa's performance of those Sublime pastimes in the middle of Vihāravana, from which emanates all auspiciousness, this arena of Divine pastimes is celebrated throughout the three worlds.

Prayer Mantra for Vihāravana

gopīka nirmita yaiva nanda sunu vihārine ।
devarṣhi durlabha śreshtha vanarāja namostute ॥
(*Brahmānda Purāṇa*)

"O supreme Vihāravana, the king of all forests, as you are not obtainable even by the devaṛṣhis, gods, and sages on account of being the abode of the Supreme enjoyable and recreational wanderings of Kṛṣṇa with the gopīs, I offer my obeisance unto you."

Prayer Mantra for snāna and ācamana for Varuni Kuṇḍa

namovaruṇa ramyāya vāruni kuṇḍya te namaḥ ।
indradi loka pālānām, vardāy namostute ॥
(Brahmānda Purāṇa)

Prayer Mantra for the Arena with One Thousand Million gopīs

gopībhyo śata kot bhyo, sa kṛṣṇabhyo namostute ।
devādi parmotsāha rāsa goshthi namostu te ॥
āgatya varuno yatra vāruni madira karot ।
kṛṣṇa paṇaya gopīnam pānāy madavihvalam ॥
vaihara vihvlah gopīhi Kṛṣṇam vaihara vihvalam ।
drashtva karona maha tirtha vāruni kunḍa muttamam ॥
surāpān kruto mohādyatra dosho vimucyate ।
(*Brahmānda Purāṇa*)

"I offer my obeisance to this blissful arena which is vibrant with the ecstatic feelings of one billion gopīs. This auspicious recreational pastime awards supreme pleasure even to gods. Varuṇa gratefully produced and affectionately offered Vāruṇīmadira (an intoxicating honey flavored drink) as a beverage to Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs. Vāruṇī-kuṇḍa, a great place of pilgrimage was created from the various ecstatic feelings by Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs during Their recreational pastime. There, anyone who drinks madira (intoxicating drink), even with the intention of becoming drunk, becomes free from all shortcomings. I offer my obeisance to this lovely Vāruṇī-kuṇḍa made by Varuṇa deva."

I salute Rādhārāṇī's intense love, by which, Kṛṣṇa, being so delighted by Her affectionate dealings, immediately creates a wonderful pastime. Rādhārāṇī becomes Kṛṣṇa and adorns Herself with His ornaments and Kṛṣṇa becomes Rādhārāṇī and decorates Himself with Her ornaments. The roles are reversed, Rādhārāṇī, trying to entice Śyāmasundara, who is acting and sitting like a shy woman.

kahati nāgri shyam so, taji mān hathili ।
hamte chuk kahā pari tiya garab gahili ।
vrutha mān nahi kijiye sir charanam dhārti ।
pyāri ha ha karat na mane puni puni charan gahe ।
kaha karat ye bolat nahi, nāgrihansati hriday dar bhari ।
nirakhi tiya rup piya chakit bhari nāgri hath tajo, kripa kari mohe bhajo ।
'sur' prabhu nāgri ras virah magan bhayi dekhi chhabi hansat girirāja dhāri ।



Top - Vihaar Van - Raas Mandal. Bottom - Vihaar Van - Vaaruni Kund

Chapter 30
Kasaroṭa

Kāsaroṭa is an abode where one can achieve communion with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. When a devotee is favored to enter into Kṛṣṇa's domain or reality, the place where he meets Him is called yoga-pīṭha. Kāsaroṭa is yoga-pīṭha personified.

Gāṅgarol

This is the village of Gaṅgā. Brajabāsīs named this as 'Gangroli'. It is also recognized as Jāhnu or Jāhnavī vana. Janhu muni's daughter, Jāhnavī performed penance here for Kṛṣṇa. In Vaishnav Gaudiya tradition, Jāhnavī or Gaṅgā is also recognized as Anaṅga Mañjarī, who was Rādhārāṇī's younger sister in a previous kalpa. At some time, Anaṅga Mañjarī was secretly and intimately wedded to Kṛṣṇa by the desire of Rādhārāṇī.

Once, at the time of Makara Sankranti, Nanda Bābā desired to take bath in the Ganges, so Śrī Kṛṣṇa brings Nanda Bābā here, where the Gaṅgā had performed austere penance for Kṛṣṇa's audience. When Gaṅgā finally saw Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, she melted. Nanda Bābā took bath in the Gaṅgā at this place, which is now known as Gaṅgāroli. The Brajavāsīs only know that this is the village of Gargācārya Muni. There is also Gargācārya's deity here.

Prayer Mantra for Janhu Vana

deva gandharva sevyāya nānādruma latārchita ।
vikalmashāya mokshaya tapasthala namostute ॥
nitya snānam chakā rātra jahnushch tapasāmnidhiḥ ।
jahnu kupa samākhyatam gangā pāta samudbhavam ॥

(*Brahmā Purāṇa)*

"I offer my obeisance to this place of penance, which is inhabited by gods and Gandharvas, and is splendidly beautiful with all kinds of trees and plants and which destroy all varieties of sins and awards liberation."

This was the bathing place of the great ascetic Janhu muni. Janhu Ṛṣi drank Gaṅgā and later on released her from his ears at the request of King Bhagīratha. Gaṅgā fell down on this earth at that location from Janhu's ears, and it became famous as Jāhnu *kūpa*.

Prayer Mantra for snāna and ācamana in Janhu rsi's Well

Gangā pāta samudbhuta, janhu tirtha namostute ।
sarva kalmasha nāshaya janhu kūpa namostute ॥
(*Brahmā Purāṇa*)

"Oh Janhuvana, where Gaṅgā, after coming out of Janhu's ears, appears on this Earth and destroys all sins. I offer my obeisance to you."



Kajraut - Akhshayvat



Gangrol kund

Chapter 31
Chīra Ghāta (Chīra harana)

Kṛṣṇa's pastime of stealing garments is a reflection of His removing the covering of devotee's natural tendencies. In scriptures like *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *Śrī Garga Saṁhitā*, and *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa*, this pastime is sung and narrated nicely but only in the Śrī Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa, the reverential account of the main reason is found. Only then, one can truly understand that there is no room for any immoral acts in the single pointed unique divine worship of Śrīji.

In this pastime, there was no need to ask for the stolen clothes to be given back, as the clothes themselves come to Śrīji. According to *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa*, in the cold season, during the month of Margaśīrśa, all the unmarried gopīs performed 'Gauri Vrata'. Before dawn, they went to the bank of the Yamuna River and took bath after removing their clothes. After taking bath and molding idols of Bālukāmayi Devī with Śyāma-gaur dust mixed with camphor near the bank, they worshiped Devi with sandalwood, rice, incense, and expressed their heartfelt desires.

he devi jagatā mātah, shrushti sthityantakārini ।
nanda gopa sutam kāntamasmabhyam dehi suvrate ॥

"Oh, Jagdambe, who destroys all evils and gives protection to the creation, please bless us that the moon of Nanda's family (Kṛṣṇa) becomes our husband!" (Bra.Vai.Pu.Kṛ.Ja.Kā. 27.6)

In the beginning of the creation, Kṣīrodakśāyī Śrī Hari advised Brahmā to chant this same hymn. When Brahmā, who was sitting on the lotus that sprouted from Śrī Hari's navel, was tortured by the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, Brahmā asked for help by appeasing the primeval goddess Ambikā with the same hymn. In response, Ambikā gave him the Kṛṣṇa *kavaca* (armor) named *sarvarakṣana* (protection against all difficulties) shield. Brahmā later gave this protective armor to Maheśvara. This auspicious hymn invoked by the gopīs removes all obstacles and fulfils all desires. The gopīs attained their wishes by chanting this prayer.

At the end of the month, when their vow was completed, the gopīs bathed naked in the Yamunā. Right at that time, Kṛṣṇa arrived there and took the colorful white, red, yellow, and green clothes of the unmarried gopīs, while they were still naked and playing in the river, and climbed up a Kadamba tree.

After finishing their bath, the gopīs looked all around for their clothes but they could not find their clothes. Kṛṣṇa who was sitting on the tree, said, "O gopīs, you have offended Varuṇa deva, by bathing without clothes so his servants have come and taken away your clothes. Look! Even the Goddess whom you worshiped is not pleased with you, as she did not protect your clothes." Hearing His words, the gopīs with faltering voices appealed to Kṛṣṇa with folded hands. "O Śyāmasundara! Our bodies are shivering from the cold. Why are You so cruel to torture us like this? We understand that it is You and You alone who have taken our clothes. Please, kindly return our clothes, so we can come out from this cold water."

Kṛṣṇa advised the gopīs to give up their bashfulness, hesitation and modesty, which are hurdles to develop true devotional qualities, and to come out of the water and pick up their own clothes. But Nava-Bhamini, Śrī Rādhā, did not come out of the water to get Her clothes. She began praying while She was in the water. She steadied Her mind, body, and breath in Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrījī composed *Kṛṣṇa Arādhāna* (prayer to Kṛṣṇa) Herself. From the power of the purity of Her composed prayer, all Her clothes came to Her by themselves. The glory of Śrījī's power is revealed here. The divine sound, the very word Radha is a shield of pretection when faced with ten severe elements such as suspiscion, violence, old age, treachery, analytical pointless reasoning etc.

Here the Rādh root word is used as ārādhanā meaning worship -

arādhāna tu krushnasya, krushnena ārādhanādapi ।
arādhānārtha kādhātoho, rādho rādheti siddhyati ॥

or

yā vā rādhayati priyam brajamanim praudhānuragotsavaih ।
samsiddhayanti yadāshrayena hi param govinda sakhyotsukāh ॥
yat siddhih pramā padaikarasavatyārādhanānte nu sa ।
sri radhā shrutimauli shekharlatā nāmni mama prīyatām ॥

When the nectarean word "Rādhā", is spoken with love, it brings a flood of the blissful nectar of love. Lord Hari happily hears the chants. (Rā.Su.Ni. 97)

Sometimes Śyāmasundar is worshipped by Śrīji and at other times Śrīji is worshipped by Śyāmasundar. Here the verbal root of Rādhā is employed, meaning adorable or worshipable. After Her steadfast focused worship, when Śrīji opened Her eyes, She saw that Her clothes had appeared on the nearby bank of the river on their own.



Cheer Ghat

Once Nārada inquired about the *'Gauri vrata'* that fulfills all desires. Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself mentioned that Vedavatī, the daughter of King Kuśadhvaja also performed *'Gauri vrata'* in Puṣkara. She asked the goddess Ambikā to be blessed by having Kṛṣṇa as her husband. Ambikā replied, "Jagadambe! You are the virtuous Lakṣmīdevi, the wife of Lord Nārāyaṇa and now you have incarnated on this Earth. In Tretā-yuga, the Lord will incarnate as Śrī Rāma in the Sun dynasty. You should go to Mithilā, where you will appear from the ground to become the daughter of King Janaka, and will be known as Sītā. You will be the wife of the Lord in every *kalpa*." Then Vedavatī became Sītā, and as a young girl, she also performed the same *'Gauri vrata'* and was blessed with Śrī Rāma as Her husband.

Rādhārāṇī also performed the same kind of vow in order to have Kṛṣṇa as Her beloved. The gopīs also performed a similar vow and were similarly blessed to have Kṛṣṇa as their husband. On the occasion of the concluding ceremony of Gauri vrata, the goddess Durgā, who removes all inauspiciousness, appeared and affectionately embraced Rādhārāṇī. After that, all the gopīs offered their obeisance to Durgā devi and she blessed all the gopīs, giving them the benediction that their desire to obtain Kṛṣṇa as their husband will be fulfilled.

After that, Pārvatī herself adored Rādhārāṇī, who is worshiped by all in every planet. Pārvatī said, "O Radhe! You are dearer to the Lord than His own Self and You are executing the rites of the *Gauri vrata* just to instruct mankind. You are not human, but with the assistance of Your illusory energy, You have assumed a human form. As You have manifested from one side of the body of Kṛṣṇa, You are as lustrous as Kṛṣṇa. All divine maidens are created from the one sixteenth part of the small portion of Your body. So, how can You be an ordinary human being? Only ignorant people consider You to be human. For such bewildered souls, You always remain incomprehensible. You are the soul of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is Your soul. In ancient times, even after performing austere penances for sixty thousand years, Brahmā could not see Your lotus feet. You are the personification of the greatest power, maha śakti. You incarnated on this earth as a gopī by obeying the instructions of Kṛṣṇa. On account of receiving Your mercy, King Suyajña, of the Manu dynasty was able to enter Goloka. Paraśurāma from the Bhṛgu dynasty who eliminated the royal order twenty-one times from the earth, also got your mercy after obtaining Your prayer from

Maheśvara and meditating upon it till perfection in Puṣkara. Then only was he able to kill Kārta Viryārjuna. When I was about to burn Him to ashes for breaking one tooth of my dear son Gaṇesh, You appeared there and protected him. O Mother of the world! The execution of Your vow to do Gauri vrata is for the well-being of mankind."

It is worth noting that while offering Her prayers to Rādhārāṇī, sometimes Bhagavati Durgā Herself addressed Rādhārāṇī as the mother of the world and sometimes acknowledged Her as the energy of Kṛṣṇa. The conclusion from this observation is that as a worshiper of *śakti* (potency) worships Durgādevi, in turn, Durgā worships Rādhārāṇī.

"Just like whiteness cannot be separated from milk, heat is an inherent quality of fire, the land has inherent odor, and water has its intrinsic liquidity, You are eternally situated as an integral part of Kṛṣṇa. Apsarās, goddesses, human girls or even Gandharva girls cannot equate Your good fortune.

rādhikā sama nāgarī navīna ko pravīna sakhī ।
rupa guna suhāga bhāga āgarī na nāri ॥
varuna nāga loka bhūmi devaloka kī kumāri ।
pyārī jū ke roma ūpara ḍāroṃ saba vāri ॥
ānandakanda nandanandana jāke rasaranga rachyau ।
anga var sudhaṃga nācatī mānatu hai ati hārī ॥
tāke bal garv bhare rasika 'vyāsa' se na ḍare ।
lok veda karma dharma chāḍi mukuti cāri ॥

This is my boon to you, Kṛṣṇa, Who is even worshiped by Śiva, will be submissive to You." After saying this, Bhāgavati Durgā disappeared and Śyāmasundara with a hue of blue water appeared and told Rādhārāṇī to request a boon. Rādhārāṇī asked, "Please give Me the blessings that My restless mind will always be attached to Your lotus feet; and I shall get ultimate devotion which is very difficult to attain." The gopīs also asked for the same benediction from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa said, "You are all eternally My realized favorite devotees. Rādhā is My eternal consort. From Goloka, you all have come with Me to assist in My pastimes." This pastime corroborates the fact that Rādhārāṇī is the primeval power of all great powers. She is praised, served and worshiped by all great powers.

Tapovana

Lakṣhmī, whose opulent youth was destroyed by the curse of Durvāsā, performed penances here and regained her youth.

nashta samvatsarodbhuta lakshmi gupta prakāsine ।
namaste yauvana yaiva sarvārishta vināsine ॥

(Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"O Tapovana! Evoked from the bygone era, secretly illuminated by Lakṣhmī, and slayer of all demons, I offer my obeisance to you!"

vishnavrishtakruta snāna sarva pāpaugha nāshine ।
tīrtha rāja namastubhyam visnu kunḍa varaprada ॥

(Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"O bathing place of Lord Viṣṇu that was created on account of Ariṣṭā, I offer my obeisance to the great pilgrimage site known as Viṣṇu-kuṇḍa."



Tapovan (Here Lakshmi ji did penances)

Chapter 32
Nanda-ghāṭa

Once, Nanda Bābā was observing the vow of Ekadāsī on the eleventh day of Lunar month. He went to the Yamunā river at midnight to take a bath. There, the servants of Varuṇa captured him and escorted him to Varuṇa-loka. When Brajavāsīs came to know that Nanda Bābā had drowned in the river, they all became sad and Yaśodā ji started to weep. Seeing Yaśodā crying, Kṛṣṇa asked, "Mother, why are you crying?" Yaśodā sadly replied, "Oh! How can I not cry? Nanda Bābā has just drowned." Kṛṣṇa said, "Mother, Nanda Bābā has not drowned, please do not cry. I am going right now and will bring him back." Knowing that this was the mischief of Varuṇa's servants, Kṛṣṇa reassured everyone and went to the abode of Varuṇa.

As soon as Kṛṣṇa reached the kingdom of Varuna, Viśāla puri, He destroyed his magnificent fort. *"Bhaya binu hoi na priti":* there is no regard without fear. Immediately, Varuṇa rushed with folded hands and respectfully said, "O Kṛṣṇa! Please accept my greetings to You. O Lord of Goloka, You maintain countless universes and sometimes manifest in the four-armed form. Some of my foolish servants are not aware of Your glorious position and have performed this abominable act. Please forgive me. O inhabitant of earth, I, the resident of water surrender to You!" Kṛṣṇa was pleased to see Varuṇa asking for His protection. Thereafer He brought back Nanda Bābā alive to Braja. Nanda Bābā remembered the opulence of the abode of Varuṇa and also noticed that Varuna was worshipping Kṛṣṇa. When Nanda Bābā returned, all the cowherd men surrounded him and shouted, "Oh! Nanda Bābā has returned; and he has not drowned, Kānāi has brought him back."

With great curiosity, the cowherd men inquired, "Nanda Bābā, where have you been?" Nanda Bābā replied excitedly. "I was in the abode of Varuṇa who surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and begged for forgiveness. He offered his obeisance to Kṛṣṇa as if He was the Lord. He is not our child, He is the Supreme Lord!" After hearing this, the cowherd men immediately asked, "Kṛṣṇa Kānāi, as You are addressed as the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, please show us Your divine abode."

This story of the vision of Vaikuṇṭha is described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and in the *Garga Saṁhitā* in more detail. Kṛṣṇa answered, "Just close your eyes and I will show you Vaikuṇṭha." When they opened their eyes, they saw the magnificent Vaikuṇṭha in front of them, where Kṛṣṇa was lying down on Śeṣa-nāga in His form as Nārāyaṇa holding a śaṅkha (conch shell), *cakra* (disk or wheel), *gada* (club or mace), and *padma* (lotus) in His four hands.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* mentions that beyond the dark planets and the material planets that are under the influence of the illusory energy, there is the Lord's Supreme abode called Vaikuṇṭha, which is forever illuminated by His inherent bodily luster. Kṛṣṇa showed them Vaikuṇṭha as is revealed to Akrūra. In the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, this pastime is mentioned briefly. Further detail is given in Garga Saṁhitā, since that is the detailed commentary of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. The story continues as follows:

Even though the cowherd men were standing in Vaikuṇṭha dhāma, being simple villagers, they discussed the situation in an innocent way amongst themselves.

The cowherd boys said, "Oh! Look, He appears just like our Kānāi, but He has four hands! Each one holding either a a śaṅkha, *cakra*, *gada* and *padma*. Kānāi does not carry these things here in Gokula." They talked further, "In Vaikuṇṭha, there is so much discipline!" The officials chastised the cowherd boys by saying, "How did you come here? Do you not know that this is Vaikuṇṭha! What are you all talking about? How dare you talk and lecture here? Here, the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha lives; therefore, you must stand straight with your folded hands and offer your respects!"

After all, the Brajavāsīs were just simple villagers. They complained to each other, "Let us not stay here. We cannot even talk freely among ourselves here! We are standing down here and Kānāi is sitting up there, and we cannot approach Him or even talk to Him. These officials do not allow us to go to Kānāi. Now we feel sorry that we insisted Him to bring us

to Vaikuṇṭha. Our Kānāi is so far from us. Our Braja is much better. There, we can even ask Him to become a horse and ride on Him. We can wrestle with Him and play ball with Him. This Lord of Vaikuṇṭha is Kṛṣṇa but the standards here are quite different and difficult for us."

kahā karon vaikuṇṭha hi jāi l
jahān nahīn vaṃśīvaṭa yamunā, girigovardhana nanda kī gāi ll
jahān nahīn yaha kunja latā drūma, manda sugandha bahata nahiṃ vāi ll
kokila haṃsa mor nahīn kūjath, tāko basibo kāhi suhāy ll
jahān nahīn dhuna vaṃśī kī bājata, kṛṣṇa na puravata adhara lagāy ll
prema pulaka romānca na upajata, mana vaca krama āvata nahīn dhāy ll
jahān nahīn yaha bhuvi vṛndāvana, bābā nanda yaśomati māi l
'govinda' prabhu taji nanda suvana ko, braja taji vahān merī basai balāy ll

Thus, the cowherd boys were distressed and began telling each other, "We asked for it and Kānāi showed us Vaikuṇṭha. Now, we came to Vaikuṇṭha and we are in all sorts of trouble; just to stand here is so difficult. 'Stand like this. Stand straight, and do not talk!' Kṛṣṇa is in His four-handed form noticed the cowherd boys' distress, and immediately brought them back to Braja. After returning to Braja, the cowherd boys were all very happy and said, "Goodness! We now regret wanting to go to Vaikuṇṭha."

There is another pastime in Bhaygaon at Nanda-*ghāṭa*. According to *Bhaktamāl*, Once Jīva Gosvāmī was rejected by his spiritual mentor, Rūpa Gosvāmī. Once, a famous scholar came to Vṛindāvana and inquired if there was anyone residing there, who was ready to accept his challenge to debate on the interpretation of the scriptures. People mentioned that in Vṛindāvana, lived the most recognized scholar, Rūpa Gosvāmī. If anyone defeated Rūpa Gosvāmī, it would mean that he defeated Vṛindāvana. The scholar came to Rūpa Gosvāmī, who replied, "We do not aspire for victory, nor do we engage in such debates, and as we are Vaiṣhṇavas, we do not waste time in such debates. The scholar said, "Then give me a declaration in writing that I have defeated you." Rūpa Gosvāmī smilingly wrote, "I, Rūpa Gosvāmī, declare that I have been defeated."

Rūpa Gosvāmī behaved in that way because of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instruction that we should be even more humble than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, not expecting any respect, and ready to offer respect to everyone.

tṛṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā ।
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ ॥
(Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

"One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly. Unless one is meek and humble, to make progress in spiritual life is very difficult." (*Sikshastakam* 3)

If in the present day, we can simply and sincerely follow this instruction, then the whole Vedic community that has been divided would be united once again.

After Rūpa Gosvāmī accepted his defeat, the scholar started bragging throughout Vṛindāvana about his victory over Rūpa Gosvāmī. When Jīva Gosvāmī came to know this, he felt very bad that this scholar is giving such a bad reputation to his spiritual master because of his simplicity. 'My spiritual master has accepted his defeat in humility.' Not able to tolerate his guru's defamation, Jīva Gosvāmī challenged the scholar to debate him, and he easily defeated him. When Rūpa Gosvāmī found out about this debate, he questioned Jīva Gosvāmī as to why he engaged himself in such a debate. Jīva Gosvāmī kept quiet because he knew that if he replies that he wanted to preserve honor of his spiritual master, Rūpa Gosvāmī will not like it. Rūpa Gosvāmī then said, "Jīva! Go away from here. I do not want to see your face again. After all those years of studying, you still do not understand the true meaning of humility!"

After this, Jīva Gosvāmī became quite detached, He did not even care about maintaining his existence. He left Vṛindāvana and came to Bhaygaon at Nanda-*ghāṭa* and stayed there. He did not even take alms to maintain his body as commonly practiced by renounced *sadhus*. He sometimes soaked dry flour in water and drank it. He felt that since his spiritual master had rejected him, there was no point to continue living but also that one should not commit suicide. So, he used to occasionally eat soaked flour.

Sanātana Gosvāmī also used to wander around in Braja, subsisting by begging alms. While wandering, he once came near NandGhat and went to one house to beg alms. The resident gopī said, "Bābā! Please wait, I

will bring roṭis (round flat bread)." Sanātana waited for sometime for the roṭis, but after a while he started to leave thinking that "gopī must be busy in doing other house chores, maybe she does not have time to prepare roṭis for me." Meanwhile, that gopī came out of her house and told him, "Bābā! The Bābājī residing in Nanda-*ghāṭa* is better than you." Sanātana curiously inquired, "Who is this Bābā residing at Nanda-*ghāṭa*?" The gopī said, "That Bābājī just soaks dry flour in water and takes it as a meal and I asked you to wait for roṭis, but you are leaving before I could prepare them." Sanātana Goswami was very curious about who this other Bābā at Nanda-*ghāṭa* was. He asked her to take him there to meet the other Bābā.

When they reached Nanda-*ghāṭa*, the gopī asked him to see the other Bābā residing in the cave there. When Sanātana Gosvāmī looked in, he found Jīva Gosvāmī sitting there. When Jīva Gosvāmī saw that Sanātana Gosvāmī had come, he fell down at the feet of Sanātana Gosvāmī and cried. They both embraced each other and cried. Sanātana inquired, "Jīva, how do you happen to be here?" Jīva Gosvāmī replied, "Rūpa Gosvāmī has rejected me."

Jīva Gosvāmī relayed the entire incident of his debate with the scholar and defeating him. Sanātana Goswami then said, "Come with me." Sanātana took Jīva Gosvāmī back to Vṛindāvana. Sanātana was the elder brother of Rūpa Gosvāmī. He asked Rūpa Gosvāmī, "Is Kṛṣṇa not present in all living beings?" Rūpa replied, "Yes, dear brother, He sure is." Sanātana then soberly said, "Then, is Kṛṣṇa not present in Jīva?" Rūpa became silent. Sanātana asked him, "Owing to all considerations, was it proper for you to reject Jīva Goswami?" Then he instructed Jīva Gosvāmī to fall at the feet of Rūpa Gosvāmī. Rūpa Gosvāmī immediately lifted Jīva Gosvāmī and embraced him.

Jīva Gosvāmī's cave, where he performed his devotional practice was present for everyone to see and it was appreciated by all devotees until 2011. But now it is regretful to note that at the very spot a new temple has been built and the old memories are lost.

Chapter 33
Umarāro

Umarāro means "emperor". The royal throne of Rādhārāṇī is here. One day, to fulfill Her associates' desire, Rādhārāṇī sat on the throne as they were exclaiming, "Śrī Rādha is the empress of this kingdom!" Lalitā became the chief minister. Rādhārāṇī's first instruction to Her associates was to bring to Her whoever is trying to exercise control over Her kingdom. Rādhārāṇī's friends, armed with flowers and branches in their hands, ventured to capture Kṛṣṇa's friends. After arresting Madhumaṅgala, Subala, and a few others, they asked them to surrender at the lotus feet of Rādhārāṇī. Madhumaṅgala asked that he should be punished by being fed sumptuously. Rādhā instructed Her friends that because he was a gluttonous Brāhmaṇa, he should be fed laḍḍus and be released. This is the spot where Lokanath Gosvāmī did lot of Bhajan. On account of Lokanath Gosvāmī's intense devotion, Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda's Deities manifested here from Kiśorī-kuṇḍa.

Basaī

While herding the cows, Nanda Bābā used to rest for some time at Basai, on the bank of the river Yamunā.

Chātā (Chatravana)

Prayer Mantra for circumambulation for Chatravana

gopīkānvita krushnāya namaste chhatra dhārine ।
indrādi devata bhyastu, vardāya namo namaḥ ॥
(*Kurma Purāṇa*)

"I offer my obeisance to Lord Kṛṣṇa, who holds a parasol and is surrounded by the gopīs and awarding boons even to devas like Indrā."

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Acamana for Surya-kuṇḍa

bhaskarāya namastubhyam pratibimba svarupine ।
ravi patana sambhuta tirtharāja vara prada ॥

"O King of all pilgrimage! I respectfully bow down to the Sun god, who is present everywhere through his reflecting sunrays. This Surya-kuṇḍa is created where the sun sets. I respectfully bow down to you, who easily grants benedictions."

Ranavārī

Three miles away from Chhata, southwest of Barṣāṇā is a village named Ranavārī, where there was a contest of *Sūrat* (recollection). In that contest, Rādhārāṇī emerged victorious.



Basai - Nanda Baba lived here

Chapter 34
Narī Semarī (Nārāyaṇavana)

Narī represents Nārāyaṇa. Here we find Nārāyaṇavana and gop-kuṇḍa. Śyāmasundara disguised here as a gopī and played melodious music on His *vīna* that startled His beloved Rādhārāṇī. Śrījī asked, "My dear friend, where did you learn to play such melodious music?" Śyāmasundara said, "I belong to the divine community of singers and musicians, the *kinnaris* and come from heaven." Priyaji was so pleased that She desired to reward the musician with Her necklace of precious jewels. At that moment, She could recognize the disposition of Śyāmasundara and Rādhārāṇī's superficial displeasure on Him melted away. Both lovers celebrated their union. Because this musician had a dark complexion, the village is named Semari. Nearby is the village named Nari, which is the vernacular form of word Hari (Nārāyaṇa). There is also an ancient Deity of goddess Durgā, where a festive fair and Navaratri celebration take place every year. Thousands of Brajavāsīs come from a far distance and adore the goddess, even to this day.

Prayer Mantra for Nārāyaṇavana

nārāyaṇa sukhāvāsa, paramātma svarūpine |
namo nārāyaṇa akhyāya vanāya sukha dāyine ||

"I offer my respectful obeisances to Nārāyaṇavana, which provides comfort, pleasure, and happiness similar to those found in Nārāyaṇa's abode."

Prayer Mantra for Gopa-kuṇḍa

nandādi snapanod bhutatīrtha nirmala vārine |
gopakuṇḍa samākhyāya namaste muktidāyine ||

"I respectfully pay my obeisances to Gopa-kuṇḍa which awards liberation and whose water has been purified by the bathing of Nanda Mahārāj and others."

Tārāvana

Prayer Mantra for Tārāvana

tārāvana namastubhyam, tāpaḥ siddhi svarupine|
deva yoni samad bhuta, kanyāyai varade namaḥ ||

"O Tārāvana! I offer my obeisances to you, as you are the personification of the perfection attained by practicing austerity and offer blessings to the girls born in the families of demigods."

The Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Acamana for Tārā-kuṇḍa

tārā nirmita tīrthāya tara kundābhidhāyine ।
tīrtha rāja namastubhyaṁ sarva pāpa pranāshana ॥

"I offer my obeisance to the pilgrimage place named Tārā-kuṇḍa, which is able to destroy all sins and is created by Rādhārāṇī's associate Tārā."

Chaumunhā

Brahmāji became embarrassed when he saw the calves and cowherd boys still enjoying in Braja after he had stolen them. As repentance he asks for forgiveness by chanting the following prayers, uttering it with all four of His Divine faces.

utkṣepaṇaṁ garbha-gatasya pādayoḥ ।
kiṁ kalpate mātur adhokṣajāgase ॥
kim asti-nāsti-vyapadeśa-bhūṣitaṁ ।
tavāsti kukṣeḥ kiyad apy anantaḥ ॥

"O Lord Adhokṣaja, does a mother take offense when the child within her womb kicks with his legs? And is there anything in existence — whether designated by various philosophers as real or as unreal — that is actually outside Your abdomen?"

(ŚB. 10.14.12)

nārāyaṇas tvaṁ na hi sarva-dehināṁ ।
ātmāsy adhīśākhila-loka-sākṣī ॥
nārāyaṇo 'ṅgaṁ nara-bhū-jalāyanāt ।
tac cāpi satyaṁ na tavaiva māyā ॥

(ŚB.10.14.14)

Brahmāji said: I am like an embryo or newly born child and deserve to be forgiven. You are Lord Nārāyaṇa, I am created by You.

This place is recognized as Chaunmuha, one who has four faces.





Top -Chaumuhan - Brahma Temple. Bottom- Chaumuhan - Chandra Sarovar

Chapter 35
Pasolī

Pasolī is also known by other names such as Sarpasthalī, Sāpolī or Pasaulī. It is associated with the pastime of killing the demon Aghāsura. Once, while walking, the cowherd boys saw the open mouth of Aghāsura as wide as a cave. To explore it further out of curiosity, they decided to enter inside. Even though Kṛṣṇa tried to stop them from entering that cave, they were completely fearless relying on His strength. Not paying attention to Kṛṣṇa's warning, they entered the mouth of Aghāsura. Aghāsura did not close his mouth because he was still waiting for Kṛṣṇa to enter. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa noticed the precarious position of the cowherd boys, He came to their rescue and entered the mouth of the demon. Aghāsura immediately closed his mouth, trapping Kṛṣṇa along with the cowherd boys. Kṛṣṇa expanded Himself to such an extent that Aghāsura was unable to breathe anymore and instantly died. Then Kṛṣṇa looked at the dead cowherd boys and revived them with His nectarean glance and awarded them new life. Because of this pastime with Aghāsura, the giant snake, this place was named Sāpoli (*sāpa* means "snake") or Pasolī.

Pasolī's Second Significant Historical Event

According to *Mahābhārata*, Satyavatī's son, Chitrāngada suspected the purity of Bhīṣma's character. Later, he recognized his mistake and

felt embarrassed. In repentance, Chintrāngada came to Pasolī and burned himself.

After the death of Śāntanu, Bhīṣma gave spiritual instructions and good association to his father's second wife, Satyavatī, and pacified her disturbed mind. At that time, Chitrāngada became suspicious of the behavior of Bhīṣma, and hid himself in the bedroom of Satyavatī to observe Bhīṣma's activities. As Bhīṣma was reciting spiritual topics, Satyavati fell asleep and one of her legs was hanging down from the bed. Bhīṣma was thinking to lift her leg and put it back on the bed to prevent her from falling off, but he was also thinking how to do this in accordance of the scriptural teachings.

mātrā svastrā duhitrā vā nāviviktāsano bhavet |
balavān indriya-grāmo vidvāṁsam api karṣati ||

"One should not allow oneself to sit on the same seat even with one's own mother, sister or daughter, for the senses are so strong that they can agitate even a learned man who is very advanced in knowledge." (ŚB. 9.19.17)

After careful thinking and consideration of the circumstances, Bhīsma crawled under the bed and with his head moved the leg back onto the bed. In so doing, he kept his bounds and also honored the dignity of his stepmother. Chitrāngada observed this event and became most remorseful. The next day, he asked Bhīṣma, "How can one atone for the sin of wrongly accusing a great man?" Chitrāngada did not clearly explain the whole situation and Bhīṣma did not properly understand the context of what had actually happened. But he expressed his opinion stating, "The guilty party should ignite a fire from straws and burn himself to ashes." After hearing this, Chitrāngada came to Pasolī and burned himself near this kuṇḍa.

Chitrāngada knew that King Śāntanu had performed great penances at Śāntanu-kuṇḍa in Satohā, where he was rewarded with the boon of having Bhīṣma as a son. Pasoli in Braja is only 3 kilometers from Satohā.



Pasauli - Mansa Kund

Chapter 36
Āzaī

Brahmā stole the calves and cowherd boys from Braja. When his delusion dissipated, Brahmā returned the calves and cowherd boys, but one year had already passed. The cowherd boys returned to Braja not understanding what had taken place. While returning home in the evening, the cowherd boys were saying that today only (āja hi) our dear Kṛṣṇa has killed the demon Aghāsura. From the word āj-hi, this village is named Āzaī.

Jainta

The village of Jainta is situated only three miles away from Chaṭīkar*ā*. This village symbolizes Kṛṣṇa's conquest (jīt) over the demon Aghāsura. When Kṛṣṇa killed the demon Aghāsura, all the gods celebrated this victory by shouts of joy and showering flowers. This village still tries to revive the memory of these victory shouts; even today there is an idol of a snake in Jaya-kuṇḍa and amazingly enough, no matter how much water is in the kuṇḍa, the snake idol always remains above the water.

Chaṭīkarā

As Kṛṣṇa's Chaṭī (6th day after birth) was celebrated here, this place was named Chaṭīkar*ā*.

Garuḍa Govinda

At the request of cowherd boys, Kṛṣṇa invited Garuda and rode on him here. Six kilometers away from Vṛndāvana in Chaṭīkarā, where Kṛṣṇa's Chaṭī pujan was performed, there is a majestic deity showing twelve hands. This deity is famously known as Garuḍa Govinda.

garuda govinda eii dekho srinivas ।
etha karilen kṛṣṇa adbhut vilas ॥
Śrīdāma garuda haiyā khelaye anande ।
chaturbhuja govind chadhaya tāra skandhe ॥
garuda govinda duhu shobha atishay ।
ai hetu 'garuda govinda'nāma kay ॥

(ŚB. Ra.)

Sunarakh

In this place, Saubhari Muni performed great austerity by immersing in water in order to purify his heart. Once, as he was performing his penances in the river Yamunā, he saw a male fish frolicking with so many female fish. Noticing that the male fish was fully enjoying himself in their company, the desire to get married entered his heart. Immediately after coming out of the water, he went to king Māndhātā's palace and told him that he wanted to marry one of his daughters. The king was quite perplexed and thought that it would not be fair to ask anyone of his daughters to marry a Muni because his body was quite old and disfigured due to so many years of austerity. His skin sagged from his limbs, his hair was white and his body trembled as he walked. Because he had strong affection for all his daughters, he was not inclined to give anyone of them in marriage to this old Muni. However, he was afraid that if he denied his request, Saubhari Muni may become angry and curse him. Thus, Māndhātā said, "Muni, any one of my daughters that likes you will become your wife."

Understanding the king's position, Muni transformed himself into a beautiful person with a huge strong handsome body. He was so handsome that not only all the princesses, but even the heavenly girls were wishing to marry him. Saubhari Muni then went to meet the king's daughters.

Upon seeing him, all of them began to quarrel among themselves. One daughter said, "This man is only suitable for me." Another one said

right away that she had held his hand first, therefore, he had to marry her. A third one, being quite confident, proclaimed, He likes me, and so I will be his wife." In this way, every one of them was claiming him as her husband. To solve their dilemma, Saubhari Muni decided to marry all fifty daughters. He went to the king, who was completely bewildered seeing this. The powerful Muni immediately built fifty palaces for his fifty wives. Seeing the opulence of Saubhari Muni, the king of Sapta Dvipavati Avani, Māndhātā, was greatly astonished and accepted Saubhari Muni as the most opulent person in the entire world.

Saubhari Muni was totally engrossed in enjoying the pleasures derived from his senses that he forgot the Lord and devotional service. Just as pouring ghee over the fire does not extinguish it but rather magnifies it; in the same way, these bodily pleasures did not satiate the sense hunger of the Muni; they only increased his lust.

One day, because of the devotional practice performed earlier in his life, he became remorseful and depressed. He started regretting the consequence of his uncontrolled mind. "Oh! Just see, I have lost my spiritual luster and all the strength which I had acquired from executing austere penances." By tempting me to indulge in sense pleasures, my flickering mind had destroyed my wisdom and self-control."

saṅgaṁ tyajeta mithuna-vratīnāṁ mumukṣuḥ ।
sarvātmanā na visṛjed bahir-indriyāṇi ॥
ekaś caran rahasi cittam ananta īśe ।
yuñjīta tad-vratiṣu sādhuṣu cet prasaṅgaḥ ॥

"A person desiring liberation from worldly existence must give up the association of persons interested in sex life and should not employ his senses externally (in seeing, hearing, talking, walking and so on). One should always stay in a secluded place, completely fixing his mind at the lotus feet of the unlimited Supreme Lord, and if one wants any association at all, he should associate with persons similarly engaged." (ŚB. 9.6.51)

Oh, seekers of liberation! Please understand this valuable truth: a moment of association with those desiring sense gratification is enough to destroy our spiritual lives. We should constantly remember Lord Kṛṣṇa and try to spend time in solitude. We should abandon the association of

any person who engages in enjoying sensual pleasures and if we desire to have company, then we should find a devotee who is attached to the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. We should be always cautious, and even a moment of being inattentive in our endeavor can bring so much havoc in our lives.

After some years, Saubhari Muni thought as follows, "First I was alone. Then I expanded to fifty wives and then to hundreds of children." Being disgusted, he left his family and accepted the renounced order of life. When his wives realized that he had left them to become an ascetic, they also left home and went with him. After performing severe penances, Saubhari Muni left his body and his wives faithfully entered the fire along with him. He enacted his life in this way, just to teach us a strong lesson: unless we are able to remember Kṛṣṇa in all situations, we will fail in controlling our mind, which eventually would bring us to the regretful position of falling down.





Top - Sei RaasMandap. Below - Sei - Brahma Baavri





Top - Chhatikra - Garuda Govinda Temple.
Bottom - Chhatikra - Garuda Govinda Kund



Top - Jaint - Naag Pokhar.
Bottom - Jaint - Kaliya Naag Statue



Sunrakh - Saubhari Rishi Ashram

Chapter 37
Seī

Once, in the forest grove of Vṛindāvana, Śyāmasundara organized a forest feast with His cowherd friends. They were dressed in colorful garments and sat surrounding Him from all sides. Kṛṣṇa sat in their midst wearing His majestic yellow garments and looked very beautiful. He appeared just like Indra, the radiant king of heaven, surrounded by so many gods, or like the golden center of a golden lotus surrounded by so many beautiful petals.

On account of being in the forest, the cowherd boys did not have suitable vessels to place their food. They were, however, very innovative and used big leaves and sat down to enjoy the opulent, tasty preparations. As they were eating, one cowherd boy suddenly placed a morsel of food in Kānāi's mouth. He truly relished this loving exchange more than the food itself! Kānāi wanted to share His blissful experience. He looked at the cowherd boys and said, "Brothers! Let us taste each other's delicacies. All of you can help Me to determine which is the best preparation." All the cowherd boys agreed proclaiming simultaneously, "Let it be!" While feeding each other with the morsels of their own food, they amused themselves by telling jokes and laughing at each other.

Subal again pushed another morsel in Kānāi's mouth. After eating the morsel of food, Kānāi pretended to be so full that He cannot eat anymore and burped quite loudly. All the cowherd boys who had morsels in their mouths also burped loudly which caused everyone to laugh even more. One cowherd boy said to Kṛṣṇa, "Yaśodā-nandana, listen! How could

anyone, whose maternal grandfather is a fool know anything about taste? That is why You are not experienced in distinguishing between flavors!" Later on, Śyāmasundara asked His dear friends for the remnants of their food and snatched it from their mouths and ate it with delight!

gvalan kar te kaur chhudavat ।
jhutho let saban ke much te, apne mukh hai lāvat ।
khatras ke pakvān dhare sab tāme ruchi nahi āvat ।
ha ha karke māng let hai, kahat mohi ati bhāvat ।
yah mahima vah pun jānat jāhe āp batāvat ।
'sūrashyam' sapnehu nahi darsat munijan dhyan lagāvat ॥

Observing this pastime, Brahmā was totally bewildered and thought as follows: "How could Kṛṣṇa, who was snatching and relishing the remnants of food from the cowherd boys, be the Supreme Lord!" His mind refused to believe it and to further examine the situation, he captured the cowherd boys and the calves and hid them in a cave.

Then, to enact a different pastime and to give pleasure to the mothers of the captured cowherd boys and calves and to fulfill their long-cherished desires, Śyāmasundara expanded Himself in the forms of those cowherd boys and calves. In this way, many gopīs and cows became Gopāl's mother and they showered even more love than usual towards their children. Thus, Kṛṣṇa protected the cowherd boys and calves who were His parts and parcels for one year. This pastime is called *vatsa-pālan* (protecting the children and calves).

Meanwhile, after hiding the cowherd boys and calves in a cave in Brahmaloka, Brahmā came back to Braja. When he saw that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were still playing with the cowherd boys and calves just as before, Brahmā became perplexed. He thought, "Śyāmasundara must have brought back those cowherd boys and calves from Brahmaloka where I have hidden them." After thinking in this way, he returned to Brahmaloka to confirm his reasoning. He saw the cowherd boys and calves there just as he had left them. Brahmā came back to Braja and saw Nanda-nandana playing with the same cowherd boys and calves. Brahmā was completely baffled and thought thus: "Are these cowherd boys and calves playing in Braja real (in Hindi: *sahi*) or are the ones that I have hidden in Brahmaloka real?" Therefore, the place of this pastime is named Seī.

Those who have a wavering or skeptic mind become proud. In order to free Brahmā from his perplexity, Kṛṣṇa withdrew His illusory potency

and revealed His inconceivable opulence to Brahmā. After seeing Kṛṣṇa's immeasurable divinity and supremacy, Brahmā came to his senses. By Kṛṣṇa's mercy, Brahmā realized the truth and it cleared his deeply bewildered state of mind. He was able to open his eyes and see Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Lord. Brahmā also observed the splendor of the beautiful plants and groves of Vṛindāvana blossoming in the spring!

sapady evābhitaḥ paśyan diśo 'paśyat puraḥ-sthitam ।
vṛindāvanaṁ janājīvya- drumāktīrṇaṁ samā-priyam ॥

"Then, looking in all directions, Lord Brahmā immediately saw Vṛindāvana before him, filled with trees, which were the means of livelihood for its inhabitants and which are equally pleasing in all seasons." (ŚB. 10.13.59)

yatra naisarga durvairah sahāsan nrumugādayah ।
mitrānī vājitā vāsad drutaruṭ tarsha kādikam ॥

"Vṛndāvana is the transcendental abode of the Lord, where there is no hunger, anger, thirst or so on. Though naturally inimical, both human beings and fierce animals lived there together in friendship." (ŚB. 10.13.60)

Brahmā sincerely glorified Gopal Kṛṣṇa. When the mind is afflicted with analysis and pointless logic, it brings false pride of knowledge. The pastimes of Braja are beyond such logic, more auspicious than the pastimes of Vaikuṇṭha. Five-headed Śiva with his five mouths and one thousand-headed Śeṣa with his thousand mouths are always absorbed in glorifying Kṛṣṇa. The Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, Śrī Hari lying in the Kṣhīrodaka ocean and Dharma's son Nārāyaṇarṣi, are always absorbed in the service and adoration of the Lord of Goloka, Kṛṣṇa. One, who circumambulates Kṛṣṇa, gets the same reward as one who visits all the pilgrimage sites of the world and in addition, after leaving this body, enters the most blissful and divine eternal Goloka.



Top - Sei - Gyan Kund. Bottom - Sei - Brahma Kund

Chapter 38
Devī Ātasa (Aśokavana)

Hearing the infant crying and the news of the birth of Kṛṣṇa's younger sister Ekānshā, terrified Kaṁsa immediately rushed to the prison, where he kept his sister Devakī. He was surprised to see a female child because he was expecting that her eighth child would be a son, as it was foretold. This fact did not stop cruel Kaṁsa from snatching the baby girl from Devakī's hands, and trying to crush her on the stone. Escaping from his hands, the female child appeared in the form of the eight-handed Goddess Bhāgavati, who loudly laughed and said, "O fool! Who are you to kill me! The one who is going to kill you is already born in Braja." Because of āthas (loud laughter), this place is named after Goddess Ātasa.

According to *Braja-bhakti-vilāsa*, this forest is known as Aśokavana.

Prayer Mantra for Aśokavana

krīda vānara ramyāya, vruksha aśoka manorame ।
sītā vāsa vrukśaśrestha, saukhya rūpāya te namaḥ ॥
(Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"O Aśokavana! You are densely populated with Aśoka trees and are enlivened by so many playful monkeys, as you are glorified and blessed on the account of Sītā staying in your shelter. I offer my obeisance to you."

Prayer Mantra for Sītā-kuṇḍa

jānakī snāna sambhuta tīrtharājāya te namaḥ ।
nīla pīta kallolāmbha parmokśa svarūpine ॥

(Bra.Bha.Vi.)

"O Sītā-kuṇḍa! King of all pilgrimage! You, who have manifested from the waters from Sītā bathing here. The color of your water is a combination of yellow and blue, thus producing the greenish color of Sītā's beloved Lord. I offer my obeisance to you, as you award liberation."

Varāhara

eī varāhar grame Varāha rupe te ।
khelālā kṛṣṇa priyā sakhār sahite ॥

Once, Kṛṣṇa, very passionately, enacted one of His pastimes in the form of Varāha. Thus, this place is named Varāhara.

Ātasa

The village of Ātasa is named after Aṣhṭavakra who stayed here. It is four miles away from Vṛindāvana. Here, Aṣhṭavakra witnessed and cherished Kṛṣṇa's enchanting pastimes.

Mānt

During Kṛṣṇa Lila, *mānts* (clay pots) were made here for mother Yaśodā. In Braja, Mānt is the pitcher shape container used to fill water. *Mānt* also indicates the large earthen vessel, which is specifically used to churn the yogurt. Here, *mānts* were made in huge quantity to supply to all the gopīs.

Mānt, one of the principal forests in Braja is recognized as Balarāma's favorite area for herding His cows.

banśīvaṭa baiṭhe hain nandlāl ।
bhayo hai madhyāhna chāka kī viriyān, apanī gaiyā chaiyā lai āvo brajabāl ॥
gvāl maṇḍalī madhya virājata, karata paraspara bhojana gopāl ॥
'āsakaraṇa' prabhu mohana nāgara, saba sukha rasika rasāl ॥

Chānharī

Chānharī village, also known as Bijauli, is near Bhāṇḍiravana. After playing various sports with His young friends in the burning sun, when Kṛṣṇa desired to rest, He sat down here and relaxed in the shadows of the dense trees. Because of the shadows (*chanh*), this village is named Chānharī.

sakhā saha śrī kṛṣṇa bhāṇḍīre khelāiyā ।
bhunje nānā sāmagrī e chāyāye basiyā ।
e hetu chānharī nām grām eī hay ।
yamunā nikaṭa grām dekh shobhāmay ॥



Devi Atas - Mansa Kund - Sita Kund

Chapter 39
Śrī Bhāṇḍiravana

In Śrī Bhāṇḍiravana, Kṛṣṇa enacted charming, intimate and blissful pastimes with His friends. It is a place which destroys all evil thoughts and invites an auspicious dawn of delight to manifest in the core of our hearts. This place creates a special kind of enthusiasm to manifest, like a stream, because of the potency of the pastimes that took place here.

It is unimaginable that the Abode of all mystic power, the unconquerable Supreme Almighty was defeated here! By whom? By some young cowherd maidens! It was a daily routine for Kṛṣṇa to engage in wrestling with His strongly built cowherd friends.

But One day, Kṛṣṇa started playing His flute with the sweet nectar from His lips. His lips were glowing red as the early rising sun. The beautiful cowherd maidens saw that someone else had been snatching their share of the divine nectar from Kṛṣṇa's lips for a long time and they became quite jealous. In the company of the exquisitely beautiful and pleasure-loving Rādhārāṇī, Who spread an amazing fragrance more attractive than a grove covered by divine and heavily scented creepers, all of these damsels rushed to Bhāṇḍiravana.

The Queen of this forest was welcomed by melodious sounds from hundreds of cuckoos, which were intoxicated from the nectar of the mango-blossoms. Rādhārāṇī approached Her beloved and humorously asked Him, "Please tell Me what kind of sports you and your cowherd friends engage in here?"

Kṛṣṇa thought that it would be better to choose a sport in which Rādhārāṇī and Her friends were not experts. In such a sport, He could easily defeat them. Kṛṣṇa smiled and thought for a while and replied looking at Rādhārāṇī and Her friends, "I daily wrestle here with My cowherd friends and so far, every day, My victory is proclaimed!" Lalitā, who is an expert in sports, sarcastically said, "O Tribhaṅgī! (one whose posture is bent at three places; legs, waist and neck), You can hardly even stand straight! What do You know about wrestling?" Kṛṣṇa said, how dare You insult me? If You don't believe me, then I challenge You to wrestle and find out for Yourself." Lalitā said, "As we all accompany Rādhārāṇī, You can wrestle with whomever You choose."

These beautiful maidens of Braja had delicate bodies, but that day, instead of their voluminous skirts, they put on garments suitable for wrestling. To start the game, Lalitā raised her hand. Śrīji signalled and the expert leader innaguarated the sport.Both wrestlers applied various tricks like revolving, gliding, tossing, raising, establishing, overthrowing etc. As soon as a new opportunity arose, Kṛṣṇa changed the strategy. But on that day, He was not competing against ordinary wrestlers. These accomplished wrestlers easily overwhelmed Him! Occasionally the gopīs, in order to



Bhandir Van - Balaramji







Top left - Vamshi Vat - Shyam, right - Venu koop. Below - Bhandir Vat

raise the moral, would shout, "Bravo! Bravo! Very good! Do not let go of that blackish wrestler! Hail to Rādhārāṇī! Victory to Radhe!" Kṛṣṇa did not just wrestle with one gopī alone, but all the gopīs. Alas! He was defeated by each of them! It appeared to be the day for Him to lose. That day, Kṛṣṇa, who was usually invincible, had to accept defeat. He appeared like a child amongst the stout gopīs in wrestling.

***tere biraja me gaiyā bahut hai pī pī dudha bhayi patiyā* ।**
***braja mañdala deśa dikhāya rasiyā* ॥**

Kṛṣṇa was most embarrassed after His crushing defeat. Śrīji and all Her companions were teasing Him. While narrating this nectarean pastime, in his humility, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī paid homage to Bhāṇḍiravana in his *Braja-vilāsa-stava*.

In the *Varāha Purāṇa*, as well as famous book *Bhakti Ratnākara*, glorify Śrī Bhāṇḍiravana with a detailed description. According to the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Pralambāsura was liberated in Bhāṇḍiravana. Here, Pralambāsura lost his life at the hands of Kṛṣṇa.

In Bhāṇḍiravana, the cool soft breezes carried aromas from different kinds of lotuses like Kāṅhār lotuses and blue Utpal lotuses etc. After Kṛṣṇa's birth, the daughter of the Sun, Yamunā, overflowed in joy and appeared like an ocean. The rows of trees, drinking water through the roots, appeared as though they bowed down at the sandy beach of Yamunā to talk to her. On the bank of the Yamunā, the trees were so dense that they would not let the Sun rays even touch the sand of Braja. Again and again, the peacocks, rabbits, flock of cuckoos and swarms of bees, in their own language, asked Kṛṣṇa to come to the forest. Kṛṣṇa came to Bhāṇḍiravana surrounded by His friends, who had so much love for Him. They took-off the precious jewels and necklaces He wore and in their place adorned Him with colorful beads made of yellow precious stones and red soil. They even decorated Him with fruit garlands of guava and a dress made from bunches of grapes and say "Kānāi, enjoy these. If you feel hungry, you can simply eat them!"

Cowherd Rattak gave Him a an ornament of green peas. Cowherd Varuthap gave Him a fancy bracelet made of Kadli fruit.

To cherish Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in the forest, many gods disguised themselves as young cowherd boys to go there and glorify the controller of the world with prayers. The Lord of the Universe engaged in endearing

innocent activities like tugs of war, wrestling, frog jumping, hide-and-seek and running competitions in Bhāṇḍiravana. He was acting as an ordinary boy with His cowherd friends. The younger cowherd boys, hanging from the hands of older boys, enjoyed the swing play.

evaṁ tau loka-siddhābhiḥ krīḍābhiś ceratur vane ।
nady-adri-droṇi-kuñjeṣu kānaneṣu sarassu ca ॥

"In this way Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma play all sorts of popular games as They wander amongst the rivers, hills, valleys, bushes, trees and lakes of Vṛindāvana." (ŚB. 10.18.16)

Thus, on the bank of the Yamunā river in Bhāṇḍiravana, Kṛṣṇa played with His cowherd friends amidst the high and low slopes, groves, and small lakes. Pralambāsura also bracelet made of Kadli to be delivered by Kṛṣṇa. The tall and strong blackish Pralambāsura, disguised as a cowherd boy, came here, joined the group, and desired to play with them. Kṛṣṇa never says no! He always accepts a challenge. Kṛṣṇa said, "Today, we will be divided in two groups." Some boys joined Kṛṣṇa's assembly along with Pralambāsura and some boys joined Dāujī 's group. The rules of the game were such that each member of the loosing team would have to carry a boy from the winning group on their shoulder.

In ancient times, there used to be a huge tree in Vṛindāvana with very long branches crossing the Yamunā river and reaching Bhāṇḍiravana that acted as a bridge for the cowherd boys. The losing team had to carry the winning team on their backs to this tree.

vahañto vāhyamānāśca cārayantaśca godhanam ।
bhaṇḍirakam nāma vatam jagmuḥ kṛṣṇa purogamāḥ ॥

"Thus carrying and being carried and pasturing their cattle-wealth, they, led by Sri Krsna, reached to a banyan tree named Bhāṇḍiraka." (ŚB. 10.18.22)

Kṛṣṇa's team lost the game to Dāujī 's team. Each member of Kṛṣṇa's team had to give a ride to the boy that they had lost against. Kānāi could not carry the weight of his rider, so before reaching the destination, He caused the rider to fall down several times. He asked for some time to take rest before continuing. These cowherd boys were so fond of Kānāi that they enjoyed even falling down from Kānāi's back. Kānāi even tucked in in His yellow garment so securely as if He was going to carry the whole world

on His back. He placed both hands on His hips and took long breaths. He said, "Let us go, it is only little further." Again, they lifted the riders on their backs and commenced walking. The strongly built Pralambāsura was carrying Balarāma on his shoulder. Dāujī was much stronger than His brother, so Pralambāsura was planning to kill Dāujī first and then kill Kṛṣṇa.

Pralambāsura managed to take Dāujī away from the rest of the group, but could not carry Dāujī very far. He began to fly and gradually transformed into a dreadful black monster. Initially, even Dāujī was frightened seeing this dreadful giant, but He immediately remembered His own strength and struck the monster's head with a almighty blow. Only one blow was enough to deliver Pralambāsura, who fell unconscious to the earth. Now, all the young cowherd boys applauded Balarāma, the deliverer of Pralambāsura. They placed Him in their laps, patted Him on His back, embraced Him joyfully, and hailed His victory, "Hail to Dāujī , the deliverer of Pralambāsura!"

This place is very important. Also, here one can find the Matsyakūpa, the well in which Viṣṇu had incarnated as the fish Matsya.

Prayer Mantra for Bhāṇḍiravana

catur daśāvatārāṇām lilodbhava svarūpiṇe ।
nānādravyod bhavasthāna namo Bhāndīra sangyike ॥
(*Matsya Purāṇa*)

"O Bhāṇḍiravana! You are sanctified by fourteen different incarnations and also produce numerous ingredients which are necessary for Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, I offer my obeisances to you."

Prayer Mantra for Asibhānda tirtha

manortha varade tīrthe asibhānda hridāvhaye ।
namo gopyajalālhāde tīrtharāja namostu te ॥
(*Skanda Purāṇa*)

"I offer my obeisances to the holy place named Asibhand whose preserved water gives joy and awards one's desired boon."

Prayer Mantra for snāna and ācamana at Matsya well

catur draśāvatārāṇām janmanyutsava varddhine ।
dugdho fānamayodbhūta matsya kūpa namostute ॥

"I offer my obeisances to Matsya's well, which looks like milk foam and where the appearance days of the fourteen incarnations are celebrated and glorified."

Bhāṇḍiravana is also the most sacred place where Brahmā performed Rādhā-Mādhava's wedding ceremony which is described in detail in the chapter entitled *Vivāha-līlā* of this book.

Chapter 40
Bhadravana

Some people believe that Bhadravana is located near Tumeragāon, while others recognize Bhadāval as Bhadravana. Thus, there are two distinct Bhadravanas, just as there are two distinct Banśivaṭas, Chīrghāṭs and Kayiadahas. *Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*, citing purānīc sources, identifies Bhāṇḍīravana as a village north of the Yamunā river where trees are no longer present.

According to *Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*, forty-eight forests are clearly described in an eighty-four *kośa* of Braja. Among them 12 *vanas*, 12 *upavanas*, 12 *prativanas*, and 12 *adhivanas* are identified. In *Padma Purāṇa*, twelve forests are described in the northern and southern direction of the Yamunā River and Bhadravana is one of them. The presiding deities of these forests are specified in the *Brahmā Nāradiya Purāṇa* as indicated below.

Mahāvana - Halāyudha, Kāmyavana - Gopīnātha, Kokilavana - Naṭavara, Tālavana - Dāmodara, Kumudavana - Keśava, Bhāṇḍīravana - Śrī Dhara, Chhatravana – Śrī Hari, Khadirvana - Nārāyaṇa, Lohavana - Hṛṣīkeśa, Bhadravana - Hayagrīva, Bahulāvana -Padmanābha, Belavana - Janārdanā.

Prayer Mantra for Bhadravana

bhadrāya bhadra rupāya, sadā kalyāna vardhane
amaṅgala chchhide tasmai, namo bhadra vanāycha

"I offer my obeisance to the most auspicious Bhadravana which always increases good fortune and removes all misfortune."

Prayer Mantra for Bath and Sip in Bhadra-sarovara

yajña snāna svarūpāya, rājyā khaṇḍa pada prada
tīrtharāja namastubhyam, bhadrākhya sarase namaḥ

"I offer my obeisance to Bhadra-sarovara, the king among places of pilgrimage, who is sacrifice and charity personified."

Prayer Mantra for Bhadreśvara Mahādeva

bhadreśvarāya devāya, sarvadā shubha dāyine
namo bhadra svarūpāya, vāmadeva namostute

"I offer my obeisances to Bhadreśvara Mahādeva, Lord Śiva, who is auspiciousness personified, and who always bestows beneficial results."

Pātravana

dvāparasya yugasyānte rājā karṇo bhavatsudhīḥ
dhātūnāṃtu caturṇām sasvarṇa rukmaprabhrutināṃ
tāmrakāṃsyadvayoścaiva pātraṇi ca cakāraha
ghṛta śarkara godhūma tila pūrṇāni tūrya ca
sadravyāṇi dvijātibhyo dadau dānamanuttamaṃ
angirātri bhāradvāja kaśyapebhyo praṇamya ca
yasmāt pātrabanam nāma vikhyātaṃ prathivītale
(Braja Bhakti Vilāsa)

At the end of Dvāpara-yuga, lived one one magnanimously famous king, Karna, who was a big donor. He had *patras* (vessel) made of gold, silver, copper and *kānsā* (mix of all metals). He gave those vessels, full of butter, sugar, milk, sesame seeds etc. in charity to great *ṛṣis* like Aṅgirā, Atri, Bharadvāja and Kaśyapa, with prayers. That is why this place was named *patravana*.

Prayer Mantra for Pātravana

sarva dhātu maya sthāna swarna bhumi namostute
ratna garbha namastubhyam pātra sthala namostute

iti mantra śatāvṛtyā namaskāram samācaret ।
pātradānaphalam lebhe puṇyam koṭiguṇam phalam ॥
yathā śaktyā karoddanam catuṣpātraṃ sadhātukaṃ ।
catuṣpātrādi dhānyam ca dvijebhyo savidhānata ॥
sarvān kāmānavāpnoti sahasraguṇitam phalam ॥

"My obeisances to you, O place full of all glorious metals. O Place of gold !
The place with many precious jewels, place of vessels, my obeisances to you !!"

Here if one recites this mantra 100 times, one can get the fruit of giving that same elaborate charity. A person who gives all these materials in these four described metal vessels as charity, according to their ability, to *brāhmaṇas* get all their wishes fulfilled.

yatra karṇo mahātyāgī nityasnānam cakāra ha ।
suvarṇanirmitam kuṇḍam nīlāmbhaḥ kamalānvitam ॥
yatra snāthvā karoddanam daśbhārasuvarṇakaṃ ।
māghakārtika yo ścaiva pakṣayorubhayorapi ॥
dāna kuṇḍo bhavedatra puṇyam koṭiguṇam phalam ॥

The great renouncer, Karna used to come here, every year during the months of Māgh and Kārtika to bathe daily. Afterwards he distributed charity of gold (10 bhār). As a result, the name of this kuṇḍa is D*ān-kuṇḍa* (*dān* means charity). This kuṇḍa was made from gold and beautified with so many blue lotuses.

Prayer Mantra for Dān kuṇḍa

sarvākshaya pradastirtha dānakuṇḍa namostute ।
sadeha karna mokshāya namah pāpa pranāshine ॥
iti mantram dāshāvrutyā majjanāchmanair naman ।
saklevara jivātmā vaikuntha padam āpnuyāt ॥

O Dān kuṇḍa! The giver of imperishable boons, my obeisances to you. You are the one who liberated Karnā. O destroyer of sins!"

If we recite this mantra when sipping or bathing and praying, we can go to Vaikuṇṭha.

Prayer Mantra for Karna darśana

karnāya dāna rupāya kauravāya namostute |
sarva kalmasha nāshāya muktido mukti murtaye ||
iti mantram samuchchārya panchabhih pranati varaet |
muktibhāgi bhavelloko darśānnātra samśayah ||

"O great renouncer Karna! My obeisances to you! The one who is here as an idol, You are the destroyer of mental distress. You are the deliverer of liberation. If one recites this mantra five times while praying here, then without any doubt, just by having *darśana* one can get free from this world."

In this way, the glory of the origin and significance of Pātravana have been described.

Belavana

The daughter of the Milk Ocean, Goddess Lakṣmī always resides on the chest of the Lord, but to experience the essence of a gopī's emotions, she took shelter of Braja-raja, the dust of Braja.

yarhy ambujākṣa tava pāda-talaṁ ramāyā
kṣaṇaṁ kvacid araṇya-jana-priyasya
asprākṣma tat-prabhṛti nānya-samakṣam añjaḥ
sthātuṁs tvayābhiramitā bata pārayāmaḥ

"O lotus-eyed one, the goddess of fortune considers it a festive occasion whenever she touches the soles of Your lotus feet.

(ŚB. 10.29.36)

śrīr yat padāmbuja-rajaś cakame tulasyā
labdhvāpi vakṣasi padaṁ kila bhṛtya-juṣṭam
yasyāḥ sva-vīkṣaṇa utānya-sura-prayāsas
tadvad vayaṁ ca tava pāda-rajaḥ prapannāḥ

"Goddess Lakṣmī, whose glance is sought after by the demigods with great endeavor, has achieved the unique position of always remaining on the chest of her Lord, Nārāyaṇa. Still, she desires the dust of His lotus feet, even though she has to share that dust with Tulasī-devī and indeed with the Lord's many other servants. Similarly, we have sought the dust of Your lotus feet for shelter." (ŚB. 10.29.37)

Even the beautiful Braja gopīs repeatedly said that Lakṣhmī is always eager to be blessed with the dust of Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

dhanyā aho amīālyo govindāṅghry-abja-reṇavaḥ
yān brahmeśau ramā devī dadhur mūrdhny agha-nuttaye

"O friends, the dust of Govinda's lotus feet is so sacred that even Brahmā, Śiva, and the goddess Ramā take that dust upon their heads to dispel sinful reactions." (ŚB. 10.30.29)

Considering the immeasurable value of the dust of the lotus feet of the Divine couple, it is said that this is the very dust which was smeared on the heads of Brahmā, Śrī Lakṣmī and even on the dusty matted hair of Śambhu, in order to be freed from sins.

O! How can there be sin in the great virtuous Maha-Lakṣmī?
O! How would there be sin in Śiva, who is the destroyer of all sins?
O! How could there be sin in Śrī Brahmā the creator of this world?

Yes, sin certainly resides in them too. Brahmā and Śiva have committed sins in their male forms.

vṛndāvana rās rachayo, shiv gopī banker āyo
bhole ban gaye nar te nār, rate ja radhe radhe
radhe albeli sarkar, rateja radhe radhe

Until Śiva became a gopī, he could not appreciate Kṛṣṇa's dance with the gopīs in the festival of the Ras (Divine dance performed to please the Lord in a servitude mode). Brahmā also could not access the hard to obtain, blessed dust from the gopīs's feet.

śashti varsh sahastrānī, pura taptam mayā tapah
bhaktya nanda Braja strina, pād renup labdhaye

Brahmā performed austere penances for sixty thousand years to relish this true essence. What is the sin of Goddess Lakṣmī? To not be able to relish the spirit and great opulence.

According to Brihad Vāmana Purāṇa

To eradicate their sins right from the roots, Brahmā and Lakṣmī smear their heads with the dust from the lotus feet of the Divine couple. To obtain this Divine dust, Lakṣmī performed severe penances for a very long time in Belavana. She abandoned all other desires and took shelter of Brajaraja, the dust of Their lotus feet. She perfected her penances here, so Belavana is the land for perfection of penance.

jayati teh dhikam, janmanā vrajah
shrayat indira sāśva datra hi
dayit drushyatam, dikshu tāvkā
stvayi dhrutasava stvam vichinvate

"The gopīs said: O Lord, because of your birth in this land of Braja, this land has become extremely glorious and thus Indirā, the Goddess of Fortune, always resides here. O beloved Lord ! It is only for Your sake that we, Your devoted servants, maintain our lives. We have been searching everywhere for You, so please show Yourself to us." (ŚB. 10.31.1)



Bel Van - Laxmiji Temple

Chapter 41
Śrī Mān-sarovara

There are many sublime tales related to this place. Lord Shiva attaining the gopi form, the past time of Srimati Radha Rani's transcendental jealous mood subdued by Kṛṣṇa and the Holī festival, took place here. Mān sarovar is also identified by the name- 'Rādhārāṇī'. Lord Śiva and 'Āsuri muni'- both obtained the forms of gopīs here.

The story of Lord Śiva and Āsuri Muni attaining the gopi form -

In Nārada hill, Āsuri Muni, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, meditated on the beautiful form of the Divine couple for 60,600 years. The power of penance is nectarean if internalized, and cause of death, if engaged in sense gratification.

God has two distinct forms:
1. The Divine form
2. Kāla (Death)

For the people engaged in sense gratification, He is death personified but for the devotees, who have withdrawn themselves from material attachments, He is realized as the Divine Supreme Lord.

bāhya-sparśeṣv asaktātmā vindaty ātmani yat sukham
sa Brahmā-yoga-yuktātmā sukham akṣayam aśnute

"Such a liberated person whose mind is not attracted to material sense pleasure but is always in trance meditating on Supreme, enjoys the pleasure within. In this way the self-realized person enjoys unlimited happiness, for he concentrates on the Supreme." (*Gītā* 5.21)

Kṛṣṇa guaranteed that if we become a self-realized devotee, then in the advanced stage, we will surely attain Him. The materially detached Āsuri Muni meditated for 60,600 years. He had the vision of Supreme Lord residing in his heart every day. One night, although sincerely trying repeatedly, he could not see the Lord in his meditation. Longing for the Lord, and in great distress, he went to Badrikāśramā. However, even there, he could not see the Lord in Nara-Nārāyaṇā form. With the power of his penances, he departed for Lokāloka's mountain. Alas! Lokāloka was also deprived of the presence of Śasānan (Śeṣa). When he enquired from Lord's associates regarding the whereabouts of the Lord, they expressed their unawareness of the Lord. Then, he went to Śvetadvīpa, which is adorned with Kṣīra Sagar, but even there, the lap of Śeṣa was vacant (the Lord was nowhere to be seen).

When Āsuri Muni could not find Nārāyaṇa in Śvetadvīpa, he traveled to Vaikuṇṭha. He was struck with dismay, when he didn't find Nārāyaṇa and Goddess Lakṣmī even there. With the power of his meditation, he arrived at the eternal abode of the Lord, Goloka. Even there, he could not find the divine couple in the pleasure groves of Vṛndāvana.

Then, the Lord's associates said, "O Muni do not be distraught. Our beloved Lord Kṛṣṇa has gone to the universe where He incarnated as Lord Vāmana; where, once upon a time, He also incarnated as Pṛṣnigarbha." Now this great *muni*, with the strength of his penances, promptly arrived at Kailāsa and saw Lord Śiva (Śambhu) in deep meditation. Śambhu always meditates on Kṛṣṇa's relishable pastimes.

Paying his respectful obeisances, the Muni said, "O Śambhu! I have traveled all over this universe, but I could not find the Lord anywhere. Kindly tell me where is He? Lord Śiva said, "O Āsuri Muni! you are blessed. In this world, only they are commendable who desire earnestly to see Lord Kṛṣṇa. One who desires anything apart from discussions about Lord Kṛṣṇa is inanimate, like an animal. At this very moment, where the Lord incarnates as Vāmana and Prishnigarbha, in the same holy Brahmāṇḍa, He in His full-blown form, is dancing with herd girls in the rāsa festival. That is why He cannot be found in any other Brahmāṇḍa at this time. Just now I was desiring to go there and you arrived."

Āsuri Muni prayed to Śambhu to allow him to accompany him. Both left Kailāsa and arrived at the banks of the river Yamunā. The entire bank of Yamunā was endowed with full of unfathomable bliss.

The splendor of the groves of the forest, witnessing this arena of rāsa-lila, appeared to be praising itself. The holy and radiant moonlight falling in this rāsa-lila arena, sings the glories of its own good fortune while suffusing the entire forest with soothing illumination. The female gatekeepers, holding golden batons, were patrolling vigilantly.

The female gatekeepers stopped Lord Śiva and Āsuri Muni from entering saying "Obeying Kṛṣṇa's orders, we, millions of gopīs are protecting the entire Vṛndāvana. Here, Sri Kṛṣṇa is the only enjoyer. Hence, your entry is restricted. Only gopīs are allowed to enter this arena."

Hearing this, Lord Śiva and Āsuri Muni, humbly requested the gopīs to let them go and witness this pastime just once. The gopīs mercifully gave them a solution, "If both of you take bath in this Mān-sarovara, you will obtain the beautiful forms of gopīs and will easily be able to see Lord Kṛṣṇa." Then both of them took bath in this Mān-sarovara and attained beautiful bodies similar to the Braja gopīs. This pastime is not only described in many *purāṇas* but all Brajavāsīs also sing about this glorious pastime.

vrindavan rās rachāyo shiv gopi ban ke āyo
bhole ban gaye nar te nār bhaje jā rādhe rādhe
rādhe albeli sarkār rate jā rādhe rādhe

After attaining the transcendental gopī form, Lord Śiva and Āsuri Muni entered the arena of rāsa-lila. That grove, adorned with vines of Mādhavi, was decorated with many kinds of fragrant flowers.

yamunā ratna sopān tolikābhih virājite

"The splendor of the banks of the daughter of the Sun God, Yamunā, defeated the brilliance of lightening. Both Lord Śiva and Āsuri Muni became blissful witnessing the beauty of this transcendental forest of Vrindavan, that defeated the beauty of heavenly gardens. The pristine blue water of Yamunā was radiant like blue sapphire. The gracefully decorated gopīs stood at the shore along with flocks of their maidservants, ready to perform Rāsa." (Ga.Saṁ.Vṛ.Kh. 24.10)

Meanwhile, these two new gopīs approached the majestic Divine couple, the Lord of Rāsa, Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Goddess of Rāsa, Rādhārāṇī. Both these gopis witnessed the beauty of most delicate couple.

Anyone whose heart has even a faint appreciation of the inconceivable and boundless sweetness of this couple having bluish and golden-yellow complexion, is most fortunate. Even Śruti, Sarasvatī, and thousand-hooded Śeṣa cannot fully comprehend or describe the splendor of this most attractive bluish form of this youth from Braja, who appeared just like a newly born cloud wearing a silky yellow garment. One who is the object of meditation, one who eternally roams in new groves, whose luster defeats the splendor of gold, that Srimati Radharani's undescribable transcendental effulgence drowned the two gopis in the bottomless ocean of eternal happiness.

vamsidharam pitpatam vetra panim manoharam
śrīvatsankam kaustubhinam vanmala virajita

Both Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa, moved as gracefully as swans in this glorious amphitheater and approached a throne bedecked with jewels. Kṛṣṇa was wearing a glistening silky yellow garment, with His flute glowing in His reddish lotuslike hand. In His other hand, He had a charming herding-stick. His chest bore the mark of Śrīvatsa and Kaustubha jewel, which had an extraordinary luster. A lovely garland of fragrant forest flowers, reaching His knees, is swaying from His bluish neck. (Ga.Saṁ.Vṛ,Kh. 25.17)

karna nupoor manji kanchi keyur bhushitam
hār kankan bālārk kuṇḍal dvayam manditam

Kṛṣṇa stood in an elegant dancing pose, an angular posture bent at the leg, hips and neck. On his feet He wore golden anklets containing tiny ornamented bells that resounded sweetly. On one side, dear Kṛṣṇa with the hue of a newly formed cloud, was standing and on His left was His beloved Rādhārāṇī, whose appearance was more dazzling than the lightning. Each limb of the Divine couple was adorned with splendid jewels that tinkled with various musical vibrations.

The ringing anklets on Rādhā's lotus feet sounded like a group of bumblebees buzzing near the whorl of a lotus. Her waist-belt had small bells that resounded like a group of flamingos. The bangles on Her lotus hands were jingling melodiously. On Her fair, soft cheeks swayed beautiful golden earrings bedecked with pearls. A most fragrant garland with the most intricate combination of various colorful flowers, which appeared to

be smiling, decorated the beautiful upper part of Rādhārāṇī's body. (Ga. Saṁ.Vṛ.Kh. 25.18)

Delightfully absorbed in beholding the beauty, Āsuri Muni and Mahādeva started glorifying the Lord.

kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa maha yogīn, deva deva jagat pate
puṇḍerīkākṣa govind garuḍa dhvaja te namaḥ
janārdan jagannath padmanābh trivikrama
dāmodar ṛṣikesh vāsudeva namostu te

Prayer meaning – "O Lord Kṛṣṇa! You are the supreme personality of Godhead. You have appeared in the home of Nand maharaj to remove the burden of the earth, killing the demons, and for the welfare of the saints."

One should certainly chant these glories of the lord in this place. These prayers are bestower of everlasting benedictions.

Satisfied with their devoted glorification, the Lord of all Rāsa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa declared, "O, Śambhu and Āsuri, you performed intense austere penances for 60,600 years without any material desires. Such renounced devotees are more dearer to Me than my own life. Now both of you can ask for any boon from Me." Showering Her boundless mercy, graceful Śrījī also said, "Yes, yes, Śyāmasundara is right. Both of you may ask for any boon or anything you may desire." Then, together with folded hands, Śambhu and Āsuri Muni started offering prayers with great respect and deep adoration:

namo 'stu bhūman yuvayoḥ padābje
sadaiva vṛndāvana-madhya-vāsa
na rocate no 'nyam atas tvad-aṅghrer
namo yuvābhyāṃ hari-rādhikābhyām

"O Emperor and Empress of all rāsa, our respectful obeisances unto You. Your generosity has obliged us to ask for a boon. We wish to eternally reside in Vṛndāvana. Be merciful upon us and grant us this boon." The Divine couple, being fully pleased by their devotion, said, "So be it, and granted them permanent residence in Vṛndāvana." (Ga. Saṁ.Vṛ.Kh. 25. 21, 22, 30)

nikuñja-pārśve puline vaṃśīvaṭa-samīpataḥ |
śivo ‹pi cāsuri-munir nityaṃ vāsaṃ cakāra ha ||

From then on, Mahādevajī is eternally residing in the form of Gopeśvara Mahādeva near Vaṁśīvaṭa, the banyan tree where Kṛṣṇa used to play His flute. Even today, Gopeśvara Mahādeva's temple is located here and worth seeing. This is the old Vṛndāvana. (Ga.Saṁ. Vṛ.Kh. 25.32)

Prayer Mantra for Mān-sarovara

manoratha siddhi rupāya, sarse mānsāhavye
namaste tirth rājāya, dev vaimalya rupine

Śivaji's desire was fulfilled at Mān-sarovara., The king of holy places, Mān-sarovara, which fulfills all desires, is very sacred.

Mān līlā

Chāchā Vṛndāvana Dasa has narrated the mān līlā, the pastime of transcendental jealous mood of Srimati Rādhārāni, at Mān-sarovara, in a verse as follows:

puni puni lāl bhānvare let
ko jaane īhī mān sarovar tat bhule chit chet

Mān-sarovara is very dear place of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He comes here again and again. He sometimes come to play Holī with Rādhārāṇī or to pacify Her, when She is in transcendental jealous mood or just to see Her.

mānasar sobhā sanghat māi |
jahān kachhu hot mān ko sambhram nāgri gehet bhurāi |
avani amal tahān pratibimbit gire tan pe chhāi |

Once, the Divine couple was sitting here. Since this land is enriched with shining gems and jewels, Kṛṣṇa's blue reflection fell on the fair complexion of Rādhārāṇī and Her fair reflection fell on Kṛṣṇa's bluish body. Just by seeing this reflection, Mānini Radharani became transcendental jealous.

so piya mukur māhi jab lakhiyat tub hut karat mahāi |

Sriji inquired, “O beloved Kṛṣṇa, who is this girl that I see on your chest.” Observing Her innocence, He gently said, ”My dear beloved, there is no other gopī, it is Your very own reflection that you are witnessing on My body.” But Sriji is very innocent. She asked “How do I believe You?”

Then Kṛṣṇa, quickly thought of an explanation which will convince Her. He responded, “O Radhe, I will put a garland on You and it will appear in the reflection on my body. Then You will understand that it is none other than You standing by My side.” Sriji said, “Yes, I will believe then.”

Kṛṣṇa immediately put a garland made of forest flowers on Rādhārāṇī. As the garland reflected on His body, Kṛṣṇa inquired, “Didn’t I tell You the truth, Rādhe? Now observe, when I remove this garland from Your neck, it will also disappear from the reflection as well.” After saying that, Kṛṣṇa removed the garland from Rādhārāṇī and instantly the garland disappeared from Her reflection. Now, the most innocent and beautiful Rādhārāṇī relinquished Her sulkiness.

jab ur kusum dām ur morat mān chor vasi jāi

When Śrījī was convinced that it was Her own reflection, then, the thief named sulkiness ran away from the courtyard of Her heart. Once again, the Divine Couple harmoniously engaged in other sweet pastimes.

tab ras rang badat-badat chhinn-chhinn prati kunj subhag thal āyi /
sir ke teer latā nij mandir keli karat mann bhāyi /
“vrindāvan” hit roop jāon bali ali drig vānchhit pāyi /

Holī Līlā

Sri Kṛṣṇa worshiped Rādhārāṇī at Mān-sarovara, by disguising Himself as Her female companion. This pastime is also mentioned in “Rādhā Sudhā Nidhi”

kālindī – taṭa kuñja-mandiragato yogīndra vadyatpada jyotirdhyāna paraḥ
sadā japati yāṃ premāśrupūrṇo hariḥ /
kenāpyadbhutamulla sadratirasānandena sammohitā, sā rādheti sadā hṛdi
sphuratu me vidyāparā dvayakṣarā || (Ra.Su.Nidhi 95)

May the supreme knowledge in the form of the two-syllable mantra "Radha", which Lord Kṛṣṇa, with tearful eyes, sitting like a king of yogis in the bowers of Vrindavan by the Yamuna's shore, meditating on the glow of Her lotus feet, overcome with splendid bliss and nectarean love, always chants, appear in my heart at all times.

Sri Kṛṣṇa is sitting like yogis at the banks of Yamunā Ji, in the groves of Mān-sarovara, meditating on Rādhārāṇī. He is chanting "Radha" …… "Radha" …… "Radha" …… and tears of love are flowing constantly from his eyes. Captivated by the mellows of that transcendental love, the golden complexioned Rādhārāṇī, got attracted towards Sri Kṛṣṇa.

In this world, there are many mystical mantras, incantations, and among them, the name "Rādhā: is the foremost, which is also recognized as Paraṁvidyā or Supreme Knowledge. Lalitāji first witnessed Kṛṣṇa, constantly chanting "Rādhā" mantra.

The pastime of Holi is sung in the community gathering of Barsāṇā and Nandagāon. This Holi pastime performed at this place is unique. On Ekādaśī, the Gosvāmī community followers of Sri Rādhā Vallabhajī gather at Mān-sarovara and sing this verse:

(The Rās āchārya Sri Hit Ghanshyām ji wrote the verse about pastimes of Holi at Mān-sarovar)

ṣri lalit nikunj bihārī khelat kunj me /
piya kiye sakhi ko roop sakhini ke punj me /
(Vṛndāvana Hīta Ghanshyamjī)

Kṛṣṇa, adorned with a beautiful skirt with colorful imprints, has decorated himself with fragrant flowers.

Lalitājī, observing this new gopī for the first time, immediately approached Rādhārāṇī and said,

"vahi bārambār rute rut Radha mantra ko"

"Hey Radhe! One new girl is sitting in meditation and chanting Your name with great affection"

Rādhārāṇī asked, "Where is She?" Lalitājī said,

mānsarovar mānjh ari suni nahāi ke /
radha ko jāp jape pāni me jāi ke /

"Oh Radhe! After taking bath in Mān-sarovara, she is chanting your name in there itself"

teri murati sone ki anhavāi ke /
tāko charanodak le dhyān lagāi ke //

She has made a golden Deity in Your image. After bathing the deity, she honors the water that has washed the deity's feet, with great devotion. She worships the Deity in various ways. She offers the most nectarean and delicious dishes and only after serving the Deity, she honors the remnants of the offering.

"teri pratimā pahire kanthi me pohi ke"

She is wearing a small locket of your form which is always close to her heart.

"vanshidhar ki si nāi vanshi bajābai"

Moreover, she plays the flute just like our Kānāi. Her flute's streaming musical melodies is creating contradiction in the qualities of the moving and non-moving living entities."

dhenu chare na chale na kare trinu khandali /

Venu-geet, "The song of Kṛṣṇa's flute" also describes this as:

śāvāḥ snuta-stana-payaḥ-kavalāḥ sma tasthur
govindam ātmani dṛśāśru-kalāḥ spṛśantyaḥ

Using their upraised ears as vessels, the cows are drinking the nectar like music of flute flowing from Kṛṣṇa's lips. The calves, their mouths full of milk from their mothers' moist nipples, stand still as they take Govinda within themselves through their tear-filled eyes and embrace Him within their hearts. (ŚB. 10.21.13)

Śrījī asked, "Lalitā what is Her condition?" Lalitājī said, "Her large, lotuslike eyes are restless and appears just like two dancing humming-birds. Oh, Rādha if You want to bring pleasure to Your eyes, just look at Her once."

jo sukh chāho nainani, to sukh dijiye
chali prema piyush matush pivo pījiye

Hearing this, Śrījī's delicate body was thrilled with delight and She took the garland from Her neck and gave it to Lalitājī. Her lotus eyes were constantly shedding tears of love and they appeared just like lotuses producing pearls. These tears fell on Her elevated breasts.

"sakhi ansh bhujā gati hans chali gaj gāmini"

Sriji walked with the elegance of a female elephant to meet the gopi who is worshiping Her. Arriving at the banks Mān-sarovara, Rādhārāṇī started playing holi with this gopi.

"vāl tamālani beech gulāl urāvahi"

The entire sky became colorful due to the blue, green, yellow and red powders being profusely sprinkled in the Holī festival.

"chāhati bāl tamāl latāni uthāi ke"

Sriji brushed aside the vines of tamāl tree that was causing hinderance in letting the two meet openly. Then both of Them met in such a way that

"manu hem latā lapati nav sānval kanj so"

as-if, a golden vine is embracing a blue lotus. Sriji was mesmerized to witness the beauty of that gopi. She asked,

kaun tiharo nām, kahā tero gāv rī
tai mero mana mohyo rī sakhi sāwrī

"O My dear friend! what is Your name? Where is the blessed land of Your birth? Your extreme beauty has fully captivated My heart."

The new gopī replied,

shyāmā mero nām, gāv jahā nandko
sakhi mere tero dhyān, chakor jyo chanda so

"O My dear friend, My name is Śyāmā and I come from the same village as Nanda Bābā and just like a cakora bird is madly in love with the moon, You are that moon which causes such exceptional love to manifest in My heart!"

At that point, Rādhārāṇī realized that this new gopī is none other than Her beloved Śyāma. After this, the entire group of gopīs went with Them to Vaṁśīvaṭa. They knotted Their beautiful silky yellow and bluish garments together and celebrated Their wedding ceremony with affectionate songs.

Pānigāon

Phani is another name of Śeṣa. As Vasudeva Ji was carrying the newly born baby Kṛṣṇa from Mathurā to Gokula, there was a very heavy rainstorm. To provide an umbrella for baby Kṛṣṇa, Śeṣa Ji joined from here and used His hoods as an umbrella to shelter Him. Over the course of time, the name Phani gāon has deformed into Pāni gāon. Since ancient times, this place is known for its ability to cure deadly diseases.

Chapter 42
Śrī Vṛndāvana

This divine abode of Vṛndāvana is unparalleled, ambrosial, celestial, mysterious, ethereal, and pleasant. That is why, the disciple of the guru of the demigods, Bṛhaspati, the minister in the court of the Yādava King, the dear most friend of Kṛṣṇa, one who is known by the glorious name –Uddhava, also desired to become a tree, a bush, a creeper, a blade of grass, a leaf or a pebble in this divine Tulasī (holy basil) forest, called Vṛndāvana.

āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syāṁ
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhīnām
yā dustyajaṁ sva-janam ārya-pathaṁ ca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-padavīṁ śrutibhir vimṛgyām

(Bha. 10.47.61)

Not only this, Brahmā, who is born from the lotus stemming from the supreme creator, Nārāyaṇa's navel, also declared, "In whatever form, be it as an animal, bird, insect, fly, tree or stone, I wish to be born in this blissful Vṛndāvana. This will be the highest benediction for me."

tad bhūri-bhāgyam iha janma kim apy aṭavyāṁ
yad gokule 'pi katamāṅghri-rajo-'bhiṣekam

(Bha. 10.14.34)

vrindāvanasya saṅyogātpunah tvam taruṅi navā
dhanyam vrindāvanam tain bhaktih nrityati yatra cha

(Bha.Ma. 1.69)

Most auspicious is this twenty koṣas (1 *kośas* = 2 miles) of Vṛndāvana, which is the embodiment of all five attributes of divine love: serenity, service, friendship, parental affection and conjugal love.

Not only Uddhava and Brahmā aspired to reside in this abode, but also Lord Śiva firmly established Himself here in various forms; Gopeśvara at one place, as Brajeśvara somewhere else, as Aseśvara in another place or as Chakreśvara in another.

There is no doubt that this 20 kośa track of land, which adorns the name Vṛndāvana, is the most beloved recreational place for Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma.

vṛndāvanaṁ govardhanaṁ yamunā-pulināni ca
vīkṣyāsīd uttamā prītī rāma-mādhavayor nṛpa

"O King Parīkṣit, when Rāma and Kṛṣṇa saw Vṛndāvana, Govardhana and the banks of the Yamunā river They both enjoyed great pleasure." (ŚB. 10.11.36)

When the Brajvāsis travelled from Mahāvana to Vṛndāvana, witnessing the beauty of the rich, green forest of Vṛndāvana, the most gratifying sight of Govardhana Hill and the exquisite banks of the Yamunā River, great love dawned in the hearts of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. They were delighted with this sight.

Once, Brahmā, the creator of the world, requested Kṛṣṇa to enact His divine pastimes on the planet earth. The Supreme Lord requested Rādhārāṇī to join Him, since none of His pastimes would be complete without Her divine presence. Initially, Rādhārāṇī simply refused to do so. What was the reason? Śrī Rādhārāṇī Herself stated,

yatra vṛndāvanam na asti yatra no yamunā nadi
yatra govardhano na asti tatra me na manah sukham
(Gā. Sā. Go.kh. 3.33)

"How can I be happy where there is no Vṛndāvana, no Yamunā and no Govardhana Hill?" Then, Śṛi Kṛṣṇa sent the entire 84 *kośas* of Brajabhumi, Govardhana and Yamunā to earth from His Eternal abode.

veda nāg krosha bhumi swadhāmnah vṛndāvana hari swayam
govardhanam cha yamunā presh ya mās bhu parī
(Gā. Sā. Go.kh. 3.33)

Today, people consider Braja to be a much smaller place, but as per *Brihad Gautamiya-tantra*, the area of Vṛndāvana has been defined to be 5 yojanas or 20 kośas.

panch yojanam eva asti vanam me deh roopkam

This 20 kośas of Vṛndāvana is manifestation of Lord's body.

Here, we must know, that Śrī Vṛndāvana is not only a place of pilgrimage or merely Kṛṣṇa's own abode,

vrindā vipin ramyāya bhagvad vās hetave
parma alahād rupāya vaishnavāya namo namah
(Padma Puraṇa)

It is the Lord's supreme and dearest devotee. A very enchanting forest. The reason for Lord's appearance on this earth. The place that gives supreme pleasure to the Lord. It will be an offense to consider Vṛndāvana as a mere place of pilgrimage. Kṛṣṇa and His abode are non-different from each other out of which Vṛndāvana is the most glorious amongst all the abodes. Blessed is this Vṛndāvana, blessed is this place, where Lādalījī ("the Pampered One", another name of Rādhārāṇī) Herself is the presiding Goddess.

Why was this place called Vṛndāvana?

Reason 1

According to Brahmāvaivarta Purāṇā, in Satya-yuga, there was a king named Kedar. He was famous for his generosity and devotion. Vṛnda, his illustrious daughter, was a partial incarnation of the goddess Lakṣmī. After receiving mantra initiation of Lord Hari's name from Maharṣi Durvāsā, she performed penance for 60,000 years in this secluded forest. As a result of her severe penances, she accompanied Kṛṣṇa to Goloka and became a most illustrious and fortunate Gopi like Śṛimati Rādhārāṇī. Since this is the place where Vṛndā performed penances for very long time, this place came to be known as Vṛndāvana.

Reason 2

King Kushadhvaja's daughter was Vedavatī and Dharmadvaja's dearest daughter was Vṛndā. Both of them were equally proficient in scriptural knowledge. After practicing strict austerities, Vedavatī attained Lord Nārāyaṇa's grace and was born as Sītā, king Janaka's beloved daughter. Thus, she became the Lord's consort. Vṛndā, too, ardently desired to be Lord Hari's consort, but was married to Śaṅkhacūḍa, a partial incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. Her wish was not fulfilled because of a curse from Maharṣi Durvāsā.

Finally, she also attained Lord Hari as her consort, but she became a plant due to the the Lord's curse and the Supreme Lord himself appeared as a śāligrāma (worshippable form of the Lord as a stone) due to Tulasī's curse. Thus, this is also the land where Tulasī performed austerity. That is why, the sages call this place as Vṛndāvana, because Tulasī and Vṛndā are synonymous.

Reason 3

The presiding Deities of Vṛndāvana are Vṛndā Devī and Govinda deva. This is also the reason why this place is known as Vṛndāvana.

vrindadevi sametāya govindāya namo namah
loka kalmash nashāya parmatma swarupīne

(Br.Bh.Vi.)

Besides this, 'Vṛnd' means group. Venerable Jīva Goswāmījī has written, 'Vrindā avatiti' means who nourishes herd of cows, group of gopīs, groves of trees, vines and so on. This is also clearly stated in Śṛimad Bhāgwatam,

vanaṁ vṛndāvanaṁ nāma paśavyaṁ nava-kānanam
gopa-gopī-gavāṁ sevyaṁ puṇyādri-tṛṇa-vīrudham

There is a forest named Vṛndāvana which is very suitable for cowherds because it is lush with grass, plants and creepers for the cows and other animals. It has nice gardens and tall mountains and is full of facilities for the happiness of all the gopas and gopīs and our animals. (ŚB. 10.11.28)

Reason 4

This place is known as Vṛndāvana because

rādhā shodāsh namna cha vrinda nām shrutau shrutam
tasyah krīda vanam ramyam tena vrinda vanammrutam
(Br.Vai.Kr.Jā.Khā. 17.217)

Out of million names of Śṛimati Rādhārāṇī, sixteen are foremost and Vṛndā is one of those sixteen names. Scriptures also sing glories of this name. This is the place of transcendental pastimes of Śṛimati Rādhārāni, Who also has the name Vṛnda. Hence, this place is known as Vṛndāvana. Earlier, Kṛṣṇa created Vṛndāvana in Goloka, the supreme abode of the Lord, for Śṛimati Rādhārāni's pleasure and manifested it on earth for Their conjugal pastimes.

Our Śrījī is the indwelling potency of Vṛndāvana. That is why Vṛndāvani is one of Her names in Śodāsa nāmāvali (the song of sixteen names of Śṛimati Rādhārāni). More facts are described in *Matsya Purāṇa*, which states:

rādhā vṛndāvanae vane

which means, Rādhā is none other than Vṛndāvana and Vṛndāvana is none other than Rādha, both are one and the same. When a devotee understands that Vṛndā and Vṛndāvana are one and the same, then, there is nothing left to be discussed regarding the glories of this subject matter. In fact, Śṛi Kṛṣṇa never leaves this blissful abode of Vṛndāvana, which is full of transcendental mellows.

vṛndāvanam parityajya pādam ekam na gachhati(padama purān)

Nārada Uvācha

tasmin vṛndāvanae punyam govindāsya niketanamtatseva
kasma kirna tannaiva sthiyate mayā
(Skā.Pu.Mā.Khā.)

or

vṛndāvanae cha govindam ye pashyanti vasundhare
na te yampuram yanti yanti punya krutam gatim.
(Ā.Pu., Vā.Pu.)

Vyasa

Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma is beyond the influence of māyā (the material nature) and kāla (time). The crest jewel of rasik of Vṛndāvana (those who are submerged in exclusive love for Shri Radha Kṛṣṇa), Vyāsa ji has said -

vṛndāvana ki shobha nirkhat mere nain sirāt
kunj nikunj punj sukh barsat harshat sab ke gāt
rādhā mohan ke nīj mandir mahā parlay nahi jāt
brahma te upajyo na akhanditakabhu nahi nasāt
fani par ravitar nahi virāt mah nahi sandhya nahi prāt
maya kāl rahit nīt nutan sadā ful fal pāt
nirguna saguna brahm te nyaro viharat sadā suhāt
'vyās' vilās rās adbhuta gati nigam agochar bāt

vṛndāvanaṁ sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīṛtiṁ
yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyaṁ
prekṣyādri-sānv-avaratānya-samasta-sattvam

"O friend, Vṛndāvana is enhancing the glory of earth as the soil of Vṛindāvana has been graced by lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī. The peacocks dance madly when they hear Govinda's flute, and when other creatures see them from the hilltops, they all become stunned."
(ŚB. 10.21.10)

One gopī said to another, "O dear friend, this Vṛndāvana is even more glorious than the celestial Vaikuṇṭha because it is decorated with the lotus footprints of Śṛi Kṛṣṇa, the son of mother Yashodā, Who is still performing His eternal, novel and transcendental pastimes here."

Pastime of subjugating Kāliya: Kalyadaha, Āditya tīla and Praskandan Ghāṭ

Who knows what Kānāi will do today, having gone to play with the gopas, without His elder brother Balarāma? It was a hot summer and at noon, the sun was directly overhead, except for Kālindī's banks there

was no other cool place around. Kṛṣṇa, along with cows and His cowherd friends gathered at that bank of Yamunā to play. The sand was burning hot and not a blade of grass grew, except for one kadamba tree. It stood alone due to the effect of a few drops that had dripped from the *amṛta* kalash, a pot containing ambrosial nectar. The pot was once kept over this tree for a few moments by Garuḍa, and the tree survived despite the strong poison of Kāliya, a powerful snake that had lived in the Kālindī.

The day was scorching hot and the gopas were thirsty and their cows were also thirsty. Bhadra called out, "Ghosh, Madhu, Maṅgala, Śrīdāmā, let's quench our thirst with the cool waters of the Yamunā." Immediately, all the calves and gopas died as soon as they drank the poisoned water.

(Śṛi Kṛṣṇa witnessed that and said) "Oh! How did this happen? All the boys are lifeless?" Kāliyā lives in Kālindī and this must be due to the ill effect of his poison. That's fine. Today, I will certainly eradicate the poisonous effect from the water of Kālindī."

With affection, He glanced at the dead calves and gopas and they instantly regained their consciousness, as if awakening from a deep sleep. Happily looking at each other they exclaimed, "Oh, Kānāi brought us back to life! Bravo Kānāi ! Bravo!" Kṛṣṇa contemplated, "How do I purify the water of Yamunā? He thought He should have some purpose to enter the water. Suddenly, His face brightened. He had the answer.

Surdāsji has sung about this excuse as follows:

shyām sakhā ko gaind chalāi
Śṛi dāmā muri anga bachāyo gaind parayo kālideh jāi
ghāi gahayo tub faint shyām ki dehu na meri gaind mangāi
aur sakhā jinni moko jāno moso jini tum karau dithāi
jāni bhuji tum gaind girāyo ab dinhe hi banai kanhāi
"sur" Sakha sab hansat paraspar bhali kari gaind girāi

(sursāgar)

All the gopas began to play with a ball by throwing it from one gopa to another. Kṛṣṇa caught it and threw it to Śrīdāmā, who failed to catch it and it rolled down into the water. All the boys demanded the ball from Kṛṣṇa.

Smiling, He climbed up the Kadamba tree, saying, "Śrīdāma, let Me retrieve your ball." When they saw that Kṛṣṇa was ready to jump into the water, all of them became afraid and shouted, "No, no Kānāi, come down, we do not want the ball." But Kṛṣṇa first tightened His belt and flexed His

arms. Then He jumped into the water, which splashed up high, as if to hug Him. Kṛṣṇa now swam down to the bottom of the river.

sarpa-hradaḥ puruṣa-sāra-nipāta-vega-
saṅkṣobhitoraga-viṣocchvasitāmbu-rāśiḥ
paryak pluto viṣa-kaṣāya-bibhīṣaṇormir
dhāvan dhanuḥ-śatam ananta-balasya kiṁ tat

"When the Supreme Personality of Godhead landed in the serpent's lake, the snakes there became extremely agitated and began breathing heavily, further polluting it with volumes of poison. The force of the Lord's entrance into the lake caused it to overflow on all sides, and poisonous, fearsome waves flooded the surrounding lands up to a distance of one hundred bow-lengths. This is not at all amazing for the Supreme Lord who is possessor of infinite strength."

(ŚB 10.16.7)

Giving the sleeping Kāliya a powerful blow, Kṛṣṇa said, "O you, lowest among the rogues, wake up." Frowning in anger, Kāliya rose up, as if ready to engulf the entire universe. His hundred hoods stung Kānāi's delicate body parts repeatedly. The rogue sometimes squeezed Him tightly or tried to find ways to attack Kṛṣṇa.

The gopas stood terrified and absolutely motionless. However, there was no need to worry. After all, the fight is between two fighters of equal caliber. Witnessing these horrifying scenes, some cowherd boys ran with haste and reached Nanda Bābā's palace. Breathless and barely able to speak, they stuttered – Mo....th....er!! Kā....nā....i!!, Kā....li....ndī!!.

hāi hai kari sakhani pukārayo
gaind kāj yeh kari Śṛi dāmā nand mahar ko dotā mārayo
yashumati chali rasoi bheetar tabahi gvāli ek chheenki
thitaki rahi dvāre per thādi bāt nahi kacchu niki
āyi ajir nikasi nandrāni bahuro dosh mitāi
manjāri āge de nikasi puni firi āngan āyi
vyākul bhai nikasi gayi bāhir kahān dhaun gayo kanāi
bāyon kāg dahin khar sukar vyākul ghar firi āyi
khan bhitar khan bāhir āvati khan āngan ihi bhānti
"surshyām" ko terat Janani nek nahi mann shānti

(sur sāgar)

That day, the signs of inauspiciousness also started to appear. Braja's queen, Yaśodā was restless. She went into the kitchen and aunt Tungi sneezed, a pot of yogurt suddenly dropped from the hanging basket without any reason, the sun was beating down like never before, dogs were weeping,. the women's right eye and the men's left eye began to twitch.

All the Brajavāsīs started showing up at Nanda maharaja's palace inquiring about dear Nīlamaṇi (another name for Kṛṣṇa). "O queen! Why are you not speaking? Where is our adorable prince? Dāu is here at home, why has Kānāi gone alone? Where has Kānāi gone?" Kānāi alone was on everyone's mind. There was so much tension in the air. Yaśodā was neither speaking nor listening. She simply ran and followed Kṛṣṇa's footprints, while calling out, "Kānāi, my dear," with tears flowing profusely. Nanda Bābā, Dāu bhaiyā and other brajwāsis followed her. Everyone's heart started pounding realizing that the footprints were leading to Kālidahā. Thay all throbbed with grief and cried out, "What prompted Kṛṣṇa to come here today?"

Fight Between Kṛṣṇa and Kāliya

Yaśodā was lifeless. Tears were pouring from her unblinking eyes which are set on the Kālindī. Although ready to jump in, her friends, the elder gopīs, tenderly tried to give her solace. Dāu bhaiyā stopped Nanda Bābā from jumping in the lake. It was very difficult to ascertain if Nand Bābā still had life air or not. Dāu bhaiyā shook them repeatedly and tried to bring them back to external consciousness. Now, even the ocean of parental affection, Śṛi Kṛṣṇa could not resist. He jumped upon the hoods of Kāliya and danced so intensely that even Lord Śiva, one who performs tāndav (the dance performed at annihilation) holding a trident, was utterly surprised and spellbound.

This pastime took place for another reason also. Once Śrījī was giving dancing lessons to Kṛṣṇa. After learning the fine nuances of dancing, Kṛṣṇa moved around and talked about in vanity, displaying His dancing skills. Śrījī told Kṛṣṇa, "Well, I taught You dancing, and now You are flaunting Your dancing before Me?" Kṛṣṇa said, "Oh! When did I learn from You? I have always known this." Śrījī replied, "Show Me something new if You know so much." Kṛṣṇa contended that one day He would definitely show

Her His skill. That day the time had come and Kṛṣṇa exhibited such a dance over the hoods of Kāliya, that even Lord Śivā was fascinated

taṁ nartum udyatam avekṣya tadā tadīya-
gandharva-siddha-muni-cāraṇa-deva-vadhvaḥ
prītyā mṛdaṅga-paṇavānaka-vādya-gīta-
puṣpopahāra-nutibhiḥ sahasopaseduḥ

"Seeing the Lord dancing, His servants in the heavenly planets, the Gandharvas, Siddhas, sages, Cāraṇas, and wives of the gods arrived there immediately. With great pleasure, they began accompanying the Lord's dancing by playing drums such as mṛdaṅgas, paṇavas, and ānakas. They also made offerings of songs, flowers, and prayers." (ŚB. 10.16.27)

The gods started to shower flowers over Kānāi from the skies. Citraratha, the chief of the Gandharvas, beat a mṛdaṅga, a two-sided drum, Huhu sang, Haha blew on trumpets. Instruments began roaring from all directions. The celestial dance started.

In the Words of Suradāsjī

fan fan prati nirtat nandnandana
jal bhitar yug yam rahe kahu mityo nahi tanu chandana
uhe kāchhni kati pitambar shīsh mukut ati sohat
manu giri upar mor ānandita dekhat braj jana mohat
amaratha kea mar lalanā sang jay jay dhvani tihu loka
'sur shyam' kāli par nirtat āvat braj ki auka

Kṛṣṇā trampled each hood that did not bow down. This most elegant performer started dancing, tapping His feet with the rhythm. All Kāliya's hoods dispersed with blood oozing from them. Suddenly, the whole atmosphere drastically changed. Everyone, being invigorated with new liveliness, was rejuvenated by the sounds of victory resounding from all directions. All people present chanted glories to the victory of the Prince of Vṛndāvana and tears of joy flowed from Yaśodā's eyes. Once again, the Brajavāsīs joyfully sang with great delight.

tac-citra-tāṇḍava-virugna-phaṇā-sahasro
raktaṁ mukhair uru vaman nṛpa bhagna-gātraḥ
smṛtvā carācara-guruṁ puruṣaṁ purāṇaṁ
nārāyaṇaṁ tam araṇaṁ manasā jagāma

"My dear King Parīkṣit, Lord Kṛṣṇa's wonderful, powerful dancing trampled and broke all of Kāliya's one thousand hoods. Then the serpent, profusely vomiting blood from his mouths, finally recognized Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be the eternal Supreme Lord and the supreme master of all moving and nonmoving beings, Śrī Nārāyaṇā. Thus, within his mind, Kāliya took shelter of the Lord." (ŚB. 10.16.30)

kāli deh te nikas kai āyo ri mero bāro so kanahiyā

There are dvādas adityas, twelve suns in a year., who have come Since Śṛi Kṛṣṇā spent a lot of time in waters of Yamunā ji, all the suns came at once to give warmth to little Kṛṣṇā, lest He may catch a cold. Therefore, this hillock, located near Kāliya daha is named as "dvādash aditya tīlā". Next to this hillock is Praskandan Ghāṭ, created by little Kṛṣṇā's profuse sweating due to the heat of twelve suns.

punah anyat pravakshyāmi tat chhrunu tvam vasundhare
kshe praskandanam nām sarva pāp haram shubham.

The supreme Lord enacted many such pastimes in Vṛndāvana. Through these pastimes, He not only imparted spiritual knowledge, but also set an unparalleled example of environmental conservation

For example:

* By subduing Kāliya, He purified the water element
* Killing Tṛṇāvarta, He purified the air element
* Eating the dust of Vrindāvan, He purified to relieve the earth element
* Killing Vyomāsura, He purified the space element
* Drinking Dāvānala, the blazing forest fire, He purified the fire element

"Śṛi Vṛndāvana" is the name of that auspicious track of land that is the center of the childhood pastimes of our Kānāi. Not only was Kāliya subdued here, but Keśī, in the garb of a horse, also came to this enchanting land to attain liberation by Kṛṣṇa's divine touch.

The pastime of slaying Keśī, the Horse

Brajavāsis started running frantically when they saw the demon in the form of a gigantic horse galloping at great speed. Śyāmasundara, wanting to protect the fearful Brajavāsīs, confronted this atrocious man-eating demon. The whinnying Keśī demon dashed towards Kṛṣṇā and kicked Kṛṣṇa's chest with his hind legs. The fight was on…. Mādhav, flung him aside as if a child throws a small pot. In the end, Kṛṣṇā inserted His hand in Keśī's mouth, reaching his abdomen and blocking his windpipe, thus suffocating him to death. In celebration of slaying Keśī, the demigods showered flowers from the skies and cheered: All glories to Keshava, Keśī's death personified!

Vyomāsura's Liberation

Kṛṣṇa also playfully liberated Vyoma who came in the guise of a gopa. Coincidently, Balarāma didn't come that day, so Kṛṣṇa, who is more liberal, allowed him to play with them. Up until then, Vyoma had not committed any sin yet. Vyoma proposed to play a new game, where sheep were to be stolen; he played the role of a thief with some of the gopas on his side. Kṛṣṇa, with some friends, became sheepherders, while others played as sheep. Cunning Vyoma stole the sheep and hid them in a cave, and shut the opening of the cave with a massive rock. All the sheep were stolen from the herd but for two. Even the gopas who were playing the role of thieves were not visible. The sheepherders became alarmed and said, "Kānāi. O Kānāi what kind of protector are you? Look, all our sheep have been stolen and even the thieves are nowhere to be found."

Kṛṣṇa said, "Oh, is that so. Let him come, I will catch him this time." The time had come to end the game. The influence of Vyoma's mystic potency suddenly disappeared and his true monstrous form appeared. Kṛṣṇa threw him to the ground and held his neck tight, immobilizing him. As if this was not enough, He struck him with such blows that within a moment, Vyoma breathed His last.

Being all-merciful, Kṛṣṇa released him from his sinful bondage and granted him a permanent eternal form as a lovely gopa. After this, Kṛṣṇa entered the cave, and simply by affectionately glancing at the gopas, He brought them all back to consciousness. They all began to jump, hugging Him with joy and Toka told everyone how marvelous it was that Kānāi had

so easily killed the demon. Singing and dancing, they all returned home, accompanied by their new friend!

According to Garga-saṁhitā

Once, King Bhimarath of Kāśi did not honor Pulastya Ṛṣi appropriately. The ṛṣi became very angry and cursed him to be born as a demon. However, a saint's curse is actually a benediction. The King begged forgiveness and the ṛṣi mercifully granted a redemption, "Towards the end of Dvāpara-yuga, in the holy land of Braj, you will be liberated by none other than the crest jewel of Yadu dynasty, Śṛi Kṛṣṇa. You will get the liberation that is unattainable even by the mystics." That same Bhimarath, due to offending a ṛṣi, became Vyomasurā. Therefore, one should be even more careful and never commit any offense against the Lord's devotees. (Ga.Saṁ.Mā.Kh. 24)

Kṛṣṇa dāsajī has also said

ye aparādh param pad hu te utari narak me paribo
hari bhaktan so garab na karibo

Nevertheless, Śṛi Kṛṣṇa appeared and liberated Vyoma because of this saint's mercy in the form a curse. In this holy land of Vṛndāvana, our supreme Lord enacted many such wonderful pastimes to liberate demons, who attained these demonic births due to their past deeds, without the use of any weapon. Śrī Vallabhācārya thus said that - Everything is sweet about the Emperor of sweetness! Kṛṣṇa.

"dalitaṁ madhuraṁ phalitaṁ madhuraṁ madhurādhi-pater akhilaṁ madhuraṁ"

Lords of Vṛndāvana

This is only a short description about the pastimes of Śṛi Kṛṣṇa. Now, we will discuss about some saints of Vṛndāvana. We can only briefly discuss some topics about Vṛndāvana, otherwise, the purpose of this scripture will change. In this holy land, there are many self manifested deities, also known as archa avatāras (incarnation of the supreme Lord in the form of a deity), that were worshiped by great devotees. These are bonafide deities.

The Deities are

- Served by Svāmī Śṛi Haridās jī - Śrī Bāṅke Bihārī ji
- Served by Śṛi Hit Harivansh jī - Śrī Rādhā Vallabh ji
- Served by Śṛi Sanātana Gosvāmī ji - Śrī Madan Mohan ji
- Served by Śṛi Rūpa Gosvāmī ji - Śrī Rādhā Govinda ji
- Served by Śṛi Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī ji - Śrī Rādhā Ramaṇa ji
- Served by Śṛi Madhu Gosvāmī ji - Śrī Rādhā Gopīnāth ji
- Served by Śṛi Jīva Gosvāmī ji - Śrī Rādhā Dāmodara ji

The revelation of these worshipable deities by these great devotees form a most interesting history, which will be briefly presented here.

Bāṅke-bihārī, Mahārāj of Vṛndāvana

Svāmī Hari dāsa is considered an incarnation of Lalitā sakhī, one of the close associates of Rādhārāṇī, and he worshiped Bāṅke-bihārī, who truly is Bāṅkā. This word has two meanings: 1) bent and, 2) beautiful.

Normally it is difficult to find someone whose body would be beautiful and bent at the same time, but this Thakur is both. His body, which is attractively bent at three places, at the knee, the waist, and the neck, is amazingly beautiful.

Why did He choose to appear in this form? Although this entire land of glorious Vṛndāvana is worshipable, Śṛi Svāmī Haridāsa specifically paid obeisances daily to this dense Nidhivana forest. Svāmīji, beholding the beauty of this forest with tearful eyes, would sing, smile or even laugh. Even most of his sincere disciples, failing to understand his strange behavior, speculated over this daily occurrence.

One day, gathering courage, they expressed their curiosity to the revered Svāmīji, who then granted them the privilege to have a divine vision of Nidhivana. What did they see? They witnessed the divine conjugal pastimes of Śrī Lādalī-Lālajī(Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa). Everyone lost their external consciousness and drowned in the ocean of ecstasy. Svāmī Haridāsa ji ordered his senior disciple, Vitthal Vipul Deva ji, to bring the water-pot from the arena where Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa were engaged in conjugal pastimes. Vitthal Vipul Deva ji brought the golden water-pot. Svāmīji wanted to prove that the vision of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa was real and not merely a false impression in their minds. As soon as Vitthal Vipul

Deva ji exited and looked back at that arena, there was neither the arena nor Śṛi Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

At that time, Svāmīji started to sing ecstatically, "O dear, the divine pair appeared; fair and dark, as lightning within a cloud!"

"māi ri sahaj jori prakat bhayi jo rang ki gaur shyām ghan dāmini jaise"

(kelimāl)

Svāmīji's senior disciple Śṛi Vitthal Deva ji, enamored with this divine vision, fervently prayed, "O Holy Master! please bless me that I may have divine vision of this pastime daily." The one who is most affectionate for devotes, the reservoir of all good qualities, the most merciful supreme Lord fulfilled his cherished desire. On the fifth day of the waxing moon in the month Mārgasirsa (December-January), Bihārījī, Śṛi Kṛṣṇa, appeared in that same grove in Nidhivana to shower mercy on the devotees. This day is also celebrated as Vihar-pañcamī. Forthwith following the instructions of Svāmīji, Śṛi Vitthal Vipul Deva ji lovingly brought out Bihārījī in his lap from Nidhivana. Hearing the appearance of Bihārījī in Nidhivana, Svāmī Haridāsa ji's glories spread everywhere in no time.

nripati dvār thāde rahe darshan āsā jās ki
āsudhir udyotkar rasik chhāp haridās ki

(bhaktmāl)

Now, many great kings, musicians, *yogīs*, saints, and sages queued up to seek his audience. Even king Akbar came to hear his singing, not caring about his prestige. Once, Parvatapuri, a *sannyāsī*, came to test his realization. He started changing forms, now a lion then a snake, but all his tricks failed to scare Svāmīji, who said to his disciple, "Look, this is sage Parvatapuri. By the grace of God, he has received this human body. He is misusing this mystic power of taking any form and has caused his own downfall by foolishly choosing to transform into animal forms rather than godly form. All these mystic powers are of no use that cause a human being's downfall.

Svāmīji used to religiously follow a discipline of daily serving his dear Thakur, Bāṅke Bihārījī, by offering Him many delicious delicacies, along with sweet and melodious singing. All residual *prasādam* would be fed to the peacocks, monkeys, fish, etc. He would consume only some roasted

chickpeas simply to sustain himself. One day Parvatpuri transformed himself into a peacock to receive some *prasādam* from the Svāmīji's hands. The most compassionate Svāmīji said, "Oh! A new peacock has come today."

By Svāmīji's grace, Parvatapuri realized his mistake in trying to test Svāmīji. Feeling extremely repentant, he bowed down to Svāmīji's feet and begged for his forgiveness. Svāmīji's compassionate love and mercy elevated Parvatpuri's conscience. Svāmīji gave him the name of "Prakāsh dāsa". This clearly demonstrates that mysticism is insignicant compared to devotional practice. Showing mysticism to Svāmīji was just like showing a lamp to the sun. In this way, Svāmīji showered his mercy on numerous mystics and people engaged in fruitive activities (karm-kānd) and made them devotees of the supreme Lord.

Once, Dayaram, a Sārasvat brāhmaṇa, despite being born of a high caste of intellectuals, was infatuated with a philosopher's stone. Even he was freed from his vanity by the mercy of Svāmī Hari dāsā ji. Svāmīji engaged him in the real wealth of the names, forms, pastimes, singing glories of Śṛi Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. That is why Bhagvat Rasik ji said,

pāras so dhan pariharayo sevak akbar shāhi
Śṛi svāmi haridās sum aur batāvo kāhi
aur batāvo kāhi ab vairagya gyān ki
bhakti sumuratimant prem nidhi dashā dhyān ki
nitya vihār ādhār pragat sevā nahi āras
"bhagvat rasik" ananya mile guru poore pāras

Moved by Svāmiji's single-minded devotion, non-hoarding attitude, firm faith in the holy names of the supreme lord and the holy land of Vrindāvan, Svāmī Śrī Hariram Vyāsa ji, a renounced devotee poet of that era, said:

Śṛi kunj bihāri seye bin jin chhin na kari kāhu ke ās
sevā sāvadhān ati jāni sughar gāvat din rasrās
aiso rasik bhayo na hvahe bhuv mandal ākās
deha videha bhaye jivat hi bisare vishva vilās
Śṛi vrindāvan raj tann mann bhaji taji lok ved ki ās
priti riti kinahi sabahi so kiye na khās khavās
apano vrat hati aur nivāhayo jo lau kanth usās
surpati bhupati kanchan kāmini jinke bhāye ghās
abake sadhu vyās humhu se jagat karat uphās

Svāmīji Mastery over Music

The Gandharvas, who are gods and experts in the art of music and dancing, could not compete with his artistic ability. The reason was that his music was for the pleasure of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa only. He never sang for pleasing any mortals or for any material gain. Tansen, a famous singer in the court of King Rāma Bundela, was his disciple and a well-known singer. Baiju Banwara learned this divine art from Tansen. Śrī Svāmīji attained perfection in the fields of music, poetry, literature, and *upāsanā* (devotional service). He produced a collection of 110 poetic gems, a compilation entitled *Kelimāl*.

He was one of our prominent preceptors for imparting the worship of the pastimes taking place in the *nikuñjas* (forest cottage) to the people. His community, popularly known as the Sakhī or Hari dāsa community, has given eight great masters to the world. Their poetic works are still very popular. Śrī Vitthal Vipul Deva accepted Śṛi Bihārīn Deva ji as his disciple.

This was a brief description of the life of Bāṅke Bihārījī's worshiper, Svāmī Hari dāsā ji. For more details, refer to Bhaktamāl, a complete treatise on the life of the devotees from Braja.

Śrī Hita Harivanshjī

Śṛi Rādhā Vallabh ji is the life and soul of Śrī Hita Harivanshjī.
Śṛi harivansh gosain bhajan ki riti sakrit kou jāni hai
(bhaktmāl 90)

May be some very rare and fortunate devotee can understand Śrī Hita Harivanshjī. Once, Śṛi Agradev ācharya ji instructed his disciple Śṛi Nābhā ji to compose the scripture describing glories of unalloyed devotees of Śṛimati Rādhā Rani; Nābhā ji asked how he could understand the pastimes of the devotees that have already disappeared from this material world. Śṛi Agradev ācharya ji blessed him with the benedictions that whichever devotee you want to write about, just meditate upon them and they will appear in your heart and reveal their pastimes. When Nābhā ji desired to write about Śṛi Hit Harivansh ji, he did not appear in his heart as blessed by his guru (spiritual master). When he asked Śṛi Agradev ācharya ji, he revealed that Śrī Hita Harivanshjī is one of the most unalloyed devotees of

Śṛimati Rādhā Rani. He said, "In order to understand Śrī Hita Harivanshjī's pastimes, you will have to first pray at the lotus feet of Śṛimati Rādhā Rani." Śṛi Agradev ācharya ji himself prayed to Śṛimati Rādhā Rani,

"vandau Śṛi Radhika pad padma"

Only after that, Śrī Hita Harivanshjī appeared in Nābhā ji's heart and revlealed himself. Otherwise, a great devotee like Śṛi Nābhā ji was also unable to understand the enigmatic nature of devotional practices and pastimes of Śrī Hita Harivanshjī.

"Śṛi Rādhā charan pradhān hriday ati sudrid upāsi"

One must not misinterpret that Śrī Hita Harivanshjī being an unalloyed devotee of Śṛimati Rādhā Rani, had no devotion to Śṛi Kṛṣṇa,

Śṛi harivansh suriti sunāu
shyāmā shyam ek sung gau
chin ek kabhau na antar hoi
prān su ek deh hein doi
rādhā sung binā nah shyām
shyām bina nahin rādhā nām

(sevak vāni)

Śṛi Hita Harivanshjī worships these two youthful Śṛi Rādhā and Śṛi Kṛṣṇa, but one thing is certain

hit ju ki riti kou lakhin me ek jāne
sṛi rādhā hi pradhān mane pācche sṛi kṛṣṇa dhyaiye

Śrī Hita Harivanshjī

Śrī Hita Harivanshjī resided in Devaband, Sahāranpur district, in the state of Uttar Pradesh. After many years of marriage, when the pious and learned brāhmaṇa couple, Śṛi Vyāsa Miśra ji and Śṛimati Tārā rānī, were bereft of an offspring, they disclosed their distressful condition to his elder sanyāsi brother named Sri Narsimhāshram ji. Out of compassion he said, "If it is in your destiny then you will have a child. Do not worry." On hearing this, Tārā rānī anxiously remarked, "If destiny is supreme, then what is the use of austerity and unfliching devotion?" Hearing this,

Svāmīji entered deep meditation. He fervently prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who appeared in the Svāmīji's vision and declared, "Do not worry. My vaṁśī (flute) will incarnate as a son to Vyāsa Miśra and Tārā rāni." That is why Śrī Hita Harivanshjī is known as the incarnation of "vaṁśī".

On the disclosure of this blissful news, the whole family became ecstatic. Spontaneously, as a sincere gesture of gratitude towards Kṛṣṇa, the couple set off for a pilgrimage to Braja. In Braja, at a place called Bād, the newborn arrived as per the divine plan. He came into this world on an auspicious Monday morning, on the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of Vaiśākha, April, in the year 1530 V.S./1473 AD. After spending some time in this holy place, the couple went back to their home along with their blessed child, whom they named Hita Harivanśa, nicknamed Hitu.

There is a common saying in Braja that a boy shows signs of his character right from the cradle. Śṛi Hita ji mahārāj started displaying his transcendental nature from early childhood. Whenever he heard anyone uttering Rādhā Rāni's name, he danced in ecstacy, chanting Rādhā-Rādhā. He had such spontaneous love for Rādhā Rāni's name.

One day, when his father was worshiping his deities, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, something unusual happened. It appeared to him that Rādhā looked like Kṛṣṇa and vice-versa. He once again dressed up his deities, but still, nothing changed. Intrigued and puzzled, he began to wonder about this strange phenomenon. Suddenly, he heard the sweet glorification of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa from right outside his door. He immediately went outside to find out what was happening. What he saw was just amazing: little Hitu was playing with some children. He had dressed up a dark child as Rādhā and a fairer one as Kṛṣṇa and the same phenomenon had just happened with his deities. His father immediately figured out that his son was no ordinary mortal. He had certainly appeared on earth from some divine plane.

Once, on an auspicious full moon winter night, Śrījī dressed him up in Her own *odhani* (veil) and mantilla (scarf). During Jhulan *utsava*, the swing festival, Lādalī, and Lālajī kept their exquisite clothes and jewelry under his safe custody. Once, Śrījī appeared in his dream at midnight and disclosed the presence of Śrī Rangi Lālajī's Deity in a nearby unused well. Śrījī ordered him to take the deity out and offer regular worshipful service. As the day dawned, as per his dream's vision, he followed the instruction, took a few children along, and went to the specified well. Without any fear, he jumped into the well. Deep below, he saw a blue and golde halo

emanating from the great Śrī Rangi Lālajī. He came up holding Him tightly but tenderly.

By that time, so many people had gathered around the well. Vyāsa Miśra was nervously waiting but the moment he saw his dear son Hitu holding Śrī Rangi Lāla ji, his anxiety vanished and his joy knew no bounds. Thereafter, the deity Rangi Lāla was ceremoniously installed in a temple and given a new name: Śrī Navarangi Lāla. His worship is going on to this day in Devaband.

At the young age of sixteen years, Hitu was married to Rukmiṇī Devi. The couple had three sons and one daughter in due course of time. They were named Vanacandra, Kṛṣṇacandra, Gopīnath, and Sahibde, respectively.

When Śṛi Hita was 32 years old, Śrījī Herself directed him to undertake the unique and marvelous service of revealing to the world Her intimate pastimes in the forest groves of Vṛndāvana. To fulfill Her desire, he readily set off for Vṛndāvana. Crossing rivers, woods, and mountains, he reached a place called Chat-thāval. Atmadeva, a native brāhmaṇa, received a clear instruction from the Lord in his dream to marry both his daughters with Hita Harivansh and present Śrī Rādhā Vallabhājī in dowry. Simultaneously, Śṛi Hita also received the same order.

The next morning, after meeting each other, they shared their divine experience. Due to their unflinching faith and love for the Supreme Lord, they followed the instructions and Hitu ji married the two daughters of Ātmadeva brāhmaṇa and received the deities of Śrī Rādhā Vallabhājī. Hitajī and both wives, Kṛṣṇa dāsi ji and Manohari dāsi ji, seated the most beautiful, most charming, Śrī Rādhā Vallabhā Lālajī, in the bullock-cart and continued the journey towards Vrindāvan. After two months, they reached Madan Ter, on the banks of the river Yamunā ji. At this place he composed Yamunāstakam, eight verses glorifying Yamunāji.

The Brajavāsīs were highly impressed with his sweet demeanor. Narvahana, a wealthy man, offered him land the length of his arrow's reach. His arrow, driven with great force, fell as far as Chīr ghāṭ, where his holiness revealed the Rāsa Mandalā. His deep, spontaneous and transcendental worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in the pleasure groves of Vṛndāvana was exceptional, commendable and the finest. Till today, the daily schedule of loving service comprising of five *āratis* and seven food offerings to Śrī Rādhā Vallabhā Lālajī is religiously followed. Hit Chaturasi is a unique and matchless composition by his holiness, in

which he has revealed the intimate, confidential and blissful pastimes of his guru Śrī Lādalījī.

Harirām Vyasjī says

huto ras rasikani ko ādhar
binu harivansh hi saras riti ko kape chalihe bhār
ko rādhā dulrave gave vachan sunave char
śrī vṛndāvana ki sahaj madhuri kahi he kon udār.

These three personalities, Śrī Hariram Vyāsa, Svāmī Haridāsa, and Śrī Hit Harivansh, are popularly known as Haritrayi or the three Haris. They are highly respected in Braja as great scholarly saints. The four divine places of pilgrimage of Māna-sarovara, Sevakuñja, Rāsamandala, and Vaṁśī-ghāṭ were revealed by Śrī Hit Harivansh. He left this material world on the full moon day of the month of Aśvini of 1609 v.s., 1552 AD. After he entered the realm of divine pastimes, his eldest son, Śrī Vanacandra ji took over the divine service and propagated his father's blissful devotional service of the Lord.

There are three Thakurs of Braja Vṛndāvana where Śrījī is symbolically worshiped as Gādi, a cushion used for sitting:

Bāṅke Bihārījī
Rādhā-Vallabhājī
Rādhā-Rāmaṇajī

Gopal Bhaṭṭa's Śrī Rādhā Rāmaṇajī

Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was one of the main disciples of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He was born in the village Belgundi, near Śrī Rangam, Tamil Nadu in 1557 vs. 1500 AD, on the third day of the dark half of the month of Māgh, to the blessed Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa and Sadambā. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, while on His travels to southern India, had very graciously accepted Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa as His host for four months. Being so attracted by the divine character of Mahāprabhujī, young Gopāl Bhaṭṭa had firmly made up his mind to follow Him, even though he was only a boy of eleven years.

When the four-month period of Chāturmāsya ended, Mahāprabhu ji was set forth to continue his pilgrimage. Śrī Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī pleaded to accompany Him. Mahāprabhu jī instructed him to first serve his parents and in due course join Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana. He diligently followed Mahāprabhu jī's instructions. However, he could not hold himself back upon their demise and came to the holy land of Vṛndāvana to take shelter of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. He had brought his śāligrāma along for daily worship and service.

His spiritual wisdom was quite vast and soon he became one of the honored six Gosvāmīs amongst the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. He studied the Vedic works of literature under the precious guidance of his learned uncle Śrī Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī, a direct disciple of Śrī Mahāprabhu. Śrī Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī vigorously studied various sansktrit literature including logic (nyāya), doctorine of Upanishads (vedānt), grammar, literature, principles and techniques of literary composition and ornamentation (darshan alankār) etc. Mahāprabhu ji was residing in Nilānchalā when he received the news of Śrī Gopal Bhaṭṭa's arrival in Vṛndāvana. He sent prasādam for Śrī Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, comprising of a *tulasī mālā* (rosary), an armrest and *dhotī*, a formal garment, through a visiting Vaiṣṇava from Nilānchalā.

Gopal Bhaṭṭa used to lovingly serve the Lord as a *śāligrāma-śila,* a stone that is non-different from Kṛṣṇa, which he had procured from the river Gandaki in Nepal. He served Them with immense love. But, when he witnessed Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī ji lovingly serving Śrī Govind dev ji deity, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī ji serving Śrī Madan Mohan ji deity and Śrī Madhu Pandit ji serving the deity of Śrī Gopināth ji, he always wondered how he could serve Śri Śāligrāma ji in the same way? How do I decorate my Thakurji? How do I dress Them? How do I put Them to bed? "I don't even know which side is Their head, Their feet? How do They eat, see or sleep?" He felt dejected contemplating.

One day, a rich devotee businessman came to Vṛndāvana to offer new dresses and ornaments, etc., to all the deities in various temples. When he offered dresses and ornaments to Sri Gopal Bhaṭṭa ji for the pleasure of His Thākurji, Gosvāmī ji again started thinking "My Thākurji doesn't have hands or feet or neck or waist, They are simply like a round marble. If my Thākurji also had a form of a deity, I would also have decorated Them with fine clothes and jewelry, drew designs on Their body etc. But how else can I decorate my Thākurji who have this round form. He was like a

ball, with sandal paste rubbed all over and looked at best like a fried gram ball in yellow curry.

Gopal Bhaṭṭa Sang

zulo zulo mere gandaki nandan
jaise kadhi pakodi foryo ese liptyo chandan
hāth na pāv naina nahi nasa dhyān hi hot ānandan
jalandhar aru vrinda vallabh karat koti ho vandan

Kṛṣṇa has also made a promise

ye yathā māṁ prapadyante
tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham
mama vartmānuvartante
manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ

"In whatsoever way, they surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛthā."
(BG. 4.11)

jāki rahi bhāvanā jaisi, prabhu murati dekhi tin taisi

If You can appear from brahmarākṣasa, a demon, for the sake of Nāmadeva, from a pillar to protect Prahlāda, is it any wonder, then, that He could appear in a deity form from a Śāligrāma for Śri Gopāl Bhaṭṭa ji? Once again, he dismally looked at Śāligrāma ji, wondering, "Even if I accept these dresses and ornaments, how will I offer them to You?" But surprisingly, there appeared the most charming Lord, standing in His typical three bending form with a sweet smile, casting a loving glance towards him. As if the Lord is saying, "Come adorn Me with all the articles of your choice to your heart's content." Instantly, he accepted the gifts and happily adorned his Thakur with fine dresses and jewels.

The work titled *Seva Prakatya* dates this event on a full-moon day of the month of Vaiśākha of the year 1599 v.s. April 1656. Therefore, this day is celebrated with great rejoicing jubilation till today. While residing in Vṛndāvana, Śrī Gopāl Bhaṭṭa ji served Śrī Rādhā Ramaṇa ji for 62 years. Once, Śrī Rādhā Ramaṇa ji, obliged with his relentless and unconditional devotional service, Himself went to a trader to free Śrī Gopāl Bhaṭṭa ji from a debt.

Uniqueness of Rādhā Rāmaṇajī

Being smaller than one foot, Rādhā Rāmaṇa looks like a *śāligrāma* only from the back. It is said that viewing of Śrī Rādhā Rāmaṇajī's alone, one gets the grace of all the three deities, Śrī Govinda-devajī, Śrī Gopīnāthajī, and Śrī Madan-Mohanjī. From His waist down to His feet, Rādhā-Rāmaṇajī looks like Madan-Mohanjī, from His waist up to His shoulder, He looks like Govinda-devajī and His head looks like Gopīnāthajī.

Śrī Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was farsighted. He initiated Dāmodara dāsa, a pious married man with a family who was the younger brother of his close disciple Śrī Gopīnath dāsa into the service of Śrī Rādhā Rāmaṇajī. Presently, Munajī, a descendant of Śrī Dāmodara dāsa, is offering his dedicated service in this temple. The same tradition is followed to this day as was started by Śrī Gopal Bhaṭṭā.

Śrī Madhu Pandit's Gopīnāthajī

Madhu Pandit was a native of Bengal. Once, a very strong desire for Kṛṣṇa's audience arose in his heart. He came to Vṛndāvana because he had heard that Kṛṣṇa has declared,

"braj taji anat na jayee ho mohe nand bābā ki ān"
"Braj Vṛndāvana is my only abode."

Even today, one whose heart is filled with the purest love can witness this playful, effulgent, Thakur of Vṛndāvana.

After constantly hearing this from saintly persons, he left Bengal for Vṛndāvana in search of Kṛṣṇa. Due to the pain of unbearable separation from his Beloved, he was behaving like a mad man, often asking for Kṛṣṇa's whereabouts from all creatures, persons, bushes, and creepers. He would say, "Look, over there Kṛṣṇa is playing His flute sitting on that Kadamba tree." He rushed towards the Kadamba tree to catch Him but alas! Kṛṣṇa was not there. Looking around everywhere he would abruptly exclaim, "Oh! He has entered the waters of Yamunā. O Kṛṣṇa… don't play in the waves… You will drown! Please come out!" And he frantically ran to save Kṛṣṇa. "O Keśava… O Mādhava… Oh! He has disappeared from here as well."

He would fall down, roll on the ground, get up after great effort, and would renew his search. He would stop any passer-by and ask, "Brother, have you seen Navnīt Chora (butter thief)?" Someone would send him to one temple and another person would send him to a different temple, but to no avail. He could not find his Kṛṣṇa. Immersed in an ocean of sadness while trying to meet Kṛṣṇa, he was oblivious to thirst and hunger.

One day, sitting at the banks of Yamunā, near Vamsivat, inundated with the ocean of grief in intense separation, he started calling out for Kṛṣṇa. Fully immersed in this overwhelming emotion, all external awareness was lost. The waters of Yamunā was also surging high as if in separation of Kṛṣṇa desiring to meet Him. Suddenly, he was swept away by the turbulent waters. This was indeed the blessed moment when Gopīnāthajī appeared. In order to fulfill his desire, Gopīnāthajī embraced him. Feeling His soft, soothing touch, Madhu Pandit opened his eyes, to find out who was holding him. As soon as he opened his eyes, he immediately recognized and said, "Behold! This is the One who I have been searching for. Wow! How strange are Your ways of meeting! You meet one by drowning in Yamunā and another by rescuing from Yamunā."

Gopīnāthajī asked, "Madhu, tell Me what do you want?" Madhu, pleaded, "My Lord, You still do not know? I only wish to always behold Your divine form." Comforting him, Gopīnāthajī said, "All right, may your wish be fulfilled." Saying so, Gopīnāthajī transformed Himself into a very charming deity and spoke, "You will have My direct association in this form." For Madhu, this Deity is Gopīnāthajī Himself. For almost 40 years, Gopīnāthajī lived with Madhu Pandit, in his cottage near Vaṁśīvaṭā. Later on, in 1589, a courtier of Akbar, Raisāl Shekhawat, built a beautiful temple in red stone, especially for Gopīnāthajī. In those days, India reeled under Mughal terror. The devotees shifted Gopīnāthajī to Kāmyavana in Kaman from Vṛndāvana.

In 1747, King Trilokchand and his queen Bhanumati of Vardhman, Bengal, constructed a massive temple for Gopīnāthajī. That temple was blessed by His presence for 28 years. When Kaman also came under the Mughals' siege, Gopīnāthajī was shifted to Jaipur to sanctify that land also by His divine presence. Other than Kaman and Jaipur, there were seven more temples devoted to Śrī Gopīnāthajī in Rajasthan. The Vṛndāvana temple has two parts; one for Caitanya Mahāprabhu and in the other a deity of Gopīnāthajī has been established.

śrī-bhagavān uvāca
bhakti-yogo bahu-vidho mārgair bhāmini bhāvyate
svabhāva-guṇa-mārgeṇa puṁsāṁ bhāvo vibhidyate

"Lord Kapila, the Supreme Lord, replied: O noble lady, there are multifarious paths of devotional service according to the different natural qualities of the executor." (ŚB. 3.29.7)

Some others maintain that Śrī Gopīnāthajī appeared for the sake of Śrī Paramānanda Bhaṭṭācārya and that the worship was later transferred to Madhu Pandit. All views are correct. Some devotees believe that initially, Mahāprabhu gave the vision of Gopīnāthajī to Madhu's guru, Śrī Gadādharajī, while coming from Puri to Vṛndāvana. Gadādharajī served the Deity very fervently. In his old age, having become a hunchback, it was most difficult for him to dress the deity. Gopīnāthajī, moved by the faith and loyalty of the old pujari, sat down with folded legs in front of him to make it easy for him to dress the Lord. In Puri, people still regard the deity as Tota gopīnath. At the same time, a strong desire to serve Gopīnāthajī arose in Madhu Pandit's heart. Śrī Gopīnāthajī, satisfied with his strong desire, appeared in Vaṁśīvaṭā to bless him.

Once, Jāhnavī, the wife of Nityānanda Prabhu, visited Gopīnāthajī's temple, and while she was there, a thought came to her mind, "If our Śrījī was a little taller, the pair will look much more attractive." That midnight, in a dream, Gopīnāthajī ordered her to install a taller idol of Śrījī beside Him. As the legend goes, Jāhnavī then arranged for a beautiful deity to be brought and merged into Her. She instructed her followers to carry that idol to the temple and install Her beside Gopīnāthajī. Initially, the priest refused, but Gopīnāthajī ordered him promptly to install the idol on His left and to move the earlier one to the right. Immediately, the instruction was followed. As Gopīnāthajī is standing in the middle, Rādhārāṇī, on His left and Lalitājī, on His right, the three of Them are blissfully blessing the devotees.

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's Madan-Mohanjī

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's biography is very comprehensive. It is very difficult to choose some of his life incidences for our topic of discussion.

A concise abstract

Sanātana Gosvāmī was born in 1522 vs. 1465 AD. From a very tender age, he developed a natural monastic propensity. He had forsaken the temporary existence of the world like vomit (*vamanvat*: this expression refers to an utter rejection of material affairs). Later, by the will of Providence, he was serving as prime minister in the court of King Hussain Shah of Gaur, Bengal.

His brother, Śrī Rūpa, had renounced the world even before him, making it unbearable for Sanātana to lead a worldly life. When he resigned from his post as prime minister, he was arrested and put behind bars by the King. But nothing was stronger than his desire to continue his search for Kṛṣṇa. He bribed the jailer with all his wealth of 7,000 gold coins. This was enough to release him. The jailer, in turn, helped him to cross the Ganges under cover of darkness. His dispassionate act of abandoning all opulence was highly laudable.

He met Mahāprabhu in Kāśi at the home of a physician called Candrasekhara. There, he was told to go to Vṛndāvana. Thus, following Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instruction, he went to Vṛndāvana. When he arrived in Vṛndāvana, coincidently, Śrī Rūpa had already left for Nīlācala, Orissa so they couldn't meet each other. After staying and sanctifying the land of Vṛndāvana for some time, he traveled to Nīlācala via Jhārikhaṇḍa. Following the orders of Śrī Mahāprabhu ji, he stayed at Nīlācala for one full year and then returned to Vṛndāvana. Receiving instructions from Śrī Mahāprabhu ji, he undertook the restoration work of many extinct places of pilgrimage and composed many important Vaiṣṇava texts like Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta, Bṛhad Vaiṣṇava Toṣani, Śrī Līlāstava, etc.

One day, a very sweet pastime transpired in Mahāvan While he was engrossed in meditating upon the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he saw a charming, brilliantly radiant, bluish complexioned, twelve-year-old boy gazing at him with a captivating smile. The boy's charm absolutely overpowered him. In a flash of a second, the boy disappeared, but this momentary vision left him crying incessantly wanting to see Him again. With tears rolling down his cheeks, he desperately cried, "Govinda! Ha Mādhava! Ha Keśava!" and fell down to the ground, unconscious. After regaining consciousness, he screamed, "Ha Prāṇanātha, please manifest just once more!" Totally drenched in tears, he fell onto the ground again and frantically began rolling on it. This went on until sleep mercifully took over.

The same charming boy appeared in his dream saying, "Bābā, stop crying." Gently wiping the tears with His delicate, soft hands, the divine boy said, "Go to Paraśurāma Chaube's house in Mathurā and bring Me from there."Sanātanajī's sleep was disrupted, and even before dawn, he set off for Mathurā in great haste. On reaching the town, he was asking everybody where he could find Paraśurāma's house. Someone finally directed him towards a big palatial building, informing him that Paraśurāma's wife was the sole survivor of the family and that she lived there. Fumbling and rolling, he finally reached the main door. What did he see?

Madan-Mohanjī was standing, attentively and patiently listening to an old woman's sweet ramblings. "Madan-Mohan, now that I have grown so old, who will take care of You after I am gone? Who will sing lullabies and lovingly put You to sleep? Who will rub fragrant paste on You and bathe You? Who will lovingly feed You?" He did not wish to intervene in this sweet dialogue, but he certainly had a solution to this problem. So, at one point, he interrupted and said, "Mother, please do not worry, I will look after Him properly." He requested her to leave the Lord in his care. The old woman said, "O Bābā! Why do you wish to ruin your life? From the time He has come to this house, I have been ruined. I had a very prosperous life. Now I am left all alone in this house, I have achieved nothing but this. Here, in this big palace, no one, but He and me are left." Sanātanajī replied, "Mother, I have also been caught in the same condition. I am also left with nothing but for this loincloth on my body. What more do I have to lose?" Thus, he passed the test imposed by the old woman. He took Madan-Mohanjī with him to Vṛndāvana.

As before, he was living the life of a recluse, going for alms only once in 2-4 days, spending all his time in prayer and contemplation. But now, he was worried about Madan-Mohan. He cooked bread from whatever little flour he could get in alms, although he had never cooked before. A few days passed and Madan-Mohanjī suggests, "Bābā, at least add a little salt to this dry, tasteless bread." The next day, Sanātanajī asked for salt along with the flour. Two more days passed and Madan-Mohanjī proposed, "Bābā, if you add a little ghee, then I will easily be able to swallow this thing which you call bread." Then Sanātanajī became a little annoyed, "Prabhu, for Your sake, I have forgotten all about my renunciation, but now, tell me, who is going to give me ghee in alms in this sparsely inhabited forest?"

Madan-Mohan then started thinking of making His own arrangements. This was only His pastime for how can He, who is the cause and support

of all creation, need any material assets? His only purpose was to glorify Sanātana, Therefore, He created a most peculiar situation.

Those were the days when huge commercial vessels used to sail through the deep waters of the Yamunā for trading in distant places. There were many dangerous locations in the Yamunā where powerful waves would rise and drench the entire Braja. There were very dense, lovely, fragrant, floral vines in the forests of Vṛndāvana. Simultaneously, these celestial forests created a background for the Braja gopīs to live happily in these natural, transcendental palaces. Most auspicious was this dense Vṛndāvana, whose ground was beyond the reach of even the sun rays. Such was the beauty of Braja, far beyond the limits of human imagination. Oh… Oh! Our thoughts have now detoured; let us come back to our Sanātana Gosvāmī.

According to His divine plan, a ship belonging to a rich trader, Rāma dāsa Kapoor from Multan, West Punjab (now in Pakistan) was traveling in this area loaded with beautiful merchandise. The ship was caught in a whirlpool near Sanātanajī's location and the trader was in danger of losing the entire cargo and his crew's lives. He was desperately screaming for help but there was not a single soul around in that remote place. Suddenly, he saw some children playing closeby, and one of them, a small and most charming boy clad in yellow attire, shouted aloud, "O merchant, you are in distress! Just call upon Sanātana Bābā and your ship will be saved!" Now, instead of "save me and help me," the name of Sanātana Bābā filled the air, and instantly, the storm subsided. The ship stabilized and began to sail smoothly. Having experienced this miraculous escape, the trader climbed down from the ship and went to that little boy and asked Him, "Son, who is this Sanātana Bābā? Where does he live? Please take me to him." With a gentle smile, the boy pointed to the top of a small hillock and said, "Go there." The trader, without wasting a second, hastily climbed up the hill and prostrated himself before Sanātana Gosvāmī, saying, "Bābā! Bābā! With your grace, I was saved! Please tell me how can I serve you? "

Sanātanajī, unaware of what took place, not able to understand the trader's intention, asked him, "Who has sent you here to this lonely, remote place?" The trader narrated the whole incident. Listening, Sanātanajī, becoming ecstatic and said, "Build a temple for Madan-Mohan, whose grace has saved you today, and also arrange for His daily service." Around the year 1592, the same trader built a grand temple made of red stone for

Madan-Mohanā. Later on, Aurangzeb destroyed part of this temple, which was later rebuilt by King Guṇanandā.

Śrī Purushottama Jana, the son of King Pratāparudra of Orissa, hearing the news of Madan-Mohanjī's appearance in Vṛndāvana, with reverence, sent two beautiful deities from Puri. Śrī Madan-Mohanjī instructed the priest, "The taller of the two deities Lalitājī and the smaller one is Rādhārāṇī, the only reason for my existence. Hence, install Rādhārāṇī to my left and Lalitājī to my right" The priest followed the orders. Even today the deity of Śrī Madan-Mohanjī is in the middle, Rādhārāṇī is to His left and Lalitājī to His right. Sanātana Gosvāmī's meditation place, his samādhi and samādhi of scriptures are located to the west of this ancient temple, which is very pleasing and a must-see place.

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's worshipable deities of Madan-Mohanjī is presently mesmerizing His devotees with His transcendental beauty in Karauli, Rajasthan.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's Govinddevajī

Foreign invaders have tried to slander this pious land repeatedly, either by destroying its temples or by breaking the Lord's idols. Time and again, great souls from His entourage are sent to this holy land to protect its sanctity from such mischievous acts. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī was one of those great souls. At the end of the fifteenth century, Govinddevajī reappeared on this holy soil, on account of His desire, as a transcendental, most charming boy of fourteen years.

Śrī Brajanabha, Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson, after the Lord's ascent to His permanent abode, revealed many places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes on Śandilya Muni's request for the pleasure of the devotees and the benefit of all people. Usha, Brajanabha's mother, having seen Kṛṣṇa in person, acknowledged that Madan-Mohan's feet, Gopīnath's head, and Govinddeva's chest exactly resembled those of Lord Kṛṣṇa. So this is the same, original deity of Govinddeva that Brajanabha installed in Vṛndāvana some 4,800 years ago. Since then, Govinddeva has hidden Himself many times from the eyes of foreign invaders. The present form of Govinddeva reappeared on the request of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī some 500 years ago.

The legend goes like this: During the attacks by the Muslim rulers, the Lord remained buried for a long time. One day, desiring to again manifest Himself and bless His devotees, He chose Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī to perform

this sublime task. Appearing in his dream in the middle of an auspicious night, the Lord thus spoke "Rūpa Bābā! O Bābā, I have been lying buried under the Goma Tīla (hill) for a long time and one cow is daily coming and nourishing Me with her ambrosial milk, but now I desire to come out to relish the association of My devotees. So please dig Me out from the ground and establish My worship." After saying only this much, this most adorable, merciful, and loveable Govinddevajī simply disappeared.

Upon rising in the morning, Rūpa Gosvāmī clearly recalled his dream. It was the auspicious fifth bright day of the month of Magha. He quickly gathered some Brajavāsīs and told them about his dream. Immediately, everybody enthusiastically brought the required implements for digging and started the work. All the Brajavāsīs were perplexed to notice that the land surrounding that area was completely drenched with cow's milk. They were simultaneously anxious to find out which divine ocean was about to appear from that land. In a short while, the enchanter of the three worlds, Govinddevajī appeared in His exquisite majesty, revealing His charismatic beauty to all. Immediately, everyone hailed, "All glories to Govinddeva! All glories to Govinddeva! "

Govinddeva is the Iśvara, Rajarajeśvara, Vṛndāvaneśvara, the Supreme and most sublime master of Vṛndāvana. Śrī Puruṣottama Jana, the adopted son of King Pratāparudrā, had a dream in which Śrījī instructed him "At the place called Chakrabeda in Puri dhām, the devotees are mistakenly worshipping me as Lakṣmī ji. But, I am Radha, the life of the darling of Braja, Kṛṣṇa. I was awaiting this golden moment of appearance of Govinddeva. Now that He has reappeared, send me to be by His side." The instructions were followed with any delay. With the gracious presence of Rādhārāṇī, They became renowned as Śrī Rādhā-Govinddeva.

In the year 1590, King Mān Singh of Jaipur, a disciple of Śrī Raghunath Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, erected a tall red stone temple with a height of seven floors. During the regime of Aurangazeb, in the year 1670, this temple was damaged and its three upper levels were demolished. Before this destruction happened, Śrī Govinddevajī had already left for Jaipur. In the year 1805, the gaudiya devotees installed the deities of Śrī Rādhā-Govinddeva. In the year 1887, Nandkumar Vasu, a devotee hailing from Bengal, established a temple of replica deities of Śrī Rādhā-Govinddeva in Vṛndāvana, where devotees can go to get blessings even today.

Presently, Śrī Rādhā-Govinddeva ji is blessing the devotees in His temple in Jaipur. Amazed with His beauty and divine radiance, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī said,

smerāṁ bhaṅgī-traya-paricitāṁ sāci-vistīrṇa-dṛṣṭiṁ
vaṁśī-nyastādhara-kiśalayām ujjvalāṁ candrakeṇa
govindākhyāṁ hari-tanum itaḥ keśī-tīrthopakaṇṭhe
mā prekṣiṣṭhās tava yadi sakhe bandhu-saṅge 'sti raṅgaḥ

"My dear friend, if you are indeed attached to your worldly friends, do not look at the smiling face of Lord Govinda as He stands on the bank of the Yamunā at Keśīghāṭa. Casting sidelong glances, He places His flute to His lips, which seem like newly blossomed twigs. His transcendental body, bending in three places, appears very bright in the moonlight."

(Bha.Ras.Si 1.2.239)

Gosvāmījī intended to convey the following: "If you really wish to free yourself from the dreadful calamities of worldly affairs, then you must have the audience of this all attractive Govinddeva jī." According to the legends, Sri Govinddeva jī is residing in Jaipur from past 270 years. The devotional books of Vaishnava philosophy composed by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī jī, such as, Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, certainly reveal his sublime, transcendental position.

Each and every particle of Vṛndāvana is filled with Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. If we simply list the names of all the temples of Vṛndāvana, a new volume will be created. And, if we try to describe all the pastimes, a new massive Vedic treatise will be created and it will still not be comprehensive enough to cover all the pastimes. We will, therefore, offer our obeisances to all the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and proceed with our humble work.

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's Rādhā-Dāmodarajī

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī was Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's most dedicated disciple. Due to his unparalleled spiritual knowledge, he was considered supreme among Vaiṣṇavās. His works *Gopāl Champu*, Kṛṣṇa's glories in poetry and prose form, *Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa*, teaching grammar through the Lord's name, *Sarva-saṁvādinī tīkā*, synthesis of all existing philosophies and S*atsandarbha*, six volumes describing the six different aspects of



Top - Radha Govinda temple. Below - Radha Madan Mohan temple





Top- Gopishwar Mahadev. Below - Nidhivan





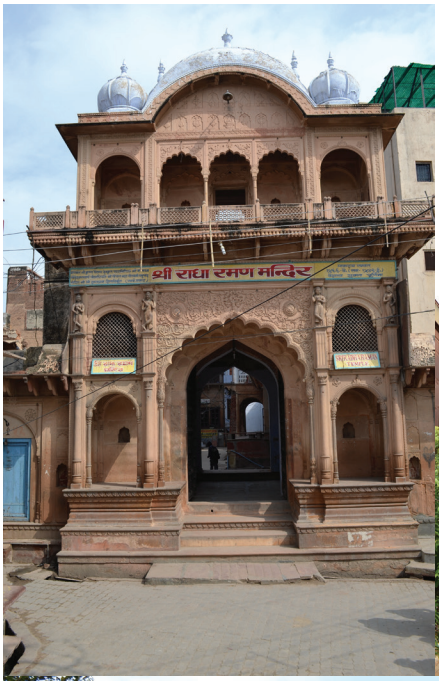
Top - Kaliya Dah. Below - Keshi ghat



Top - Seva kunj. Below - Tatia Sthan



Top - Vamsi vat. Below - Yamunaji







Top - Radha Raman and Radha Gopinath temples. Below - Sanatan Goswami

devotional service, present an introduction to his true grandeur. Up to the age of 90 years, he composed over 400,000 verses.

Having received Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodarajī deity from his holy master Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, he devotedly served Him, attaining a long fruitful life of 125 years. Later, Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodarajī moved on to Jaipur. Presently, a large Govardhana Śilā with various markings is worshiped in this temple in Vṛndāvana and circumambulating this Śilā seven times is equivalent to a Girirāja *parikramā* (going around Govardhana Hill). On this Śila one can clearly see the imprint of Kṛṣṇa's footprint, flute, and stick, as well as a cow's hoof.

Also present in this temple, are the precious bonafide deities of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava jī of Jayadeva jī, Śrī Rādhā-Vṛndāvana Chandra jī of Kavirāj Kṛṣṇa dāsa jī, Śrī Chail-Chikaniya jī of Bhugarbha Gosvāmī jī.

Apart from these deities in Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodarajī, there are many other bonafide deities present in other temples of Vṛndāvana. Such as, Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara jī of Śyāmānanda jī, Śrī Rādhā-Vinod jī of Śrī Lokanath Gosvāmī jī, Śrī Yugala Kiśorjī of Śrī Harirām Vyāsa jī, Śrī Giridhari-Gopal of Mīrābai jī, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇacandra jī lovingly served by Lālā Babu (Kṛṣṇacandra).

The extent of the area of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is quite extensive, therefore the narration of every place in detail is not possible. The entire Vṛndāvana is overflowing with the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's sublime pastimes. Presently, there may be only a few visible forests, but even today, the devotees who are coming here, are getting a taste of this divine ambrosia.

Chapter 43
Bhatrod

Kṛṣṇa often went to Aśokavana to tend cows along with His cowherd friends. Sometimes, when they did not receive their lunch, they pleaded their dear most friend, Krsna, to arrange for some food and satisfy their hunger.

On one such occasion, while going from Vṛndāvana to Mathurā, in a dense forest, the cowherd boys got really hungry and pleaded Krsna, "Brother Kṛṣṇa, it seems that we will soon be dying from hunger. We cannot tolerate it anymore. Please quickly arrange for some food." Kṛṣṇa replied, "Some brāhmaṇas are performing a huge religious sacrifice in a nearby place. Please go there and ask them for some food." Because they were quite hungry, they immediately went to the *brāhmaṇas* and asked them for some food. But being ignorant of the glories of Kṛṣṇa, those *brāhmaṇas*, who were simply attached to perform ritualistic activities, did not give them any food. The boys returned empty-handed and disappointed. After they informed Kṛṣṇa what had happened, Kṛṣṇa first instructed them that those who beg to maintain their life should not expect to be successful at every attempt. He then told them to go to the wives of those *brāhmaṇas*, who would definitely fulfill their desire.

The wives of the *brāhmaṇas*, having already heard about the sweet nectarean beauty of Kṛṣṇa, did not need to be convinced. So, against the will of their husbands, they gave the cowherd boys varieties of succulent dishes and went with them to see Kṛṣṇa. Srila Jīva Gosvāmī said that the wives of the brāhmaṇas, having already heard about Kṛṣṇa's enchanting and glorious pastimes from the female vendors of wild fruits and flowers, had developed immense love for Him. Simply by hearing about Kṛṣṇa, their eternal love for Krsna had awakened. They were completely mesmerized upon seeing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Krsna said to them, "Dear ones! Now that you have fulfilled your desire to see Me, you should dutifully return

home, so that your husbands may complete their sacrificial ritualistic ceremonies."

But who would want to accept such a proposal and leave, after enjoying the sweetness of the magnificent divine beauty of His form? Therefore, Kṛṣṇa told them:

yushmākam tu prabhāvena patayo vo dwijātaya
sadhyo yajnaphalam prāpya yushmābhi saha nirmalā
gamishyanti param dhama golokam prakrute param
atha natvā hari sarva ājagmur yagna mandale

"By the influence of your pure devotion, your husbands, along with you, will attain My eternal divine abode of Goloka Vṛndāvana, which is beyond these material worlds. So now, return to them." Following Kṛṣṇa's instruction, these wives unwillingly returned home. Their husbands, upon seeing their wives, who were overwhelmed and shining with a divine effulgence and radiance from seeing Kṛṣṇa, started cursing their ill-fortune as they had been deprived of seeing as well as rendering service to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa." (Ga.Saṁ. Bhā.Kh. 21.18-19)

The main reason why the cowherd boys were not able to obtain food from the brāhmaṇas, was because Kṛṣṇa wanted to shower His grace upon their wives. Bhatrod, who witnessed Kṛṣṇa's divine and purifying pastimes, even today gives tremendous joy and delight to the visiting devotees, by reflecting upon its ancient glory.

Prayer Mantra for Bhatrod

brahmā yagyāya tirthāya yajñapatni krutāya cha
yajña patni manoramya susthalāya namostu te

"O most holy place of pilgrimage, where the impersonal ritualistic brāhmaṇas realized their foolishness by seeing the purity of their wife's devotion. Because of their purity, you are so charming and beautiful. I offer my obeisances to such a beautiful place of pilgrimage."

Chapter 44
Akrūra Ghāṭ

Prayer Mantra for Snāna And Ācamana in Akrūra Ghāṭ

viṣṇu-loka pradāstīrtha mukta akrūra pradāyine
krushne kshana prasādāya namaste viṣṇu rupine

"O Akrūra Ghāṭ! O most wonderful place of pilgrimage! O you, who bestowed liberation upon Akrurajī! O Viṣṇu personified! Awarding us a place of residence in Viṣṇu-loka! We offer our obeisances to you to grant us the ability to see and please Kṛṣṇa."

On Kaṁsa's orders, When Akrūra Ji arrived at Braja to summon the beloved of the cowherd girls and boys, Sri Krsna to Mathura, and conveyed this message to them; they were stunned and appeared lifeless. They were consoled repeatedly but how can one live when deprived of the very source of life. The residents of Braja somehow held their life air together and spent their time longing for Sri Krsna waiting for His return.

Akrūra departed with Kṛṣṇa and reached the bank of the most sanctifying and purifying river Yamunā. Akrūra, desiring to take bath, entered her water and was utterly bewildered to see that both brothers, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, were also standing in the waters of the Yamunā. Akrūra, looking back in the direction of his chariot, saw that Kṛṣṇa was still sitting there. Diving again into the water, he saw Him comfortably lying down on the bed of Ananta Śeṣa and His thousand hoods. Akrūra, understanding the mystery of his vision, began to offer his prayers to the Supreme Lord. This very place came to be known as Akrūra Ghāṭ. (Brā. Bhā.Vi.)

namaste vāsudevaya namaḥ sankarshnāya cha
pradhumnāy anirudhāya sātvatām pataye namaḥ

"Obeisances to You, Lord of the Sātvatas, and to Your forms of Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddhā." (ŚB. 10.40.21)

Lohavana

Lohavana was where Jarāsandha fought with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. After they heard that Jarāsandha had arrived in the proximity of Mathurā to fight with them, they came out and defeated him at Lohavana. Brajavāsīs recognize the place with a different name but in reality, it is the place of the defeat of Jarāsandhā. The lake is known as Surya-kuṇḍa This place links Kṛṣṇa's various pastimes as described in Mahābhārata, with His pastimes in Braja, and acts as a seed for the forthcoming pastimes in Dvārakā. (Brā. Bhā.Vi.)

Prayer Mantra For The Place Where Jarāsandha And Army Were Defeated

kṛṣṇa vijayine tubhyam surya kuṇḍa samahya
namastetīrtha rājāya, sarva kalmasha nāshane

"I offer my obeisances to Surya-kuṇḍa, king of all pilgrimage places, where Kṛṣṇa was victorious."

Loha Jangha Ṛṣi, Prayer Mantra for Loha Jangha Ṛṣi's murti

loha jangha rushe tubhyam namāmi parameshvaram
vināshāya yamālokam sarvadā kuru mangalam
loha patre dhrutam dhrutva dīp danam sama charet
mantram tridha sammucharya namaskar yantra charet
kadachid naiva tasyati yama dutasya darshanam
vajra tulyām bhavet kay stri lok vijayi bhavet

"O Lohajangha Ṛṣi! O great devotee of the Lord! We offer our obeisances to you. Please free us from having to go to Yamaloka and always continually award auspiciousness and good fortune upon us."

If one chants this prayer three times respectfully, while bowing down, during the lamp offering, then one will never see the messengers from Yamaloka. The chanter's body will become as strong as the *vajra*, Indrā's weapon, enabling him to conquer over the three worlds.

Rudra Yāmal

Here, a *ṛṣi* by the name of Lohajangha performed severe penances for a long time. About 2028 years ago, according to the Vikram Samvat, he was blessed with a vision of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He received a boon from the Lord and went to the eternal, divine Vaikuṇṭha. The gods established the deity of Lohajangha Ṛṣi here. Just by respectfully observing the deity, one gets liberation.

Suradāsjī has written that in Lohavana, there is a blackish idol of Loha Jangha Ṛṣi, a great sage. So many people mistakenly identify this place as Loha asurā. But that is incorrect because this place was named Lohavana after Loha Jangha Ṛṣi. He underwent most severe penances here to attain shelter in Braja. So many forests are named after the *ṛṣi*s. Just like Mahāvana is named after Maha Ṛṣi, Lodholi, named after Lodhāng Ṛṣi, and Mādhava village is named after Markandeya Ṛṣi.

Prayer Mantra for Lohavana from Vāyu Purāṇa

loha janghān sammuta kalā kashtha svarūpine
sarva vādhā vimuktāya namaste loha sangyake

"O Lohavana! All glories to you, whose name originated from Lohajangha Ṛṣi, who is the personification of the perfection of all arts and who was residing here. As you are freeing us from all afflictions, we offer our obeisances to you."

Tārāpura

This place is named after Tāra, Rādhārānī's close friend who participated in the Maharāsa, Kṛṣṇa's most celebrated pastime of dancing and singing with millions of gopīs in Vṛndāvana. Tārāpura is located at a short distance from Gokula and Kṛṣṇa used to come and play various pastimes in nearby villages. One pastime was Kuṇḍuk krīdā.

Here, Kṛṣṇa attracted a gopī named Tārā with His charm, even though she was placed under strict guard. It was very difficult to approach her because she was staying on the third floor and was under strict surveillance. Kṛṣṇa decided to show her a favor and went to her alley, playing Kuṇḍuk krīda, accompanied by the cowherd boys, who were making a festive commotion. Tāra, after hearing the uproar, climbed up to the roof, peeped down, and saw the most beautiful and attractive blue boy who, on the pretense of playing with a ball, was playing with her heart! What an astonishing and beautiful sight to behold!

Sundar badan sadan kī shobhā nirakh nayan man thākyoan rī thākayo/
Hoan ṭhāḍhaī bīthin he nikasyo uzaki zarokhan zākyo rī zāankyo /
Mohan ek chaturāī kīnhī geanda uchhār gagan mis tākyo /
Vārayo rī lāj bairin bhaī mokūan mean ganvār mukh ḍhāankyo rī ḍhāankyo /
Chitavan mean kachhu kar gayo mo tan man n rahat kyoan rākhyo rī rākhyo /
'sūradāsa' prabhu sarabas lai gaye hansata-hansat rath hāankyo rī hāankyo /

One gopī told her friend, "I am mesmerized by seeing the most beautiful, opulent, soft and bright lotus face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I was sitting at home and Śyāmasundar passed by playing with his ball. I heard voices, so I looked out of my 2nd floor window. Just then, Śyāmasundar threw the ball in the air. While he was looking up, I looked down and we saw each other. By habit I covered my face with my veil but I nevertheless received a glimpse of His beautiful loving eyes and I became stunned in happiness. Surdāsaji explained that by the gopī seeing the mesmerizing smiling face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa while He was playing with a ball, she lost her consciousness.

Nandi-Bandi

This is a very famous area of Braja, but at the present moment, it is known as Śakti-pīṭha, a place of worship for goddess Durgā. It is not known when this transformation took place. In ancient days, this was a meeting place for Rādhārāṇī and Her friends. Bandi, as well as Anandi, are Her friends. Once, at Śṛṅgāraśilā, situated on Govardhana's mountain, Rādhārāṇī was adorned by all of Her followers and many great goddesses. (Ga.Saṁ.Vṛ.Kh. 20.10)

tatakam yugalam bandi kuṇḍale sukha dayinī
ānandi ya sakhi mukhya rādhāyai bhal toranam

Yamunā placed golden anklets containing tiny bells on Rādhārāṇī's lotus feet. Lakṣhmījī offered an ornamental belt made of precious metals and valuable stones. Madhumālati gave a garland and Lalitājī put on a blouse with precious gems. Viśākhājī provided a necklace and Gaṅgājī set toe-rings. Ekādaśī positioned bangles and Śat Candrānanā put on the bracelets. Madhumati decorated the upper arms with ornaments. Ānandi and Bandi hung earrings and bhāl toran. The most fortunate ornament, which is called *bhāl toran*, is put on Her forehead near Her hair line and is amazingly enhanced by the beauty and splendor of Her face.

In Dvāpara-yuga, this place was the birthplace of Rādhārāṇī's friends Ānandi and Bandi, but in course of time, it became the abode of the goddesses. How this transformation took place can only be discovered through further research and investigation. According to Garg-samhita, both these were Radharani's friends and used to decorate her with various ornaments. Apart from that, according to the Brajavāsīs, these sakhis used to pack cow dung and make cakes for fuel at Nanda Bābā's cow barn and this is the place where Nanda Bābā worshiped these goddesses. There are different stories on this subject among the Brajavāsīs. Whatever it may be, here, at the present time, there is a festival celebrating the occasion of Navaratri, when so many faithful devotees come to visit and worship the Śakti-pīṭha, the abode of goddesses.





Top - Akrura ghat. Below - Akrura temple

Chapter 45
Śrī Dāujī

Kṛṣṇa's older brother Balarāma is the king and presiding Deity of the pastureland of Braja. A merciful king must affectionately take care of his subjects as if they are his own children. Dāujī is quite full of love and mercy, which is why He is named Dāu Dayāl, merciful.

braj ke raja inko kahiyat din dayal bade balaram

Does it mean that Kṛṣṇa is any less merciful? No, but Kṛṣṇa showers His mercy only on His devotees, not on non-devotees. The younger brother, Krsna, is unfavorable towards non-devotees.

jo mam bhakta so bair karat hai so bairi nij mero
dekh vichar bhakt hīt karan hākat rath ho tero.

Dāujī not only showered His affection on the Pāṇḍavas but He also equally loved the eldest wicked sinner Duryodhana. That is why Kṛṣṇa gave Him the name Dayālā. For that, the reader can refer to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Kṛṣṇa established Dāujī as the ruler of Braja while tending the cows.

sa tatra tatrāruṇa-pallava-śriyā
phala-prasūnoru-bhareṇa pādayoḥ
spṛśac chikhān vīkṣya vanaspatīn mudā
smayann ivāhāgra-jam adi-pūruṣaḥ

(ŚB. 10.15.4)

sa tatra tatrāruṇa-pallava-śriyā: Kṛṣṇa said, "Dādā, wherever You pass, spreading cooling rays resembling the moonlight, even the leaves,

flowers, stones, the animate and inanimate nature, all welcome You and say: 'Dādā, today You have received a new name.'"

ete 'linas tava yaśo 'khila-loka-tīrthaṁ
gāyanta Ādi-puruṣānupathaṁ bhajante
prāyo amī muni-gaṇā bhāvadīya-mukhyā
gūḍhaṁ vane 'pi na jahaty anaghātma-daivam

"O Original Personality, these bees must all be great sages and most elevated devotees of Yours, for they are worshiping You by following You along the path and chanting Your glories, which are capable of purifying the entire world. Though You have disguised Yourself within this forest, O sinless one, they refuse to abandon You, their worshipable Lord." (ŚB. 10.15.6)

Here in this verse, Kṛṣṇa addressed Dāujī as *anagha*. What is the meaning of *anagha*?

nasti vidyate aghah bhaktanam yasmin

He has such boundless mercy that He never pays attention to the faults of others. This is why Kṛṣṇa addresses Him as Dāu Dayālā. Although the entire land in Braja is marked by Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, specific intimacy is obtained at the place of Dāujī, Baladevagāon, which is known as Vidrumvana according to the *Matsya Purāṇā*.

vidrumāryagatā yātrā rohiṇī bhuṣaṇaya sa
snanam chkār shuddhyartha mukta dānam kroti sa
vidrumo bhava rupāy tālankarchitāya cha
sarva saundraya gandhāy vanāya cha namostu te

To escape the tyranny of Kaṁsa, Rohiṇī radiantly graced the holy land of Mahāvana. In order to increase its good fortune, she came to Vidrumavana to collect the corals and precious beads produced by the Vidruma vines, from which she made beautiful garlands to adorn Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. The abundance of Vidruma vines was why this land was known as Vidrumavanā. Mother Rohini, who has molten-gold complexion, has great fortune that she witnessed all the glorious pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in Gokul, Mathurā, and Dvārakā. According to *Matsya Purāṇa*,

Rohiṇī bathed in a specific pond in Vidrumavanā and then gave pearls in charity and that is why that pond became famous as Rohiṇī-kuṇḍa. Vidrumavana marked the presence of tender lotus feet of Mother Rohiṇī and was nurtured and cared by Dauji's own lotus hands.

There is also a large lake here known as Kṣīra sāgar that is well-recognized by the local devotees. According to *Braja-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Ādi Purāṇa*, that vast lake is also known as Dugdha-kuṇḍa. Aniruddha, Kṛṣṇa's grandson, after conquering the world in all directions, along with the entire Yādava army, entered Braja on Nanda Bābā's invitation. This *kuṇḍa* was filled with milk from thousands of the best cows, and thousands of Yādavas were simultaneously fed. That is why it is known as Dugdha-kuṇḍa, the reservoir of milk.

Prayer Mantra for Dugdha-kuṇḍa

sudha maya paya stubhyam halāyudhav rodbhāva
chirayur vardā yaiva dugdha kuṇḍa namostu te..

"I offer my obeisances to Dugdha-kuṇḍa which contains nectarean water, created by the mighty plow of Balarāma and which endows a greater lifespan."

yātrāiva baldevastu yadu putraih samanvitah
bhojanam kriyate svechcham kruta dugdhādhya pāyasam..

At this auspicious place of pilgrimage, Dugdha-kuṇḍa, our own elder brother Dāu dined with all the sons of the Yadu dynasty. (*Ādi-Purāṇa*)

Dāujī, the Clever Leader of The Cowherd Boys

The protocol in Braja is such that it is better to become an unpolished villager related to Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma from birth than to be recognized as Brahmā or Paramātmā. Consequently, both of them became qualified leaders in the pastimes spent with the cowherd boys. For further details of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma's pastimes with Their cowherd companions, the reader may refer to Bhā. 10.11.38-40 and 10.12.4-10.

Now the Play of Uncouth Villagers is About to Begin

Kānāi said, "Dāu bhaiyā, today We both will dance." Dāu said, "Kānāi, My mind is also in the mood for dancing, but until there is someone singing, My legs will not move." Kānāi said, "Bhaiyā, this is not a big concern. I will sing Myself as You know that My singing is inferior to none." Then, after dancing for some time, Dāujī said, "Kānāi, now You also dance." Then Dāujī sang and Kānāi danced. Thus the festive pastime continued. Shridama said, "O dear brother, You are dancing separately which is quite attractive, but it would be more delightful to watch if both of You were to dance together. Now, we will sing and both of You should dance as a pair." Oh, how auspicious and blessed is this land. On one side, Kānāi danced, adorned in *pitāmbara*, yellow clothes, and on the other side, Balarāma danced, dressed in *nīlāmbar*, blue clothes. It appears that on the pretext of dancing, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma fulfilled all the ancient and present heartfelt desires of this land.

With white flowers braided in Their curly black hair, which came to Their shoulders, both of Them, being the wonderful abodes of all beauty, appeared like two adorable heavenly moons standing in the black sky. The amazing artistic pose of Their legs was a pleasing sight, and the resounding tiny bells hanging from Their waist and hollow anklets embracing Their little legs made a sweet melodious murmuring sound that mystified and astonished the entire world. The motion of every step of both brothers astonished all viewers. One most affectionate cowherd boy declared, "Friends, realize that it is not proper to allow our eyes to further enjoy this sublime happiness, for both Brother's lotus feet and lotus faces, appear to be tired and exhausted." Suddenly, the cowherd comrades shouted, "O Kānāi! O Dāu Bhaiyā! Enough! Enough! Now step aside and we also will dance." Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma complied with their desire and moved aside. The cowherd boys said, "Now, You both sing and we will move, swing and dance."

As both Brothers started to sing, a troop of mesmerized heavenly musicians put their hands on their cheeks, fascinated, staring at both Brothers. As both Brothers were singing and dancing with hundreds of friends, everyone began arguing as to who danced the best! After all, who was going to say that his dancing was not great! Everyone praised their own family name and tradition shouting, "I danced very well.." "No… no…I danced very well." From all directions, the sweet warbling sound of

their debate was heard. Then the liberal Dāu dādā gave His verdict, "You all danced well as all of you are experts in the fine art of dancing." (*Rasia Rāseśvarī*)

nṛtyato gāyataḥ kvāpi valgato yudhyato mithaḥ
gṛhīta-hastau gopālān hasantau praśaśaṁsatu

"Sometimes, as the cowherd boys danced, sang, ran or wrestled with each other, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, standing nearby hand in hand, would glorify Their friends' activities and laugh." (ŚB. 10.15.15)

The Childhood Pastimes of Kṛṣṇa And Balarāma

Both Balarama and Kṛṣṇa were very active and energetic. One moment, They would be fighting, but in an instant They would be friendly with each other and would burst out with laughter, Their bright teeth blooming. Yaśodā usually took the side of Dāu and Rohiṇī took the side of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa knew that it was better to present Balarāma's case in the court of Rohiṇī, where He had an advantage, but in His own mother's court, He would certainly lose His case. With His little tender legs, Kṛṣṇa went running to Rohiṇī.

His lotus-like eyes were filled with so many tears that as soon as He closed His eyelids, a shower of tears fell down. His beautiful lips were also trembling. Frantically running, He approached elder Mother Rohiṇī and fell into her lap and began to cry. Breathing most heavily, with frequent sobs, He informed Her, "Maiyā Dāu bhaiyā." Rohiṇī became very distressed by observing Kṛṣṇa's fast-beating chest. She put her hands on His palpitating chest and tenderly inquired, "Kānāi, my Kānāi, what happened? Has Dāu again hurt You today? Tell me about all His wicked deeds." Kṛṣṇa said, "Maiyā Dāu scared Me." Gradually, one by one, He filed a series of complaints against Balarāma.

Dekh rī rohiṇī maiyā kese haian baladāū bhaiyā ।
Yamunā ke tir mohe zuzua batayo ri ॥
Subal shrī dāmā sāth hasa-has pūchhat bāt ।
Āp ḍarapaie aur mohe ḍarapāyo rī॥
Jahā-jahā bole mor chit rahat tāhī or ।
Bhājo re bhājo re bhaiyā dekho vah āyo rī ॥
Āp gaye tarū chaḍha mohian chhāanḍyo vāhī tar ।

Dhak-dhak chhāti kare daurayo ghar aayo ri ||
Uchhanga soan liye lagāya kaṇṭha soan rahe lapaṭāya |
Vārī re vārī mero hiyo bhar āyo rī||
'paramānanda' rānī dvij bulāya vedmanja paḍhaāya |
Bachhiyā kī pūchha gahi hāthahi divāyo rī||

Mother Rohini! "Come, look, at brother Baldau! While playing on the Yamuna bank, He told me that there is a dangerous animal living nearby." Subal and Śrīdama laughed and asked Him to explain. Brother Dau then acted as if He were very alarmed and He scared me too! When peacocks started to call He claimed that was a signal that the dangerous animal is coming closer! "Everyone run!" Then He climbed into a tree leaving me alone on the ground! I was so scared, I ran till I reached home. Listening to this, Mother Rohiṇī picked Śrī Kṛṣṇa up and hugged Him lovingly. She said, "I would do anything to make my Kṛṣṇa happy. I will do whatever I can to take away Your fear." She then called several brāhmaṇas to come to the house to perform special pujas and prayers for the well-being of Kṛṣṇa. She then brought Śrī Kṛṣṇa near a calf and let Him hold the calf's tail.

Rohiṇī immediately called upon the brāhmaṇas and asked them to recite a prayer mantra. Having strong conviction and devotion towards the cows, She called for a white cow and said, "Dear child, touch the tail of the cow and from now on no ghost will come near You and do not go again with Dāu to play in the forest." Kṛṣṇa said, "Mother, I did not want to go, but Dāu and His friends insisted and encouraged Me by saying, 'Let us go to the forest because there will be exciting challenges and events. They all took me to the forest on the pretext of showing me entertaining events. Mother, Dāu's friends are also very deceitful like him."

Great Mighty Balarāma

If Balarāma had not been there, could anyone else have killed Dhenukāsura? Could anyone else have fought with Pralambāsura? Could anyone else have placed his might against Balvala? Kṛṣṇa performed astonishing tasks that were impossible for any mortal but the elder brother, Balarāma Ji, executed acts that even younger brother Kṛṣṇa was not capable of. In *Garga-saṁhitā* Dāu's valor is narrated in detail. But fearing that this volume may become too big, we will only describe Dāu's valiant actions very briefly.

Once, the chief personalities in the Yadu dynasty decided to conquer the world. In the ceremonial Aśvamedha sacrifice, performed by them before the conquest, a ceremonial horse was followed by the army and roamed for one year in different kingdoms. Either the kingdom accepted the sovereignty of the kingdom owning the horse or else they challenge the aspiring sovereign with a fight.

Before the conquest, the son of Pradyumna, Aniruddha, wandered everywhere with the victorious horse of the Aśvamedha sacrifice. When Aniruddha defeated three powerful unconquerable monsters, Anushālva, Yuvnāshcha, and Bhishan, no one else dared to stop the horse. Six months had passed and six more months were remaining for completing the Aśvamedha sacrifice.

At that time, Balvala was residing in Naimiṣāraṇyā. No one was mighty enough to kill that very powerful demon. Even when he interfered with the fire sacrifice, the performing sages used to tolerate it and kept silent. In Naimiṣāraṇya, Balvala's violence was increasing day by day. All the great sages were keeping silent because of their extraordinary patience. Everywhere blood, vomit, excrement, urine, meat, and wine were raining continuously. It was difficult for them to even breathe in the foul odor. Once, on a festive occasion, a terrible whirlwind suddenly appeared, creating clouds of dust. The whole sky became dark and large amounts of impure items rained on the sacrificial altar. Suddenly, a demon as big as a black mountain, appeared in the sky, with hair and beard as red as blood, carrying a powerful trident and vibrating a fearsome thunderous roar.

As the demon was blessed with a boon from Lord Śiva, even Kṛṣṇa could not kill him. Only the very powerful Balarāma could kill the demon. Nārada, the most celebrated instigator of so many pastimes, went to Balvala and told him, "You appear to be so powerful, just wandering here and there, but you very well know that the Yādavas have killed your brother Śakuni. If you have any valor, why are you not taking revenge for your brother's death? At this time, the Yādavas are busy conquering the world, challenging anyone who is not accepting their sovereignty by sending the ceremonial horse through various kingdoms. Presently, their horse has reached Prayāga and is drinking the water in the Triveṇi, at the confluence of three holy rivers, Gaṅges, Yamunā, and Sarasvatī."

As soon as Balvala heard this, firmly believing that his victory is sure, he rushed with the speed of the wind to the Triveni and captured the ceremonial horse. As the army attacked and counter-attacked with blows

against blows, the evil demon vanished into thin air, along with the horse. Then they were perplexed. Where should they aim their weapons? Whom should they beat? Whom should they fight with? As the poor soldiers were sitting there, dejected, Naradajī appeared and told them, "This demon, as a result of performing severe penances for twelve years, is blessed with a boon from Śivā. To defeat him is not going to be easy."

The brave soldiers of the Yadu dynasty replied, "How can we fight and be victorious without seeing our opponent? First, we have to find out where he is hiding." Naradjī said, "At this very moment, he is on a small island called Pañcajanya, which is on the other side of the ocean." The problem then was how to cross the ocean? With the help of extremely powerful warriors like Uddhava and Sātyaki, a bridge, thirty yojanas or 400 kilometers long, was made by arrows in only 4 prahars, twelve hours. Then the entire army reached the island of Panchajanyā.

One demon named Maya, in the disguise of a parrot, observed all this and explained to Balvala, "O great King, it is only beneficial for us to reconcile with them. Lord Rāma made a bridge of rocks, which took so many days to do, but here the army of Aniruddha, the grandson of Kṛṣṇa, made the bridge with only arrows and in only twelve hours." After hearing the advice from Maya, Balvala told him, "You are a coward! As Vibhīṣaṇa surrendered to Rāma, you also have surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, but I will fight them with my army of one million demons." The war started and every warrior was set to fight against an opponent warrior of similar strength. The poor earth trembled. Indra, Kuvera and other gods were shaking and anxious as they watched the battle from the sky. From all four directions, fearsome screams, harsh piercing sounds, and shrieks from elephants were heard.

Aniruddhajī, exhibiting his great fighting skills, finished off great warriors like Urdhvakeśa, Nad, Sinh, Vruk, Kuśambuddha, etc. Again, Maya came to Balvala and said, "O great king, still there is time for you to surrender. One by one, all your great warriors are being killed." But Balvala did not listen to him. Balvala said, "I know this Kṛṣṇa very well. He used to steal butter, and out of fear of Jarāsandhā. He ran away into the ocean."As the sun was about to set, the war was halted at that point for the day. Balvala made the announcement, "All the demons of the island of Pañcajanya must fight and whoever will be late to reach the battlefield tomorrow morning will be killed by me."

On the next day, the commander of the army, the son of Sanyapala, came late., and Balvala, as promised, killed him. The day after, Balvala's son Kunandana, who was also a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, came late. Seizing the opportunity, the resentful Sanyapala told Balvala that in principle he should also kill Kunandana. Seeing his brave son ready to die, Balvala's eyes overflowed with tears. Kunandana said, "I am not afraid of death, but before dying, let me glorify Kṛṣṇa with devoted praise. I am so unfortunate that I did not have the good fortune of seeing Him in person." Even after so many attempts, there was no success in killing Kunandana. After all, who can cause the death of one who is protected by God Himself? No one!

yan cha rakshati śrī kṛṣṇastam ko bhakshati mānavah
bhaktam hantu chāgto yah sa vinashyati daivatah

(Ga.Saṁ.Ash.Kh. 33.60)

After that, Balvala's son Kunandana fought with Sunandana, the son of Kṛṣṇa. Sunandana attacked with many unfailing, powerful weapons like *jrumbhanastra*, *mohanastra,* etc. When Kunandana chose to die, Lord Śiva, who is easily pleased, arrived there wearing a tiger skin and shouted, "Where is Sunandana who killed my devotee Kunandana?" Because of Śivajī's excessive rage, Sunandana was killed, which caused Kṛṣṇa to appear with all His weapons. From all directions there resounded the shout of victory and the outcry of conquest. Śivajī offered his obeisances to Kṛṣṇa and begged forgiveness for his offense.

Kṛṣṇa said, "Śambhu, you have not done anything improper, being bound by the commitments of your boon; you were simply fighting on behalf of your devotee." Soon after, Kṛṣṇa revived his son Sunandana. Balvala's time of death was approaching, and it had to happen at the hands of Dāujī. Neither Aniruddha nor Kṛṣṇa could kill Balvala, what to speak of others? Only Haladhara (Balarāma, who carries the mighty plow) would be able to make him lay down on the ground.

Balarāma, not requiring a bow and arrows, simply remembered His plow and His club, which suddenly appeared. There was no need to delay, so He dragged Balvala with His plow and broke his skull with His club in the flash of a second. From Balvala's head blood was pouring profusely, just like the Ganges flowing from the head of Śivajī. Balvala struggled restlessly but after a few seconds, he succumbed to death.

King of Braj – Dāu dādā

According to the Garga-saṁhitā, Cākṣuṣa Manu had a daughter, Jyotiśmati, who was an incarnation of Nāglakṣmī. When Vaivasvaṭa Manu's twenty-seven cycles of the four yugas were completed, Jyotiśmati incarnated as princess Revatī, the daughter of King Raivat. She got married to our Dāu dādā, and hence He is called Revati-Ramana. The deity of Mother Revati in this Baldev village temple, is installed facing Dāu Ji instead of His right side. This doesn't mean that she is shy and hence standing opposite to Dāu ji, instead, this is "Prem-Vaichitri", They keep looking at each other forever. By continuously looking at each other, Their "prem-āsakti", loving attraction towards each other, keeps enhancing.

milibo nainan hī ko nīko /
charo nayan bhaye īk thaure dhoko mit gayo jī ko /
khatti chhāch mane nahi bhāve "sur" pivaiyā ghyo ko /

The Mantra to pay obeisances to Revati-Ramana, the Yugal-Swarup

revati ramnayaiva gopānām var dāyine /
anyonya sanmukha loka pritaye namastute ||

Your name is Revati-Ramana. You grant benedictions to the cowherd boys, and you are standing facing each other. I offer my obeisances to such Revati-Raman.

History of Dāu Ji's Horanga

The colourful Holi of Barsana – The history of Dāu Ji's horanga: The marriage ceremony of Rām-Shyām as RādhāRaman and RevatiRaman, is celebrated as Holi in Barsānā and horanga in village of Dāu Ji.

palle per gayi rang mein rang dayi hori khelat rasiyā /
lehnga sabro rang mein kar diyo rang dai angiyā /
rang birangi karhe chhodi rang dayi fariyā ||
duff lai hori gāvan lāgyo dai dai hansiyā /
hānsi sun ris lāge badlau lungi man basiyā ||
rasiyā ki dhoti pakdi maine mootthan ke kasiyā /
dhoti faard banyo korda pityo man bhariyā ||

pit pit ke hoo fāg sunāve dāu ko bhaiyā ।
aiso bhayo horango braj mein gave duniya ॥

Holi in Marriage Ceremony

Holi in Barsānā as a celebration of Sri Krishna's wedding

nandgaon kau pānde braj barsane aayo ।
bhari hori ke beech sajan samdhyāne dhāyo ॥
bhānu bhavan bhai bhir fāg ko khel machayo ।
samdhyāne ki gari sunat shravan such pāyo ॥
binā vivāh ke samdhi sambandh sambhav nahin ।
peet pichauri tāni rangilo mandap chhāyo ।
naval aam ke mor ko mori maur banāyo ॥
nag nyauchāvar kinhe kirti kalash dharāyo ।
man ki bhānvri dini chhitt chauk purāyo ॥
hori ki atthvāri kari dulah dulrāyo ।
niki bani barāt barātini rang badāyo ॥

Songs of playful abuse in weddings –

hori ki gāri ko shāshā chāri pardāyo ।
nainan piyo piyush hituni ko hiyo sirāyo ॥
to lau hori khelat giridhar dulah aayo ।
sānche svāngini sāji sabe samuh suhāyo ॥

Dauji's horanga as a mark of Dauji's wedding celebrations

khelau baldāu ji so hori ।
vai to kahiye braj ke rājā fagua lain chalo ri
fāgun mein hiyo umgi maryo hai man bhāve soi karo ri
lāj sab door dharo ri ॥
chovā lāo chandan lāo abeer banāo bhar jhori
bainyā pakri ke yāhi nachāo (yāki) much te lagāye deo rori
hāl aiso hi karo ri ॥
kehet mukund baar naaye keeje pakri leu barjori
koi kājar koi bendi lagāo (yāke) sundar maang bharo ri
neel per dhoori dharo ri ॥

also, from "Baldev Vilas",

braj juvtin ke bus pare suniyat sri balarām
kesri mukh mundane kiyo gandan bindu lagāye

Until marriage ceremony is not celebrated as holi, the Sringār ras will not attain perfection. Because the great scholars have identified pastimes of hori as the beginning of Sringār ras.

According to "Bhāv vibhāvika" by Sri Rām Nārāyan,
"Vasant sambhāvit holika udyotanam api gyeyam"

All rasik scholars have also sung this pastime of hori marriage ceremony

From "kelimāl"
din duff tāl bajāvat gāvat
bharat paraspar chin chin hori ||
ati sukumār badan shram barsat
bhalae milae rasik kisor kisori ||
bātni batbatāt rāg rang rami rahiyo
it-ut chāhi chalet taki khori ||
suni "haridas" tamāl syam saun
latā lapti kanchan ki thori ||

also, from "Hit Chaturasi"

kanak kapis patt sobhit subhag sānvre ang |
nil basan kāmini ur kanchuki kasumbhi surang ||
tāl rabab muraj duff bājat madhur mridang |
saras ukti-gati suchatvar bansuri mukh chang ||
dou mili chānchar gāvat gauri rāg alāpi |
mānas-mrig bal bhedat bhrikuti dhanush drig chānpi ||
dou kar tārinu patkat latkat it-ut jāt |
ho-ho-hori bolat ati ānand kulkāt ||
rasik lāl par melat kāmini bandan dhuri |
piy pichkārinu chhirkat taki kumkum puri ||

also, from "Mahavani"

sri radha krishna vivāh such sarbas mangal mool l
nit-nit rachat saheliyān bhari prem parfool ll

by Biharin dev ji

pyāri mohan so hansi kahyo āvahu jo mili khelein fāg l
sni man mudit udit mhaye ko barne kavi tini ko bhāg ll

Song of marriage ceremony in "Srimad Rādhāras SudhāNidhi"

pritin kāmapi nām mātra janit prodyamrom udgamā
rādhā mādhvyoh sadaiv bhajatoh kaumār aiv ujjvalām l
vrindā āranya nav prasunanichayānāniya kunjāntare
goordam shaishavkhelanaivartkadā kāryo vivāh utsavah ll

Songs of Abusing (Gāri Gān)

There are songs of abuse at Holī- and wedding festivals

nij nij anga ladāy ke sahchari gāvat gāri
kahat sabai gore tumahi dekho mukar nihari

In *Rāmayana* Bāla Khānd 99 at wedding of Śiva,

gāri madhur swar dehi sundari bigya vachan sunavahi

In *Rāmayana* Bāla khānd 329 at wedding of Lord Rāma

panch kaval kari jevan lāge, gāri gān suni ati anurāge

"The gopīs of Braja, with their witty words, have abused Kṛṣṇa many times." (Ā.Vā.*Purāṇa*)

mṛgayur iva kapīndraṁ vivyadhe lubdha dharmā
striyam akṛta virūpāṁ stree-jitaḥ kāma-yānām
balim api balim attvāveṣṭayad dhvāṅkṣa-vad yas
tad alam asita-sakhyair dustyajas tat-kathārthaḥ

"Like a hunter, He cruelly shot the king of the monkeys, Vāli, with arrows against the rules of warfare. Bounded by the love of His consort Sita, He disfigured another woman, Surpanakha, who came to Him with lusty desires. One time, He (as Vāmana) took everything from Bali Mahārāj in charity on the pretense of seeking just three feet of land, and then He bound him up with ropes as if he were a crow. So, let us give up all friendship with this dark-complexioned boy, even if we can't give up talking about Him." (ŚB. 10.47.17)

madhupa kitava-bandho mā spṛśaṅghriṁ sapatnyāḥ
kuca-vilulita-mālā-kuṅkuma-śmaśrubhir naḥ
vahatu madhu-patis tan-māninīnāṁ prasādaṁ
yadu-sadāsi viḍambyaṁ yasya dūtas tvam īdṛk

"The gopīs said: O honeybee, O friend of a cheater, don't touch our feet with your whiskers, which are smeared with the kuṅkuma that rubbed onto Kṛṣṇa's garland when it got crushed by the breasts of a rival lover! Let Kṛṣṇa satisfy the women of Mathurā. One who sends a messenger like you will certainly be ridiculed in the Yadus' assembly." (ŚB. 10.47.12)

They accused Kṛṣṇa of being deceitful and cunning. Even in *Rāsa Panchadhyāyi*, there is the exhibition of anger in their loving exchanges.

preṣṭhaṁ priyetaram iva pratibhāṣamāṇaṁ
kṛṣṇaṁ tad-artha-vinivartita-sarva-kāmāḥ
netre vimṛjya ruditopahate sma kiñcit
saṁrambha-gadgada-giro 'bruvatānuraktāḥ

"Although Kṛṣṇa was their beloved, and although they had abandoned all other objects of desire for His sake, He had been speaking to them unfavorably. Nonetheless, they remained unflinching in their attachment to Him. Stopping their crying, they wiped their eyes and began to speak, their voices stammering with much agitation." (ŚB. 10.29.30)

They spoke with so much anger. This is the amazing splendor of intense love, where words are used as a powerful weapon to penetrate the heart of one's lover!

One of the symptoms of love is tolerance. If there is intolerance on the part of the lover and the beloved, then, due to a lack of tolerance, within a mere three to four days after the wedding, there will be a condition of divorce. Therefore, there is a custom of singing and listening to *gāri gān* in a wedding festival, to cultivate patience. Whether one is Lord Śiva, Lord Rāma or Lord Kṛṣṇa, everyone has to listen to abuses and name-calling at the time of their wedding. To listen patiently is real religion. In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, abuses from one's in-laws are narrated.

gṛhītvā mṛga-śāvākṣyāḥ pāṇiṁ markaṭa-locanaḥ
pratyutthānābhivādārhe vācāpy akṛta nocita

" He has eyes like a monkey's, yet he has married my daughter, whose eyes are just like those of a deer cub. Nevertheless he did not stand up to greet me, nor did he think it fit to welcome me with sweet words." (ŚB. 4.2.12)

gauri hamāri mrugya naini banna hamaro bandar naynā

"Our daughter has beautiful eyes like a deer, but this boy has the face of a monkey." (Rā.Bā.Kā. 89)

also,

bholā āe re bholā āve re
bholā mero bhangad bhāri āk dhaturā khāve re ।
tohu bhāng na chardi masti pe kālkut pi jāve re ॥
mohini roop dhare nārāyan bholā peeche bhāge re ।
bāvro bhayo digambar dole mohini pakad na pāve re ॥
lajja chhord digambar daude mohini pakad na pāve re ॥

also,

digambar bhayo bholā digambar bhayo bholā
mohini roop dharyo nārāyan dekh-dekh bholā bāvro bhayo ।
mohini peeche bāvro dole nango bhayo bholā nango bhayo॥

What is the reason **why there was no divorce in our culture**? One of the reasons was that at the time of the wedding the groom was taught

forbearance via abuses. It was observed and assessed whether he has tolerance or not. These days, not only in foreign countries, but all over the world, including here in our India, humans are behaving like animals, just as a dog accepts many female dog companions and leaves them, or one female dog accepts many male dogs and abandons them. This is bestial love. The civilization of ancient Bhārata, our previous culture, was mostly on the level of human love.

There are three distinct kinds of love or affectionate attachment (*rati*).

1. *Deva rati* or divine love
2. *Manu rati* or human love
3. *Paśu rati* or bestial love

At the time of the wedding festivals of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and Śiva, *gāri gān* was sung in the mood of divine love. That is why Rukmiṇī ji also said

tasyāḥ syur acyuta nṛpā bhāvatopadiṣṭāḥ
strīṇāṁ gṛheṣu khara-go-śva-viḍāla-bhṛtyāḥ
yat-karṇa-mūlam an-karṣaṇa nopayāyād
yuṣmat-kathā mṛḍa-viriñca-sabhāsu gīta

"O infallible Kṛṣṇa, let each of the kings You named become the husband of a woman whose ears have never heard Your glories, which are sung in the assemblies of Śiva and Brahmā. After all, in the households of such women, these kings live like a donkey, ox, dog, cat or a slave." (ŚB. 10.60.44)

Classification of Lovers

In the world, there are five kinds of husbands.

1. One who carries the home's burden (a donkey)
2. One who is engrossed in his household business (a bull)
3. One who is scorned by his wife (a dog)
4. One who is miserly and violent
5. One who is the servant of the woman

Only the unfortunate ones get these five kinds of husbands. These five kinds do not have forbearance and do not know how to love, so they cannot maintain the relationship for very long. Divorce is imminent in a very short time, at the most two to four years. This is why there is one marriage rite known as *lahakauri,* in which a bride and her groom give and eat each other's food remnants to symbolize that both of them are agreeing to recognize and tolerate each other's shortcomings. "Even goddess Parvati and goddess Sarasvatī performed the lahakauri ceremony."

(Rā.Bā.Kā. 327)

lahkauri gauri sikhāya rām hi siya sarad kahe

Tolerance is the main characteristic of love. This is why there are pastimes of maan. What is maan? The unfavorable mood, or, not expressing love benevolently by an unbenevolent heroine is described as maan.

In the pastimes of maan, the hero has to tolerate the sulky mood of heroine and entreat for reconcililation. Just as Sri Kṛṣṇa also did

reme tayā cātma-rata ātmārāmo 'py akhaṇḍitaḥ
kāmināṁ darśayan dainyaṁ strīṇāṁ caiva durātmatām

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed with that gopī, although He enjoys only within, being self-satisfied and complete in Himself. Thus, by contrast, He showed the wretchedness of ordinary lusty men and hardhearted women." (ŚB. 10.30.35)

Śrī Hītajī Mahārāj

prīti ki riti rangilo hi jāne l
yadhyapi sakal lok chudāmani dīn apnapo māne ll
yamunā nikat nikunj bhavan me mān mānini thane l

The mood of sulkiness in love (Prem me maan)

When a sulky lady persists with her sulkiness, then the endeavor to pacify her becomes very peculiar and tedious.

chalahi kin mānini kunj kutir,
to binu kuvar koti banitā- jut mathat madan ki pīr.

gad gad sur virha kul, pulkit shravat vilochan nīr
kasi kasi vṛṣabhānu nandini vilapat vipin adhīr
banshi bisikh vyāl mālā vali panchānan pik kīr
malyaj garal hutāsan mārut sākhā mrug ripu chīr
jay śrī hīt harivansh param komal chit chapal chali piya tīr
suni bhayabhīt bajra ko panjar surat sur ranvīr

"O Haughty one! Why are You not coming to the forest grove? Without You, even in the company of millions of loved ones, Kṛṣṇa is intensely suffering from unfulfilled passionate desires. Being distressed from separation and becoming incoherent due to conflicting emotions, He is not even able to speak. As tears continually flow from His eyes, He is restlessly weeping and screaming: O Daughter of Vṛṣabhānu, where are You? Where are You?" (*Śrī Hīta Caturāsi* 37)

"Even the sound of His flute gave Him pain, like a piercing arrow, and His flower garland was as unpleasant as a vicious snake slithering around His neck. When the cuckoo and parrots sang, He became as troubled as he would from the roaring of a ferocious lion. Sandalwood paste felt like burning poison and even the wind had become like a burning flame. His yellow garment felt like a *kīvāch* (a plant that even monkeys are afraid of touching because it gives itching). Listening to all this agony, the most empathetic Rādhā, immediately rushed to Her beloved Kṛṣṇa. Hearing that Sriji is coming, Shyamsundar, who is more determined and valorous than the thunderbolt, became frightened."

aprekse krta-niscayapi su-ciram drk-konato viksate
maune dardhyam upaśrītapi nigadet tam eva yahity aho
asparse su-dhrtasayapi karayor dhrtva bahir yapayed
rādhāya iti mana-dusthitim aham prekse hasanti kada

"She vowed never to see Him again, yet She stared at Him from the corner of Her eyes. She vowed to never speak to Him again, yet She told Him, "Go to her." She vowed to never touch Him again, yet She held both His hands to lead Him outside. Oh when seeing all this, will I smile at Rādhā's desperate struggle to remain angry and jealous?"

"She grasped His hand and drove Him out. One who can pacify even the mosy sulky one is a real hero. Mood of sulkiness is the touchstone

and love is the gold. Without love rubbing against the touchstone of mood of sulkiness, it will not get intensified (pranay). Gold does not glitter without first rubbing it against a touchstone. A donkey, dog, or bull cannot dare think in this way, but Kṛṣṇa passed this test. What is love? Heroine becomes sulky. She is miffed even after being begged for reconciliation repeatedly. Even then, the Hero continues to endeavor to reconcile."

sarvatha dhvamsa rahītam satyapi dhvamsa kārane |
yadbhav bandhanam yuno sa premā parikirtaitah |
(Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi 14.63)

After the stage of love, next is pranay (intense love). In this stage of intense love, the Heroine is confident that the Hero will certainly endeavor to reconcile, this is why she is displaying the mood of sulkiness. One who cannot soothe is not a lover but an egoist.

Kṛṣṇa taught us this. Lovers must display humility and meekness. Kṛṣṇa purposely displayed humility to show and teach us what love is. If you want to be a true lover, learn humility and tolerance. Humility entails that we should be able to recognize our subordinate position. Kṛṣṇa incarnated to establish religion, and which religion did He teach us by his example? Engaging in the *rāsa* dance, Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs taught us the religion of love, where there is no room for ego and arrogance, as these are not a part of religion. He destroyed that conception.

tasām tat-saubhaga madam vikshya mānam cha keshava
prasamāya prasādāya tatraivā antara dhiyata

"Lord Keśava, seeing the gopīs too proud of their good fortune, wanted to relieve them of this pride and show them further mercy. Therefore, He immediately disappeared." (ŚB. 10.29.48)

Parīkṣitjī asked that if it is irreligion to dally and dance with other's wives, then why did Kṛṣṇa behave irreligiously. In fact, it was not irreligion, but the showering of His grace upon the living entities.

anugrahāya bhutānām mānuṣam deham āsthitah
bhajate tādrsih kridah yāh srutvā tat-paro bhavet

"Having assumed a human form in order to shower His grace on living beings, He engages in such pastimes which would compel those who hear about them to become dedicated to Him." (ŚB. 10.33.37)

sarvathā dhvansa rahītam satya api dhvamsa kārane /
yad bhāv bandhanam yunoh sa prema parikirtitah /

Even, when the cause of destruction is present, love is not destroyed. This is called true love. Capturing this primordial quality of love, by various ways and means, Kṛṣṇa is serving and pleading with sulky Rādhārāṇī. (*Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* 14.63)

jaha jaha charan padat pyāri ju tere
taha taha man mero karat firat parchhahi. (*Kelimāl*)

Stages of Pure Love: Maan, Pranay, Raag, Anuraag

When the mood of sulkiness in pure love intensifies, it is called Pranay, When Pranay, intense love, intensifies even more, then it is called Raag. In the stage of Raag, the lover gets immense pleasure even when suffering from intense pain.

Mīrabai

māirī, mohe yaha badnāmi lage mithi

Parmananda Dāsjī

jo mero yaha loka jayego aru parloka nasāya rī
nandanandan ko tau na chhado milungi nisān bajāy rī.

"In the kingdom of divine love, what appears to be emotional distress is the most sublime happiness. In that intense feeling of separation, the urgency of the need to unite with one's beloved increases manifold. There, in that kingdom, the communion taking place between lovers transcends the bodily conception: it is the union of souls."

Raskhan ji said -

Kotik hu kaldahut ke dhaam karil ki kumnjan upar vaaron |

also,

taji deh ko geh ko neh sabai basiye such saun nit kunj gali |
umrdi hi rahe jahan shyaam ghata barsain sarsain ras bhaanti bhali |
such dukh jahan ik rang rahein hain karil ke kantak kund kali |
sudh let jahaan nij daasan ki braj chaand piyaa vrishbhanu lali |

This intense love stage of raag when intensifies even more, it is called Anuraag.

atati yad bhavān ahni kānanam
truti yugāyate tvām apasyatām
kutilā-kuntalam śrī-mukham ca te
jada udiksatām paksma krd drsām

"When You go to the forest during the day, a tiny fraction of a second becomes like a millennium for us because we cannot see You. And even when we can eagerly behold your lovely face adorned with locks of curly hair, our pleasure is hindered by the blinking of our eyelids, which were fashioned by the foolish creator." (ŚB. 10.31.15)

yugāyitaṁ nimeṣeṇa cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam
śūnyāyitaṁ jagat sarvaṁ govinda-viraheṇa me

"O, My Lord! O, Govinda! Because of feeling intense separation from You, I consider even the duration of a moment to be a great millennium. Tears are incessantly flowing from My eyes like torrents of rain, and the entire world appears as void." (*Śikṣāṣṭakam* 7)

The Residents of Dvārakā said

yarhy ambujākṣāpasasāra bho bhavān
kurūn madhūn vātha suhṛd-didṛkṣayā
tatrābda-koṭi-pratimaḥ kṣaṇo bhaved
raviṁ vināksṇor iva nas tavācyuta

"O lotus-eyed Lord, whenever You go away to Mathurā, Vṛndāvana or Hastināpura to meet Your friends and relatives, every moment of Your absence appears to us like millions of years. O infallible one, at that time our eyes become useless, as if bereft of the sun." (ŚB. 1.11.9)

When the intense love stage of Anuraag, intensifies further, that stage is called bhaav. In this stage, one is always worried about some mishappening, unpleasant events.

yat te sujāta-caraṇāmburuhaṁ staneṣu
bhītāḥ śanaiḥ priya dadhīmahi karkaśeṣu
tenāṭavīm aṭasi tad vyathate na kiṁ svit
kūrpādibhir bhramati dhīr bhāvad-āyuṣāṁ naḥ

"O dearly beloved! Your lotus feet are so soft that we fear of injuring them when we place them gently on our breasts. Our life rests only in You. Our minds, therefore, are filled with anxiety when you traverse the forest on those tender lotus-like feet." (ŚB. 10.31.19)

Bhāv and Mahābhāva

Bhaav when intensifies further, it attains its last stage of pure love, which is called Mahābhāva. In Mahābhāva, the gopīs experience jealousy even towards the flute and the flower garland.

gopyaḥ kim ācarad ayaṁ kuśalaṁ sma veṇur
dāmodarādhara-sudhām api gopīkānām
bhuṅkte svayaṁ yad avaśiṣṭa-rasaṁ hradinyo
hṛṣyat-tvaco 'śru mumucus taravo yathāryāḥ

"My dear gopīs, what auspicious activities has this flute perfomed, by virtue of which it enjoys the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips independently and leave only a taste for us gopīs, for whom that nectar is meant! The forefathers of the flute, the bamboo trees, shed tears of pleasure. His mother, the river on whose bank the bamboo was born, feels jubilation, and therefore her blooming lotus flowers are standing like hair on her body." (ŚB. 10.21.9)

But this is not jealousy. It is a song glorifying the good fortune of the flute and of admiration for the garland of forest flowers. The language of love is at different level, where tolerance becomes the barometer of love. And, to successfully pass this test, the lover will have to entreat and reconcile with the love-interest who is in the mood of sulkiness and will have to tolerate Her loving abuses.

braja khelat brajrāja kumār hori daDāu ropiyo
puni Śandilya bulāii kai lagan mahurat shyām sudhāī

"At the time of Holi, people from Nandagāon come to Barṣāṇā in the mood of the people in marriage procession from bridegroom's side. Basant-pañcamī, the fifth day of the spring season, is the wedding day of Lakṣmī and Narāyanā. This is the day when Kṛṣṇa, with the help of Paurṇamāsī and Madhumaṅgala, begins the festivities of Holī"

Vṛndāvana Dāsajī

ritu vasant sukh kheliye ho āyo fagun mās
hori dado ropiyo sab braj jan hiye hulas

"The fifteenth day of the month of phalgūn, the full moon, is recognized as Gaura purnimā. The horangā of Dāujī is the wedding festival of Dāujī."

Govinda Svāmī

dāu dāu sab kahe, maiya kahe na koy
dāu ke darbār me, maiya kahe so hoy.

Just as no one says Kṛṣṇa-Rādhe, here Revatī's name also comes before that of Balarāma. He is addressed as Revatī-Ramaṇ. Without marriage, it is impossible for Revatījīs' arrival in Braja. Since mother Rohiṇī is staying with Dāujī, Revatījī is not standing on His side but is facing Him. Here, observing Braja's tradition, the wife cannot sit adjacent to the husband in front of the mother. It is simply due to the influence of love that they both always want to look at each other.

Braja Bhakti Vilāsa

revati ramnayaiva gopanam var dayine
anyonya sanmukha loka pritaye cha namastute.

Prema, sambandha aur vivāh : Love, Relationship, and Wedding

Love is only possible after a relationship is established.

jāne binu na hoi partiti, binu partiti hoyi nahi prīti

"Love blossoms after a relationship is established and relationship is only possible after the wedding." (Rā.U.Kā. 89)

Rukmiṇī and Sri Kṛṣṇa's worship was first established in Dvāraka, and Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are worshiped all over Braj. Why is Śrījī so much revered in Braj Vṛndāvana? This is because Sriji and Shyamsundar got married here. Rukmiṇī Ji got married to Kṛṣṇa in Dvāraka. In the same way, there has to be some reason why Dauji and Revati Ji are worshiped in Baldeva village. Without an appropriate reason, the previous acharyas would not have established this worship. The only reason is – reverence, which can only happen when some past times occurred to establish this principle. If we cannot establish Revati ji's relation with Braj, this worship with reverence cannot be justified. However, in the village of Baldeva, Revati ji has more reverence than Dauji.

dāu ke darbār me maiya kahe so hoy

In the court of Dāujī, whatever Revatījī proclaims will be followed.

Dāujī's Wedding

Those who accept Dāujī's wedding to Revatī ji in Dvāraka will also have to accept mother Revati's connection with Their pastimes in Braja. Otherwise, the existence of the worship of Dāujī and Revatījī in Baladevagāon will be considered as a figment of the imagination of the great spiritual preceptors. Worship of Revatījī in Braja indicates connection to Their pastimes in Braja, which may be connected to Their wedding in Dvārakā or Revatījī's arrival in Braja with Dāujī from Dvārakā.

According to Śrī Harivansh Purāṇa, Śrī Garga-saṁhitā, Śrī Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Śrī Gopal Champu, etc., Dāujī's wedding took place in Dvāraka

but according to Śrī Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa, Braja Bhakti Vilāsa, and rasik ācharyās, Dāujī's wedding took place in Vidrumavana or Baladevagāon. Śrī Sudarśana Singha Chakra is also of this opinion.

In communion,

hari ananta hari katha anantā

"As Kṛṣṇa is unlimited, His pastimes are also unlimited." (Rā. Bā.Kā. 140)

Both opinions are correct. Just as in one incarnation, Pratap bhanu became Rāvaṇā, and in another, it is narrated that Sanakādika Muni cursed Jaya and Vijaya and they incarnated as Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa. While in yet another incarnation, it is told that Jalandhar became Rāvaṇā. In the same way, it should be accepted that Dāujī and Revatī were married in Dvārakā and also in Baladevagāon.

Even there are different opinions related to the birth of Kṛṣṇa.

1. Kṛṣṇa was born to Vasudeva and Devakī.
2. Kṛṣṇa was born to Nanda and Yaśodā.

According to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, this astonishing child appeared from Devakī (Ś.B. 10.3.8-9), then in Ś.B. 10.5.1, he is proclaimed as son of Nanda maharaj. In Ś.B. 10.14.1, he is again proclaimed as the son of the king of cowherds (Nanda maharaj). In Ś.B. 10.8.14, it says tavātmaja, meaning your (Nand-Yashoda's) son. Ś.B. 10.9.21, He is proclaimed as Gopīkāsuta, son of gopī (mother Yashoda).

The songs of Balarām's wedding ceremonies are described wherever Kṛṣṇa's wedding ceremonies are discussed. Because, the marriage of a younger brother is contradictory to spiritual injunctions when the elder brother is unmarried. This is called as parivetta dosha.

śantanu brahmāne ruktaha parivettaya magrabhuka
rājyam dehāgrajāyāshu purrāshtra vivrudhaye

"Śāntanu committed a parivetta offense when he was married despite his elder brother being unmarried. After Śāntanu was crowned and took over the throne, there was no rain in the kingdom for twelve years, so everyone was very aware and conscious of having committed a parivetta offense."

dharma-vyatikramo dṛṣṭa īśvarāṇāṁ ca sāhasam
tejīyasāṁ na doṣāya vahneḥ sarva-bhujo yathā

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: The personality of powerful controllers is not affected by any apparently audacious transgression of morality we may see in them, for they are just like fire, which devours everything fed into it and remains unpolluted." (ŚB. 10.33.29)

samaratha kahu nahi doshu gosāi
ravii pāvaka sursari ki nāi

"The Supreme Lord is the preceptor of the bounds of religion as well as its protector." (Rā.Bā.Kā. 69)

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī first sang the praises of the wedding of Balarāma and then glorified the wedding of Kṛṣṇa in his *Gopal-Champu*. *Garga-saṁhitā* covers Balarāma's wedding first. In *Harivansh Purāṇa* also, the wedding of Balarāma is narrated first. In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, to avoid *parivetta* offense, Śuka Muni sang the wedding of Dāujī twice. Once, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.3.27-36 in ten verses, Dāujī's wedding is glorified and then once again in the tenth Canto, before the wedding of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī in one verse.

ānartādhipatiḥ śrīmān raivato raivatīṁ sutām
brahmāṇā coditaḥ prādād balāyeti puroditam

"As ordered by Lord Brahmā, Kakudmi, the opulent ruler of Ānarta, gave his daughter Revatī in marriage to Lord Balarāma. This has already been discussed." (ŚB. 10.52.15)

Everyone sang the praises of the wedding of Balarāma and Revatī but no one clarified where the wedding took place. The great and mighty Śrī Sudarśan Singh Cakra mentions the wedding place of Balarāma as

Mathurā-Maṇḍala, or Brajabhumi, in his literary treatise Bhagavān Vāsudeva. But he doesn't state where exactly in Brajabhumi the wedding took place. This was clarified in the *Brahmā Vaivarta*, *Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*, etc.

According to Braj Bhakti Vilās (Mātsya Purāna)

vidrum udbhava rupāya tālānka arachitāya cha |
sarva saundarya gandhāya vanāya cha namostu te ||

Mother Rohiṇī was very fond of Vidrumavana, Baladeva's village, because Dāujī Mahārāj Himself made Vidrumavanā. Beautiful Vidruma trees were surrounded in all four directions with splendid aromatic creepers. Surrounding them, the dense rows of kadamba trees captured the heart. Rohiṇī ji used to adorn herself here. This is the land for adoration. This place which was surrounded by Demigods, Gandharvas (divine singers) and Kinnaras (divine musicians), was the daily visiting place of mother Rohini. She used to come here everyday and take the corals from the Vidruma trees (coral trees) to make very charming and beautiful ornaments."

Prayer Mantra for Tīrtha Created by Rohiṇī

rohiṇī krut tirthāya namaste kalmashā paha
deva gandharva bhushāya sarva saubhagya dāyaka

"I offer my obeisances to this pilgrimage place, regularly frequented by Rohiṇī, the gods and the Gandharvas, which eliminates all sins and bestows all kinds of good fortune."

According to the *Garga-saṁhitā*, Naglakṣmī incarnated as Jyotiśmati at the place of Cākṣuṣa Manu. When Vaivasvaṭa Manu's twenty-seven cycles of the four yugas were completed, Jyotiśmati incarnated as princess Revatī, the daughter of King Kakudmi. In the Sun dynasty, Mahārāj Śaryati had three sons: Uttanbarhi, Ānarta, and Bhūriṣeṇā. Ānarta's son was Revata, whose son was Kakudmi. Revatī was Kakudmi's daughter. Kakudmi went to Brahmā-loka to find a suitable groom for Revati ji. He had to wait for a while before he could meet Brahmājī and asked him to find a suitable groom for his daughter Revatī.

Brahmājī told him that at this time, on earth, there is no sign of a proper candidate for marrying his daughter. "When twenty-seven cycles of the four yugas will have gone by, at that time, Balarāma, who is by all means suitable for your daughter, will be descending on earth." At that time, Kakudmi came back to this earth, following Brahmā's instructions. Since he had been away for several million years there were no surviving descendants in his family, so he came alone to Baladevagāon for the wedding of Revatī.

The Brajavasīs, simply desiring a bride for their beloved Dāujī, were not concerned if anyone would be joining in the marriage procession. They played that role and accompanied the bride in her marriage and performed all the customs and wedding rituals as if they were her family members. Even today in Dāujī, at the time of Dāujī's *horanga*, in wedding festivities, the same people who accompany Dāujī in His wedding, also accompany the bride.

Kakudmi gave 300,000 elephants, 1,000,000 horses, 100,000 chariots, 100,000 precious stones, 100,000 jewels, 10,000,000 gold coins, lustrous beautiful dresses, and countless pearls and rubies in dowry with the bride. When Brahmājī suggested him the suitable husband for his daughter, he also blessed him that even if his kingdom would no longer exist, he would still have the ability to give the required dowry. (Brā.Vai.Pu.Kr.Jā.Khā. 106.4-6)

yatreva baldevastu yadu putre samanvitah bhojanam
kriyate svechham kruta dugdhā dhya pāyasam
nand ādi sakaler gopye barhu dugdha
vibhuyate yatreva vana yātri cha naivedhyam pāyasam charet

"Ten thousand members of the Yadu dynasty also came from Dvārakā to celebrate and enjoy the wedding festival. For them, *khīr*, rice cooked in milk and sugar, was made from a pond filled with milk and was truly a very wonderful feast. Whosoever offers prayers in this pilgrimage place with sincere devotion, will attain immeasurable opulence." (Brā.Bhā.Vi., Pā.Pu.)

yātrā nanda dayo gopā yadone manna shcharet
dāshā yuta gavā dugdham samāni yātrā pakshipu.
dugdha purna payo kuṇḍa prachakhyur dugdha kuṇḍakam

"Here, Dāujī ate khīr with all the Yādavas and gopas. Nanda and all the gopas welcomed the Yādavas and respected them by offering vibhuti (cow dung ash). All the cows of Braja were milked. That is why all the pilgrims should offer khīr to their deities here and also obtain the remnants of such offered khīr as blessings. Even today, this tradition of offering rabadi, thickened sweet milk, and pāyasam (rice boiled in milk with sugar) to Dāujī is maintained." (Brā.Bhā.Vi., Pā.Pu., Brā.Vai.Pu.Kr.Jā.Kha, 106.8-9)

After performing all the traditional auspicious rituals, Devakī, Rohiṇī, Yaśodā, Aditi, Diti, Śānti, Lakṣmī, etc., brought Revatī into the temple, accompanied with the claps of triumph and jubilation. Even today in Baladevagāon, claps of glorification are hailed for Revatī.

milibo nainan hī ko nīko
charo nayan bhaye īk thore dhoko mit gayo jī ko

"Since the wedding, even today, Revatī is radiantly facing Dāujī with modesty and bashfulness. In her father-in-law's house, the bride does not sit near the husband facing him."

brahmānan bhojayāmās, dadāu tebhyo dhanam mudā
mangalam kāryāmās, vasudevasya vallabhā

"After the wedding, Rohiṇī fed many brāhmaṇas and gave them proper charity and received auspicious blessings." (Brā.Vai.Pu.Kr.Jā.Khā. 106.10)

The amazing literary work, Braja ka Itihās, History of Braja, written by author Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dutta Bajpeyi, Head of the Museum of Arts of Mathurā, provides very strong evidence of this incident narrated in the Purāṇas that the place of the wedding of Revatī Ramaṇa is certainly Braja Maṇḍalā.

Mother Yaśodā's attendance here in the wedding festivities also provides sufficient proof that Dāujī's wedding took place in Baladevagāon.

What is so attractive to see and participate in Dāujī-Baladevagāon and Barṣāṇā's Holī that people from entire world rush in overflowing crowds to witness the holi festivals?

The main reason is that the glorious and auspicious celebration of the weddings of Revati-Rāmana and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are the actual events behind Holī.

Revatī Rahasya, Mystery of Revatī

To associate with Saṅkarṣaṇa, Nāga Lakṣmī merged into Revatī. This incident took place at the beginning of the creation. Cākṣuṣa Manu performed a huge fire sacrifice. From the sacrificial altar, a girl was born and adorned with the name Jyotishmati. When she reached the proper age for marriage, she disclosed to her father her inner desire to obtain the mightiest man as her husband. Cākṣuṣa Manu then started the search for a worthy husband for his daughter.

He directly called upon Indra, the king of the gods in heaven. Indra respectfully gave him a seat. Then Cākṣuṣa Manu asked, "OhKing of heaven, is there any man mightier than you?" Indra replied, "It is only with the help of Vāyudeva, the wind god, that all my tasks are successfully completed, so he is certainly much stronger than I." Vāyudeva was summoned. Vāyudeva said, "My velocity cannot even shake mountains, so mountains are certainly mightier than me." The mountains said that the earth was much stronger than they are.

Then the earth said, "Saṅkarṣaṇa is mightier than me. There is no one more powerful than Saṅkarṣaṇasince He carries on His heads all the different planets in this universe. Even a great sinner who commits the offense of destroying all the three worlds can attain the state of oneness with the absolute simply by chanting Saṅkarṣaṇa's holy name. There is no possibility of finding someone more powerful than Saṅkarṣaṇā."

Afterward, Jyotishmati asked permission from her father to leave for the Vindhyāchal mountains to undergo severe penances. While tolerating both heat and cold, her entire face shone brilliantly due to the majesty of her penances. Attracted by her brilliance, many gods came to the place where Jyotishmati was performing her penance. Indrā said, "Oh divine lady, you are performing severe penances for Saṅkarṣaṇa in vain. I am the king of the gods, you should choose me instead!" Yamarāja said, "After marrying me you will become my best and most favorite wife in Pitṛloka and we will live happily!"

Kuvera said, "If you choose me, you will never have a shortage of wealth!" Agṅi said, "Where would you find such a fiery and brilliant

husband like me!" Varuṇa said, "All the opulence of the seven oceans, which is very difficult to achieve, is under my control and authority!" Surya said, "I am the power of seeing in every living being. Where could you find someone better than I?" Candra said, "I am the emperor of all medicines and herbs, the ruler of all constellations and the source of ambrosia; I am the benefactor of all strength, so choose me only!" Mangala said, "If you want good fortune, I am the auspicious planet causing all good fortune and prosperity. You should select me!" Bṛhaspati said, "I am the spiritual guide and mentor for the gods, so it will be proper for you to leave them and choose me only!"

Śukra said, "I am the spiritual mentor of demons; the gods are busy seeking hiding places out of fear of these demons. If you select me, you will be free from all kinds of danger. Fear personified is afraid of me, so who can be more powerful than I? Choose me only!" Śani said, "Even the gods are afraid of me, what to speak of mankind. So, who can be more powerful than I? Choose me only!"

Listening to proposals of all these gods, Jyotishmati became so enraged that the whole Brahmānda (universe), including the fourteen planetary systems, started to tremble in fear due to her vehement anger. Being most enraged, Jyotishmati cursed the gods. "Śani, you will become lame, crippled, wretched, dark-complexioned, and you will just drink sesame oil and eat urad dhal! Śukra, you will be deprived of one eye! Bṛhaspati, you will acquire the disposition of a woman!

Būdha, you will become fruitless and whatever activities are performed on your day will be futile. Mangala, you will become monkey-faced!

Candra, you will suffer from the disease *rajyakshama*! Surya, you will lose all your teeth! Varuṇa, you will suffer from dropsy disease! Agni, you will have to consume all that which is edible and inedible, including excrement! Kuvera, your flower airplane will be snatched away from you! Yamarāja, you will be defeated by the powerful demons! Indrā, slanderer of Saṅkarṣaṇa, your wife will be abducted and you will be driven away from heaven!"

In response, Indrā also cursed her that even though she would obtain Saṅkarṣaṇa as her husband, she would be deprived of having a son. At that point, Brahmā arrived and asked her what benediction she wanted. Jyotishmati said, "My only desire is to have Saṅkarṣaṇa as my husband." Brahmā said, "O, you with a beautiful radiant face, may your desire be

fulfilled. Vaivasvata-manvantara has just begun. After 27 cycles of the four yugas have elapsed, Saṅkarṣaṇa will become your husband."

Jyotishmati said, "I cannot wait for such a long time. Grant me the boon that I will obtain Saṅkarṣaṇa right away, otherwise, I will curse you as I cursed the other gods." Out of fear, Brahmā said, "O pious lady, you then become the daughter of Kakudmi, the king of the Anarta kingdom, and your desire will be fulfilled only in one birth."

After granting the boon, Brahmājī disappeared. Afterward, Jyotishmati took birth in the palace of king Kakudmi and was named Revatī. When king Kakudmi went to Brahmāloka to find a suitable and qualified husband for Revatī, Brahmā pointed out that Baladeva was fully capable and a worthy husband. Only a moment had passed by in Brahmāloka but on earth 27 cycles of four yugas had elapsed. So, when king Kakudmi and his daughter Revatī returned to earth, his son, grandson, relatives and even the people with the same gotra had passed away long ago. So, king Kakudmi went to the wedding of Revatī without the company of any relatives to attend the marriage procession.

Chapter 46
Runamochana-Kuṇḍa

While going to Mathurā with Akrūrajī, Kṛṣṇa said, "Alas, We are now leaving Nanda Bābā and Yaśodā Maiyā who nurtured Us as their sons, tolerated so much on Our behalf and showered their love upon us despite all Our mischief and tantrums. We will always be indebted towards them." Sri Kṛṣṇa took bath at Rhinamochana Ghāṭ and proclaimed, "Whoever takes bath at this Rhinamochana Ghāṭ, will get freed from the parental debt."

Chintāharana

"This place is associated with Mahādeva's pastimes. When Nanda-lālā appeared in Braja there was a big celebration for Nandotsava, and Śiva, although a little late, also attended this celebration. Even today, on the day after Janmāṣṭamī, Kṛṣṇa's glorious birthday, while celebrating Nandotsava in Nandagāon, the Brajavāsīs are still remembering Mahādeva's participation." (*Garga-saṁhitā*)

Śrī Nāradajī described, "O King Bahulāśva, Nanda Bābā erected hills of precious stones of over two square miles in area. When the red rays of the rising sun fell on them, they appeared as red shining jewels. All over Braja amazing events were observed. Lotuses sprouted in the river's flowing water. All six seasons expertly exhibited a complementary background to the transcendental and bluish effulgence of Kṛṣṇa, which was brilliantly shining in all directions. No one could measure the jubilant waves of the ocean of bliss of the Brajavāsīs. The nine Nandas, Upananda, and six Vṛṣabhānus also came. The gopīs were distributing pearls from gold plates. As the auspicious singing and dancing was performed, even the old gopīs started to dance like young girls.

As the young cowherd boys joyfully sang sweet melodious songs, the young and old gopīs moved with flashy steps. The excited newly married young gopīs, enchanted by the festive atmosphere, eagerly encouraged Yaśodā and Rohiṇī to dance, and everyone blissfully danced with much joy. The jeweled garlands were tossing and turning on the breasts of the gopīs and the tinkling bells on their buttocks were jumping. The day's divine pleasure exceeded millions of springs of joy.

To experience this divine ecstasy and dive deeply within that ocean of bliss, Sanak Ādikajīs, Kapila Devajī, Śuka Devajī, Vyāsajī, Dattātreyajī, and Pulastyajī all arrived. Nāradajī also came, accompanying Lord Brahmā. Seeing all the gods, including Brahmā with his four faces, the Brajavāsīs could not stop laughing. As everyone was relishing these amazing manifestations, Indra, husband of Śacī, arrived riding on an elephant. Thus, riding on their carriers, the gods, including Vāyudeva, Yamarāja, Kuvera, Agni, Chandrama, Varuṇa, Kārtikeya, etc. Everyone came.

Sarasvatī arrived on Hamsa, Goddess Durgā came riding on a lion, Prithvi came in the guise of a cow, the sixteen Maitrikās arrived on palanquins, and Goddess **Ś**ashthi also appeared. In Nanda's palace, everyone's heart was filled with loving devotional mellows. Everyone dove deep in the ocean of infinite bliss with the arrival of the source of all joy, Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nandā.

When Nandotsava was over, the restless Śiva departed from Kailash towards Nandagāon. Śiva arrived in Nanda's palace in a strange disguise, and he observed that many gopīs were still present there as if Nandotsava was still going on. All of them were happily performing various chores and it appeared that the gopīs felt quite at home in Nanda's palace.

jatā tavi galajjal pravāha pāvita sthale
gale avalambya lambitām bhujanga tungamālikām
damad damad damaddama ninādavadam arvayam
chakār chand tāndavam tanotu nah śivah śivam

"Śiva, from whose long tresses of matted hair the holy water of the Ganges is flowing down, whose neck was bedecked with snakes and adorned with a garland of skulls, was wildly dancing, accompanied with his resounding *ḍamaru* **(small drum)."** (*Śiva tandava stotra*)

As soon as he approached the gate, the strange-looking Śiva loudly announced, "Alakha Nirañjanā!" No one responded, and thinking that

no one heard his voice, he again shouted, "Alakha Nirañjanā!" This time Yaśodā came out and Śiva begged for some alms. Yaśodā offered him food on a plate decorated with jewels. He declared that he was not interested in food, but only desired to see Kṛṣṇa, her newly born baby.

Yaśodā, a little alarmed, said, "Yogīrāja! Even I am feeling fear due to your strange appearance with all these snakes and skulls, what then to speak of Kṛṣṇa, who is so delicate? I definitely cannot take the risk of exposing Him to you, as He will be alarmed at your sight and become disturbed!"

After listening to Mother Yaśodā's words, Śiva ji went to Chintāharaṇa on the bank of river Yamunā and sat down, worrying, now that Mother Yaśodā has refused, how will I get audience with my Lord.

Suddenly in Nanda Maharaja's palace, Kṛṣṇa started crying. Mother Yaśodā tried in so many ways to pacify Him by offering milk and toys but Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the three worlds, was resolute in His desire to see Tripurāri, Lord Śivā. The cowheard women there said, "O Mother Yasoda, we suspect that the strange-looking saint must have done some mischief, since this little Krsna never cried like this. Mother Yasoda agreed and said, "It does seem like that. Please go and summon him to come here." Some of the gopīs immediately went to Chintāharaṇa, where, Shiv Ji was seated in a worried contemplative mood.

Addressing him, "Bābā! O Bābā! What are you thinking about? Quickly come with us!" Coming out of his meditation, Śiva said, "Where and why?" The gopīs replied, "Come to Nanda's palace." Śiva thought that his Lord had finally heard his prayer and that his desire will be fulfilled. "Let me tease these gopīs just a little," Śiva thought, and he then told the gopīs, "I went to Nanda's palace a little earlier and Yaśodā asked me to leave the place, so I will not go there again." The gopīs, strongly insisting, told Śiva, "We have come here to take you at the request of Yaśodā. Her child is crying and no one can pacify Him. Do you have any auspicious prayer or chant that can help Him?" Śiva, understanding that the Lord is pleased with him and is purposely crying to show favor upon him, told the gopīs, "I know a powerful and divine prayer that would surely cause her child to never cry again!" The gopīs replied, "Well, then come quickly."

Śiva went to Nanda's palace just to see Kṛṣṇa, but because Yaśodā drove him away, he became very anxious. Suddenly, with the grace of the Lord, his anxiety was removed, so this place is known as the abode that

cures anxiety. Whoever comes here, by Śiva's grace, becomes free of all of their anxieties.

Although Mother Yaśodā had invited Śiva ji back, she was still not ready to have his audience with Kṛṣṇa. She told Śiva, "Snakes are hanging all over your body! Some are hissing in this direction and some in that direction!"

Śiva, contemplated that the matter was still not resolved. "Mother Yasoda will not let me see Krsna anytime soon.

In the words of Chacha Vrindavan das,

rasik jogi machalyo mere āngan mānat nahi samujhāyau ।
bhikshā lei na much tein bolai inko matau upāyau ॥
budi badi bhed kahao yakau mhi sandeh dabāyau ।
putra bhaye pai pahilain kabhun kāhu kain ho āyau ॥

The master of the yogis, Shiva ji said: "O mother Yasodā! I came to Goukul earlier as well, in order to take audience of your child, Krsna."

sunyo na dekhyo aiso kabhun jaiso bhesh banāyo ।

Mother Yaśodā said, "I have never ever seen a yogi in this guise."

palanā or chitai kein in kachu āk dhaturau khāyo ॥

Mother Yaśodā said, "So many acclaimed yogīs have come here in the past, who ate rich, tasty foods but this Yogīraja is only eating poison and he is continually staring towards my child in the cradle."

dekhi jatni tein varshat pāni, gare nāg laptāyo ।
chandāso chamkat hai māthe, sab tan bhasma lagāyo ॥
bhāghamber audhe yah sajni, damru hāth bajayo ।
kilkat hai suni kunvar kanhaiya aiso īn kachhu gāyo ॥

Pretending to leave, Śiva, started walking away while playing on his drum and chanting some divine prayer. "Yaśodā look at this! Hearing this sound, Kṛṣṇa is so pleased that he is now smiling with joy!" Some of the gopīs started telling each other, "Let us go to Yogīrāja and inform him. This is truly a great miracle!" Catching up to him, the gopīs said,

"Yogīrāja, why are you so obstinate? Why don't you see Kṛṣṇa from a distance and then go?" Some other gopīs told Yaśodā "Why don't we give him what he wants so that he leaves from here as soon as possible?"

Those snakes were the attendants of Śiva, and they were so pleased to meet Yaśodā that they extended their hoods toward her to offer her their obeisances. But not understanding this, she said, "I am very suspicious about this Yogīrāja as his snakes are constantly hissing at me. Please send him away as soon as possible. If Kṛṣṇa sees these snakes, He will be scared and start crying again."

The most venerable gopī, Paūrṇamāsī, said, "Yogījī! Please fulfill your desire but quickly leave from here." She inquired, "What do you want to take from here?" Śiva replied, "O mother! I have been practicing yoga since my childhood, and after doing so much meditation I have realized that I can attain the fruit of my lifetime's endeavor here in Gokula. This is why I have come here."

The gopīs asked,

kaun vriksha aru bel lagyau phal tākau tum jo batāyo l

"From which tree or creeper is your fruit growing? O baba! There aren't any trees here. This is a palace adorned with precious gems. You must go to a garden and stay there. You will find your fruit wherever there are trees.

nahin vann nahin bagh hyan bali jāun āsan janhā jamāyo ll

Hearing this, Mahādev ji started laughing. He thought, "These gopīs are so naive that they don't recognize that Ananta Brahmāṇḍa, the fruit of the intense austerity of countless sincere devotees, is living among them."

kaun vriksha ko bāg batāu jasumati bhavan durāyo ll
sukrit punj ki latā jasomati param tatva phal jāyo l

Śiva said, "O gopīs! Yaśodā Ma is the tree of all auspicious deeds being performed in the entire world and in this garden of Nanda's palace, she is nurturing the fruit of the Supreme essence."

After hearing this, Yaśodā immediately closed the door of the room and securely hid Kṛṣṇa.

Śiva continued, "O gopīs, my Lord, who is the imperceptible Lord of all three worlds, brought me here so that I can see Him." Śiva, thinking that nothing is going to happen in this way, decided to show his magical prowess and said, "My dear gopīs, go to Yaśodā and tell her that I have a powerful stone, which I am willing to give to her baby, by which He will at once become invincible. If she so desires, then I will place this stone on Kṛṣṇa, otherwise, I will leave. You will feel sorry that He did not get this stone, and once I leave it will be too late because I will not come back."

bahut jatan kari jantra mantra so ganda ek ruchi layo
putra janam te dān bahut diyo sujas sakal jas chhayo
tere bhur bhāg ki mahima barbas chit ju churayo
kaya amar karan tuv sut ki mero man akulayo

Yaśodā, hearing that her baby could become immortal, became greedy and excited, and opening the door a little, said, "Rohiṇī! This is not an ordinary saint. He is very powerful and has achieved many mystic powers." Before this, Yaśodā did not even care to look at him. Taking this opportunity, Śiva said, "Mother Yaśodā I have come here just to put this bracelet on your baby and make Him invincible but because you are not able to understand the grandeur of this mystical armlet, I will leave, and then you will be sorry." Śiva made one more move, thinking, "Yaśodā Ma is coming under my control. Now I have to enchant Kṛṣṇa. To charm Him, I will just chant the name Rādhā through this horn and once Kṛṣṇa hears Her name, He will immediately come under my control."

nāth samazi singi me ruchi so rādhā nām sunayo

Kṛṣṇa, hearing Rādhā's name, became emotional and started to cry. Kṛṣṇa is so pleased upon hearing Rādhā's name that He offers Himself to one who utters Her name.

rādhā rādhā nām jo sapnehu me let
tako mohan ladlo rīz apan pau det.

Yaśodā took the baby in her lap and caressed Him, saying, "My dear child, why are you crying?" Śiva thought, "My trick has worked, for just see how delighted Kṛṣṇa is by the sweetness of Rādhā's name. He is breathing heavily and smiling. "On the other hand, Yaśodā panicked and couldn't

understand why Kṛṣṇa was breathing so heavily. She said, "O Yogīraja! Come and put your charm bracelet on my baby. He is crying so loudly." Śiva said, "Maiyā, don't worry. I have a powerful stone, as well as one special prayer, that will take care of everything." Yaśodā frantically said, "Then quickly do whatever you have to do!" Śiva stepped forward and began to pacify Kṛṣṇa with his hands, while saying, " Rādhā..Rādhā…"

In the *Padma Purāṇa*, it is stated that Kṛṣṇa Himself gave the following *Yugal-mantra* to Śivā.

rādhe kṛṣṇa rādhe kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa rādhe rādhe
rādhe śyāma rādhe śyāma śyāma śyāma rādhe rādhe

Śiva chanted this *Yugal-mantra* while waving the beads in a circular manner over Kṛṣṇa's head. Hearing the prayer, Kṛṣṇa smiled, giving His approval. Yaśodā, seeing the baby so pleased, uncovered Him from underneath the border of her sārī. Until then, Yaśodā was hiding the baby under the hem of her sārī. She said, "Yogīraja since you have stopped His crying and made Him happy, you can now see the baby."As soon as Śiva's eyes met with baby Kṛṣṇa's eyes, he became overwhelmed with ecstatic love and said, "Maiyā. I have been blessed with some more magical power."

mataa mere sees jantra hai yo kahi charan dharāyo ||
vepath bhaye ajir me lotat nāth sindhu sukh nehāyo |

Yaśodā, now deeply trusting him, asked, "Which one?" Śiva revealed, "In the locks of my hair there is a divine potency. If your baby touches the locks of my hair with His feet, He will be free from all afflictions in His life." Upon touching the lotus feet of baby Kṛṣṇa, Śivajī fell on the ground in ecstasy and began rolling in the dust of Braja. Yaśodā became scared and thought, "What is happening to this *yogī*? If something bad happens to him, it may even affect my baby."

After quite a while, Śiva regained his consciousness. Yaśodā asked, "O Yogīrāja! We were very concerned. What happened to you?" Śiva replied, "Maiyā nothing happened to me. I do not give this charm to everyone, and I was taking permission from my Lord, whether I can apply this charm on your baby or not. Now, my Lord has approved." Hearing this, Yaśodā was quite pleased.

Now, grabbing the opportunity, Śiva took baby Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet in his hands and, because he had won everyone's trust, no one stopped him. Śiva touched baby Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet to his heart's content, took out some ashes from his stringed small bag, and placed it on His toenails and deep abdomen. Śiva said, "Maiyā, my gurujī, who is invisible, has told me that your child has now become immortal." Yaśodā was very pleased. Śiva said, "Maiyā, this is my flag! Offer homage to the flag and give me alms in my bowl."

ādi nāth ki dhwajā chadayi puni khaprā bharvāyo |

This is how Yogis establish their mystic prowess. By asking to pay homage to their flag and asking to fill their bowls. Yaśodā said, "Yogīraja, what do you desire? What should I give you in alms: diamonds, pearls, cloths, or dresses?" Śiva replied, "No, no, Maiyā. Just give me the *panjīri*, (sweets), offered when your son was born. I am a *yogī*, so what would I do with diamonds and pearls? Instead of dresses and clothes, just give me Kṛṣṇa's loose upper cloth." Yaśodā asked, "O Bābā, how can you even use this small cloth, hardly eight inches in length? Please take whatever else you desire. " Śiva would not accept anything else, and said, "Maiyā, now I am going. You have fulfilled my wish. May your son live long and be very happy."

det asish jiyo sut jug jug mo abhilash pujayo
'vṛndāvana' hīt rup charit lakhi ur anand badhayo
(*Shrungar ras sār 27.133*)

Brahmānḍa Ghāṭ

Here Kanhaiyā performed pastimes of eating dust of Braj. When Krsna ate dust, the cowheard boys approached mother Yaśodā and thus complained, "Mother! Your beloved son has eaten dust." Then Kanha said, "No no mother, I did not eat dust."

nāham bhaksitavān amba sarve mithyābhisamsinah
yadi satya-giras tarhi samaksham pashya me mukham

"Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "My dear mother, I have never eaten dirt. All My friends complaining against Me are liars. If you think

they are being truthful, you can examine my mouth with your own eyes." (ŚB. 10.8.35)

Yaśodājī said, "Ok then, show me Your mouth."

Kṛṣṇa opened His mouth and Yaśodā saw the entire Brahmāṇḍa within the little mouth of Kṛṣṇa. After seeing the totality of Brahmāṇḍa in Kṛṣṇa's mouth, Yaśodā was wonder-struck and overwhelmed with her omnipotent son, thinking that her son was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa considered that because His mother had seen His grandeur He will not be able to relish her affections anymore, and He, therefore, removed all impressions of His grandeur from Yaśodā's mind and filled it again with motherly affection towards Him as her son." (ŚB. 10.8.35-41)

Mo dekhati yashodā tere ḍhoṭā abahī māṭī khāyī ।
Ehi sunake uṭhake ris dhāī bāh pakaḍa lai āyī ॥
Ek kar sauan bhuj gādhai kar ek kar līnhai sāṭī ।
Mārati hauan tohe abahi kanhaiyā begi n ugalo māṭī ॥

All Kṛṣṇa's friends went to mother Yashoda and complained, "Mother Yashoda, just now in front of us, Kṛṣṇa ate sand while on the bank of the Yamuna". As soon as mother Yaśodā heard that, she went to Kṛṣṇa angrily and caught both of His muddy hands with one of her hands. With the other hand she held a big stick and, chastising Him, said, If you do not spit out the sand from your mouth, I will punish You with this stick.

Shyamsundar said,

sab larika ab tere āge jhooti kehet banāyi ।
mere much tu keh nai mānat dikhrāon bai ।
akhil brahmānd ki mahimā dikhrāyo much māhi ।

Just like an ordinary child, Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied: Mother everyone is lying! I didn't eat mud. I will open my mouth and show you!" Śyāmasundar then opened His mouth and let His mother see the whole Universe within His mouth.

In this way, it is described how Brahmāṇḍa in its totality was shown to Mother Yaśodā from within His mouth at Brahmāṇḍa Ghāṭ.

Chapter 47
Mahavan Gokula

Prayer Mantra for Mahāvana

mahan maha ṛṣir nām yātrā tepe mahātapa
varsha panch sahastreshu mahāvana namostute

Prayer Mantra for Mahāvana

tapah pitha namastubhyam kṛṣṇa krīda vara prada
trelokya ramaṇa kshetra mahāvana namostute
(*Bṛhad Gautama Tantra*)

The land of Braja is filled with an attractive and delightful atmosphere. It is a part of the divine Goloka. It is endowed with forty-eight forests including twelve *vanas* (main forests), twelve *upavanas* (small forests), twelve *prativanas* (restricted forests), and twelve *adhivanas* (supplementary forests). The twelve main forests are renowned and distinctly glorious. The glorious Mahavan is one of the main forests.

kām kokilā kumud khadirvan chatra tāl bahulāvan bel |
bhadra bhāndir mahā lohjangh bārah van yugal sukeli ||

The pasture land of Braja is a combination of one hundred thirty-seven forests. All these principal and small forests are considered to be limbs of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. All these opulent forests have manifested on this earth just before His advent, as the pasture land of Braja, covering an area of eighty-four kośa, approximately 168 square miles.

The area of Mahāvana was selected by Kṛṣṇa for His most captivating and fascinating childhood pastimes, which gave supreme joy and delight to

all people. This glorious place of pilgrimage had the ultimate good fortune of obtaining the purifying vision and sanctifying touch of Kṛṣṇa, Who, in turn, enjoyed the beauty and the hospitality of that holy land. The enjoyer of divine pastimes established this divine place for His pastimes and that divine place was blessed by the divine presence of the Supreme Enjoyer.

Now, the first question arises, "Why was this place named Mahāvana?"

In Bṛhad Gautami tantra, it is revealed that there was a great sage named Mahānmahā, who performed severe penances for 5,000 years in this forest. This is why it was named Mahāvana and is recognized as the land of penances. This land was also blessed by the performance of Kṛṣṇa's captivating childhood pastimes, as well as the performance of His delightful amorous pastimes.

This is the land of penances for the sages. It is famous all over the three worlds as being the place of Kṛṣṇa's most amazing pastimes. Numerous great men and saints have stayed there, and many still stay there today.

For all of them, it is a place of worship as well as a place for purifying their heart through self-discipline with the aim of achieving shelter at the lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Among them are Mahārāj Śrī Āskaranjī, Śrī Madan Gopāl dāsjī, Śrī Govinda Svāmī, Śrī Chhītta Svāmī, Śrī Nārāyaṇa dāsa Brahmācārī, Śrī Jadvendra dāsa Kumhar, Śrī Jagannāth Joshi, Śrī Bābā Venujī, Śrī Govinda dāsa Bhallājī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsjī, Śrī Yadvendra dāsjī, Śrī Alīkhānjī, and Śrī Tāj Bībījī.

It is not possible to narrate all of their biographies here due to lack of space, but the important thing we should understand is that many great personalities endowed with the most exceptional qualities chose to reside in Mahāvana. Deeply understanding and recognizing the importance of this place, they enhanced and protected its beauty and splendor. A short description of some of the great souls who stayed here is briefly narrated below.

Alīkhānjī

One Muslim devotee by the name of Alīkhānjī occupied a very high government post. Taking over the post in the governmental administration of Tavisa from another devotee named Prīthvipati, he started residing in Mahāvana. He used to attend the religious discourses daily given by Śrī Gūsāijī.

One day in the discourse, he heard the following verse.

vrikshe vrikshe venudhāri patre patre chaturbhujah
yatra vṛndāvanam tatrah lakshya alakshya kathā kritah
(Chaurasi Vaishnav Varta)

Here in every tree, there is Kṛṣṇa, in every leaf there is Kṛṣṇa. One should not discriminate to serve or favor one tree over the other.

84 Vaiṣṇava Varta

After hearing this verse, he announced that if anyone breaks or destroys even a leaf from a tree in Braja, he would be punished. One day, an oil dealer broke the branch of a tree in Braja. Alīkhān punished him by pouring all his oil at the root of that tree. Since then, everyone was so fearful that no one dared to harm even a single leaf in Mahāvana.

All these great devotees beautified and glorified Braja. They served Braja and they protected Braja. Everyday Śrī Gūsāijī would deliver a spiritual discourse in Gokula and everyday Alīkhān would go from Mahāvana to Gokula to hear the religious discourse. Impressed by Alīkhān's firm faith, Śrī Gūsāijī would only start the discourse after Alīkhānjī's arrival. Other Vaiṣṇavas attending the discourse noticed this and complained, "Who knows how much this Muslim understands?"

When Śrī Gūsāijī realized what thoughts were bothering these vaishnavas, he asked, what was the topic of yesterday's discourse? but none of them were able to reply. When Alī khan jī arrived, the same question was presented to him. With folded hands and great humility, he said, "As you have instructed me, I will narrate yesterday's lecture and if you instruct me so, I can narrate all the discourses from the first day I have been listening."Gūsāijī was very pleased to hear this.

Alīkhānjī was such a favored recipient of the Lord's mercy, that he would remember every word of any religious discourse he heard. The essence of this story is that the path of devotion to the Supreme Lord is open to every living being. In this path of devotion, there is no discrimination based on lineage, caste, or community. One who has boundless love for God is of the highest caste and supreme lineage.

In this way, Alī khān Pathān lived in Mahāvana, as the governor of Braja ruled by Emperor Akbar. He was a cherished governor on account of his righteousness. Besides hearing Gūsāinjī's transcendental nectarine discourses and constantly engrossed in remembering the lotus feet of the Lord, he became the qualified Vaiṣṇavā of the highest degree. His burial place is on the way from Gokula to Ramaṇ Reti, after crossing Gopa's well. This place can be witnessed during the Braj Yatra.

Once, Tānsen, a very qualified singer, and one of the nine extraordinary personalities in the court of Emperor Akbar, arrived at this Mahāvana. He met Gūsāinjī to boast his singing. After he sang, Gūsāinjī awarded him 10,000 coins and a worthless penny with a hole in it. Tānsen was perplexed and asked, "Why did you give me a worthless penny along with 10,000 coins? What is your intention?" Gūsāinjī replied, "As you are a singer in the court of Emperor Akbar, you were awarded 10,000 coins. But, your singing is worth only one worthless penny when compared to the quality of our singers here." Tānsen, who was proud of his singing, remarked, "How can I accept your judgment?"

Then Gūsāijī called upon Govinda Svāmī and asked him to sing one devotional verse. Govinda Svāmī sang a verse in the Sārangā musical note. Tānsen was astonished to hear that composition. He contemplated, "Govind Svāmī's singing ability compared to mine is like comparing velvet with a rough cloth. This is why they gave me a worthless penny along with 10,000 coins!"

After that, he earnestly and humbly requested Govinda Svāmī to teach him singing. Govinda Svāmī replied, "I don't even talk with followers of other beliefs." Tānsen immediately surrendered to Gūsāijī and presented him 25,000 coins. Thereafter Govinda Svāmī agreed to teach him singing.

Tānsen completed his training under Govinda Svāmī and continued to spend most of his time in Mahāvana. Once a month, however, he would travel to the Emperor's court to sing there. But one day, while listening to Tānsen's singing, Śrī Nāthajī smiled and from that day, Tānsen stopped going to the emperor and stayed near Gūsāijī permanently. In this way, this auspicious land of Mahāvana also has some historical significance.

Mahāvana was one of Kṛṣṇa's favorite locations to enact His pastimes and is most famous in the three worlds. Mahāvana is the most wonderful and delightful place, where the heart enchanting, transcendental Cupid descended in an accessible form. Just by seeing this form, the mind and soul experience supreme bliss. In all four directions, cool, mild, and

aromatic breezes flowed, amidst the sweet, resonant, and melodious sounds of parrots, pigeons, cuckoos, and intoxicated peacocks, thus creating an atmosphere of astonishing pleasure.

In all four directions, sweet resonating echoes of victory and jubilation is resounding. After all, what is the reason behind this happiness? Suradāsjī describes the cause of this jubilation in Mahāvana

gokul pragat bhaye hari āyi l
adham udhāran asur sanhāran antaryāmi tribhuvan rāi l
māthe per dhari vasudev lyāye nand mahar ghar mein pahunchāi l
jāgi meheri putra mukh dekhat pulak anga ur mein na samāi l
gadgad kanth bol nahin āve harshvant hvai nand bulāi l
āvahu kant dev persen bhaye putra bhayo mukh dekhau dhāi l
dauri nand gaye suta mukh dekhyo so shobhā sukh barani na jāi l
"surdās" pahile yeh māngyo doodh piāvan yashumati māi l

In this land of Mahāvana, Nandnandan has finally appeared in the lap of Mother Yaśodā. We are so grateful!! We all are so grateful.

The whole Mahāvana was covered with excellent soft grass. Its vines were heavy with beautiful flowers and the trees were loaded with various fruits. In Mahāvana, honeycombs were abundantly sighted and the honeybees, after casually leaving behind the filled honeycomb, immediately started making new ones, as if to say, "Take this one, take that one, and make our endeavors fruitful!"

The sun is dawning. The mother wakes up and is witnessing her blue-complexioned, darling son. Her maternal affection is surging with overflowing waves of love, as if it knows no bounds.

"What to do? Who shall I call? Who should I tell? Who shall I show? "Oh, sister Sunandā! Listen! Quickly call Nanda Bābā?" Sunandā immediately ran impetuously without caring for herself or the path. Somehow, she reached the barn.

Forgetting all about her surroundings, speaking loudly into the ears of Nanda Bābā and pointing out the good fortune of Gokula, she told him, "O Brother! Many hearty congratulations to you! Wake up! Wake up! Yaśodā has given birth to a precious Son!" This is all she said, and Nanda Bābā, after listening, quickly ran to see this charming Prince, "Oh! Where is He? Where is He?" Wherever you looked, you saw gopīs and Gopas, running here and there.

After all, what had happened in Nanda's residence? After seeing that beautiful bluish lotus face, Nanda Rāya said, "Oh! He is the One, the same One, whom I was envisioning in my meditation when I was in the barn!"

nandray ke navnidhi āi /
māthe mukut shravan mani kuṇḍal pitavasan bhuja chāru suhāi /
bājat tāl mridang yantra gati charachi argajā anga chadhāi /
akshat dudh doob liye shir bandat ghar ghar bandanvār badhāi /
chhirkat harad dahi hiya harshat girat anka bhari let uthāi /
'suradās' sab milat paraspar dān det nahi nand aghāi /

Now the program of giving in charity started. Not only Nanda Bābā gave charity. Whatever precious things came into sight; whatever precious objects came into his hand or in his way; it was being given. Who is giving? To whom it is given? Why is it given? No one knew and no one cared!

nando mahā-manās tebhyo vāso 'laṅkāra-go-dhanam
sūta-māgadha-vandibhyo ye 'nye vidyopajīvinaḥ

"The great-minded Mahārāj Nanda gave away clothing, ornaments, and cows in charity to the cowherd men, the sūtas (the professional reciters of the old histories), the māgadhas (the professional reciters of the histories of royal dynasties), the vandīs (general singers of prayers), and men of all other professions.

(ŚB. 10.5.15)

Nanda Bābā, who is very generous by nature and self-willed, decided to become voluntarily robbed. He began to give beautiful clothes, ornaments, cows, jewels, and treasure to sages, ascetics, and brāhmaṇas. Folding his hands in supplication, grasping their legs and forcefully persuading them to accept, he implored them, "Oh please take this! If not this, take that, take something! Certainly, you will have to take this!" Along with blissful singing and festive dancing, someone put butter on another's face, someone threw oil mixed with turmeric, and somebody tried to shower another with water. All over, very auspicious sounds could be heard, accompanied by laughter and clapping. Everyone was dancing, young and old. It was announced in the whole village, "No-one will go to the forest today."

lakshmi si jaha mālin bole bandan mālā bāndhat dole
dwār buhārat firat ashta nidhi, kauren sathiya cheetat nav nidhi

Lakṣmī became a wonderful gardener, traveling here and there, decorating Braja with various fragrant and multicolored flowers.

Surasāgar

tata ārabhya nandāsya vrajaḥ sarva-samṛddhimān
harer nivāsātma-guṇai ramākrīḍam abhūn nṛpa

"O Mahārāj Parīkṣit, yet beginning from Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance, the home of Nanda Mahārāj, the abode of the Supreme Lord and His transcendental qualities, became the place for all prosperity and the pastimes of Laksmi." (ŚB. 10.5.18)

From that day onwards, in Nanda Bābā's kingdom, success and prosperity began to flourish. Since the arrival of the son of Yaśodā, Braja became a place of pastimes for Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune. Whoever came to Nanda's residence as a beggar, returned as a donor for the rest of their life! This festival celebrating Kṛṣṇa's first birthday is not a subject of writing, but it is an unfathomable ocean of indescribable bliss.

greh greh te gopi gāvati jab rangili galin bich bhir bhai tav /
sovaran thāl rahi hāthan lasi kamalan chadi āye māno shashi /
umange prem nadi chhabi pave nand nand sāgar ko dhāve /
kanchan kalash jagmage nug ke bhāge sakal amangal jag ke /
dolat gvāl māno ranjeete bhaye sabahi ke man ke cheete /
ati ānand nand ras bheene pravat sāt ratan ke deene /
kāmdhenu te nek navine dvai lakh dhenu dvijan ko deene /
nand dvār je yāchak āye bahuro firi yāchak nā kahāye /
ghar ke thākur ke sut jāyo "surdās" tab sab sukh pāyo /

In Mahāvana, Kṛṣṇa was now six days old. Was there any celebration for the festival of Śashthi? Of course, there was! In all four directions, the atmosphere was divine. Somewhere, auspicious benedictions were being recited in a loud voice. In one place, the goddess Śashthi was being worshiped. In another place, offering and brāhmaṇaical ritualistic fire sacrifices were being performed. Elsewhere, blessings were bestowed upon the newly born child. At the same time, the gopīs were singing and dancing, while Nanda Bābā was performing charity.

As the festival finished, Pūtana, the murderer of many children, arrived, being inspired by Kaṁsa. She had taken an oath in front of Kaṁsa, "Oh great King, there is no need to worry! I will cause the death of the Boy who is supposed to be the cause of your death. If I do not kill Him, then my name is not Pūtana." One should be alert and cautious of Pūtana. After putting a very deadly poison on the foremost part of her breasts and disguising herself as a very beautiful lady, she approached the land of Kṛṣṇa.

Now, we shall see whose vow will be fulfilled, this child's or Pūtanā's! It is quite clear that purity will own victory. There is no gain in deceit. Pūtanā is the ultimate personification of deceit. Outwardly, appearing as a most charming and beautiful divine goddess, while internally her heart is filled with violent and murderous intentions. Her only purpose is to kill.

Gokula

Gokula is at the entrance of the surrounding area of Mahāvan; here all the Brajavasis stood amazed. After the birth of Nandanandana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, many gods, and goddesses came frequently to Braja. Goddesses like Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī forgot about '*chanchaltā*' (not being at the same place for too long). Lakṣmī came here to stay, "I will not go and leave this land of Braja!"

Then there were Gods and goddesses who became very enthusiastic! They left their *swarga loka* (heaven) and roamed in these cow dung and dust laden streets, searching the palace of Nanda Maharaj.

After seeing Pūtana, the Brajavāsis thought she might be one of the goddesses. "What do we know? Just let it be. How long can we keep looking at these demigods and goddesses? Let's carry on with our work."

Later, Yashodā and Rohiṇī also saw her. Lotus eyed Kṛṣṇa didn't even looked at her. He closed His lotus eyes even before she arrived. He thought, "Why shall I look at a child killer's face? I won't look!" She took Him, put her breast in His mouth, and said, "Drink."

But she did not say what to drink? She didn't specify if Kṛṣṇa should drink milk or poison or her life-air. So, He thought, "If I drink milk, then poison and life will be leftover. If I drink poison then, milk and life be leftover. But if I drink her life air, then nothing will be leftover. And I would have drunk everything." Thinking this way, that drinking her life-air is the best recourse, He sucked Putanā's life air.

"Bolo Putnā Uddharaka poot ki jai"! (May the beloved son who delivered Putanā, always be victorious!)

But Kaṁsa still did not want to accept defeat. Kaṁsa sent a brāhmaṇa named, Srīdhar. Kaṁsa said, "Do not come back 'till you kill Him". Sridhar said, "I am your servant, do not worry".

"OK, then leave now," Kaṁsa said. Srīdhar reached the palace of Nandā. He asked Yaśodā, "I am a brāhmaṇa and I am hungry. Please let me have some food. I came from so far to see your child."

Yashodā said, "O brāhmaṇa, please stay here till I come back after my bath." The brāhmaṇa was happy that she left, leaving him alone with the child; he thought that he could finish the work. Swinging in his little cradle, victorious over Putana, Kṛṣṇa thought, "I killed Putana, but now this is a brāhmaṇa. I should not kill him, but taking care of him is also necessary. When he comes close to me, I might wreck his neck."

jabahi brahman hari dhing āyo hāth pakar hari tāhi girayo

Kṛṣṇa pressed his hand and made him fall to the ground, but this was not enough. With His little feet, He stepped on the brāhmaṇa's tongue and it was folded. Having twisted his tongue, Kṛṣṇa broke the pot of yogurt and spilled all the yogurt on his face. Then "Lālā" (Kṛṣṇa) went back to His cradle and started crying heavily. Yaśodā, coming back with water, saw baby Kṛṣṇa crying, broken pots on the floor, and the Brahmān's face covered with butter and yogurt. She put the water pot on one side and screamed angrily, "Thief, thief in Nandabhavan! Get out from here, how can you be a brāhmaṇa? You broke all the pots, ate everything, and even made my baby cry! Get out, cunning brāhmaṇa!"

The helpless cunning Brahaman started squeaking "a ā ī e uuu," as if teaching mother Yashodā all the vowels. He could not say anything since his tongue was twisted. Janārdanā had twisted his tongue; so that the brahamn could not reveal anything to anyone.

brāhmaṇa ko ghar bāhar kino
god uthāi kṛṣṇa ko lino

brijawasis came running and entered Nandabhavan

poorvasi sab daude āye
soor dās hari ke guna gāye

O Yashodā! Is Kanāia safe?

"Oh Lord! Please do not let anything bad happen to our Kānāi.". One old gopi said, "Lāla, May You will live for eternity." (One gopī while kissing baby Kṛṣṇa), "Why do all these demons only know the way to Nandabhavan? One gopi examined His hands and another gopi examined His feet. "Let me check if this demon brāhmaṇa harmed Kṛṣṇa in anyway".

She checked and sighed in relief. All the gopīs said, "Nothing has happened to our *lālā*. Everything is fine. There is so much mercy from Lord."

Now that Srīdhar was gone and taken care of; was anyone else coming to Nandabhavan? Did Kaṁsa accept defeat after this? No. no. No way!

sunyo kansa putanā māri, shoch bhayo take jiya bhāri ॥
kāgāsur ko nikat bulāyo, tāson kahi sab vachan sunāyo ॥
mam āyasu tum māthe dharo, chhal bal kari mam kāraj karo ॥
iha sunike tinha mātho nāyo, sur turat braj ko uthi dhāyo ॥

Now it was Kāgāsurā's turn.

kāgrupa ek asur dharayo

He headed to Nandabhavan with great zeal, thinking, "Now, I will become the cause of His death. It will not take me long. Oh! Here is Nandabhavan. Let me check first, where is the one who is supposed to be *kāla* (death) for Kaṁsa? Ha, He is right here. Bluish light like a bright blue jewel! Everything is in place and Yashodā is busy with her work. I will finish my work quickly." As soon as he pocked his beak, which was hard as a rock, baby Kṛṣṇa thought, "Oh, I have a chance to play with you" and smiled. "I was thinking I wanted to play with someone. Mother is busy in her works, so if all of you come one by one every day, I will always have a new toy to play with."

However, I do not wish to play with the same toy every day. I want new toys everyday". This is the reason why you don't send back the toy with which you have already played; thinking what if Kamsa send the same toy back again? So, how did you play with Kāgāsura!

kanth chāpi bahu bār firāyo, gahi parkyo nrip pās parayo ।

With Your soft little lotus hands, wrecking his neck, swirling him in the air, showing him the entire universe, You threw him with such great might that he fell right by the Kamsā's throne.

turant kamsa tehi poochan lāgyo, kyon āyo nāhi kāj sarayo ।

Kaṁsa asked, "Hey! Did you kill or got killed?"

bityo jām jawāb jab āyo, sunhu kamsa tero āyu sarayo ॥
dhari avatar mahāvan kou, ekahi kar mero garv harayo ॥
"surdās" prabhu kamsa nikandan, bhakt hetu avatar dharayo ॥

"Mahārāj, Mahārājā. Kandarpa darpa (the one who destroyed the pride of Kāmadev) destroyed my pride. He is not any ordinary child. He appears to be the God of gods." Kaṁsa laughed, saying jokingly, "Oh! So you also learned this lesson?"

Kānāi killed many demons, and Braja was finally free of all demons. Now, who will solve Kṛṣṇa's problem? He called his mother, "O Mother!" Mother Yaśodā replied, "Yes, lālā, come here in this room"

"I am coming," said Kānāi, (and placed His lotus feet at the doorstep).

Everyone has their own problems. Some have family upbringing problems; some have financial problems. Some have this problem or the other. But what is our Kānāi's problem? Don't even ask. It is a big problem. If you can help to solve it, then it will be a big help. Our baby Kṛṣṇa, our *bāl līlā Bihariji* is holding His lock of hair in his hand and asking, "When will my tuft of hair grow" When little Kṛṣṇa asked mother Yaśodā for the moon to play with, she solved the problem by filling a big vessel with water and showing moon's reflection in it. However, she is unable to solve this problem of the tuft of the hair not growing. This huge problem of tuft not growing, sprouted in this Mahavan. Holding the choti (lock of hair), He sometimes stared at it himself, showed it to His mother at times, or shook it at times asking her to make it bigger. "I want it longer than brother Balarāma's choti. Mother, you fed Me a lot of milk from our cow Padmagandhā and Surabhi, but My hair is still short."

maiya kabahi badaigi chotti ।
kiti bār mohi doodh pivat, bhai ajahu hai chhotti ॥
tu jo keheti bal ki beni, jyon hai hai lāmbi moti ।
kaadat-guhat-nahavāvat ochhat nāgini sib hui loti ॥

kācho doodh piyāvati pachi-pachi deti na mākhan roti |
"surshyam" chir jeev dou bhaiyā hari haldhar ki joti ||

Who can solve this problem? If it cannot be solved, what can we do? Both brothers will fight. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma both had childish, lovable, adorable pastimes here in the holy dust of Mahāvana, which blossomed the lotus heart of Mother Yashodā. In simple ways, by killing all the demons sent by Kaṁsa, They destroyed the fear of the Brijavasis and protected them. This gave them so much happiness.

For ages, this Mahāvana has captured our minds in a very pleasing way. Today, the number of trees has decreased dramatically, reducing greenery and nature. Modernization, industrial development, and other activities are seriously affecting Mahāvana, and the whole Braja is in danger of losing its original splendor. Nonetheless, devotees still experience sublime happiness in this holy land.

Chapter 48
Ramaṇ Reti

There is a well-known and glorious story of Ramaṇ Reti which is narrated in the *Garga-saṁhitā* as follows. Once, the most excellent sage Durvāsā, coming to Braja with the expectation of seeing the reverential aspect of the Supreme Lord, observed with the strength of his mind the most pleasing and attractive activities of Gopāl with His young cowherd friends, who were rolling about in the glorious soil of Braja, playing various childish games.

Durvāsā, watching Kṛṣṇa playing games with His little friends without even wearing clothes, was quite surprised and could not help but think, "Is He really the Supreme Lord, the embodiment of all truth, knowledge, and bliss? If so, then why is He rolling about in the land of Braja with small children? He definitely cannot be the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is eternally endowed with all six opulences."

As Durvāsā was sitting there, very bewildered, little Kṛṣṇa appeared in front of him. Kṛṣṇa began to laugh and took such a deep breath that Durvāsā was drawn into His mouth, where he saw the whole universe. There Durvāsā envisioned a vast forest, and while wandering in that forest he was swallowed by a large python. In the stomach of the python, Durvāsā viewed a vast universe, where there was a white mountain on which he sat and performed severe penances for one hundred million years.

As Durvāsā completed his penances, there was a partial devastation of the world. After completely engulfing the earth, the seven seas came towards Durvāsā, transporting him in the irresistible swift current of the oceans. He kept floating in this way for many ages. Once, on the shore of this ocean, he saw that there was another world. After entering the heart of that world, he reached the transcendental world. As he was wandering in that world for the lifetime of Brahmā, he spotted a hole and immediately entered the hole. Soon after entering the hole, he came out of that universe.

Afterward, he saw a large expanse of water, in which he observed millions of universes drifting forward. Looking at that water attentively, he saw the river Virajā going across it, and in so doing he saw the eternal, divine Goloka. As he entered the divine Goloka Dhāma, he was pushed into a lovely thicket and blessed with the presence of Kṛṣṇa, who upon seeing Durvāsā bursts out laughing.

Durvāsā was again drawn into His breath and entered into Kṛṣṇa's mouth. There, he saw the same beautiful little child who was playing various games with the other children in the delightful ground of Ramaṇ Reti. Now, Durvāsā realized that He is the Lord of the entire universe, the Supreme Lord, and immediately offered his prayers to Kṛṣṇa.

bālam navīna shat patra vishal netram
bimbadharam sajal megha ruchim manogyan.
rajant ānat shirah kumudāsya yasya nandātma
jāya sablāy namo namaste

"I am offering obeisances in my mind to Kṛṣṇa, Whose elongated eyes are as vast as a newly blossomed hundred lotus petals. Whose most attractive lips have a soft reddish glow, Whose lustrous dark bluish body surpasses the beautiful bluish hue of a fresh rain cloud; Whose lotus face is radiant with the splendor of a faint smile; Who is wandering about with a gentle and graceful gait; and Who is just a child but knows it all in His mind. His lotus feet are decorated with anklets, which tinkled in a melodious tone; His waist is adorned with a belt bedecked with novel jewels and ringing bells. I worship this Kṛṣṇa who is playing children games on the bank of Yamunā." (Ga. Saṁ.Go.Kh. 20.24-25-26)

One, who recites this *Śrī Nanda-nandana stotra* at dawn is supremely blessed, as Kṛṣṇa Himself will appear in front of his eyes.

Yaśodā had put a black mark made out of the black soot from a lamp on His beautiful bluish lotus face to avert the evil eye. He was adorned with a most beautiful garland and a protective necklace made of tiger claws, amulets, and charms. His bright face, as beautiful as the full moon, and the dark curly hair hanging on His face produced an astonishing splendor and beauty; and appeared like dark clouds gracing a beautiful blue moon. His lotus head was bent downward, and He was adorned with

such a distinct exuberance. I respectfully salute that Kṛṣṇa and His older brother Balarāma again and again.

There are so many stories and incidents related to this place. Āskaranjī, a great devotee, saw the astonishing pastime of Holī here and remained unconscious standing for three days struck with wonder. Holī is very famous here. King Āskaranjī was a very famous devotee in the Vallabha sect. Ramaṇ Reti is not only a place for Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes, but it is also blessed with Kṛṣṇa's amorous pastimes with the gopīs, but this is unknown to most people.



Gokul Raman Reti



Top - Raman Reti - Raskhan Samadhi. Below - Raman Reti - Ambrish Tila

Chapter 49
Rāval

The celebration of Rādhārāṇī's birth is sung in both abodes, Barṣāṇā and Rāval. Here, the festivities were twice as large as the festivities in Nanda's palace on Janmāṣṭamī. Rādhā's beauty was unmatched, being far superior to that of Lakṣmī, Pārvatī and other goddesses. In these glorifications, Barṣāṇā is not specifically mentioned but it is stated that all the *ṛṣis* (sages) were sitting at the main gate of Vṛṣabhānu's palace, anxiously awaiting the birth of Rādhā.

As soon as the sages were informed, they engaged themselves in performing the birth ceremony, including *nāmakarana* (naming ceremony) or giving the auspicious name to the newborn child. The palace of Vṛṣabhānu is established at three different locations in Braja: Barahana, Barsāṇa, and Rāval. When the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are in Gokula, Rādhā resides in Rāval; when the pastimes are in Nandagāon, in Barṣāṇā; and when Nanda Bābā stays in Basai, She resides in Barahānā.

When the omniscient Maharṣi Gargācārya, well versed in all the branches of Vedic knowledge, came to the splendid palace of Vṛṣabhānu situated in Rāval, on the auspicious bank of the Holy River Yamunā holding a parasol as well as a staff, he appeared very majestic and as radiant as Indra and Dharmarajā.

Appearing like a second sun, his luster brilliantly illuminated all ten directions. He was wearing a sacred thread and decorated with a manuscript in his belt, appearing like a second Brahmā. As he was wearing a bright white dress, his splendor was like that of Lord Viṣṇu. Vṛṣabhānu, noticed Garga Ṛṣi, the supreme embodiment of truth in his lineage, standing at the door. He immediately offered him prayers, kneeling at Garga's feet with much respect, and welcomed him with folded hands.

As Vṛṣabhānu was well versed in all the etiquette of worship, he first offered the best seat to Garga Muni and as soon as he was comfortably seated, he glorified him with the suitable rites and reverential prayers, which were appropriately conforming to the scriptures. After properly worshiping him, he respectfully circumambulated him and said, "The appearance of great men is to establish peace, as this awards ultimate goodwill and bliss to the householders. Only the mercy of the saints eradicates the darkness of ignorance from the heart of men, not the sun. Oh, great saint! Your presence has sanctified our whole cast of Gopas. O, sinless one! Great men like you sanctify even the Holy places of pilgrimage with the dust of their lotus feet. O, Prabhu! I am so fortunate to have the all-auspicious Rādhā as my daughter. Please grace us with your mercy."

"After thoughtful consideration, please enlighten us as to Who in this world is adorned with the unparalleled supreme qualities, and worthy to be given the hand of my daughter. As you are wandering through all the three worlds just like the sun and are omniscient, I will only give my auspicious daughter to One who will be recommended by you; and who possesses all the supreme qualities."

After hearing the desire of Vṛṣabhānu, Garga Muni took him to a secluded place on the bank of the Yamunā which was very charming and filled with the melodious murmuring sounds of her clear blue water. Here, he spoke to him, "Vṛṣabhānu, I am going to tell you a very confidential secret which should be kept from all others. The Supreme Lord of Infinite universes, the presiding Lord of Goloka, the absolute complete Brahmā, the Supreme Lord, the *līla puruṣottama* (the best of all men), Kṛṣṇa Himself has appeared in the residence of Śrī Nanda Bābā."

Vṛṣabhānu said, "Oh, Maharṣi! Nanda is blessed with the most auspicious fortune, which is beyond any description. Now, please shower your grace and reveal to me the total mystery of this divine incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa."

Maharṣi Garga said, "In response to the prayers of Brahmā, Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Goloka has descended to alleviate the burden of this earth and to annihilate extremely wicked men like Kaṁsa, and many others. The Supreme beloved of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lady of Goloka, the One and only Śrī Rādhārāṇī has kindly appeared in your residence as your daughter, Rādhā. You are unaware of Her unique glory, as She is the pleasure potency of the Supreme Lord."

At that instant, an ocean of bliss erupted in the heart of Vṛṣabhānu, and he was filled with ecstasy. He called upon Queen Kīrti and deliberated at length on this subject.

Vṛṣabhānu, after fortunately perceiving the incomparable and boundless glory of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and shedding tears of extreme joy, told the best of Ṛṣis, Garga Muni, "I will give my very beautiful daughter only to Kṛṣṇa. Oh, Garga Muni, as you have given me divine and extraordinary guidance, the wedding will take place according to your instructions."

Garga Muni said, "Oh, Vṛṣabhānu, the best among Gopas, I will not be performing the auspicious wedding ceremony of Rādhā with her beloved Kṛṣṇa. The ceremony will take place in Bhāndiravana located on the bank of the Holy Yamunā. The creator of the universe, Lord Brahmā himself, will perform this wedding ceremony in a quiet place near Vṛndāvana. Oh, lord of the Gopas, please understand that Rādhā is the eternal consort of Kṛṣṇa, the beloved Lord of Mathurā. In this world, you are the lord of all the kings and emperors within the chief universe of Goloka Dhāmā. You have descended upon this earth from Goloka Vṛndāvana. Your whole clan of gopas and all the gopīs have also descended from Goloka as per the instructions of Rādhārāṇī. Even after performing so many grand sacrifices, the demigods are unable to have the audience of Rādhārāṇī for innumerable lives. But the same Supreme Lady of Goloka, wife, and life of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa is secretly present in the courtyard of your residence as Rādhā. All these gopas and gopīs are extremely fortunate to have Her audience."

Hearing the incomparable glory of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Vṛṣabhānu and queen Kīrti were amazed and spoke to Śrī Garga Muni in the excitement of supreme bliss as follows, "Oh, best of *brāhmanas*, please have mercy on us and reveal the essential definition of the word Rādhā. Oh, best among the *munis*! On this earth, there is no one like you to eradicate the doubts of our minds."

Gargācārya said, "Once, I went to Gandhamadan's mountain with my disciples. I imbibed there the essence of the *Sāma Veda* from the lotus mouth of Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself. With the sound, "ra," you grasp and comprehend Ramā's nature (Laksmi). With the sound, "a" you accept and perceive the gopīs's position; with the sound. "dha," you grasp and comprehend *dharā*, the earth's function; and with the last sound, "ā", you perceive and accept the Viraja's glories."

The luster and ultimate brilliance of Kṛṣṇa are divided into these four forms: 1. as the gopīs, 2. as the earth, 3. as Lakṣmī, and 4. as Virajā. These four potencies merged into the ultimate auspicious form of Rādhārāṇī. That is why the wise and intelligent consider Rādhārāṇī as the most complete. Whoever is devoutly and continuously chanting these most auspicious names of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa will not only easily acquire religiosity, wealth, sense gratification and liberation, but will also easily obtain the audience and realization of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa.

Vṛṣabhānu and Kīrti were at that time struck with astonishment. After understanding the immeasurable and infinite opulence of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, they began to worship Their image. After that, Vṛṣabhānu paid his homage with the utmost respect to the best in the lineage, Ṛṣi Garga Muni. Thereafter, the knower of truth and one who can at once see the past, present, and future, the best among the *munis*, Śrī Garga Muni returned to his hermitage.



Top - Raval Rādhārāṇī temple. Below - Rādhārāṇī temple





Top - Raval Rādhārāṇī temple. Below - Rādhārāṇī temple

Chapter 50
Maṭhurāpurī, The Capital City of Braja

We are the people of Bhārata-varṣā. As it has been told by the wise, "Bha" means knowledge, and "rata," means immersed in knowledge.

madhyate tu jagat sarva brahma gyanena yen va
tatsār bhutam yatasyā mathurā sa nigadhyate
(*Gopal Tāpni Upaniṣad* U.Khā. 72)

The foundation of this absolute Knowledge, *Brahmājñāna*, which pervades this entire creation, is Śrī Maṭhurāpurī, implying that Śrī Mathurā is the source of all Absolute Knowledge and Devotion. However, here, in the auspicious land of Braja, knowledge becomes submerged into an incredible ocean of bliss.

According to *Padma Purāṇa*, Śrī Mathurā, the birthplace of our beloved, is placed as one of the seven major ancient cities famous for granting salvation. Blessed is this city.

ayodhya mathurā maya kasha kanchi avantika
puri dwaravati chaiva saptaitā moksha dayika

Where is the doubt of its supremacy over Vaikuṇṭha? The fifth goal of life is Kṛṣṇa-prema or love of God. The first four goals of life are *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*, (religiosity, wealth, sense gratification, and liberation). The first goal begins to sprout by staying here only one day, then what to speak of other material benefits?

aho madhupuri dhanya vaikunthay gariyasi
dīn maikam nivāsena harau bhakti prajayate.

There are seven great cities in the Indian subcontinent.

Amongst these, only Śrī Mathurā received the honor of becoming the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa. This most famous land where the personification of eternity, knowledge, and bliss (*Sat-cid-ānanda*) appeared, complete with all sixteen attributes, ever protected by the divine and invincible armor of *Sahasradhāri*. Then, where is the doubt of this land's characteristics being celebrated as supernatural, beyond the realm of māyā? This land exists throughout the four *yugas*. There are ample proofs available to substantiate this fact.

Towards the end of *Satya-yuga*, a demon called Madhu became master of the three worlds after defeating all gods. The gods were terrified by the atrocities of this demon and approached the Lord for protection. The Lord, after fighting a fierce battle that lasted for 10 years, killed Madhu. The gods praised the Lord and addressed Him with a new name, Mādhava, renaming Madhupurī as Mathurā. Eighty- four holy places were established here by the gods.

Vālmīki Rāmayaṇa, *Mahābhārata* and *Harivansh Purāṇa* label Mathurā as Mādhura or Madhupuri. According to *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, in Tretā-yuga, Śatrughna killed Lavaṇāsura, son of Madhu and established Mathurā city after clearing a dense forest.

According to Viṣṇu Puraṇa 1.12.04

hatva cha lavanam raksho madhu putram mahabalam
shatrughno madhra nām puri yātrā chakār vai.

Sukadeva in *Bhāgavatam*

śatrughnaś ca madhoḥ putraṁ lavaṇaṁ nāma rākṣasam
hatvā madhuvane cakre mathurāṁ nāma vai purīm

"Śatrughna also killed a Rākṣasa named Lavaṇa, who was the son of Madhu Rākṣasā. Thus, he established the town known as Mathurā in the great forest known as Madhuvana." (ŚB. 9.11.14)

This implies that Śatrughna cleared the forest of Madhuvana and established a new residential estate named Mathurā which he ruled for twelve years. Some scholars believe that the newly founded city was named Śūrasena city.

At the end of *Dvāpara yuga*, Mathurā gained unprecedented significance by becoming the birthplace of our dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, and later the event of Kaṁsa's death. In Kali-yuga, it survived devastations again and again and our history and people are the proof. Therefore, this city existing in all four *yugas* is a fact. (*Ādi Varāha Purāṇa* 168.9, 158.1; Hari. Pu. 1.54-55)

Varāha Bhagavān said to the Earth: My Mathurā Maṇḍala covering over 80 kośas or 210 km. is a widely-spread estate. Here, one gets the fruit of an *Aśvamedha Yajña* at every step, and by taking bath, is relieved of all sins. In the *Purāṇas*, it is called Māthura Maṇḍalā. Hieun Tsang came to Mathurā in the year 635 AD. and recorded the area of Mathurā as 833 miles or 1230 kilometers. Mathurā, Bhāratapur, Karoli, Dhaulpur, Agra and half of the northern part of Gwālior state used to be included in the state of Mathurā. The city of Mathurā has been recorded as 5 kilometers.

After the Lord's pastimes, it almost became extinct. In Kali-yuga, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came here along with Rūpa Gosvāmī and others, rediscovering the lost places of the pastimes enacted in this locality.

Nārada reveals in great detail the importance of Mathurā in the *Garga-saṁhitā*, *Mathurā kāṇḍa*, *Mathurā-māhātmya*, before King Bahulāśva in 39 verses. Who is the presiding deity of Mathurā? Who is the minister? Who is the guard? Who is the enjoyer?

Nārada Says

svayaṁ hi mathurānāthah keśava kleshnashanah

Keśava Himself, being the famous Lord of Mathurā, extinguishes all troubles and is also named Varāhadeva. The Lord presented this Deity of Keśavadeva initially to the brāhmaṇa Kapiladeva, from Kapiladeva to Indra then to Rāvaṇā. Later, Śrī Rāma brought Him to Ayodhya. Śatrughna received Him from Śrī Rāma and later enshrined Him in Mathurā. The same Keśava-Varāha became the Supreme Ruler of Mathurā.

The compassionate Guardian of Mathurā is Bhūteśvara Mahādeva, who is looked upon as the Police force of Mathurā. Kṛṣṇa says: Deva, You will be the guardian of Mathurā. Hey Mahādeva! Your audience will grant men My Eternal Abode. Śrī Bhūteśvara, the benevolent guardian of Mathurā, punishes the sinners and initiates them into *bhakti*.

kshata vṛndāvana mathurāyashcha namna bhuteshvarah shivah
datva danda pātkine bhaktyarthan mantratā vrajetā
(*Varāha Purāṇa* 168.5-6; Ga.Saṁ.Mā.Khā.Mā. Māhātmya 25.9)

Vāyu Purāna168.5-6

mathurāyam cha deva tvam kshetrapalo bhavishyati
tvayi drashte mahādeva mama kshetrafalam bhavet

Brahmā obtained his illustrious son Svāyambhuva after performing austerities in this land, Varuṇa attained salvation, Lord Rāma won victory over Lavaṇāsura, Rāvaṇa gained victory over all the demigods, and Śāntanu begot Bhīṣma as his son.

"All of them were successful on account of the auspiciousness of this land. Simply by the uttering of the name Mathurā one gains the same benefit as chanting Kṛṣṇa's name, even casually hearing its name grants the fruit of hearing the transcendental topics of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, despite being unknowingly touched by its Holy dust, it is still equivalent to a saint's auspicious touch and being submitted to its various smells is likened to the purifying potency of smelling a Tulasī leaf. Just imagine if one, fortunately, visits Mathurā… what a blessing! This would be like having Kṛṣṇa's personal association! Mukti is roaming in every street of this city, waiting for fortunate candidates!" (Ga.Saṁ.Mā.Kh. 25.25,26,32,33)

Among the seven great cities, Mathurā is most auspicious, because only She grants liberation in four various ways: either by simply taking birth here, performing the ceremony for wearing a sacred thread, meeting one's death here or if the last rites of a departing soul is performed in Mathurā. Any one of these four activities grants liberation to a living entity because this land is sanctified due to the appearance of Kṛṣṇa, which increases a million times the good fortune of Mathurā. Once again, (Kṛṣṇa comes to Mathurā every 8,406,000,000 years!), after spending eleven blissful years with the Brajavāsīs in Gokula, mesmerizing them with His enchanting pastimes and saturating their heart with His affection,

Kṛṣṇa arrived here with Akrūrajī. After hearing about the entrance of these two extraordinary brothers whose presence enhances the glory of Mathurā, elegantly adorned in yellow and blue garments, the women folk of the city quickly and eagerly ran to witness Their beautiful forms. They have been keenly waiting for this rare chance for a long time, and are

enthusiastically gathering in the balconies of high buildings without even bothering to dress up properly.

Every street of this opulent city was filled with the most fragrant flowers; who knew which thoroughfare would be the one lucky enough to receive this blessed vision? Seeing Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the whole world, surrounded by the Gopas, these fortunate women lost all external consciousness. Their gaze was fixed on His charming lotus face only.

This district of Mathurā is not just what we can see with our physical eyes, but is totally and eternally filled and pulsating with the divine playful pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, the ultimate friend of the fallen souls.

We should always cautiously remember, to avoid offenses, that all of its Holy places, bathing places, hills, magnificent buildings, people, birds, animals, plants, trees, all living entities here are factually, eternally, and transcendentally divine and not otherwise.

The amazing form of Mathurā appears just like a lotus. The presiding Deity Keśavadeva is sitting in the whorl of this lotus, on the western petal, Haridevajī is having His pastime on Govardhana hill, the northern petal holds the attractive form of Govindadeva in Vṛndāvana, on the southern petal, the awesome form of Varāhadeva is residing in Mathurā and on the eastern petal, Lord Viśranti is being worshiped. Braja is still the source of India's spiritual power, actually not only of India but, of the whole universe.

braja samudra mathurā kamal rāmakarand;
braja banita sab kumud hai kairav gokula chand

"Braja is an ocean of love…. Mathurā is the lotus growing there…. Vṛndāvana is the whorl of this lotus…. The gopīs are the nectar of this lotus…. and Kṛṣṇa is the bee relishing this precious nectar!" (*Ādi Varāha Purāṇa* 163.15-16)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmābhumi

Mathurā city, the center of our cultural heritage, faced destruction many times in the past, ancient spiritual locations were almost lost in these tumultuous times of uncivilized attacks. Because this land, is spiritual, having descended from Goloka to earth, there is nothing or no one in this material world which could destroy it completely.

Today it once again stands tall in its glory, spreading its divine effulgence through the whole world. The great-grandson of Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Vrajanābhajī Mahārāj constructed Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmābhumi. Around 800 AD King Vikramaditya built a temple there. During the period from the year 1000 to 1026, at which time King Jaipal was ruling, Mahmud Gazani, a yavana(a meat-eater), attacked Bhāratavarṣa for a total of 17 times. He attacked Mathurā in 1017-1018 and ruined many places where Lord Kṛṣṇa performed pastimes, destroying the magnificent structure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmābhumi temple, which was established by King Vikramadityā.

Munshi Al-Alavi, who was the minister of Mahmud Gazani, wrote about the magnificence of that temple in his diary entitled *Tahrike Yamini*. He wrote that the Sultan was overwhelmed by the grandeur of the Vāsudeva Temple. He stated that it would take a minimum of 1 million Dinars and 200 years to build such a structure by the best of artisans. He insisted that it was not something created by normal human beings, saying that only celestial artisans could have erected this master artwork.

The Sultan looted the city of Mathurā for 20 consecutive days, loading his booty of gold, silver, exquisite idols, and other precious items on the backs of hundreds of camels. Al-Alavi mentions in his book an account of one massive idol being broken, yielding 18,300 miskels of pure gold. The Yavanas took away enormous wealth from Mathurā.

After passing through that dark period, this temple was rebuilt in the year 1150 during the rule of King Vijayacandra by a noble man named Śrī Judge Mahaśyā. In 1434 AD, Sikandar Lodi attacked the city again, destroying all its temples and ghāṭs. He erected mosques instead, passing strict orders against Hindus forbidding them from performing any religious ceremonies or rituals on the ghāṭs of the Yamunā.

Around 1515, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmābhumi. From 1556 to 1605, Akbar ruled over the country. He had a secular outlook and showed tolerance towards the Hindu religion. In that period Hindu beliefs grew freely in Braja, and the Lord's ritualistic worship recommenced in various temples. The saints and sages were also again receiving due respect. Akbar himself gave 200 acres of land for the Govinda Temple and Dāmodara Temple, and repeatedly visited Svāmī Hari dāsjī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, and other great saints.

In 1615 AD King Vira Siṅgh Bundela of Orchha renovated the dilapidated, massive old structure of the Keśavajī Temple at 3.3 million rupees. This remained supreme amongst the previous temples with its

most refined carvings, decorations, and splendor. In the year 1650, a French traveler, Tavernier, arrived here and wrote his impressions about this grand temple. He stated that after the Jagannath and Benaras Temples, the Mathurā Temple was the most famous and beautiful temple in Indiā.

In the year 1663 came Barnier, who described Mathurā as a magnificent place. The rule of Akbar lasted until 1605 and after him, Jahangir ruled Bharat until 1628. It is Shahjahan who ruled India for 40 years from 1628 to 1668. After Shahjahan, from 1669 to 1707, Aurangzeb took over the empire of Delhi and relentlessly attacked the Hindus and the city of Mathurā. In the year 1669, the Janmābhumi Temple was once again destroyed and a mosque was erected in its place. The atrocities of Aurangazeb over Mathurā brought an early downfall of the Mughal Empire.

From the year 1707 to 1739, Muslim rulers like Bahadur Shah Zafar and Muhammad Shah Rangila ruled Bharata. From 1739 to 1744, Nadir Shah ruled, and later from 1744, three wars were fought between the English and the French. The Britons ruled over India for 200 years, but not one of them raised a finger towards the Lord's deities. Between 1800 and 1857, some religious awakening began to manifest among the Hindu population.

King Patanimal of Kāśi purchased the land of Janmābhumi with a desire to build a massive Temple in 1815. Other Hindu kings also united to reconstruct the ruined ancient temples in the Holy cities of Ayodhya, Kāśi, etc. It is said that from 1805 to 1857, Bhārata-varṣa remained more or less peaceful. No problematic incidents were recorded in this period.

The first fight for freedom against the British rulers began in the year 1857. In the year 1947, almost after a century, a 'Quit India' movement began and India became independent. On 15th October 1953, Śrī Madan Mohan Malviya put great effort into realizing King Patanimal's dream. The king purchased this land in 1815 but could not build a Kṛṣṇa memorial. Śrī Malviya, with the generous help of Ghanaśyāma Dāsa Birla, purchased this land from Rai Kṛṣṇa Dāsa on 8th February 1944.

In the year 1951, the 'Kṛṣṇa Janmābhumi Trust' was formed and headed by Śrī Gaṇeśa Vāsudeva Malvankar. Next, Śrī Madabhushi Anathasayanam Ayyanger became the head. The Muslims tried to disrupt its proceedings, but on 15 October 1953, Svāmī Akāṇḍānandajī, a great saint, became the President of this Trust. In 1956, Śrī Hanumān Prāsad Poddar Bhaijī, the founder President of Kalyan arrived in Mathurā with

hundreds of devotees and the work began at its own pace towards its conclusion. A Bhāgavat Bhāvan was built in 1965 by Śrī Bhaijī.

The land of the appearance of Jagadīśvara, the creator and controller of countless universes, has undergone many ups and downs in this Kali-yuga, as if to declare a profound message, not only to the Indian nation but to the whole creation, "O devotees of the Lord, have faith in Me and worship Me; do not lose patience because Kṛṣṇa always keeps His promises!"

Forests of Mathurā

According to the *Garga-saṁhitā,* there are 140 million forest groves in this Holy and worshipful land of Mathurā. This holy place has so many millions of places of pilgrimage, that even a mention of all these sites is impossible and beyond the scope of any book for want of intellect, words, and space. Therefore, we will briefly go through the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa's birthplace and then move along.

Keśavadevajī

na keśavā samo devah

"Kṛṣṇa became Keśavadeva by killing Keśī. Nowhere is there a God-like Keśava." (*Varāha Purāṇa*)

In Rudrayāmal

chaturshiti kośatvam maryādam raksha sarvadā
namaste keshvayaiva namaste keshi nashaka

Many other gods and *munis* (sages), dwelling in this land, were nurtured and protected by Keśavadeva. Later they appeared either as Holy places, forest groves, bathing places, hills, ponds, etc. So many great Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* took shelter in this holy land. Śrī Nimbārkācārya added to its glory with his presence. Vallabhācārya was greatly impressed by the beauty of its ancient trees and by the bluish Yamunā river that was filled with fragrant lotuses. Every corner of this land was decorated with profusely growing creepers. He spent much time here relishing the divine

atmosphere. He also visited Keśavadeva Mandir and performed a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata saptāhā*.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, on reaching here, became immersed into the greatest depths of devotional love, dancing in ecstasy. (*Bhakti Ratnakar*)

Presently, Keśavadeva enhances the glory of the Village Rāsadhān Oraiya of district Kanpur. The Chief Guardians of Mathurā Maṇḍala are the four Mahādevas who resided in the four directions, whose task is to safeguard Mathurā

In the North – Śrī Gokarṇa Mahādeva
In the East – Śrī Pipleśvara Mahādeva
In the South – Śrī Rangeśvara Mahādeva
In the West – Śrī Bhūteśvara Mahādeva

Śrī Bhūteśvara

Śrī Bhūteśvara Mahādeva is the worshipable Deity of Kaṁsa, the king of the Bhoja dynasty, and one of the four Mahādevas enshrined by Vrajanābhajī. This is located at a little distance from Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmābhumi in the south. Near to this, one can have an audience of Patala Devī Rudrayamal

Prayer Mantra for Rudrayamal

bhutanam rakshanarthaya sthapito harina svayam
sarvadā vardo nāth bhuteshāya namostute

Potara Kuṇḍa

Near to Kṛṣṇa's birthplace is Potara-kuṇḍa, which boldly proclaims its extraordinary good fortune and where newborn Kṛṣṇa adorned the most exquisite yellow garments.

Vishram Ghāṭ

The circumambulation of Mathurā begins from this attractive location. After ending Kaṁsa's life, Kṛṣṇa came here to rest and to relieve His fatigue. After killing Hiraṇyākṣa, Lord Varāha also rested at this place.

Śatrughna recovered here after killing Lavaṇāsurā. Even Yamunā relaxed here after her long journey from Goloka to Madhupuri.

tīrtharaja namastubhyam devanam hīt karine
paraspar suradhishtha vishran tyai varde namah
(*Padma Purāṇa*)

Therefore, this place is presently known as Vishram Ghāṭ and is situated on the banks of Holy Yamunā. This beautiful, divine place is mentioned in *Ādi Varāha Purāṇā*.

tīrtha rāj namastu bhyam devanam hīt karakah
kamsa vadha shrama prapta śrī kṛṣṇa shram harin

As Viṣṇu Tejas is especially present in Vishram Ghāṭ in the morning, during sunrise, Dhirgha Viṣṇu is present at noontime and Śrī Keśavadeva is present at sunset.

Śrīman Vallabhācāryajī arrived here at the times of Lodi's rule. With Lodi's anti-Hindu policies, this place became as quiet as a graveyard, as no one was allowed to bathe at the ghāṭ or perform any rituals or worship. First of all, Ācāryajī himself took bath here exhibiting his divine powers and sent his disciples to Lodi to convey a clear message not to interfere with the Hindu traditions and right to perform ritualistic worship and to immediately lift all bans. From then on, this place regained its old glory and people again began to perform traditional worship. Vishram ghāṭ is considered as the middle-eastern ghāṭ of Yamunā in Mathurāpuri.

Devakī Temple, Mukut Mandir, Kṛṣṇa Baladeva Mandir, Annapūrṇa Mandir, Govardhana Nāthajī, Charchikadevī, Dharmarāja, Hanumān, Satya Nārāyaṇa, and Yamunā are all present here.

Dvārakādīśa of Mathurā

In Gwalior, Dwarkadhishji was the main deity of the 'Naga' sadhus. One businessman named Gokuldas Parikh was a devotee of Shri Dwarkadhishji. Once, the army of another state looted Ujjain and brought all the wealth to Gwalior. But the queen of Gwalior at that time, didn't want that wealth in the treasury. So, she asked Parikhji to take that wealth and use it for some pious work. That night, Dwarkadhishji appeared in

Parikhji's dream and said, 'You take Me to Braja.' In the morning he told all the Naga sadhus about his dream. They all agreed , 'When you go to Braja, please take our Dwarkadhishji with you.' In Samvat 1850, Dwarkadhishji came to Braja with Parikhji and was installed in the old temple. After some time He was moved near Akrura ghata on the bank of the Yamuna. But Parikhji was still not satisfied, then there was the construction of a temple for Dwarkadhishji near Vishram ghata. During this work due to illness, Parikhji appointed Laxmichandji to take over. He was the son of Parikhji's friend from a poor devotee family. Before the temple was completed, Parikhji left his body. Then Laxmichandji completed the rest of the work. Later Laxmichand's son Gopaladasaji served the deity. They were all from Pushtimarga. In 1930, the service was given to Girdharlalji from Kankroli, on Jayestha Ekadashi. From then on, Lord is served here according to the principles of Pushti Marga. According to Pushtimarga seva, there are 8 Darshan's in a day. 1) Mangla, 2) Shringar, 3) Gwala, 4) Raja Bhoga in the evening, 5) Utthapan, 6) Bhoga, 7) Sandhya aarti, 8) Shayan. Every day devotees relish the prasad of sweet butter after the second darshan in the morning and the Mohan bhoga in the evening after shayan. In the month of Shravana, there are so many events and darshans where the devotees can observe hindola (swings), flowers decorations, natural decorations etc. Annakuta and Janmashtami are also the main festival of this temple.

This king of kings,owning immense wealth, is truly Dvārakādīśa, whose massive palace was established over a 108 x 120 meters platform, situated on the banks of the Yamunā at Asi-kuṇḍa Ghāṭ. A four-armed form of Kṛṣṇa is present here with His consort, Rukmiṇī. Śrī Gokul Dāsa Parikh, a great devotee and the treasurer of Gwālior State, constructed this Temple in 1871 (V.S) and gave it to the Gosvāmīs of the Vallabhā community. Now, as per *Puṣṭimārga* traditions, the Lord's worship is performed eight times a day. In the month of Śravaṇa (July-August), Hindola's Holī, colorful bathing ceremonies, Janmāṣṭamī, Annakuta, etc., are the main festivals of this place.

Anyone who sees this unique Lord will become deeply attached to the Lord. The locals or other devotees who are fortunate enough to behold the Lord's awesome, dark, resplendent form with His four long graceful arms, His charming lotus eyes, and His most attractive face, attest to the fact that this is the most beautiful form of the Lord in this creation. The real purpose of the eyes is clarified by the gopīs.

śrī-gopya ūcuḥ
akṣaṇvatāṁ phalam idaṁ na paraṁ vidāmaḥ
sakhyaḥ paśūn anuviveśayator vayasyaiḥ
vaktraṁ vrajeśa-sutayor anaveṇu-juṣṭaṁ
yair vā nipītam anurakta-kaṭākṣa-mokṣam

"The cowherd girls said: O friends, those eyes that see the beautiful faces of the sons of Mahārāj Nanda are certainly fortunate. As these two sons enter the forest leading the cattles alongwith their cowherd friends, playing on the flute and casting loving glances all around. For those who have eyes, we think there is no greater object of vision." (ŚB. 10.21.7)

Śrī Yamunā

Yamunā's form does not only consist of flowing cool waters but, being the most fortunate fourth supreme queen of Dvārakādīśa and the sister of Yamarāja, she also nourishes many important places in Braja with her sweet waters. Many great saints have written very beautiful songs describing her glory and expressing her sublime achievements and feelings including Nandadāsjī with his poems, Śrī Vallabhācarya with his *Yamunāṣtakam*, and Śrī Vitthalnātha with *Shatpadi*. Yamunā is the embodiment of the drops of perspiration of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's labor of love; and she is also an incarnation of Viśakha, Rādhā's most intimate friend.

Once, while having a conversation with Akbar, Jīva Gosvāmī proclaimed Yamunā's supremacy over Gaṅgā. The greatness of Bhārata-varṣa has its source in the kingdom of Braja, and Braja is great because of Yamunā's divine presence. Her present pitiable state is a matter of concern and pain for all those whose hearts are filled with sweet love for her and the pasture lands of Braja.

Her present condition is mainly due to our lethargy, as we are neither responsive nor do we have the conviction to act on this grave situation. Fortunately, history is a witness to the fact that whenever any trying situation arises in Braja or Bhārata-varṣa, or for the upholding of the integrity of *Sanātana Dharma*, again and again, the saints and great-men of this sacred land protect us and save us. They provide their kind protection, valuable guidance, loving, nurturing service, and mainly set the ideal standard of living for those who desire to live here in Braja.

In the same line of service, Śrī Mān Mandir Seva Sansthan earned a special place for itself. Let us now take a glance at its activities which include initiating and achieving a complete ban on mining of the hills in Braja and the compassionate service and protection of abandoned and sick cows. This Mān Mandir has taken up cow protection and river pollution prevention activities in a big way. After planting 125,000 trees, it now strives to plant additional 12.5 million trees. Also, the renovation and construction of many ponds, lakes, and ghāṭs of Braja have been successfully completed.

Now Śrī Mān Mandir is gearing up to create a new page in history under the competent guidance and leadership of our divine master, Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj, through the 'Save the Yamunā' campaign. This organization is applying all its influence to release the water from the dam built across the Yamunā in Haryana and we believe that the day is not far away when the nectarine waters of Yamunā will flow freely and innumerable devotees will partake of the bliss of taking bath in Her clear, pure water and drink of her clean water. May Śrī Yamunājī bless us all!

Forgetting all our differences, uniting in thoughts, words, and deeds, let us perform our sacred duty to fulfill this task. We should not think that this is only the work of an individual, a community, an institution, or a state, but is essentially the collective duty of the human race.

agādha-toya-hradinī-taṭormibhir
dravat-purīṣyāḥ pulinaiḥ samantataḥ
na yātrā caṇḍāṁśu-karā viṣolbaṇā
bhuvo rasaṁ śādvalitaṁ ca gṛhṇate

"With their flowing waves, the deep rivers drenched their banks, making them damp and muddy. Thus the rays of the sun, which were as fierce as poison, could not evaporate the earth's sap or parch its green grass." (ŚB. 10.18.6)

Gatāśrama Tīrtha

It is said that after killing Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa halted here for a few moments. (*Varāha Purāṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for Gatāśrama Tīrtha

varadosi maharamya nanal kesha nivaraka
gata shram mahasthan namaste nardarchitā.

"We prostrate to the great Gatāśrama, which is worshiped by Nārada and who dispels all miseries and bestows all auspiciousness."

Offering obeisances to all those places, now we wish to visit the other places of pastime of the Lord.

Tilās of Mathurā

First, let us see the *Tilās* (the mounds) of Mathurā: Dhruva Tila, Ṛṣi Tila, Kali-yuga Tila, Bali Tila, Kaṁsa Tila, Rajak vadha Tila, Ambarish Tila, Hanumān Tila, and Gatāśrama Tilā.

Mahādevas of the *Tilās*: Śrī Bhūteśvara, Śrī Gokarneśvara, Śrī Pipleśvara, Śrī Rangeśvara, Śrī Kālindīsvara, Śrī Garteśvara, Śrī Someśvara, Śrī Rameśvara, and Śrī Virbhadreśvara etc.

The developed *Tilās* are Dhruva Tila, Dhanush Tila, Gaṇesh Tila, Nārada Tila, Saptaṛṣi Tilā, and Kaṁsa Tilā.

Ponds of Mathurā

Ponds associated with the pastimes are Śivatal-kuṇḍa, Balabhadra-kuṇḍa, Mahāvidyā-kuṇḍa, Potara-kuṇḍa, Sarasvatī-kuṇḍa, etc.

Places of Pastimes of Mathurā

These are Rajakvadha-sthal, Kuvalayāpīḍa-sthal, Rangabhumi-sthal, Kaṁsavadh-sthal, and Kubjā-kūpa, (Kubjā's house was situated at this place).

Ghāṭs of Mathurā

Vāsudeva Ghāṭ (Vasudeva has taken Kṛṣṇa to Gokula from here).

Askuṇḍā ghāṭ, Manikarnika ghāṭ, Kṛṣṇa Gaṅgā ghāṭ, Gau ghāṭ, Dāsahaśiva ghāṭ, Shamba ghāṭ, Tinduka ghāṭ (Bengali ghāṭ), Nāgtīrtha ghāṭ, Assi ghāṭ, Dharapatan, Ghantabharan, Vaikuṇṭhaprayāga, and Atisukta and Kankhal.

The Temples and Holy places of Mathurā

Gokarṇatīrtha Tinduka tīrtha, Yamunā tīrtha, Avimukta tīrtha, Guhya tīrtha, Cakra tīrtha, Mokṣa tīrtha, Samyaman tīrtha, Bodhi tīrtha, Vasumati tīrtha, Ṛṣi tīrtha and Koṭi tīrthā. The prayers for all these divine Holy places are available in *Śrī Braja Bhakti Vilāsa*, composed by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa.

Śatrughna Temple

namaste kamala kanta padhmanābh namostute
mathur mandalam raksha pradakshina vara prada

(*Viṣṇu Yāmal*)

"We pay our obeisances to Śatrughna, who, following Śrī Rāma's instruction, came here to save Braja and who is enshrined in Mathurā."

"O Lakṣmīkanta! O Padmanabha! May You always protect this most auspicious land of Mathurā and grant victory to those who circumambulate this area!"

akhanda braj raksharthe dirgha murti dharo hari
sarvada vardo nāth namaste dirgha vishnave

"O, Śrī Hari! Taking a tall powerful form, You are constantly guarding Braja, we offer obeisances to You for facilitating our approach to Vaikuṇṭha."

Prayer Mantra for Charchika Devi

tvam vaishnavi maha durge marga dehi vara prade
vaikuntha gamanarthay durga seni namostute.

(Brā.Bhā.Vi.)

Śrī Kubjā-Kṛṣṇa Temple

Kṛṣṇa met Kubjā here while at Rangashalā. This is an ancient temple.

rūpa-peśala-mādhurya hasitālāpa-vīkṣitaiḥ
dharṣitātmā dadāu sāndram ubhayor anulepanam

"Her mind overwhelmed by Kṛṣṇa's beauty, charm, sweetness, smiles, words, and glances, Trivakrā (Kubjā) gave both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma generous amounts of sandal-paste." (ŚB. 10.42.4)

Kaṁsa's Kali Temple-

sā tad-dhastāt samutpatya sadyo devy ambaraṁ gatā
adṛśyatānujā viṣṇoḥ sāyudhāṣṭa-mahābhujā

"The child, Yogamāyā-devī, the younger sister of Lord Viṣṇu, slipped upward from Kaṁsa's hands and appeared in the sky as Devī, the goddess Durga with eight mighty arms equipped with weapons." (ŚB. 10.4.9)

Chamundadevī Temple

The Lord, pleased with her act of transferring Śrī Balarāma from mother Devaki's womb to Rohiṇījī's womb, gives Chamundadevī the blessed opportunity of becoming a mother, and a boon to be worshiped by the people through different names.

nāmadheyāni kurvanti sthānāni ca narā bhuvi
durgeti bhadrakālīti vijayā vaiṣṇavīti ca
kumudā caṇḍikā kṛṣṇā mādhavī kanyaketi ca
māyā nārāyaṇīśānī śāradety ambiketi ca

"Lord Kṛṣṇa blessed Māyādevī by saying, "In different places on the surface of the earth, people will give you different names, such as Durga Bhadrakālī, Vijaya Vaiṣṇavī, Kumuda Caṇḍika Kṛṣṇa Mādhavī, Kanyaka Māya Nārāyaṇī, Īśānī, Śāradā, and Ambikā." (ŚB. 10.2.11-12)

Śrī Sarasvatī Temple

Vidyādevī (Vakdevī) is present here.

Śrī Mahāvidyā Temple Siddha Pītha

This is one of the 8 empowered locations in Braja, where the Presiding deities manifest themselves for the benefit of their qualified worshipers. This temple was worshiped and served by the Brajavāsīs. On the Śivarātri day, all the Brajavāsīs perform the worship of Śiva here in Ambakeśvarā.

śri-śuka-uvāca
ekāda deva-yātrāyām gopālā jāta-kautukāḥ
anobhir anaud-yuktaiḥ prayayus te'mbikā-vanam

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, "One day, the cowherd men, eager to take a trip to worship Lord Śiva, traveled by bullock carts to the Ambikā forest." (ŚB. 10.34.1)

tam apṛcchad dhṛṣīkeśaḥ praṇataṁ samavasthitam
dīpyamānena vapuṣā puruṣaṁ hema-mālinam

"The Supreme Lord Hṛṣīkeśa then questioned this personality, who was standing before Him with his head bowed, his brilliantly effulgent body adorned with golden necklaces." (ŚB. 10.34.10)

Next to Ambikadevī is the Śrī Pashupatinath Mahādeva temple. During Kṛṣṇa's times, the river Sarasvatī used to flow here, the mention of which appears in the *Bhāgavatam*. The Brajavāsīs, after taking bath in this river, performed the worship of Lord Pashupatinath and Bhāgavatī Ambikadevī. Presently this river has vanished and only a drain flows here, known by the name Sarasvatī *Nullah* (drain).

Śrī Garteśvara Mahādeva Temple

Since this appeared from a *gart* (pit) so the name Garteśvara. Here, Mahādeva's audience is famous for relieving all illnesses.

Prayer Mantra for Garteśvara Mahādeva

garteshvara namastubhyam ati dirghajvarapaha
haraye shambhave deva! sharer arogya machara

"O Mahādeva! We offer our obeisances to You, may You help us in our service to Kṛṣṇa, by making our body healthy."

We should enter into the Dhāma understanding, that the Lord is fully present here even today, but can only be perceived through divine vision.

tīn loka te mathurā nyāri, aur na dujī disiye
keshavarāya govardhan gokul pal pal māhi parisiye
jamuna jal vishrant madhupuri koti karma jahā nasiye
nand kumar sadāvana viharat koti rasāyan rāsiye
'vyās dās' prabhu yugal kishori koti kasauti kasiye.
dhani dhani mathurā dhani dhani mathurā dhani mathurā ke vāsi ho
jivan mukta sabai viharat hai keshav rāya upāsi ho
mala tilak hridaya ati rājat munijana gyan prakasi ho
sthavar jangam sabai chaturbhuja kām krodh kul nāsi ho
sugam nadi vishranta jamuna jal bhajan kāl vinasi ho
'vyasdās' shat puri duri sab haripur bhayo udāsi ho.

How fortunate are we? Entering this most auspicious place… Our beloved Lord still is present here…This divine vision could be ours. Simply by applying the balm (ointment) of loving devotion…





Top - Śrī Krishna Janmabhumi. Below - Crossing Yamuna



Top - Dwarkadhish temple. Below - Vishram ghat





Top - Bhuteshwar temple. Below - Kankali Devi temple - Yogamaya

Chapter 51
Satohā

Śāntanujī begot Bhīṣma as his illustrious son as the result of his austerities performed at this holy place. Śāntanu-sarovara is situated here. Śāntanu-kuṇḍa is her

dekhoha'satoha' gram –kuṇḍa sunirmala shantanu munir aī tapasyāsth
(Bhā. Rā.)

Madhuvana

This is the same place where Nārada sent Dhruva for meditation. Dhruva Hill is here, surrounded by dense green forests and bushes. Dhruva performed austerity on this hill and gained victory over *Kāla* (time and death).

tat tāta gaccha bhadraṁ te yamunāyās taṭaṁśuci
puṇyaṁ madhuvanaṁ yātrā sānnidhyaṁ nityadā hareḥ

""Śrī Nāradaji instructed Dhruva: My dear child, I wish all good fortune to you. You should go to the holy bank of Yamunā, where there is a virtuous forest named Madhuvana. Be purified there. Just by going there, one draws nearer to the Supreme Lord, who always lives there." (ŚB. 4.8.42)

yayottānapadaḥ putro muninā gītayārbhakaḥ
mṛtyoḥ kṛtvaiva mūrdhny aṅghrim āruroha hareḥ padam

"By hearing these topics from sage Nārada, Dhruva, the son of King Uttānapāda got enlightened regarding the Supreme Lord, and he ascended to the abode of the Lord, placing his feet over the head of death." (ŚB. 3.14.6)

tadottānapadaḥ putro dadarśāntakam āgatam
mṛtyor mūrdhni padaṁ dattvā ārurohādbhutaṁ gṛham

"When Dhruva Mahārāj attempted to get on the transcendental plane, he saw death personified approaching him. Not caring for death, he having set his feet on the head of death and stepped into the wonderful airplane." (ŚB. 4.12.30)

Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes are eternally present here. Dhruva meditated upon His pastimes, which would be performed in the future at this place! Nārada narrated Kṛṣṇa's pastimes to him and initiated him into the Kṛṣṇa *mantrā*. Dhruva performed his meditation while sitting on this hill, eating only wild berries for sustenance, once every three days for one month, in the second month, surviving on dry grass and leaves, eating only once every six days.

As his austerity increases, on the third month, he subsisted on drinking plain water, once every nine days. In the fourth month, he breathed only once in twelve days. In the fifth month, stopping his breathing altogether, the whole world began to tremble. Bhagavān Himself came to see such intense austerity. Śukadeva says that generally devotees are aspiring for His audience, but here, Kṛṣṇa personally came to have His devotee's audience, such an amazing child.

A famous *Kuṇḍa* by the name of Madhusūdana-kuṇḍa is situated nearby in the other part of Madhuvana. Lavanāsura was killed here. Madhuvana is famous both for Kṛṣṇa's pastime in the mood of friendship and the mood of conjugal love. As far as His pastimes with the gopas go, whenever Kṛṣṇa would come to Madhuvana, Mother Yaśodā would send a nicely decorated container filled with delicious food items, hence this area becomes famous for having pastimes in the mood of friendship.

Also, in His pastimes in the mood of conjugal love, Kṛṣṇa, after walking through many places, comes to this lovely place. Since this is a

sublime forest, Kṛṣṇa expertly plays the most nectarine, melodious music on His flute here, just suitable for this place!

So, this is Madhuvana. These sweet pastimes take place under these very bushes, which we see here even today. Kṛṣṇa performs His famous festival of dancing with innumerable gopīs at Madhuvana. He sings compositions in eight *ragas*: *Bhairava*, *Meghmalhar*, *Dīpak*, *Malkauns*, *Śrī*, *Hindole,* etc. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa sing these *ragas* in Madhuvana, each one of these eight ragas creates unique effects.

banshi bāj rahi madhuvan me, kaise jau meri bir.
auchak suni muraliya bāji mero manua hai gayo rājī
sudh budh meri utahi bhājī
loka lāj ki kaun sune mero jiyara dhare na dhirā

Bhairava elevates the consciousness, Dīpak lights the flame, Meghmalhar produces joy, Malkaunsa produces devotion, Śrī brings auspiciousness, and Hindol provides a blissful environment. So, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa sing these eight ragas at Madhuvana and then dance. The pastime is performed here in 8 rhythms, 3 grams, and 7 notes. Kṛṣṇa dances here with Rādhārāṇī.It is mentioned in the scriptures how Rādhā makes Kṛṣṇa dance by holding His finger.

Prayer Mantra for Madhuvana

madhu dān samadbhuta sahastra gunitartha dah
madhveshaya ramyāya namo madhu banāya chā

"O Madhavesh, as You are so beautiful, we offer our obeisances unto You, Who, due to the performance of the sweet offering of Your devotees, has so kindly appeared and Who is bestowing unlimited wealth upon us!"

Prayer Mantra for Madhusudan Kuṇḍa

madhusudan kuṇḍaya tīrtha raja namostute
pīt rakta seta shyam nirmal kshir puritah

"O Madhusūdana-kuṇḍa! We prostrate unto you, as you are filled with yellow, red, white, and blue pure water, thus creating wonderful pastimes; we offer our respects to you."



Satoha Kund

Chapter 52
Tālavana

Dhenukasura, a demon in the form of a donkey, used to live here in Tālavana. According to *Bhāgavatam* and *Garga-saṁhitā*, Dhenuka is killed by Balarāma. *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa* states Kṛṣṇa as the deliverer of Dhenuka.

According to *Garga-saṁhitā*, Devarṣi Nārada narrates this story to King Bahulāśva, "Look! There are so many sweet-smelling ripe Palmyra fruits in Tālavana, spreading their aroma all around! But no one dares to enter into Tālavana out of fear of Dhenuka, who is Kaṁsa's friend and who possesses the power of innumerable lions. Once, the gopas, feeling hungry and attracted by the sweet aroma of these Palmyra fruits, told Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, "Brothers, today, as we are very, very hungry, we wish to eat these Palmyra fruits."

Dāujī, without any fear, took the gopas along and went to Tālavanā. The boys, shaking the Palmyra trees for obtaining the ripened fruits, disturbed Dhenuka's sleep with the sound of the falling booty. Braying with anger, Dhenuka charged Dāujī with full force. Dāujī, holding him by his hind legs, swung him around and around, releasing him into the sky, onto a large Palmyra tree. The tree crashed down due to the weight of Dhenuka, who instantly got up and again powerfully charged towards Dāujī, and was again lifted and swung, this time so fast that he fainted.

Quickly recovering, Dhenuka tried to attack the Gopas. Although donkeys usually do not have horns, Dhenuka had four sharp horns on his head, by which he tried to pierce the gopas. Not wanting to leave Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma alone at a time of crisis, the gopas did not want to run away, as they were not just naughty companions only good for playing pranks, but were brave, powerful boys. Śrīdāmā hit Dhenuka with his stick, Subala attacked him with his fists; Stoka Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna also knocked him hard

with their hands and feet; little Tejasvi even grabbed him by his neck and Varuthapa, not finding any other object, hit him with his ball.

At that time, Kṛṣṇa, lifting Dhenuka, tossed him on top of Govardhana Hill. Dhenuka got up again, and in anger charged at Kṛṣṇa, lifting Him into the sky. Kṛṣṇa pushed him down and he fell to the ground and again fainted. On regaining his consciousness, he lifted Govardhana Hill like a ball and rolled it over the Lord. Kṛṣṇa, slayer of so many demons, threw Govardhana back over his head and Denuka returned the volley; this game continued for some time. Finally, Kṛṣṇa kept the hill with Him and Dhenuka charged Dāujī with his full strength while making a loud noise. Dāujī struck him with a mighty blow, putting an end to his life. After death, he attained a divine form and went to the Lord's eternal abode."

King Bahulāśva asked, "O revered Nārada! Who was this Dhenukāsura in his previous life?" Nārada replied, "King Virochana was Prahlāda's son and Bali was born to Virochana. Bali's elder son was Sahasik. Once, Sahasik wandered around with 10,000 women over Gandhāmādan Hills. Nearby, by the will of Providence, Durvāsā Ṛṣi was deeply meditating in a cave. While involved in carnal pleasures a man loses his human intelligence. His frolicking activities disrupted Durvāsā's concentration, who coming out of the cave, cursed Sahasik for his degrading activities. "Fool, as you are indulging like a shameless donkey, then become a donkey!" The donkey is the most sensual among animals. He begged the *ṛṣi's* pardon and Durvāsājī said, "You will remain a donkey for 400,000 years and later get liberation through Dāujī."

According to Brahmā Vaivarta Puraṇa

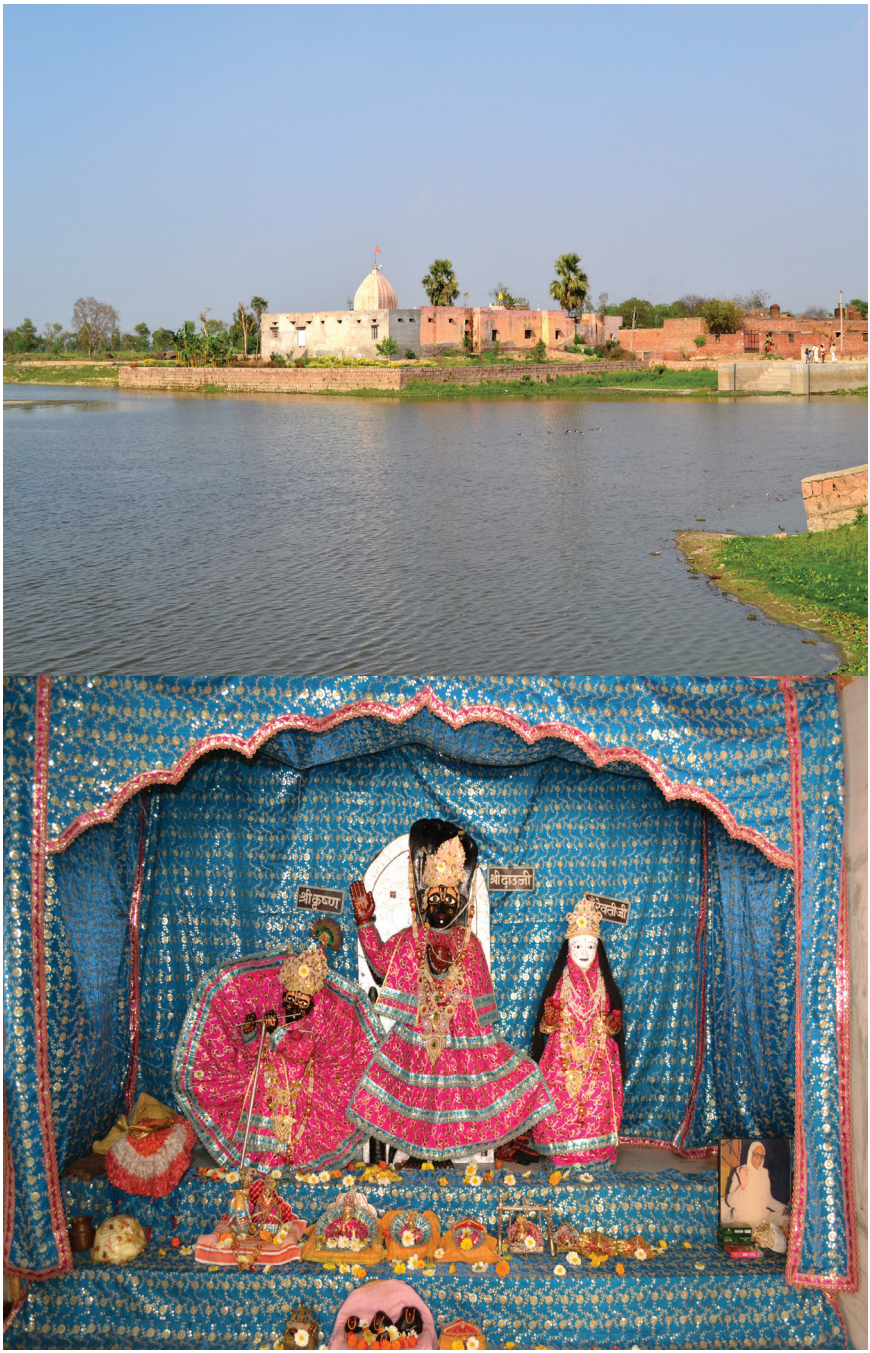
Once, Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa narrated this story to Nārada. When the gopas shook the Palmyra trees, the ripened fruits fell on the ground with a thud. As the gopas were happily eating those fruits to their heart's content, Dhenuka suddenly appeared. The little gopas, frightened by his huge form, cried and called Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma for help. Kṛṣṇa said to Dāujī, "Dear brother, You please take these boys to a safer location. I, alone, am strong enough to kill this wicked demon, who is Bali's son Sahasik. All the gods combined cannot defeat him."

Dhenuka came with his mouth wide-open and swallowed Kṛṣṇa, who became like a fire inside his body causing him to instantly spit Kṛṣṇa out. Looking at Kṛṣṇa's sweet smiling face, his demonic nature quickly

vanished. He recognized Kṛṣṇa and thus sang His glories, "O Lord! A long time ago, as Vāmana, You asked for an offering from my father. At that time, You granted him the kingdom of Sutalalokā. On account of my sins, I have become a donkey. Now kindly deliver me from this sinful life with Your Sudarśana *cakra*. And may You grace me so that I may not be born again." It is written that anyone who daily chants these praises sung by Dhenuka attains liberation. Hearing his prayer, Kṛṣṇa thought, "As he is my devotee, I cannot kill him; instead, I will cover his consciousness." Dhenuka, deluded by the Lord's māyā (illusory energy), started braying aloud, "O You! Insignificant child of a man, let me send You to Yamalokā." As he said this, he dashed towards Kṛṣṇa A fierce fight followed. Now that Dhenuka was acting like a demon, Kṛṣṇa cuts off his head with His *cakrā*. A bright light emerged from his body and merged into the Lord's lotus feet. The gods showered flowers from the sky, and the children also dance happily over his death.

Nārada asked, "O Lord! Who was Dhenuka in his previous birth?" Lord Nārāyaṇa explained, "Once, Brahmājī collected various beautiful ingredients from everywhere and created a very beautiful nymph, whom he named Tilottamā. Once, on her way to meet Chandrama, she became attracted to Bali's son Sahasik. Unchaste women, as a rule, do not usually keep relationships with one man only; they flirt with all according to their desires. As Tilottamā flirted with Sahasik, both became blind with carnal passions and did not even notice Ṛṣi Durvāsā sitting in meditation.

As he opened his eyes and saw them so shamelessly behaving like donkeys, he angrily cursed them, "Oh immodest one! Although the son of Bali, you are indulging like a donkey! Then be a donkey!" Then, looking towards Tilottamā, "Oh you! Who has bewildered the heart of so many men, be a man-eater." Then, both of them coming to their senses, begged for his forgiveness. His heart-melting, the *ṛṣi* said compassionately, "Sahasik, go to Braja. By living there in Tālavana near Vṛndāvana, your sins will be vanquished and you will be delivered by Kṛṣṇa." Then, addressing Tilottamā, "You too will be delivered. You will be born as Bāṇāsura's daughter, Usha, and Kṛṣṇa's grandson Aniruddha will marry you."



Top - Vetra Ganga. Below - Taalvan - Dauji temple

Chapter 53
Kumudavana

Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd friends arrived at the transcendentally beautiful Kumudavana, watching the lovely lotuses in their full glory. This scenic place added to the taste of food and they desired to enjoy an equally transcendentally delicious meal here. At that very moment, Rādhā, the supreme Goddess of beauty and love, arrived, carrying a pot of churned curds, overflowing with divine love.

She offered the pot to Kṛṣṇa, but how could He consume this food without sharing it with Her? Taking out a butterball, He most affectionately offered it to Her with His own hands. Rādha, not able to deny this, as it was filled with the sweetness of His sweetness, ate half of the butterball and understanding His desire, put the other half on a leaf. Kṛṣṇa immediately took it and after eagerly tasting the butterball, which was sweetened with the touch of Rādhā's nectarine lips, found it to be very delicious. He then affectionately shared it with all His friends, who appreciated this delicious curd, sugared with the sweetness of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

āj dadhi mitho madan gopal
bhavat mohi tiharo jhutho chanchal nayan vishal
āne pāt banaye dona diye saban ko bāt
jin nahi payo suno re mere bhaiyā meri hatheri chāt
bahut dīna ham base kumud vana kṛṣṇa tihare sāth.
eso swad ham kabahu na chakhyo sun gokul ke nāth
āpan hasat hasāvat gwālan mānas līlā roop
'parmanand' prabhu ham sab jānat tum tribhuvan ke bhup

Since all the Holy places wish to reside in Braja, Kṛṣṇa grants this abode to all of them. He also awards residence to Gaṅgā Sāgara at Kumudavanā. During Kṛṣṇa's time, this pond was replete with lotuses.

The Deity of Kapila muni is worshiped here, and nearby, there is also the sitting place of Śrī Vallabhācāryā.

According to *Garga-saṁhitā*, Padma-kuṇḍa is the name of this place. Here sweet Rādha, beholding Kṛṣṇa's lovely form, told Him, "Today, I will play Your part and You play Mine; You shyly sit here, pretending to be annoyed with Me and I will serve You as You always do." After saying this, She affectionately decorated every part of His body with ornaments and expertly braided His hair with attractive and fragrant flowers.

Prayer Mantra for Padma-kuṇḍa

indradi deva gandhar vaira kīrna vimlarthine
padhma kuṇḍāya te tubhyam nana saukhya pradayine

"O lovely Padma-kuṇḍa! As you are constantly bestowing, in so many ways, the most sublime joy to all of us and as you are adorned with so many varieties of lotuses, we offer our obeisances to you."

Prayer Mantra for Kumudavana

kumuda akhyāya ramyāya nanalhad vidhayine
nana kumuda kalhara rupine te namo namah

"O Kumudavana! As you are inhabited by the many other gods and Gandharvas and exist only to give joy, we offer our obeisances unto you."

As part of their old belief, the Brajavasīs consider Kumudavana as Kapila Bhagavān's abode. On the bank of the pond, a Deity of Lord Kapila is treasured to this day.

Kapila Ṛṣi
Prayer Mantra for Kapila-tīrtha

gupta yoga samā yukta kapiladhi shthita sthale
namo brahmanya rupāya devhuti stāya te

"O Gaṅgā Sāgara! O most secret place graced by Maharṣi Kapila, whose audience is available just for one day in the whole year, we offer obeisances to you."

Chapter 54
Yamunāvato

Yamunāvato Village is located next to Candra-sarovara (Parāsauli). Yamunā flows in three streams in the Sarasvatī Kalpā. The stream flowing to the east of Girirājī is Yamunā, the stream in Mathurā is Kalindī, and the stream flowing straight from Kāmavan towards Govardhana is the Svarṇarekhā. Yamunā used to run through this village, hence the name Yamunāvato.

Yamunā's sand found in the excavations here confirms the passage of the Yamunā in this place. In another story, it is said that Yamunā acquires the form of a gopī and participates in Mahā-rāsa at this place. Śrījī calls this special gopī Yamunāvati and this place became popular as Yamunāvato. This place is also of great significance for being the birthplace of two great holy men: Kumbhan dāsjī and his saintly son Caturbhuja dāsajī.

Śrī Kumbhan Dāsajī

Both Holy men always remain immersed in the direct divine service of Śrī Nāthajī. Kṛṣṇa's great devotee, Śrī Kumbhan dāsa was born in Yamunāvato village on the Ekādāsi day in the month of Kārtika (October-November) in the year 1470. Although born to a *kṣatriya* couple, his ancestral profession was agriculture and devotion was his intrinsic wealth.

Around 1495, Śrī Vallabhācārya, on his pilgrimage to Braja, reached Śrī Nāthajī in Govardhana. At that time, Kumbhan dāsa became his disciple. Observing his excellence in the art of music, Śrī Vallabhācārya offered him the service of singing devotional songs for Śrī Nāthajī. In this way, he began this service with full devotion at a time when Suradāsjī had not yet arrived in Braja.

Later, after the establishment of the community of the eight great devotional poets by Śrī Vitthal Dāsa in 1542, he became one of them. As he daily sang new compositions for Śrī Nāthajī, his singing became famous all over the area. Once, Emperor Akbar, desiring to listen to his music, invited Kumbhan dāsjī to his palace. On this special invitation, he went to the palace in his usual dress, a tattered, tilted turban, an ancient tunic, a worn-out dhoti, a raw-wood stick in his hand, and an old pair of slippers on his feet.

Although the Emperor received him with great honor, Kumbhan dāsjī felt the kingly opulence to be like a living hell. As the King requested him to sing, Kumbhan dāsa decided that he would express all his disgust to Nāthajī in his song. His song revealed the following, "My Lord, what is Your purpose to expose Your devotee to such material opulence while coming here. With my torn slippers, I forgot Your Name. I bow down to Him, whose face places me in such anguish. O Kumbhan dās! All is unreal but the Lord's name."

bhagat ko kaha sikari kām
āvat jāt panhaiya tuti, bisar gayo hari nām
jako mukh dekhat dukh upajat, tako karan pari parnām
kumbhan dās' lāl giridhar binu sab jhutho ghanshyām

The most outspoken Kumbhan dāsa had neither desire for honor, wealth, nor fear of death. He freely expressed his true feelings in the song. Thereupon, the Emperor soon sent him back to Braja with due respect, understanding his most elevated state of mind. In the year 1565, King Mān Siṅgh came to visit Kumbhan dāsjī in the village Yamunāvato. Little Kṛṣṇa sat in his lap and both were intimately talking to each other. Kṛṣṇa asked, "Kumbhan Dāsajī, shall I tell you something?" Kumbhan replied, "Yes, my Lord." As King Mān Siṅgh entered into Kumbhan Dāsajī's cottage, little Kṛṣṇa immediately disappeared from his lap. His heart sang his misfortune as a result of being afflicted with the pangs of separation, his spirit was crying, his face became gloomy, and his joy went far away to a distant place.

When this king arrived; the dialogue had not yet concluded. Who knows what the Lord was going to tell. The King gently bowed down and sat in a corner. Kumbhan dāsa called his niece for a mat and a mirror for applying *tilaka* on the forehead. The girl replied, "Uncle, there is neither

mat nor mirror. The buffalo has eaten the mat and swallowed the mirror. I will bring another right away." The king could not make any sense out of this. As a mat is not food, a mirror is also not a beverage! By then the girl brought some straw for a mat and water in a mud plate. Sitting on the straw, looking into the water, Kumbhan dāsa applied *tilaka* on his forehead; now the king understood the meaning of the girl's response.

The king, thus looking at Kumbhan dāsjī's impoverished condition, took courage to offer him a bejeweled mirror in a golden frame, which was denied instantly by Kumbhan dāsā. Then the king offered Kumbhan a thousand gold coins, but he was again denied. While going, Mān Siṅgh wanted to offer and record the whole village of Yamunāvato in Kumbhan dāsjī's name. To this he replied "Tenti in the summer and Jharberi in the winter, these two are my patrons, (Tenti and Jharberi are seasonal wild berries which form a poor man's diet). I lead a comfortable life depending upon them." King Mān Siṅgh was deeply moved by Kumbhan dāsjī's exemplary dispassion. He pleaded, "Please take any service from me." Kumbhan dāsa responded by saying, "Do not come again." Thus the king returned, after bowing down reverentially to Kumbhan dāsa, who was firmly established in the highest state of renunciation. His niece said, "There's nothing in the house; you should have accepted the King's offer." This advice irritated Kumbhan dāsa and he said, "You fool! What would Nāthajī say? Don't ever speak of accepting anything even jokingly." After the king's exit, Kumbhan dāsa said, "At the king's arrival, little Kṛṣṇa did not complete His words. What was He trying to say?" By then, Kṛṣṇa reappeared and sat in his lap and Kumbhan dāsa asked, "Jaya! Jaya! What were You saying?" Kṛṣṇa replied, "What else, only this much, that whatever the king offers, accept that. Don't deny him and don't tell him to never come here again with the intention of giving." Kumbhan Dāsa said, "Jaya Jaya, You are talking to me like this! Myself, being the servant of Sarvesh, the Lord of all, shall I accept something from a Naresh, the king of mortal men? You are the Lord of all worlds. He is just a small king." On account of his loyal determination and indifference towards the worldly comforts, Kumbhan dāsjī thus defeated the Lord.

For his indifference alone, Nāthajī opted to eternally live with him. Nāthajī said, "Kumbhan dāsa, come, eat with Me today." Kumbhan dāsa replied, "As You wish my Lord." Both set off together. Nāthajī entered into a quiet house as if it was His own home, followed by Kumbhan dāsā. Nāthajī said, "Kumbhan dāsa, lift Me on your back." Standing on

Kumbhan dāsjī's back, it was easy for Him to dislodge the various pots hanging there. Nāthajī said, "Now, without delay, let Me eat curd, milk, and butter." Hastily, as He was eating with both hands, the knot on His dhotī opened. To avoid any disruption while eating, Nāthajī found it convenient to manifest two more hands for holding the *dhoti* from falling. With these two extra hands, He held His slipping dhoti; neither eating was interrupted nor He disgraced; what an arrangement! Kumbhan dāsjī's pot of fortune was overflowing, as he had received the audience of Caturbhujā. By that time, the best of the Braja gopīs standing at the door were waiting for the thieves.

Kumbhan dāsjī's alarmed eyes were looking at Nāthajī. He said, "Should I pay for Your meal?" Nāthajī said, "No….no…. What is there to pay for? Just shoot at them with your weapons!" Kumbhan asked, "What weapons?" Nāthajī replied, "Let Me show you." He quickly filled His mouth with milk and sprayed it into the gopīs' eyes. It was enough for both of them to escape. Today's unique experience was permanently engraved in Kumbhan dāsjī's mind. He always remains blissfully engaged in the divine company of the Lord as his most intimate friend.

Kumbhan dāsjī had seven sons, seven daughters-in-law, and one niece. Along with his wife and himself, he had altogether 17 members in his family. The most compassionate Gosainjī thought if Kumbhan dāsjī doesn't accept anything from the Lord, how could he accept something from his guru? Therefore, intending to help Kumbhan, Gosainjī asked him to go on a pilgrimage to Dvārakā with a group of devotees. Gosainjī thought that the offerings from the Vaiṣṇavas may help ease his financial position a little. Kumbhan dāsa never wanted to go away from Girirāja Govardhana; at the same time, he could not say no to his guru.

So he left, but as he reached Apsarā-kuṇḍa, his heart was abnormally palpitating and his eyes were longing for the sight of his beautiful Blue Lord. He also suffered from high fever on account of being away from Śrī Nāthajī. Tears rolled down his cheeks in an unbroken stream. Who is qualified to know his mind? And, who could judge the depth of his love? Just three hours had passed and his aching heart sang, "Oh! How many days have gone by, without Your sight." Looking at his uncomfortable condition, Gosainjī immediately called him back to the service of Śrī Nāthajī.

Once, Gosainjī went to Gokula on his birthday. Nāthajī said, "Jalebi should be served on this special occasion." All the Vaiṣṇavas collected

money for the celebration. Some contributed a rupee, some two. Kumbhan dāsjī sold off his buffaloes and contributed five rupees. Jalebis were prepared, and the temple was decorated and with great enthusiasm, the Vaiṣṇavas offered jalebis in the *rāja bhoga* to Śrī Nāthajī.

Having just returned from Gokula, Gosainjī asked, "What is the purpose of this celebration?" The disciples said, "Mahārājā, today is your birthday." Gosainjī asked, "Who has paid for the jalebis?" Saddu Pandey replies, "Jaya Jaya! All the Vaiṣṇavas have contributed and a total of 21 rupees were collected, out of which Kumbhan dāsa alone had given 5 rupees." Gosainjī was surprised and asked, "Kumbhan, where did you get five rupees from?" He remained silent.

Rāma dāsa explained, "Jaya Jaya! Kumbhan sold off his buffaloes to make the contribution." Kumbhan dāsjī very humbly added, "I'm not so fortunate as I was not able to sell myself, my wife, and children and serve you with all the profit." Hearing such words, Gosainjī's heart was deeply touched. Kumbhan dāsjī became the first poet nominated amongst the famous eight devotional poets and thus served Śrī Nāthajī for a long time with unflinching devotion.

After completing a long life of 115 years, in the year 1585, when he was about to conclude his earthly life at Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa, Gosainjī asked him, "Kumbhan dāsjī, where is your mind engaged now?" He replied, "I am interested in singing a poem depicting the sublime beauty of the Divine Couple Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa." Kumbhan dāsjī was truly an ideal *gṛhastha* (householder), a great devotee, and an embodiment of the ideals of renunciation and sacrifice.

Chaturbhuja Dās jī

Chaturbhuja dāsa, the son of Kumbhan dāsa, was an incarnation of Vishala, one of Kṛṣṇa's friends. Kumbhan dāsa was always hankering to be in constant *satsaṅga* (association with holy men). Although the Lord Himself would play with him, give him direct association, talk to him, still his heart always yearned for constant association. To fulfill this desire the Lord granted him a devoted son, Chaturbhuja dāsa, who began speaking the Lord's glories right from his birth. Once, Kumbhan dāsa sat in his field in a very despondent mood. Nāthajī asked, "Kumbhan dāsa, why are you so dejected? Although I come to you daily, still, you are not happy!"

On Nāthajī's insistence, Kumbhan dāsa replied, "Nāthajī, You come to me only once in a while. I am aspiring for Your constant company. May I receive the association of Your true devotee with whom I may constantly engage in telling or listening to Your *kathās* (narration of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes)? Lack of constant association is the cause of my despondency." Nāthajī said, "Kumbhan dāsa, stop worrying, I will grant you a devoted son who will fulfill all your desires." Though Kumbhan dāsa had seven sons, his answer to the question, "how many sons do you have?", would always be, six and a half. Why is that? He considered his sixth son, Kṛṣṇa dāsa, as a half, whom he felt had some devotion, but Chaturbhuja dāsa was born with a holy stream of devotion flowing through him.

At the time of his birth, Kumbhan dāsa went with Nāthajī to steal from some milkmaid's house. On the eleventh day from his son's birth, Kumbhan dāsa offered him at Gosainjī's feet. Gosainjī named the child Chaturbhuja dāsa. Around the year 1542, when the renowned eight devotional poets were recognized and established by Gosainjī Vitthal dāsjī, Chaturbhuja dāsaalso became one of those eight great poets along with Kumbhan dāsjī. Right from his birth, lying in his cradle, he narrated beautiful incidents of the Lord's pastimes and Kumbhan dāsjī listened intently. He expressed his sweet experiences of the Lord's pastimes in his poetry.

Once, Nāthajī approached Chaturbhuja dāsa saying, "O son of Kumbhan! Let Me make you a wrestler." Chaturbhuja dāsa asked, "O Lord! How will You do this?" Thakurjī said, "Come with Me, eat curd, butter, ghee, and so many other nice things." Chaturbhuja dāsa said, "Let's go then!" Both went together. First, Nāthajī, after thoroughly checking that no one was around, entered into a house. Lifting a pot of curd, He finished it quickly and rolled it aside, then lifting a pot of butter, ate His fill and smeared the leftovers on His face. After eating His fill, He scattered curd, milk, and ghee all over the place and started playing in that mess.. jumping…*chhapp*…*chhapp*. By then, the householder arrived home. Nāthajī instantly fled and Chaturbhuja dāsa was caught.

After getting a rash thrashing, he was frustrated, and asked the Lord, "What is this Prabhu! You ran away and leave me behind to receive the beating!"

Chaturbhuja dāsa used to go to Govardhana from Yamunāvato daily for Nāthajī's audience and to sing devotional songs. Occasionally he visited Gokula for Navanīta Priyājī's audience also, but separation from Nāthajī was most unbearable for him. With the grace of Nāthajī, he observed His

eternal pastimes daily. Once, Gosainjī showed a mirror to Nāthajī after dressing Him up, and then Chaturbhuja dāsa sang the following lines:

subhag śrīngar nirakhi mohana ko
le darpana kar piyahi dikhavai
āpun nek nihariye bali jaun
āj ki chhavi kachhu kahat na āve

"When would I be fortunate enough to behold Rādhā affectionately adorning Kṛṣṇa and then holding a mirror for Him, causing my heart to fill with such wonder, which no words can express!"

One Devotee could not resist asking, "Gosainjī Mahārāj, you showed a mirror to Śrī Nāthajī every day. Why did Caturbhuja dāsa sing thus "āj ki chhavi kachhu kahat na āve?'" Instead of replying himself, Gosainjī asked the Devotee to pose this question to Caturbhuja dāsa directly. On hearing his query, Caturbhuja dāsa replied, "*mai ri āj aur kāl aur chin chin prati aur aur*. His beautiful form is ever new, so where is the doubt?"

Caturbhuja dāsa was a *siddha* (perfected one) by birth. Deeply engrossed in a nectarine pastime, Kumbhan dāsjī sang the following line

…ve dekho barat jharokhani dipak hari paurha unchi chitrasaari…

…The lamplight is illuminating the room through the window…

Experiencing the same pastime, Chaturbhuja dāsajī added the second line:

…sunder badan niharan karan rakhein hai bahut jatan kari pyari…

…His lovely blue form is so beautiful, that Rādha is not turning off the lamp as not to lose this exquisite sight…

Once, Gosainjī, with his assistants, went out of Braja on some assignment. He asked Chaturbhuja dāsa also to accompany him. He went along, but the moment they crossed Braja's border his heart began to cry.

"O Samware! O Dweller of Govardhana! I cannot live without You. A moment's separation seems like an eternity; my eyes seek Your sight as a fish out of water."

Shrī Govarḍhan vāsī sāanvare lāl tuma-bin rahyo n jāya ho।
Brajarāj laḍete lāḍile tuma-bin rahyo n jāya ho॥
Banka chite musakāya ke lāl sundar badan dikhāya।
Lochan talafe mīn jyoan lāl pal chhin kalpa vihāya ॥
Saptak svara bandhān sau lāl mohan veṇu bajāya ।
Surat suhāī bāandhike neka madhure-madhure gāya ॥
Rasik rasīlī bolanī lāl giri chaḍha gaiyāan bulāya ।
Gāanga bulāī dhūmarī neanka ūchī ṭer sunāya ॥
Dṛuṣhṭi pare jā divas te lāl tab te ruche n ān ho।
Rajanī neenda n āvahī mohi bisaro bhojan pān ho ॥
Darasan ko nenā tape lāl vachan sunan ko kān ho।
Milave ko hiyarā tape mere jiya ke jīvana-prān ho ॥
Pūraṇ rāshi mukh dekh ke lāl chit choryo vāhī ora।
Rūp sudhārasā pān ke lāl sādar kumuda chakor ॥
Man abhilāṣhā he rahī lāl lagat n nena-nimeṣh ho।
Ek ṭak dekhe bhāvate pyāro nāgar naṭavar veṣh ho ॥
Loka-lāj kul bed kī lāla, chhāanḍe sakal bibek ho।
Kamal kalī ravi jyon baḍhae lāl chhina-chhin prīti vishesh ho ॥
Koṭik mananmath vārane lāl dekhat ḍagamagī chāl ।
Yuvati janaman fandanā lāl ambuj nayan vishāl ॥
Kunja bhavan krīḍaā karo lāl sukh nidhi madan gopāl ।
Ham shrī vṛundāvan mālatee tum bhogī bhramar bhuvāl ॥
Yah raṭ lāgī lāḍale lāl jese chātak mor ।
Premananīr varaṣhā karo lāl navaghan nanda kishor ॥
Yuga-yug avichal rākhiye lāl yah sukh shail-nivās ho।
Shrī Govarḍhandhar rūp pe bali jāya 'chaturbhuja dāsa' ho ॥

Śrī Chaturbhuja dāsa says, Oh Giridhari-lāla who lives in Govardhana. I cannot live without seeing You. Oh son of Nanda-bābā, please let me see Your lovely eyes, mesmerizing smile, and moonlike lotus face! Oh my Lord, All my senses yearn for You! My eyes want to be fixed on the beauty of Your form, my ears want to drink the nectar of Your words, and my heart wants to reside in You. My consciousness is refreshed with the bath of remembering You. Just as a partridge waits for the appearance of the moon, I wait only for You. All my worldly desires have vanished. I only want Your love. Just like the sunlight makes a flower grow and bloom, I wish that my love for You will continue to grow by Your merciful glance. Millions of cupids are conquered just by Your walking. Your lotus eyes attract the hearts of the gopīs. Oh ocean of happiness! Please come and make the atmosphere energetic and alive by Your presence. Oh love of the

gopīs, you are like a black bumblebee drinking the nectar from the flower-like gopīs. Oh Nandakiśor, the peacocks sing and dance after the rain just as we will when You shower Your love upon us. Let

us always see and remember Your transcendental pastimes and let this Chaturbhuja dāsa always be immersed in Your beauty."

Nāthajī presented Himself before him saying, "One, who sings this poem regularly for one year, will surely attain My association." At last, under a Tamarind tree at Rudra-kuṇḍa, easily liberating himself from this gross form of five elements, he proceeded to Goloka.

At Yamunāvato, there is a well of Kumbhan dāsa and a banyan tree, under which Nāthajī's footprints are present. Nāthajī used to regularly give His direct audience to Kumbhan dāsjī at this spot. A cowshed of Śyāma and a cow nurtured by Kumbhan dāsjī is also located here. There is a pond in the village named after him.

Chapter 55
Mādhurī Kuṇḍa and Significance of Jativana

ashadh shukla saptamya magato braja yātrāyā
rādhā priya sakhi yātrā madhuri nām gopīka
rādhā kṛṣṇa archanarthaya rachayen māla tībanam
nana druma lata kīrna mathurā mandalam dhyuti

Gopī Mādhurī, a dear friend of Rādha on account of worshiping Her and Kṛṣṇa, created Jativana, which is densely covered with trees and creepers and which symbolizes the grandeur of the Mathurā region. According to *Nrsimha Purāṇa-Vibhajī*, there is mention of Braja-yātrā in the month of Āshāḍ May-June, on the seventh bright day for this place.

Prayer Mantra for Jativana

madhuri nirmitayaiva jātivana namostute
ati saugandh modaya laxmi rupāya te namah

"O Jativana! Created by Mādhurī sakhī, as thou art full of fragrance and splendor, thus bringing so much pleasure to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, we bow down to thee." (*Nrsimha Purāṇa-Vibhajī*)

madhuri rachitam tīrtha pīt vāri samakula
namaste madhuri kuṇḍa mān roop namo namah
yātrā rādhā karon mānam madhurya saha vihalā
kuti lekshanā drashtaya sa śrī kṛṣṇam valoka yet
bahubhi prarthnabhih sa madhurya sudsha bhavat
vilāsam kurute sau sa krishnena saha mohita
mān purna vilasya madhuri sthala miritam

"O Mādhurī-kuṇḍa created by Mādhurī and filled golden waters, where Rādhā's jealous anger is appeased, we bow down to thee."

(*Braja Bhāgavata* Vi)

Rādha, accompanied by Mādhurī gopī, came to this spot and then being annoyed with Kṛṣṇa, looked at Him from the corners of Her eyes. On Mādhurī sakhī's request, She discarded Her displeasure and performed blissful pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. This place is named *Mān vilāsa Mādhurī* since first there was *mān*, annoyance, and then *vilāsa*, pleasure.

Prayer Mantra for the Place of Mān madhuri

mān purna nivasāya rādhā ramaṇa hetave
vilās madhuri sthana rati saukhyāya ten amah

"O Jativana! O most wonderful place created by Mādhurī, where such opposite emotions are coexisting, thus bringing so much pleasure to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, we offer our obeisances unto thee." (*Braja Bhāgavata* Vi)

Chapter 56
Gaṇeshara

The Gandharvas participated in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes at this place. In the *Gopī Gīta* of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, it mentions that the gopas decorated Kṛṣṇa with jasmine flowers. The crown, earrings, garland, and waist-belt, all were made of jasmine flowers.

kuṇḍa-dāma-kṛta-kautuka-veṣo
gopa-godhana-vṛto yamunāyām
nanda-sūnur anaghe tava vatso
narma-daḥ praṇayiṇāṁ vijahāra
manda-vāyur upavāty anukūlaṁ
mānayan malayaja-sparśena
vandinas tam upadeva-gaṇā ye
vādya-gīta-balibhiḥ parivavruḥ

"O sinless Yaśodā your darling child, the son of Mahārāj Nanda, has festively enhanced His attire with a jasmine garland and is now playing near the Yamunā in the company of the cows and cowherd boys, amusing His dear companions. The gentle breeze honors Him with its soothing fragrance of sandalwood, while the various Upadevas, standing on all sides like panegyrists, offer their music, singing, and gifts of tribute." (ŚB. 10.35.20-21)

Vallabhācārya, in his commentary on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, gives the meaning of *kautuka vesa* (curious dress up). He explains: The gopas dressed Him up in such a comical or funny manner, which made everyone laugh heartily. Kṛṣṇa stood on the bank of the Yamunā surrounded with His friends and cows.

The gopīs reported to Yaśodā, "O sinless Yaśodā, Your son is enjoying himself in the company of His friends." The gopīs used to inform Yaśodā of every movement of Kṛṣṇa in order to keep an eye on any unfortunate incident or trouble. The gopīs were saying, "Hey Yaśodā! Your naughty son is enjoying himself. He is dressed up in such a comical way that everyone is having a laughing fit."

The scene was like this: a cool, gentle, and fragrant breeze is blowing, which with all her three attributes, creates a perfect environment for the Gopas's entertainment. Being cool dissipates the heat generated while playing; being gentle, it does not chill; and being fragrant, it sets the right mood.

Although the Gandharvas are termed as Upadevas, they also belong to the deva category, only being slightly lower in status. Their service is to sing and play musical instruments, whereas the Apsarās' service is to entertain with their dance. Thus they have come here to entertain Kṛṣṇa. The gopīs told Yaśodā that they are playing music to please her Son. The Gandharvas descended from heaven, therefore, only a few who are blessed by Kṛṣṇa can see them.

It is written in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* that Kṛṣṇa's various pastimes with the gopas were predominantly hilarious. The Gopas, laughing, cracking jokes, stealing and bringing curds and butter, eating it and smearing it on their faces, made whiskers and beards with curd and butter. As they joyously played, putting *tilaka* (mark) on someone's tummy and then making fun of them and saying, "Look at this glutton, he has eaten so much that butter is oozing out from His tummy."

The Gandharvas, watching this comical scene, began doubting the true identity of the Lord. Their conversation went like this, "It is said that Kṛṣṇa is an Avatara, an incarnation of the Supreme Lord and the supreme Brahmān. Being Brahmān, why is He applying curd and butter on other's faces, snatching and eating food from other's hands? What kind of Brahmān is this? What kind of God is He?" Thus thinking in this way, they decided, "Let's go and ask Brahmā which God is Kṛṣṇa?"

The Gandharvas, approaching Brahmājī, immediately reported, "Aye! Kṛṣṇa is eating leftovers. What kind of God is this? Is this Kṛṣṇa, who is eating, joking, laughing just as ordinary human beings do, is that Him, the supreme Lord?" Listening to the Gandharva's peculiar doubt, Brahmā coming under their foolish influence and becoming doubtful, also came and saw Kṛṣṇa enjoying with the cowherd boys.

Suradāsjī says: The doubt which was created in Brahmā's mind arose from the Gandharva's foolish association. Brahmā immediately went to Vṛndāvana to confirm the facts. As he arrived there, he saw that lotuses were blooming everywhere, creating a most blissful atmosphere, which, due to being in awe of the beauty of Braja, was impenetrable for him, since such bliss did exist even in Brahmā-lokā. He saw that so many gopīs were standing around Kṛṣṇa as He was happily partaking in food. One gopī put a ball of butter in His mouth, which looked like a lotus feeding the Moon, the source of nectar. Whatever Brahmā saw there only bewilderd him! This pastime where Brahmā became bewildered began from the pastime enacted at Gaṇeśra, where the Gandharvas were foolishly doubtful about the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa.

Chapter 57
Khechari

Kh means sky and Pūtana, who with her illusory powers could fly in the sky, was called Khechari. This is her native village. And, who doesn't know the story of Pūtanā? Who else is more compassionate than He who delivers even Pūtanā?

Rāl

Rālvana is so named because Holī (festival of colors) is celebrated here. A variety of Holis are enacted in Braja: the Lathamār Holī in Barṣāṇā and Nandagāon; Horanga, in Dāujī; Korhamār Holi, in Jāv-Bathain. There is a gentle beating with Babūl branches; a folk dance is in Mukandarai; a priest walks over flames in Phalen; and at Rāl, Flag-Holīis enacted. Rār, competition, for winning the flag is organized, thus the name Rāl. Within Rālvana is the most beautiful and ancient Viharvanā.

Chapter 58
Sonkh

This Saṅkagram is the residence of a demon named Śaṅkhacūḍa, who was an incarnation of one of Kṛṣṇa's friends, Sudāmā. A distortion of the word Śaṅkhacūḍagram has now become Sonkandā. The author of the *Bhāgavatam* mentions the history of Śaṅkhacūḍa only briefly, but in *Garga-saṁhitā* and *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa*, Prakriti-kāṇḍa, chapters 13-20, this story is clearly described. It is written there that in Satya-yuga, there was a king named Vrishadhvaja, a great Devotee of Śiva, but there was one demerit to him. He had no faith in Lord Nārāyaṇa to the extent that he would not let anyone else perform the Lord's worship.

Seeing this, the Sun god became annoyed and cursed him. Lord Mahādeva became angry and attacked Suryadeva with a trident in his hands. Surya and his father, Ṛṣi Kaśyapa, sought protection from Brahmā who said, "It would be most difficult for us to pacify Śiva's fury, so let us go together and pray for Śrī Hari's grace." All three of them went to Vaikuṇṭha. Lord Nārāyaṇa granting them fearlessness, said, "Do not fear; I will protect you." Śiva, arriving with his eyes red with anger, bowed down to Lord Nārāyaṇā. Brahmā and Surya, prostrating before Lord Śiva, prayed to him. Lord Nārāyaṇā spoke, "O Śambhu! Why are you so angry?" Śiva replied, "Prabhu! Vrishadhvaja is my dear Devotee; Surya has cursed him and as a result, Vrishadhvaja has lost all his opulence." Lord Nārāyaṇā said, "Only half a minute has passed in Vaikuṇṭha by now, whereas 21 yugas have passed on Earth. Neither Vrishadhvaja nor his son Rathadhvaja is now alive on the planet earth. His two grandsons, Dharma-dhvaja and Kuśadhvaja are still there. You should go and ask them to worship Lakṣmī and they will soon be able to regain their lost opulence." As advised, Dharmadvaja and Kuśadhvaja both worshiped Śrī Lakṣmī.

Kuśadhvaja was blessed with a daughter who was named Vedavatī. For one Manvantara, three million years, she performed austerity at Puṣkara and was blessed to be the consort of Lord Rāma, but only in her next life. She was very frustrated on this account, not knowing when she would be reborn and how she would attain the Lord. "I want Him now; I do not want to take a second birth; I want to attain the Lord in this very life!: She again performed strict austerities.

As Vedavatī was extremely beautiful, Rāvaṇa became infatuated with her and tried to charm her by saying, "O Devī! Why are you performing austerity here? I have never seen such a ravishing beauty as you." Saying so, he grabbed her hand and tried to pull her towards him forcibly.

Realizing Rāvaṇa's evil intention, Vedavatī exhaled so forcefully that with the power of her austerity, Rāvaṇa instantly froze. Neither his hands, his fingers nor his eyes moved. Such was the power of Vedavatī's austerity. This story has been told in Vālmīki's *Rāmayanā*. Rāvaṇa, who had lost his speech, mentally prayed to Vedavatī for her forgiveness. Somehow Vedavatī became satisfied with his prayer but still declared a curse upon him saying, "You evil-spirited demon, as you have touched my body, I do not wish to keep it any longer. You and your clan will perish because of Me alone."

Saying so, Vedavatī left her body and Rāvaṇa put the remains of her body into the Gaṅgā while repenting dearly, "I have committed such a foolish act. A chaste woman should never be maligned. I was immortal due to Śiva's boon." A pot of nectar exists in Rāvaṇa's navel with Lord Śiva's grace. He thought, "Śiva's boon has made me invincible, even after shedding my head a thousand times, I cannot be killed. For this small mistake of mine, I have invited my doom. The slightest mistake can destroy one's entire life."

The same Vedavatī became Sīta King Janaka's daughter and Lord Rāma's consort. As the time for Sītā's kidnapping by Rāvaṇa was nearing, Lord Rāma protected the real Sītā with fire and created an illusory Sītā. After Rāvaṇa's destruction, when Śrī Rāma brought back the real Sīta, what happened to the illusory Sītā? Lord Rāma sent her to Puṣkara to perform austerity there. She later became Lakṣmī in heaven. From heaven, she was born on the earth once again as Draupadī, whose other name is Trinayani, as she was Vedavatī in Satya-yuga, the illusory Sītā in Tretā and Draupadī in Dvāparā. She was Kuśadhvaja's daughter.

Dharmadhvaja also had a daughter, named Tulasī. She was a resident of Goloka and Rādhārāṇī's maidservant. Once Rādhā cursed her to be born on earth and she took birth as Dharmadhvaja's daughter. She was called Tulasī, as her beauty was such that there was none in comparison to her. She later went to Badrikāśrama to perform austerity. Pleased with her, Brahmā came to offer her a boon. Tulasī said, "I am a gopī of Goloka and have come here due to Rādhārāṇī's curse upon me and Sudāma who has incarnated as Śaṅkhacūḍā. Kṛṣṇa granted me a boon by which I will not get Him as my spouse in this life. Rather, Śaṅkhacūḍa, His partial incarnation will marry me. This Śaṅkhacūḍa is none other than Sudāmā. Then, I will be cursed by Lord Nārāyaṇā to become a plant and I too will pronounce a curse unto the Lord to become a stone. Then I will observe austerities in Vṛndāvana, and attain my name and eventually receive Kṛṣṇa as my consort." After listening to this story, Brahmā gave her Rādhārāṇī's śodāskśara mantra and said, "With its effect, you will become identical with Rādhārāṇī." Brahmā consoled Tulasī, "Devī, this is the will of Kṛṣṇa; for now, you live with Śaṅkhacūḍa and later you certainly will attain Kṛṣṇa."

Once, Śaṅkhacūḍa conquered all over the three worlds, defeating the gods who then sought the refuge of Śivā. At first, Śiva was not able to defeat him due to Śaṅkhacūḍa possessing divine armor. In this fight between Śiva and Śaṅkhacūḍa, even Bhagavātī Kali and Kārtikeya could not conquer Śaṅkhacūḍā. The Lord, disguised as Śaṅkhacūḍa, deceived Tulasī, decreasing the power of her chastity. Due to this, Śiva, using his infallible Trident, was able to kill Śaṅkhacūḍā. Tulasī cursed Lord Śrī Hari to become a stone and thus the Lord became Śāligrāmā. The Lord also cursed Tulasī to become a plant and she became a Tulasī plant. Afterward, the marriage between Śaligrāma and Tulasī plant took place.

Śaṅkhacūḍa lived in Sonkanda and the village became known by his name. This village is different from the one of Sankandai, who was a Yakṣā. Here, a clarification is needed: Dharmaraja, with the curse of Ṛṣi Mandavya, appeared in three forms at the same time – as 1.Yudhiṣṭira, 2. Śvapach Vālmīki, and 3. Vidura, son of a handmaiden. Likewise, both Śaṅkhacūḍa is considered to be Sudāmā's incarnations; in one form as a Yakṣa of Sankhai and the other as a Devotee of Kṛṣṇa in Sonkandagram.

There is no confusion on this account. The same pastime happened differently in different kalpas (one thousand cycles of the four ages). As

in *Rāmacarita mānasa,* one time, Pratapabhanu became Rāvaṇa and at another, he appeared as Jalandharā. (Rā.Bā.Kā. 124)

All pastimes are factual, unbelievably spreading over different immeasurable periods of time. Innumerable examples exist to prove this fact. As Dharma appeared from the Lord's chest, Adharma appeared from the Lord's back. Also, Nishada was born from Vena's thigh and Bhagavān Prithu appeared from the same upper limb. All this, only to say that Kṛṣṇa works in such a mysterious way, much beyond our capacity to even begin to understand, that He can accomplish so many purposes with one stroke!

Vatsavana

Kṛṣṇa's sweet pastimes naturally capture one's mind. One such pastime is as follows: When Brahmājī kidnapped the gopas and calves and kept them captive for one full year, Kṛṣṇa Himself acquired the form of a calf. Brahmā brought all of them back to this place, thus the name Vatsavana or Bachhgram. Not aware that one of those calves were Kṛṣṇa in disguise, he somehow felt quite attracted towards Him and showed great affection for Him.

One more pastime of this place is told that one day, the Gopas, feeling quite hungry, asked Kṛṣṇa to arrange for something to eat. Kṛṣṇa, smiling most wonderfully, played a mystical tune on His flute, and miraculously, out of nowhere, many pots full of delicious, aromatic dishes immediately appeared. Then Kṛṣṇa told the gopas to sit down and truly enjoy the feast. Bansuri-kuṇḍa, Kanak-kuṇḍa, Vimal-kuṇḍa, Sahasra-kuṇḍa, Ram-kuṇḍa, etc., many such ponds were created at this holy place.

Although the circumambulation route changes as per the interest of the pilgrims, it is impossible to go through all the villages of Braja. All places are connected with some divine pastimes. These days, the pilgrims follow a route from Paintha or Āniyor to Jetipura, Govardhana, Rādhā-kuṇḍa to Kusuma-sarovara. Therefore, a brief note on these adjoining places is considered necessary here.

Close to Paintha and Sonkanda are located Nagla Sabla, Nagla Shera, Nagla Sattu, Dompura, Konthara, and Konthar-kuṇḍa Around Sonkanda are Malhu, Nainu Pattu, Jangali Nagla, Āhmal Nagla, Nanu, and Tasia villages. Similarly, towards Govardhana there are also some villages with some significance.

Chapter 59
Nīmgāon

Nīmgram, 4 km north of Vṛndāvanagram, was the residence and the sitting place of the meditational practice of Śrī Nimbarkācārya, who is an incarnation of Lord Vāsudeva's Sudarśan chakra.

Śrī Nimbārkācārya

Śrī Nimbārkācāryajī, acting as the lighthouse of pure devotion, dissolved the prevailing fog of ignorance and mystically transformed the mind of the general masses of people. He was an incarnation of Suacakra, one of the integral weapons of Lord Vāsudeva, and the founder of one of the four Vaiṣṇava lineages. His supreme knowledge, enriched with devotion, filled the whole environment with its overpowering stream of devotional love. It is next to impossible to understand his divine life. Simply by thinking about the Ācāryas, who are part and parcel of the Lord Himself, sanctifies the deluded minds of the living entities.

The only purpose of their advent is to elevate the consciousness of the living entities, which are hopelessly and tightly bound by the shackles of illusion, their minds veiled with the darkness of material desires and the fear of death.

Śrī Nimbārkāchārya

nimba adityāya devāya jaga janma adikarine
sudarshana avtāraya namaste chakra rupīne

1. In the form of Śrī Rangadevījī, a dear companion of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Their amorous pastimes in the pleasure groves of Vṛndāvana, he is constantly serving Them!

2. In the form of Tosh śakha, a constant companion of Kṛṣṇa in His pastimes in Braja, he is being blissfully engaged!

3. In the form of Dhusar, one of Kṛṣṇa's dear cows, he is enjoying the bliss of Kṛṣṇa's pastime of tending to the cows!

4. In the form of Lakut, Kṛṣṇa's staff in Braja, he is assisting Him!

5. In the form of Rādhā's sparkling nose ring, he is enhancing the beauty of Her lovely face!

6. In the form of the glowing effulgence emanating from Rādhā's transcendental form, he is illuminating our heart!

7. In the form of Ācārya, for the dissemination of the doctrine of Devotion, he is descending upon the earth to remove the darkness of ignorance!

Vaiṣṇavas hold that

Vaiṣṇavas hold that he belongs to Dvāpara Yugā. The theoreticians of his lineage pronounce that the time of his advent was between the 4th and 5th century in Maharashtra at Vaidūryapattan in southern Kaśi tīrtha, which is the birthplace of Eknāthajī. Presently it also bears the name of Paithan. In this Holy land, he was born to the illustrious Śrī Arun Muni and Śrīmati Jayanti devī, who called him Niyamanandā.

After some time they migrated along with their son from Paithan to Braja and lived in a small village near Śrī Girirājajī; which is now called Nīmagāon. The boy was an extraordinarily genius from his childhood. Lord Nārāyaṇā delivered the supreme knowledge, appearing as a Swan to Sanakadik, which later delivered it to Nārada. Nārada passed this on to Śrī Nimbarkācārya, who kindly made this knowledge available to the entire humanity. In his commentary on the *Brahmā sutras*, he offered obeisances to his guru saying: *asmad guruve nāradaya*; indicating that the guru-disciple lineage that began with Sanakadik had been mentioned and acknowledged. It is believed that Naradajī initiated Nimbarkācārya into the *Gopal mantrā*.

Once an ascetic visited Ācāryajī and they sat and discussed the *śastras*. Both became so involved in that divine dialogue that neither of them realized how quickly the entire day had passed. The monk, strictly adhering to his vow, would not accept food after the sun had set, but for Ācāryajī it was not acceptable that a guest should leave there without food.

Ācāryapada, being the luminous Sudarśana *cakra*, instantly manifesting himself as a brilliantly shining sun from behind the Nimba

(nīm) tree in the courtyard, pleaded with the monk, "Look, the sun is still up in the sky, so please accept the food."

The monk was agreeable to eat the food. The moment he refreshed himself after finishing the meal, the sun immediately disappeared from the horizon. For this pastime of manifesting the sun over a Nimba tree in the motionless quiet night, he became known as Nimbaditya or Nimbarkācārya and that *āśrama* came to be known as Nimbagram, which in its distorted form has become Nīmgāon.

His diverse and elaborate compositions are the true representation of his multifaceted genius. These compositions include *Sva-dharma-dhvabodha*, *Vedānta-Tattvabodha*, *Guru-paramparā*, *Kṛṣṇa-Stavarāja*, *Gītābhāṣya*, *Rādhāṣṭaka*, *Etihya Tattva-Siddhānta*, *Vedānta- kāmdhenudāṣṭakam,* etc. Presently only two brief texts titled *Vedānta Pārijāta Saurabha* and *Vedānta-kāmdhenudashśloka* are available.

The Supreme Goddess, Rādhika, holds the highest place in the *Śrī Nimbārkā sampradāyā*. This path, replete with the most secret and intimate sentiments of devotional love, is accessible to only a few of Radhikajī's chosen devotees.

The Disciplic Lineage

Nivasācāryajī was the principal disciple of Śrī Nimbarkācāryajī. He wrote *Vedānta Kaustubha*, a commentary on Ācāryapada's text *Brahmā Sutrabhaśyā*. Later Kaśmiri Keśava Bhattācārya wrote a critique on *Vedanta Kaustubhā*.

After Nivasācārya, in the disciplic order, the eleventh *ācārya* was Śrī Devācāryajī. He wrote two texts titled *Vedānta-Jāhnavī* and *Bhakti-Ratnavalli*, which are highly acclaimed in the Vaisnava community. There were two main disciples of Devācāryajī; Sundara Bhattācārya and Brajabhuṣaṇ devācāryā. The lineage from these two ācāryas later expanded. In Sundara Bhattācārya's sequence, seventeen more *ācāryas* were known. The sixteenth was Kaśmiri Śrī Keśava Bhattācāryā.

His disciple, Śrībhaṭṭa, composed *Yugal śatak*, which is popularly known as *Ādi Vāṇī*. The Gosvāmīs from his brother's progeny is presently in the direct disciplic order of Śrī Nimbarkācāryā. The supreme disciple of Śrī Bhaṭṭajī was Śrī Harivyāsā. His disciples later started identifying themselves as Harivyāsai, who had twelve disciples, amongst whom

Śambhudevācārya, Paraśurāma devācārya, Ghamand devācārya, and Śrīlpargopal devācārya are praiseworthy for their special attributes.

The following of *Catur Cintāmaṇi* is widely known in the country from the lineage of Śrī Śambhudevācārya. The worship is now with the lineage continuing from Śrī Paraśurāmadevācārya and the Pithadhipati of Nimbarkāsampradāya is the ācārya from this order.

Śrī Ghamand devācārya's expression of his divine experiences has contributed to the emergence of Kṛṣṇa's sublime divine pastime of dancing with the gopīs in its present form, as enacted in Braja. Śrī Giridhariśaraṇdevācāryajī, a disciple of Śrīlapargopaldevācāryajī, was the guru of many royal families like Jaipur, Gvalior, etc. This is the disciplic lineage of Śrī Harivyāsadevajī. The descendants of his brothers do not call themselves as Harivyāsai. They follow the direct lineage of Śrī Nimbarkā-line. Śrī Devācāryajī's second disciple, Śrī Brajabhuśan Devācārya had two prime disciples: Śrī Rasikdeva and Śrī Haridāsā. It is believed that Jayadeva also belonged to this order. Rasikādevjī's presiding deity is Śrī Rasikbihārī Lālajī and that of Haridāsjī's is Śrī Bankebihārī Lālajī.

The followers of Śrī Haridāsa call themselves Haridāsi. Their main center is located in Vṛndāvana, popularly known as Tatiasthan. In his biography, Śrī Prananāthajī, the initiator of *Kṛṣṇa-pranāmī* or Pranāmī community, has been mentioned as a disciple of Śrī Haridāsjī. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa-pranāmī's order is also a branch of Haridāsjī's lineage, an offshoot of the Nimbarkā community. The main center of this Pranāmī sect is located at Panna, Bundelkandand, Madhya Pradesh. The particularity of Śrī Nimbarkācārya and his disciples is that they did not contradict the opinions or beliefs of the other Ācāryas. Śrī Devācāryajī has only refuted the Advaita philosophy in his texts.

Śrī Nimbarkācāryajī has taken Prasthan Chatushtya as proof instead of Prasthan Treyi, and among the four, the fourth and most authentic proof has been taken-up in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* composed by Śrīmat Kṛṣṇa Dvaipayan Maharṣi Vedavyāsā.

One must visit the Yugal Sarkara temple in Nīmgāon as worshiped by the Nimbarka community. Sudarśana *cakra* temple: Śrī Hamsa Bhagavān, Deva*ṛṣi* Naradjī (guru of the whole world) and Śrī Nimbarkācāryajī in the disciplic order are enshrined here. Sudarśan-kuṇḍa, Kuṇḍaeshwara Mahādeva, and Prachin Tapasthali are situated near the temple.





Top - Nimbarkacharya. Below - Neem Gaon





Top - Neem tree. Below - Taalvan - Sudarshan kunda

Chapter 60
Śakarva Gāon

This village is located at a distance of about 2.5 kilometers northeast of Sakhītarā. Indrā had presented the Surabhī cow to Kṛṣṇa at this place. Śakra-kuṇḍa and Gvāla-kuṇḍa are also located here.

Śrī Sankhi

Many demons resided in Braja, for example:
1. Pūtanā in village Kechari
2. Bakāsura in Bākal
3. Vyomāsura in Garhvan, Shergarh
4. Aghāsura in Pasauli
5. Dantavakra in Dahita
6. Śaṅkhacūḍa Yaksha in Sanki
7. Kṛṣṇa Devotee Śaṅkhacūḍa in Sonk

Śaṅkhacūḍa

Sudāmā Gopa had appeared as Śaṅkhacūḍa by Rādhā's curse. These so-called curses are meant to promote the descent of *avatāra*. Śaṅkhacūḍa was an invincible gallant warrior and his skill in mace fighting was matchless. When the might of a warrior rose; his limbs craved to test his strength.

One day he asked Devaṛṣi, "O master of the vina! Kindly tell me, who is the mightiest warrior?" Vīna is a string instrument like a harp. Nārada said, "O King of the Yaksha! There is only one warrior who can match your strength." Śaṅkhacūḍa asked, "Who is that great hero?" Nārada

replied, "Kaṁsā." Instantly, the great mace fighter, Śaṅkhacūḍa, departed for Mathurā. Holding his huge iron mace he presented himself before Kaṁsa and challenged him by saying, "Look, if you win me over, I will serve you all my life and if you lose, you will be my servant till death."

A fierce fight started between the two. As both were possessing steel-strong bodies, the mace would split into pieces on being struck over their body, without ever causing the slightest injury to any of them. In this way, hundreds of maces turned into powder in the fight. They continuously fought with their fists for 27 days to win or die. Victory and defeat, as if standing afar, was unable to decide whom to crown.

Kaṁsa lifted Śaṅkhacūḍa unimaginably high and dropped him on the ground. Śaṅkhacūḍa raised himself, lifted Kaṁsa even to a greater height and smashed him down. Like this, the fight became fiercer and was inconclusive. The whole earth and sky were trembling. As Garga Muni reached the spot, both warriors stopped fighting and bowed down to the Muni. Gargjī contemplated that both of them were invincible and that nothing would happen to them but, in the process, the whole world would suffer.

Garga Muni, admonishing Kaṁsa, said, "Indrā's mighty elephant, Airāvata, had bowed down to you after receiving just one blow from you. Your single punch is enough to put an end to anyone's life. No one is strong enough to even bear your one jab. Who then can ever defeat or kill you? And Kṛṣṇa, who will end your life, you know this well, bears the same name sign as yours. Kṛṣṇa and Kaṁsa - both names start with the same letter K."

"Many mighty demons lost their lives through your hands but Śaṅkhacūḍa, like you, is invincible since his death is the same as yours. He can only be killed by Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, stop fighting and befriend each other." Both of them, liked Gargjī's suggestion and stopped fighting, hugged each other, and became friends. Now only Kṛṣṇa lurked very heavily upon Śaṅkhacūḍa's mind. He put his arm around Kaṁsa's broad mighty shoulder and said, "Dear friend, there is no need for you to worry, as I will go and kill the enemy right away, but where would I find this Kṛṣṇa?" He thought, "All right, let me go to that viṇal-player and ask him, as he is always well informed about everyone's coming and going. As he brought me to Kaṁsa, now he will direct me to Kṛṣṇa also."

Śaṅkhacūḍa approached Nārada and asked, "O viṇal player, where is Kṛṣṇa?" Nārada replied, "He is performing Rāsa during this moonlit night."

Śaṅkhacūḍa inquired, "What is Rāsa?" and Nārada replied, "Dancing with uncountable damsels." Śaṅkhacūḍa asked, "What is He, a warrior or a dancer?" Hastily, he reached the Rāsa Maṇḍalā. He caught a glimpse of the sublime and transcendental Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

śrī radhya alankrut vām bahu svachchhanda vakri kurta dakshinam dhrim vanshi dharam sundarm hāsam bhrumandalairmo hīt kāmrashīm

(Ga.Saṁ.Vṛ.Kha. 23.30)

The eternally young, beautiful form of the Lord put Cupid to shame, as His dark bluish left arm graced young Rādhā's shoulder. His right hand was holding His constant companion, the flute. Standing with His right foot forward, the right toe supporting the weight of His slightly slanting posture. His smiling face was spread nectar all around. The daughter of the Ocean, Lakṣmī, put to shame before these divinely beautiful gopīs's perfect dancing movements, lost her luster.

Watching those lovely gopīs, an evil thought entered into Śaṅkhacūḍa's mind. As an urge to possess at least one of those beautiful damsels rushed through him, he put off his objective of fighting with Kṛṣṇa for the time being and pondered"Where else will I get such lovely women again?" Śaṅkhacūḍa, thus grabbing a gopī named Śatchandrānanā, whose luster surpassed the effulgence of a hundred moons, started running at an electrifying speed. (Ga.Saṁ.Vṛ.Kha. 23.33)

With a dark complexion, his face like a tiger, taller than the tallest tree and his tongue hanging out, Śaṅkhacūḍa appeared before them. On seeing him, the gopīs panicked at his ghastly appearance and started wailing and calling Kṛṣṇa for help Kṛṣṇa listened to their cries, uprooted a massive Shāl tree, and ran behind Śaṅkhacūḍa, who on looking back, understood that Kṛṣṇa was not just a soft and docile dancing boy; rather He seemed to be a most powerful hero.

Being afraid and leaving Śatchandranana there, he ran at such a speed that he straightway landed into a Himālayan valley. There, uprooting a huge Shāl tree, he faced Kṛṣṇa, who, also holding a tree attacked him. Śaṅkhacūḍa returned the attack with great strength and the two trees clashed together, producing a loud noise. As the fight was going on, Kṛṣṇa, considered the interest of the whole world and gave a strong blow to Śaṅkhacūḍa's head putting an end to his life.

Afterward, He took out the precious gem from his forehead, just like a pious man draws treasure from any place. A luminous flame then left Śaṅkhacūḍa's body and merged into Kṛṣṇa's friend Śudamā.

Chapter 61
Sahār

On chanting this verse, while bowing down, one is released from the binding harsh speech of others and one always encounters sweet words

Prayer Mantra for Sārikavana

sārika alhād saukhya nana shrut sukha prada
yuglāya namastubhyam ramā ramaṇa matah

"O Rādhā-Rāmaṇa! You are the object of the starling's joyful songs, as You bestow upon them the most sublime joy by various means. We prostrate unto You."

śrī rādhā kṛṣṇa yo shchaiva mansa ahlād sambhava
yato mansaro yātrā jāyte tanmanoharam
nana hansa vaka kirna kalnila harlad sārasam
devanganā samā kirna devgandha varsankulam

This is the pond which was manifested from the group of gods, goddesses, and Gandharvas for Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa's joy and happiness.

Prayer Mantra for Mān-sarovara

bhagavan man sodbhuta rādhā mand vihasaja
tirthraja namastubhyam śrī mān sarse namah

"O Mān-sarovara, originating from Kṛṣṇa's heart and Rādhā's gentle laughter, as you are the King of Holy places, we prostrate unto you."

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa delightfully enjoy the sweet and melodious singing of the starlings here. This lovely Mān-sarovara, which has originated from Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's internal joy and blissfully brimming with gods and Gandharvas, is home to innumerable species of beautiful birds, which harmoniously sing and joyfully play here.

Śrī Upananda, older brother of Nanda Bābā, lived in Sahārgāon. This village is 5 kilometers northwest of the village Sivār.

Ha-Ha Vana

Another name of Ha-Ha Vana is Devapura.

Prayer Mantra for Ha-Ha Vana

gopīkakshobha krut kṛṣṇa nana nritya vidhayine
vimalotsava rupāya ha-ha vana namostute

"O most fortunate place, where Kṛṣṇa is exciting so many beautiful gopīs and dancing with Them, we bow down to you."

Prayer Mantra for Ratikeli koop

rati keli sakha snana koop tīrtha namostute
ganga vetravati goda tridhajal swarupīne

"O you, most auspicious well, which was formed with the waters of the sakhī Ratikalā's bathing and as your water is parallel to the waters of Holy rivers Gaṅga Godavari and Vetra, we prostrate unto you."

Chapter 62
Bharna Khurda

Impressed with the devotion of his daughter Yamunā, Surya, the Sun-god, also descended to worship Kṛṣṇa at Surya-kuṇḍa, which is located at this place. Rādhā would come here for the Sun's worship, and Kṛṣṇa, in the guise of a priest, would perform the worship. In this way, the Divine Couple would meet at this place.

yamunā janakam surya sarva roga paharakam
manglalay rupam tam vande kṛṣṇa rati pradam

Four great saints have appeared in the Gaudiya community at these locations: 1. Govardhana, 2. Kāmyavana, 3. Ranvāri, and 4. Chhota Bharnā.

The saint from this place, unable to bear the pangs of separation from Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa anymore, once jumped into Surya-kuṇḍa and struck a rock which bore the mark of Rādhā's crown. Rādhā appeared and told him, "This *śilā* (stone) is engraved with the mark of My crown; keep this and you will find solace in it." This *śilā* is still present here in the temple.

Jasumati sakhī's village is Jasoti, and Vasumati sakhī's village is Vasoti, both neighboring Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Near Bāti is Toshgram, the village of Tosh-sakanda, who gave dancing lessons to Kṛṣṇa. Nearby, west of Toshgram is the village of Nakandaet. On the way to Mathurā is the village of Ādig, where Kṛṣṇa got embarrassed after taking gifts from the gopīs. Moreover, after Kaṁsa was killed, his eight brothers fled to this place and were killed by Balarāma. The village of Bharna Kāla is located near Diravali, where a small mud-dam also exists.

Pali

Just look at the magnificent garden of the village, Pali, where the supreme gopī named Palita lived.

Siyano

All Brajabāsis rejoiced in the killing of Aghāsura and were pleasantly surprised with Kṛṣṇa's intelligence. Siyana means intelligent. From Siyana, the village became Siyano.

Chapter 63
Kuñjera-Navagram

Dense Kuñja(forest grove) is located here, giving it the name Kuñjera, which is now also known by the name Navagram. This village lies on the border of the pasture lands around Rādhā-kuṇḍa Here the gopīs collectively formed an elephant pose and Kṛṣṇa took a ride on it. Dāujī's ancient temple and a canopy are also situated here. The adjoining villages are Nagla Kasoriya, Bhagosa, Madora, and Palson.

(*Bhakti-ratnākara*)

Palson

tās tathā tapyatīr vīkṣya sva-prasthāṇe yadūttamaḥ
sāntvayām asa sa-premair āyāsya iti dāutyakaiḥ

"As He departed, that best of the Yadus saw how the gopīs were lamenting, and thus He consoled them by sending a messenger with this loving promise, "I will return." (ŚB. 10.39.35; Bhakti-Ratnākara).

Seeha is the village where Krishna consoled Gopis saying he will be coming back soon . And Konai village where Krishna was waiting for Radharani , when he didn't see with Gopi , he asked why isn't she here yet?? In braj language sheegrah means soon and hence the name of the village is Seeha and kau nai??? means why not ?? From that word the name of village is Konai.

Sivaar is the village near by here where Shri Gurudev Priya sharanji maharaj resided and preached Mahavani. Shri Priya sharan Baba is the shiksha guru of Shri Ramesh babaji maharaj.

Chapter 64
Govardhana

Kṛṣṇa created Govardhana Hill on the bank of the Yamunā River in Goloka, with hundreds of pinnacles in a vast area, to provide an exclusive place of solitude and utmost beauty for the pleasure of His most beloved Rādhā. The same Govardhana descended on Earth to provide a playground as a backdrop to the divine play of the myriad of pastimes for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and also to strengthen the race of Gopas. Kṛṣṇa expressed His wish to Rādhā to descend on the Earth to fulfill the desire of so many *ṛṣis* and maidens, who wanted to become His wives and serve Him, and also to lessen the burden of the Earth from the demoniac kings. Before agreeing to accompany Him, Rādhā said, "Where there is no Yamunā, no Vṛndāvana, and no Girirāja, My mind cannot find peace at that place." Therefore, Kṛṣṇa sent the 84 koṣas of Goloka with the Yamunā River and Govardhana Hill to Earth.

Any being coming to Govardhana will meet Kṛṣṇa. It is said in *Vaiṣṇava Varta*:

dagar chali govardhan ki bāt, khelat tahan
milenge mohan jahan godhan ki thāt'

Whoever walks on the paths of Govardhana, verily finds Kṛṣṇa playing amongst the cowherds.

Prayer Mantra for Govardhana

govardhana gire tubhyam gopanam sarva rakshaka
namaste deva rupāya devanam sukh dāyine

"O Govardhana Hill! As you are the protector of the community of gopas and the personification of Kṛṣṇa and the source of comfort and happiness for the gods, we offer our obeisances unto you."

The Appearance of Govardhana Hill

Two pastimes describe the appearance of Govardhana Hill. Once, as Ṛṣi Pulastya wandered at various pilgrimages, he became attracted to Govardhana, the son of Dronāchalā. As he was covered with fragrant vines and the trees were loaded with abundant flowers and fruits, the undisturbed peace made the hill all the more tranquil. Relishing the divine beauty of this hill, the *muni*, with an intense desire to acquire this place, approached Dronāchala, who immediately paid due respect to the *muni*. Pulastyajī thus spoke, "O Drona! You are the master of numerous hills. I am a dweller of the Holy city of Kāśi and have come to you as a beggar. As I am not interested in anything else here, I am only requesting you to please me give your son."

Hearing these words, Dronāchala's eyes became wet, for he loved his son very much. Fearing Ṛṣi Pulastya's anger and not able to refuse, he said, "O great Ṛṣi! I am quite perturbed and pained by the idea of departing from my son, who is very dear to me but fearing your curse, I am giving him to you."

Govardhana, also not willing to go, immediately challenged the Ṛṣi, "O Muni! My body is 8 yojanas long, 2 yojanas high and 5 yojanas wide, how would you carry such a big hill?" Pulastyajī replied, "Dear son, you just comfortably sit on my palm." Govardhana again tried to discourage him and said, "O Muni! Before we leave, let me state my one condition." Pulastya asked, "What is that?" Govardhana said, "Once you place me at any location I will not move from there again." Muni said, "I will respect your condition, I will not stop anywhere on the way." Govardhana surrendered to the muni and with a heavy heart and tearful eyes bowed down to his father and sat on the right palm of the muni.

On the way, as they neared Braja, it suddenly occurred to Govardhana, "Oh! Kṛṣṇa along with Rādha are going to appear here and perform various playful pastimes, therefore I should not go further." Contemplating thus, Govardhana immediately began to increase its weight.

The muni, who soon felt tired and forgot his promise, placed Govardhana on the auspicious ground of Braja and went away to refresh

himself and have a bath. After taking bath the muni tried to lift the hill, but it would not move. "What is this?" The Muni, frustrated, said, "O supreme hill! Please do not increase your weight now, I understand that you are annoyed, tell me, what do you want?"

Govardhana said, "O Muni! This is not my fault. As per our agreement, I would not move from here as you have laid me down here." The muni became angry and cursed him, "As you did not let me fulfill my desire, from now on, you will diminish one inch every day." After cursing him, the muni proceeded to Kāśi.

Ādi Varāha Purāṇā

The story goes like this: As Śrī Rāma was building the bridge to Laṅka, Śrī Hanumān was bringing Govardhana Hill following His instructions. On his way back, hearing the heavenly announcement that the bridge has now been completed, he laid down the hill in Braja and rushed to his Master. But, Govardhana, on being deprived of offering his service to his Lord, angrily told Hanumān to take him along lest he wanted to be cursed.

Being afraid, Hanumān told him, "O Govardhana! O Girirāja! Please excuse me. Towards the end of Dvāpara-yuga, the Lord will make people worship you for the sake of crushing the pride of Indrā. As Indrā will try to create havoc in Braja, Kṛṣṇa will use you to protect the people of Braja, thus your desire will be fulfilled at the end of Dvāparā." After saying this, Hanumān rushed back to Śrī Rāma and narrated the whole incident. Śrī Rāma replied, "O Hanumān! Go and tell Girirāja that all the other mountains which were brought for the making of the bridge, have only received the touch of My feet, but I will sanctify him with My own hands."

"When I will be appearing in the lineage of Vasudeva, I will be performing many childhood pastimes in Braja and will be tending the cows on his green and lush slopes." Hanumān went back and conveyed all this encouraging news to Girirāja, which brought peace to his heart.

The Glory of Śrī Govardhana

In *Garga-saṁhitā*, the glories of Govardhana were disclosed to King Bahulāśva by Śrī Nārada. On the banks of Holy River Godāvarī lived a brāhmaṇa named Vijayā. Once, he was visiting Mathurā to pay his taxes. On his way back, taking the route passing by near Govardhana, he

instinctively became attracted by the attractive appearance of this lustrous, divinely magnificent hill. After picking up one small stone with a bluish sheen and admiring it, he moved along the path. As he was crossing the border of Braja, one huge demon with a mouth on his chest, three legs, six hands, long tongue, sharp teeth, bloody eyes, red hair, looking grotesque and hungry, appeared right in front of him and was ready to eat him to satiate his hunger.

Out of fear, Vijaya struck the demon with the tiny stone of Girirāja, which he held in his hand. And lo! Just with the touch of that stone, the monster transformed into a god, who with his hands joined, politely spoke, expressing his gratitude, "O revered man, with the touch of this lustrous stone, you have liberated me from that heinous form."

The brāhmaṇa was already awestruck with such an unusual event of the transformation of a monster into a celestial being. He was astonished and amazed at hearing the magical effect of this small stone. Vijaya said, "O most revered god, as I am most curious and bewildered, kindly tell me about the glories of this small stone." The celestial stated, "O brāhmaṇa! This is not any ordinary stone. This is Girirāja, who is no different from Kṛṣṇa Himself and simply by seeing him, a man gets liberated. One achieves much greater benefit from a single circumambulation of Govardhana Hill than by circumambulating all the other Holy hills or even the whole Earth." Therefore, *Garga-saṁhitā* declares:

girirāja samam tīrtha na bhūtam na bhavishyati

Śrī Girirāja is Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of a mountain. Just by seeing Girirāja, a person can have mercy from Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

girirāja hare rupam vṛndāvanaman govardhano girih
tasya darshan matrena naro yati krutarth tām

There has never been and there will never be any pilgrimage superior to Govardhana Hill.

'girirāja sama tīrtha na bhutam na bhavishyati'

After this, the god spoke about His previous life. He said, "O brāhmaṇa! In my previous birth, I was a rich merchant and was inflicted

with the vices of gambling and drinking. Consequently, falling into the bad company of prostitutes, I poisoned my parents and murdered my wife with a sharp knife. One day I also ended the life of that prostitute by pushing her into an abandoned well. And I committed many murders, killed many brāhmaṇas, warriors, merchants, and servitors; just to satisfy my lust for money. Once, as I went hunting in a thick forest, a black poisonous snake bit me and I died."

"The servants of Yama took me, the worst sinner, to a hell called Kumbhīpāka, where I spent one manvantara, one long cycle of the universal creation. After that, I was thrown into a hell called Taptasūrmi for one *kalpa*; after that I passed through 8.4 million species, bearing the pain for one year in each species. After that, I was born in Bharat. I became a tiger one hundred times. I was born as a buffalo for one hundred times and underwent endless pain as a snake for a million births; and thereafter, I lived as a deadly monster in a dry forest for ten thousand years."

"Once, in the guise of a servant, I tried to enter into Braja but was beaten up by the Lord's associates. Since that time I had been living in this dense forest on the periphery of Braja. By touching me with this stone from Girirājajī, you have liberated me." After telling this story, he boarded the golden chariot, which had appeared to take him to Goloka. Such is the transcendental glory of Girirājā.

Ādi Varāha Puraṇa

There is no difference between Girirāja, Giridhari, and Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, who-so-ever comes in contact with Girirāja, whether with or without faith or be a murderer, a killer, or a most ignoble sinner, he straightaway attains a place in Lord's Eternal Abode. The best living example is this monster, who just by the touch of a small stone of Govardhana thrown at him by Vijaya brāhmaṇa in self-defense, attained a place in Kṛṣṇa's eternal abode. Therefore, the devotees consider Girirāja as the personification of the divine and compassionate love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Mānasī Gaṅgā

ganga hari mānas so prakti braj me lahar lahar lahrāya'

Braja Bhakti Vilāsa

gange dugdha mayi devi bhagvanmāna sodbhave
namah kaivalya rupādhye muktide mukti bhagini

Occasionally, with earthly eyes, some deserving men perceive your true milky form. Where can even a fraction of sin stay, after having bathed in this Mānasī Gaṅga which has emerged by the power of Kṛṣṇa's desire, seeing the Holy temple of Śrī Harideva and circumambulating Govardhana?

manasi ganga vṛndāvana harideva girivar ki parikkrama dev
kuṇḍa kuṇḍa chinnamat lev apno janam safal kari lev

According to *Varāha Purāṇa*, there is Indrā tīrtha east of Mānasī Gaṅga, Yama tīrtha in the south, and Kuvera tīrtha in the north.

Once, a strong desire aroused in Nanda Bābā for bathing in the Ganges, but Kṛṣṇa, not wanting His father to venture out of Braja, to fulfill Bābā's wish, brought the sacred Gaṅgā to Braja with the power of His mind, on the Kārtika-pūrṇimā full moon day. Then it came to be called Mānasī Gaṅga, the Gaṅgā which was created with the mind. Seeing this most lustrous Mānasī Gaṅga in absolute exhilaration, all the Brajavāsīs along with Nanda Bābā bathed and worshiped the Ganges with nicely decorated lamps. The whole Mānasī Gaṅgā appeared so beautiful, as if all the stars, forgetting their path in the sky, descended on the surface of the shining silky waters of the Ganges. King Surajmal of Bhāratapura also celebrated his victory and wealth over Delhi by lighting lamps in Mānasī Gaṅgā. Till this day, many devotees light decorative lamps in the Mānasī Gaṅgā on *dīpavali*, the day of the new moon of *kārtika*, replicating the day of its appearance in Dvāpara-yugā.

Mānasī Gaṅgā is more glorious than the other Gaṅga which flows outside Braja because she has appeared from Kṛṣṇa's heart. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa along with the astute gopīs, eternally perform innovative pastimes here, either water-sports or boating.

Śrī Raghunāth dāsjī was so fortunate to have such a clear vision of these ambrosial eternal pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The glory of this Gaṅgā is:

gaṅgā nām liye tar jave, nhave te prabhu paye

One gets liberated by just taking the name of the Gaṅgā; and one who bathes in it attains God.

First Opinion

Kṛṣṇa killed Vatsāsura, a demon in the guise of a calf, for the sake of the fearful Brajavāsīs. But Rādhā and Her *sakhīs*, openly criticizing Him for killing a calf, told Kṛṣṇa, "Stay away from us. On account of having committed the unpardonable sin of killing a calf, You have become greatly contaminated. But how could this *cakora* (a bird who dearly loves the moon) stay away from the lustrous moon?" Therefore, to wash His sin of killing a calf, He promptly produced Śrī Mānasī Gaṅgā with the power of His mind. King Bhagavān Siṅgh, by beautifully paving her banks, gave Mānasī Gaṅga, who is sitting in the loving lap of Girirāja, such a dignified and magnificent look. Later his son, King Mān Siṅgh, renovating the whole area, built a massive palace with many artistic canopies here.

In the same sequence, the palace of queen Kiśorī of King Surājamal and a massive temple of Śrī Kiśorī-Śyāma were erected upon the banks of Mānasī Gaṅgā; adding to the nobility of this place

Second Opinion

It once occurred to Gaṅgājī, "How fortunate is my younger sister Yamunā in whose waters Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa eternally perform various pastimes along with the gopīs. Would I ever be as fortunate as her?" Gaṅgājī requested the Yamunā, being the beloved of Kṛṣṇa, to appeal to Him to fulfill her desire. Always being affectionate towards His devotees, Kṛṣṇa invited Gaṅgājī to come to Braja and pleased her by performing various pastimes with the gopīs in her sacred waters. Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī has very vividly recited the boat pastime in Mānasī Gaṅgā through His composition titled *Śrī Govardhanastakam*.

yātrāiva ganga manunavi rādhāma rohya madhye tu nimagna naukah
krishno hi rādhā nugalo babhou sa govardhano me dishtām bhishtam

Kṛṣṇa becomes the boatman, and as astute as He is, occasionally and deliberately rocks the boat with such vigor that Rādhārāṇī, being afraid, embraces Him.

Āshad Pūrṇimā

There are many festivals taking place in Mānasī Gaṅgā and amongst them, the full moon day in July, Āshad-pūrṇima is very important. In the Vaiṣṇava tradition, this day is popularly known as Guru-pūrṇimā or Vyāsa-pūrṇimā for two reasons:

The Most revered Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsadeva, one of the twenty-four incarnations of Kṛṣṇa, who composed *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the *Mahapurāna*, the greatest source of deliverance for the entire world, was born on this day. Therefore, the devotees gratefully call this day as *Vyāsa-pūrṇimā* or *Guru-pūrṇimā*.

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, the most sincere devotee of Śrīman Caitanya Mahāprabhu, shaved His head and performed his worship on the northern bank of Mānasī Gaṅga known as Śrī Chakleśvara and would circumambulate Girirājajī daily. On this day, he left his mortal frame and ascended to Goloka in the year 1666.

His disciples, with shaven heads, carried his mortal remains and vigorously chanted and danced, circumambulated the whole Mānasī Gaṅgā. Thereafter, in Braja, this day became known as *murhiya puno*. Now, the Gauḍīya sampradāya (community) devotees hold the pictures of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs in a decorated cart, and enthusiastically celebrate a holy festival by circumambulating the Mānasī Gaṅgā. Because of the continuous chanting of the Holy Name, the entire atmosphere becomes sanctified and surcharged with pure devotional vibrations.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Śrī Nanda dāsjī

Śrī Nanda dāsjī belongs to the Vallabhā community and one of the eight great poets, from whom it is said that other poets are like potters. Nanda dāsa is like a diamond, who lived in Parna kuti under the banyan

tree near Mānasa Devī Temple on the banks of Śrī Mānasī Gaṅgā. His life is full of mystical experiences and was a beacon of light for all mankind. In fact, such great souls appear only for one purpose; for the happiness and welfare of others.

Bhoja Sakhā has incarnated as Nanda dāsjī. He was holding a pristine position among the eight great poets of the Śrī Vallabhā community in the 16th-17th century. Four of them were disciples of Śrī Vallabhācārya and the other four were disciples of Śrī Vitthalnath Gosainjī.

Śrī Sura dāsjī, Śrī Kumbhan dāsjī, Svāmī Parmananda dāsjī, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsjī were disciples of Śrī Vallabhācharyā. Śrī Govinda Svāmī, Śrī Nanda dāsjī, Śrī Chīt Svāmī and Śrī Chaturbhuja dāsjī were disciples of Gosāi Vitthal Nāthajī.

Śrī Nanda dāsjī Mahārāj was a multifaceted personality and was highly respected amongst the composers of eloquent poetry. He was born around the year 1645 to a prosperous brāhmaṇa couple from the village Rāmapur near the Eta district in Uttar Pradesh. All of his compositions, bearing absolute nobility and decency, are appreciated by the commoners and scholars alike, who have praised his devotionally rich poetic compositions. All of his fourteen compositions are very popular.

Some devotees have the opinion that eleven of these are his works and some other poets have done the other three.

In Words of Vṛndāvana Nāthajī

śrī nand dāsa ānand nidhi rasikasu prabhu hīt rangmagna
līlā padarasa riti granth rachna me nāgar

He is the composer of the following jewel-like compositions: *Rāsa Pañcadhyayi*, *Siddhānta Pañcadhyay*i, *Rūpa Mañjarī*, *Anekarth Mañjarī*, *Mān Mañjarī*, *Virha Mañjarī*, *Rāsa Mañjarī*, *Bhrāmar Gīta Bhāgavata Dāsām Skandha*, *Śyāma Sagai*, *Śrī Govardhana Līla Rukmiṇī Maṅgala*, *Śrī Sudāmā Caritra* and *Padavali*.

Rūpa Mañjarī

Nanda dāsjī titled one of His poetic compositions with the name of Rūpa Mañjarī, who was fully surrendered to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

It is written in 252 Vaiṣṇava Varta that Rūpa Mañjarī was a daughter of a Hindu King and was married to Emperor Akbar. The greatly devoted Rūpa Mañjarī had vowed not to have any physical contact with Akbar, not even allowing himself to touch her. As such, Akbar respected her vow and never touched her. Rūpa Mañjarī possessed divine power. With the power of her pure devotion, she would keep a betel leaf in her mouth and attend Śrī Nanda dāsjī's holy association daily; and with this, every day, her passage would take place effortlessly. Once, someone recited a verse in Akbar's presence.

dekho dekho rī nagar nata niratat kalindi tata
gopīn ke madhya rajai mukut latak
kāchhini kinkani kati pitamber ki chatahk
kuṇḍal kiran ravi rath ki atak
tat thei tata thei sabad sakal ghat darap
urap tirap gati pada ki patak
rāsa madhya radhe radhe murli me ek rata
'nand dās ' gave tahā nipat nikat

Natarāja Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is most expert in dancing, is dancing on the bank of the river Kalindi surrounded by all the gopīs. He is known as Pitambara because He wears bright yellow clothing. He has a beautiful scarf and is adorned with elegant jewelry. His golden earrings are radiant like the sun. His movements are graceful and sublime. Nanda dāsaji lovingly glorifies the pastimes of Śyāmasundar Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Hearing this, Akbar raised his doubt, "Is it that the one who has uttered so, was present in the pastime, or has he just composed this out of his imagination?

Someone responded, "If he is still alive, we should go and ask him." Akbar the seeker came to Braja with his clan. Birbal was sent to invite Nanda dāsjī, who, being busy with other people, sent Birbal back saying he will come two days later. Nanda dāsjī, being aware of Rūpa Mañjarī's arrival along with this clan, went directly to Bilachu-kuṇḍa where she offered food to her Lord. There he recited one verse and later they both took the Lord's *prasādam* (remnant). Rūpa Mañjarī, disclosing her desire, said, "May I have the company of Śrī Girirāja and Mānasī Gaṅgā forever?" Nanda dāsjī said, "Kṛṣṇa, being most affectionate to His devotees, is always fulfilling their desires; so you should not worry."

After Nanda dāsjī went for a bath at Mānasī Gaṅga. From there, Birbal very respectfully took him to Emperor Akbar who wanted to clear his doubt and asked, "What you said in your poem, '*gāve tahan nipat nikat,*' were you present during the pastime or was it just your imagination?" Nanda dāsjī replied, "Oh! So this is it? Rūpa Mañjarījī will clear your doubt." The emperor then presented the same query to His queen Rūpā. On hearing this, she instantly left her mortal frame and entered into the divine pastime. Now, Akbar, narrating this whole episode to Nanda dāsjī, asked for clarification. Immediately Nanda dāsjī, also detaching himself from His physical body, entered into the divine pastime. Birbal then tried to explain that Divine love is very intricate and secret.

'jadapi agam te agam ati nigam kahat hai jahi
tadapi rangile prem te nipat nikat prabhu āhi.

Nanda dāsjī always recited verses while in the divine company of the Lord. He did not entertain any desire to publicize his secret to any non-deserving, doubting person; therefore both of them opted to leave their bodies.

Śrī Sachidananda **Ś**ukla had two sons, Ātmārāma and Jīvāram. Tulsi dāsjī was Ātmārāmajī's son. Nanda dāsjī was Jīvarājī's son. His mother's name was Kamalā Devi. Therefore the composer of *Śrī Rāmacarita mānasa*, Gosain Tulsi dāsjī was his first cousin. There are different opinions on this issue. He earned a prestigious place amongst the group of the eight illustrious poets with his extraordinary, transcendental capability of being a poet par excellence.

His best composition *Rāsa Pañcadhyayi*, which is filled with divine poetry, touches one deeply and exalts the hearts of all readers. Every word etches a picture in the heart and enlivens the eyes of the reader. His delicious, meaningful, and sentimental illustrations not only nourish the emotional devotees but also arouse divine sentiments within them. The mind can never get enough; what more can be said for his divinely, supreme, and heart-rendering compositions, which most accurately describe the Lord's divine pastimes. The scholarly devotees say that the context of his compositions is a summary of the most revered Śrī Vallabhācāryajī's *Sudhā-Nidhi*. This statement is not an exaggeration but an absolute truth.

Near Śukar Bhūmi, also known as Soron, on the banks of Gaṅga, he obtained His initial schooling from Śrī Narsinhjī. Later he shifted to Kāśi,

where Śrī Tulsi dāsjī Mahārāj was already studying under the tutelage of Śrī Śeṣa Sanātanajī, thus joining him, treating Śrī Tulsi dāsjī as his elder god-brother.

śrīmat tulasi dās sva guru bhratā pada vande
shisha sanātana vipul gyan jīn pay anande

It is mentioned in 252 Vaiṣṇava Varta that Śrī Nanda dāsjī was attached to material vices, but the Ācāryas of Pushtimārg have declared that "*rasikāh kama varjītah*," which means that one devoid of desires is called a *rasikā*. In the initial part of his life as a materially entangled being, and later life as a devout Vaiṣṇava, all this is Kṛṣṇa's will. The curse pronounced to Jaya-Vijaya was also Kṛṣṇa's will. Those who are entangled in vices cannot be *rasikās*, but Nandadāsjī was surely a great *rasikā*. His eyes certainly sought beauty everywhere, but this vice was transcendental!

It is beyond the capacity of an ordinary intellect to comprehend and understand the pure, luscious heart of Nandadāsjī. He would get attracted to beauty with a pure mind anywhere and everywhere. Once, when a group of devotees was going to the pilgrimage of Mathurā and Dvāraka, he also wanted to join the group, and so he went along with them and was overjoyed while stepping onto the holy soil of Mathurā.

tat tāta gaccha bhadraṁ te
yamunāyās taṭaṁ śuci
puṇyaṁ madhuvanaṁ yātrā
sānnidhyaṁ nityadā hareḥ

Śrī Nāradaji instructed Dhruva: My dear child, I wish all good fortune to you. You should go to the holy bank of Yamunā, where there is a virtuous forest named Madhuvana. Be purified there. Just by going there, one draws nearer to the Supreme Lord, who always lives there." (ŚB. 04.08.42)

Many wonderful pastimes of the Lord are happening in every quarter of this land even today. Every moment is the embodiment of Their sublime voice and nectarine laughter. His bluish sheen twinkles in this environment of cool, fragrant tranquility. Nandadāsjī had a desire to visit Dvārakesh, but his mind was not ready to leave Mathurā. He became immersed in Braja since he was a soul from this soil. He thought that he would spend

the rest of his life in this beautiful land of Braja, but desired to go and visit Ranchorajī at least once. As he started for Dvāraka he lost his way. He reached a village called Sinhnād, where his eyes fell on a beautiful woman belonging to the *kṣatriya*, warrior clan. She was drying her lovely, thick, long, and rich-black hair, standing on her balcony. The moment he saw her, his heartfelt as if he had never seen in his life such true beauty before, and here today was this most sublime, attractive beauty!

It was impossible that this form belonged to this material world. Surely she must have been an image of the Lord's beauty. Many days passed and he would not accept even water without first having glimpsed her face. His behavior became the subject of gossip for the villagers. Then, one day, the family members, along with the woman, set off for Gokula early in the wee hours, thinking that after a few days of their absence from the village this stranger will go away on his own.

At mid-day, as they reached the Yamunā banks, what do they see! Nanda dāsjī was following them. The family immediately hired the boat and paid extra money to the sailor for not taking him across the other shore. Feeling as if he had gone crazy for a while, he finally got the grace of Yamunājī, and sitting on her banks, he recited verses praising her.

jo jamuna jamune ju gave
sesa sahsa mukh gāvat nisidin pār na pave
sakal sukh denhār tate karo
uchchār kahte hi bār bār bhuli jīn javo
nand dās' ki āsa jamune puran karī
tate kahu dhari dhari chīt lavo

Meanwhile, when the family reached Gokula, it was time for *Raja bhogā*.

After prostrating to the all-attractive Deity of Śrī NavnītPriyājī, as Śrī Gosainjī was arranging the distribution of the *prasādam*, he laid one extra plate. The man said, "Mahārāj, we are only three, why is this extra plate?" Gosainjī replied, "This one is for Nanda dāsa, otherwise, where would he go for food?" The man's eyes lowered with shame. Gosainjī explained to him that he was not just an ordinary, worldly-minded being, and invited Śrī Nanda dāsjī. On reaching Gokula, the moment he received a glimpse of the divinely beautiful Kṛṣṇa, nothing else remained to be seen for Nanda dāsjī.

ya chhavi pe raskhān ab varokoti manoja
jāki upmā kavin nahi paii rahe jo khoja

or

jāki sundartā jaga barnata
mukh chhavi lakhi dhyuti chandra lajavai

No one can describe the beauty of the lotus-faced Śyāmasundar Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Even if one lives for millions of years and is endowed with millions of tongues one still will not be able to fully capture Śrī Kṛṣṇa's attractiveness. Even the most learned poets from the heavenly planets cannot adequately describe Him. Who in this whole universe can understand the beauty of Śrī Kṛṣṇa!

By the grace of Gosainjī, in the year 1662, he was chosen as one of the *āsthā sakhās*, eight intimate cowherd boyfriends of Kṛṣṇa, instead of Śrī Viṣṇu dāsa Chipā. Now he could sing devotional songs daily for the pleasure of Śrī Nāthajī. He spent one month with Śrī Nāthajī at Govardhana and one month at Gokula with Śrī NavnītPriyājī. One day it occurred to him that without serving the devotees, unflinching devotion could not be attained. He, therefore, lived near Sura dāsjī at Parasoli for six months.

Tulasī dāsjī, hearing the news that he was singing every day for the pleasure of Śrī Nāthajī and that he had also become a disciple of Śrī VitthalNāthajī, felt very happy and wrote him a letter.

'gharko parno pari haryo kaho kaun updesh
tulsi yaso janiye nahi dharma ko lesh'

"Nanda dāsjī, leaving Śrī Rāma's worship, like an unchaste woman, you have now accepted the worship of another." In response to this, Nanda dāsjī wrote back to Tulasi dāsajī.

'hum chakar śrī raghunath ke janam janam ke dās
roop madhuri man haryo dār prem ki fās'

"I was married, of course, to Śrī Raghunāthajī, but Kṛṣṇa rules over me. Since Raghunāthajī desires to have only one wife, He cannot marry me, but as Kṛṣṇa is already married to 16,108 great women, He may easily look after a few more."

It is written in 252 Vaiṣṇava Varta that Tulasi dāsjī came to Govardhana to meet Nanda dāsjī. They met at Govind-kuṇḍa

Tulsi Dāsajī

Dhām ruche to rahahu ayodhyā purī ruche rahu kāshī ।
Van ruche rahiye daṇḍakavan giri kāmad avināshī ॥

If one wishes to live in a dhāma (holy place), then live in Ayodhyā. If one wishes to live in a city, then live in Kāśi. If one wants to live in a forest, choose Dandakaranya. And if one desires to live near mountains then choose Kamadgiri mountain.

Nandadāsajī

jo giri ruche to base govardhana, gām ruche to baso nandgām
nagar ruche to baso madhupuri, shobha sāgar ati abhirām
sarita ruche to baso śrī yamunātata sakal manorath pooran kām
'nand dās' kānan ruche to, baso bhumi vṛndāvana dham

If one wishes to reside near a mountain, choose Govardhana. If one wants to live in a village, choose Nandagaon. If a city is one's desired place of habitation, definitely choose Mathurā. And if you decide it would be best to live near a river, the river Yamuna should be your first choice since she is always eager to help in fulfilling devotional desires. For those desirous of living in a forest, there is no better place in the three worlds than the forest in the pious land of Vṛndāvana.

Tulsidāsjī

kahā kami śrī raghunāth ke chhandi kul ki kāni ।
mana anurāgi hai gayo suni murli ki tān ।

The great saint Tulsidāsa inquired from his brother: "Why are you leaving the worship of Lord Rāma which has been going on in our family for generations? Nanda dāsa replied, "I have become spellbound by hearing the sound of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute and now my heart belongs only to Him. What can I do?"

Nanda dāsjī said: Brothers, you all made a mistake by naming me as Nanda dāsā. Bearing such a name, it would be quite natural that I am ruled by the son of Nanda, Kṛṣṇa. You should have named me Daśaratha dāsa and the son of Daśaratha would have been my master."

These were all loving conversations. In fact, for the devotees, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are no different. Nanda dāsjī has recited so in his compositions.

rām kṛṣṇa kahiye, uthiye bhor
ve avadhesh dhanush kar dhare,
ye braj jīvana makhan chora
unke chhatra chavar simhasana
bharat shatrughna lachhimana jora
inke lakuta mukuta pitambar
nīt gayan sanga nand kishore
un sāgar me śīlā taraii
in rakhyo giri nakh ki kora
'nand dās' prabhu sab tajī bhajiye,
jaise nirkhat chandra chakora

In the year 1695, on the banks of Mānasī Gaṅga under the banyan tree, he entered into the divine pastime. On the southeast corner of Mānasī Gaṅgā, Vallabhā Ghāṭ is located.

Śrīmad Vallabhācārya's seat exists here under a *chonkar* tree, where he met with Śrīman Caitanyadevā. This place is worshippable and is of the utmost importance, as it is where these two great personalities had met.

Nearby Pilgrimage Places

In the East of Mānasī Gaṅgā: Śrī Girirāja Mukut-Mukharvind, Prachīn Śrī Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa Mandir, Śrī Kiśorī-Śyāma Temple, Śrī Girirāja Temple, Śrīman Vallabhācārya's seat, and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple.

In the West: Śrī Girirāja Mahārāj (Sākṣi Gopal), Śrī Viśvakarma and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple.

In the North: Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha Śrī Nṛsiṁha, Śrī Śyāmasundara, Śrī Bihārījī, Śrī Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Nāthajī, Śrī Nanda Bābā Temple, Śrī Rādhā Rāmaṇajī (new temple), Śrī Advaita dāsa Bābājī's cottage, Śrī Rādhā-Govindjī Bhāgavata Hall, Śrī Chakleśvara Mahādeva, Śrī Mahāprabhu Temple, Śrī Rāsa Kuṇḍa, Jhulana krida place, and Siddha Hanumān Temple.

In the South: Śrī Harideva Temple, Śrī BrahmāKuṇḍa Temple, Śrī MānasaDevī Temple, Śrī Gore Dāujī, Śrī Gandeśvara Mahādeva, Śrī Yamunā Mohan, and Śrī Bihārījī.

Śrī Dāna Ghāṭī

Many of our Ācāryas have recited the sublime *Dāna-ghāṭī* pastime presenting varied sentiments. There are so many compositions on this pastime in *Śrīngāra Rasa Sāsgar*. In *Śrī Dāna Keli Kaumudi* and *Śrī Dāna Keli Cintāmaṇi*, the Gauḍīya Ācāryas have elaborately illustrated the pastime of *Dāna Ghāṭī*, as they have recited the instances of wordplay, bickering, etc., between Kṛṣṇa the prince of Braja, and Rādha the daughter of Vrsabhanu in a most delectable manner.

For those who are experts at relishing in divine sentiments, this exchange of apparent rudeness brings much pleasure! Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhujī expressed His curiosity for this *Dāna-līla* Kṛṣṇa's pastime of collecting taxes, on arriving in Govardhana.

ahe! vṛndāvana nivās eii dān ghāti sthan
rasikendra kṛṣṇa etha sādhe gavya dān
ei khane vṛndāvana chaitanya sangera viprere
jigyasena dān prasanga ādi dhīre dhīre

Śrī Girirājajī's Pastimes

In this auspicious land, surrounding Śrī Girirājajī, innumerable pastimes depicting the emotional exchanges taking place in the various relationship of *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, *śrīngāra* (in the mood of a servant, in friendship, in motherly love, and conjugal love) have been enacted.

S*akhya rāsa*, as described in the words of the *rasikās*: As the gopas were feeling hungry while tending to the cows, Madhumaṅgala said, "Kṛṣṇa, even as the sun has now reached its zenith, still our food has not come, and as this hunger is constantly reminding me of so many kinds of sweets, please do something about it." Anśu said, "Yes brother, just see, even my stomach has shrunk to my backbone."

To feed these hungry boys, Kṛṣṇa climbed up on Govardhana. Keeping His left hand on His waist, He began waving His yellow waist-belt with His right hand and called His cows aloud: Arunā… Tarunā… Nandinī… Kāmdā… Kapilā…. Padmagandhā…

On understanding His intentions, these big-horned cows first shook their bodies, raised their tails and ran speedily towards Kṛṣṇa.

The bells that hung from their necks began to ring and dance and produced melodious sounds as if there was a competition amongst the cows on who will reach Kṛṣṇa first. As Nandinī reached Him first, she just stood behind Kṛṣṇa, who leaned on her back as if He would fall without her support! Some of the cows found solace in licking Gopal's hands while others pointed at their udders which were full of milk and looked at Kṛṣṇa as if asking Him to draw and drink their milk. Kṛṣṇa loved to milk the cows, and as He seldom got a chance to do so at home, He returned home only after he fulfilled His wishes in the forest.

On feeling the soft touch of Kṛṣṇa's tender fingers, the cows immediately produced thick streams of milk, which just kept on flowing, until Kṛṣṇa finally had to remove the brimming pot from below.

Truly, love is capable of unlimitedly performing whatever is required, easily removing all impediments. Kṛṣṇa called Bhadra and Toke and told them, "Come and take this milk, after churning it, you can take out the butter." After doing so, all the hungry cowherd boys sat together along with Kṛṣṇa and truly relished eating it, and by that time, their food had also arrived.

Dāna Ghāṭi Pastime in the Words of Śrī Hariraijī

These gopīs, much-loved by Kṛṣṇa, accompanying Rādha, the embodiment of divine beauty and their fearless leader, always wished to be in the close vicinity of Śyāmasundara, and on the pretext of selling curds, looked for Him. Within them were the innate and spirited desire to see Kṛṣṇa's lotus face. Rādhā's fairness was enhanced by Her dress and ornaments.

She wore a decorated waist-belt bedecked with beautiful jewels and a fragrant garland around Her delicate swan-like neck. Her beaded apparel lightly covered Her face, as if it was trying to stop the moon to appear in the daylight.

She approached Him with two shining pots on Her head and held a small golden pot in her hand, which was slightly supported by Her waist. Her naughty eyes were roving in all directions, looking for that astute and charming Kṛṣṇacandrā. Around Her, many of Her friends also held pots overflowing with curd. Their eyes and mind were leisurely moving

forward and busily searched for that one glimpse of Him. And then, the omniscient Kṛṣṇa shouted from the hilltop, "Bhadra, Toke, Anśu, Manasukha, Dhanasukha, Raktaka, Patraka, and Subal, where are you? O quickly come! Look at all those beautiful damsels of Braja going by. Surely, the pots on their heads and in their hands cannot be empty. Quickly go and take the delicious milk and curd from them."

Subal asked, "Why would they give it to us?" Kṛṣṇa replies, "Subal, you always talk in such a way that the listener would doze off in boredom. Why can't you ever enthusiastically speak?" Mansukha said, "Why are both of you wasting time in plain talking? My nostrils and my tummy are strongly pulling me towards their pots. If you delay a little more, my tummy will run away, leaving me behind here." All laughed and immediately began to run towards the gopīs. The first one to reach was the glutton brāhmaṇa Mansukhā. On one side was Rādhā with all the sweet-looking damsels around Her, and on the other side was Kṛṣṇa with His group of naughty friends.

On one side, the hands were holding pots filled with milk products and on the other, the hands were holding herders' staffs. Mansukha asked, "O fair maidens, why don't you give us some butter?" All the witty gopīs replied in unison, "Oh! Have we all carried these pots from so far only to come here and feed you gluttons? If you know what is good for you, then move aside and let us go!" Bhadra and Toke tried their best to stop them by pitching their sticks, but the astute young damsels brushed them aside and moved forward.

Mansukha yelled at them, "Our dear leader is still a little behind us and this is why you are all so bold! Just wait, as soon as He arrives, you will become so docile and quiet in His presence! O Kṛṣṇa! Come fast, these gopīs are not even listening to us." Their fearless leader quickly ran and arrived immediately, took hold of Rādhā's veil, and addressed His friends, "Oh! For so many days, I was searching for these thieves who daily passed through our forest path but never bother to pay any taxes. Today I will charge them all the pending taxes of the previous days."

"O You! With the most beautiful eyes, whose fair complexion is so attractive, show us Your lovely face!" Saying so, Kṛṣṇa removed the veil hanging over Her face with a gentle touch. The entire surroundings became instantly illuminated with the silvery-white sheen emanating from Her moon-like face as if millions of moons had appeared simultaneously.

There are hundreds of lyrics on *dāna līlā* by saints, *āshtā sakhās* and devotees. You can find in Hindi the original '*Rasili Braj Yātrā'* sacred book.

This analogy does not convey even a fraction of Her divine splendor, which is unparalleled, beyond any description or imagination. How foolish are we to try to express the extent of this incredibly vast ocean of beauty within a circumference of words?

Meanwhile, Rādhā unsuccessfully tried to turn Her face away from Kṛṣṇa. All Her friends spoke together, "We go daily to sell our milk products through this path and no one has ever asked us for any tax, and a tax on milk. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Where has this new trend in Braja come from?" Meanwhile, Rādhā's unblinking eyes transgressed the etiquette of modest behavior and met the lotus-eyes of Kṛṣṇa.

tum navin nava nāgari nutan bhuṣaṇ anga
nayo dān ham mangno so nayo banyo vaha ranga

Naughty Kṛṣṇa teased Her and said, "You are new, Your dresses and ornaments are new; therefore, today's tradition of paying tax should also be new!" Kṛṣṇa extended His hand to touch beautiful Rādhā. She expertly replied politely:

chanchal nayan nihariye ati chanchal mrudu bain
kar nahi chanchal kijiye tajī anchal chanchal nayan

"O naughty eyed one, first you have beheld Me with Your lusty gaze, then You recited Your naughty words very sweetly, but now, stop Your restless and naughty hands and let go of My garment."

sundartā sab anga ki basanan rakhi goya
nirakh nirakh chhavi lādli mero mana ākarshita hoy

Kṛṣṇa pleaded, "O Rādhā! My mind is instinctively attracted towards Your celestial beauty, which You are hiding under the cover of Your veil." As He is said this, extremely agile as He is, He wiped out the betel leaf's juice off His mouth with Rādhā's veil.

nek door thade raho kachhu aur sakuchāy
kaha kiyo mana bhavte mere anchal pīk lagāya

Lovingly protesting and pretending to be angry with Her attractive lips trembling, She said, "How dare are You to wipe Your unclean mouth with My new apparel?"

kaha bhayo anchal lagi pīk hamari jay
yāke badle gwālini mere nayanan pīk lagāya

Kṛṣṇa smiled charmingly and replied, "Why are You so angry? So what, if My beetle-leaf has stained Your garment? As an act of revenge, if You so desire, You may happily spit on My lip, implying, You should kiss Me with Your nectarine lips."

Rādha chastised Him, "O You! King of all deceivers, if all You want is milk products, why don't You say so directly? You are saying one thing, but Your eyes are speaking something else!" Kṛṣṇa, the naughty king of all dancers, replied "O You! From Whose body such a sweet fragrance is emanating, You may also speak like Me with Your mind, body, and eyes, but, I won't let You go without paying our tax." Rādha softly said, "What is it which I can give You?"

Kṛṣṇa, being quite bold, directly expressed His desire, "Give Me Your youth which You are hiding from Me under Your blue garment."

Rādha Now Speaks Hesitantly

itni binate maniye mangat olī chhor
goras ko rasa chakhiye lālan anchal chhor
sang ki sakhi sabe fīr gayi sunihe kirti māya
prīti hiye me rakhiye so pragat kiye ras jāy
kāl bahori ham āii he goras le sab gwāri
niki bhati chakhāii ho mere jivan ho balihāri.

"Kṛṣṇa! You must also comply with My request now and leave My dress alone. All My friends have gone; I am alone now, and if they tell mother Kīrti about this, Our love will be revealed. Our sacred love, nurtured by Our mutual selflessness, is all the sweeter and nectarine for as long as it remains a secret; and it would become dry on disclosure. Tomorrow we will come again and give You as many milk products as You want."

But this restless boy wouldn't agree. He said, "Look, I don't trust anyone! Why should I lay My hope in the future, rejecting the present

opportunity? Like the *cakori* bird, loses its patience on seeing the full moon; similarly, I am very inspired upon seeing you."

Rādhā replied, "Listen! You just move around here and there and have nothing worthwhile to do. Nandajī is fair complexioned, so is mother Yaśodā, but Your complexion is dark and this is only because of Your misdeeds."

Kṛṣṇa replied, "Look Radhe, I am the undisputed ruler of this entire Braja Mandalā. You are a full-bloomed lotus and I am a bumble-bee who is intensely hankering to taste the nectar of Your fragrant blossom."

Rādha becomes nervous and said, "Look, I'm going now, someone may be coming this way. Our love should remain a secret."

braj vṛndāvana giri nadi, pashu panchhi sab sang
inso kaha durāyie, pyāri rādhā mero anga

"O Rādhā! All living entities, all forms of life, moving or unmoving, are My expansions, so there is no question of 'You without Me' and of 'us' hiding anything."

Finally, being exhausted, She brought down the pot from Her head. A line of sweat had appeared over Her delicate face in this scramble. Kṛṣṇa, on seeing Rādhā's discomfort and labor, started serving Her; affectionately wiping Her lovely face, gently fanning Her to cool Her warm and attractive body and bathing Her tender feet.

So this is the *Dāna Ghāṭi* pastime, where Kṛṣṇa would stop the Braja gopīs to receive their gentle, loving touch. All of our Ācāryas have recited this pastime of collecting taxes, which nurtures mutual joy and happiness. These damsels of Braja, never becoming satiated with His divine presence, achieve absolute fulfillment from the slightest vision of His beautiful form and the affectionate touch of His gentle and soft hands.

Śrī Nārāyana Svāmīji

hamaro dān dehu brajanāri
madmāti gaja gāmini dole tu dadhi bechan hāri
rup tohi bidhnā ne diyo jyo chandā ujiyāri
matuki sisa katile nayanā motina māng sawāri
hār hamela gale me rāje alke ghunghar vāri

yā braja me jeti sundari hai saba hama dekhi bhāri
'nārāyana' teri ya chhavi para nand nandana balihāri

Truly speaking, these innumerable maidens, the beauties of Braja, come with Rādhā only for this scramble and scuffle. Selling curd is just a means towards this end. Being touched by His nectarine lips and soft hands, Kṛṣṇa fulfills their desires. This is why the *śrutis*, which have now attained the form of the beautiful damsels of Braja, desiring Kṛṣṇa alone, not desiring to be born in any higher caste or anywhere out of Braja, are asking for only one thing: Kṛṣṇa's love!

Śrī Govinda Svāmī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsajī, Śrī Nāgridāsjī, Śrī Nandadāsajī, Śrī Askaranjī, Śrī Madhavadāsjī, Śrī Kumbhandāsajī, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Svāmīji and all other great devotees and saints have written devotional songs of *dāna līlā*.

Jāna Ajāna Trees

First Story

After Kṛṣṇadāsajī fell in a well, people were saying that he became a ghost. The devout devotees (*rasikās*) of Vṛndāvan thought, "How can this be possible?" A saintly person should be liberated. How can he become a ghost?" All of them decided to go to Śrī Nāthajī to ask. When they left from Vṛndāvana to go to Govardhana, they spent one night at Rādhā-kuṇḍa At Rādhā-kuṇḍa, there were Svāmī Haridāsjī and Svāmī Hīta Harivanshjī's (*bhajan sthali*) place of worship. After spending the night there, they started for Jatipura the next day. At that time, Gosainjī Śrī VitthalNāthajī was serving Śrī Nāthajī for His *Śrīngar sevā* decoration. Śrī Nāthajī Himself said, "Saints are coming from Vṛndāvana. You should go and welcome them." Gosainjī left, leaving the service to the Lord. They all met at the place of Jān-Ajān. He welcomed them and then they all went to the temple. They all asked their question to Śrī Nāthajī.

At that moment, a cowherd boy came running in and said to Gosainjī, "Jaya Jaya, just now I saw Kṛṣṇa Dāsajī at Shyam Dhākā. He had the water pot for Śrī Nāthajī in hand and was on his way to serve Him." Kṛṣṇa Dāsajī also said, "There is some wealth kept near the well. Let Gosainjī acquire that wealth in service for Śrī Nāthajī." Kṛṣṇa Dāsajī had not turned into a ghost but was actually in daily service to Śrī Nāthajī. Listening to all this, saints did not have any doubt left in their minds and they returned satisfied.

Second Story

In the *rāsa* dance, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa disappeared, the gopīs started asking the trees, "Which way did He go?"

bāhuṁ priyāṁsa upadhāya gṛhīta-padmo
rāmānujas tulasikāli-kulair madāndhaiḥ
anvīyamāna iha vas taravaḥ praṇāmaṁ
kiṁ vābhinandati caran praṇayāvalokaiḥ

"O trees, we see that you are bowing down. When the younger brother of Rāma walked by here, followed by intoxicated bees swarming around the tulasī mañjarīs decorating His garland, did He acknowledge your obeisances with His affectionate glances? He must have been resting His arm on the shoulder of His beloved and carrying a lotus flower in His free hand." (ŚB. 10.30.12)

The gopīs requested the trees, "You are staying in this holy place (*tīrtha*), please have mercy on us and tell us about His activities." But even though they knew, the trees did not reply. Hence, the name *jāna-ajāna* was given.

Gulāla Kuṇḍa

From the name Gulāla, it looks like Śrī Kṛṣṇa played *holī* here. (Gulāla is a substance that you play with during *holī*.)

basanti rang barsego,āii āire basant bahār
lohri saut chale mat īklichunar audha basanti
ye braja hai rasiyan ko akhāro tu hai nayi lajwanti
shyām ras pāvego.āii-āii re

According to Vartājī, the great famous poet Chaturbhujadāsjī's son, Śrī Raghav dāsjīī had envisioned Śrī Rādhārānī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Holīlīlā* (pastime). Seeing that pastime, he wrote a *holī* song there.

While singing, he went into a trance of the *holī* pastime and left his body. His daughter later completed the song.

Bilchhu Kuṇḍa

Bilchhu Kuṇḍa is an ancient place of the divine pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Bichu Bihārī is present in an ancient temple here. Once, while playing hide-and-seek, Rādhā lost Her *bichua* (toe-ring), which could not be found anywhere. Later, Kṛṣṇa found that *bichua* around a nearby pond. Thereafter the pond came to be known as Bichu-kuṇḍa In ancient texts, this forest area has been described as *Vilaśanavāna*, a charming forest, where many picturesque pastimes took place. In olden times, this area was a rich, thickly grown forest. Some consider this forest to be the place where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇahave supreme and enjoyable pastimes. Thus the name *Vilāśanavana*, as the meaning of *Vilāsa* is amusement. Śrī Haridevajī's deity, one of the four supreme presiding deities of Braja, was discovered at this place by Śrī Keshavācāryajī.

Śrī Kṛishnadāsjī, one of the eight great poets, lived here at this *Vilaśanavāna*, which was then a dense forest of varied trees, vines, and creepers. One day Kṛṣṇadasjī, while inspecting the construction of a well fell into it and died there when his stick slipped on the structure. This happened on the outskirts of the village Punchhari. One comes across this well on the Govardhana parikrāma, which is now known as Kṛishna dās-ka-kuan.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsajī

Kṛṣṇadāsajī was born in the year 1498 in village Chilottra, near Ahmedabad in Gujarat in the Kunvi lineage. His father was a Judge, but being an ignoble man would side with thieves, robbers, etc. Once, when a few nomads were camping on the outskirts of the village, his father arranged for some robbers to loot them. From that robbery, he kept Rs.12,000 for himself and gave Rs.2000 to the robbers. The nomads approached him, explained their situation, and pleaded for justice. He very unreasonably rebuked the nomads and sent them off. Kṛṣṇadasjī felt disgusted over his father's unjust behaviors, and so he disclosed to the nomads the truth: that his father himself had arranged for their money to be looted through thieves. He advised them that they should approach the king for justice and that he would stand witness for them. The nomads took their complaint to the king. The king got both the father and the son arrested. Both were presented in the King's court. Kṛṣṇadasjī got the

nomad's money returned by telling the truth. After this incident, his mind developed intense dispassion. As a result, he left his home and childhood itself and took off for pilgrimage, and reached Mathurā. Here, he met Vallabhācārya at Vishram Ghat. Acārya, at first sight, could make out his divinity! He showered his abundant blessings upon him and ordained him as a *pushtimārga vaishnavā*. Later, his divine genius presented him with the responsibility of Thakura Śrī Nāthajī's service.

Śrī Nāthajī's service progressed unprecedentedly under his guidance. Kṛṣṇadasjī has thus sung his praises in his famous Bhaktamāl like this:

He was the ocean of *bhajan mārga* (singing lord's glories) and was an embodiment of divine virtues, as presented and proclaimed by Gurudeva Śrī Vallabhācāryā.

The poetry composed by him is extraordinary and pure and faultless. He was perfectly adept in the service of Śrī Nāthajī. The scholars are full of praise for his compositions glorifying the *līlās* of Śrī Govardhandhari Gopal.

Kṛṣṇadasjī considered the soil of Braja as his all; lived in the holy company of a pure devotee in Girirājajī's foothills and beheld him in his thoughts, words, and deeds. He had taken a strict vow of serving Yugal Śrī Rādhā-Madhav.

Once, Kṛṣṇadasjī brought a nautch girl who was very talented in singing and dancing with him to Govardhana to bless her. He sanctified her by performing elaborate Vaishanava rites upon her and taught her a beautiful, highly elevating '*pad*' and presented her before Śrī Nāthajī for singing.

Singing the Last Line of this Verse

kṛṣṇadās kiyo prān nichhavar yeh tan jag sar patakyo

"Kṛṣṇa dāsa sacrifices his breaths, his body, his world – all is sacrificed unto You". She offered her life to the lotus feet of Śrī Thakurajī, attained an astral body and entered into Lord's eternal *līlā*. That day, Kṛṣṇadasjī himself completed this last line for that divine soul.

Similarly, once Kṛṣṇadāsajī had gone to Delhi for some work pertaining to Śrī Nāthajī. He was at a place where very delicious, fresh Jalebis were being prepared. He felt these were fit to be offered to Śrī Nāthajī. He mentally offered a plate full of Jalebis to Śrī Nāthajī from Delhi and the

Omniscient Lord accepted these with His own hands, extending His hand from Girirājajī to Delhi!

Śrī Hari Devajī

The presiding deity of Śrī Girirājajī is this seven-year-old Śrī Haridevajī. It was Him who lifted Govardhana for seven days. Śrī Vajranabhajī, great-grandson of the Lord, had enshrined four deities in Braja; one of those being is Śrī Haridevajī. Time and again, all four deities vanished. After going underground (being buried), Śrī Haridevajī was uncovered by Śrī Keśavācāryā**.**

*Śrī Keśav*ācāryā

Śrī Mohan Mishra and Śrīmati Bhagvati Devi was a prosperous, devoted brāhmaṇa couple from a village near Gwālior. They had lived half of their prime life and at the age of 55, they developed a desire to bear a son.

Worship of God is the only deliverer of all desires. Like mother Aditi, she also undertook strict vows with chaste intentions. As a result, the devout Bhāgvati Devi conceived and with time gave birth to a beautiful, divine boy child. The parents started calling him by the name Keśava. Keśava learned all *Vedas*, *Puraṇas*, history from his scholarly father, Mohan Mishra, but his special interest was in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* only. The child portrayed a natural tendency of dispassion from the world and intense devotion in the lotus feet of God. One day, the father, only to test his son's mind, posed an inverted question to him. Father asked, "Son! At this age you can't renounce; how will you get liberated from the loans of *devas*, parents, *ṛṣis* without paying them off?" His son replied, "Dear father! I discretely remember the character of Prahlāda as told by you to me."

śrī-prahrāda uvāca
kaumāra ācaret prājño
dharmān bhāgavatān iha
durlabhaṁ mānuṣaṁ janma
tad apy adhruvam arthadam

"Prahlāda Mahārāj said: One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of life — in other

words, from the tender age of childhood — to practice the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements. The human body is most rarely achieved, and although temporary like other bodies, it is meaningful because in human life one can perform devotional service. Even a slight amount of sincere devotional service can bestow us on the path of complete perfection." (ŚB. 7.6.1)

"Adolescent age is meant for following the Vaiṣṇava life. In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 11.5.47, as Yogeswara Karbhajanajī has said, "One who is surrendered to the Lord; he is ever free from all loans." Keśava (son) said, "Dear father, you have inculcated these thoughts into me." Observing his matured and unshakable devotion, the parents blessed their son Keśava for the attainment of the Divine. There and then Keśava prostrated himself before his parents and started for Vṛndāvana. On the way, he thought, "This path of *bhakti* is so difficult for a person like me, and thus attaining the Divine is almost impossible for myself." Such doubting thoughts were agitating his mind, when a co-traveler called aloud to his friend, "Come fast, your friend is calling you." This sentence fully shook his inner being, like the Lord saying, "Keśava! Do you have no faith in Me? Come fast, I'm waiting for you!"

Totally possessed by this one sentence, Keśavajī reached Vṛndāvana running. To him, every single moment seemed like a century. He could not even eat or drink. Losing all bodily-consciousness, the hope of a glimpse of the divine was holding his life! He would faint every second moment. His beloved Lord could also not bear the separation from Keshavajī anymore. A resident of Gahvaravana, Śrī Gyan Devajī, who was a great devotee of the Lord, brought Keśavajī back to consciousness, initiated him into '*mantra*' and brought him face to face with Śrī Lādli-Laljī the dwellers of Nikunjas. He ordered him to live in the foothills of Śrī Govardhana and practice bhakti.

In the Words of Nāgridāsjī

talhati govardhan ki rahiye
brajavāsin ke tuk jhuth lai govind kuṇḍ nīt rahiye
tana pulkit mana mat madhup hai braj-subās ko lahiye
shravan sunat harikatha prem ras trushāvant hai jahiye
shyāma shyam saloni soorat nainan māhi basahiye.

Mahārāj Gyandevajī foretold at the same time, "You will be blessed to uncover Śrī Haridevajī. You will be respected in this world in coming times at par with Lord Haridevajī. With the blessings of Śrī Gurudev, you developed an unprecedented love for Śrī Girirājajī. You have expressed this in your composition titled '*Govardhana-shataka.*'

"This was the height of trust, that is why Syamasundar always would play with you, show you His *līlās* and would also joke with you."

One day, the Lord gave a strange instruction to Keśavajī. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said. "Keśava! My one deity form is lying hidden in the ridge of a field near Bichhua Kuṇḍ. Go and unearth that."

Keśavajī spoke with folded hands, "O Omniscient ocean of divine virtues! Svāmī nijī is not present with You in that *vigraha* (form); I am a Yugal-worshiping, simple brāhmaṇa."

I live on a handful of rations begged from the Brajavasīs' households. O, Merciful Lord! Have mercy on me that this emotion remains undeterred in my heart. May my vow of selfless *bhakti* remain intact. May I not sin and not break my vow of Yugal worship. Worship of lone Kṛṣṇa, without Śrījī besides Him is a sin; therefore, it is forbidden."

Lord Śiva Says

gaur tejo bīna vastu shyamam tejah samarchayet
japet vā dhyāyate vāpi sa bhavet pātaki shive

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, "Keśava! Today I'm disclosing a secret to you, which was not known to anyone till today. Once, I had gone to see Śrījī to Barṣāṇā but could not meet Her. Thereafter, for the *darśan* of blue-dressed Gourangi (Rādhā), I spoiled Indra's puja and started Śrī Govardhana pujā. Indra became angry over this and tried to doom Braj with heavy rain waters. Then to save Braj, I lifted Govardhana Hill and the entire Braj came under the hill. Amongst them came the beauteous, all charming, life of My life, Śrī Rādhā. With this *vigraha* (Harideva) I got Her uninterrupted *darśan* for all seven days and with Her force, I upheld Govardhana."

This fact has been disclosed by Keśavācāryajī himself in his text '*Govardhana Mahimamrit*'.

"Therefore, don't consider My form of Harideva devoid of Śrījī. This is, in fact, a form of love for *priya*. Treat this as a *vigraha* with Śrījī, serve and worship this, and disclose this information. This way, both your vows

will remain protected. Your *nishkinchan vrata* (vow of non-hoarding) will not break; never beg for My sake, and, also, do not deny food, etc., offered with My inspiration. You must accept that."

Keśavācāryajī told the Brajavasīs about the Lord's instructions and also explained the exact spot from where Śrī Haridevajī would appear. The digging started speedily and very soon the *dvaimilit* (dual in one form) appeared, spreading a divine charisma all around. Watching this beautiful sight, people got greedy; everyone wanted to own the Deity. One person said, "This Deity is mine, I'll take this home." A second said, "How can you take this? This has come out from my field!"

A third person said, "Get aside! I am the landlord." So Keśavācāryajī left the debating crowd and stood aside. One logical man, observing this, said, "Look brothers, it would be appropriate to give this deity to the one who has disclosed this secret to us. Doing anything with this without asking him will not result in anything good." Hearing this, four or five people arose and said in unison, "Who has elected you as a *panch* or a *pundit* (a leader or a scholar)? If you wish to be here then keep your mouth shut."

The poor fellow became silent. By that time, an oracle was heard, "One who can lift this śrīvigraha (deity) all alone in one's lap will be entitled for its service."

All of them tried to lift this, but it did not move at all. Now everyone requested Keśavachryajī. The moment Pujya Acārya came forward and extended his hands, just by touching it slightly, Śrī Haridevajī himself clung to Keshavācārya's chest. From all directions, the sounds of people resounded, "Śrī Haridevajī Mahārāj ki Jaya!"

Thus, it became obvious that Haridevajī had appeared for Acāryajī only. Acāryajī brought Haridevajī to his little cottage, and the service was instantly started.

This Thakur loves to eat and eats a lot! One day He said, "Keśavajī! Today I will eat *payas*(sweet rice)."

Kesava said, "Within Your arrogance was hidden one more objective – To make your devotee famous. I am a begging brāhmaṇa. Wherefrom would I bring the *payas*?"

The same night Haridevajī instructed king Bhagavan dāsa of Amer in a dream. By the next morning, the king came to Keśavācāryajī. The king was deeply impressed with Śrī Haridev's appearance, and in the year 1581, the king had a massive temple built for the Lord. He also arranged

appropriately for all services. He presented many villages to Svāmīji in the service of the Lord.

Now the impact of Acāryajī was spreading far and wide. During the time of the onslaught of the Muslim people, this temple also was invaded under Aurangzeb's cruel rule. The Deity of Śrī Haridevajī was taken out of Braja. This deity is now present in the village of Rajdhan, Bucholi in the district of Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. The king of Bharatapura gave two villages, Bhagosa and Lodhipura, for the service of the Lord. He also gave a large grant for the maintenance and services of the temple. Śrī Caitanya, while on a pilgrimage of Braja, had ecstatically danced during the *darśan* of Śrī Haridevajī.

According to *Dānakeli Kaumudi*, composed by Śrīpad Rupa Gosvāmī, Rādhārānī along with Her *sakhīs* come here for Śrī Haridev's *darśan*. After Holīfestival, the Lord's appearance day is celebrated on the second dark day of *chaitra* (April) month. His floral chair car is brought here and the Holika festival is concluded here.

Brahmā-kuṇḍa

Brahmā performed the Lord's *abhishek* (bathing ceremony) here for self-purification after committing the sin of kidnapping the cows, calves, and Gopas. This *kuṇḍ* got created with the holy waters of the *abhishek*.

Mansa Devi

Yogamāyā herself has appeared as Mansa Devi at the southern bank of Mansi Gangā.

Śrī Chakreswara

Śrī Chakratīrtha is located to the north of Manasi Ganga and this is the resting place of Śrī Rādhā Madhavā. Govinda lifted Girirāja to protect the Brajavasīs from the continuous flashing rain for seven days and ordered the Sudarśana chakra to not let any water enter Giri's (hill's) base. For all seven days, the *chakra* did not allow even a drop of water to enter. The lord established Girirājajī after the rain stopped. At that time, Lord had kept Sudarśana *cakra* here at this spot. Therefore, this Chakratīrtha bears the mark of the *Chakrā*.

Prayer Mantra for Chakreswara

chakra tīrtha namastubhyam kṛṣṇa chakrena lānchchhitam
sarva pāpa chchhide tasmai kṛṣṇa nirmial nirmitam

Chakreswara Mahādeva is enshrined here. There are four famous temples of Mahādeva in Braj which were enshrined by Bajranabhjī: Gopeshwara in Vṛndāvana, Kameshwar Mahādeva in Kaman, Bhooteshwar Mahādeva in Mathurā and Govardhana as Chakreswara Mahādeva. Over time Chakreswara came to be called Chakleswarā. Just opposite to Chakleswarā Mahādeva is the Bhajan cottage of Śrīla Sanatana Govāmī, where he did *bhajans* for some time. While living there he went for Girirāja parikrama daily. Though inflicted with old age, he did not abandon his resolve. With slow, staggering steps, he fulfilled his resolve. The merciful Lord, unable to bear his suffering, came to him in the garb of a small boy and presented a Girirāja rock marked with Kṛṣṇa's feet and stick and said, "Bābā in this old age, instead of walking 21 km for Girirāja parikrama, you circumambulate this piece of Girirāja rock. You will get the fruit of complete *parikramā*."

Sanatanajī held the rock with both his hands and touched it to his forehead, By that time the boy had disappeared.

"Who could that boy be? He must be Giridhara Himself?" Sanatanjī watched him with unblinking eyes for a long time and said nothing when the boy disappeared from his vision, but his unsatisfied heart was very upset.

Afterward, Gosvāmī jī did the *parikrama* of that piece of rock. Presently, this holy rock is worth seeing at Rādhā Damodar temple at Śrī Vṛndāvana Dham.

Opposite Chakleswarā is situated Śrī Gaur-Nityānanda Prabhu's temple. Śrī Caitanya and Śrī Nityanand Prabhu had rested here while circumambulating Girirājajī and visited Chakreswara Mahādeva, Manasi Ganga, and Prayāga Ghat. It is said that once Sanatan Gosvāmī decided to change his place, disturbed with the onslaught of mosquitoes. Lord Chakerswara Himself assured him that from then on the place will forever remain free from mosquitoes. Therefore, he dropped his idea of shifting from there.

Nearby is the *bhajan-sthali* of a great Siddha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Bābā who was born in Odishā. At the adolescent age of 16, he left his home out

of intense dispassion and came to Vṛndāvana and then moved further to Jaipur to be in the company of Śrī Rādhā GovindaDev of Rupa Gosvāmī jī. After he spent some 8 to10 years there, he went to Kamyavan, where he received initiation by a great *siddha*, Śrī Jai Kṛṣṇa dāsa Bābājī into the discipline of *bhakti-bhajan*. He then lived in a village called Domil near Nandagāon. Under the influence of renunciation, forgetting food and sleep, he remained immersed in *bhajan*. His vision became dimmed because of malnutrition. Śrījī with Her grace appointed Lalitājī to bless him. Lalitājī in the garb of a simple girl brought a full meal on a golden plate for him. After he ate that nourishing meal, he felt a divine satisfaction. She also gave him *kājal* for his eyes, after which he regained his vision. Having all these divine experiences, Bābā decisively concluded that she was no ordinary village girl, rather that she must have been some divine power (*shakti*). Bābā wished for Her vision (*darśan*) once again. He spent three days and nights intensely looking for Her. Śrījī Herself appeared in his dream and assured him and instructed thus:

"Kṛṣṇadās! Now you will go to Śrī Govardhana, spend the rest of your life there, spreading the message of My simple devotion!" Following Śrījī's order, he started living near Śrī Sanatanjī's *bhajankuti*. With abundant blessings from Śrījī, he remained immersed day and night in Lord's *līlās'*experiences and attained divine wisdom. He composed many Vaiṣṇava texts, the important amongst those being *Prarthanamrit tarangini*, *Sadhanamrit chandrika*, *Bhavanasar sangraha,* etc. His life is a source of knowledge, wisdom, and inspiration for all mankind.

Mukhārbind

On the Northern bank of Manasi Ganga, Mukhārbind is located, which represents the face of Śrī Girirājajī. Govardhana jī is in the form of a sitting cow. The way the cow turns her face towards the belly or udder while sitting is considered to be similar to Girirājajī's face. A massive temple has been built at this spot.

Indra-dhvaj Vedi

The flag of Indra's worship used to be installed here. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had started Girirāja worship after stopping Indra worship here. This place is situated on the east of Govardhana.

Mochan and papamochan Kuṇḍ: Both these ponds are near the Indradhvaj vedi, near the existing Bus stand, but are almost vanishing. People are building houses over this spot after illegal possession.

Ānyaur Village

Ānyaur village is located en route to Govardhana parikrama 3km away from Dān Ghati Temple. Instead of Indra pooja, Girirāja pooja was performed here and many delicious dishes were offered to Girirājajī by Brajavasīs. The Lord had appeared in person here on the top of the hill and partook in all foods, saying "Aur ān, aur ān", meaning 'bring more, bring more'; thus the name of this place "Ānyaur." Śrī Kṛṣṇa then asked, "Had any god appeared in person before? Look, Girirāja Bābā is very generous. He fulfills all your desires." Brajavasīs also started feeling blessed by worshiping Govardhana. The same pooja tradition is prevalent in the country even in present times. At the place of Annakoot, the natural marks of bowls, etc. exist. Bajaniśīlā, which produces melodious sound by touching, is located near this village. The place of appearance of Śrī Nāthajī is close to the foothills of Girirājajī.

Place of the Appearance of Śrī Nāthajī

Without Śrī Nāthajī's *darśan*, *darśan* of all four Naths is not considered successful; and the sole *darśan* of Śrī Nāthajī is equivalent to all four. Therefore, Śrī Govardhana Nāthajī is the Lord of Lords. For being the destroyer of Brahmā's pride: Devadaman, Indra's pride Indradaman, Kalia's destruction Kāliyadaman, Nāgadaman – He is known by all these names.

The Vallabha Sampradaya Believes the Following

Vṛṣabhānu's brother, Gopa Chandrabhan, incarnated as Saddu Pandey in the village Annyaur on Thursday the 11th day of Phalagun (March) in the year 1473 (samvat 1533). Śrī Govardhana Nāthajī came in person to *ācārya* Śrī Vallabha Prabhu while he was in southern Jharkhand and told him about the presence of three destroyers: Nāg Daman on the left, Indra Daman in South and Deva Daman in the central part. He was asked by the Lord to immediately come and manifest these three worshipful forms. As

per instruction, Acārya Charan reached Gokula in the month of Shravana (July) on Thursday the 11th day in samvat 1549. From there he proceeded to Govardhana where he saw one cow deliberately pouring all her milk at one particular spot daily. On reaching Saddu Pandey's home he, along with Saddu Pandey, his daughter Naro, and other Brajavasīs, dug out this seven-year-old Devadaman from this "*Śrīngār mandala*,"

It is mentioned in *Vaiṣṇava varta* that Devadamanjī Himself proclaimed to Śrī Vallabha Prabhu to bring Him to light, and also obliged him with His divine vision. Therefore, Thakurajī has appeared on His own. Forgetting the unnecessary discussion as to who brought light to this Lord, one should believe that He got manifested at His own Will – this is the best and ultimate belief.

You were manifested through Śrī Madhavaendra Puri. For the generous devotees, all ācāryas are Lord's forms. Therefore, this issue is not debatable, so is the Lord's instruction:

ācāryaṁ māṁ vijānīyān
navamanyeta karhicit
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta
sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ

"One should know the ācārya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should never try to find faults in him thinking him as an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods."
(ŚB. 11.17.27)

amānitvam adambhitvam
ahiṁsā kṣāntir ārjavam
ācāryopāsanaṁ śaucaṁ
sthairyam ātma-vinigrahaḥ

(BG. 13.8)

As mentioned in *Bhakti Ratnakar*, the Gosains of Vṛndāvana, Raghunatha Dāsa Gosain, and possibly Jīva Gosain, after consulting all, the Gaudiyas decided to present the right to worship and serve Śrī Nāthajī to Śrī Vitthal Nath Gosainjī.

According to Caritāmṛta

The reason behind offering the service, worship of Śrī Nāthajī to Śrī Vitthaljī was the deep mutual love between Śrī Vallabhācāryajī and Śrī

Caitanya Devajī. Therefore, Gaudiya devotees lovingly offered the service of Gopaljī (Śrī Nāthajī) to Śrī Vitthal Nāthajī. Today as well the young boys of Gosains from the Vallabha community are engaged in serving Śrī Nāthajī at Nathdvarā.

The Gaudiya *ācāryas* have showered their praises over Śrī Gosainjī's worship tradition:

In *Vaisanava Vandana* Śrī Jīva Gosain Pāda has glorified Śrī Vallabhācāryajī.

Śrī Kavikarnapoorjī believes that Acārya Vallabhajī was Śrī Sukadeva in his previous incarnation. Therefore, the fact to be known and understood is that Śrī Nāthajī has manifested Himself at His own Will; Śrī Nāthajī, therefore, does not belong to anyone particular person or community, but is here for one and all and is present in one and all.

Both opinions hold for all open-minded, generous, emotional devotees. One should taste the blissful *līlās* of the unlimited omnipotent Lord with an undoubting mind and non-argumentative intellect. To indulge in arguments over the Eternal Divine Power's existence is both wasteful and misleading.

The intellect hidden deep in ignorance only indulges in such arguments and not in the discriminative beings; our *Iṣṭa* (Lord) is very clever making his play apparent at one time and hiding at the other times! After going into hiding, He needs someone for His reappearance, and whomsoever He dims perfect, jumps into His lap! Therefore, taste these nectarean *līlās* with a pure mind, intellect, and heart, as stated by Suradāsjī ;

braj līlā kou pār na pave
brahma shisha mahesh nārayana mati hi bhulāye
veda smruti suni hari hi milan bahu mārag batāyo
gopījana nīj mārag' sur' nyāro dikhayo.

Bābā Mahārāj's Unbiased Opinion

In Vartajī, it is referenced that the Lord appeared to Śrī Vallabh Prabhu to shower His grace and instructed Devadaman to reveal Him. Thereafter the Lord manifested Himself. There is no point in getting into deliberation or controversy as to who revealed the deity. Instead, if we accept that He manifested Himself; that is the best conclusion.

The marks of all Śrī Kṛṣṇa's five fingers from *Dvapar līlā* can be seen nearby from here. Śrī Govardhana softened like butter and these finger marks got etched here. Further ahead is Sindoori-Śīlā, on rubbing this rock, one gets sindoor (vermilion). The Lord had applied vermilion on Rādhājī's forehead by rubbing His finger on this rock. (In Hindu tradition, the groom applies vermilion on the bride's forehead). There are, therefore, many indicators or marks of *Dwapara-līlās* upon Girirājajī.

Dandoti Śīlā

Beneath the hill, this śīlā (rock) is worth seeing. There is a tradition of prostration at this śīlā before climbing the hill to get to Śrī Nāthajī. By thus prostrating, one is saved from committing the offence of stepping over Girirājajī. Sindoori śīlā is worth seeing and it is located nearby.

Śrīngār Mandala

According to *Garga-saṁhitā*, during Rāsa Kāla (time), Kiśora-Kiśorī along with a large group of friends and associates performed water-sports in the cool blue waters of Śrī Yamunā. While throwing water upon each other with cupped hands, some water-drops got settled over the curly black tresses over the naughty eyes (of Kiśorajī), and some droplets got seated over the resplendent golden face, which was shining like kuṇḍa*nā*. After the water sports, Yugal Kiśora along with their group went to Śrī Giri Govardhana. (Ga.Saṁ.Vṛ.Kha. 20.1)

On this bejeweled soil, Rasesh-Raseshwari danced in Rāsa formation.

Later, Yugal Sarkar sat on a flower-decked seat over a rock (Rāsa Mandala). It looked as if the dark cloud and lightning have dawned together over the hill. (Ga.Saṁ.Vṛ.Kha. 20.3)

The Braja damsels were adept in applying make-up and decorated Kiśorījī. They applied a bluish paste over her fair skin, red ink on her soles in an artistic way, kajal in Her dilated fish-like eyes, tied lovely colorful wildflowers in Her braid, and finally, sprayed perfume on Her.

Yamunājī herself tied nupur (bells) on Her delicate feet. Gangajī, Śrī Rāmajī, Lalitā, Vishakha, Chandranana, Madhumati, Bandi, Sukhadayani, Anandi and others decorated Śrījī with exquisite, exclusive ornaments. Śrījī, bedecked and bejeweled by Her friends, spread divine charm and beauty all around, which made even Madan Mohan's eyes drop in sheer shyness. (Ga.Saṁ.Vṛ.Kha. 20.15-16)

Since Śrījī was decorated by Her friends at this spot, Śrī Govardhana became known as Śrīnagār Mandalā. This place holds special importance due to Dwapara-era līlās of Rādhā-Madhav; and, at present age also, it has attained special grace and glory because Śrī Govardhana Nath (Śrī Nāthajī) emerged from here. The proof for this fact is found in many authentic texts including 84 Vaisanava Varta, *Garga-saṁhitā,* etc.

It is mentioned that after completing 4,800 years of Kali-yuga, Śrī Hari's self-siddha form will emerge from Śrīngār mandalā. (Ga.Saṁ. Gi.Kha. 7.31)

People would know this deity (Śrīvigraha) as "Śrī Nāthajī" for the sake of destroying the pride of Devas. This deity will enshrine itself at the lotus feet of the Lord in the center of the Earth. There are four Naths (Lords) present in the land of Bharat which is the land of Aryan *ṛṣis*, innumerable great devotees, bhajan bhoomi, and the origin of the world's divine wisdom and Vedic knowledge. Jagannāthajī in the East, Ranganāthajī in the South, Dwarikanāthajī in the West, Badrināthajī in the North, and Śrī Govardhana Nāthajī in the middle. You are the Deva of all these Nath Devas. (Ga.Saṁ.Gi.Kha. 7.37)

Govinda-kuṇḍa

Indra was shocked to see the failure of his incessant rains. "Certainly there is some powerful existence".

śṛī-śuka uvāca
evaṁ kṛṣṇam upāmantryasurabhiḥ payasātmanaḥ
jalair ākāśa-gaṅgāyāairāvata-karoddhṛtaiḥ
indraḥ surarṣibhiḥ sākaṁcodito deva-mātṛbhiḥ
abhyasiñcata dāśārhaṁgovindaiticābhyadhātBhā

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, "Having thus appealed to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Surabhi performed His bathing ceremony with her milk. Indra, based on the request of Aditi and other mothers of the gods, bathed the Lord with the waters of heavenly Gaṅgā, brought by Airāvatā (Indra's elephant carrier) in its own tusks. Thus, in the company of the gods and great sages, Indra coronated Lord Kṛṣṇa, the descendant of Daśārha, and gave Him the name Govinda." (ŚB. 10.27.22-23)

The godmothers also asked Indra, "Son! Take the cow Surabhi along; He is Gopāl. On seeing the cow, He will be extremely pleased. Surabhi

is very dear to the Supreme Lord and the Lord is very dear to Surabhi." Surabhi even said, "O Supreme Lord of Lords! You are my Indra (Lord). I do not know anyone other than You."

surabhir uvāca
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa mahā-yogin
viśvātman viśva-sambhava
bhavatā loka-nāthena
sa-nāthā vayam acyuta

"Mother Surabhi said, "O Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, greatest of mystics! O Soul and origin of the universe! You are the master of the world, and as favoured by you, O infallible Lord, we have You as our master."
(ŚB. 10.27.19)

tvaṁ naḥ paramakaṁ daivaṁ
tvaṁ na indro jagat-pate

bhavāya bhava go-vipra
devānāṁ ye ca sādhavaḥ

"You are our supreme worshipable Deity. Therefore, O Lord of the universe, for the benefit of the cows, the brāhmaṇas, the gods, and all other saintly persons, please become our ruler Indrā."
(ŚB. 10.27.20)

indraṁ nas tvābhiṣekṣyāmo
brahmaṇā coditā vayam
avatīrṇo'si viśvātman
bhūmer bhārāpanuttaye

"As ordered by Lord Brahmā we shall perform Your bathing ceremony to coronate You as Indrā. O Soul of the universe, You descend to this world to relieve the burden of the earth." (Ga.Saṁ. Vr.Kha. 20.21)

Indra had no courage to come alone; so he brought along *surpati*, Surabhi and sura-*ṛṣis*. From a distance, he saw the Lord sitting on solid rock. He jumped down from Airavat's back (elephant) and offered precious stones and jewels to Kṛṣṇa and prostrated at His lotus feet. He performed

the Lord's Abhishek with proper methodology. This GovindaKuṇḍa came into being with Surabhi's milk and Manasi Ganga was created with the waters of Ganga coming from the heavens, which was used for Abhishek.

This Govinda Kuṇḍa which emerged with the milk of Surabhi for Kṛṣṇa's *abhiṣeka* is all-powerful to nullify the gravest of sins. Govinda Kuṇḍa represents Lord's lips.

Katha 1

One day, Govinda Svāmī was playing *gilli-danda* (something like bat-ball) with Śrī Nāthajī. Balaram and Shyam played all those games in the rivers, hills, valleys, parks, and forests of Vṛndāvana, which all earthly children of this world play.

First Śrī Nāthajī was hitting with the *danda* (stick or bat) and Govinda Svāmī was running around to pick or catch the *gilli* (a small oblong-shaped piece of wood). At last Govinda, Svāmī caught the *gilli* and it was Śrī Nāthajī's turn. Govinda Svāmī said, "Look, Gopal! Now take Your turn!" Holding the *danda* in his hand, Govinda Svāmī hit the *gilli* very hard, pushing it far away. Śrī Nāthajī thought, "Even after running around the whole day, I won't be able to complete this turn." As a result, Śrī Nāthajī, without giving up His turn, ran into the temple's sanctum sanctorum, red with anger. Govinda Svāmī threw the *gilli* with full force upon Śrī Nāthajī. On seeing this, the *pujari* pushed Govinda Svāmī out of the temple. How could the *pujari* know their mutual love? After being pushed out, Govinda Svāmī sat on the banks of the pond (Govinda Kuṇḍ) and thought, "Afterall, Śrī Nathajī will go to play in the forest through this route only. He got me beaten up and thrown out of the temple. I will certainly take my revenge."

Śrī Nāthajī then thought, "How can he pass his day without play? He is just sitting on the road. How do I satisfy him?" By that time, Śrī Vitthal Nath Gosain had served Śrī Nāthajīthe meals, ut He was not accepting the food. Gosainjī asked and Śrī Nāthajī replied, "I am not relishing anything today; if you wish to feed Me then first make Govinda Sakhā happy. I owe a turn to him, and I came in without completing the game. So he was upset with Me and hit Me with *gilli*. The *pujari* could not understand his sentiment, considered him at fault, and pushed him out of the temple. Now he is calling Me all sorts of names! Kindly bring that brāhmaṇa to Me. Only then will I eat the food. He is very angry If I go out he

will thrash Me." Gosainjī went to please Govinda Sakhā, and watching Gosainjī coming towards him, ran away from there. Gosainjī said aloud, "O Govinda! Don't run. I won't beat you." Govinda replied, "I've been pushed out earlier." Gosainjī said, "No, no Govinda! No one will beat you now. Look, Śrī Nāthajī is not taking food without you. Just as your friend has said, we will both hug each other first, and then we will sit together and eat". Gosainjī thus explained the whole thing to Govinda Sakhā, and he took him along.

While on his way to the temple, Govinda Svāmī thought that if Śrī Nāthajī bowed his head down in front of him, then he will pardon him; otherwise, if He lifted his head even a bit, he was certainly going to hit Him hard. Nāthajī kept Govinda Sakhā's word. He immediately bowed his head down on seeing Govinda. His anger vanished and they both ate together.

Katha 2

One day, Śrī Nāthajī, Govinda Sakhā, and Kānāi Bhangi played together. Kānāi bhangi lost the game and as an accepted rule of the game, Śrī Nāthajī rode on his back, making him the horse. After the game was over, and Śrī Nāthajī was ready to go back to the temple, Govinda Sakhā said, "Jaya Jaya! Śrī Gosainjī upkeeps the sanctity of the temple very meticulously and you would enter the temple after playing with the *bhangi* (a person of the lower caste, an untouchable). You would corrupt the temple's sanctity; this is not fair. I can't tolerate this immorality; I will tell this to Gosainjī." Nāthajī said, "Look, brother, I'm your friend. Please don't do this. Let Me play whole-heartedly with My friends. I plead with you." But Govinda Sakhā did not agree. Govinda Sakhā wanted Śrī Nāthajī to take a bath in the Kuṇḍa with His clothes on before entering the temple.

Govinda said, "All right, if You don't wish to take bath, then at least go to the Kuṇḍa and sprinkle some water over Yourself." While sitting on the banks of the Kuṇḍa, the moment He extended His hand in the Kuṇḍa, witty Govinda Sakhā pushed Nāthajī into the pond and he too jumped in. When Nāthajī plunged in the waters, Govinda Sakhā instantly took him out, and then, ran to his home, jumping and clapping over his trick. Śrī Nāthajī came to the temple. Gosainjī observed Nāthajī standing with His

clothes dripping, he asked, "Jaya! Jaya! How did Your clothes get wet?" Śrī Nāthajī grumbled making a very innocent face, "Govinda Sakhā jostled Me in the pond and all My clothes got wet." Gosainjī immediately called upon Govinda Sakha and started scolding him, "Is this a game where you put a life at risk?" Govinda sakha replied smiling, "Gosainjī! Your dear son rode on Bhangi's son making him the horse. I told him to take a bath before entering the temple, but He did not agree. I then made Him bathe and sent Him to the temple. Had I not done this, all your sanctity would have been spoiled." Listening to this, Gosainjī's heart softened (melted) and he showered his loving praises upon Govinda Sakha, with whom Śrī Nāthajī never tired of playing.

Raskhanjī, on listening to the charm of this ocean of beauty, resplendent with a bluish sheen of Shyam, had come for his *darśan*. He was denied entry into the temple. Seeing his *pathani* body, he was pushed out of the temple. His physical strength had failed to get him in, but his mental strength motivated him to get a glimpse of the all charming, pure, lotus-eyed Lord. Raskhan had heard that Govinda Kuṇḍa is His playground. He daily comes there to play with his friends. So, he came and sat at Govinda Kuṇḍa. Three days had passed without food or water. His life force was diminishing, but he had not left his body and his heart was still singing. On the fourth day, Gosainjī brought Nāthajī with him. Now Raskhanjī was initiated into the Vallabha community after having bathed in GovindaKuṇḍa.

Raskhanjī's Love for Braja

Yā lakuṭī aru kāmariyā par rāj tih pur kau taji ḍāroan/
Āṭhau siddhi navoan nidhi kau sukh nanda kī gāya charāya bisāroan ||
'rasakhāna' sadā in nayananhi soan braj ke ban bāg taḍaāg nihāroan /
Koṭin h kaladhaut ke dhām karīl kī kuanjan ūpar vāroan ||

Raskhanji declares: "If I ever possess any worldly opulence, wealth, or kingdoms, I would gladly give them up in a second to get the audience of the ever-youthful Lord Kṛṣṇa's stick or chaddar. I would sacrifice the benefits of all my penance just to be able to participate in herding Nandabābā's cows. My ardent desire is to have the vision of the gardens, lakes, and forests of Braja eternally. I would sacrifice any personal comfort to have even a tiny thorny residence in Braja."

Mānus hoan to vahī 'rasakhāna' basoan braj gokul gāv ke gvāran /
Jo pasu hoan to kahā bas merau charoan nit nanda kī dhenu mazāran //
Pāhan hoan to vahī giri kau jo dharayoan kar chhatra purandar dhāran /
Jo khag hoan to baserau karoan nit kāliandī kūl kadamba kī ḍāran //

Raskhanji prays: "Oh Destiny! If you wish to have me take birth as a human in my next life, please let it be as a cowherd boy in Braja. If I become an animal, please allow me to be born a cow in the barn of Nandabābā so Śrī Kṛṣṇa will take me to graze on the succulent grasses of Vṛndāvana. If I become a stone in my next life, please make me a stone on Govardhana Hill, which Śrī Kṛṣṇa lifted to protect the brajabāsīs from the terrible storms sent by Indrā. And if I am reborn as a bird, please allow me to be a bird whose nest is on a Kadamba tree on the bank of the river Yamuna."

Rahim jī's story is similar to that of Raskhanjī. After hearing Syamsunder's infinite charm and beauty, he came to have His *darśan* at Yatipura (Govardhana). Looking at his *pathani* body, the gate-keepers jostled him out. His agitated mind felt, "*Aisi sahibi, aisi bevakoofi.*"- implying, "Why did You give this Muslim body, with such a strong urge to come to You? And, why did You give this Muslim body, if you had to give me this irrational desire?"

"Abandoning everything, I came to get a glimpse of you. You don't even let me approach You. Now I will not come to You, but You will come to me." Saying so, he went and sat under the canopy at Govinda Kuṇḍa. When Gosain Vitthal Nāthajī came to know of this, he sent a sacrament (*prasād*) for him, but he refused.

Rahim turned his face away from Śrī Nāthajī, but Nāthajī kept the plate there and disappeared. After seeing Him once, who can any satisfy his eyes without seeing Him again? His eyes searched for that sight again but could not find Him. Now, this separation from Madan Mohan became unbearable for him.

He felt as if his body would burn to ashes in this fire of separation. His eyes deliberately dropped without the sight of those lotus eyes. His obsession ultimately brought back the all-loving Lord and Rahimjī dived deep in the bliss of his darśanā.

Hari Rahim aisi kari Jyoti kamaan sar paar

Rahimji says, "I think Lord Hari is testing me! When a person uses a bow, he first pulls the arrow towards himself and then releases it to shoot if far away. In the same way Śrī Kṛṣṇa first attracted me with His beauty and wonderful qualities but when I came to Braja I was not even allowed to enter the temple. In that way He pulled me to Him and then let me go."

Khai chi chadhni dhili dharni , kaho kaun yah riti

I do not know why is Śrī Kṛṣṇa doing that? First attracting me with his irresistible beauty and then mercilessly pushing me away? Is Mohan Śrī Kṛṣṇa acting like a fire whose brilliance attracts the moth who then loses its life in the flames?

Poonchhari

This border village of Girirājajī falls in Rajasthan state, from where the parikrama turns west. When Rāsa Bihari (Kṛṣṇa) disappeared from amidst the *rāsa* dance, the impatient gopīs started saying to each other, "Let's ask all non-moving, static beings stones, trees, insects, etc."

'O! Please ask…' (*arī, poochh rī…*)

Therefore, it came to be known as Poochhari. Close by are Apsara Kuṇḍa and Naval Kuṇḍa.

According to Garga-saṁhitā

All holy places situated at Girirājajī represent His various body parts. This place represents the tail. The *Purānīc* (scriptural) name of Naval Kuṇḍa is Puchh Kuṇḍ. This too is a reason for this place being famous as Poonchhari.

Brajavasīs Hold Their Faith

They consider this is the tail portion of peacock-shaped Girirājajī (*poonchh* means tail). On the southern end of Girirājajī, a temple is located by the name of Poonchhari-ka-Lautha, where His vermilion-pasted Deity is worth seeing. Śrī Kṛṣṇa requested His friend Lautha to accompany Him

to Dvārakā. Lautha said, "I won't go anywhere, I won't leave Braj, but without You, I won't eat anything either." Śrī Kṛṣṇa then assured him, "Until I return, you cannot breathe your last!" And from that time, Lauthajī is immersed in austerities at this place and gets nourished without food or water.

Chanting this, the Brajavasīs greatly honor him. Besides hailing Girirāja Mahārāj, Brajavasīs always hail Lauthajī.

śrī girirāja mahārāja ki… jai!
poonchhari-ke-lautha ki …jai!

An Introduction in the Words of Brajavasīs

Apsara-kuṇḍa and Naval-kuṇḍa

tatrāgatās tumburu-nāradādāyo
gandharva-vidyādhara-siddha-cāraṇāḥ
jagur yaśo loka-malāpahaṁ hareḥ
surāṅganāḥ sannanṛtur mudānvitāḥ

"Tumburu, Nārada and other Gandharvas, along with the Vidyādharas, Siddhas and Cāraṇas, came there to sing the glories of Lord Hari, which eradicate the sins of the entire world. And the wives of the gods, filled with joy, danced together in the Lord's honor."
(ŚB. 10.27.24)

Angels of supreme beauty danced here, hence the name Apsara (angel) Kuṇḍa.

Next to this is located a pond which was known as Poonch Kuṇḍa previously, and later came to be known by the name of queen Naval of Bharatapurā. For being the kuṇḍa of the eternally new Nandanandana, this is also known as Naval-kuṇḍa (*naval* means new). Very near these kuṇḍas is a *rāsa-sthali*, which is covered with dense plantations and Kadamba trees. Next to these kuṇḍas is Apsaravihari Temple, Kuṇḍeswara Mahādeva Temple, and Raghav pandit's cave, where he was immersed in *bhajan sadhana* and later, another great saint Pandit Rāma Kṛṣṇa Dāsaa Bābā also performed his *bhajan-sadhana* here.

Surabhi-kuṇḍa

śṛī-śuka uvāca
evaṁ kṛṣṇam upāmantrya surabhiḥ payasātmanaḥ
jalair ākāśa-gaṅgāyā airāvata-karoddhṛtaiḥ
indraḥ surarṣibhiḥ sākaṁ codito deva-mātṛbhiḥ
abhyasiñcata dāśārhaṁ
govinda iti cābhyadhāt

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, "Having thus appealed to Lord Kṛṣṇa, mother Surabhi performed His bathing ceremony with her milk, and Indra, ordered by Aditi and other mothers of the demigods, bathed the Lord with the waters of heavenly Gaṅgā, brought by Airāvatā (Indra's elephant carrier) in its own tusks. Thus, in the company of gods and great sages, Indra coronated Lord Kṛṣṇa, the descendant of Daśārha, and gave Him the name Govind." (ŚB. 10.27.22-23)

En-route to the *parikrama* path from Poonchhari in the north of Dāujī's temple is situated Surabhi-kuṇḍa, where the *surabhi* cow had performed Śrī Kṛṣṇa *abhiṣeka* with her milk. At this spot, Śrī Parmananda Dāsajī, one of the eight great poets (*ashtachhap mahakavis*) had unearthed a deity.

Śrī Parmananda Dāsajī

Toke Sakha incarnated as Śrī Parmananda dāsa Svāmī. In Dwapara yuga, Śrī Kṛṣṇa could provide solace and joy to His most dear Sakhafor only eleven years. Therefore, many unsatisfied souls have incarnated again in Kali-yuga to play with Him and fulfill their soul's hunger for more. In Kali-yuga, Śrī Parmananda Dāsajī reached the pinnacle of divine love like the Braja gopīs of Dwapara-yugā. Śrī Parmananda Svāmī was born in Sambat 1550 on the 7th day of the bright half of the holy month of Margashirsha into a *kanyakubja* brāhmaṇa family of Kannauj. Even though he was a fine singer and also time and again instigated by his father to do so, he never sang for earning money in his life. He would sing melodious kirtans everywhere. Once while in Prayāga, he was blessed by Acāryapāda's *darśanā*. Acāryajī asked to him sing the Lord's *līlā*. Parmanandadāsjī sang a song of separation (*viraha*). When Acāryajī asked him to sing Lord's *bāla-līlā* (childhood amusements), he expressed his ignorance. Then with the grace of Acāryajī, he obtained entry into the transcendental world. After receiving initiation from Acāryapād, Śrīmad

Vallabha Prabhu, he started experiencing the eternal *līlās* of Lord. While listening to a song from Parmananda Dāsajī – '*hari teri līlā ki sudhi āve*' Acāryapād remained in trance for three consecutive days.

Hari terī līlā kee sudhi āvati /
Kamal nayan man mohan mūrati man man chitra banāvati /
Ek bār jāi milat mayā kari so kese bisarāti /
Mṛudu muskāni banka avalokanī chāli manohar bhāvati /
Kabahuk nibiḍa timir āliangati kabahuk pika-svar gāvati /
Kabahuk sanbhram kvāsi-kvāsi kari sanga hī uṭhi-uṭhi dhāvati /
Kabahuk nen mūdi aantaragati banamālā pahirāvati /
'paramānanda' prabhu shyām dhyān kari aisean hī virah ganvāvati /

Feeling separation for Śrī Kṛṣṇa the gopīs constantly remember Him. In their mind's eye they capture that beautiful lotus-eyed all-attractive boy. The gopīs cannot forget Him even for a moment. For them His inviting smile, loving slanted eyes, charming slow walk, and every gesture is so mesmerizing that in remembering they feel close to Him. They spontaneously sing songs about His glories. If, somehow, He steps out of their thoughts for a moment, they search for HIm everywhere. They sometimes close their eyes and, feeling Him close, garland Him with forest flowers.

Parāmananda dāsaji says, "In this way the gopīs are spending their valuable lives always remembering Śyāmasundar Śrī Kṛṣṇa."

After this incident, Paramānanda Dāsajī came to Gokula with Acāryapād. For many days, he performed *kirtan seva* for Navnīta Priyājī. Later, when Nāthajī attracted his mind, Acāryapād gave him *the kirtan seva* of Nāthajī which he performed with great religiosity throughout his life. Once, Suradāsjī, Rāmadasjī, Kumbhandasjī, and other devotees came to Parmanandadasjī's house. Blessed with the joy of Vaisanava's company, he sang:

"āp mere nandanandan ke pyāre
mala tilak manohar bano tribhuvan ke ujiyāre"

Vaiṣṇavās inquired, "Parmanandadāsjī, whose love is supreme? Spontaneously, Parmanandadasjī concluded, "*gopī prema ki dhuja brajajana sama ghara para kou na*" None other than Brajavasīs' are comparable with the gopīs, the apostles of the divine love on this earth."

In the holy company of Gosainjī Vallabha Prabhu, Śrī Parmanandadāsaji recited many *līlā-pad* while staying at Surabhi Kuṇḍa. Gosainji once asked, "Parmānandadāsjī! Where is your mind at this moment?" He recited a *pad* in reply saying, "*Rādhā baithi tilak samvarati*" (implying that his mind always remained immersed in Lord's *līlās*). He also said,"*kaha karo baikunthahi jaye*" (what is the purpose of going to Vaikuṇṭha). He lived with this sentiment all his life. Leaving his mortal frame in the year of Samvat 1641, on the 9th dark day of holy of month Bhadrapad in the daytime, he entered into Lord's eternal *līlā*.

Dāujī Mandir

Next to Surabhi Kuṇḍa is Dāujī temple on the Girirāja hill. Śringār Śīlā is worth seeing here.

Airavata-kuṇḍa

Surrounded with beautiful *kadamba* trees is situated Eravat kuṇḍa, where Airavata, on Indra's direction, had brought celestial Ganges water for Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *abhiṣeka*. Close by, one can see the foot-mark of an elephant.

Rudra-kuṇḍa : the first līlā

The news of the massive Govardhana Hill's *puja* spread all around without much effort. The little friends of Kṛṣṇa were running around, telling everyone on the way with a certain pride in their eyes "It is our Kānāi's order today Govardhana *puja* will be done. Go back home and come properly dressed."

Then they informed their cows and calves about this novel ritual too. They decorated them with colorful floral garlands on their horns, beads on their necks, tilak on their forehead, and adorned them with brightly colored and bejeweled cloths on their backs. They also dressed up smartly with headgear and bright clothes. Thousands of gopas started for Girirāja as if all Braja gopas were grooms going for their wedding! From the other side, large groups of gopīs, resplendent and beautifully dressed up, presented quite a sight – as if entire Braja has been invaded by *Ādi-sakti-Mahāsakti*.

Parvati–kanta (Śiva) never misses any single festive occasion in Braja. Even today he is in a hurry. Hurriedly, He applied *vibhuti* (ashes) on his body, adorned himself with lion's skin. Forgetting to tie his *jata-jute* (matted hair), and holding the *trisula*, he started with delight. Himadri-tanaya, daughter of Himalaya (Parvati) was confused.

"He doesn't tell us of his travel plans…"

"He doesn't even ask me to accompany him…"

Gathering courage, she asked him softly, "Lord! Which occasion are you going to grace?"

Śiva, "Devi! How can I grace the gracious?"

Parvati, "Hey Vāmadeva! What are you saying?"

Śiva, "Listen, other than Kailasa, I get solace only where my Lord lives! Leaving Kailasa, I go only for His divine company. Presently His nectarine *līlās* are nourishing every place of the land of Braja. It is my good fortune that I could get His *darśana* right from the beginning. Today, a novel *līlā* of *gau-giri puja* (worship of cows and the hill) will happen there, for which preparations are going on in Braja.

This *līlā* will fulfill His many objectives: destroying Indra's ego; developing unflinching faith of Brajavasīs in the hill and cows; utilization of Nandabābā's ever-increasing wealth; and His wish, Śrī Rādhā's *darśanā*. My absence on this occasion will be detrimental to me. In the middle of Indra's incessant thunderous rains, the sight of Govardhana lifting would be so charming. That is where I am going!"

Parvati said, "O Gangadhara! You say there is going to be heavy rain, and you are going without locking your tresses. Like this, you will worsen the scene with the waters of the Ganges dripping from your hair."

Śiva, "Girija! Good, you reminded me."

He quickly tied his tresses.

According to Gargsamhita

After hearing about Girirāja's ceremonial festival, Lord Śiva started getting ready for the festivities – smearing ashes on body parts, skulls-garland around the neck, snakes around his arms, and eyes awesome make-up! (Ga.Saṁ.Gi.Kha. 2.13-14) Fun, frolic, and festival go together.

He ordered bhang paste [*cannabis*]. Cannabis, harebell (Datura), and topped this with poison –a perfect cocktail for Śiva- now Shashank Sekhara (Śiva) started nodding under its influence.

Parvati also expressed her wish to accompany him. Śiva said, "Sure! Come sit with me on the bull's back!" Gathering enough courage, other members of Śiva's retinue also expressed their desire to go along. They said, "Mahārāj! May we also attend this great ceremony?" Śiva, "Yes! You may also come along for enjoying the Girirāja-festival of Brajesh (Kṛṣṇa)."

Now, Kabandha, Vikritanana, Kuṇḍa, Kuṇḍaka, Pishtabha, Kākpadodara, Chaturvaktra, Shanmukha, Bhringi-Riti, Chaitra, Madhupangi, Kekraksha, Vikrita, Dudumbha and Parvatak. (Rā.Bā.Kā. 13)

Crooked-faced, curved-faced, hideously disfigured, one with a beard growing all over the face, another with a face protruding from the tummy and one without a head, another with many heads, and one without eyes and another with a million eyes …such was the retinue following Lord Śiva! All happily jumping and excited…singing, dancing, blowing conches, hitting drums… Who knows when the ceremonies would start! Lord Śiva-Uma and all their companions gathered and settled themselves here at Śrī Rudra Kuṇḍ. "This is a good spot; we will have a clear view from here. So, from here we will enjoy the Girirāja *līla*" Sasidhara said. On watching Girirāja *līlā* of Giridhara, Sambu entered into a trance, a continuous stream of tears flowing; hence its name is also Rudan-kuṇḍa (*rudan* means crying).

Other close by *līlā sthalis* are Chaugan ground of Kṛṣṇa's 'catching –the –ball' *līlā*; Śrījī's seat; Jān –ajān tree; Poojani śīlā, etc.

Second līlā,
Śrījī said to Raseshwara during Maharāsa

tato gatvā vanoddeśaṁ
dṛptā keśavam abravīt
na pāraye 'haṁ calituṁ
naya māṁ yātrā te manaḥ

"Then, reaching a certain part of forest, the special gopī feeling proud of Herself, told Lord Keśava, "I cannot walk any further. Please carry Me wherever You want to go." (ŚB. 10.30.37)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked Śrījī to sit on His shoulder.

evam uktaḥ priyām āha
skandha āruhyatām iti
tataś cāntardadhe kṛṣṇaḥ
sā vadhūr anvatapyata

"Thus requested, Lord Kṛṣṇa replied, "Just climb on My shoulder." But as soon as He said this, He disappeared. His beloved consort then immediately felt great remorse." (ŚB. 10.30.38)

Here, the word ''Vadhu'' (bride) has been used thrice for Priyajī, after His disappearance.

tais taiḥ padais tat-padavīm
anvicchantyo 'grato 'balāḥ
vadhvāḥ padaiḥ su-pṛktāni
vilokyārtāḥ samabruvan
imāny adhika-magnāni
padāni vahato vadhūm
gopyaḥ paśyata kṛṣṇasya
bhārākrāntasya kāminaḥ
atrāvaropitā kāntā
puṣpa-hetor mahātmanā
evam uktaḥ priyām āha
skandha āruhyatām iti
tataś cāntardadhe kṛṣṇaḥ
sā vadhūr anvatapyata

(ŚB. 10.30.26,31,38)

hā nātha ramaṇa preṣṭha
kvāsi kvāsi mahā-bhuja
dāsyās te kṛpaṇāyā me
sakhe darśaya sannidhim

"She cried out, "O master! My most beloved Lord! O dearmost, where are You? Where are You? Please, O mighty-armed one, O friend, show Yourself to Me, Your poor servant!" (ŚB. 10.30.39)

Śrījī cried here, for Śrī Kṛṣṇa had deserted from Her sight; this too is the reason for this Kuṇḍa to be called Rudan Kuṇḍa.

Śrī Girirāja līlā (Surasāgar)

Taking Indra out of the center, Kānāi had diverted everyone's mind from Indra's *yajña* (worship). The slogans of 'Jaya, Girirāja! Jaya, Girirāja!' resounded in all directions. All the gopas and gopīs finely dressed, singing and dancing, were coming out of their homes with baskets full of various sweets, etc.

Vyasadeva Says

Braja *upasana* is nectarine *upasanā*.

sv-alaṅkṛtā bhuktavantaḥ
sv-anuliptāḥ su-vāsasaḥ
pradakṣiṇāṁ ca kuruta
go-viprānala-parvatān

"After everyone has eaten to his satisfaction, Kṛṣṇa said, "You should all dress and decorate yourselves handsomely, smear your bodies with sandalwood paste and then circumambulate the cows, the *brāhmaṇas***, the sacrificial fires, and Govardhana Hill."** (ŚB. 10.24.29)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, "O people of Braja! Circumambulate Śrī Girirājajī, wearing new, fine clothes, jewels, sandal paste, and perfume."

A long unbroken queue could be seen up to a seven *yojana* distance. Little children were walking with small sticks of tree-branches kept on their shoulders. Maharṣi Shandilya and his disciples were walking in the front chanting *swasti mantras*; behind them were the elderly gopas carrying newly crafted sticks in one hand and twisting their long mustaches with the other, looking occasionally forward or backward as if they are the organizers of today's special event. They were stopping the little children from going ahead, and, at times, even scolded them for transgressing the queue. Regardless, the poor, impatient boys, again and again, tried to sneak in front. As they got pushed back by the elders, their eyes got fixed on the plates full of delicious dishes and sweets carried by the gopīs. They rolled their hands over their belly as if consoling themselves:

(Silently they were speaking amongst themselves)

"When would we reach Govardhana?"

"When would the food be offered to God?"

"When would this delicious sacrament be distributed?"

"And, when will it roll down into our belly?"

Children have their own worries; Gopa-gopīs have their own wish-lists.

Then, Maharṣi Shandilya entered Govardhana, along with an entire commune of Brajavasīs. Firstly, the Brajavāsīs sighted the Govardhana Hill with great joy as Kṛṣṇa's image – seeing that, one is freed from the mesh of birth and death. Then they worshiped the cows and the *brāhmanas*. The little children, on getting instructions from the elders, unloaded all the articles of food from the bullock-carts and beautifully arranged it in a circle around the hill. On the other side, the girls arranged all necessary materials for puja – *panchgavya*, incense, lamps, vermilion, rice, flowers, garlands, fruits, *durvā* grass, etc., before Maharṣi.

The children were always happy helping in this way. This supreme *puja* was successfully completed under Maharṣi Shāndilya's instructions and guidance.

The Brajavāsīs camped in a 54 kosa areā. Nanda bābā with his dear sons, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa prostrated before Girirāja and prayed for Girirāja's blessings upon the two boys, "Mahārāj! Kindly bless them both. It was my grave mistake that I was worshiping others while totally neglecting you."

Śrī Girirājajī moved with pure devotion of the Brajavāsīs, appeared amidst them and in a few moments finished all the foodstuffs that were offered to Him.

Mahārāj Vrishbhanu's Milkmaid – Badraula

Badraula had not joined in the festivity. Religiously, she was performing her duty, churning curds as ever in Vrishbhānujī's palace in Barṣāṇā. She had made her offering to Girirājajī from a 21 km distance and the all-compassionate Lord accepted her offering by extending His hand to this devotee of unshakable faith! The Badraula *tilla* (hillock) is worth seeing in Unchāgāon.

On conclusion of the worship, Brajavāsīs, enjoying the *prasādam* (holy sacrament), singing and dancing, hailing Girirāja Mahārāj, started circumambulating the sacred hill.

Śrī Girirāja Mahārāj ki jai!
Sāt kosa ware ki jai!

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this unique Girirāja festival. Devarṣi Nārada announced the news that they started Giri-worship and abandoned the worship of Indra in the heavenly planets. As described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 10.25.6, Indra, blinded with anger, immediately called for the heavily laden clouds and sent those off with strict command – "Ruin the entire Braj and its wealth of cows!"

By ordering the destruction of cows, Indra expressed his arrogance. So, the Lord said to Indra:

mām aiśvarya-śrī-madāndho
daṇḍa pāṇiṁ na paśyati
taṁ bhraṁśayāmi sampadbhyo
yasya cecchāmy anugraham

"A man blinded by intoxication with his power and opulence cannot see Me nearby with the rod of punishment in My hand. If I desire his real welfare, I drag him down from his materially fortunate position." (ŚB. 10.27.16)

Such show of arrogance is not good for gods (*devas*):

gamyatāṁ śakra bhadraṁ vaḥ
kriyatāṁ me 'nuśāsanam
sthiyatāṁ svādhikāreṣu
yuktair vaḥ stambha-varjitaiḥ

"Indra, you may now go. May all be well with you! Let My injunctions be followed. Devote to your duty without false ego and remain in your appointed position as King of Heaven." (ŚB. 10.27.17)

Indra was punishing the cows even though it was Śrī Kṛṣṇa who had abandoned Indra's worship and protected the cows, cowboys, and all the families. Anger is indeed blind. The people in Braja were still rejoicing in

the festivity of Girirāja-puja (worship), when, just after mid-day, the entire Braj suddenly got covered with thick, dark clouds.

vidyotamānā vidyudbhiḥ
stanantaḥ stanayitnubhiḥ
tīvrair marud-gaṇair nunnā
vavṛṣur jala-śarkarāḥ

"Propelled by the fearsome wind-gods, the clouds blazed with lightning bolts and roared with thunder as they hurled down hailstones." (ŚB. 10.25.9)

sthūṇā-sthūlā varṣa-dhārā
muñcatsv abhreṣv abhīkṣṇaśaḥ
jalaughaiḥ plāvyamānā bhūr
nādṛśyata natonnatam

"As the clouds released torrents of rain as thick as massive columns, the earth was submerged in the flood, and high ground could no longer be distinguished from low." (ŚB. 10.25.10)

aty-āsārāti-vātena
paśavo jāta-vepanāḥ
gopā gopyaś ca śītārtā
govindaṁ śaraṇaṁ yayuḥ

"The cows and other animals were shivering from excessive rain and wind, and the cowherd men and ladies were pained by the cold. All people approached Lord Govinda for shelter." (ŚB. 10.25.11)

The clouds thundered; terrifying lightning struck the skies. Tons of water started pouring in no time! Chilling winds started blowing, the chill entering into the bones, with non-stop, heavy hailstorms. Everywhere, it was only water, flooding the entire area.

Terrified and shivering with cold, all the gopīs and Gopas, along with their children, covered their heads with iron-pots to save themselves from the strong hail-stones. They approached their sole savior saying, "*govindam sharanam yayuh*" "Govinda," They were passionately praying, "Protect us… Save us… Hey Gopāl! Hey Madhava! Hey Mukuṇḍa! Hey

Mohana! You are our Lord – be it in any tough situation or a threat to our life – surrendering to Indra is not at all acceptable to us."

Looking at the pleading faces of His people, the merciful Lord was reminded of His vow:

tasmān mac-charaṇaṁ goṣṭhaṁ
man-nāthaṁ mat-parigraham
gopāye svātma-yogena
so 'yaṁ me vrata āhitaḥ

"I must therefore protect the cowherd community by My transcendental potency, for I am their shelter, I am their master, and indeed they are My own family. After all, I have taken a vow to protect My devotees." (ŚB. 10.25.18)

"I'll certainly keep my word." (Vā.Rā.Yu.Kā. 18.33)

My vow is, "If one who comes to Me and says even once "I belong to thee alone," I grant him freedom from all fears, and make him fearless."

Coming out from Nandabhavan, Braja Rājakumar (prince Kṛṣṇa) waved His hand, calling everyone, "Load all your essentials in bullock-carts, gather your cows and follow Me." The whole mass of Brajavasīs followed Nīlaghanasunder (beautiful blue cloud – Kṛṣṇa). All of them reached the foothills of Girirājā. Adorable worshipful Kṛṣṇa prostrated before Girishikhar with folded hands.

All the Brajvāsis, raising both hands, started chanting thus:

"girirāja dharan hum teri sharan!
hum teri sharan girirāja dharan!"

Our Brajarāja and Girirāja are one

ity uktvaikena hastena
kṛtvā govardhanācalam
dadhāra līlayā viṣṇuś
chatrākam iva bālakaḥ

"Having said this, Lord Kṛṣṇa, sportfully lifted Govardhana Hill with one hand and held it aloft just as easily as a child holds up a mushroom." (ŚB. 10.25.19)

And Oh! The omnipotent Lord has lifted Govardhana Hill on the tip of the nail of His left little finger as if a small child sportingly is lifting a mushroom. Spontaneously, little gopas were fixing their long sticks under the hill.

Why did He lift the hill with His left hand?

Braja Song

vāma kara hi te putnā ke prana sokhe
vāma kara hi te trunavarta māryo hai
vāma kar hi te keshi ke dāshan zāre
bhupadal jītve ku vāma kara bala hai
dāhine hāth girirāja kyo na dharyo nāth
jānat ho jī parasavo fala hai
vāma anga śrī vrishbhanu nandini ju ko dhāma
yāhi ke prātap te vāma kara bala hai

Nanda-lāla used His left hand to press the breast of Pūtanā to take her life. He used it to grab Trinavarta's neck and liberated him. He even put His left hand in the mouth of the demon Keśī, who came in the form of a horse, and took the demon's life. Lord Kṛṣṇa lifted Govardhana Hill with His left hand and many evil kings were subdued with that same left hand of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. To all it appears that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has more strength in His left hand. Is that because Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is always on His left-hand side and the strength comes from Her?

For seven days and seven nights, this frail, delicate seven-year-old dark boy supported the huge hill for the sake of Brajavāsis' safety.

The loving Lord Kṛṣṇa was holding His flute in the right hand and infused divine nectar into it. All Brajavasīs forgot their woes started dancing under the hill. This festivity continued for seven days. The eyes and breath of all the people were focused on Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

īha līlā saba karat kanhāii……

With His peacock-feather crown tilted towards the most virtuous life and essence of all *līlās*, Śrī Rādhārānī, His lovely fragrant garland would flow with the wind and finally find peace only on the bosoms of Śrī Rādhārānī. His fish-eyes were, as if impatient to drown in the depths

of Rādhā's eyes. His yellow garment was proclaiming only Śrījī's golden glow. Standing in typical '*tribhangi*' (curved from three places) posture, the stealer of everyone's heart, (*Madan Mohan)*, His lotus-feet are the sole refuge for all Brajavāsīs.

Those who were totally surrendered to Kṛṣṇa had no care for life and death, and all were joyously celebrating. Association with their Lord was their ultimate goal. They had transcended even the turning of day and night. This realization came only after the dried-up clouds presented themselves before Indrā.

King Indra asked, "Has Braja been destroyed?"

The withered clouds replied, "We were fortunate to not be destroyed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Sahasrar..!

King Indra asks, "Speak clearly, what are you saying?"

Withered clouds said, "We became bereft of water, O king of *devas*!"

Narrating this, the clouds dropped their heads.

Hearing this, Indra was shocked! He thought that this was an unpardonable mistake. Indra was now burning with intense remorse. On the other end, Madhumaṅgala the laddu lover, rolling his hand over His belly shouted, "Kānāi! The rain has stopped. I am very hungry; let's go home. The sweets from Girirāja festival were not finished, we will now finish eating them." All of them laughed.

Sudarśan chakra evaporated the water from above and Śeṣa the snake sat coiled up beneath. How could even a drop of water wet the Brajavāsīs? After the rain stopped, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, "Now, take your cows along and move out from under the hill."

The gopas said, "No Kānāi, You are younger, so You move out first; don't You worry about Girirājā. We are supporting it with our sticks. If we move out, You will get buried under its weight!" Kṛṣṇa said, "All right, as you order!"

The moment Kṛṣṇa slightly moved His hand, relinquishing the slightest weight, everything started to fall. They had been imagining that Girirāja was standing on their sticks!

Rising on their knees, they said, "Brother! Run. This son of Nanda is a wonderful boy. If ever He loosens His hand, our bones would be churned to powder!"

Everyone, along with their cows, moved away.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa then established Govardhana as before and sat on a large rock. Finding Him alone, Indra, shoving aside his pride, approached Him with his elephant Airavat and cow Surabhi.

How could he muster the courage to speak? Without uttering a word, he prostrated himself, keeping his crowned head at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. The grace of the All-gracious Lord showered upon the frightened Shakra (Indra, destroyer of demons) and He smilingly pardoned the unpardonable offender, King Indra, who was pleading with folded hands. Airavat was impatiently holding the waters of Akash Ganga in his tusks; and, Surabhi at the right moment came forward and bathed Kṛṣṇa with her nectarine milk. Today, Indra addressed Lord with a new name – Govinda.

'gaha vindati iti govinda'

The protector of cows is called Govinda. Indra pronounced this word very thoughtfully. Kṛṣṇa said, "Purandara! Now remain content within your limits. Never, ever try to trespass your boundaries."

'Hari anant hari katha ananta' (The Lord is infinite, and infinite are His stories).

That's why the sayings from scriptures

"muhayanti yatsuryaha, muninam cha matibhramah"

and many others conveying the same message, are popular.

By Kṛṣṇa's grace, one may make it possible to comprehend His infinite līlās. Many narrators, through various texts, have tried to expound upon this wondrous Girirāja līlā.

According to Brahmā Vaivarta Puraṇa

Like every year, it became time for the festival of lights – Dīpāvali. A tall bamboo, called Indra-*dhwaj* (Indra's flag-pole), got erected in the middle of Vrishbhanupur and Nandagram by Nanda Bābā's order.

All around the pole were kept heaps of delicious sweets like laddus, rasgullas, gulab jamuns, gujia, chamcham… The Brajavāsīs had put up their tents in an area larger than 54 *kosas* (162 square km).

Ṛṣis Jaimini, Garg, and Vedavyas arrived. Getting up from his seat, Nanda Bābā welcomed all of them by offering floral garlands. Adorned with a tilted crown, bejeweled earrings, a sandal paste smeared body, wearing a brilliant golden yellow dress and holding a flute in one hand came the two princes, Rāma and Shyāmā. Though knowing everything, very sweetly He inquired, "Bābā! What kind of fair is happening in our village today?"

Nanda, "Son! This is not fair."

Kṛṣṇa, "Then why have so many people gathered here?"

Nanda, "Son, today is Indra-*yajnā*."

Kṛṣṇa, "Why is that?"

Nanda replied, "To please him. Look Kṛṣṇa, if Lord Indra doesn't give rain, our cows will not survive."

Kṛṣṇa, "Bābā, who has misled you?"

śrī-bhagavān uvāca
karmaṇā jāyate jantuḥ
karmaṇaiva pralīyate
sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ bhayaṁ kṣemaṁ
karmaṇaivābhipadyate

"Lord Kṛṣṇa said, "It is by the force of karma that a living entity takes birth, and it is by karma alone that he meets his destruction. His happiness, distress, fear, and sense of security all arise as the effects of karmā." (ŚB. 10.24.13)

"Every man gets the result of his actions; then where is the role of *devas*? Actually, no *deva* but our own virtuous actions are fruitful."

tasmād gavāṁ brāhmaṇānām
adreś cārabhyatāṁ makhaḥ
ya indra-yāga-sambhārās
tair ayaṁ sādhyatāṁ makhaḥ

"Therefore, may a sacrifice for the pleasure of the cows, the *brāhmaṇas* **and Govardhana Hill begin! With all the paraphernalia collected for worshiping Indra, let this sacrifice be performed instead."** (ŚB. 10.24.25)

"You worship the cow, brāhmaṇa and Girirājā." (Br.Vai.Kr.Jā.Kh. 21)

"One who serves a devout brāhmaṇa has served all *devas*. One may not worship a deva; by worshiping a devout brāhmaṇa, all *devas* are worshiped and if a *deva* is worshiped at the cost of a devotee, then that worship is of no use. Finding devout brāhmaṇas in this world is very difficult. The earth gets sanctified with the advent of a *bhakta* (devotee), devout brāhmaṇas are the supreme pilgrimages, and, Bābā! Our Girirājajī is supreme amongst devotees." The same idea has been affirmed by the gopīs also.

"Of all the devotees, this Govardhana Hill is the best! O my friends, this hill supplies Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, along with Their calves, cows and cowherd friends, with all kinds of necessities — water for drinking, very soft grass, caves, fruits, flowers, and vegetables. In this way, the hill offers respect to the Lord. Being touched by the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Govardhana Hill appears very jubilant." (ŚB. 10.21.18)

The name 'Govardhan' is used for His innate quality only – enhancer of cows' wealth (go-dhan).

Kṛṣṇa, "The whole day our cows graze on him." (Br.Vai.Kr.Jā.Kh. 21.8-11)

One may circumambulate the whole earth, study all Vedas, visit all pilgrimages, feed the brāhmaṇas, give all his possessions in donation, perform sacrifices, serve or worship the Lord – the cumulative result of all these may be achieved by offering grass to a cow."

(Br.Vai.Kr.Jā.Kh. 21.13 to 16)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Nanda Bābā

Kṛṣṇa said, "Bābā! All devas reside in the cow's feet; Lakṣmījī herself resides eternally in *gobar* (cow dung). By applying gauraj on the forehead, one gets the fruit of bathing at all holy places and one who adorns *gauraj* attains victory at every step. By breathing one's last breath in a cow-shelter, one undoubtedly attains liberation.

Any unholy man, who attacks a cow or a brāhmaṇa, certainly commit the gravest sin."

Nanada said, "But son, by worshiping Indra, all our forthcoming problems get solved. Indra-*yajña* is the traditional worship for us cattlemen."

Kṛṣṇa replied, "Bābā! Who is this Indra? In the blinking of the Lord's eye, 108 Brahmas pass. Compared to this timescale, Indra's existence is minuscule! Therefore, for gopas only Giri-worship is supreme."

A phenomenal faith in Gau-Giri-Vipra (cow-hill- brāhmaṇa) aroused in the heart and mind of all Brajavāsīs on listening to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's powerful words. All the Brajavāsīs accompanying Kānāi-Balarāma started moving towards Govardhana happily dancing in high spirits.

The 'Giri-*puja*' was accomplished in complete ritualistic detail. All around a hill of food was visible. The tradition of *annakoot* (food-hill) started from here. Girirājajī physically accepted the food offerings and said, "*aham hi prathamo deva*", (I am the foremost god, I will shower benedictions upon you all). Saying thus strengthened the faith of Brajavāsīs. After the Giri-*puja* the story of Indra's anger is essentially the same in all texts but, there is one very thought-provoking aspect to this story.

Why did Giridhara, at the tender age of seven, support Giri-Govardhana for seven days? Why, though capable of soaking all clouds in no time, did the *sahasra* did not do so?

The Answer According to Brahmāvaivarta Puraṇa Is

Nanda Bābā had put his trust upon seven external factors other than the Supreme Lord. Until all these supports failed, the rain did not stop. God did not come for Pānchāli's help as long as she put all her trust in Pāndavas, and when her *sārī* started slipping from the grip of her own teeth and she surrendered absolutely to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa instantly came. Even to cast a gaze upon any other God than Himself is *anyāshraya*, meaning "dependence upon others but the Lord." This is a grave mistake.

So the main purpose of holding Giri for seven days was to shatter Bābā's trust in external objects.

First Was Faith in Gods

When the incessant downpour started, Bābā felt, "By blindly following the words of this little boy, I have committed a great blunder. Now Indra is annoyed, and to please him, we should go back to him for protection.

He first called Rohiṇī and Yaśodā and said, "Look, take Balarāma-Kṛṣṇa along and move out from Braja. I may forsake my life, but nothing should happen to Balarāma-Kṛṣṇa. All the gopas and gopīs may flee from here to save their lives from Indra's tyranny. The strong and brave gopas ready to face death may stay back with me."

Nanda Bābā is terrified and started praying for refuge by chanting Indra's 46 names.

Now Kṛṣṇa got angry, "I am preaching Supreme God's worship and Bābā is reverting to same old conventional rituals!"

Kṛṣṇa said, "Bābā! You are worshiping that cruel Indra who is bent upon destroying the entire Braja for being neglected just once!"

Day 1

Kṛṣṇa freed Bābā from dependence upon gods on day one.

Day 2

Many great *ṛṣis* (sages) now came to Bābā's mind. Kānāi is telling the truth; gods are very cruel. Therefore, *ṛṣis* (sages)will give protection. When this also did not work, then on day two, their dependence on *ṛṣis* too got shattered.

Day 3

The wishful thinking of getting the grace from elders of the community also failed, and thus they got freed from this trust.

Day 4

Bābā had requested the people to come forward for help, seeing that the whole load is borne by little Kṛṣṇa alone. On day four this faith in others also melted away.

Day 5

Bābā had now failed even in invoking the grace of ancestors.

Day 6

"What would the people say? He has put us all in unprecedented trouble by giving undue importance to his little son's words." He was freed from this worry also.

Day 7

Faith in his own strength also faded away.

A *jīva* (soul) gets separated from God because of seven reasons. Shedding all these dependencies, Nanda Bābā finally said, "Kānāi! No one could help but You! You supported Giri for seven days, due to which we are not touched by even a single drop of rain." Instantly, the dark clouds left for Amarāvati (Indra-loka).

Hail victory over Indra!

Śrī Govardhana nath ki jai!

Śrī Girirāja Mahā Mahotsava ki jai! (Hail to the grand Girirāja festival)

So miraculous are the *līlās* of Śrī Girirāja, who is the savior of cows, cowherds, and all Brajavāsīs. Simply with Girirājajī's *darśana*, a *jīva* gets liberated from the cycle of birth and death. By visiting Govardhana, one glimpses God in His visible form. With this thought and emotion, one should enter Govardhana.

Svāmī Parmananda Says

A new bride came to a village in Braja; a friend told her, "Dear sister, come, let's go to Girirājā."

Bride: "Girirāja?! Why?

Friend: "We will meet Gopāl at Girirājā."

Bride: "Gopāl… Gopāl! (thinks a bit) "How would he be, whose name is so sweet?"

Friend: "Now, come along fast!"

Bride: "Tell me, how is this Gopāl?"

Friend: "His very presence constantly infuses nectar into the earth and the skies. He has lotus-eyes… don't ask more! The beauty of a million Kāmadevas is no match to His minutest pore!" "Look forward, walk carefully! You may get hit by a sharp stone!" (On entering Girirāja they have Kṛṣṇa *darśana*).

Friend: "Sweet bride! This is Girirāja, and this is Gopāl…"

Both witnessed the beauty of the *rasika-sekhara* (apostle of rasikas), the essence of all beauty, and, without blinking, just kept on gazing.

śyāmaṁ hiraṇya-paridhiṁ vanamālya-barha-
dhātu-pravāla-naṭa-veṣam anavratāṁse
vinyasta-hastam itareṇa dhunānam abjaṁ
karṇotpalālaka-kapola-mukhābja-hāsam

"His complexion was dark blue and His garment golden. Adorned with a garland of sylvan flowers, peacock fathers, tender leaves and colored minerals, He was dressed just like a dramatic dancer. He rested one hand upon the shoulder of a friend and was swinging a lotus with the other. He wore a pair of water-lilies on His ears and a smile on His lotus-face, His curly locks hanging on His cheeks."

(ŚB. 10.23.22)

On the dark-resplendent body, a flowing yellow raiment, wildflowers' garland around the neck, peacock feather crown on the head, colorful decorations on the body, small bunches of tender buds hanging over Him. Looking like a juggler, with one arm around a Gopa's shoulder and gently tossing a lotus flower with the other, He has adorning lotuses on His ears. His red cheeks are covered with His dark, curly tresses. His lotus-face is blissfully beautiful with a sweet-soft smile. This new bride got drowned in this beauteous ocean and lost her all to this *chhaila* (trickster).

Parmananda Svāmī obtained the direct vision of this Govardhana *līlā* and was compelled to sing this.

Suraj-kuṇḍa

On the northeast of Yatipura is Suraj Kuṇḍ. When Sun was not visible due to rain by Indra, the Sun-soaked the rainwater with his heat and became visible.

Sakhītharā

On the left of Mānasi Ganga is the village of sakhītharā. Chandrāvali *sakhī* is from this village. Both the sakhī kuṇḍaand the sakhīvana are

spectacular here. Near this is a place called 'Chootarteka'. To sit here is of special importance, Śrīmān Mahāprabhujī had introduced Śrī Nivāsajī and others to this place.

According to Braj-bhakti-vilāsa

Prayer Mantra for Sakhāvana

gopal sakhi bhi ramyeh cheshtit kṛṣṇa shobhine
nāna krīdā manogyāya sakhāvana namostute

We prostrate to you, O lovely Sakhāvan! You are colorfully vibrant with Gopāl's sakhās' presence, their aspirations and various sports are resplendent with Kṛṣṇa's glory.

Prayer Mantra for all Kṛṣṇa Sakhās

madhumangalah śrī krushnah subalah padhma modakah
balarāmah subhadrashcha vallabho kamalākarah
megha shyāmah kalākantah padhmash kṛṣṇa vallabhah
manoramo jagadwamah shubhago loka pālakah
kādarpyo vishva bhogi cha navnīta priya vallabhah
ityashta dāsha sankhyanam sakhānam nāma lanchhitam

We worship the beholder of eighteen-*sakhās* names and mārks.

Prayer Mantra for līlāvati Kuṇḍa

kṛṣṇa līlā samutpanna līlāvati krutāya te
namaste tīrtha rājāya sakhi helodbhvāya cha

Prostrations to the Kuṇḍa, who has appeared from Kṛṣṇa-*līlās* and was built by Līlāvati.

Śrī Kusum-sarovara

'Kusum' means a flower. Another name for Kusuma-sarovara is Puṣpavana. Leaving aside all precious gems, *priyatama* (lover – Kṛṣṇa) adorned *priyā* (Rādhā) with flowers. Actually, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is always engaged

in worshiping Radhika; He doesn't leave this service even for a split-second. Nevertheless, He adopts many forms to render Her personal service, trying to do ever more.

jahā jahā charana parata pyāri ju tere
tahā tahā mana mero karata firata parchhihi

(Kelimāl)

Sadhana (worship) in Solitude

Kṛṣṇa was until now sitting amidst numerous damsels, putting flowers in one's braids, tying anklets on another's feet, helping one with toe-rings and tightening the knot of another one's *sarī*. Being served like this by Kṛṣṇa, an innate ego aroused in these gopīs, which is unacceptable. At this moment, Madhusudana and Rādhā withdrew from there. Rādhā was shy and quiet. He broke the ice first with His wit and then served Her lovingly by various means.

atra prasūnāvacayaḥ
priyārthe preyasā kṛtaḥ
prapadākramaṇa ete
paśyatāsakale pade

"Just see how in this place dear Kṛṣṇa collected flowers for His beloved. Here He has left the impression of only the front part of His feet because He was standing on His toes to reach the flowers." (ŚB. 10.30.32)

Observing the footsteps of *priyā-priyatama*, clever gopīs imagined Śrī Kṛṣṇa's acts of serving Rādhā.

Sakhī 1 – "Look, until now He was carrying our dear Svāmīni (mistress) on His shoulders. Here she has descended."

Sakhī 2 – "Oh no, lest Her soft soles are pricked by any sharp grass-blade!"

Sakhī 3 – "No, no… look ahead! His toe-marks – essentially, He has plucked flowers from here."

keśa-prasādhanaṁ tv atra
kāminyāḥ kāminā kṛtam

tāni cūḍayatā kāntām
upaviṣṭam iha dhruvam

"Certainly, Kṛṣṇa sat down here with His girlfriend to arrange Her hair. The lusty boy must have fastened the flowers to her braid at this spot." (ŚB. 10.30.33)

Sakhī, "See how the beloved hero has combed Her hair." Svāmī Śrī Haridāsa, on direct visualization of this *līlā,* has thus recited – "*beni gunthi kaha kou jane*" – who knows better the art of braiding the hair!

Hero, "O Radhe! Grant Me a chance to comb Your soft, curly, and dark tresses today. None else can braid Your hair like Me. I swear to You, today I'll make such an expert braid that not even Your friends could match!"

Heroine, "Well, how do You know? All-day long You graze the cows and wander in the forests."

Hero, "For once, give Me a chance." (Like a shopkeeper telling his customer to give him one chance to serve him and then he can decide, this is the same artistry Śrī Kṛṣṇa is applying here.)

Verse in (Kelimāl. 70)

White flowers in Śrī Rādhārānī's dark tresses looked like a breathtakingly beautiful star-studded dark sky.

And then, yellow flowers amidst the whites – why?

Because He Himself is adorned with yellow silks! As if replicating His form in Radhika's.

Not a comb, with His delicate fingers He made a fine braid and displayed His more artistic ability in *Śringār līlā*.

He applied *anjana* (kohl) perfectly to Her mischievously dancing eyes, shaping the corners beautifully with the tip of His nail. This *līlā* happened at this Kusum-sarovara.

Kusum-sarovara is one of the prime ponds of Braja. This place is known for Yugala-Sarkar's *Śringār līlā*.

One more *līlā* pertaining to Kusum-sarovara appears in *Skanda Puranā*.

Thousands of His wives in Dwarika were inconsolably pained after Golokadhipati (Kṛṣṇa) finally left for His eternal abode, but, Kālindī delved in eternal bliss even thereafter.

So, one day they asked her,

"Sister Kālindī, what is the reason that this unbearable loss never afflicts you and you have not become as pitiable as we have."

Kālindī, "Because, my mind is not under this illusion that I'm separated from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Look: –

atmārāmay kṛṣṇasya dhruva mātmāsti radhika
tasya dāsya prabhāvena virahosmānn na samprusheta
(Bhā.U.Mā. 2.11)

Our Lord is *atmārāma*. He is the soul of the whole world, but His soul is Śrī Rādhārānī. As a result of serving Her always, I remain free from the pain of separation forever.

tasya evānsh vistārah sarvāh śrī kṛṣṇa nāyikah
nitya sambhoga evasti tasyah sāmmukhya yogatah
(Bhā.U.Mā. 2.12)

Look, we all are a part of Vṛṣabhānu Nandini's (Rādhā) retinue. It's only with Her grace that we may receive the divine association of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chandrā. For fulfillment of our desire, the divine company of *premjnani* (intellectual devotee) like Śrī Uddhava is essential."

Kṛṣṇa's wives, "But where may we find Uddhava – Kṛṣṇa's look-alike?"

Kālindī, "Physically, he had gone to Badrikashram, since he too strongly aspired.

āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syāṁ
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhīnām
yā dustyajaṁ sva-janam ārya-pathaṁ ca hitvā
bhejur mukuṇḍa-padavīṁ śrutibhir vimṛgyām

"The gopīs of Vṛndāvana have given up the association of their husbands, sons and other family members, who are very difficult to give up, and they have forsaken the path of chastity to take shelter of the lotus feet of Mukuṇḍa, Kṛṣṇa, which one should search for by Vedic knowledge. Oh, let me be fortunate enough to be one of the bushes, creepers, or herbs in the land of Vṛndāvana, so that I can be blessed with the dust of the lotus feet of these gopīs." (ŚB. 10.47.61)

vande nanda-vraja-strīṇāṁ
pāda-reṇum abhīkṣṇaśaḥ
yāsāṁ hari-kathodgītaṁ
punāti bhuvana-trayam

"I repeatedly offer my respects to the dust from the feet of the women of Nanda Mahārāj's cowherd village. When these gopīs loudly chant the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the vibration purifies the three worlds." (ŚB. 10.47.63)

In the Words of Nanda Dāsajī

"Again and again he prayed to attain this holy dust." (Bhā.U.Mā. 2.24-25)

Kālindī, "Therefore, with his astral body, Uddhava – desirous of the dust from the gopīs' feet, resides at Kusum-sarovara. Charged with emotions you start chanting Kṛṣṇa's glories, hearing that He'll present Himself before you." (Bhā.U.Mā. 2.30)

As per instructions of Yamunājī (daughter of Kalinda and younger sister of Yama), all Kṛṣṇa's beloved wives along with Parikshit and Bajranabh went to the specified place at Śrī Kusum-sarovara which had a thick vegetative growth.

Reaching this spot, they soulfully recited Kṛṣṇa's glories so that the whole atmosphere of that place started echoing with the melodious sounds of musical instruments. Suddenly, at the same time, *premjnani* Uddhava appeared from within a thick arbor. By sitting amidst them, he pronounced divine knowledge, liberated them all from their agony of separation from the Lord, and gave them the direct experience of the Lord's eternal amusements (*nitya līlās*).

Śrī Uddhava-kuṇḍa

Uddhavajī narrated the Kṛṣṇa-*katha* to the agonized beloveds of Kṛṣṇa, causing them to become peaceful. The place up to Kusum-sarovara is said to be Uddhava's abode. On both sides of Kusum-sarovara is Uddhava's temple. Close by is Uddhava Kuṇḍa; Uddhava had gone to Braj just for a day, thinking that after addressing the gopīs, he'll return. But how nectarine is this Braja –

sarid-vana-giri-droṇīr
vīkṣan kusumitān drumān
kṛṣṇaṁ saṁsmārayan reme
hari-dāso vrajaukasām

"That servant of Lord Hari, seeing the rivers, forests, mountains, valleys and flowering trees of Vraja, enjoyed inspiring the residents of Braj by reminding them of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes related to these places." (ŚB. 10.47.56)

The forests of Braja puts to shame even the lovely gardens of the heavens. The divine beauty of the blooming forest was pervading in all directions, the trees, creepers, and vines were all alive and responsive. How can the manifestation of the eternally new opulence of Braja be put into gross words? Uddhava witnessed the ecstatic, impetuously flowing rivulets, the joyful caves and creeks of Govardhana, the valleys and blooming vines bent with a load of fragrant flowers – all reminding him of the transcendental presence of Kṛṣṇa. He stayed six months rather than one day, not even thinking of going back.

The *ācāryas* have clarified in their commentaries these *līlās* which are draped in love.

Uddhava asked the gopīs, "For which *līlā* is this spot known?"

"What did lovely Braja-mayank (moon of Braja-Kṛṣṇa) do in this valley? Did He ever stand below this tamal tree?"

Even the unconscious (*jada*) is asking me like a human, "Uddhava! Why do you ask? Every spec of this place is soaked in Kṛṣṇa-*līlā*."

Holding the hand of Uddhava, the Braja-damsels showed to Uddhava and spoke with choked throats.

"I was alone that day and was walking on this lonely path. And… and… that mischievous lovely prince held my hand; this is the same spot… the same spot…"

This student of Bṛhaspati – Uddhava – was wandering like mad in the fond memory of Brajakulachandra (Kṛṣṇa). The cloud of divine knowledge burst into rags. (*jnana goodari* is famous in Vṛndāvana). Each and every blade of grass too is filled with love.

Now Uddhava was engrossed in Braja-*līlā*. The author of *Bhāgavatam* says that at that time, although Śrī Kṛṣṇa was not physically present, the soil drenched and embossed with the divine nectar of His *līlās* was still presenting the same sight, disseminating the same transcendental opulence.

itas tato vilaṅghadbhir
go-vatsair maṇḍitaṁ sitaiḥ
go-doha-śabdābhiravaṁ
veṇūnāṁ niḥsvanena ca

"Gokula resounded on all sides with the noise of milking and of the white calves jumping here and there; with the loud reverberation of flute-playing; and with the singing of the all-auspicious deeds of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma by the cowherd men and women, who made the village resplendent with their wonderfully ornamented attire." (ŚB. 10.46.10)

Uddhava Witnessed

The nectarine sound of the flute was audible everywhere. All around little white calves were playing. How divinely sweet this place was. Though Kṛṣṇa had gone, the parrots, cuckoos, pigeons, and dancing peacocks of this place were still talking in their languages about Him and Him alone. In the hearts of gopīkas, He alone resided. Looking at the dilated eyes of these calves, it seemed as if each calf was accompanied by two Gopals!

A thought struck him and he ran hastily, waving a peacock feather touched by Kṛṣṇa and with tearful eyes looked around in all directions.

"All these remind us constantly of Nanda's son. Indeed, because we see Kṛṣṇa's footprints, which are marked with divine symbols, we can never forget Him." (ŚB. 10.47.50)

Uddhava saw the entire Braja, marked with Kṛṣṇa's feet, was attaining such beauty as if someone has meticulously traced embroidery patterns over a bride's *sarī*. How six months passed, Uddhava didn't even know.

Uddhava was Hari's servant at His personal service. After he came to this ecstatically charged Brajabhoomi, he altogether forgot Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his master.

A detailed account appears in *Garga-saṁhitā* and *Brahmāvaivarta Purāna*.

One day Śrījī reminded him, "Uddhava! Your friend would be waiting for you, you have to leave as well…" Uddhava returned with a heavy heart after getting Śrījī's blessings. He thought, "Just once more, let me see these Kṛṣṇa's beloved Braja damsels." He climbed up a hillock and saw the Braja-gopīs engrossed in Kṛṣṇa's remembrance. "These are the forms of love-incarnate, in whose association I had forgotten even Kṛṣṇa."

It would not be an exaggeration to say that after reveling in the Brajadharā (land) and Braja gopīkas, Uddhava forgot even Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself.

Śrī Parmananda Dāsajī Says

The nectarine experience which was unavailable to Vidhi-Hari-Hara (Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Mahesh), Uma-Rāma-Sharda (Parvati-Lakṣmī-Sarasvatī), was very naturally available to those gopīs.

These Most Fortunate Women

gopī prem ki dhvajā…
jinha gopal kiye apne basa, ur dhari shyam bhuja
shuk muni vyās prasanshā kini, udho sant sarāhi
bhuri bhāg gokul ki vanita, ati punit bhav māhi
kahā bhayo vipra kul janme, jo hari seva nāhi
soi kulin' dās parmānanda', jo hari sanmukh jaii

On witnessing this proud loving character from the hillock, he felt unprecedented grief. He had to leave because it was Nitya-nav-nikunjeswari, Rādhā's, order. At that moment, Uddhava's heart filled with a unique desire:

āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syāṁ
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhīnām
yā dustyajaṁ sva-janam ārya-pathaṁ ca hitvā
bhejur mukuṇḍa-padavīṁ śrutibhir vimṛgyām

"The gopīs of Vṛndāvana have given up the association of their husbands, sons and other family members, who are very difficult to give up, and they have forsaken the path of chastity to take shelter of the lotus feet of Mukuṇḍa, Kṛṣṇa, which one should search for by Vedic knowledge. Oh, let me be fortunate enough to be one of the bushes, creepers, or herbs in the land of Vṛndāvana, so that I can be blessed with the dust of the lotus feet of these gopīs." (ŚB. 10.47.61)

"They have a special respect for me being Śrī Kṛṣṇa's friend. But to get the dust off their feet is essential, without which love cannot be achieved. Of what value are Jnana, Vairagya, Tapas, and concentration? Love can't be attained through these methods. Love would be attained only by bathing in the dust of their feet!"

"If I become a tree, being so tall I would remain untouched by the dust of their feet.

If I become a small plant, grass, weed or stone-pebble, then this dust of their feet, inaccessible even to *yogīs*, would become effortlessly available."

Bhartendu Harishchandrajī's Expression

braja ki latā patā mohi kije
gopī pada Pankaj pāvan ki raja jāme sir bhije

"Let me be a leaf or veil in Braja. May every organ of my body be soaked with the dust of gopīs' feet.

"Being a creeper here is highly beneficial, the sight of these Brajavasīni-lovely gopīs would naturally become available."

What was so special about these Braj-gopīs that Uddhava, born in Vṛṣṇi lineage and extremely intellectual, aspired for the dust of their feet?

Their specialty:

"The gopīs of Vṛndāvana have given up the association of their husbands, sons and other family members, who are very difficult to give up, and they have forsaken the path of chastity to take shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, Kṛṣṇa, which one should search for by Vedic knowledge. Oh, let me be fortunate enough to be one of the

bushes, creepers, or herbs in the land of Vṛndāvana, so that I can be blessed with the dust of the lotus feet of these gopīs." (ŚB. 10.47.61)

It's Written in Yugal-Gīta as

nija-padābja-dalair dhvaja-vajra
nīrajāṅkuśa-vicitra-lalamaiḥ
vraja-bhuvaḥ śamayan khura-todaṁ
varṣma-dhurya-gatir īḍita-veṇuḥ
vrajati tena vayaṁ sa-vilāsa
vīkṣaṇārpita-manobhava-vegāḥ
kuja-gatiṁ gamitā na vidāmaḥ
kaśmalena kavaraṁ vasanaṁ vā

"As Kṛṣṇa strolls through Braja with His lotus-petal-like feet, marking the ground with the distinctive emblems of a flag, thunderbolt, lotus, and elephant goad, He relieves the distress the ground feels from the cows' hooves. When, playing on his flute, Kṛṣṇa walks with the gait of an elephant, we gopīs, in whom the fire of love is kindled by his amorous glances, stand as still as trees and are no longer conscious of our braid and dress."

(ŚB. 10.35.16-17)

Look at the exalted state of love – their clothes slipped on looking into Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eyes. They lost their body-awareness, their hair loosened, knots opened, raiments dropped, and they lost control over their own hands. Who will refrain? How can a drab understand love? He would say, "This is all exaggeration!"

Uddhava was impressed after he witnessed the gopīs' state. Immediately he understood the fallacy of his knowledge. Why? Because *jñāni* says the state of mind should be *bhrahmakāī* (void). He has come across many great *jñānis* but never came upon anyone where there remained no awareness of the body or action. Having witnessed such a state, Uddhava calmed down and thought, "how mysterious is this emotion? How remarkable is this state?"

Uddhava was deeply impressed by the love-filled intellectual prowess of these pained, grieved gopīs. He lifted his load of knowledge and immersed into Kālindīji (Yamunā), sang the gopīs' glories, prostrated to the dust of their feet and turned towards Mathurā.

Upon reaching Mathurā he scolded Śrī Kṛṣṇa, "O Lord of all! Either change Your name or justify it. Don't flaunt this fake degree of *karuna-nidhi* (treasure-trove of compassion)!"

A similar expression is found in Parmananda Dāsajī's words:

Uddhava said *"Esi mei dekhi braja ki bāt…"*

Oh, my lotus-eyed Śyāmasundar! A feeling of emptiness has overtaken Braja. It is like a marriage procession without the groom. There are the same birds chirping, the same peacocks, the same cows, cowherd boys and Braja gopīs. Nandabābā is still there. But without Your presence everything seems vacant.

Parāmananda dāsa says, "Uddhava delivered a letter to Lord Kṛṣṇa from the gopīs begging Him to please return to Braja as soon as possible." They said, "Without your presence, we don't know if we can maintain our lives."

Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa

The glory of Girirāja divinized after the advent of Rādhā kuṇḍaon this earth-plane. However, there is no difference between Śrī Rādhā kuṇḍa and Śrī Rādhā.

Kārtika-māhātmya:

yatha rādhā priya vishnotasyah kuṇḍam priyam tatha
sasrva gopīshu saivaika vishnoratyanta vallabha

(*Padma Puraṇa*)

Meaning – 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa equally loves Śrī Rādhā and Rādhā kuṇḍaas both are the same.'

A demon named Arishta lived here in the garb of a bull; therefore it was previously called Arishta Van In the time of Śrīman Mahāprabhujī's arrival, it was known as Arishta Gram (village).

Ādi Varāha Puraṇa

arishta sur namasau yātrāiva vaste sadā
yad rishtam vanam nāma bahu vānar sankulam

At many places in Skanda Puraṇa and Ādivaraha Purāna pranam mantras are written for Arishtavanā.

Once, when the people of Braja were struck with terror for Ariṣṭāsura, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ended his life to relieve the people from his fear, but they did not appreciate this act of killing. The reason being that he was in the form of a cow – a bull. Therefore, the cow-worshiping Brajavasīs disowned Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

"O Kṛṣṇa! O killer of bull! Don't touch us, you have killed a bull. You have offended the race of cows." Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, "Listen, gopīs! He was a dreaded demon worthy of killing!" the gopīs replied, "Whether he was a demon or of demonic character, we don't want to listen to all this. That was a male cow. You should expiate to get rid of the sin of cow-killing as Indra did after killing a brāhmaṇa named Vritrasur." Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked, "What is the penance for this?" The gopīs suggested, "Go and take bath at all the holy places. This will possibly sanctify you." Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, "Even if I go and take bath at all the places, you would not trust me? It would be good if I invite all the holy places here and take bath here in your presence." At that very moment, Śrī Thakurjī hit the soil with His heel and invoked all holy places, "O all pilgrimages, kindly come here!" All pilgrimages appeared in person. Śrī Kṛṣṇa thus said to the gopīs, "See! Now have *darśan* of all pilgrimages lest you declare me a liar again!" However, the gopīs acted smart as always and said, "We can't see anyone here!" Thakurajī thought, "How clever these gopīs are! Seeing but still denying!" Then all pilgrimages, on Kṛṣṇa's prompting, one by one introduced themselves to the gopīs:

"I'm Lavanasāgar; I'm Kshirasāgar; I'm Sone river; I'm Tamrapani river; I'm Pushkar; I'm river Sarasvati; I'm Yamunā; I'm Saryu from Ayodhya; I'm the confluence of Prayag; I'm river Revā. Please see our pure waters and have faith in us."

After this, the gopīs agreed and said to Kṛṣṇa, "Yes, now we can see all holy pilgrimages. You can take bath in their holy waters." Śrī Kṛṣṇa took bath and said, "Look, I've created such a pond whereby water of all the holy places is collected here. I had killed a demon and you declared me a cow-killer. By siding with a demon, you too have committed a grave sin. You also must sanctify yourselves." On the gopīs' request and with their help, Śrījī created a beautiful pond in no time.

The gopīs filled the pond with the holy waters of Manasi gangā.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa suggested, "O lotus-eyed! If you so wish, your friends may draw water from my pond to this tank." Śrījī refused and said, "No, no, never! You have washed your sin of killing a cow by bathing in this water. As a result, your pond is now contaminated. I'll fill my pond with pure water of Manasi Ganga and make it glorious." On hearing these words all the pilgrimages appeared from the pond and pleaded with Śrījī with folded hands and wet eyes, "O omnipotent! Knower of all knowledge, those who do not know your glory, neither Brahmā nor Śiva or Lakṣmī, none but Kṛṣṇa alone is the knower of absolute Truth. Even He feels blessed by wiping your sweat-droplets; with His hitting of the heel, we have taken shelter in this pond. If we too may receive your grace, our wishes will be fulfilled. If you permit us to enter your pond, our existence will become meaningful. We seek your blessings." Śrījī is all gracious, always sparing, full of compassion, and granted them shelter. With Śrījī's kindness, all *tīrthas* (holy places) filled that pond with their waters. Śrī Shyamsundar said, "O Rādhā! I have washed my sin of cow-killing by taking a dip in my pond and thus contaminated it. Now, no one else will take bath in its waters as your pond with all its purity now exists here. This way, it will get neglected." How could Śrī Rādhā let this happen? With a slight pounding of her hand, she enjoined both the ponds. This is the *līlā* of Shyam-kuṇḍa and Rādhā-kuṇḍa. "O, my dear! May your kuṇḍabe be more glorious than mine!" This is the same Rādhā kuṇḍa which has greatly contributed to Girirājajī's glory.

"This kuṇḍa will ever remain My favorite like You. For Me, You and Your kuṇḍa are identical. I'll come here daily for bathing and playing."

Śrī Rādhā said, "I too will always come with My friends to take bath in Your Kuṇḍa."

Both these ponds were almost extinct when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu reached here. Mahāprabhujī identified these ponds from amidst the rice-fields.

Śrīman Mahāprabhujī reached the village of Arishta dancing in ecstasy. He regained his external consciousness at this spot. He started inquiring about Śrī Rādhā kuṇḍa from the natives but none could provide any clue. He understood that it has been lost over time. As He is Omniscient Lord incarnate, He identified two rice-fields as the site of Śrī Rādhā kuṇḍa and Śrī Shyam Kuṇḍa. Mahāprabhu bathed there with the little water collected

in those rice fields. People were taken by surprise by this act of Prabhujī's, but at the same time, He started glorifying Śrī Rādhā kuṇḍa with profound devotion. Śrī Rādhā kuṇḍa is most dear to the Lord among all the ponds as Śrījī is most dear to Him among all the gopīs.

Śrī Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's Baithak (seat)

Close by on the left is a Tamāl tree. Śrī Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhujī on his Braja pilgrimage came here and rested under this tree.

After Prabhujī's visit, Raghunāth dāsa Gosvāmī constructed these two ponds.

vimalo sarva papaghno brhma hatya vighātako
adao snanām tu Rādhāyah Kuṇḍe sarvarth dāyakam

This Rādhā kuṇḍa bears the capacity to cleanse a person of the gravest sins.

Village Mukhrai

Śrī Rādhā rānī's foster mother, Mukharājī's, village is in the south of RādhāKuṇḍ.

Once, Kalāvati, Ratnamālā and Māneka, the three psychic daughters of the Lord of ancestors, happily wandered in the hills and did not notice Sanaka and *munis* crossing their path, and therefore did not pay respects to the *munis*. Such arrogance on their part annoyed the *munis* and they cursed the girls to fall on the earth. This proved to be a boon instead, as they received a rare golden chance to be mothers of the Three Divine Powers. As Janak's wife, Ratnamālā as Sunainā became Sitājī's mother. Kalāvati married king Suchandra in Manu's lineage. King Suchandra and Kalāvati performed rigorous tapas; Brahmājī was pleased and granted him *moksha* on his askance. Perturbed, Kalāvati said to Brahmājī, "What will I live for after you have granted moksha to him? I'm going to curse you!" To save himself, Brahmājī suggested a middle path. He said, "All right! Both of you live in heaven for some time and later you will be born in Bharatavarsh (India) and you will be fortunate to bear Mahāshakti (Divine Power) Śrī Rādhārānī as your daughter." Accordingly, King Suchandra was born as Vrishbhānu Gopa to Surbhānu (Mahibhānu) and Padmavati in Gokula Kalavati (Kirti) was born in Kanyakubja dynasty. King Bhanandana

gave his extremely beautiful and charming daughter to queen Mukharā's (Mālāvati) lap. Mukharā very lovingly brought her up. One day, Nanda jī saw this celestial beauty and thought of fixing her match with his dear friend Vrishbhānu. Soon, this happy resolve got fulfilled. Mukhara out of her love for this girl left Kanyakubja and started living near Girirājajī in this village. This village became known as Mukharāi. Presently, in this village temple, the daughter, mother, and the grand-mother stand together. Adjacent to this lies *bajani śīlā* (musical rock) which the grandma used to entertain her sweet Rādhā. (*Shiva Purāṇa* Parvati Khanda Chap. 2)

Ratna Sinhāsana (Bejeweled Throne)

In the south of Kusum-sarovara is a magnificent place. Once on the full moon day, the Brajvasis played Holī with Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. Sitting over this particular spot, Śrī Rādhā watched them play.

Shyam Kuti

Near atna Sinhasana is Shyam Kuti. Śrī Shyamsunder smeared a black fragrant paste on his body, wore black clothes and black ornaments. The gopīs could not recognize him. Adjacent to this lies *bajani-śīlā*.

Śrī Gwāl Pokhara

This dense forest is imbued with divine *līlās* of little Kṛṣṇa enacted in his early childhood with children. The transcendental fragrance of this place is in divinizing all directions – what else is there to say? Even Śeṣa with his thousand mouths and Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech, felt incapacitated in telling the wonderful fortune of this land. This is why all great mountains who accept Govardhana's supremacy declared, "You are the King of Mountains."

"*sesa sahas mukh sakahin na gāye"* (Śeṣa the serpent with his thousand mouths could not sing Thy glory)

It was only for seven days that the Lord lifted Girirāja on his hand, but look at his great fortune – Brajendra-tanaya (Kṛṣṇa) chose him as his playground. Mukuṇḍa spent all his days here, and along with the cows and cow-herd boys he enacted various friendly acts.

As told by the wise men, the supreme *rasa* (emotion) of s*akhya* (friendship) flows here in abundance.

The mind never gets contended with these magnificent *līlās* which carries one to the limitless ocean of bliss, with their narration-recitation, audition-retention, and contemplation-meditation. Therefore the author persistently sang Śrīmad Bhagwat in his timeless treatise and moreover started singing the versatility of the Versatile even before He entered into childhood from infancy.

sākaṁ bhekair vilaṅghantaḥ
saritaḥ srava-samplutāḥ
vihasantaḥ praticchāyāḥ
śapantaś ca pratisvanān

(ŚB. 10.12.10)

The little Gopa' boys crossed over the small pits filled with rainwater! First, they tightened their waist-belts, adjusted their arm-bands as if about to jump over some impassable ravine, and then, along with the frogs they jumped high shouting and celebrating their feat!

Watching their reflections in the water also became the most entertaining sport for these little ones.

Kṛṣṇa, "Madhumaṅgala, look! Your mouth is below your nose…"

Subal, "This is how he can smell a laddu from miles away… hā hā ha!"

Madhumaṅgala did not tolerate his ridicule and instantly retorted, "Kānāi, save your hanging-jostling nose, lest it falls into the water! I have to arrange your wedding. I'm a *brāhmaṇa*, if you lose your nose, from where will I find a girl without a nose for you?" The whole group laughed.

So ignorant were these little ones that, upon hearing their echo, they got startled.

"Who are you? O! Who's speaking?" The echo returned the same question.

"You are calling me! Do you wish to be killed soon?"

Like this, they reacted again and again. These kids got so engrossed in their playfulness that they failed to recognize their echoing sound.

bhramaṇair laṅghanaiḥ kṣepair
āsphoṭana-vikarṣaṇaiḥ
cikrīḍatur niyuddhena
kāka-pakṣa-dharau kvacit

"Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma played with Their cowherd boyfriends by whirling about, leaping, hurling, putting the weight, slapping the arms, tug of war and wrestling. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma would pull the hair on the boys' heads." (ŚB. 10.18.12)

Holding each other's hands, at times they swung or even teased each other. They put up challenges like this:

"Come forward! If you drank mother's milk…."

"Come forward! If you drank cow's pure milk…"

The competition was on Who threw a stone the farthest?

These little wrestlers patted their arms' muscles with their palms, divided themselves into two groups, and pulled each-other to exhibit their strength.

Their long, thick, curly hair is looked beautiful. Innumerable sweat-droplets shone brightly on their lovely little faces.

When this ocean of beauty, created with novel ingredients from beyond this material creation, got tired, any one of the small boys started fanning him with a lotus leaf. Another adjusted his clothes and ornaments, and yet another wiped off his sweat with delicate hands.

This is called "Nectarine friendship emotion – Sakhya bhāva" in the words of Parmananda Svāmī.

'Catch the ball' started: In this game of Chougan the one who catches the ball, in turn, throws it towards others. Hundreds of friends are played this game with Rāma and Shyām.

This was a unique game of *chougan*. Sitting on an agile horse, they would hit the ball. Yaśodā-nandana, who was adept at this game came along, sitting on an agile horse, and ran away picking the ball right from the middle.

An alarm was raised in the whole group. All swore with their hands on their necks, "By father! I'll take back the ball from Kṛṣṇa." Another one said, "How will you take it? My horse runs faster! I'll get the ball."

The whole group surrounded Kṛṣṇa and snatched and snapped.

The children suddenly felt that the roughness might hurt dear Kānāi and stopped immediately.

These tiny boys in their early childhood age of five to six years were so careful and responsible that they took extra care of Kānāi. Kānāi himself was their dearest toy!

The underlying emotion of *sakhya* amongst the same age-groups is trustworthy bonding and fearlessness. After they played a variety of games the little ones got exhausted. The first one to say something was the laddu-fan Madhumaṅgala, "Kānāi, I'm reminded of laddu. My stomach has lost patience and is now making a noise! Brother, do something"

Anshu, "Yes brother! I'm also hungry."

Bhadrasen, "Brother Kānāi, if refreshments don't reach us in time, Madhumaṅgala is going to faint!" After hearing Bhadrasen's words, Madhumaṅgala dramatically fell flat on the ground.

At that time a gopī brought a tiffin sent by mother Yaśodā was brought.

Subal, Subahu, Śrīdam, and all the cow-herd boys came. And lo! The unconsciously lying Madhumaṅgala rose on his own!

"I could get up on the strength of aroma of the tiffin", said Madhumaṅgala and made everyone laugh.

Plates of lotus-leaves and cups of Palash tree leaves are used for serving refreshments.

These are the crockeries of the forest!

All types of foods are available here, solid, semisolid, pastes, fluids, etc., there is such an interesting, delicious variety.

Flute fixed in the waist-belt, stick under the arm, a bite kept on the remaining palm, a variety of pickles kept under the fingers, his right hand was free for snatching bites from friends' hands. This resplendent moon of Nanda's Dynasty looked like a bright-blue pearl amid young children.

He had everything with him, but this Gopal would not eat from his own plate until he stole left-overs from his friends' plates.

This place was a place of many such forest-sports of little Kṛṣṇa.

After this forest treat, Kṛṣṇa served water to calves, therefore this is popularly known as Gwāl Pokhar.

Śrī Priyasharanjī Samādhi Sthali

At a little distance from Gwāl Pokhar is the Samadhi Shrīne of the most worshipful Bābā Śrī Priyasharanajī Mahārājā.

bhakti bhakta bhagvan guruchatur nām vapu ek
Inke pag vandan kiye nashi vighna anek

His Holiness, Śrī Priyasharanaī Mahārāj, a life filled with sacrifice, one-pointed exclusive faith in the dust of Braja, knower of deepest wisdom hidden within words of *rasikācāryas* was Śrī Śrī Ramesh Bābā jī's guru (holy master). His Holiness's introduction is beyond the scope of speech and words. How can a limited one explain the limitless? Even then, simply to sanctify the heart and words, whatever is being written here is like the tiniest effort towards this end. Bābā Śrī possessed an unflinching faith and unbound love for Braja. He completed a hundred years of his life in Braj with the sole support of the holy dust of Braja. Absolutely free from sectarianism, he was a prime disciple of an illustrious master belonging to the Gaureswarw commune, Pandit Bābā Śrī Śrī RamKṛṣṇa Dāsajī Mahārājā. For thirty years he lived in his holy association. In the year 1929 Gandhi jī and Iron-man of India Sardar Patel had visited Pandit Bābā. At that time, PujyaŚrī Priyasharanjī was sitting beside Pandit Bābā as he always remained in his personal service. Gandhijī's question was, "The struggle for India's freedom is continuing since before 1857, after such a long persistent effort. Why is success not achievable?"

Pandit Bābā replied, "Without the Lord's name success is impossible."

The name of the Lord and singing His glories is the key to success in all endeavors.

Mahāprabhu too has expressed the same.

"All nine types of devotions get fulfillment in the Lord's Name."

These words uttered by the great one got deeply ingrained in Gandhi jī. Immediately after returning from Braja, *Raghupati rāghav rājā Rāma* was sung and in 1947 the success of this struggle for Independence was apparent.

This miracle was clearly visible and thus this incident was narrated by Maharājajī to Śrī Ramesh Bābā jī Mahārāj.

A detailed treatise of imperceptible, inapprehensible Yugal *līlā* is Śrī Mahavani. He propagated this invaluable text.

He expressed the deeply hidden essence of the Lord's *līlās* so remarkably and exaltedly that many, many great *sādhakas*, immersed in their solitude, would move out of their dwellings to partake in the blissful nectar of his speech. He enlightened many with his contagious *bhakti-sādhanā*. His absolute faith in Dhām instilled faith in many people's hearts. His every action was meant to uplift the worldly men. His inspiring

life benefitted Braja Bhoomi in the form of many praiseworthy services that he initiated. A few such works are:

Śrījī Temple in Barṣāṇā was constructed by the inspired Seth Hargulal on a spiritual path, and daily worship was started by him. Renovation of Priyā kuṇḍa in Barṣāṇā and Manasi Ganga in Govardhana in the year 1960 was completed under his direction. He constituted a Braja Seva Samiti through which blankets, clothes, etc. were distributed to saints. There was a unique blend of all divine virtues like sacrifice, service, wisdom, solitary living, etc.

His Greatest Treasure

Aparigraha (non-hoarding) was his greatest treasure. One would say, "Son! You won't find even four *annas* from me after my death." He lived by his words all his life. A cupful of water, two to three pieces of dry bread – this formed his full-meal. He returned by night from Govardhana. On this frugal diet, he would sit in one posture for 16 hours daily for bhajan. All his life was spent in wanderings, taking shelter here and there. Even in old age did he build even a small cottage as his own. His life presented the highest principle of non-hoarding in its absolute meaning.

Before leaving the mortal frame, Śrī Priyasharanajī Mahārāj had said, "Don't make my Samadhi (tomb) after my death." Some devotees later constructed his Samadhi Śrīne. PujyaŚrī Bābā Mahārāj paid his respects at this shrīne every year during Rādhā rānī Braj Yātrā. Bābā Mahārāj received a special grace from His Holiness Śrī Priyasharanjī Mahārāj and was granted lifetime shelter in Braja with blessings. As it is impossible to bind the boundless, a very fragmental introduction of a divine personality could be presented here.

Papamochana-kuṇḍa, Rinhmochana-kuṇḍa

This pond is situated en route to Govardhana-Bharatapura near Govardhana. Today hardly any water is left here. It is said that by having a dip in this pond, one gets freedom from all sins. Similarly, Rinhmochana kuṇḍais also situated nearby, which is on the verge of extinction – a dip in its waters relieves one from all debts from ancestors.

Paintha Gaon

Distortion of Pravishtapuri is Paintha, which indicates that Śrī Kṛṣṇa had entered Govardhana from this spot for lifting Girirāja. This is located in the south of village Parsauli, 2 km away.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the midst of Vasanti Rāsa after secretly hinting to Rādhā rānī, and waited for her in the dense arbor. Not finding Śrī Kṛṣṇa around, they (gopīs) started searching him and finally reached the same arbor. Śrī Kṛṣṇa could not elope anywhere else from there and therefore sat there and assumed a four-limbed form. Upon seeing Him, the gopīs thought that it was Narayaṇa and not Kṛṣṇa! Prostrating to Nārāyaṇa they asked for a boon for uniting with Kṛṣṇa and moved forward. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was just jostling, while in a four-limbed form, there arrived Śrī Rādhā Rānī and instantly his two limbs disappeared. This was the effect of Śrījī's pure love that brought back Śrī Kṛṣṇa's true form with two limbs only.

One More līlā [Pastime]-

When Indra created havoc over Braj, Śrī Kṛṣṇa suggested to the gopas that he would lift the Govardhana under which all Brajavasīs with cows and calves may take shelter and be protected. Though the Gopas' children were familiar with Kṛṣṇa's many miracles, even then, to strengthen their faith, they tested his might by saying, "Kṛṣṇa, if you can twist this full-grown Kadamba tree, then we would know that you'll be able to lift Girirāja." And the little child Kṛṣṇa demonstrated his might. With Śrī Bābā Mahārāj's inspiration, the remnants of that Kadamba tree have been preserved neatly in a glass box.

Nārada Vana

Among 12 enumerated groves in Braja, Śrī Nārada Vana (Śrī Nārada Kuṇḍ) is an idyllic place, mantled with lovely, fragrant wildflowers. (Ā.Pu.)

Here, Devarshi Nārada and Muni Shardul performed rigorous *tapas* for the attainment of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (Bruha.Na.Pu.)

yātrā brahmā samāgatya putradhyayan hetave
sarva Vidhya sthalam jātam siddha pitham varaprada

Brahmājī delivered supreme knowledge to Nārada and, for his attainment of perfection enshrined Bhagwati Sarasvatī, goddess of knowledge, enthroned upon Hamsa (swan) holding *viṇal* in her hands. Sitting at her lotus-feet Nārada perfected *yoga vidya*. Therefore, this place is the grantor of perfection to *devarṣis, munis*, saints, and humans alike.

According to Śrī Vṛndāvana *līlāmrit,* once upon a time, Devarṣi Nārada approached Ashutosh (Śiva) and expressed his desire to hear the *līlās* of Yugal Sarkar. Shambhu showed his incapacity and directed him to Śrī Vrinda, goddess of Vṛndāvana.

Thus, with Rudra's motivation, Nārada approached Śrī Vrinda Devi to listen to the Lord's *līlās*. She narrated the *līlās* in great detail. Later, Nārada came to this holy place, Nārada Kuṇḍ, and strongly aspiring for the sight of Yugal Sarkar, he mentally repeated the eternal *līlās* of the Lord. A blue-yellow golden, brilliant light appeared surrounded by many accompanists. On one side was the most charming, dark and delicate Shyam and on His left was standing the heart-throb of the whole universe, Śrī Rādhā rānī, both being served by their associates.

The brilliance of this divine couple spread in all directions.

Devarshi watched this unparalleled beauty without a blink. This place is called Nārada-kuṇḍa for *devarṣis'* divine aspiration.

Once a *devarṣi* came to Kusum, *tapasthali* of Vṛndāvana Devi, for the sake of understanding the secret of Śrī Kṛṣṇa *līlā*.

Sakhī Madhavi, on the request of Vṛndāvana Devi, showed Nārada the transcendental Yugal *līlā*. On sighting that divine beauty, Devarṣi Nārada immersed himself into the ocean of bliss. After the fulfillment of his desire, he regained his masculine form on taking a dip in the south-west corner of Kusum-sarovara. There is a mention of this holy place in *Padma Purāṇa*, Patal-khaṇḍa, and *Vṛndāvana-māhātmya*.

Prayer Mantra for Nārada-kuṇḍa

brahmā loka pradāyaiva vaikuntha pada dāyine
namah nārada kuṇḍāya tubhyam pāp prashantaye

"Hey Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, You are the destroyer of all sins. We prostrate unto thee!"

Prayer Mantra for Nāradavana

govardhana mukhasthāya nāradakhya vanāya cha
tapasā rāshaye tubhyam namah kaivalya rupine

"O kaivalya like Nārada Vana! We prostrate unto thee. Thou art situated at the mouth of Girirāja Govardhana and are conducive for penances."

Since Nārada took bath in this pond before sitting for meditation, it is known by the name Nārada Kuṇḍa.

Śrī Candra-sarovara

According to *Garga-saṁhitā – nasa candra sarovarh* – this Candra-sarovara which is imbued with *līlā* Bihārī Kṛṣṇa's shringār and sakhya līlās, is like the nose of Govardhana. In Sarasvati-kalpa, the Godhead performed Rāsalīlā here. Therefore, this place is known as Ādi Vṛndāvana.

Reasons for this Name

In ancient Vaiṣṇava texts, Candra-sarovara is known as Param Rāsa Sthali or Maha Rāsa Sthali. This is the Lord's Vasanti rās destination. Here is a Rāsa Mandala which is called rās Chauntara. Close by is a Kadamba tree, which is called Vansi Vat.

It is written in a text titled Nija Varta Prasanga 32 that in the year 1488, on 5th of the Phalguna month, a Sunday, Śrīmad Vallabhācārya with his group had reached here at Chandra-sarovara, Parsauli, and after taking bath in Candra's well, blessed all Vaiṣṇavās with the divine sight of Rāsa-līlā. In his composition Śrī Subodhin', ācārya jī has mentioned this Rāsa-līlā as *phala prakarna*.

In this period of *rāsa*, Rasesh (king of *rāsa*) destroyed the pride of Kāmadeva, and the motion of the Moon, too, was halted! The moon was proud of his cool-white brilliance. Poor thing, he didn't have the slightest clue that before the beauty of this pair of lotus-eyes, the ocean of bluish radiance, and the Moon of Nanda's dynasty, the brilliance of a million moons looks faded.

When Rasesh started the celebration of Rāsa, the skies got jammed from all directions with aerial vehicles of gods and goddesses. Hopefully, their long-time standing desire was to be fulfilled by the Merciful Lord. Their hearts were unusually throbbing.

Repeatedly, only one question arose, "Which exalted melody, beyond the limit of seven notes, would Shyamsunder break from His flute?"

And, when a melodious tune erupted from Sanwara's flute, spreading in all four directions, even the clouds forgot their movement in that exaltation.

manmohan ki banshi bājī, candra-sarovara rās me
brahmā loka me brahmā nāche, shiva nāche kailas me
liye vimān devata thade phool gire ākash me

The gods were beating drums. the celestial musical instruments started playing spontaneously. A shower of heavenly flowers was pouring. Gandharvas with their beautiful wives were singing the Lord's glories. Huge drums cast in stone still exist here which produce sound on hitting. These are termed Indra's drums by the natives.

The proud moon, on witnessing this ocean of beauty, lowered his eyes in shame and realized his insignificance. Rāseshwar proved that only He is the possessor of Rasa.

gām āviśya ca bhūtāni
dhārayāmy aham ojasā
puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ
somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ

"Permeating the earth I nourish and support all beings by My energy and I become the moon to supply the juice of life to all herbs and vegetables." (BG. 15.13)

"I, Kṛṣṇa, am Bliss Absolute, implying that by being nectarine moon, It's Me who nourishes all plants and herbs; thus the pride of Moon got melted away."

Narayana Svāmī has recited the same *līlā*.

According to Garga-saṁhitā

Here the moon presented a peerless pearl and two million lotuses to Śrījī and Thakurajī.

The narration goes as follows:

Śrī Rādhā dressed and decked up by the adept gopīs, along with Brajarāj Kiśora, came to Candra-sarovara, located in Parsauli and sported in water.

Later, Śrī Kṛṣṇa accompanied with Braja damsels, like a mellowed elephant, entered Candra-sarovara for sporting in its sparkling, cool water which was covered with tall trees of kadamba, banyan, mangoes, palash, etc.

Here the moon came down to present a peerless pearl and two million lotuses to Śrī Rādhārānī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who are Beauty Absolute personified and stealers of sages' hearts.

How did the lotuses bloom at midnight? The gopīs explain:

gopyaḥ kim ācarad ayaṁ kuśalaṁ sma veṇur
dāmodarādhara-sudhām api gopīkānām
bhuṅkte svayaṁ yad avaśiṣṭa-rasaṁ hradinyo
hṛṣyat-tvaco 'śru mumucus taravo yathāryaḥ

"My dear gopīs, what auspicious activities must the flute have performed to enjoy the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips independently and leave only a taste for us gopīs, for whom that nectar is meant! The forefathers of the flute, the bamboo trees, shed tears of pleasure. His mother, the river on whose bank the bamboo was born, feels jubilation, and therefore her blooming lotus flowers are standing like hair on her body." (ŚB. 10.21.9)

At night, Rāsa Bihārī (Kṛṣṇa) held a full-bloom lotus in His hand.

The present architecture of Chandra-sarovara is very attractive. It looks like an eight-petal lotus. One more reason for the name Chandra-sarovara is that its shape resembles the Moon. This pond was constructed by Jawahar Singh, son of King Surajmal of Bharatapura. Its renovation was completed around the year 1858 by queen Hamsia of Bharatapura. In the south-west corner of Chandra-sarovara is Śringār Mandir and in the south-east is Rāsa Chabutra (platform).

Some devotees believe that this place has a connection with Śrī Candrāvalī sakhī and therefore Candrāvalī sakhī is enshrined in this temple along with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balram, though today only Dāu jī is present here.

Close by Śrī Sankarshana kuṇḍa is located.

The scholars say that 'palli' means 'patti' or 'village'.

In earlier days, this place was full of Palāsh trees, therefore was known as 'Palāsh Palli'. A distortion of 'Palāsh Palli' is 'Parsauli'.

Another reason is that being the *tapasthali* of Ṛṣi Parashar, it became known as Parsauli. Its boundaries in the west are Govardhana, in the north Jamnavat, in the south Painthana, and south-east is Bharatapura and south-west is Ānyaur. This piece of 1200 *bighas* land is not only known for Kṛṣṇa *līlās* but also reminds one of many great sages and saints. Nearby the pond is Śrī Gosainjī's conference (meeting spot), Gosain Hari Raijī's and Śrī Gokul Nāthajī's cushion- service and a well are close by, which is popularly known as Chandra-*kūpa* or Śrī Nāthajī well. The sweet water from this well is served to Śrī Nāthajī daily.

Once upon a time Ā*cārya* Śrī, whose mind was free from all desires, wished for a son after Pandhari Nāthajī's *darśan*. The Lord Himself ordered him, "you should marry now."

"If You become my son, only then I'll marry," replied Ā*cāryapad*.

All merciful, compassionate Lord Pandhari Nāth immediately agreed and appeared as Vitthalesh.

Ācāryapada had two sons: Śrī Gopī Nāthajī and Śrī Vitthal Nāthajī.

After Ācāryapada's departed from this world, the Lord's worship-service became the responsibility of elder son Śrī Gopī Nāthajī, but he too did not live long. His son Śrī Purushottam was a small child at that time. Therefore, this responsibility was happily shouldered by the virtuous Śrī Vitthalesh Prabhu and he expanded this worshipful service. Kṛṣṇa Dāsajī, the manager of the temple, sided with Śrī Gopī Nāthajī's wife and tried to accord the Lord's service to her. So, enumerating certain deficiencies in Prabhu jī's service, like being more interested in playing *vīṇa*, and delaying the ārti worship, he took away the right to perform the Lord's worshipful service from Vitthalesh jī and closed Śrī Nāthajī's balcony.

Gosainjī was pained not for the right to serve, but because the Lord's *darśan* was now denied to him. So, taking this as a wish of the Lord, he lived at Candra-sarovara in Parsauli, burning in the fire of separation from his dear Lord for over six months.

Every day, he would prostrate to the Temple's flag from a distance. He would keep sighting the flag unblinkingly and tears would roll down his cheeks in a continuous stream. When Birbal, Gosainjī's disciple, came to know about this, he told the whole incident to Emperor Akbar. This resulted the manager Kṛṣṇa Dāsajī to be put behind bars by the king.

When compassionate, pure-hearted Gosainjī came to know about this incident, he took a very unique vow. "I won't eat or drink anything till the time the manager doesn't return." Immediately Kṛṣṇa Dāsajī was released. He accepted his mistake and recited Gosainjī's praises.

These six months of separation were spent by Gosainjī at the banks of this pond only. During those days, when Śrī Nāthajī was at Govardhana, the flower-house was situated here, so, from Girirājajī a loud call for garland used to be made. Following the same tradition, in Pushtimārgī temples, the garland is called for aloud after the *rajbhoga* even today. Śrī Rāma dāsa Bhitariya, who was very dear to Gosainjī, would go to Gosainjī daily with beetal sacrament of Thakurjī, and Gosainjī, in turn, would send a floral garland in a small cane bowl and would hide under that a verse written on a leaf expressing his hearts sentiment for Thakurajī.

Nāthajī would read that verse daily and send his message of consolation through RāmaDāsajī. One day Nāthajī sent a message, "Cloud will rain in its own time" implying, "Let the right time come, everything will be set right again." In its reply, Gosainjī responded with, "Of course the cloud rains at its own time, but even the *chātaka* bird doesn't stop its patter." See the secrecy of love. Śrī Nāthajī used to swallow these letters written by Gosainjī like a dame would secretly send a love-letter to her beloved, and he would save it from other's sight.

Similarly, Śrī Nāthajī used to swallow all letters. Some 19 letters somehow are available and a compilation of which finally came out as a text titled Nav Vigyapti.

Following are a few gems from Nav-Vigyapti:

Verse Meaning: "O Vigyapati! I do not possess even an iota of humility, which is the cause of your compassion. So, please grant me that, so I may receive thy humility."

Verse Meaning: "O Lord of Gokula! I am devoid of all means but you are Omnipotent. So I shall not be deserted by you by any means."

Verse Meaning: "O Lord! You may be happy or unhappy with me, for me you are my sole refuge. You may grant life or death to us helpless ones. I take shelter in thee alone."

Suradāsjī

Next to Vallabhācārya jī's conference is Sura- cottage and Sura-samādhi. This great ornament among poets, Śrī Suradāsa, spent 70 years of his 105 years long life here.

Mahāprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya jī called him 'Ocean of devotion' and Gosainjī Śrī VitthalNāthajī considered him as a ship of *pushtimārg*'. A hundred twenty-five thousand divine poems form the content of Sura Sagar, in which nine forms of emotions as illustrated in literature and five forms of devotional emotions like *shanta* (tranquility), *dāsya* (service), *sakhya* (friendship), *vatsalya* (mother's love) and śrīngār (beloved's love) are beautifully presented.

When love arises from the heart, only then is such poetry born.

Recitation of the manifold virtues of love only is called *vani* (speech). His *vani*, Sura-Sāgar, does not consist only of innumerable poems but is a *sāgar* (ocean) of deep, fine, and meaningful emotions which has disseminated the divine nectar to the mankind.

He has composed the highest number of *padas* (poems) from amongst the *Ashtachhāp* poets (the eight great poets of Vallabha lineage).

The fact is that Suradāsa was no ordinary human being. Benevolent Uddhavjī himself incarnated as Suradāsa, as he was cursed by Lalitā jī to be born on this mortal earth-plane.

In the year 1535 (V.S.), in the month of *vaisakh* (April) on the 5th day of ascending moon, a Tuesday in Saraswat Kalpa (an auspicious formation of constellations), Sura dāsa was born in a village Sihi near Delhi. His parents considered themselves cursed since Sura dāsa was born blind.

Once, his father received two gold coins from a rich devotee; at that time Sura dāsa was 6 years old. The father was very happy to receive this valuable oblation, and he kept it aside securely, but the rats somehow took it into their hole. His father was more depressed at this loss than was he happy to receive the coins. Little Sura dāsa tried to console him, saying, "Dear Father! Why are you so depressed about this loss?" His father lost his temper and said "O blind boy! Our home has been ruined after your birth." Suradāsa, "Dear Father! Please don't get angry over anything, I'll tell you where the gold coins are but on one condition."

Father, "Quick, tell me your condition." Suradāsa, "You will hold my hand and get me out of home and never call me in again." Because he lusted for gold coins, the father said ye' to this proposition and found the

gold coins. As per the condition, Sura dāsa left home and set out for the woods, but his father tried to stop him.

Suradāsjī said, "Father, if you try to stop me, you will again lose these gold coins and if lost once more, you won't ever get them back." The parents did not stop him again.

Deserting home, Sura dāsa started living at a distance of some 15 km from there and remained there for the next twelve years. Slowly his sovereignty (influence) grew, which was becoming an obstruction in his *bhajan-sadhana*. Therefore, at the age of eighteen, he left this place. He went to Mathurā, and from there went to Gaughat near the village Runakta, where he finally stayed. There too, many people came under his influence and became his disciples. Everywhere, he came to be called ' Svāmīji'.

Once, in the year 1560 (V.S), the founder-ācārya of Pushtimārg, Mahāprabhu Śrī Vallabhācāryajī, started for Braja Yātrā. He had impacted the vast populace of North India with his scholarship. During this pilgrimage, they camped at Gaughat. The great poet Sura Svāmī, on getting this information, wished to meet Ācāryajī. People took him to ācārya Śrī and Sura Svāmī found great solace in his presence.

Ācāryapada asked, "Sura, sing something!" Suradāsjī recited the following verse

Hari ho sab patitan ko nāyak

Ācāryapada retorted, "Oh, Being a Sura (Lion) you are bluffing! Sing the Lord's *līlās* (pastimes)."

Sura Svāmī lamented, "Ācāryapad! This blind can see nothing. How do I sing the Lord's *līlās*?" Acāryapad replied, "Come to Braja with me, I'll show you the *līlā*." Then and there, after receiving initiation from Ācārya Śrī, Sura Svāmī accompanied him to Braja. From Sura Svāmī he became Suradās. First of all, on reaching Gokula, he got Navnīt Priyājī's *darśan* and started singing nectarine poems of the Lord's *līlās*.

Suradāsjī then went to Govardhana to sing for Śrī Govardhan Nāthajī's amusement. Āchāryapad appointed him as a principal singer in the temple of Śrī Nāthajī. Later on Gosain Śrī Vitthal Nāthajī compiled Ashtachhāp and presented this in a beautiful shape.

In the year (1613 V.S.), while Nāthajī was enshrined at Mathurā, Suradāsjī was offering a kirtan-service. Akbar was deeply impressed by

Suradāsjī's multi-faceted personality. He met Suradāsjī while on his way to Mathurā.

To test Suradāsjī's faith and devotion, Akbar asked him to sing his (the king's) glories. Suradāsjī blatantly refused. This silenced Akbar.

Once, Śrī Govinda Ram, Śrī Bāl Kṛṣṇa, et al., the children of the Gosains (Goswami) of Gokula, did not dress-up Thakurajī with any clothes or ornaments. They decorated Thakurajī with only lotus flowers. They wanted to test Suradāsjī's ingenuity. Though Suradāsjī was deprived of his physical eyes, his psychic vision was always seeing Śrī Thakurajī. The Gosains' children were curious to see Suradāsjī's reaction to this situation.

On opening the doors of the temple sanctum-sanctorum, Suradāsjī smilingly started singing:

dekheri hari nangam nangā …
jala suta bhuṣaṇ anga virajat vasan hin chhavi uthat taranga
anga anga prati amit mādhuri nirakhat lajjita koti anangā
kilakat dadhi sut mukh lai man bhari'sur' hasat braja yuvatin sanga

Today Śrī Gopal is dressed only in flower petals, no other clothing! He is still so adorable and attractive that millions of cupids are put to shame. Surdāsa adds, "Makhanchora has stolen butter and is smiling while He enjoys it as the gopīs look on."

All the boys were taken aback at this and were fully convinced of Suradāsjī's divine vision.

Suradāsjī had taken a vow to compose a hundred twenty-five thousand *pad* (poems), which was about to be fulfilled. A hundred thousand had been composed when Śrī Nāthajī gave him the final call for ending this mortal existence. Now, Suradāsjī got gravely pained that his vow would go unfulfilled. Śrī Nāthajī resolved his problem by declaring, "Suradāsjī, the final number of your poems has already been achieved!"

Suradāsjī asked, "How's that, Lord?"

Nāthajī, "I've composed the rest of the twenty-five thousand poems. If you don't believe Me, you may get them counted. My compositions are signed with the words 'Sura-Shyam'." On counting, the number was indeed found to be a hundred twenty-five thousand!

Mortal-dissolution līlā of Suradāsjī

Gosainjī was busy with Śrī Nāthajī's decorations when suddenly he noticed that Suradāsjī's voice was not being heard. "Where is Suradāsjī?" he wondered. When he looked towards Śrī Nāthajī, he found His eyes were filled with tears.

Gosainjī understood – it seemed to be Suradāsjī's wish to enter into Lord's eternal *līlā*. Suradāsjī, facing the Vaisanavās, lied down on his abdomen, keeping his chest over the Braja-soil. Observing this, people felt that Suradāsjī was in pain so they attempted to turn him around. The moment they tried to do so, Suradāsjī stopped them and said, "How can I show my back to this holy dust, to whom I've presented my front all my life? This is the same land where the Supreme Godhead is playing His eternal *līlā*. This dust is most dear to all Vaiṣṇavās; the sand, the thorns, all the difficulties of this land are dear to them. Those who get disturbed with the problems and difficulties, and start crying over little things, are most unfortunate They can't comprehend the Braja-sentiment.

One who is in love with Braja says, "The pricking of a thorn here bestows joy which is a million times greater than salvation" – that is called a Devotee of Braja! Raskhanjī has expressed this.

By that time Gosainjī, along with Kumbhan Dāsajī et al., reached there and Gosainjī lifted Suradāsjī's head and kept it over in his lap. All Vaiṣṇavās wished to receive answers for their spiritual queries from Suradāsjī. One Devotee inquired,

"What is Lord's nature?"

Suradāsjī replied, "Prīti ki rīti Gopal hi janat" (the tenets of love are known only to Gopal).

"Gopal bothers neither for knowledge nor external behavior, wealth, beauty nor youth. He observes only love, and you try to deceive Him. You wish to enjoy the Lord's love as well as the world's comforts. The Lord knows this deception very clearly, that you love worldly wealth, respect, and comforts."

"This is not My lover, this is a hypocrite –"*sarvas deta bhorai hī son*" – one who is simple, gullible, offers all to this soil, annihilates his little 'I' into this dust, the Lord grants him everything, even Himself!"

"*chaturan son chaturai thanat*" "And, those who act clever are deceiving none else but themselves. They feel that they'll deceive Kṛṣṇa, but, smarter than the smart is Kānāi, for He is kinked in three places!"

Chaturbhuja Dāsajī inquired, "You recited Lord's glories in so many ways, but did not compose anything to glorify Ācārya Śrī."

Sura dāsa jī replied, "Had I realized any distinction between Ācāryapad and the Lord, I would have certainly composed separate poems. If you so wish, then listen –

Bharoso dḍha in charanani kero /
Shrī vallabh nakh chandra chhaṭā binu sab jag māhian andhero ॥
Sādhan or nahīan yā kali me jāsoan hot nibero /
'sūra' kahā kahe dvividh āandharau binā molako cherauan ॥

I only trust Śrī Gurudev Vallabhacārya. In this dark world the only source of light is his lotus feet. One cannot cross the ocean of birth and death without surrendering to Śrī Gurudeva.

Sūradāsa says, "On my own I cannot do anything. I am blind both materially and spiritually. I only pray to be an insignificant servant of my guru.

Gosainjī asked, "Suradāsjī, where is your mind now?" Suradāsjī disclosed a top-secret here –

"Bali bali ho kuvari radhika, nand suvan jaso rati māni /
Ve ati chatur tum chatur shiromaṇi prīti karī kese hot he chhānī॥
Ve jū dharat tan kanak pītapaṭ so to sab terī gati ṭhānī/
Te puni shyām sahaj ve shobhā ambara mis apane ur ānī ॥
Pulakit aanga abahi he āyo nirakhi dekhi nij deh sayānī /
'sūra' sujān sakhī ke būze prem prakāsh bhayo vihansānī ॥"

All glories to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī who holds a special place in the heart of Nandanandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa! He attracts everyone in the universe but You attract Him. Who can understand the depth and mystery of Your love. Śrī Kṛṣṇa wears a brilliant pitambar (yellow-gold cloth) because He is thinking of Your complexion of molten gold. And in the same way You, thinking of Your Śyāmasundar, wear a blue sari.

Gosainjī again asked, "Suradāsjī, what are you visualizing now?" Suradāsjī recited-

Khanjan nen rūp rasamāte /
Atishaya chāru chapal aniyāre pal pianjarā n samāte ॥
Chali-chali jāt nikaṭ shravanani ke ulaṭi palaṭi tāṭanka fandāte /
'sūradāsa' anjana gun aṭake n taru abahian uḍi jāte ॥

The beautiful dark lotus eyes of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī are like those of the Khanjan bird. Just as a bird dislikes being in a cage, Her eyes dislike Her eyelids which briefly prevent Her from seeing Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's eyes are large and always moving. They are enhanced by eyebrows in the shape of bows.

Sūradāsa says that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's eyes are even more beautiful decorated with the kajal of love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise they would fly away like a bird.

Like this, singing Śrī Rādhārānī's glories, Suradāsjī, breaking away from the mortal frame, entered into the Eternal Abode. This is the play-ground of Śrī Nāthajī and His Ashtachhāp sakhas.

'Chaugān Patti' – an important spot known for *sakhya līlās* is situated here.

Chaugān Patti

Śrī Nāthajī used to play *gilli-danda* (a rural sport played with a stick and an oblong wooden piece) here with Govinda Svāmī, Chhīta Svāmī, Parmananda Svāmīji, and others.

Śrī Chhīta Svāmī

Śrī Chhīta Svāmī (Chhītu Chaube) was Subal *sakha* incarnate. He was born around the year 1512 in a Chaturvedi family of Mathurā. He was known as Chhītu Chaube. He was of *rajasic* temperament and had not learned to be under anyone's sovereignty. They were four friends, and he was the leader. Everyone identified this group of four as *gunda pandās*'. Once they tried to raise a conflict with Śrī Gosain Vitthal Nāthajī. They started with a stale coconut and a fake coin to test him. "Let me see what magic he spells, who-so-ever goes to him, becomes his disciple!" but, what happened? The moment Chhītu came in eye contact with Gosainjī, his whole being got transformed. Instantly he fell at Gosainjī's feet seeking

his resort, and the all-compassionate Gosainjī adopted Chhītu Chaube, and Chhītu started singing.

Bhayee ab Girdhar so pahechan

Because I was introduced to Śrī Giridhari-lāla, I could understand Śrī Vithalnāthajī. Firstly, out of ignorance, I thought I could deceive Him. I didn't realize His divine personality. Chitt Swami admits, "I am full of ignorance. I have nothing of value to offer but still Vithalnāthajī mercifully accepts me as I am."

"Where is that coconut which you had brought as an offering for me?" asked Gosainjī. Lowering his head, he replied, "That I had brought with ill intent." Gosainjī took the coconut and offered it to Navnīta Priyajī. Nothing in this world is worthy of Guru-Govinda, only after being offered to the Lord, it becomes worthy. Chhīta Svāmī always considered Śrī Vitthal Nāthajī and Śrī Nāthajī as one undifferentiated entity. Once he was with Birbal in Delhi, he recited a song *Jai Vṛndāvana vallabha rajkumar* and in his last line he said,

"Chhīta Svāmī giridharan Śrī vitthal pragat Kṛṣṇavtara"

Hearing this, Birbal raised a doubt, "You are declaring Śrī Gosainjī as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. The emperor is a Muslim, to such a declaration he is certainly going to raise a strong objection. How will you handle that?" Outraged, Chhīta Svāmī replied, "To my mind, you are a greater culprit since you don't believe this truth, therefore I disown you." He returned from Delhi without accepting any gifts and never went there again.

When Akbar heard of this incident he said, "Birbal, have you forgotten that day when we were going to Agra by boat and I offered a precious pearl to Gosainjī at Thakurānī Ghat? Gosainjī had asked thrice whether that belonged to him and I had affirmed. After that, he threw that pearl into the Yamunājī. Observing my grave expression, he took out a handful of priceless pearls from the Yamunājī and had said, "Identify your pearl from these." So, Birbal, if his disciple called him Kṛṣṇa incarnate, there was nothing wrong in that."

Once, on Janmāṣṭamī day, Gosainjī was swinging the cradle for Thakurajī. Observing this, Śrī Chhītajī got a very unique, magnificent vision: First Vṛndāvana Gosainjī is rocking the cradle for Thakurajī and then Thakurajī is rocking the cradle for Gosainjī.

priya navnīt palne zule, vitthalnāth zulave ho
kabhuki āp sang mili zulat, kabhuk utari zulave ho

Impressed with his poetic genius, Gosainjī Mahārāj appointed him in Ashtachhāpa and assigned him the kirtan-service of Śrī Nāthajī. He served Nāthajī whole-heartedly while living at Govardhana. His two hundred pads are available, some of which remain unpublished. After the demise of his holy master, Śrī Vitthal Nāthajī, he too entered into Eternal *līlā* in the year (1642 V.S.) at his residence in Poonchhari while singing '*viharat saton roop dhare*'.









Top - Anyor - Kumbhandas ji. Below - Anyor - Sankarshan



Top - Poonchri - Apsara kunda . Below - Poonchri - Naval kunda



Top - Poonchri ka Lautha . Below - Poonchri - Samadhi of Cheetswami





Top and Below- Jatipura - Indra Puja Maan Bhang.





Top - Jatipura - Luk Luk Dauji. Below - Mark of Airavata



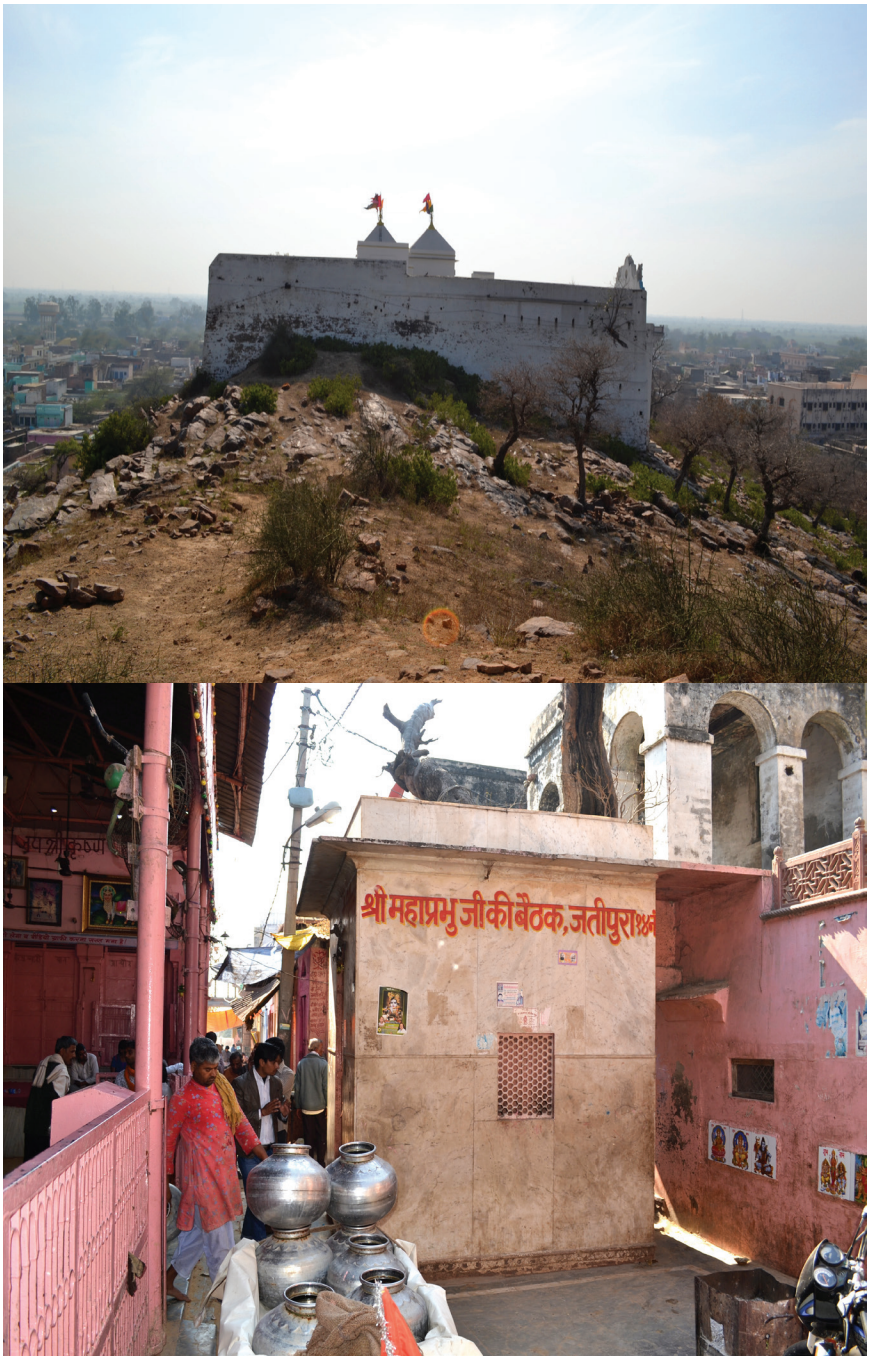
Top - Jatipura - Airawat kunda. Below - Harji kunda



Top - Jatipura - Rudra kunda. Below - Jatipura - Mukharbind



Top - Jatipura - Dandavati Shila. Below - Srinathji Ttemple



Top - Jatipura - Srinathji temple. Below - Jatipura - Mukharbind



Top - Govardhan Bilachu kunda. Below - Govardhan Chakreshwar Mahadeva



Top - Manasi Ganga. Below - Govardhan Sanatan Goswami Bhajan kutir



Top - Uddhava kunda. Below - Radha kunda





Top - Shyama kunda. Below - Lalita kunda



Top - Raghunath Das samadhir. Below - Vishwanatha samadhir





Top - Krishna Das Kaviraj bhajan kutir. Below - Caitanya Mahaprabhu baithak





Top - Kusum sarovara. Below - Narada kunda





Top - Syam kutir. Below - Gwal Pokhra





Top - Ratna kunda. Below - Govardhan



Top - Parasauli - Chandrasarovar. Below - Giriraji Vallabha - Goswami Vitthal







Top - Paitha - Narayana sarovara. Below - Aintha Kadamba and Surdas samadhi

Chapter 65
Śyāma Dhāk

There is a thick forest covered with Khakhara and Kadamba trees near Punchhari, where Kṛṣṇa partook in curd in the kadamba-leaf-cups. The leaves of these Kadamba trees, which naturally have a cup-like shape, can be seen here even now. In the era of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, the Yamunā used to flow here in many streams. Chhak(lunch) pastime happened here at Śyāma Dhak. The Dhak trees of this place bear lovely dark leaves. Śrī Vitthal Nāthajī's Bethak Temple is located here. Gopsām, Gopa Talaya, etc. are worth seeing. Closeby are the Baroli Chauth and Nagla Dadu villages.

"Śyāma Dhak chhak aarogat lekar thari thadi Lālitā"

At the place called Śyāma Dhak, Śrī Lālaitā sakhī is waiting with an offering of food for Śyāmasundar. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then enjoys eating the delicious food which she serves on a banana leaf. The gopīs surround Śrī Kṛṣṇa looking like shining lightning bolts around a dark cloud. All the gopīs drink the nectar through their eyes, watching the lotus face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Vitthalji recites: Śrī Giridhari Lāla is having His meal along the banks of the river Yamuna.

Chapter 66
Sonkarai

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, repeatedly, made an oath here that He knew none other than Rādhā. Due to Śrī Kṛṣṇa taking the oath here, this village became known as Sonkarai. It is located 2 kilometers to the west of Govardhana.

Samai Khera

This land is called Surya Patan vana.The Sun God worshipped Śrī Kṛṣṇa here therefore a Surya Kund (Sun Pond) exists at this place. Also, Kṛṣṇa pleased Rādhā by appearing as Śyāmā sakhī at this place. The significance and origin of Surya Patan vana: (Aditya Puraṇa)

rāvanasya bhayam labdha Śrī ramsharnagatih
yato suryayprapakhyam banam yātrā prajapate

In Tretā Yug, the Sun god, terrified by Rāvana, took refuge at Śrī Rāma's lotus feet; therefore this Surya Patanvana came into existence.

Prayer Mantra for Surya Patan Vana

bhaskarāya namastubhyam, bhuva stal samāgatah
namah pratyaksha devāya timirandh vinashine

"O Surya Nārāyaṇa! As Thou art visible to us and dispelling all darkness, we bow down to thee, who have taken residence here"

Dīg

When Vajranābhjī came to Braja for the sake of rehabilitating this place, the names of four locations came to light:

govardhane dīrghpure mathurāyam mahavane,
nandigrame brihatsanu karya rajyasthitistvaya

Govardhan, Dīrghpur-Dīg, Brihatsanu-Barṣāṇā and Mahavan, these four are illustrated in *Bhāgavat Māhātmya* part of Skanda Purāṇa V. K. B. M. 2.1.38.

As the name indicates, Dīrghpur (*dīrgh* means big) was a big city. Its abbreviation is Dīg. Other than this, people started calling this place Lathavana since the hill-ranges start from all four sides. These hill ranges spread up to Kāmyavana. Ṛṣi Śandilya directed Vajranabhajī to establish His kingdom first at these four places, as after Kṛṣṇa's departure, the whole Braja was abandoned.

To accomplish this, Ṛṣi Śandilya asked him to rehabilitate Braja by first establishing Nandgram, Barsāṇa, Mathura, Mahāvana, Govardhana, and Dīg. Thus Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson Śrī Vajranābha re-established Braja. Ṛṣi Śandilya showed him the locations of these places that here is Govardhana and here is Dīg and Śrī Vrajanābha rebuilt these places, implying that Dīg is one of the important places in Braja. Dīg is also one of the historically important places in Rajasthan. The kings of Bhāratapur have their palaces in Dīg. Dīg remained a capital city as well, but all these developments are from a much later era.

To know the ancient significance of Dīg, scriptures are the only basis. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is a very brief scripture. A detailed account on Braja's pastimes is found in *Garga-saṁhitā* and Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa. According to Ga*rga-saṁhitā*, this hill-range was the dwelling place of the Pulinda damsels, whose detailed description may be seen in the chapter titled: Various groups of Braja gopīs.

Nayan-sarovara

pyare pal na visār mohi yaha vara mānge dehu
priti pragat rasa jāt hai nain sarovar sehu

There is a very enchanting pastime at this place: As Kṛṣṇa and the gopas were tending the cows, Rādhā suddenly arrived and Kṛṣṇa became bewildered. The ācāryas say that this pastime is in Kāmyavana, the ancient Vṛndāvana. A reference is found in gopī-Gīta:

saha-balaḥ srag-avataṁsa-vilāsaḥ
sānuṣu kṣiti-bhṛto vraja-devyaḥ
harṣayan yarhi veṇu-raveṇa
jāta-harṣa uparambhati viśvam

"O goddesses of Vraja, when Kṛṣṇa is enjoying Himself with Balarāma on the mountain slopes, playfully wearing a flower garland on the top of His head, He engladdens all with the resonant vibrations of His flute. Thus He delights the entire world." (ŚB. 10.35.12)

On seeing Rādha as Kṛṣṇa forgot to tend the cows, the gopas alerted Him, "Kṛṣṇa! Look! Where have the cows gone now? What is it which makes you behave like this? Come, get up. Maiyā must be waiting. O Kṛṣṇa! Why these tears in your eyes? If You are experiencing any pain, let us know. Why are You rolling like this on the ground? Kṛṣṇa, look how miserable we are feeling without you?" Gopas are talking to each other that what kind of state of love is this?"

sanketa-kunjam anu kunjara-manda-gaminy
adaya divya-mridu-candana-gandha-malyam
tvam kama-keli-rabhasena kada calantim
radhe 'nuyami padavim upadarshayanti

"O Śrī Rādha when will I place on my head Your lotus feet, which are a flood of the nectar of spiritual love, a flood that always flows among Your devotees, and are the treasures dearer than life for Lord Kṛṣṇa?" (Ra.Su.Ni. 22)

bhoh śrīdāmān subala vrishabha stoka- krṣṇarjunadyah
kim vo drishöam mama nu cakita drig-gata naiva kunje
kacid devi sakala-bhuvanaplavi-lavanya-pura
durad evakhilam aharata preyaso vastu sakhyuh

Kṛṣṇa, being barely able to speak, said, "O Śrīdāmā! O Subala! O Vrishabha! O Stoka Kṛṣṇa! O, brother Arjuna! On the bank of Nayan-sarovara, I saw a Goddess with a very fair complexion, whose beauty was unparalleled with an exceptional glow.

Even from such great distance, She has stolen My entire Being! Today, even a robber has been robbed! Until today I was the most famous robber of Braj, but today even the heart of this robber has been stolen. I, Mohana, the enchanter of this whole creation have been enchanted by this Mohini. From across this Nayan-sarovara, She has displayed such a magic spell with Her mystical eyes that My eternal companion, this flute, also fell from My hand. (Ra.Su.Ni. 39)

"O Śrī Rādhā! When will I sweetly serve You, who with the arrow of Your sidelong glance deeply wounds Braja's prince, making His peacock feather fall from His turban, and the flute fall from His hand, and His yellow garments become disarrayed?

This is the enchanting pastime of Nayan-sarovara. Here sweet, charming Rādhā truly stole the heart of Kṛṣṇa with her enchanting glance. In Hindi, *nayan* means eyes and *sar* means lake and also arrows.

Chapter 67
Gantholi

After playing Holi, as both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa sat on the throne, one gopī quietly tied their garments to each other. On getting up, realizing what happened, as all Their girlfriends laughed, both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa blushed. After receiving a gift from Them, one gopī untied them. Due to this pastime, the place is known as Gantholi. *Ganth* means knot: This implies the wedding knot, which is tied between the bride and the groom.

Janhuvana Januthar

This place, also known by the name Januthar, is located south of Dīg, at a distance of 15 km via Panyohari village.

Prayer Mantra for Janhuvana

janha rishir nirmat vāsa ramaṇikāya bhuyave
janha vipāvanarthaya vanāya cha namostute

"O Janhuvana! Created by Ṛṣi Janhu, a most lovely abode, who is pure like the Gaṅga to this enchanting forest, we bow down."

Prayer Mantra for Vāman Kuṇḍa

vāmana kurta tirthāya janhu puṇya vara prada
sadā pāvana rupāya tirthrāj namostute

"O worshipful Janhuthar! Created by Vāmana and bestowing all boons, we bow down to you."

Chapter 68
Tod Ko Ghano

Once, as Śrī Kumbhandāsa, Śrī Rāma dāsa Bhitariya and Saddu Pandey and others, being tired of one Muslim ruler's atrocities, decided to take Śrī Nāthajī to a solitary place, Śrī Nāthajī Himself intervened and suggested Tod Ko Ghano as the right place to go to. So they all took Him there carrying Him on Saddu Pandey's buffalo. When they arrived in the thorny forest area, Kumbhandāsjī composed a song showing His difference of opinion! This thick forest is very dear to Śrī Nāthajī, Who took rest here under the trees laden with vines. Śrī Nāthajī's seat (Bethak) exists here.

"Bhave toy tod ko ghano"

"Lord, how ironic it is that you have come to live in this place full of thorns. Coming here our bodies and feet are pricked again and again. There is practically no place to sit. How can a lion-like person such as Yourself run from the fox-like Aurangzeb? In Dvāpara yuga Indrā inundated Braja with rainfall and You saved all the brajabāsīs by lifting Govardhana Hill. Indrā, the king of heaven, was insignificant to you. Then how could this puny Mogul king be a threat?"

Kumbhand dāsa recites, "Oh Govardhanadhari! The one who has caused You this inconvenience is certainly a shameful person."

Paramādara (Paramānanda vana)

Like its name, this is a blissful place, which is described in the Ādi Varāha Purāṇa as Sudāmā sakhā's abode. This Sudāmā is that of Braja's pastime. This is known as Paramānandavana since the tribal women received Rādhārāṇī's grace here.

In Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's intimate moments, Rādhā's *kumkum* got smeared on Kṛṣṇa's feet and later, as He walked through the forest it reached on to the grass, and from there those tribal women picked up the divine *kumkum* and became blessed. Blessed are the gopīs, blessed are the tribal woman, blessed is Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Who let a stream of transcendental nectar flow here.

Prayer Mantra for Parmanandavana

devarshi muni gandharva lokalhād swarupīne
namaste parmananda vana sangyāya ten amah.

"O Parāmanandavana, as you are distributing this supreme bliss to Devarṣi muni, the Gandharvas, and all the people. Obeisance unto thee!"

Kṛṣṇa shyly looked at Rādhā's transcendental, beautiful form. Why this hesitation? One verily feels hesitant on seeing greater beauty than one's own. Kṛṣṇa asked for Rādhārāṇī's ornaments and wanted to have the *kumkum* that She had applied on her bosoms. He smeared the *kumkum* on His body and so it reached the tribal woman.

The Caves of Jadkhor, Seu

These vast caves of Jadkhor are mentioned in Shrimad Bhagwat.

vanaukasaḥ pramuditā
vana-rājīr madhu-cyutaḥ
jala-dhārā girer nādād
āsannā dadṛśe guhāḥ

"The Lord saw the joyful aborigine girls of the forest, the trees dripping sweet sap, and the mountain waterfalls, whose resounding indicated that there were caves nearby." (ŚB. 10.20.27)

When Kṛṣṇa went to the forest, it was quite natural that the Pulinda maidens became overwhelmed. Sweet sap was flowing continuously from the trees and the waterfalls were flowing incessantly from the hills. In the slope of these hills, were numerous caves where Kṛṣṇa took shelter with His cows during the rainy season. His sweet tantrums didn't stop even in the caves. There too, His daily routine continued.

kvacid vanaspati-kroḍe
guhāyāṁ cābhivarṣati
nirviśya bhagavān reme
kanda-mūla-phalāśanaḥ

"When it rained, the Lord would sometimes enter a cave or the hollow of a tree to play and to eat roots and fruits." (ŚB. 10.20.28)

Kṛṣṇa, eating various roots and fruits in the caves, played with the Gopas. How did these caves expand to accommodate them all? The presence of the Omnipresent Lord facilitated their expansion. As these divine caves are in a state of absolute neglect due to the ill effects of Kali-yuga, still they are worth seeing even in this present time.

Revered Śrī Bābājī Mahārāj, traveling throughout Braja in search of these caves, entered the cave beneath Śrī Nāthajī Temple in Jatipura without any success, then, after studying Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's books, these caves were discovered in the forests of Jadkhor. 20-25 people can sit comfortably in these caves

Chapter 69
Saugandhini Śilā

Kṛṣṇa took pledge here for never leaving Braja.

brajwasi vallabh sada mere jīvan pran
braja taji anat na jaiho mohe nanda bābā ki ān
bhutal bhār utariho dhari dhari roop aneka

This is the rock where Kṛṣṇa said, "I will remove the burden of this Earth by taking many forms." Kṛṣṇa did not go away from Braja. His partial incarnation, Devakinandana, went to Mathurā, Dvārakā and performed pastimes there. This hill is a little further beyond Nayan-sarovara.

It has been described that while in Mathurā and Dvāraka, remembering the oath that He had taken here on this Saugandhini Śila, Kṛṣṇa would lament. These are the same hill-ranges where He used to play.

sakal sakhā aru nand jashoda ve chitt ten a tarahi
rukmini mohe braja visarat nāhi

Nandīśvara hill, Āsthākūt hill (hills of Ashta-mahasakhis), Sakhī giri hill in Unchagāon, Ranku hill in Rankoli of Indulekhā sakhī, Suvarna hill Suneheragāon of Sudevī, Indrāgiri in Indroli village, Dhawalgiri in ghāta, Saugandhik Parvat where Kṛṣṇa made the pledge and many other hills like Rohitāchala, Kanakachala, Gandhmādan, Vindhyāchala, Trikūt, and Maināk, etc.

Guhana (Godrishti vana)

The scriptures tell its name as Godrishtivana. Kṛṣṇa kept a watch over the cows from here. This was Kṛṣṇa's area for tending the cows.

Prayer Mantra for Guhana (Go drashti vana)

go krishne kshana sambhuta go drasht akhya vanāya te
gopal vachnā ramya moksha rupāya te namah

"O forest known as Godrishti! Born from Kṛṣṇa's vision, worthy for being witness to Gopal's pledge and as you are bestowing liberation, our obeisances unto thee."

Prayer Mantra for Gopal kuṇḍa

gopal shram nashaya gopal var dayine
chirayu vardhnar thaya tirthraja namostute

"O King of all pilgrimages! As you are bringing relief to Kṛṣṇa's fatigue and bestowing upon Him the boon of having a long life, our prostrations unto thee."

Khoh

After Kṛṣṇa had gone to Mathurā, there is an indication given in Bhāgavatam that later He returned to Braja. The people of Dvāraka, while welcoming Him back, lamented, "O Kṛṣṇa! On your occasional visits to Mathurāpuri etc., for us this separation becomes unbearable."

As per *Garga-saṁhitā*, Uddhavajī had made a promise to bring Kṛṣṇa with him to Braja and he did bring Him here from Mathurāpuri. After coming from Mathurā, the divine pastime of dancing with the gopīs was again performed and Kṛṣṇa roamed in all the forests-groves of Braja during that period.

Where had He roamed? Kṛṣṇa has gone to many forests, like Ādi Badri, which is 36 km away from Girirāja. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa moved further from Khoh to Rohitāchala leaving the lamenting gopīs behind. The gopīs, not

finding Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa there, cried out vehemently, "Where have They gone? They are lost." Thus, the name of this place became Khoh.

tāsāṁ tat-saubhaga-madaṁ
vīkṣya mānaṁ ca keśavaḥ
praśamāya prasādāya
tatraivāntaradhīyata

"Lord Keśava, seeing the gopīs too proud of their good fortune, wanted to relieve them of this pride and show them further mercy. So He immediately disappeared." (ŚB. 10.29.48), also, Ga. Saṁ.Ma.Kh. 20.36-37)

Chapter 70
Budhe Badri, Ādi Badri

Budhe Badri is not Ādi Badri. Kṛṣṇa revealed Budhe Badri for the Brajavāsīs and Ādi Badri was brought on earth by Lakṣmi and Nārāyaṇa, who decorated this mountain and the pond for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's amusement. Once, as Nanda Bābā expressed His wish to visit Badrinath along with His fellow Brajavāsīs, who agreed to accompany him, Kṛṣṇa stopped them from undertaking this difficult pilgrimage.

As all the Holy places on this earth long to come to Braja, Badrinath himself came here. At this very place, Nanda Bābā Mother Yaśodā and all others sighted Badrināthajī with Kṛṣṇa's grace and Alakanandā also appeared here, therefore, the name Budhe Badri.

Prayer Mantra for Ananda-sarovara

anand rupine tubhyam sadanand pradayine
sarva dukkha hara stīrtha hyanand sarsen amah

"O blissful lake of joy! You bestow joy and dissipate all difficulties, O king of Holy place! We pay our obeisances unto thee."

Ādi Badri

Kali succeeded to impose his influence on earth soon after Kṛṣṇa left the earth to return to His divine abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana. Thirty years after that, on the ninth day of the bright fortnight of Bhadra month, Shukadeva Muni recited SriMad Bhāgavatam to King Parikshita.

Two hundred years after that Gokarna jī recited SriMad Bhāgavatam and thirty years after that when Devarshi Nārada saw Bhakti, Jnana and

Vairagya in decrepit condition, explained the importance and glory of SriMad Bhāgavatam to Bhakti *maharānī*.

vruthā khedayase bale aho chintāturā katham
vṛndāvanakṛṣṇacharanāmbhojam smara duhkham gamishyati
(Bhā.Ma. 2.1)

O, Bhakti Devi! Remember Lord Kṛṣṇa. Only let these precious tear-drops fall in the love with Kṛṣṇa. They are only blessed with good fortune in the love for Kṛṣṇa. So leave aside these tears. Stop crying, and remember Vṛndāvana Kṛṣṇa with love and devotion.

According to Bhāgavata Mahātmya in Padmā Puraṇa

When Nārada jī could not remove the unconscious and inert state of Gyan, Vairagya, even by reciting Vedic ślokas and Bhagavad Gīta, he came to this Badari Vana.

tataschintāturah so-tha badrivanamāgatah
tapascharāmi chatrati tadartham krutanischayah
(Bhā.Pa.Pu.Ma. 2.43)

"I will perform austere penances here." Here is an isolated and quiet place to perform penances. When he decided to carry out penances he saw:

tāvaddadarshapuratah sanakādīnmunīscharān
kotisooryasamābhānuvācha munisattamah
(Bhā.Pa.Pu.Ma. 2.43)

In front of him, he saw the best among the *munis*, Sanakādika on the Gandhamadana mountain. There was a debate here between Sanakādika *munis* and Devarshi Nārada. Here Sanakādika *munis* revealed the glory of the best of Puraṇas, *Srimad Bhāgavata-māhātmya*. In the second chapter of *Srimad Bhagavata-māhātmya* in Padma Puraṇa, this dialogue between Devarshi Nārada and Sanakādika *munis* is available for scrutiny. It is also mentioned in Vṛndāvana *Garga-saṁhitā*, the commentary on Śrī Bhāgavatam.

atha govardhanaddoore sundaram yojanatrayam
vṛndāvanakhandagandhasanyuktam sa yayau rohitāchalam
(Ga.Sam,Ma.Kh. 20.37)

Ādibadri pilgrimage is three yojanas, or 12 kośa (36 Kilometers), away from Vṛndāvana Govardhana. So this is the original Ādibadri which is 12 kośa from Girirāja jī, not Badridham in Uttarāchala because that is very far from Girirāja. That is why Badrināth in Vraja is believed to be Ādibadri as it is 12 *kośa* away from Girirāja. Also, Braja Bhoomi is divine and everlasting, so all pastime places in Braja are considered divine from time immemorial and that is also why it's called Ādibadri. Even today this pastime place is alive.

In the year 1994, revered Bābā Mahārāj had a vision of a stream of milk coming out of Deva-sarovara. At that time he was accompanied by Pandita Sri Rāma Lālajī and other saints.

Kṛṣṇa descended on earth by His own Will for the sake of humanity. Thus, incarnations, curses, etc. are simply there for setting the drama. It is not the curse, but Kṛṣṇa's will that works. Kṛṣṇa, although capable of nullifying the curse, doesn't do so due to His own sweet Will. A much higher phenomenon or potency is Kṛṣṇa's Will. These curses are, in essence, companions of the Will of Kṛṣṇa, and do not pose any obstructions in the overall divine pastime. (Rā.Bā.Ka. 138)

Deva*ṛṣi* Nārada cursed the Lord on the pretext of not getting married to Viśvamohinī, and instantly realizing the truth, said, "Lord! Let my curse be a false one". The Lord proclaimed, "Devarṣi, it is only by my will that You have uttered a curse." The Lord accepted the curse by choice. And what was His will?

anugrahāya bhaktānāṁ
mānuṣaṁ deham āsthitaḥ
bhajate tādṛśīḥ krīḍaḥ
yāḥ śrutvā tat-paro bhavet

"To shower mercy to his devotees, Lord assumes a humanlike body and He engages in such pastimes as will attract those who hear about them to become dedicated to Him."
(ŚB. 10.33.37; Rā.Bā.Kā. 122)

Kṛṣṇa's unlimited benevolence, mercy, and compassion brought Him to this world as an incarnation. Sudāmā cursed Rādhā in Goloka that She would be born on the mortal plane of the Earth, and along with her friends, would have to suffer the pain of separation from Her beloved Kṛṣṇa for one hundred years. Rādhā retorted, "You also would be born there, but as a demon." Being so cursed by Rādha as Śrīdāmā descended on the earth, Her eyes became wet with tears. Kṛṣṇa consoled Her saying, "Don't worry, Sudāmā will soon return." What was the reason for Her tears? It was only due to Her mercy, compassion, and benevolence.

Lord Rāma, addressing Sītājī, "O dear chaste, faithful, gentle Lady! Now we'll enact a human drama, in which You will be separated from Me and will live in a demon's fort." Implying that all events, Sītājī being captured, separated, suffering, etc., have only happened by Lord Rāma's Will.

Vālmīki narrates the incidence of the ten-headed Rāvaṇa who was trying to frighten Sītājī in Asoka Vatika, whose response was as follows, "O ten-headed one! My effulgence is enough to burn you to ashes, but my Master Śrī Rāma has not granted me this permission. He has willed this pastime of separation and war. Only for this reason are you alive before Me. A chaste woman doesn't act contrary to Her husband's wishes." Sītājī, although one with the Lord, accepted this separation as per the Divine plan. (Ra. Ar. Ka 24)

Per Śrī Rāma's wish, Sītājī remain separated from Him even though they had a non-dualistic and interdependent relationship. Similarly, there is a relationship of non-duality and interdependence between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, both are indivisible. However, following Kṛṣṇa's wish, Rādhā has accepted this separation. Why did Kṛṣṇa wish for this pastime of separation?

Because Brahmājī had prayed in this way, "O Lord! Please remember Sudāmā's curse and enact 100 years of separation.' (Br.Va. Pu.)

Background for this has already been created. Akrūrajī arrived in Braja to take Kṛṣṇa to fulfill the Mathurā and Dvārakā's pastimes. On the request of the demigods, this pastime was then enacted. At the same time, Kṛṣṇa had desired a display of separation in His manifested pastime. The composer of the Bhāgavatam, Śrī Vyāsajī, also accepted this fact.

The gopīs experienced unbearable pain of separation on Kṛṣṇa's departure to Mathurā and Dvārakā. "Lordship is in my hands. If I so wish, I can nullify Sudāmā's curse but I do not wish to do so because now I

have a desire to enact this pastime of separation." Here too, the Lord has established a great precedent. He has not nullified the curse though being Omnipotent. Therefore, He enacted this pastime and at the same time did not leave Braja at any point in time.

Can Kṛṣṇa ever leave Braja? Saugandhini Śilā is in the woods of Jarhkhor, where Kṛṣṇa had declared that He would never leave Braja. How can separation and union coexist? This coexistence is like this: Separation would only be felt in the manifested pastime in this universe. The constant union will remain in the un-manifested pastimes of Goloka**.**

In the manifested pastimes of this universe, He performed a departure to Mathurā and Dvārakā and also came to Braja many, many times. The author of the Bhāgavatam has enumerated these incidents. Whenever the Lord would come back to Dvārakā from Hastinapur, the residents of Dvārakā would complain to Kṛṣṇa.

yarhy ambujākṣāpasasāra bho bhavān
kurūn madhūn vātha suhṛd-didṛkṣayā
tatrābda-koṭi-pratimaḥ kṣaṇo bhaved
raviṁ vinākṣṇor iva nas tavācyuta

"O lotus-eyed Lord, whenever you go to Mathurā-Vṛndāvana or Hastināpura to meet Your friends and relatives, every moment of Your absence appears to us like a million years. O infallible One, at that time our eyes become useless, as if bereft of sun." (ŚB. 1.11.9)

Kṛṣṇa went to Braja many times from Mathurā and Dvārakā. *Garga-saṁhitā*, a commentary on the Bhāgavatam, describes Kṛṣṇa's arrival from Mathurā and Dvārakā four times and the performance of the Mahā-rāsa thrice during that period. This appears once in Vṛndāvana part of *Garga-saṁhitā,* then again in the Mathurā part with Uddhavajī and a third time in Ashvamegha part, while meeting at Prabhas, and a fourth time in the context of Aniruddha's victory, while on His return journey.

Similar mention is found in Brahmā Vaivarta, where the King of Mathurā and Dvāraka Kṛṣṇa, again and again, came to Braja and performed Mahā-rāsa pastime in Braja. Amongst those places, Ādi Badri is also one such sacred place.

The word Ādi here implies that this place is more ancient than the Badrinath Dhāma of Himālayas because this place is connected with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, which are timeless.

According to *Garga-saṁhitā*, Badrikāśrama is a place of Vaikuṇṭha Dhāma, and their Lordship of Vaikuṇṭha, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, had descended here to decorate this place for the amusement of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Once, Kṛṣṇa, playing a transcendental melody on His flute, created a very wonderful sound, which captivated the whole creation. Penetrating all the universes, the impact of the flute's music went beyond them, reaching to Vaikuṇṭha.

The clouds stopped moving, the Gandharvas became infatuated, Sanakadik arose from their meditation. Brahmājī was most astonished on hearing that sound, Mahārāj Bali also was astonished and Śeṣa, the serpent, began moving His heads in ecstasy. The sound of this transcendental flute pierced through the universes, entering the Eternal Abode.

(Ga.Saṁ.Ā.Kh. 42.3)

Suradāsjī recited the pastime of *"harshit venu bajayo chhail":* Kṛṣṇa joyously plays the flute.

kṛṣṇa-vikrīḍitaṁ vīkṣya
mumuhuḥ khe-cara-striyaḥ
kāmārditāḥ śaśāṅkaś ca
sa-gaṇo vismito 'bhavat

"The wives of the demigods, observing Kṛṣṇa's playful activities from their airplanes, were entranced and became agitated with lust. Indeed, even the moon and his entourage, the stars, became astonished." (ŚB. 10.33.18)

The moon, the stars, all became ecstatic. The entire universe was sedated with that sound. The celestial angels, too, felt exalted. Suradāsjī says: the moon, forgetting its spatial path, caused that night to become a kalpa, while the whole universe was standing still and watching.

brahma-rātra upāvṛtte
vāsudevānumoditāḥ
anicchantyo yayur gopyaḥ
sva-gṛhān bhagavat-priyāḥ

"After an entire night of Brahmā had passed, Lord Kṛṣṇa advised the gopīs to return to their homes. Although they did not wish to do so, the Lord's beloved consorts complied with His command." (ŚB. 10.33.38)

All this happened by the Lord's potency of Yogamāyā. So, the Lord first took the assistance of Yogamāyā before enacting *rāsa*. East of Ādi Badri is Maltivana, where there is a temple of Bhāgavati Yogamāyā by the name of Yogmaya *upashriyah*.

Lord Nārāyaṇa and others discussed that they should go to Braja and serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The presiding deities of Ādi Badri are Rādhā-Mādhava (Kṛṣṇa). The enshrined deity of Badrinath, in this temple, is present only to serve Them. When the sound of the flute entered Vaikuṇṭha.

murali dhuni vaikuṇṭha gayī
Kahat vacan kamala ju sunao

Lord Nārāyaṇa said to Lakṣmijī," O Devī, listen to this flute. Such bliss is not here in Vaikuṇṭha, this is present only in the dust of Braja. Such bliss is neither in the higher planets nor in the lower planets." In the entire three worlds, this bliss is not present. Therefore, even Lakṣmījī yearns to reside in this blissful Braja.

murli dhuni vaikuntha gayi
narayan kamala suni mohe, ati ruchi hradaya bhayi

Uddhava Says

nāyaṁ śriyo 'ṅga u nitānta-rateḥ prasādaḥ
svar-yoṣitāṁ nalina-gandha-rucāṁ kuto 'nyāḥ
rāsotsave'sya bhuja-daṇḍa-gṛhīta-kaṇṭha-
labdhāśiṣāṁ ya udagād vraja-vallabhīnām

"When Kṛṣṇa was dancing with the gopīs in the rāsa-līla, they were embraced by His arms. This transcendental favor was never bestowed upon the goddess of fortune or other consorts in the spiritual world. Indeed, never was such a thing even imagined by the most beautiful girls in the heavenly planets, whose bodily luster and aroma resemble the lotus flower. What to speak of worldly women who are very beautiful, according to material estimation." (ŚB. 10.47.60)

Even Lakṣmī was anxious for this blissful Braja. How can the damsels of heaven attain this Braja when Lakṣmī, although seated on Lord's chest, could not achieve this? However, the native gopīs of Braja attained this

so naturally. There comes a story in Padma Purāṇa, which goes like this: Once, Nārada, witnessing that as some *ṛṣis* were meditating, a huge heap of bones was lying beside them. Nārada, going to Vaikuṇṭha, asked Nārāyaṇa, "O Lord! Today, I have witnessed a very strange thing. Seven *ṛṣis* were meditating and besides them was lying a huge pile of skeletons, how is this?"

Nārāyaṇa replied, "So many eons have passed in their unbroken meditation that they have shed many times their bodies and even their bones have become indestructible." Nārada then asked, "Then, what is their objective?" Nārāyaṇa replied, "Attainment of Braja is their objective." Nārada again questioning, "Then why don't You fulfill their wish?" Lord Nārāyaṇa said, "I am powerless to do this. Only Rādhārāṇi, the queen of Vṛndāvana, can grant this."

rāsa rasik gun gaiiho, harshit benu bajayo chhaila
jo sukh shyam karat vṛndāvana so sukh tihu pur nyaii ho.

Lord Nārāyaṇa Said

hamko kaha milat raj unki Yaha kahke akulaii ho

The bliss of Braja may be attained only through the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the land of Braja. "May the Holy dust of Braja be smeared on my body by any means!" Even Brahmājī found it incomprehensible to exact assess the supremacy of the dust of Braja. Lord Nārāyaṇa and Lakṣmījī were inquisitive to find out the means for attaining the holy dust of Braja.

The lovers of Kṛṣṇa, the Braja gopīs have said:

dhanyā aho amī ālyo
govindāṅghry-abja-reṇavaḥ
yān brahmeśau ramā devī
dadhur mūrdhny agha-nuttaye

"O girls! The dust of Govind's lotus feet is so sacred that even Brahmā, Śiva and the goddess Ramā take that dust upon their heads to dispel the evil spells on them." (ŚB. 10.30.29)

The dust of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's feet was so priceless, that Brahmā Śiva, Lakṣmī and others adorned it on their foreheads to relieve themselves from all inauspiciousness and to ward off any obstructing elements i.e. power, opulence, pride in their path to attainment of Braj. As they desired the attainment of the bliss of Braja, they yearned for the dust of Braja. Lord Nārāyaṇa said, "Lakṣmī, although I am the creator of infinite universes, as Mahāviṣṇu, none is greater than Me regarding opulence, despite all this, I'm devoid of this bliss of rāsā. This can be attained only in Vṛndāvana."

It's mentioned in *Garga-saṁhitā* that Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa decorated the entire Rohitāchala Mountain for the pleasure of Rādhārāṇī, and Lord Badrinath created Deva-sarovara with His own hands for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who had disappeared from Khoh leaving the gopīs behind to go to Rohitāchala. The place of their disappearance became known as Khoh, which means lost. This is 24 km away from Govardhana.

Lakṣmī–Nārāyaṇa decorated Rohitāchala with rich plantations of exotic plants, vines, and creepers, reflecting the golden sheen of Rādhārāṇī's glowing complexion. (Ga.Saṁ.Mā.Khā. 20.40)

This Rohitāchala became popularly known as Kanakanchala Mount *Kanak* means gold, which was diffusing a soft golden light all around. There were numerous colorful fish, turtles, and other unique aquatic animals in Deva-sarovara, which was so fragrant due to being filled with numerous thousand-petal lotuses. The big black honey-bees were humming sweet melodies, cuckoos were blissfully singing continuously. As a cool breeze was flowing on its banks, the whole atmosphere was filled with an amazing fragrance. (Ga.Saṁ.Mā.Khā. 20.41)

On the banks of this breathtakingly beautiful lake sat the beautiful Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. After all, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa built this garden for Their pleasure. As Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa strolled a little further, They found Ṛṣi Ribhu sitting in deep meditation. Standing on one foot, he was meditating upon the Lord. (Ga.Saṁ.Mā.Khā. 20.42-43)

Sixty-six thousand years had already passed as he was meditating in the same posture without food or water. It was only by the power of his meditation upon Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet that he could perform such severe austerity. Rādha, being very gracious, inquired, "Kṛṣṇa, who is he? He looks like such a sincere Devotee. Please tell Me about him." Kṛṣṇa explained, "O Rādha! He is Ṛṣi Ribhu." Kṛṣṇa immediately called him, but since he was in a deep meditational state, he could not hear Kṛṣṇa's call. Kṛṣṇa then withdrew His lotus feet from the *ṛṣi's* heart. On account of

this withdrawal, the *ṛṣi* was perturbed and opened His eyes. Lo! Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa stood right before him. Perceiving Kṛṣṇa as a dark cloud and Rādhā as lightening embracing that cloud, he circumambulated both of Them. Falling at Their feet, he began chanting prayers, praising Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as the Ultimate Reality and the Lords of all universes.

(Ga.Saṁ.Mā.Khā. 20.49)

namah kṛṣṇaya kṛṣṇayai, rādhāyai madhvāya cha
paripurna tamāyaei cha paripurna tamāya cha

(Gā.Sā.Mā.Khā. 20.50-51)

ghanshyamaya devāya shyamayai satatam namah
sarveshvaraya satatam rasesh varye namo namah
goloka tita līlāya līlā vatye namo namah
asankhya adhi daive cha sankhyand nidhaye namah

After this, as he was offering obeisances to Both of Them, Ṛṣi Ribhu breathed His last. A flame, emanating from his body merged into the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Now Krsna started to cry for Ṛṣi Ribhu, loudly calling Ribhu… Ribhu…, who immediately reappeared from Kṛṣṇa's feet, his whole being, now looking most divine, possessing unparalleled beauty like Kṛṣṇa Himself. An aerial vehicle, descending on Kṛṣṇa's instruction, took Ṛṣi Ribhu to the Eternal Abode.

Rādhārāṇī curiously inquired, "Why did you cry?" Kṛṣṇa replied, "My devotees are very dear to Me." Rādhā said, "If you love him so much, then perform His last rites." At that instant, Ṛṣi Ribhu's body melted away, forming the holy Gaṅga who delivers one of all sins. Rādha, again surprised, asked, "How could his body melt into the water?" Kṛṣṇa explained, "Once, my body too had liquefied, all these are states of pure love." Rādhārāṇī, being curious, asked, "How did your body liquefy?"

Kṛṣṇa narrated, "Rādhe, once, when Nārada was born, he would wander about singing my Names. One day Brahmā asked him to get married and expand the creation. Nārada said there is no merit in marriage as it is a waste of time. He told Brahmā ji: You too should hold cymbals in your hands and do *kirtan*."

His words greatly annoyed Brahmā, who angrily pronounced, "Keep singing all the time… go and be a Gandharva! Do you say this body is not for merriment? Now, you enjoy and live with 50 wives!"

Nārada said, "You may curse me to become anything, but I will never marry on my own." As a result of that curse, he became a Gandharva and started living with 50 wives.

One day Nārada, romancing with his many wives and singing love-songs entered Brahmā-lokā. Brahmā, becoming highly annoyed with his absurd behavior, said, "Oh! You are so foolish! You don't even know the protocol of this place, go and take birth as a servant."

Later, Nārada was born to a maidservant, but he remembered His vow. As a maid's son, he had a chance to serve the saints and sages and to receive their holy association. After the changing of the Age, he again became Brahmā's son, and this time, Brahmā did not request him to get married. One day, Nārada, engrossed in the singing of the Lord's glories, reached Ilavrata land.

There, in Vedanagar, he saw beautiful people, but to His amazement, they all possessed distorted limbs. Nārada, being perplexed, asked them the reason for their pitiable state. To his surprise, they replied, "There is one *ṛṣi* called Nārada. As he is always singing out of rhythm, without any proper melody, our limbs have become broken and if he starts singing correctly, we all will regain our original beautiful forms. Nārada, understanding that they were right, thought, "Never before have I pondered upon the impact of my singing on others, I was always only considering my own satisfaction.

Raga-Raginis then said, "If you were to learn music from Mother Sarasvatī you would start singing properly, and we would recover our original forms." Nārada, immediately leaving that place, headed straight to Shubhragiri hill and performed penances for a hundred cosmic years, renouncing food and water. Later, that mount became known as Nārada Mount. Being pleased, Mother Sarasvatī offered him a *viṇa*. In a fraction of a moment, Mother Sarasvatī transferred all knowledge of music to Nārada.

Receiving that divine knowledge, Nārada went to the Gandharva's planet and, taking Tumbru as His student, told him how he had learned music from Mother Sarasvatī. Now, the question was; for whom should he sing that divine music? First of all, he went to a heavenly planet. There he found King Indrā engrossed in sensual pleasures with the *apsarās*.

Feeling that this divine music was not meant for sensuous people, since such a person would only convert this nectarine music into poison, he went to the Sun god and saw him perpetually moving on His chariot. He thought, "The Sun is always on the move, he cannot be the right recipient."

Next, going to Mount Kailash, he saw Śiva sitting in deep meditation. Leaving him undisturbed, he moved on to Brahmā-loka. There, finding Brahmā busy with his creation, without even a moment's respite from all his creatures. Disappointed, he left Brahmā-loka also and crossed the Virajā River to reach Goloka, to the transcendental Vṛndāvana. At the entrance, he was stopped by the gopīs, who asked for his identity.

Nārada, narrating his tale, introduced himself, "I am Nārada. I have come here to present my music." One gopī, went to Rādhārāṇī, and informed Her that, "As he could not find a qualified listener for his music anywhere else, Nārada has come here to present his music." Rādhārāṇī immediately invited him in. As the gopīs brought him forward and presented him before Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Nārada prostrated to Them and started singing.

Listening to his singing, Kṛṣṇa exclaimed, "O! I am beginning to melt. My divine form is melting away like water. This is called *brahmādravya* (divine fluid) in which infinite universes keep rolling and tossing. That ocean which is filled with countless universes is known as Prshnigarbhā."

"This ocean was punctured by Vāmana's foot, and from that hole flowed Brahmādravya, which became Gaṅga who trifurcated herself, one stream in Pātāla-loka (hellish planets), as Bhogavati, one in Svarga-loka (heavenly planets) as Mandakini and the third one in Prithvi-loka (earth planet) as Bhagirathi. Therefore, O Rādhe! Don't be surprised; Viraja had also melted into water. All of her seven sons became the seven seas. Lord Viṣṇu became the river Kṛṣṇa. Śiva became the river Veni. Even Brahmā manifested as Kukudmini Gaṅgā and, likewise, Ṛṣi Ribhu transformed into the Papanashini Gaṅgā."

A similar incident has happened with Rādhārāṇī also: As She is so compassionate, sometimes Her whole being melts with compassion.

preyah-sanga-sudha-sadanubhavini bhuyo bhavad-bhavini
līlā-pancama-ragini rati-kala-bhangi-shatodbhavini
karunya-drava-bhavini kaöi-taöe kanci-kala-ravini
śrī-rādhāiva gatir mamastu padayoh premamrita-sravini

Śrī Rādha, who always tastes the sweet nectar of Her beloved's company, who loves Him eternally, who playfully sings in the fifth raga, who plays in a hundred waves of amorous pastimes, who melts with mercy, who wears a tinkling belt on Her hips, and whose feet are a nectar stream of pure love, is the only goal of my life. (Rā.Su.Ni. 182)

As this is the place for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's leisure, this Ādibadri Dhāma is the cause of the Himālayan Badrikāśram, where such a pastime cannot take place. In Braja, there are many important places of pilgrimage and as all of them wished to reside in Braja, Kṛṣṇa granted residence to all of them. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa spent some time relaxing at Mount Rohitāchalā.

At that time, this mount was laden with floral creepers and trees and was awesomely beautiful. Lord Badrinath, Himself had created Deva-sarovara for the pleasure of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This was beautified with lovely lotuses and the melodious sounds of cuckoos filled the air. Cool, soft breezes, pregnant with amazing fragrances, blew gently.

For many, many centuries, this pond had remained concealed to the people. Recently, the Rādhārāṇī Braja Yātra restored it to its pristine glory. Five forest groves are identifiable here; in the north of Deva-sarovara is Candanavana, and Maltivana is situated in front of the temple, where the gopīs finally found Kṛṣṇa after a long search. North of the temple is Badrivana, around Deva-sarovara is Śāntivana, Tapovana is on the right side of Rohitāchala, and its left is Hirankhoi. The description of Hirankhoi is found in the Bhāgavatam.

This place was inhabited by many *hirans* (deers) and on Kṛṣṇa's disappearance, the gopīs had inquired about Kṛṣṇa's whereabouts from the deer, "O friend, wife of the deer! Has Acyuta been here with His beloved? Bringing great joy to your eyes? Indeed, blowing this way is the fragrance of His garland of kuṇḍa flowers, which was smeared with the kuṅkuma from the breast of His girlfriend as He embraced Her."

apy eṇa-patny upagataḥ priyayeha gātrais
tanvan dṛśāṁ sakhi su-nirvṛtim acyuto vaḥ
kāntāṅga-saṅga-kuca-kuṅkuma-rañjitāyāḥ
kuṇḍa-srajaḥ kula-pater iha vāti gandhaḥ

"O friend, wife of the deer, has Lord Acyuta been here with His beloved, bringing great joy to your eyes? Indeed, blowing this way is the fragrance of His garland of kuṇḍa flowers, which was smeared with the kuṅkuma from the breasts of His girlfriend when He embraced Her." (ŚB. 10.30.11)

On the right of Hirankhoi is mount Nara, a tall gate called Deva Dvāra stands here, which was erected by gopīdāsjī, a mentor of this temple. A

little further from Deva Dvāra is an ancient Kadamba tree, considered to have its original roots from Kṛṣṇa's times. Śrī Mān Mandir Seva Sansthan has constructed a protective boundary and sitting platforms around this ancient tree.

On the left is Mount Nārāyaṇa, a little further is Mount Trikuta with its three pinnacles. Near to Mount Nārāyaṇa is Nīla Valley. There are two Nīla valleys in Braja, the second one is in Nagajī's Kadamba Kāṇḍai. Nīla Valley implies that the rocks here are blue and walking barefoot on these rocks makes the feet blue. On the left of Hirankhoi is Mount Gandhāmāndanā.

Behind this mount is a mountain range called Vindhyāchala, where many Holy places of Chitrakut, like Kāmdā, exist. The Lord provided a place for all of them here. West of Vindhyāchala is Mount Kanakanchala, where you will find Chandanavana (sandal forest). A little bit on is Mount Mainaka and North-West from here is Dronagiri and Dhavalgiri. As we move a little further from Papanashini Gaṅga we find Lakṣmaṇa Jhula, which is a slightly tough climb. On its right side is Gangotri and Yamunotri; three streams flow from here. Moving a little further, Gaja-Grāha-rock can be seen. The Lord had manifested the pastime of Gaja-Graha for the Brajavāsīs at this place.

Next to this is Haridvāra and the steps of Har-ki-pauri are visible here. As it is difficult for us to approach all these Holy places, Kṛṣṇa, being most merciful, granted residence to all of them in Braja. In the description of 24 forests in Rādhopaniṣad, Gandhāmādana also gets a mention.

Tapta Kuṇḍa

Once upon a time, Agnideva posed a question to the Mahā*ṛṣi*'s committee, "O Ṛṣis! Kindly tell me a method for getting deliverance from the gravest of sins." The supreme Mahā*ṛṣi* Śrī Vyāsajī said, "O Agnideva, there is only one method for this. Go to the pilgrimage of Śrī Badri, which is the holy abode of the Lord Himself." Immediately, Agnideva went to Gandhāmādana mount in Badrikāśrama. Facing north, he sat in meditation, concentrating on the Lord's Name.

Pleased, the Lord appeared and said, "O Agnideva, seeing this Holy abode of Mine is enough to relieve a person of all sins. As you have concentrated upon my Name here, you are now absolutely free from all sins." Since then, Agnideva has been dwelling in the hot water (*tapta*) at

Badrinath. This holy pilgrimage of Śrī Tapta-kuṇḍa was granted an abode in Braja by Kṛṣṇa and simply by having a dip here, all the sins committed in infinite births are washed away.



Badrinarayana temple





Top - Badri Narayan temple. Below - Budhe Badri



Top-Rohitachal pavat. Below - Adi Badri Dham - Tapta kunda





Top-Mainaak, Dronachal, Kankachal parvat. Below - Trikut parvat



Top-Vindyachal parvat. Below - Dhavalgiri



Top - Gandhamaadan. Below - Alaknanda pond



Top - Alakananda, Gangotri, Yamunotri. Below - Maalti Van





Top - Maalti Van - Yogmaya. Below - Haridwaar - Har ki Pauri

Chapter 71
Śrī Kedarnatha

Lord Nārāyaṇa narrated this incident to Nārada. In Satya-yuga lived a valiant king named Kedar. He performed 100 *yajñas* with prescribed rituals, without desire for anything. The king, having a pure heart, denied even the throne of Indrā.

He was performing all actions for the sake of love for God, and after attaining the knowledge of the ultimate Reality from Jaigīshvya Muni, having a strong aspiration for God-realization, he went to the forest to perform penances. As he was a staunch devotee of Śrī Hari, Sudarśan Cakra stood beside him giving him protection. As a result, King Kedar soon attained the Eternal Abode. The place where he had performed his penances came to be known as the Kedar region and one would certainly attain liberation by leaving one's body at this sacred place. Since this Kedar region is very dear to Kṛṣṇa, He has granted it a residence in Braja near Kāmavana, which is also called Ādi Vṛndāvana (ancient Vṛndāvana).

The white, smooth rocks here confirm their origin from Kailāsa of Kedarnath. It is written in the Prakriti-kāṇḍa of the Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa that this Kailāsa of Kedarnath manifested from the left part of Lord Śivā. On its manifestation, it was brilliantly shining like a diamond emitting a radiance of a million suns. As Panchmukhi Trilochana, Śiva was holding his trident, he began singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa with folded hands, tears of joy were flowing from His eyes, which were fixed on the lovely moon-like face of His Lord.

jaya swarupam jayadam jayesham jaya karanam
pravaram jaydanam cha vande tam aparijatam
vishvam vishveshresham cha vishvesham vishva karnam

vishva adharamcha vishvastam vishva karan karnam
vishva raksha karnam cha vishvaghnam vishvajam param
fal bījam falādhāram falam cha tatfala pradam
teja svarupam tejodam sarva tejasvinam varam"

(Br.Vā.Brahm.Khā. 3.24-25-26-27)

From the left part of Śrī Hari appeared Brahmā and Mahāviṣṇu, from the mind appeared Isvari Durgā and from the heart came Ramā. The Lord offered His potencies to the demigods; Savitri to Brahmā, Murti to Dharma, Rati to Kāmadeva and Mahāsakti Durgā to Śivā.

Śiva said, "O Lord, I do not wish for sense enjoyment, liberation, mystic powers, *rudrapada* or even *paramapada*, because none of these can be equal to even a one-sixteenth fraction of Your service. I wish to serve thee alone." On listening to this Kṛṣṇa said, "O Śiva! You will attain victory over death by serving Me for 10 million *kalpas* and become Mrityunjaya; then you will marry Durgā. A chaste wife rising above sensuality nurtures her husband like a mother."

"O Śiva! Do not despise her, as she is a Vaiṣṇavi, she will nurture you and enhance your glory." Turning towards Durga the Lord said, "Hey Durgey! You must accompany Me to Goloka. You will attain Śiva as your consort in due course of time." Later, Mahādeva gave shelter to Bhāgavatī Durgā and she worshiped Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, religiously following the systematic three months vow. Lord Nārāyaṇa first revealed this system of worship to Devaṛṣi Nārada.

Following this Bhāgavatī vow, she begot two illustrious sons, Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeyā. Under Śiva's direction, Devī Bhāgavatī very religiously followed this vow. He said, "Devī, this vow should be started in April."

dhyayet tadā radhika cha dhyanam madhyandine reteam
rādhā raseshvarim ramya rasolla saraso tsukam

(Br.Vā.Kri.Jā.Khā. 16.85)

One should concentrate on the form of Rādhā as described in the Yajurvedā. Graciously sitting in the Rāsa Mandala, Rādhārāṇī is the director of the kingdom of Rāsa, entrance is not possible without Her Grace.

rasika pravara ramya ramā cha ramaṇot sukam
sharadrā jivrā jīna prabha mochana lochanam

(Br.Vā.Kri.Jā.Khā. 16.87)

"O Devī! By Her grace, I have been granted entry into that kingdom, Rādhārāṇī's divine splendor puts nature to shame; Her dazzling form is unparalleled. Kṛṣṇa, who is served by Brahmā and all others, is feeling honored by serving Her."

"O Durge! I worship Kṛṣṇa's beloved Rādhā who is all gracious and compassionate. Therefore, you should also worship Her by performing this vow. You must worship Rādhā by all means. Offer 108 lotus flowers to Her while chanting the sacred mantra; *om kṛṣṇāya svāhā*. Feed 108 brāhmaṇas daily and constantly sing Kṛṣṇa's name. On the final day, offer ten thousand lotuses and feed 9 thousand brāhmaṇas. Then distribute 90 fruits. As a result of this vow, a woman will not get widowed for 900 births and will beget virtuous sons. As you wish to attain Me in every life and produce righteous sons, so you must worship Rādhā following this vow for three months."

On listening to this, Durgā said, "The fruits of performing sacrifices, doing charity, studying the Vedāsa, going to pilgrimages and circumambulating the whole earth, are nothing compared to the fruits of Kṛṣṇa's worship. Worship of the Lord is the highest sacrifice; supreme is the remembrance of His Name, one gets salvation just by the sight of a pure devotee in whose heart the Lord resides. O Śambhu! The splendor which is visible in Brahmā Viṣṇu, Dharma, Śeṣa-nāga, Yourself, and Gaṇeśa is all because of the constant remembrance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa."

"With the grace of Kṛṣṇa only have I attained You as my husband, with Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya as my sons." Mahādeva, rejoicing after hearing her reply, said, "Durgey! Nothing is unattainable for you. Splendor and power are in your possession. Brahmā Viṣṇu, by keeping faith in you, can create, nurture and dissolve this creation.

You are the representative of the absolute Power, and, being assisted by you, we accomplish our work. As you worship Rādhārāṇī, the Sanat-kumāras will be your priests. I will arrange for all the materials for this worshipful sacrifice, and I will be your treasurer. Bhāgavatī Lakṣmī will arrange for the funds, and Agnideva will chant the Vedās. The sacrificial materials are transported to the demigods by Agni (fire), and he is also known as Havyavāt. Varuṇa (god of water) will arrange water for you. All the demigods will help you in the worship of Rādhārāṇī. *Yakṣas* will bring in the materials and Kārtikeya, the chief of the demigod's army will supervise them. Since this is Rādhā's worship, Vāyudeva (god of wind)

will act as the host. Suryadeva, the Sun god, will do the distribution of charity and the Moon will be the presiding Deity.

Lord Śiva thus organized this auspicious thee month vow for Pārvatī and by religiously following the vow, Pārvatī begot sons like Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeyā. Such is the devotion of Lord Śiva for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Rādhā asked Kṛṣṇa, "Why does Lord Śiva adorn a garland of bones? Why does he eat Dhatura, Āk, and poison?" Kṛṣṇa replied, "O Rādhe! Once upon a time, Mahādeva meditated upon Me for 60 thousand years. Pleased, I appeared before him. As he was looking at My form, his eyes were not satiated, feeling some limitation to see Me with only two eyes and singing My glory with only one mouth. As he expressed his desire four times, four more heads appeared on his shoulder, making him five-headed, thus becoming famous as Panchmukhi. One can have the audience of Śiva at Chakleśvara Mahādeva at Govardhana. Each head bore three eyes, so with his 15 eyes he fully rejoiced to observe My transcendental form."

"O Rādhe! He wears the bones of Sati and smears her ashes on his body. The places where Sati's body parts fell became *siddha pitha* (empowered places). As he was holding the remains of her body, Śiva fell unconscious. O Rādhe! Taking him in My lap, I imparted divine knowledge to him. In due course of time, he regained his beloved. His hair locks were formed while performing such severe penances for 60 thousand years that as a result, he does not any more perceive any difference between sandal paste and mud." "Why does he adorn snakes?" asked Rādhā. Kṛṣṇa replied, "Once, the snakes were scared of Garuḍa (Viṣṇu's eagle carrier) and came to Śiva for protection. He sheltered them by adorning them on his body. As nobody else can carry him, he uses a bull as his vehicle, and I, as a bull, bear him."

"Why does he eat Datura and Āk?" asked Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa explained, "While he was helping Pārvatī perform your three-month worship, she had offered all fragrant flowers to Me. As he doesn't take back anything which has once been offered, he adorns only the non-fragrant flowers of datura and the like. He does not keep anything which is wholesome or auspicious for himself."

Lord Shiva's love for the Divine Couple

The devotion of Śiva for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is very intense. It is mentioned in *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa* that Śrī Gargācārya, a disciple of

Lord Śiva, said that he learned the glory of Rādhā's Name from him. Lord Śiva imparted this divine knowledge to him. This nectarine holy stream of knowledge has directly come from Lord Śivā. Only he knows the glory of the name Rādhā. He had preached the same to Śrī Gargācārya, which appears in the *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa* rather than the *Garga-saṁhitā*.

(Br.Vā.Kri.Jā.Khā. 13.107)

On chanting Rādha, the letter 'R' delivers one of all the sins collected over all previous births. Next to 'R' comes 'a' making it 'Ra', which is delivering one from the cycle of birth and death. Every day, our life is diminishing. By chanting 'dh' of Rādha this loss of life stops, 'dh' means to possess. The 'a' after 'dh' has the power to deliver one from *bhāvaroga*, the disease of worldly life.

Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa states this fact very emphatically as follows: When one chants Rādhā's name, all of *samsara*, all woes, all death and even Yama, the god of death, starts trembling.

ādho nām tārī hai śrī rādhā
dhakār āyusho hanimākāro bhava bandhanam

(Br.Vā.Kri.Jā.Khā. 13.107).

It is also stated that one should never imagine that Kṛṣṇa ever left Braja. If Kṛṣṇa doesn't go anywhere outside Braja, then some doubts obviously arise in one's mind: How could the Mathurā-Dvārakā pastime happen?

This is explained here. At the time of Kṛṣṇa's manifestation, Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, Mahāviṣṇu… all of His expansions merged into Kṛṣṇa, Who sent the Nārāyaṇa portion to Dvārakā. This fact is known to very few, that Radhika's Kṛṣṇa doesn't go anywhere outside Braja. He goes to Goloka with Rādhārāṇī. Thus the Brajavāsīs say *hamaro murli waro śyāma*; Kṛṣṇa, the flute holder, is our Lord. We do not recognize any other Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā's name has been highly glorified. All demigods and Gods protect one who chants Rādhā's name; Lord Viṣṇu protects with His *cakra*, Indrā with *vajra*, and Mahādeva with His *triśul*. In Gopāl-sahasra-nāma, Mahādeva has explained this truth in detail. Also, in Rādhā-kripa-katākṣa *stotra*, which is a part of Urdhvamanya Tantra Śiva-Gauri Samvada, an authentic scripture of great repute, Mahādeva has preached the same to Bhāgavatī Durgā.

It is so mentioned in this text:

chakram chakri shul madāya shuli pāsham pāshi vajra mādāya vajrī
dhavantygre prushthato bahya tashcha rādhā rādhā vādino rakshanāya

There are millions of Viṣṇus and millions of Their celestial abodes, Mahā Vaikuṇṭha, Śvetā Vaikuṇṭha, Śvetādvipa, Rāma Vaikuṇṭha…

All the Padmaja Lakṣmīs worship Rādhārāṇī. Himarija means infinite Pārvatīs… Pulomaja means infinite Indrānīs… Viranchija means infinite Sarasvatīs… All of them worship Rādhārāṇī. At Rādhārāṇī's lotus feet reside infinite prosperities. Such is Mahādeva's belief in Rādhā's worship.

anant koti viṣṇu-loka-namrapadmajārcite.
apār siddhi vruddhi dīgdh sat padānguli nakhe
(*Rādhā-kripa-katākṣa stotram*)

Besides this, Mahādeva brought to light the glory of *punyaka vrata* (thee month vow) for the worship of Rādhā. Devī Pārvatī performed this worship for the satisfaction and happiness of Śiva, where the Sanat-kumāras became the priests.

As *dakṣiṇa*, they demanded Mahādeva from Pārvatī, which she denied. As it is considered inauspicious to deny *dakṣiṇa* to the priest, all the demigods persuaded her to agree and give away Mahādeva to the Sanat-kumāras and also suggested that she may take back Mahādeva by donating a corresponding number of cows instead. The Sanat-kumāras did not want to return Mahādeva. They said, "We don't agree to this exchange, we want to live in the divine association of Śiva forever." On listening to such adamant words of the Sanat-kumāras, Pārvatī became so dismayed that she wished to shed her body.

Suddenly, in response to Pārvatī's ardent prayer, a ball of divine radiance appeared, from which Kṛṣṇa revealed to her His transcendental form. As she was seeing that divine form, she asked for a boon to beget a son like Him and the Lord instantly granted her desire.

Lord Kṛṣṇa in that resplendent form granted boons to all demigods and goddesses present there. Later, on the advice of all, the Sanat-kumāras returned Śiva to Pārvatī and in due time, Lord Kṛṣṇa came to Pārvatī as her son Gaṇeśa.

Rudravana

Prayer Mantra for Rudravana

tapah samādhi sambhuta rudra siddhi pradāyine
namo rudra vanā khyāya pari purna kalātmane

"O Rudravana! Born of penance and meditation. O Rudra! To you, who bestows all perfection and in who resides all virtues, we prostrate unto thee."

Rudravana and Kedarnath are the same. One should go to Mahā Rudravana on Kṛṣṇa *dvādasi*, the 12th day of the month of Vaiśākha, the 12th day of descending moon in April.

Prayer Mantra for Gadadhar Kuṇḍa

gadadhar vibhusa kshadra drartharvara dāyine
tirthraja namastubhyam gadadhar samāhyā.

"O Gadhādhara! King of all pilgrimages who has bestowed a boon to Rudra himself. We offered our obeisances to you."



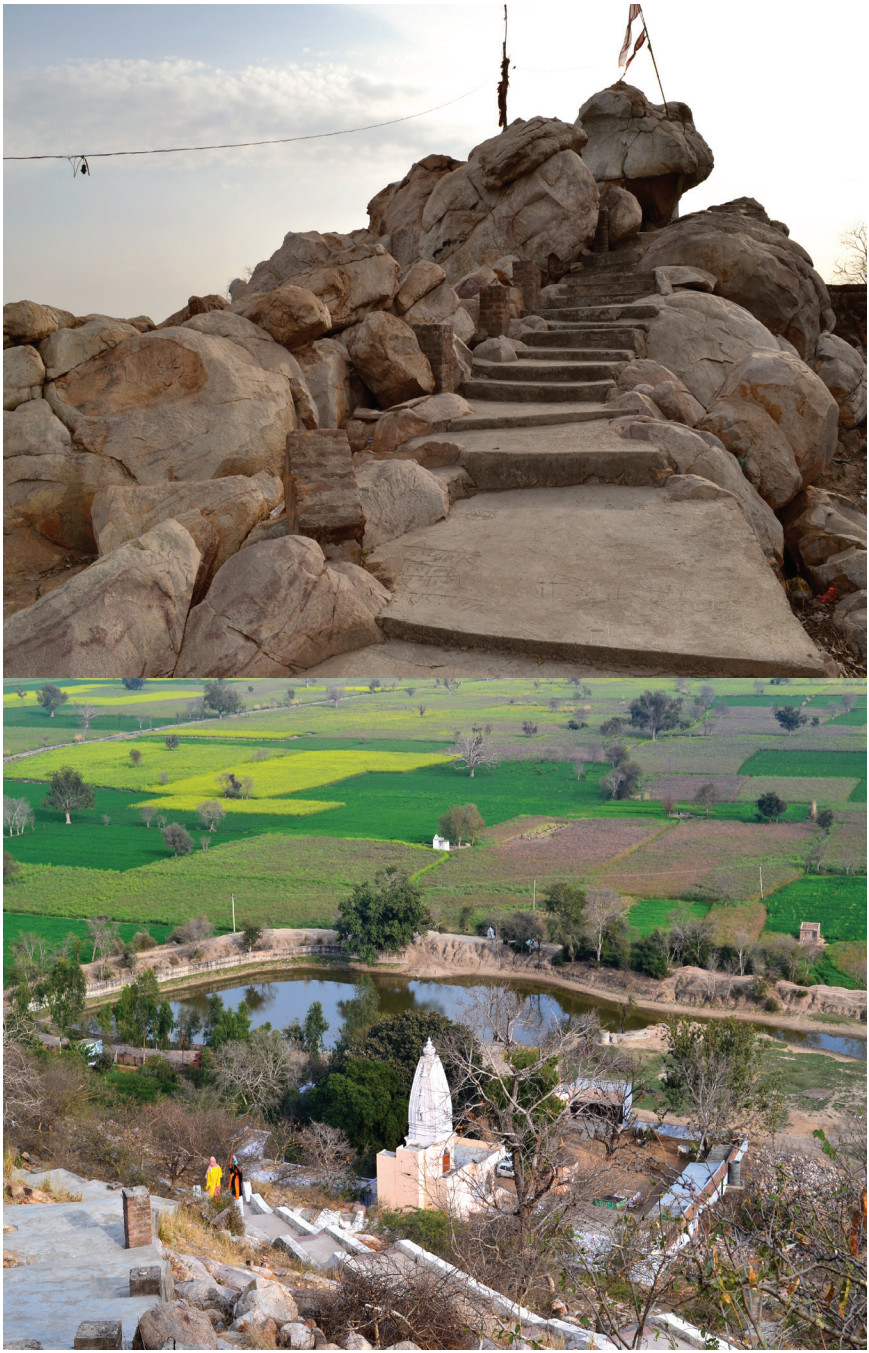
Kedarnath cave



Top - Kedarnath Gufa. Below - Kedarnath NandiJi(



Top - Kedarnath temple and Sheshnaag. Below - Garud Shila



Top - Kedarnath temple. Below - Kedarnath - Gauri kunda

Chapter 72
Kāmyavana, Kāman

In the western part of Braja is Kāmyavana, an area encompassing most of the Holy amusement places of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. To this day it is still a massive area of attractive forests, ponds, lakes, and various mountains with plentiful cool caves. Kāmavana is the fourth forest among the twelve famous forests of Braja.

A proverb is famous for this land in Braja:

kāmavana jaye te kama ban jāt hai

By going to Kāmavana, all works are accomplished. *Kāma* means desire. This place fulfills all of our desires including the desire to attain Kṛṣṇa. The divine love existing between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa has been displayed here.

In Ādi Varaha Puraṇa 153.37

chaturtha kamyaka vanam vanānām vana mutam
tatra gatvā naro devi mama loke mahiyate

The importance of Kāmyavana becomes clear with the fact that Kṛṣṇa fulfilled His parents' desire of visiting all holy places of Bhārata-varṣa, by invoking all-important pilgrimage sites in Kāmyavana like Ādi Badri, Kedarnath, Prayāga, Gaya, Laṅka Rameśvara, and Kāśi, etc., which even today are strongholds of immeasurable faith for the devotees. The periphery of Kāmyavana is 21 kilometers. According to *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 84 ponds, 84 pilgrimages, 84 temples, and 84 pillars exist in this area. The famous presiding deities of Braja, namely Śrī Rādhā-Govind, Śrī Rādhā-

gopīnath, Śrī Rādhā-Madan-Mohan, Śrī Rādhā-Damodar, and Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, are present here. Śrī Govinddeva also halted here for a few days while going to Jaipur from Braja during Aurangzeb's onslaught.

Vṛndādevī, after coming to Kāmyavana, never left this place. Besides this, in the MahāBhārata era, the Pāṇḍavas spent many days in Kāmyavana while in exile. There exist many places with Pāṇḍava names like Dharam-kuṇḍa, Bhīma-kuṇḍa, Pancha Tīrtha Yajña-kuṇḍa, and Dharmarāja's throne.

In the village Angrawali on the edge of a hill, a place named after Hiḍimbī, Bhīma's wife, also exists. The proof of the visits by many of the Mahābhārata characters to Braja can be found in places like Subhadrā Kuṇḍa in Rankuvanā. Kṛṣṇa's sister and Arjuna's wife, Subhadrā, came here, thus a pond is named after her. Bhīṣma's glorification of Braja to Mahārāj Pandu is mentioned in the *Garga-saṁhitā* Vṛndāvana khāṇḍā. Pāṇḍava Gaṅgā is situated between Kokilāvana and Bathain. There is Panduvana in Hodal and Karṇa visited Patravana where a pond bearing his name exists. The Pāṇḍavas certainly had a great devotion to the magnificent land of Braja. Even the wife of the Pāṇḍava, Draupadī, did not call the Nārāyaṇa of Lakṣmī but remembered the Beloved of the gopīs, Govind. In this way, Braja remained very dear to the Pāṇḍavas.

Mahābhārata-sabha(dhyut) parva 68.41-42-43

govindadwarka vasin, kṛṣṇa gopījana priya
kaurave pari bhutam mam kim na janasi keshav
he nāth he ramā natha braja nātharti nāshan
kauravarna vamagnā mamu ddrasva janārdana
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa mahayogina vishvatman vishva bhavana
prapannam pāhi govinda kurumadhye vasidatim

The *gopīs*, from many regions, who could not fulfill their wish to attain God in the Rāma- avatāra era, received the fulfillment of their desires in this land by attaining Kṛṣṇa's association. Kāmyavana, also popularly known as Ādi Vṛndāvana, although having mostly preserved its ancient magnificence, due to having gone through the nefarious, dreadful, and materialistic phases of Kali-yuga, was losing its cultural and spiritual heritage. Due to the constant efforts of His Holiness Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj, an incarnation for

elevating the consciousness of the present atheistic generation, this place has gained a new lease on life.

Mahārāj has succeeded in giving protection to many ponds, forests, and hills of this region. The miners had almost destroyed the hills like Indrāsena. However, 5,232 hectares of land have been secured from the hand of the greedy tycoons after a tough legal fight.

Besides this, through the medium of *prabhat-pheris*, morning processions of the congregational chanting of the Holy Name (Harinama sankirtan), and the glorification of the holy *dhāma*, a divine consciousness has arisen in thousands of villages among the general populace. Now devotees can see the Holy land of Braja in its restored glory, which otherwise was almost lost.

On this vast tract of land spreading over the hills, starting from Barṣāṇa, many of the Lord's pastimes have manifested. Rāsa, Mahā-rāsa, and Chak pastimes and the game of hide-and-seek. Who can sing the glories of such a holy land? However, only a brief description of some of the places is presented here.

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana at Vimal Kuṇḍa

vaimalya rupīne tubhyam namaste jal shayine
keshvāya namastubhyam tirthraja namostute

"O Keśava! You possessor of the purest character, in a most gigantic form You sleep over water, we pay our obeisances unto thee. O Supreme pilgrimage, we prostrate unto You also."

First amongst the supreme pilgrimage is Vimala-kuṇḍa It is said that once upon a time, all the pilgrimages of this world visited Braja, but the Holy place of Puṣkara remained absent.

Since Kāmyavana was one of Kṛṣṇa's favorite spots, He did not appreciate Puṣkara's absence. Kṛṣṇa invoked Yogamāyā and a stream of clear water erupted from the earth. A lovely woman appeared from that stream and as she pleased Kṛṣṇa with her elegant and soft behavior, He named her Vimala and granted her a boon that this newly created water body would be known by her name as Vimala-kuṇḍa

Prayer Mantra for Vimal kuṇḍa

vimalasya cha kuṇḍe tu sarva pāpei pramuchyate
yastatra muchchate prananmama lokam sa gachchhati
(Ā.Va.Pu. 153.38)

He also told her that the fruit of bathing in this pond would be seven times greater than that of Puṣkarā. On the banks of this pond, many great saints took shelter for the attainment of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

Chapter 5-6 of *Mādhurya-kāṇḍa* of the *Garga-saṁhitā* speaks about Vimala Kuṇḍā. In Sindhu state, which is now in Pakistan, before the appearance of Kṛṣṇa on this earth planet, a great Vaisnava named king Vimala lived and ruled over a city called Champakā. Although now, due to the effect of Kali-yuga, all devotion has been lost in that region. Having 6,000 queens but no children, he was thus grim and unhappy.

Ṛṣi Yājñavalkya consoled him by saying that, although a son was not destined, he will beget many daughters, and 115 years later would be offering them to Kṛṣṇa after His advent in Mathurā. As the Lord will bear distinctive marks on His chest, he would be able to recognize Him. To offer Him his daughters would deliver him of all types of debts and lead His way to the Eternal Abode.

King Vimala thus arrived in Mathurā in search of Kṛṣṇa, but as people were terrified under Kaṁsa's cruel rule, none would dare to utter anything. Going through Vṛndāvana, the king, coming across a blue-boy with the predicted marks on His chest, but only having two arms instead of four, became quite puzzled.

Also, fortunately coming across Bhīṣma, who was passing through that region on a victory-sprī, he learned in detail about the story of Kṛṣṇa's advent. He sent a messenger to Gokula with a request to Kṛṣṇa to accept His thousands of daughters in marriage.

On the king's invitation, Kṛṣṇa came to meet him. On seeing Him, all his daughters became enamored. King Vimala, offering his daughters and also his entire kingdom to the Lord as a wedding gift, after performing His prescribed duty, shed His mortal body, and proceeded to the Lord's Eternal Abode. Kṛṣṇa brought all His brides to Braja and pleased them all.

Tears of joy rolled down their cheeks, so much so, that a pond was created, which later was known as Vimala-kuṇḍa The women of Ayodhya who were strongly attracted towards Śrī Rāma and could not attain Him in

that life, became the daughters of King Vimala and Kṛṣṇa accepted them as His wives.

Charan Pahādi

Prayer Mantra for Viṣṇupād Chinha Sthala

viṣṇu pād talotkirna chinha ramyang bhumaye
namaste vishva rupāya kalākanta namostute

"O magnificent land, born of the mark of Viṣṇu's foot, obeisances unto thee. Thou art the manifestation of the universal form, so artistically and pleasantly decorated."

There are many *charan paharis* in Braja. Once, Kṛṣṇa hid Himself in Luc-luc-kuṇḍa and remained under the water for quite a long time. Then suddenly He appeared in the west on the nearby hilltop and started playing a charming melody on His flute. That transcendental music, besides captivating the hearts of the Brajavāsīs, even melted the rocks and Kṛṣṇa's feet were embedded on that mountaintop.

The gopīs, following the sound of the flute, found Kṛṣṇa on that hilltop. In the *rāsa*-dance of Kāmyavana, the music of Kṛṣṇa's flute was so magical that the Braja gopīs lost consciousness and fainted; the angels of heaven, flying in their flower airplanes, were so aroused that their waist-belts deliberately loosened. That divine melody created a magical spell affecting all the living moving entities and the non-moving ones. The rivers stopped flowing and rocks started melting. Vṛndāvana dāsa has beautifully woven the magnificent imagery of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa standing on this hilltop. This significant place of pastimes was under threat, and only with a strong and timely intervention of Mān Mandir Seva Sansthan was this sacred place protected and preserved.

Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsjī narrated an amazing vision of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Madhav standing here in a beautiful poem.

thāderi mohan charan pahādi
pitamber faharāta pavan basa mukut latak chhavi nyāri
puni kitati ki lali bhali chhavi ta grīva bhuja dāri
jāke rupa rang bas hai vana vana nachat vihāri
unmad madan rahat nishivāsar sanga lalit lalnāri
vṛndāvana hīt vimalkuṇḍa tata keli vimala vistāri

The magnificent and all-atractive Śrī Śyāmasundar is standing atop of Charan pahadi (the name of the mountain bearing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's footprint). He wears a beautiful crown with His brilliant yellow dhoti fluttering in the breeze. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is also there with Her arms around Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who then dances for Her pleasure. Priya Ji and Pritam Ji (Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa) remain together in pastimes of love served with great reverence and affection by the Braja gopīs.

Vṛndāvana dāsa recites, "In Kamavana near Vimalkuṇḍa, Śrī Śyāmasundar revels in loving pastimes with the gopīs."

Setubandha

An urge to visit Laṅkā Setubandha arose amidst the leisure talks between the Brajavāsīs. Kṛṣṇa, conceding to their wish, manifested that entire pastime before them.

The place where this pastime was manifested is known as Setubandhā. The Laṅka which Lord Rāma had approached by crossing over the *setu* (bridge) manifested here, and some marks of the burnt Laṅkā are visible at this place. In the rainy season, when the land is flooded, this resembles an appearance of a sea, and the remnants of Laṅkā can be seen amidst the water.

According to Braja Bhakti Vilāsa

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana Iin Setubandha Kuṇḍa

devanam siddhi rupāya setubandha namostute
namaste sakaleshthāya tirthraja namostute.

"O Setubandha! O king of all pilgrimages! Being the perfect abode for the demigods, and bestowing everything auspicious, we offer our respects unto You."

Vihval Kuṇḍa

Hearing the mystical sound of the flute of Kṛṣṇa inviting them, nothing could stop these Braja damsels from following that irresistible

call. Tracing out the direction of the source of that music, crossing dense forests and not able to find their beloved, they became restless. Kṛṣṇa, taking pity, appeared before them at Vihval-kuṇḍa Next to this are Lalitā-kuṇḍa, Viśākhā-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kuṇḍa, Balbhadra-kuṇḍa, Mān-kuṇḍa, and Mohini-kuṇḍa

Kāma-sarovara

All desires find fulfillment on taking a dip in the sacred Kāma-sarovara, which symbolizes the divine love of the Braja gopīs for Kṛṣṇa.

As these most devoted Braja damsels are fully surrendered to Him, their love is divine and beyond worldly conception, without any desire for their sense enjoyment. Their sole desire was only to please Him and their every action was aimed only at giving Him joy. Kṛṣṇa, on account of their pure selfless love, feels eternally indebted towards them.

(Skā.Pu.Mā.Khā.)

tatra kām saro rajan! gopīka ramaṇam sarah
tatra tīrtha sahastrāni saransi cha pruthak pruthak.

Vrindādevī

Vṛndādevi, first concealing herself in Vṛndāvana, was brought by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī from Brahmā-kuṇḍa. He worshiped her on the left side of Śrī Govinddeva. As Govinddevajī was taken away from Braja, Vṛndādevi, accompanying Him till Kāmavana, revealed her wish to the priest in a dream, thus, she stopped at Kāmavana and Govinddevajī proceeded to Jaipur.

In Viṣṇu Yāmala

Prayer Mantra for Vrindanvita Govindaloka

vrinda devi sametāya govindāya namo namah
mukti rupāya krsnāya vāsudevāya keline

"We prostrate to Govinda and Vṛndādevi. O Kṛṣṇa! O Vāsudeva! Thou art the embodiment of liberation and all divine and sublime pastimes. Obeisances unto thee!"

Śrī Kuṇḍa

Lord Śiva disclosed the secret of Rādhā's name to Mahāśakti, Durgā, at Śrī Kuṇḍa and also explained in detail the methodology for performance of the thee month vow for worshiping Rādhārāṇī.

First, Kṛṣṇa, performed Rādhā's worship in a celebrated way, adorned Himself with a Rādhā *kavaca* (protecting armor) over His neck and right limb. After this, the worship of Rādhā was performed by Dharma, Brahmā. Śiva, Vāsuki, Sun, Moon… In that era, brāhmaṇa Sutapā initiated Emperor Suyajña into Rādhā's worship.

The Worship of Śrī Rādhā by King Suyajña

Śiva, "Devī, first amongst the fourteen Manus is Svāyambhuvā. The son of Svāyambhuva was Uttānapāda. His son was Dhruva and Dhruva's son was Utkalā. Once, at Puṣkara, Utkala executed 1,000 *rājasūya* sacrifices, which were performed by kings to celebrate their sovereignty over the whole world, during which they gave away great charity. Since he performed the sacrifices beautifully, Brahmājī gave him the title Suyajña in the demigod's assembly. Daily, he would give away millions of cows and food to 100 thousand households.

During the whole sacrifice, 36 trillion brāhmaṇas were appropriately served food. After the sacrifice, all the demigods had gathered and were sitting with the king.

Vasu, Indra, Candra, and Nārada… all were present there. A brahmin named Sutapā, of Kaśyapa lineage, the son of Virūpa, and a disciple of Śiva, arrived in that meeting. The king welcomed him with folded hands, but, immersed in the greatest joy, forgot to get up from His seat.

The brahmin, feeling offended, cursed the king, "You fool! Suffer from leprosy!" Saying so, he walked away. The king, frightened, ran behind him. Viśvāmitra, Kaśyapa, Kapila, Kardama, Dakṣa, Balkhilya, Jaigīshavya, Jamadagni, Garga, Devala, Āsuri, Shakalya, Atri, Agastya, Chyavana, Bhardvaja, Vālmīki, Aurava, Parāśara, Nara-Nārāyaṇa, Sanakadi, Pānini, Jajali, Kanada, Kanva, Mārkeṇḍeya, Lomesh, Aṅgira Bhrigu, Durvāsā Gautama, Bṛhaspati, Vasiṣṭha, Marīci, Pulaha, and Pulastya; all followed him and with caution tried to convince the brahmin, as King Suyajña pleaded for forgiveness.

Convinced, Sutapā deliberated over a very potent method for the deliverance from the curse. He stated that the King should partake of a devoted brahmin's foot wash daily, while simultaneously worshiping Rādhārāṇī for a thousand years. As a result, he would then attain the abode of Goloka. For hundred celestial years, King Suyajña worshiped Rādhā by chanting the six-letter mantra; *om śrī radhya svahā*. The king obtained the resplendent vision of the most merciful Rādha who, arriving on a celestial vehicle, took him along to Goloka, to Kṛṣṇa.

Pārvatī raised a query, "Śambhu! Why did King Suyajña worship Rādhā instead of Kṛṣṇa?" Śambhu replied, "Devī! King Suyajña had asked Sutapā brāhmaṇa whom he should worship to attain Goloka." Sutapa thus explained, "Your access to Goloka may take some time if you worship Kṛṣṇa, but by worshiping Rādha who is the Lord's internal potency, you will instantly attain Goloka. Thus, the worship of Rādhā is supreme. As a result of Her worship, the glory of King Suyajña attained the greatest heights, greater than even His illustrious father Dhruvā. All the Maharishis, scholars in vedas, scriptures came in his yajna who even didn't come in yajnas performed by Dhruvā Maharaj .

Beholding the sublime magnificence of Rādha Śrī Kuṇḍa is unparalleled. Ācārya Śrīman Vallabha Mahāprabhu's sitting place is situated there. The Vaiṣṇavas, followers of the Śrī Vallabha community, always apply the dust of this place to their foreheads because of Rādhā's appearance here. The main spiritual focus of all the eight most famous poets in their line, especially towards the end of their lives before the shedding of their mortal bodies, was to remember the playful pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. As Kumbhandāsjī was ready to leave for the Eternal Abode, Śrī Gosainjī asked, "Where is your mind focused?" He replied that His mind was fixed on the pastimes of Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Rasikanī ras mean rahat gadee /
Kanak beli vṛuṣhabhānu nandinī shyām tamāl chadee //
Viharat lāl sanga rādhā ke kone bhāanti gadee /
'kumbhanadāsa' lāl giraghar sanga rati-ras keli badee //

The ever-joyful Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī remains always immersed in love of the ever-blissful Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Her complexion is like molten gold in contrast to His dark complexion, which resembles a Tamala tree. Like

a golden branch surrounding a dark tree, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī desires to always embrace Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Also, towards the end of Śrī Suradāsjī's journey in this world, on Gosainjī's inquiry, he replied that he was visualizing Radhika and Kṛṣṇa, performing amusing pastimes.

Bali-bali hoan kuanvare rādhikā nand suvan jāsoan rati mānī /
Ve ati chatur tum chatur shiromaṇi, prīti karī kese rahat hai chhānī //
Ve jū dharat tan kanak pīta-paṭ so to sab terī gati ṭhānī /
Te puni shyām sahaj ve shobhā ambaramis apane ur ānī //
Pulakit aanga abahian hai āyo nirakhi rūp nij deh sayānī /
Sūr sujān sakhī ke būze prem prakāsh bhayo vihasānī //

Śrī Paramānandadāsjī's meditation at the end was like this; he was visualizing Rādhā applying tilaka on her forehead for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa.

Rādhe baithi tilak savārati /
Mṛuganenī kusumāyudh ke ḍaru subhag nanda sut rūp vichārati /
Darapan hāth siangār banāvati bāsara-jām jugutiyoan ḍārati /
Antar prīti shyāmasundar so pratham samāgama-keli sambhārati /
Bāsar gat rajanī braj āvat milat lāl govardhanadhārī /
'paramānanda' swāmī ke sangam rati-rasa-magan mudit bajanāri /

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī applies tilaka to Her forehead while meditating on the all-opulent ever-youthful and effulgent Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She dresses and adorns Herself thinking about the wonderful activities of Nandanandana. She knows how much Śrī Kṛṣṇa loves Her and wants to be with Her. She is planning to meet Giridhari, the One who controls Her heart, in the evening.

Śrī Parmānanda dasa declares: All the gopīs of Braja rejoice in ecstasy when Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī meets with Śrī Śyāmasundar.

Luc-luc Kuṇḍa

The name is self-explanatory, as this is the place of hide-and-seek.

gaccha devi vrajaṁ bhadre Gopa-gobhir alaṅkṛtam
rohiṇī vasudevasya bhāryāste nanda-gokule
anyāś ca kaṁsa-saṁvignā vivareṣu vasanti hi

"The Lord ordered Yoga-māyā, "O My potency, who bestow good fortune upon all living entities, go to Vraja, where there live many cowherd men and their wives. In that very beautiful land, where many cows reside, Rohiṇī, the wife of Vasudeva, is living at the home of Nanda Mahārājā. Other wives of Vasudeva are also living there incognito because of fear of Kaṁsā. Please go there." (ŚB. 10.2.7)

The entire land of Braja is filled with the sweet pastimes of friendly gopas and gopīs, and Luc-luc-kuṇḍa is a place where Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes take place. Gopal has no dearth of friends. Vishāla, Vrishabha, Devaprastha… all these younger friends are always ready to obey. Śrīdāma Sudāma Toke, Bhadrasena… are His equals. Subala, Arjuna, Vasant, Ujjawal… all these are His most intimate well-wishers. Pushpank, Madhumaṅgala, Hans… are His brahmin friends, and all have a very jovial nature. Bhāratī, Kedar… is the most excellent conversationalists, constantly entertaining Him.

kvacid bilvaiḥ kvacit kumbhaiḥ
kvacāmalaka-muṣṭibhiḥ
aspṛśya-netra-bandhādyaiḥ
kvacin mṛga-khagehayā

"Sometimes the cowherd boys would play with bilva or kumbha fruits, and sometimes with handfuls of āmalaka fruits. At other times they would play the games of trying to touch one another or of trying to identify somebody while one is blindfolded, and sometimes they would imitate animals and birds." (ŚB. 10.18.14)

All of them derive amusement either by throwing wood-apple fruit at one another or by flicking nutmeg or gooseberries at each other. However, as hide-and-seek is their favorite game, they can play it the whole day! They are so expert at playing this game that if they hide in some desolate place, no one, not even the demigods, can find them. But, these friends don't play this game with the champions Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and if ever they do so they accept defeat before beginning the game.

The reason is that the elongated, dilated eyes of Rādhā do not get covered completely with anyone's tiny palms. She can see from the

corners of Her eyes. They play all kinds of interesting games at Luc-luc-kuṇḍa and rejoice in making fun of each other. Look, your face has a nose like… What about yours… Laughing and singing, they would climb over the branches of the trees, from which they would so expertly swing, and at that time, they would swing from each other's limbs also. At other times they would play the game of king and courtiers, one posing to be the king, passing on orders to the others.

kvacic ca dardura-plāvair
vividhair upahāsakaiḥ
kadācit syandolikayā
karhicin nṛpa-ceṣṭayā

"They would sometimes jump around like frogs, sometimes play various jokes, sometimes enjoy swinging with the help of boughs of trees, and sometimes imitate monarchs." (ŚB. 10.18.15)

It is not only Luc-luc-kuṇḍa, but in this land, many significant ponds have been acquired by corrupt officials and sold out to the people. Śrī Mān Mandir Seva Sansthān is trying its best to restore such lands and particularly this site. Some efforts are going on to reclaim this place of the Lord's pastimes of hide-and-seek and other playful sweet pastimes.

Skhalini Śilā
In Puraṇa Samuchchaya

Prayer Mantra for Skhalini Śīlā

kṛṣṇa gopal rupāya lalitā vallabhāya cha
namo gopī bhi ramyāya śīlā tīrtha khalāya cha

"O lovely place, so dear to Lalitājī, drawing similarity with Kṛṣṇa Gopal's form, O Skhalini Śila obeisances unto thee."

uvāha kṛṣṇo bhagavān
śrīdāmānaṁ parājitaḥ
vṛṣabhaṁ bhadrasenas tu
pralambo rohiṇī-sutam

"Defeated, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa carried Śrīdāmā. Bhadrasena carried Vṛṣabha, and Pralamba carried Balarāma, the son of Rohiṇī." (ŚB. 10.18.24)

On this rock, Kṛṣṇa, sliding with His friends, the Gopas, would play. When losing, at times he would become a horse. Although He is Omnipotent, He plays the role of a loser in the game with them, which never happens in Vaikuṇṭha or during pastimes of any other incarnation.

Bhojan Thali

Prayer Mantra for the Place of Bhojan Thali

ashta varsha svarupādhya kṛṣṇa panit lankita
namostu bhojan sthala sarvadā bhoga vardhanā.

"O Bhojan-thalī, marked with the impression of eight-year-old Kṛṣṇa's palm, we offer our obeisances unto you."

"Rāmat van Dulhin naval Bihari"

In the divine forest of Vṛndāvana, the bride, Śrīmati Rādhārani is with Śrī Navabhari (Śrī Kṛṣṇa-the Supreme Personality of Godhead). Nearby, Lālitā sakhī brought a variety of foodstuffs on a stone plate she had carefully washed. When Śrī Śyāmasundar began tasting the food, Tuṅgavidyā gopī entertained the divine couple by joking and saying funny things for Their entertainment. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī sometimes hesitates to eat due to shyness so Śrī Kṛṣṇa lovingly feeds Her with His own hand. He sometimes even takes Her remnants.

After eating and washing their hands in a nearby pond, both are satisfied.

Śrī Vṛndāvana dasa recites, "Meditating on these pastimes and by Their mercy, our love and devotion increases."

kecit puṣpair dalaiḥ kecit
pallavair aṅkuraiḥ phalaiḥ
śigbhis tvagbhir dṛṣadbhiś ca
bubhujuḥ kṛta-bhājanāḥ

"Among the cowherd boys, some placed their lunch on flowers, some on leaves, fruits, or bunches of leaves. Some actually put their lunch in their baskets, some on the bark of trees and some on rocks. This is what the children imagined to be their plates as they ate their lunch." (ŚB. 10.13.9)

The *chhak* (lunchtime) pastime happened here. Not only with the gopas (*gwāl bāl*) at this location, but Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa have also eaten meals together here. As They were washing this rock, Tuṅgavidyā lightly joked with Them. As Rādhā is so shy that she doesn't take a bite for Herself, Kṛṣṇa puts a bite in Her mouth. As She speaks very little out of shyness, a lot of canvassing needs to be done to feed Her. "O Rādhā! Take a little sweet rice, please take a little of this or that." A lake of crystal clear water is also here. This is Kṛṣṇa's pastime in Bhojan Thāli, which is recognized by the presence of the plates used by Kṛṣṇa for eating (*bhojan* means meals).

Kāmeśvara Mahādeva

Why the name Kāmeśvara? Though He bears many names; Nīlakaṇṭha, Chandramauli, Gaṅgādhara, Śambhu, Sankara… the name Kāmeśvara has a special significance. Pārvatī received many special boons from Śiva, which were fulfilled in Kāmavana, hence the name Kāmeśvarā. The most special boon was the attainment of Kṛṣṇa.

Lakṣmījī has Said

sa vai patiḥ syād akutobhayaḥ svayaṁ
samantataḥ pāti bhayāturaṁ janam
sa eka evetarathā mitho bhayaṁ
naivātmalābhād adhi manyate param

"He alone who is never afraid but who, on the contrary, gives complete shelter to all fearful persons can actually become a husband and protector. Therefore, my Lord, You are the only husband who account no other joy higher than realization of Your own blissful nature. Therefore persons learned in all Vedic literature accept only Your Lordship as everyone's master, and they think no one else is a better husband and protector than You." (ŚB. 5.18.20)

As per the *Brahmā Vaivarta Purāṇa*, this story was narrated by Lord Nārāyaṇa to Nārada. Once, Pārvatī, wanting to know about the essence of Rādha, was listening to Lord Śiva's narration of the essence of *rāsa* to Sanat Kumāra, who was also listening with devotion. Here, Pārvatī presented her eagerness to know in-depth about the attributes of Rādhā.

Previously, Śiva had resisted disclosing this secret, so this time she posed her query once again but with a little hesitation, "Vyāsa has sung the glory of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the śrutis; kindly elaborate on that for our benefit." After listening to her query, Śaṅkara, closing His eyes, prayed to Kṛṣṇa, "O Lord! Pārvatī has asked for a very secret answer. Earlier, You stopped me from disclosing this secret, what should I do now?"

Kṛṣṇa, affectionately granting His permission, replied, "Śambhu, as she was in the form of Sati, I knew that she would shed her physical body. Now, having attained the form of Pārvatī, which is eternal, you may disclose this secret knowledge to her without fear." Śiva told her, "This secret is only known to me, Śeṣa, Brahmā and Sanat Kumāra, no one else is aware of this supreme knowledge. O Durgey! Listen with rapt attention. Why is Rādhārāṇī called Rādha? 'Rā' means *rāsa* and 'dhā' means to run, implying She is running towards Kṛṣṇa, therefore, running with great speed towards Kṛṣṇa. Rādha, being Kṛṣṇa's pleasure potency, is His presiding deity."

"Without Rādhā's mercy, no spiritual attainment is possible. By chanting the letter 'Rā' one certainly attains salvation. On chanting 'dhā' one essentially attains Kṛṣṇa. Meaning that one first attains salvation and then the shelter of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who behold each other as worshiped and worshiper. Mahālakṣmī takes refuge of Them."

gopya ūcuḥ
jayati te 'dhikaṁ janmanā vrajaḥ
śrayata indirā śaśvad atra hi
dayita dṛśyatāṁ dikṣu tāvakās
tvayi dhṛtāsavas tvāṁ vicinvate
(ŚB. 10.31.1)

dhanyā aho amī ālyo
govindāṅghry-abja-reṇavaḥ
yān brahmeśau ramā devī
dadhur mūrdhny agha-nuttaye
(ŚB. 10.30.29)

Then Śiva said, "Rādhā-vallabha is the absolute Lord, you must worship Him." This was the fulfillment of her first wish; her second wish was to beget a son. After their wedding, they begot their first son, Kārtikeyā. Once, as Śambhu and Durgā were enjoying together, the demigods, for some reason, tried to stop them.

At that time, a drop of Śiva's semen fell on the soil, as the Earth was not able to bear it, she threw it into the fire; but even Agni could not hold it and instantly threw it onto the *krittikās* (grasses). Her son, who was born of *krittikās*, bore the name Kārtikeyā.

Pārvatī was not satisfied with this and thus asked for another son. Kāmeśvara, then suggesting that she performed the Puṇyaka-vrata, said, "You must perform Puṇyaka-vrata. By following this vrata, Manu begot sons like Priyavrata and Uttānapāda and later Dhruva came in their lineage. Devahūti begot Kapila, Aditi obtained Vāmana, Kuvera attained Nalkuber, Suryā was graced by Manu's birth, the moon appeared from Atri, and Aṅgirā begot Bṛhaspati.

Pārvatī instantly agreed to perform this worshipful vow, which continued for one full year. All the demigods participated in this worship. Lord Viṣṇu said, "Śambhu! This worship is superior to thousands of *rājasūya* sacrifices and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself will become your son, Gaṇeśa."

Dharma is so powerful! In fulfillment of this auspicious sacrifice, after taking bath, the Sanat Kumāras demanded Śiva as *dakṣiṇa* from Pārvatī. Taken aback, Pārvatī almost fainted; she then offered them a hundred thousand cows instead, but the Sanat Kumāras were not in the mood to accept anything else. Utterly dismayed, she did not want to remain alive anymore and prepared herself to end her life at that very moment.

Suddenly, Kṛṣṇa appeared in the form of Gaṇeśa. As she saw this small child lying on her bed, His charms mesmerized her. This lovely child was putting the luster of a million moons to shame, so resplendently graceful was He. Being none other than Kṛṣṇa, He is supreme amongst the demigods and is thus worshiped first.

Śiva is present as Kāmeśvara, one who fulfills our desires. The two auspicious desires of Ādi Śakti, who herself fulfills other's desires, received fulfillment through Lord Mahādeva.

Prayer Mantra for Kāmeshvara Mahādeva

kāmeshvarāya devāya kāmnartha pradayine
mahādevāya te tubhyam Namaste muktido bhava

"O Kāmeśvara! Bestowing auspiciousness and wealth, we offer our obeisances to thee. O Mahādeva! By whose worship, one attains salvation. We prostrate unto thee."

According to Bhavishya Puraṇa

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana at Gayā Kuṇḍa

tārane divyato yādhya dev devanga sambhava
namaste tirthrajāya falgu tīrtha samāhya

"O Tirthraj, the one who is sanctified with divine waters from demigods, the one who can deliver and the one who is famous with name Phalgu, our obeisances to you!"

In Mahābhārata

yagyante pandavah shreshthah snanam chakrar vidhānatah
yudhishthirā dipashchanam panch tīrtha saramsi cha

At end of the *yajña*, the Pāndavas took bath following their ordained rituals. Then five *tīrthas* manifested on their names.

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana in Panchsar Tīrtha

dharma rupa namastubhyam vāyu putra namostute
shakratmaja namastubhyam shchinnayā stanayo namah

"My obeisances to you. O! Dharma putra, Vāyu putra, Indra putra and two Aśvinī-kumāras."

Prayer Mantra for Gomāsur cave

kṛṣṇa krutārth rupāya sakhi rupāya ten amah
mukti gomāsura sthana ghor kalmash nāshana

"My obeisances to you, the destroyer of the sins, one who is absolved by Kṛṣṇa, as a friend."

According to Vāyu Puraṇa

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana in Sita Kuṇḍa

sita snapana ramyāya vishva karma vidhāyine
tirtha raja namastubhyam sarvadā punya vardhanam

"O Tirthraja Sita kuṇḍa, one who is constructed by Viśvakarmā, which is charmed from bathing of Sitajī, and enhancer of the virtues, my obeisances to you."

According to Vāyu Puraṇa

Prayer Mantra for Draupadi and Five Pandavas

dharma putradi rupebhyo pandave bhyo namostute
draupadi sahite bhyastu tapah siddhi swarupīnah

Prayer Mantra for Worshiping Rādhā Vallabha

rādhā vallabh rupāya vishnave braja keline
namah pragalbha kantāya sarvarth sukha dāyine

"O Viṣṇu murti manifested as Rādhā Vallabha, who is always engaged in heart capturing dalliance, always so charming and eloquent bestower of all happiness, I offer my obeisances to you." (*Brahmā Puraṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for Worshiping Gopīnatha

sadā rāsotsava krīda vimalāya krutarthine
gopī nāthāya devāya namaste braja keline
(*Matsya Puraṇa*)

"O gopīnātha, bestower of pure and lovely pleasure in dalliance and dance with gopīs, ever successful, engrossed in and devoted to Braja, I offer my obeisances to you!"

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana at Yaśodā Kuṇḍa

kāma senite tubhyam namāmi vimlātmake
tirtha rupe namastubhyam sarvadā putra vatsale
(*Dhaumya-saṁhitā*)

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana at Paramoksha Kuṇḍa

mokshāya mukti rupāya muktīrtha namostute
namah kaivalya nāthāya sarvadā moksha dāyine
yannaiva mukti mapnoti nanda gopādayo matāh
kuṇḍam mokshābhidham jātah kāma senīvī nirmitam
(Śaunaka Ṛṣi)

Prayer Mantra for Snāna and Ācamana at Mani Karnika Kuṇḍa

nama strī bhuvaneshāya vyapine parmatmane
tirtha raja namastubhyam manikarni namastute
(*Vaman Puraṇa*)

Sahasra Tīrtha-sarovara

The Lord fulfilled the desire to invite all holy places in Kāmyavanā.

Prayer Mantra for Sarovara Tīrtha

sahastra guna punyāya pāvanāya mahātmane
namo sahastra tirthāya nairmalya vara rupīne
(*Brahmānd Puraṇa*)

"O holy sage, who has appeared in the form of the most virtuous Sahasra Tīrtha-sarovara, we offer obeisances unto thee."

atrir vasiṣṭhaś cyavanaḥ śaradvān
ariṣṭanemir bhṛgur aṅgirāś ca
parāśaro gādhi-suto 'tha rāma
utathya indrapramadedhmavāhau
medhātithir devala ārṣṭiṣeṇo
bhāradvājo gautamaḥ pippalādaḥ
maitreya aurvaḥ kavaṣaḥ kumbhayonir
dvaipāyano bhagavān nāradaś ca

From different parts of the universe there arrived great sages like Atri, Cyavana, Śaradvān, "Ariṣṭanemi, Bhṛgu, Vasiṣṭha, Parāśara, Viśvāmitra (son of Gādhi), Aṅgira Paraśurāma, Utathya, Indrapramada, Idhmavāhu, Medhātithi, Devala, Ārṣṭiṣeṇa, Bhāradvāja, Gautama, Pippalāda, Maitreya, Aurva, Kavaṣa, Kumbhayoni, Dvaipāyana and the great personality Nārada." (ŚB. 1.19.9-10)

Bhardvajajī

"O glorious Bhardvaja Muni, whose discourse is the cause of the Rāmayaṇa appearing in this world!"

bhardvaj muni basahi prayāgā
tinnahi rām pada ati anurāgā
tāpas sama dama dayā nidhānā
parmāratha patha param sujānā (Rā.Bā.Kā. 44)

jāgbalik muni param viveki, Bhardwaj rakhe pad teki
(Rā.Bā.Kā. 45)

Prayer Mantra for Bharadvaj-kūpa

tapasā siddhi rupāya sadā dugdha mayāya cha
bhardvāja kurta snana koop tīrtha namostute
(*Bharadvaj Saṁhitā*)

"O Bhardvaja's well, whose waters have become as virtuous as milk with the power of his penances and which was created by his bathing, obeisances unto thee."

Prayer Mantra for Ashram of Pippaladjī

sarvadā mukti rupāya sarva kleshapa hārine
sankat mochanārthaya pippalada darshaye namah
(*Bharadvaj Saṁhitā*)

"O Pipalada Ṛṣi! Son of Dadhīci and Suvarcha, who after that his mother had entered the sacred pyre of her husband was brought up by the banyan trees and who can deliver us from all sorrows, we offer our obeisances to you."

aho dainyam aho kaṣṭaṁ
pārakyaiḥ kṣaṇa-bhaṅguraiḥ
yan nopakuryād asvārthair
martyaḥ sva-jñāti-vigrahaiḥ

"This material body, wealth, sons and other kinsmen do not actually do any good for me, the spirit soul. It is usable only for a short time and may perish at any moment. The body and its possessions, its riches, and relatives, must all be engaged for the benefit of others, or else they will be sources of tribulation and misery." (ŚB. 6.10.10)

Following your father's instruction, you resolved the problems related to the acquisition of the supreme knowledge of these six *ṛṣis* namely Sukesha, son of Ṛṣi Bhardvaja; Satyakam, son of Śivi; Sauryayini, a descendant of Garga; Āshvalayam from Kuśala state; Bhargava from Vidarbha and Kalandhi, the great-grandson of Katya Ṛṣi.





Top - Kameshwar Mahadev. Below - Kedarnath - Kama - Vimal kunda







Top - Indra's eyes and Rameshwarum Setubandh. Below - Kedarnath - Kama - Vimal kunda





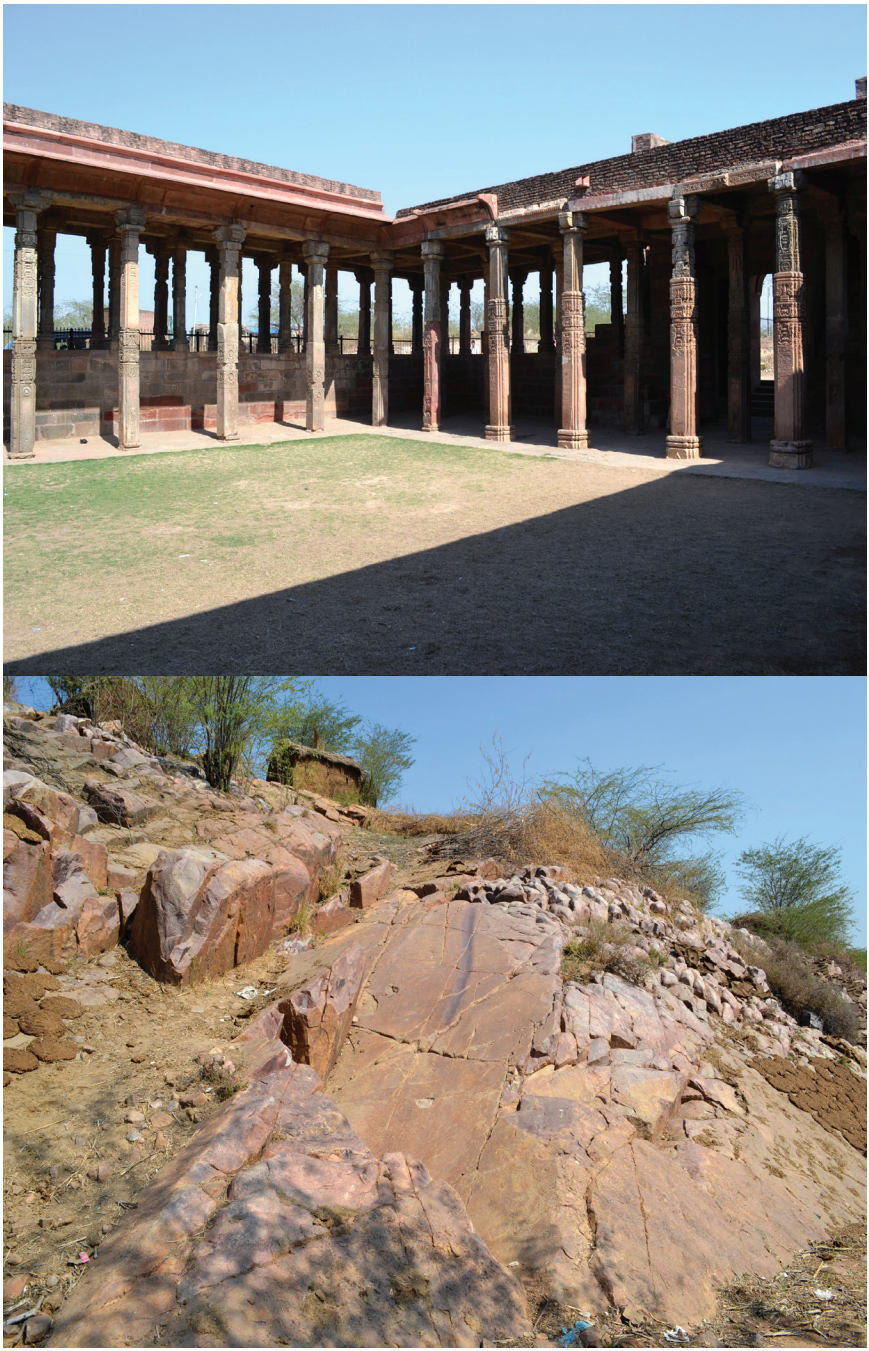
Top - Lanka. Below - Lankas Bridge of stones



Top - Ashokvatika. Below - Hidimba & Bhima Temple



Top - Bhojam Thali. Below - Dahi ka Katora



Top - Chaurasi Khamba. Below - Phisalni Shila



Top - Vyomasur ki Gufa. Below - Yantra





Top - Gayakund. Below - Luk Luk kunda

Chapter 73
Muktivana

Prayer Mantra for Muktivana

muktaye mukti rupāya mukti sanga vanāya te
deva gandharva lokānam mukti dāya namo namah

"O Muktivana! From where our deliverance is assured and as you are bestowing liberation to the demigods and Gandharvas, we offer our obeisances to you!" (*Ādi Puraṇa*)

Prayer Mantra for Madhu Mangal kuṇḍa

Madhu mangal Kuṇḍāya Kṛṣṇa keli vidhāyine
gopī shram vinirdhota pitāambhaya namostute

"O Madhumaṅgala-kuṇḍa, as you are the source of so many of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, relieving the gopīs's fatigue, and filled with yellow water, Obeisance unto you."

Tilakavana

The lovely gopīs decorated Kṛṣṇa as He was applied with *tilaka* by the *apsarā* Mrigawati at this place. Numerous *tilaka* trees were planted and nurtured here, thus Tilakavana enhances our good-fortune. The place where Mrigawati had bathed with the gopīs became popular as Mrigawati-kuṇḍa on the Earth.

Prayer Mantra for Tilakvana

mruga vatya apsara yātrā shringār tilakam karot
gopīnam sukumarinam kṛṣṇa vesha bhidhāyinam

"O Tilakavana! We bow down to thee and the gopīs adorned with tilak."

Prayer Mantra for Tilākvana

śringār tilakāmyastu gopīka bhyo namo namah
vanāya tilakā khyāya vana raja namostute
mriga vati kurtam snānam gopīkabhih samanvitā
yato mrigvati kuṇḍam vikhyātam prithvi tale
(*Bṛhad Gautamiya*)

"Our obeisances to the gopīs with tilak on their foreheads."

Prayer Mantra for Mrigavati kuṇḍa

mrigavati krutarthāya tīrtharāja namostute
tāmra varna payod bhuta brahma hatya di ghātakā.

"This place of pilgrimage was created by Mrigawati, is filled with water having a copper luster and can destroy even the grave sin of killing of a brahmin; to that King of all pilgrimages we pay our obeisances."

Nandero

Village Nandero is located at a distance of 4 km from the Kaman-Satwa road.

Prayer Mantra for Nanda-kūpavana

nanda koop vanāyaiva gopanam vara dāyine
tāpārti haraye tubhyam namastvā alhād vardhine

"O Nanda-kūpavana! As thou art dispelling all woes, providing joy for everyone, and granting boons to the Gopas, we offer our prostrations unto you. O extensive well, built by Nanda and others, as thou art pacifying our thirst, we offer our obeisances unto thee."

Prayer Mantra for Sipping and Bathingin Nanda-Kūpa

ati vistruta kupāya nandādī rachitāya cha
tirtha raja namastubhyam sarvadā tata prashantāye

"The huge *kūpa* which is made by Nanda and others. To the one who can satisfy the quench, I offer my obeisances to you!"

Prayer Mantra for Go Gopal (Go for Gaiya)

go gopal sametāya krsnāya vara dāyine
nana sukhopa veshthāya namah keli swarupīne

"O Kṛṣṇa! Being the embodiment of divine bliss and absolute joy and bestowing Your Grace upon all the cows and cowherds, we pay our obeisances unto You."

Indroli

Prayer Mantra for Indravana

deva gandharva ramyāya namah shakra vanāya te
trelokya moha rupāya sarva kāmārtha dāyine

"O Indravana! As you are giving shelter to the demigods and Gandharvas, enchanting the three worlds, the heavenly planets, the earth, and the hellish planets and fulfilling all our desires, we offer our obeisances unto you."

Prayer Mantra for Devatā kuṇḍa

indra ādi devatā snāna sambhavāya namostute
devatā kuṇḍa tirthāya chirāyuh saukhya dāyine

"O Devata-kuṇḍa! Formed by the bathing of the demigods, we bow down to you."

Kanwara, Karṇavana

Prayer Mantra for Karṇavana

karna vāsāya ramyāya yashah kirti svarupīne
namah karna vanāyaiva punya khyāya vara prada

(Skā.Pu.)

This is also known by the name Kanvavana being the abode of Ṛṣi Kanvā. According to Braja folklore, Kṛṣṇa's ear-piercing-ceremony was conducted here.

Prayer Mantra for Dāna-kuṇḍa

dāsah bhār suvarnadhya kurta dāna swarupīne
namaste dān tirthāya karna dāna samāpnuyāt

"O most wealthy pilgrimage! Possessing abundant gold and granting charity to all, we bow down to you."

Karṇa was known to be extremely charitable. In the Mahābhārata it is a well-known fact that Karṇa gave His earrings, which were his protective armor, to mother Kuntī, although advised by the Sun god not to do so, since it was protecting His life. There are praises for Karṇa's generosity in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

guru-śuśrūṣaṇe jiṣṇuḥ
kṛṣṇaḥ pādāvanejane
pariveṣaṇe drupada-jā
karṇo dāne mahā-manāḥ

"Kṛṣṇa washed everyone's feet, while Draupadī served food, and generous Karṇa gave out the gifts." (ŚB. 10.75.5)

Karṇa's generosity was supreme. This Karṇavana is named after Karṇa, and for His virtue of charity Dān kuṇḍa came into being, doing charity at this place is auspicious.

Kadambakhandi

A vast grove of Kadamba trees called Kadambakhandi is located near the village of Sunehrā. In this Kadamba grove, is the place where Nagajī engaged in his devotional practice. He was such a mighty saint that he would complete the 84 kośa Braja-parikrama circumambulation (240 km) in just one day.

He would attend the *mangala ārti* of Govindadevajī in Vṛndāvana and the śṛṅgāra ārti of Keshav devjī in Mathurā. From there he would reach Barṣāṇā by *rāja-bhoga*; walking through Nandagāon, reaching back to Rādhā-kuṇḍa

As he would never beg from anyone, he would drink milk if provided without asking. Once, for three consecutive days, he did not receive anything. On the third day, Kṛṣṇa Himself came with a bowl of milk in the garb of a small boy and served him with His own hands. Nagajī asked for water and that He denied it. In a dream, Kṛṣṇa told him that He gives only milk and not water; implying that He doesn't provide for worldly pleasures but grants only Divine Nectar.

Once, Nagajī's matted tresses became entangled in a bush. He remained standing there for thee days without food and water, with the firm resolve that the One who has entangled him only He could release him. As Kṛṣṇa came as a small boy for help, Nagajī said, "No, no… the One who has entangled me… only He will disentangle me…"

Kṛṣṇa, "I am Kṛṣṇa." "No, no, You cannot be Kṛṣṇa, You don't have a crown with a peacock feather, earrings or a flute." At that moment Kṛṣṇa became adorned with a crown, earrings, and flute. As Kṛṣṇa moved closer to disentangle His tresses, Nagajī, again stopped Him and said, "Until Rādhārāṇī comes here to prove that You are Her beloved, I won't let You touch me."

Instantly, Rādhārāṇī appeared as a witness to prove Kṛṣṇa's identity. Then, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together released His tresses from the thorny bush. Kṛṣṇa hugged him tightly, praising his devotion and unwavering love for Rādhārāṇī. Later, he became known as Chatur Nagajī (*chatur* means clever).

Concluding the Journey

This is the same Brajarāja for which Lord Nārāyaṇa had told Lakṣmījī, "O dear, even for us this soil is hard to attain."

murli dhun vaikunth gayii.
nārāyan kamla suni dampati ati ruchi hridaya bhaii

We have attained this soil with Rādhārāṇī's grace.

yad rādhā-pada-kinkari-krita-hridam samyag bhaved gocaram
dhyeyam naiva kadapi yad dhridi vina tasyah kripa-sparshatah
yat premamrita-sindhu-sara-rasadam papaika-bhajam api
tad vṛndāvana-dushpravesha-mahimashcaryam hridi sphurjatu

May the wonderful and rare glory of Vṛndāvana, a glory that is seen in the hearts of the gopīs who serve Rādhā's feet, a glory that cannot be understood by a heart untouched by Rādhā's mercy, a glory that floods even sinners with the sweet nectar of spiritual love, appear in my heart. (Rā. Su. Ni. 266)

As we all are returning after completing the journey, let us part with the firm faith that by Her grace, the remembrance of Braja will be forever with us. May we not forget Bābā and may Bābā not forget us.

Chapter 74
Blow on the Holy Dhama by Sectarian Narrow-mindedness

The misleading statement that Vṛndāvana is contained in only 5 *kośa* can be accepted as nothing more than sheer nonsense. Haven't all *rasikācāryas* declared aloud that the vast area of Vṛndāvana of 5-Yojana, 60 square km, is as a bridge to the path of devotion to Vṛndāvana Rasopāsanā? Who can become a *rasikā* by demolishing the main foundation of *Rasopāsanā*?

The confused intellect of such narrow-minded people is only creating more confusion regarding the *ācāryas* of the various Vaisnava communities. Surely this is not the whole truth, as those peoples are boldly presenting the conclusion of their society, mostly in a highly illogical and unscriptural form.

Such peoples cannot be considered *ananya*. With single-minded, unswerving devotion they seem to be concerned mainly with the fulfillment of their selfish agenda meant for their own glorification. The need of the hour is an unbiased debate, based on the sincere research of the scripture and to propagate Vaiṣṇava *dharma* free from sectarian inadequacy. The reputation of our Vaisnava Ācāryas, the ultimate welfare of every individual, of the society, and the nation is only possible by following these guidelines and surely not otherwise.

Original Form of Vṛndāvana

Brihad Gotamiya Tantra

panch yojana me vasti vanam me deha rupakam
kālindiyam sushumna khya param amrut vāhini.

This is Bhagavad *vakya*, the absolute Truth, Śrī Bhagavān says, "This forest, consisting of 5-*yojanas*, is My body, the Yamunā being My life-line." Śrī Vṛndāvana is spread over 60 square km, considering the periphery of the city of Vṛndāvana to be the actual size of the Holy Dhama is not proper. (*Brhad Gotamiya Tantra*)

evaṁ tau loka-siddhābhiḥ
krīḍābhiś ceratur vane
nady-adri-droṇi-kuñjeṣu
kānaneṣu saraḥsu ca

"In this way Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma played all sorts of popular games as They wandered among the rivers, hills, valleys, bushes, trees, and lakes of Vṛndāvana." (ŚB. 10.18.16)

śrī vṛndāvanae kananeshu tadanantargateshu karyakvanadishu
śrī vṛndāvana bhumau nandishwarashtkutvanenu
dhawalgiri sugandhika dayobahyo adrayo varnantey

In Vṛndāvana, there are many forests, hills, ponds, and rivers. In the land of Śrī Vṛndāvana, there are many forests like Kamavana and the Hill of the eight principal gopīs, like Lalitā's Sakhīgiri Hill in Unchagāon, Suvarnagiri Hill in Sunehragāon, Sudevi's Rankugiri Hill in Rankoli, Indulekha's Indrāgiri Hill in Indroli, Dhavalgiri in Chhata, Saugandhik parvat where Kṛṣṇa took an oath, and many more mountains like Nandīśvara *parvat*, Ashtakut *parvat*, Rohitāchala, Kanakāchala, Gandhamadan, Vindhyāchala, Trikut, Mainak, etc. There are many such mountains. This is how Vṛndāvana is factually spreading over a 60 square km area.

(*Vaiṣṇava Toshan*i tika- 10.24.25)

Many ignorant people commit a grave mistake by considering Girirājajī to be outside of Vṛndāvana, rejecting such novice imaginary opinions, they should instead focus on the authentic statements made by our scriptures, like in *Skanda Purāṇa* where it is said:

aho vṛndāvanam ramyam yatr govardhano giri

Blessed is this magnificent Vṛndāvana, where Śrī Giri Govardhana is. Also, the Lord's statement is found in Śrī Harivansh Purāṇa, Viṣṇu.Parva 22.25,28. A description of Kṛṣṇa entering into Vṛndāvana after becoming a cow-tender from being a calf-tender is found:

vṛndāvanam punyamtiva chakrotuh
dhanyeyam adya dharaṇī tṛṇa-vīrudhas tvat-
pāda-spṛśo druma-latāḥ karajābhimṛṣṭāḥ
nadyo 'drayaḥ khaga-mṛgāḥ sadayāvalokair
gopyo 'ntareṇa bhujayor api yat-spṛhā śrīḥ

"The earth has now become most fortunate, because You have touched her grass and bushes with Your feet and her trees and creepers with Your fingernails, and because You have graced her rivers, mountains, birds, and animals with Your merciful glances. But above all, You have embraced the young cowherd women between Your two arms, a favor hankered after by the goddess of fortune herself." (ŚB. 10.15.8)

Simply by His glance, the rivers, mountains, animals, and birds are all feeling grateful. Sukadeva did not leave any scope for such a limited constraint. After elaborately describing the rivers, mountains, forests, ponds and some of the fortunate living entities residing there, he proclaimed that all these descriptions are not of any place other than Vṛndāvana and Śrī Girirājajī of Vṛndāvana.

śrī-śuka uvāca
evaṁ vṛndāvanaṁ śrīmat
kṛṣṇaḥ prīta-manāḥ paśūn
reme sañcārayann adreḥ
sarid-rodhaḥsu sānugaḥ

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, "Thus being delighted at the sight of the beautiful forest of Vṛndāvana and its inhabitants, Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed tending the cows and other animals with His friends on the banks of the river Yamunā in the vicinity of Govardhana Hill."
(ŚB. 10.15.9)

In this way, looking at this magnificent Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa, feeling very happy along with His friends, tending the cows on the foothills of Śrī

Girirāja, began playing various games. In the description of Vṛndāvana, if the word river appears, the mind naturally takes this to be Śrī Yamunājī. Similarly, the terms *giri, droni* or *sanushu* refer to Śrī Girirājajī, thus clearly, Girirājajī's name is included in Vṛndāvana.

These restricted and narrow-minded people, denying the words of the wise, are limiting Vṛndāvana to be only a city. In their opinions, Śrī Girirāja, Śrī Barsāṇa Śrī Nandagāon, Śrī Kamyakvana, etc, are not in Vṛndāvana. How can the statements of Śrīman Jīva Gosvāmī be wrong?

Or, to put it otherwise, in God's Creation, there is a species which favors darkness over the bright light of the sun you all must know, without much consideration, who that creature is! Śukadevajī has, again and again, stated, for the orthodox men, that Girirāja, Nandīśvara, and Brahmāchala valley, the river Yamunā, many forests like Kamyakvana, and many groves like Gahavarvanā, are all in Vṛndāvana.

evaṁ tau loka-siddhābhiḥ
krīḍābhiś ceratur vane
nady-adri-droṇi-kuñjeṣu
kānaneṣu saraḥsu ca

"In this way Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma played all sorts of popular games as They wandered among the rivers, hills, valleys, bushes, trees, and lakes of Vṛndāvana." (ŚB. 10.18.16)

saha-balaḥ srag-avataṁsa-vilāsaḥ
sānuṣu kṣiti-bhṛto vraja-devyaḥ
harṣayan yarhi veṇu-raveṇa
jāta-harṣa uparambhati viśvam

"O goddesses of Vraja, when Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Balarāma and gracefully adorned with floral ear-rings, is standing on the summits of Goverdhana Hill, He engladdens all with the resonant vibrations of His flute. Thus He delights the entire world." (ŚB. 10.35.12)

Being *rasikās*, if you still maintain restricted narrowness, then look into the texts of the *rasikācāryas* of *yore*. (Rā.Su.Ni. 210,211,224)

aho te 'mi kunjas tad anupama-rasa-sthalam idam
giri-droni saiva sphurati rati-range pranayini

na vikshe śrī-rādhām hara hara kuto 'piti shatadha
vidiryeta praneshvari mama kada hanta hridayam

Here are the forest groves. Here is the peerless rāsā-dance circle. Here is the valley where She enjoyed amorous pastimes. "Alas! Alas! I do not see Rādhā' anywhere. Alas! O queen of my life, my heart now breaks in a hundred pieces." (Rā.Su.Ni. 210)

ihaivabhut kunje nava-rati-kala mohana-tanor
aho atranrityad dayita-sahita sa rasa-nidhih
iti smaram smaram tava carita-piyusha-laharim
kada syam śrī-radhe cakita iha vṛndāvana-bhuvi

In this forest, the charming girl enjoyed new amorous pastimes. In this place, She who is an ocean of nectar danced with Her beloved. "O Śrī Rādha, when will I tremble in the land of Vṛndāvana as I remember the nectar waves of Your pastimes in this way?"
(Rā.Su.Ni. 211)

śrī-govardhana eka eva bhavata panau prayatnad dhritah
śrī-rādhā-tanu-hema-shaila-yugale drishöe 'pi te syad bhayam
tad gopendra-kumara ma kuru vritha garvam parihasatah
karhy evam vrishabhanu-nandini tava preyamsam abhashaye

"O Daughter of Vṛṣabhānu, when will I joke with Your beloved, telling Him, "O prince of the gopas, don't be so uselessly proud. With a great struggle, You may have held up one Govardhana Hill. Still, You become terrified when You see the two golden hills on Śrī Rādhā's body?" (Rā.Su.Ni. 224)

These are the same forest groves, same divine *rāsa-maṇḍalas*, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's dear ravines of Govardhana Hill, where the divine couple performed Their pleasurable pastimes. Every hill of Vṛndāvana is immersed in the loving pastimes of the divine couple and imagining that they are separate from Vṛndāvana would be the greatest offense.

Ācāryas have said that on these hills of Vṛndāvana, the friendly pastimes with Balarāma and the loving pastimes with Rādhā have been performed. In the commentary on Prema Mañjarī by Ācārya Śrī Mishra Rāma Kṛṣṇa, there are two forms of pastimes in Vṛndāvana. The loving

pastimes with Rādhā are the *rahoviharatmika* pastimes of Śrīngar *rāsa* and the pastimes in the mood of friendship with Śrī Dāujī are Gopāltmika pastimes. This is found in Kṛṣṇayamal scripture also.

Rādhārāṇī with Kṛṣṇa would return from every forest, mountain, arbor, and grove of Vṛndāvana after performing intimate pleasurable pastimes (*vilāsa līlās*). Look into *akshanvatam falamidam* of Venugīta, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.21.7. The third part *vakram vrajeshsutayoh* has not been understood as referring to Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma.

In *Brhat Krama Sandarbha tika* by Jīva Gosvāmī, Brajesh stood for both Śrī Nanda Bābā and Śrī Vṛṣabhānujī, thus Suta; the son of Brajesh Nanda, Kṛṣṇa, and suta; Rādha the Daughter of Brajesh Vṛṣabhānujī, vrajesh sutayoh; indicates two young children of Braja, one is Kṛṣṇa and the second is said by Jīva Gosvāmī to be Rādhārāṇī. Thus, every mountain, forest, and pond of Braja enjoyed the bliss of being witness to the intimate pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. For anyone to consider that this land, which is filled with nectarine pastimes, is not included in Vṛndāvana and to perceive this fabulous Vṛndāvana as only a condensed city, is the greatest fallacy!

By stubbornly holding on to such restricted narrowness, the image of this holiest place has deteriorated to such a point that very few can appreciate its value and importance. Human society has degenerated to such an extent that it has sadly become only a polished version of the animal society and the worship of this Holy place along with all of His temples has degraded so much, that these days worship has become a way of earning one's daily income for some and others a very lucrative enterprise. Such immoral and unscrupulous people are certainly not worshipers of this Holy place but are its worse enemies.

Narrow-Mindedness, Destroying Hills of Vṛndāvana

People are ignorant of the names of most of these hills, what to speak of their importance! When our worshipful Holy Master first came to Braja over 60 years ago, on the banks of Yamunā in Khelanvana Shergarh, Brajkīl Parvat was located, the hill which was the abode of Vyomāsura. This attitude of familiarity towards the divine has eaten away at the name, form, and existence of that hill. Today, as a result, the hill does not exist anymore!

Raivataka mountain was in Kushvana, Koṣi, but also has become the victim of this narrow-mindedness Today only big, modern buildings can be seen in its place. The entire hill-range between Lehasar and Charan-Pahadi has been destroyed by the money-hungry tycoons. Similarly, the major part of Suvarnāchala hill, Nīlagiri, Sakhīgiri, and many such hills have almost been destroyed. Whatever is left behind is all by the grace of Śrī Mān Bihārī Lālajī. According to the sayings of ācāryas, all these hills are a part of Vṛndāvana. Due to not having faith in the words of our ācāryas, the safety and security of these hills have been compromised.

The members of Śrī Mān Mandir Seva Sansthan, working under the loving guidance of our most worshipful holy master, Gurudeva Śrī Ramesh Bābājī Mahārāj, putting their lives in danger, have taken firm steps to protect these hills. After a long battle of 50 years, victory was finally achieved.

This very notion that Vṛndāvana comprises of only 5-*kośas* has caused the neglect of all other places of significance in Vṛndāvana except for the city area of Vṛndāvana.

Vṛndāvana in the Words of Śrī Vyāsājī

śrī vṛndāvana me manjul maribo.

Girirāja pastime has occurred in Śrī Vṛndāvana. Brahmā-Moha pastime, Putana, Vāsuki, Vatsāsura, Baka, and Aghā, etc. were all annihilated in Śrī Vṛndāvana.

vṛndāvanaṁ govardhanaṁ
yamunā-pulināni ca
vīkṣyāsīd uttamā prītī
rāma-mādhavayor nṛpa

"O King Parīkṣit, when Rāma and Kṛṣṇa saw Vṛndāvana, Govardhana and the sandy banks of the river Yamunā, They were filled with great pleasure." (ŚB. 10.11.36)

This is also stated in the *Garga-saṁhitā*. Bhīṣma first narrated this pastime of Braja to Pāṇḍu. Sananda had also heard this pastime at this time, implying that Vyāsājī also opines that Śrī Govardhana Girirāja, Śrī Mathurājī, and Śrī Gokula are all part ofVṛndāvana. (Gā.Saṁ.Vr.Kh. 2.15)

namo vṛndāvanamkaya tubhyam goloka mauline
purna brahma tapnnaya namo govardhanāya cha

Sanandajī says: Nandajī's Girirājajī, lying in the lap of Vṛndāvana, is the signature of Vṛndāvana, the crown of Goloka, the umbrella giving shelter to the Brajavasīs. Which Vṛndāvana? (Ga.Saṁ.G.K. 3.32)

yātrā vṛndāvanam nasti yātrā no yamunā nadi
yātrā govardhano nasti tatra me na manah sukham

For the millions of pilgrims coming here every year, Girirājajī and Yamunājī are an integral part of Vṛndāvana. Therefore Vṛndāvana's identity is with Girirājā. Vṛndāvana is very vast, in whose lap are nestled various forests, hills, ponds, and rivers…

vṛndāvanaṁ Govardhanaṁ
yamunā-pulināni ca
vīkṣyāsīd uttamā prītī
rāma-mādhavayor nṛpa

"O King Parīkṣit, when Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa saw Vṛndāvana, Govardhana and the sandy banks of the river Yamunā, They were filled with great pleasure." (ŚB. 10.11.36)

As Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma entered Vṛndāvana accompanied with the Brajavāsīs, Their minds spontaneously chose this place for Their divine pastimes and on their return, annihilated Aghā.

rājann ājagaraṁ carma
śuṣkaṁ vṛndāvane 'dbhutam
vrajaukasāṁ bahu-tithaṁ
babhūvākrīḍa-gahvaram

"O King Parīkṣit, when the python-shaped body of Aghāsura dried up into merely a big skin, it became a wonderful place for the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana to visit, and it remained so, for a long, long time." (ŚB. 10.12.36)

Vṛndāvana is where Girirāja is. It is written in *Garga-saṁhitā* that at the beginning of the Rāsa- dance, Kṛṣṇa disappeared. Govardhana is 36 kilometers away from Ādibadri, Khoh, and all these places are situated in Vṛndāvana!

At many places in the Bhāgavatam the nectarine and friendly pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with the gopas are mentioned, e.g., games of hide-and-seek, etc.

kvacid bilvaiḥ kvacit kumbhaiḥ
kvacāmalaka-muṣṭibhiḥ
aspṛśya-netra-bandhādyaiḥ
kvacin mṛga-khagehayā

"Sometimes the cowherd boys would play with bilva or kumbha fruits, and sometimes with handfuls of āmalaka fruits. At other times they would play the games of trying to touch one another or of trying to identify somebody while one is blindfolded, and sometimes they would imitate animals and birds." (ŚB. 10.18.14)

The game of hide-and-seek was played at Luk-Luk Kuṇḍa in Kāmyavana, so this also occurred in Śrī Vṛndāvana. The game of Setubandha, building a bridge, also took place in Kāmyavanā and the story of making a bridge in Tretā-yuga also exists. Setubandha pastime also happened in Dvāpara. All these pastimes were enacted in the various forests of Vṛndāvana, like Kāmyavanā.

evaṁ vihāraiḥ kaumāraiḥ
kaumāraṁ jahatur vraje
nilāyanaiḥ setu-bandhair
markaṭotplavanādibhiḥ

"In this way the boys spent their childhood in the land of Vṛndāvana playing hide-and-go-seek, building play bridges, jumping about like monkeys and many other such games." (ŚB. 10.14.61)

gāyantya uccair amum eva saṁhatā
vicikyur unmattaka-vad vanād vanam
papracchur ākāśa-vad antaraṁ bahir
bhūteṣu santaṁ puruṣaṁ vanaspatīn

"Loudly singing of His praises in a chorus while going from forest to forest, they searched for Him as though they were mad. They even asked the trees about Him, who as the Supersoul is present inside and outside of all created things, just like the sky." (ŚB. 10.30.4)

When Kṛṣṇa disappeared at the beginning of the Rāsa-dance in Vṛndāvana, the gopīs searched for him. **Śukadeva** did not say *vanadvanam*, implying that the gopīs searched for Him in many forests. There are many small forest areas in Vṛndāvana. This place is also very conducive for both the Gopa's and gopīs's pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. Which forests are these?

vanaṁ vṛndāvanaṁ nāma
paśavyaṁ nava-kānanam
gopa-gopī-gavāṁ sevyaṁ
puṇyādri-tṛṇa-vīrudham

"Between Nandeśvara and Mahāvana is a place named Vṛndāvana. This place is very suitable because it is lush with grass, plants, and creepers for the cows and other animals. It has nice gardens and tall mountains and is full of facilities for the happiness of all the gopas and gopīs and our animals." (ŚB. 10.11.28)

Vṛndāvana in the Words of Śrīdhara Svāmīji

Śrīdhara Svāmī Svāmīji states in His *Bhāvarth dipika*:

navani kannanyvantrānī vidyente yasmimstat

Vṛndāvana is the macro forest which houses many individual forests.

kaccit kurabakāśoka-
nāga-punnāga-campakāḥ
rāmānujo māninīnām
ito darpa-hara-smitaḥ

"O kurabaka tree, O aśoka, O nāga, punnāga, and campaka, has Balarāma's younger brother, whose smile takes away the pride of angry women, passed this way?" (SB. 10.30.6)

kaccit tulasi kalyāṇi
govinda-caraṇa-priye
saha tvāli-kulair bibhrad
dṛṣṭas te 'ti-priyo 'cyutaḥ

"O blessed tulasī, to whom the feet of Govinda are so dear, have you seen that Infallible One walk by, wearing you and encircled by swarms of bees?" (ŚB. 10.30.6-7)

The names of the flowers mentioned here are indicative of each forest.

Vṛndāvana in the Words of Śrī Prabhodānandajī

Śrīla Prabhodānanda Sarasvatījī Mahārāj, the author of Vṛndāvana Mahimāmṛta, has identified Vṛndāvana with its hills, lakes, rivers, arbors, gardens, ponds, etc. in almost every *shatak*: 3.101, 3.75, 5.34, 6.10, 6.26, 6.94, 8.93, 14.11, 17.6, 1.45, 1.7, 1.18

The 18th verse of the 1st Shatak is very unique, wherein the author states that Vṛndāvana is a collective of innumerable lakes, wells, ponds, and flower gardens. Considering Vṛndāvana as just a township, where would these multitudes of lakes be situated? Where would so many forests be accommodated? Where would so many thousands of forest groves? Like Gahavarvana, which was created by Rādhā Herself! If these are not accepted then shall Vṛndāvana be taken as merely buildings and palatial houses? How is it possible to have so many hills, lakes, and groves in the condensed area of just 5-*kośas*?

Therefore, the recognition of the existence of all these different places may happen only by accepting the authentic and scriptural opinion of our *rasikācāryas*, and as stated in the Bhāgavatam and other scriptures also, this and only this is the exact truth. Everything else is delusion and obstinacy. What an irony all these narrow-minded and uneducated fools are challenging the words of the ācāryas.

One may know that there was such mutual love and appreciation that the *rasikās* of previous times would share. For example, Śrī Vyāsājī Mahārāj himself glorified Śrī Prabodhananda as a most expert poet. Śrī Prabodhanandajī, in turn, glorified Rādhā-Vallabha Lālajī, saying, one who is immersed in mercy of the divine lilas of Rādhā-Vallabha.

One Principle; surrender, One Path of Loving Devotion; pleasing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, only through this oneness of purpose can love manifest

and be disseminated, but the mindless people are creating differences in the Lord's deities, the words of our ācāryas. This is not only ironic, but it is sheer madness!

Factually, anyone who does not accept the underlying unity tying all of Kṛṣṇa's potencies and pastimes is more or less a crazy person. This indicates that the vast majority of peoples in this world are more or less crazy. To consider illusion to be the truth is madness! To voluntarily impose suffering upon oneself is insanity!

Transcendental Śrī Vṛndāvana

sapady evābhitaḥ paśyan
diśo 'paśyat puraḥ-sthitam
vṛndāvanaṁ janājīvya-
drumākīrṇaṁ samā-priyam

"Then, looking in all directions, Lord Brahmā immediately saw Vṛndāvana before him, filled with trees, which were the means of livelihood for the inhabitants and which were equally pleasing in all seasons." (ŚB. 10.13.59)

itīreśe 'tarkye nija-mahimani sva-pramitike
paratrājāto 'tan-nirasana-mukha-Brahmākā-mitau
anīśe 'pi draṣṭuṁ kim idam iti vā muhyati sati
cacchādājo jñātvā sapadi paramo 'jā-javanikām

"When Brahmā thus got perplexed with regard to the Supreme Brahman, who is beyond mental speculation, who is self manifesting, existing in His own bliss, who is beyond the material

energy and known by the crest jewels of the Vedas by refutation of irrelevant knowledge, he even was unable to perceive even the manifestation of all the four-armed forms of Viṣṇu. Lord Brahmā, the lord of Sarasvatī, was mystified. "What is this?" he thought, and then he was not even able to see. Lord Kṛṣṇa, understanding Brahmā's position, then at once removed the curtain of His yoga-māyā."

(ŚB. 10.13.57)

tato 'rvāk praTilābdhākṣaḥ
kaḥ paretavad utthitaḥ
kṛcchrād unmīlya vai dṛṣṭīr
ācaṣṭedaṁ sahātmanā

"Lord Brahmā's external consciousness then revived, and he stood up, just like a dead man coming back to life. Opening his eyes with great difficulty, he saw the universe, along with himself." (ŚB. 10.13.58)

On opening His eyes, he could see the transcendental Śrī Vṛndāvana. Subsequently, Brahmāmoha also occurred in Vṛndāvana.

śrī-śuka uvāca
evaṁ vṛndāvanaṁ śrīmat
kṛṣṇaḥ prīta-manāḥ paśūn
reme sañcārayann adreḥ
sarid-rodhaḥsu sānugaḥ

"Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Thus being delighted at the sight of the beautiful forest of Vṛndāvana and its inhabitants, Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed tending the cows and other animals with His friends on the banks of the river Yamunā in the vicinity of Govardhana Hill." (ŚB. 10.15.9)

dhanyeyam adya dharaṇī tṛṇa-vīrudhas tvat-
pāda-spṛśo druma-latāḥ karajābhimṛṣṭāḥ
nadyo 'drayaḥ khaga-mṛgāḥ sadayāvalokair
gopyo 'ntareṇa bhujayor api yat-spṛhā śrīḥ

"This earth has now become most fortunate, because You have touched her grass and bushes with Your feet and her trees and creepers with Your fingernails, and because You have graced her rivers, mountains, birds and animals with Your merciful glances. But above all, You have embraced the young cowherd women between Your two arms a favor hankered after by the goddess of fortune herself."
(ŚB. 10.15.8)

The radiance of the most refined pastimes of the Lord of all pastimes magically spread in Vṛndāvana. A multitude of hills is present in this divine

Vṛndāvana. O narrow opinionated ones, how would you prove an assembly of hills in such a limited area? To counteract these misconceptions, the opinion of Jīva Gosvāmī and others ācaryas will have to be accepted.

sa ca vṛndāvana-guṇair
vasanta iva lakṣitaḥ
yatrāste bhagavān sākṣād
rāmeṇa saha keśavaḥ

"Nevertheless, because the Supreme Personality of Godhead was personally staying in Vṛndāvana along with Balarāma, summer manifested the qualities of spring. Such are the features of the land of Vṛndāvana." (ŚB. 10.18.3)

Sukadevjī says: Kṛṣṇa, living in this Vṛndāvana (Nandgāon, Gokula), performed all His pastimes with the Gopa. Kṛṣṇa danced here. At the time of the Rāsa-dance, these demigods arrived and were continuously showered with flowers. The perfected demigods, on obtaining Kṛṣṇa's grace, appeared in the guise of gopas and worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

gopa-jāti-praticchannā
devā gopāla-rūpiṇau
īḍire kṛṣṇa-rāmau ca
naṭā iva naṭaṁ nṛpa

"O King, demigods disguised themselves as members of the cowherd community and just as dancers would praise their chief, they worshiped Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who were also appearing as cowherd boys." (ŚB. 10.18.11)

so 'mbhasy alaṁ yuvatibhiḥ pariṣicyamānaḥ
premṇekṣitaḥ prahasatībhir itas tato 'ṅga
vaimānikaiḥ kusuma-varṣibhir īdyamāno
reme svayaṁ sva-ratir atra gajendra-līlaḥ

"In the water, Kṛṣṇa found Himself being splashed on all sides by the laughing gopīs, who looked at Him with love. As the demigods worshiped Him by showering flowers from their airplanes, the self-

satisfied Lord took pleasure in playing like the king of the elephants." (ŚB. 10.33.23)

savanaśas tad upadhārya sureśāḥ
śakra-śarva-parameṣṭhi-purogāḥ
kavaya ānata-kandhara-cittāḥ
kaśmalaṁ yayur aniścita-tattvāḥ

"When He takes His flute to His bimba-red lips and sends forth the tones of the harmonic scale in variegated melodies, Brahmā Śiva, Indra and other chief demigods become confused upon hearing the sound. Although they are the most learned authorities, they cannot ascertain the essence of that music, and thus they bow down their heads and hearts." (ŚB. 10.35.15)

In *Yugal-gīta* (*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*), this is mentioned as well. Three groups of demigods have arrived.

Parmeshthi group; Sanakadik, Nāradajī,
SaptaṚṣi, Prājapati, and others.

Shakra group: Other demigods and presiding deities of all the heavenly planets.

Sharva group: Parvatijī, Kartikeya, Gaṇeśa, and others.

vṛndāvanaṁ sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīrtiṁ
yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyaṁ
prekṣyādri-sānv-avaratānya-samasta-sattvam

"O friend, Vṛndāvana is enhancing the glory of earth as the soil of Vṛindāvana has been graced by the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī. The peacocks dance madly when they hear Govind's flute, and when other creatures see them from the hilltops, they all become stunned."

(ŚB. 10.21.10)

kṛṣṇaṁ nirīkṣya vanitotsava-rūpa-śīlaṁ
śrutvā ca tat-kvaṇita-veṇu-vivikta-gītam
devyo vimāna-gatayaḥ smara-nunna-sārā
bhraśyat-prasūna-kabarā mumuhur vinīvyaḥ

"Kṛṣṇa's beauty and character create a festival for all women. Indeed, when the demigods' wives flying in airplanes with their husbands catch sight of Him and hear His resonant flute-song, their hearts are shaken by Cupid, and they become so bewildered that the flowers fall out of their hair and their belts loosen." (ŚB. 10.21.12)

In *Venu-gīta* (*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*) it is also said: Kṛṣṇa played the game of hide-and-seek in Luk-luk-kuṇḍa of Kāmyavana, which is a part of this very Vṛndāvana. At some place, He played the game of the King with ministers, at another, He enjoyed the swings. Where have all these pastimes occurred? Indeed, in the groves and gardens on the banks of the Yamunā and the slopes of countless hills. If you won't accept Vṛndāvana as the vast pasture land of Braja, then where may these places of pastimes be shown?

agādha-toya-hradinī-taṭormibhir
dravat-purīṣyāḥ pulinaiḥ samantataḥ
na yātrā caṇḍāṁśu-karā viṣolbaṇā
bhuvo rasaṁ śādvalitaṁ ca gṛhṇate

"With their flowing waves the deep rivers drenched their banks, making them damp and muddy. Thus the rays of the sun, which were as fierce as poison, could not evaporate the earth's sap or parch its green grass." (ŚB. 10.18.6)

In Kṛṣṇa's Own Words

na naḥ purojanapadā
na grāmā na gṛhā vayam
vanaukasas tāta nityaṁ
vana-śaila-nivāsinaḥ

"My dear father, our home is not in the cities or towns or villages. Being forest dwellers, we always live in the forest and on the hills." (ŚB. 10.24.24)

Bābā! Neither do we have a village or an estate. We are the dwellers of forests and hills. In this condensed city of Vṛndāvana, where are the hills? Where are the forests in which the *sakhyā* and Śṛṅgāra pastimes occurred?

Restricted Intellect Entrapped in its Gross Mental Perception of Reality

The restricted intellect, entrapped in its gross mental perception of reality, has ignored the words of the *rasikācāryas*. When revered Bābā Mahārāj had initially come to Braja as a novice, His worshipful holy master Bābā Śrī Śrī Priyasharanjī Mahārāj told him:

There are three types of *Bhāva* i.e., realities:

(1) *Bhāva*; the gross mundane reality, renouncing the house to become a recluse, delivers one from Bhāvā.

(2) *Driḍabhāva*: one's mental reality, deliverance from vices like the sense of vanity, greed, etc. is deliverance from *driḍabhāvā*.

(3) *Sudriḍabhāva*: gross intellectual reality: to be free from the duality of opposites like love & hate etc. and of our narrow-minded perception of what is factual reality is the deliverance from *sudriḍabhāvā*.

Deliverance is a far-fetched objective. This debate goes to an extent that these narrow-minded peoples start challenging even the ācāryas, the wise men. Today, in the name of *ananyata*, exclusive devotion, criticism, counter-criticism, and sectarian hatred may be seen displayed openly. Therefore, the spotless wise-men have irritated, used even abusive words for such perverted minds.

Impact of Kali-yuga

The external appearance of the Dhāma has become distorted with the impact of Kali-yuga, as the wise have said:

jete hari ked ham kām krodh krida karein bhāgavat
ya kalikāl mein kaho jīva kaitemase tarein

In the land of God, in the presence of Kali-yuga, selfish desires and anger openly play, making it very difficult for the soul to transcend.

sad-yogindra-su-drishya-sandra-rasadanandaika-san-murtayah
sarve 'py adbhuta-san-mahimni madhure vṛndāvanae sangatah
ye krura api papino na ca satam sambhashya drishyash ca ye
sarvan vastutaya nirikshya parama-svaradhya-buddhir mama

Even cruel sinners, whom saintly persons will refuse to see or talk to, become great saints if they live in wonderful, glorious, charming Vṛndāvana. They attain transcendental forms that give bliss to the kinds of the yogīs. When I see them, I know in my heart that they should be worshiped with great care. (Rā.Su.Ni. 265)

It is alarming to even see such frantic and hideous people who are presently residing in this Holy place! Great men have therefore said that in Braja four types of people live:

Brajabāsī – those who dwell in Braja;
Brajahānsī – those who make fun of Braja
Brajanāśī – those who damage Braja
Brajafānsī – those who are endeavoring to ruin Braja.

In the era of Dvāpara-yuga Brajahānśī, Brajanāśī and Brajafānsī were Kaṁsa, Pūtana, Agha, Baka, Vatsa, Pralamba, Dhenuka, and other *asuras*, the demons, and presently those who are their followers, are truly Brajahānśī, Brajanāśī, and Brajafānsī. Real Brajavāsīs are very rare. In these circumstances, how can a worshiper of the Dhāma live and continue with his worship and devotional practices when not only in this present age but also previously in the era of Prahaladjī, religion, with all its limbs, had become a business!

mauna-vrata-śruta-tapo-'dhyayana-sva-dharma-
vyākhyā-raho-japa-samādhaya āpavargyāḥ
prāyaḥ paraṁ puruṣa te tv ajītendriyāṇāṁ
vārtābhāvanty uta na vātra tu dāmbhikānām

"O Supreme Personality of Godhead, there are ten prescribed methods on the path to liberation. To remain silent, not to speak to anyone, fasting, the hearing of scriptures, to undergo austerities, to study the Vedas and other Vedic literatures, to execute the duties of varṇāśrama-dharma, to explain the śāstras, to stay in a solitary place, to chant mantras silently, and to be absorbed in trance. These different methods for liberation are generally only a professional practice and means of livelihood for those who have not conquered their senses. Because such persons are falsely proud, these procedures may not be successful." (ŚB. 7.9.46)

Influence of Wealth on Religion

dharmasya hy āpavargyasya
nārtho 'rthāyopakalpate
nārthasya dharmaikāntasya
kāmo lābhāya hi smṛtaḥ

The first principle of *Bhāgavatam* is:

"All occupational engagements are certainly meant for ultimate liberation. They should never be performed for material gain. Furthermore, one should use his wealth as a mean of earning religious merit and should never use it to cultivate sense gratification."
(ŚB. 1.2.9)

Impact of Wealth on Religion

In today's age as well, the supremacy of wealth is observed everywhere, therefore Vyāsajī asked what the benefit of living in such a Vṛndāvana is! The aim of religion is not wealth. Anyone aiming at collecting wealth is never qualified to be a speaker or a listener. There is a prerequisite for speaking or listening to the Bhāgavatam: The speaker and listener should be desirous of Kṛṣṇa alone, then only the nectar of the Bhāgavatam may flow. (Skā.Pu.B.M. 4.39)

Today, instead of nourishing us with this nectar, the sectarian and restricted narrowness of these deluded and most unfortunate souls is sadly and continuously poisoning us with their nefarious misrepresentations of this valuable treasure of unfathomable nectar.

Kahat sunat bahut din bite, Bhakti nā manme āyī ।
Shyām kṛpā binu sādhu sanga binu, kahi kaune rati pāī ।
Apne-apne mat mad bhūle, karat āpanī bhāī ॥
Kadyo hamāro bahut karat hai, bahutan me prabhutāī ।
Mei samajhī sab kāhū n samajhī, mei sab hit samajhāī ॥
Bhore bhagat hate sab tabake, hamare bahu chaturāī ।
Hamahī ati paripakva bhaye, aurani ke sabe kachāī ॥
Kahani suhelī rahani duheli, bātani bahut baḍaāī ।
Hari mandir mālā dhari guru kari, jīvan ke sukhadāī ॥
Dayā dīnatā dās bhāv binu, mile n 'vyāsa' kanhāī ।

Sometimes even after spending much time hearing and discussing Kṛṣṇa Katha devotional service to the Lord is still not awakened within our hearts. Unless we get the mercy of the Lord through the association of a pure devotee it is impossible to achieve love of Kṛṣṇa. Those on the path of spiritual advancement can become proud, thinking they are the ones on the true path and only they can teach it to others; despite the deep knowledge of Kṛṣṇa-bhakti being taught in disciplic succession since time immemorial. A person may preach high values to others while he himself indulges secretly (or openly) in immoral activities. They may make a show of devotion by wearing tilak and kaṇṭhī-mala, and even take initiation from a famous guru, but maintain envy to others in the core of their hearts.

Śrīla Vyāsadeva instructs us that one who does not have compassion, humility, and a genuine service attitude cannot attain love of Śyāmasundar, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

All the demonic means are being applied to establish oneself as the Supreme *rasikā* and the situation has thus become unbearable for the true lovers of Braja. A similar plight is visible everywhere: Śrī Suradāsa, Gosvāmī Tulsidāsjī Mahārāj, Svāmī Haridāsa, Śrī Kabir Dāsa, and Rupa Gosvāmī, all of them have cautioned us not to listen to such pretenders. The race for becoming the Supreme *rasikā* has heated-up in Vṛndāvana. Vyāsajī, therefore, said, "bhore bhagat hate sab tabke hamare bahu chaturai." The devotees of yore were very simple. Only I am the most intelligent.

Kite din Hari sumiran bin khoye /
Tilak lagāya chale swāmī hai viṣhayini ke mukh joe //
(Shri Sūradāsa ji)

Śrī Sūradāsa declares that sometimes people pose as Vaiṣṇavas by dressing as renunciants and wearing tilak but spend no time remembering or serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa and instead use their lives to collect money. Such a person's life is spent in vain.

"Tulsī dekh subehsu bhūl hi mūdh na chatur nar"
(Ramcharitmanas baal kaand – 161)

Tulasī dāsa warns that foolish people are more influenced by superficial things like external appearances. More intelligent people do not get distracted in this way, look within, and go deeper.

Log to bhūle bhale bhūle tum jini bhūlo mālādhārī ।
Apno pati chhāḍai aurani so rati jyoan dārani mean dārī ॥
Shyām kahat te jīv mote bimukh bhaye soū kaun jin dūsarī kari ḍārī ।
Kahi (shrī) 'haridāsa' jagya devatā pitarani ko sraddhā bhārī ॥
(Swami Haridāsa ji)

Worldly people forget that the only goal of life is to achieve devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Vaiṣṇavas, please don't forget your goal. Just like for a married woman it is reprehensible to wish for another man, a devotee should focus only on attaining Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who alone can deliver one.

Haridāsa Mahārāj points out that many people become absorbed in rituals to get material possessions and thus forget about Kṛṣṇa-bhakti.

The Modern So-Called Rasikas of Kali-Yuga

They consider the earlier Rasikācāryas as simple or docile and to prove this, whoever can erect the highest dividing wall, is considered the greatest *rasikā*. Amazingly, the words of the true *rasikās* are being challenged.

mat-kaṇṭhe kiṁ nakhara-śikhayā daitya-rājo'smi nāhaṁ
maivaṁ pīḍāṁ kuru kuca-taṭe pūtanā nāham asmi ।
itthaṁ kīrair anukṛta-vacaḥ preyasā saṅgatāyāḥ
prātaḥ śroṣye tava sakhi kadā keli-kuñjaṁ mṛjantī ॥164॥

"Why do You wound My neck with the swords of Your fingernails? I am not the king of demons. Why do You press My breasts? I am not Putanā." O friend, when, as I clean the pastime forest-grove at sunrise, will I hear a host of parrots repeat these words You spoke to Your beloved? (Rā.Su.Ni. 164)

Here, the author has mentioned Pūtanā's pastime and Tṛṇāvarta's pastime. Rādhā Herself is saying all this. Nevertheless, still, people are maintaining their obstinacy. Both Svāmī Haridāsa and Śrī Hitācāryajī have very lucidly sung the pastimes of Sānkarī Khor, Gahavarvan and Barṣāṇā.

These foolish people thought that they have become supreme *rasikās*, therefore for them, the words of our ācāryas have lost their importance.

śrī-govardhana eka eva bhavata panau prayatnad dhritah
śrī-rādhā-tanu-hema-shaila-yugale drishöe 'pi te syad bhayam
tad gopendra-kumara ma kuru vritha garvam parihasatah
karhy evam vrishabhanu-nandini tava preyamsam abhashaye

"O, Daughter of Vṛṣabhānu, when will I joke with Your beloved, telling Him, 'O Prince of the Gopas, don't be so uselessly proud. With a great struggle, You may have held up one Govardhana Hill. Still, You become terrified when You see the two golden hills on Śrī Rādhā's body.'" (Rā.Su.Ni. 224)

Braja-bhakti-vilāsa explains that every part of the holy *dhāma* is a part of Kṛṣṇa's body. These narrow-minded peoples, considering that this is not equivalent to severing the Lord's limbs, have already severed many of the limbs of the holy *dhāma*. To this day, on account of this attitude of neglect, so many hills of Braja have been destroyed.

Barṣāṇā is not Separate from Vṛndāvana

On the absolute platform, Barṣāṇā (and not only Barṣāṇā but every one of the particles of dust in Braja) is not separate from Vṛndāvana. To divide is to conquer. This is their motto, dividing every place and pastime, minimizing their importance, they manipulate the holy *dhāma* for their selfish purpose. Barṣāṇā is separated and Vṛndāvana is separated. This is of *nikuñja-līlā* and that of *bhawan-dvara-līlā*. Therefore, not able to grasp the essence of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, they are simply adding confusion to an already confused world. The only proclamation of the most glorious *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the nectarean fruit of the Vedas, is Bhāgavat-dharma, the religion of Divine love.

For those who are dogmatists, this *rasopasana*, this nectarean devotion, is a far-flung affair. The literal meaning of the word *rāsa* is unknown to them. As they are encaged and limited with their baseless notions, holding on to a small spec of rice, they considered themselves as grocers. Truly, the speech of those who have not tasted even a drop of *rāsa* is but a clattering of self-made separatist ideas.

It is our humble request to all the sincere devotees of Braja to be cautious of such executioners who are engaged in destroying the holy *dhāma*. They have no foundation of devotion, neither do they follow any fundamental principles, nor the guidelines of the scriptures. Their agenda, in the name of *ananyata*, devotion to the Lord alone, is to initiate tactics to destroy the original form of the holy *dhāma* and the original teachings of our glorious and previous ācāryas. Also to increase their majority, and to misguide simple-minded persons. This is their primary task.

The True Nature of Saintliness

The question, therefore, arises: by looking into these circumstances, how may devotion be practiced, living in the *dhāma*, and what the true nature of saintliness is? The authors of *Rādhā-rasa-sudhā-nidhi* and *Rāsakulya* have provided the best answer to this:

sad-yogīndra-sudṛśya-sāndra-rasadānandaika-san-mūrtayaḥ
sarve'py adbhuta-san-mahimni madhure vṛndāvane saṅgatāḥ /
ye krūrā api pāpino na ca satāṁ sambhāṣya-dṛśyāś ca ye
***sarvān vastutayā nirīkṣya parama-svārādhya-buddhir mama* ||265||**

Even cruel sinners, whom saintly persons will refuse to see or talk to, become great saints if they live in wonderful, glorious, charming Vṛndāvana. They attain transcendental forms that give bliss to the kinds of the *yogīs*. When I see them, I know in my heart that they should be worshiped with great care. (Rā.Su.Ni. 265

Those who are extremely cruel, sinners, dishonorable, and irritable or maintain a sense of adoration towards such people cannot perform *upāsanā* in Braja! Every spec of Braja is infused with the presence of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, our worshipful Lord. The author of Rāsakulya states that it is only by patiently maintaining a sense of having a strong faith in Braja's innate purifying potencies that Brajopāsanā will slowly manifest in our hearts. The Lord has proclaimed in Śrīmad *Bhagavad Gītā*: Who is *dhīra,* enduring or sober?

yaṁ hi na vyathayanty ete
puruṣaṁ puruṣarṣabha
sama-duḥkha-sukhaṁ dhīraṁ
so 'mṛtatvāya kalpate

"For whom, happiness and distress are alike, he is not disturbed by happiness and distress and is steady in both is certainly eligible for liberation, O best among men [Arjuna]" (BG. 2.15)

vikar hetau sati vikriante, yesham na chetamsi tayeva dhīrah

Kali dāsa also says the same: He is certainly *dhīra*, who, although confronted with disturbing elements, remains peaceful. Even in the presence of severe annoyance, if one is not troubled and persevered, truly he is sober and enduring. With this determination alone, *dhamopāsanā* and the ultimate goal of loving Kṛṣṇa may be attained.

Chapter 75
Brajarākṣa or Gau Rākṣa
Protection of Cows Will Protect Our Country and Even the Whole World

The place where all cows stay together is called Braja. The other name of Braja is also Gokula. This Gokul transformed Kānāiya into Gopala and Govinda. Discussion of cows is only supplementary to discussion of Braja, which is why a very indispensable discussion of cows is done here.

***"yatra gavo bhurishrungah ayasah"* (*Ṛg Veda* 1.15)**

Wherever there are cows, it is Braja.
"vrajanti gavo yasmin sa vrajah"

There are seven base pillars of foundation for this earth and the first pillar is -- mother cow.

gobhir vipraischa vedaischa satibhih satyavadibhih
alughdair danashilaishcha saptabhir dharyate mahi

The foundation of this earth is mother cow. Do you know that the first blow was struck on this foundation by Kali-yuga? King Parīkṣit subdued the Kali-yuga at that time, but now so many forefathers of Kali-yuga have sprung up, who are engaged in breaking up this very foundation with cruelty and instead of paying homage to these sacred cows, they are slaughtering them.

The complete incarnation, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has not only protected Bhārat but the whole world. Braja gopīs said:

vraja-vanaukasāṁ vyaktir aṅga te
vṛjina-hantry alaṁ viśva-maṅgalam
tyaja manāk ca nas tvat-spṛhātmanāṁ
sva-jana-hṛd-rujāṁ yan niṣūdanam

O beloved, Your all-auspicious appearance vanquishes the distress of those living in Vraja's forests and is extremely auspicious for the whole universe. Our minds long for Your association. Please give to us just a bit of that medicine, which counteracts the disease in Your devotees' hearts. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.31.18)

Kṛṣṇa! With your arrival, the world became auspicious and prosperous. How? You served the cows. Only the protector of the cow is the progeny of Gopal. The world knows that only the nectar of cow's milk gives the pure uncontaminated intelligence and pure sanctified character. If the intelligence is pure, it will automatically eradicate passion, hatred, quarrel, despair, etc., from this world and impel love instead.

If even today, the slaughtering of sacred cows is stopped, then Bhāratavarṣa will be endowed with all the strength and will become sovereign. One who serves cows or Gopal can never be unfortunate.

Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva always praised cows. After committing a great offense and cursed by ṛṣis (sages), Śiva went to Goloka and paid homage to Surabhī (sacred cow). Surabhī was pleased and protected Śiva with affection. When a group of gods were searching for Śiva and approached Surabhī in Goloka and prayed to her, Surabhī gave birth to a calf which was named Nīlavrushabha. He had five heads. Just before birth of Lord Śrī Rāma, King Daśaratha had given away one million cows in charity.

gavam shata sahasrani dasha tebhyo dadau nrupa
(Valmiki Ramayana 1.14.50)

Because of charity, God of Fire, Agnideva was pleased and appeared in fire sacrifice accepting the offerings. Even after the birth of Lord Śrī Rāma, King Daśarath once again gave thousands of cows in charity.

hataka dhenu basana mani nrupa vipranha kahan deenha

The king gave gifts of gold, cows, clothing, and jewels to the Brahmins. (*Rāmāyaṇa Bala-kāṇḍa* 193)

Again, on the occasion of Lord Rama's wedding or 'Rama-vivah, King Daśaratha gave away 400,000 cows in charity.

gavam shatasahasrani chatvari purusharshabhah
(*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* 1.72.23)

***chari lachchha bara dhenu magaii* ।**
***kama surabhi sama seela suhaii* ॥**
(*Rāmāyaṇa* Bala-kāṇḍa 331)

Once again on the occasion of departing for the forest, the king gave thousands of cows in charity.

vipra dhenu sura santa hita linha manuja avataara

For the sake of brahmins, cows, gods and saints, the Lord who transcends illusion and is beyond the three modes of Prakriti (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) as well as beyond the reach of the senses, took birth as a man, assuming a body formed of His own will. (*Rāmāyaṇa* Bala-kāṇḍa 192)

The devotee of Rama is protector of cows; the follower of Rāvaṇa in his dynasty is destroyer of cows as Rāvaṇa had instructed.

jehi jehi desa dhenu dvija pavahi
nagara gaoon pura agi lagavahi

Wherever they found a cow or a brahman, they set fire to that city, town or village. (*Rāmāyaṇa* Bala-kāṇḍa 183)

On the occasion of coronation, Lord Rama gave away 100,000 milk-giving surabhī cows in charity. In Rāmacarita mānasa, it is mentioned that Rama performed millions of aśvamedha yajñas, extremely difficult and glorious fire sacrifices.

***'kotinha vajimedha prabhu kinhe'* (Ra.U.Ka. 24)**

Those *yajñas* could not be performed without cow-nectar. Cows were roots of these *yajñas*. In royal Gośalas of Lord Rama, innumerable cows were served and they used to give sumptuous milk.

'manabhavato dhenu paya sravaheen'
(*Rāmāyaṇa* Uttara-kāṇḍa 23)

Rāmacarita mānasa

This was Lord Rama's devotion of cows.

Gopal's devotion of cows cannot be described in words. Since He started walking, He took shelter of the calves.

yarhy aṅganā-darśanīya-kumāra-līlāv
antar-vraje tad abalāḥ pragṛhīta-pucchaiḥ
vatsair itas tata ubhāv anukṛṣyamāṇau
prekṣantya ujjhita-gṛhā jahṛṣur hasantyaḥ

Captivating to the eyes of women of Braj, when the two boys started their boyish sports in the house of Nanda Mahārāj, the ladies would feel delighted to gaze on them being dragged here and there by calves whose tails were tightly seized by both of Them. When the ladies saw these pastimes, they certainly stopped their household activities and laughed and enjoyed the incidents. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.8.24)

Baby Kṛṣṇa learned to stand up while holding on to the tail of a calf. He used to put bath oil on body and then takes a bath. Remaining desires for serving the cows were fulfilled while tending the cows in pastures. His thick and curly hair used to be soiled there with the dust stirred up by the hooves of the cows.

Gopis said:

utsavaṁ śrama-rucāpi dṛśīnām
unnayan khura-rajaś-churita-srak
ditsayaiti suhṛd-āsiṣa eṣa
devakī-jaṭhara-bhūr uḍu-rājaḥ

His garland is covered by the dust raised by the cows' hooves; and His beauty, enhanced by His fatigue, creates an ecstatic festival for

everyone's eyes. Eager to fulfill His friends' desires, Kṛṣṇa is the moon arisen from the womb of mother Yaśodā.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.35.23)

Until now, even his baby teeth have not fallen, yet Kṛṣṇa is determined for grazing the cows. Nanda and Yaśodā thought -

yadi gopa sangavasthanam bina na sthatum paraya tastarhi
brajasadeshadeshe vatsaneva tavatsahn charaytam iti

(*Gopala Champu* 10.11)

Kṛṣṇa and Balarama both were restless without seeing and playing with the cows.

age gaya pachhe gaya ita gaya uta gaya
govinda ko gayana me basavo hi bhave

(Chhita Swamy)

Let us at least celebrate their dedication for grazing the calves. Before they could complete five years, they became headstrong for grazing and tending the cows. These two kids are impatient and restless. They cannot contain themselves without having the cows around.

śrī-śuka uvāca
tataś ca paugaṇḍa-vayaḥ-śrītau vraje
babhūvatus tau paśu-pāla-sammatau
gāś cārayantau sakhibhiḥ samaṁ padair
vṛndāvanaṁ puṇyam atīva cakratuḥ

Śukadeva Goswāmī said, 'When Lord Balarāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa attained the age of paugaṇḍa (six to ten) while living in Vṛndāvana, the cowherd men allowed Them to take up the task of tending the cows. Engaging thus in the company of Their friends, the two boys rendered the land of Vrindavana most sacred by imprinting it with Their footprints.'

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.15.1)

The senior men of Vṛndāvana, headed by Nanda Mahārāj, decided to promote Kṛṣṇa from the task of herding calves to the status of a regular cowherd boy. He would now take care of the full-grown cows, bulls and

oxen. Out of great affection, Nanda Mahārāj had previously considered Kṛṣṇa too small and immature to take care of full-grown cows and bulls. It is stated in the *Kārttika-māhātmya* section of the *Padma Purāṇa*:

śuklāṣṭamī kārttike tu
smṛtā gopāṣṭamī budhaiḥ
tad-dinād vāsudevo 'bhūd
gopaḥ pūrvaṁ tu vatsapaḥ

The eighth lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kārtika is known by authorities as Gopāṣṭamī. From that day, Lord Vāsudeva served as a cowherd, whereas previously He had tended the calves.

gopalanam svadharmo nastastu nischhatra padukah
yatha gavastatha gopastarhi dharmah sunirmalah
(*Govinda Lilamṛta* 5.28.29)

In these verses, it is mentioned that while tending the cows, Kānāiya never even put on slippers because cows never put on slippers. How distinct is Gopal's devotion for cows! In the words of great devotee, Sūradāsa Ji:

de maiya ree dohinee laoon gaiya
makhana khaya bala bhayo tohi Nanda duhaiya
sendura kajara ghumaree ghaura mere gaiya
duhi laoon turatahi taba mohi kara dai dhaiya
gvalana ke sanga duhata hon boojho Bala bhaiya
'soora' nirasa jananee hansee taba leta balaiya

There are hundreds of similar verses available depicting the pastimes of grazing the cows, milking the cows, and serving the cows with devotion. In Dana līlā, one gopī said, 'Lala, how can you be free from the sin while not visiting pilgrimage and not taking bath in holy water of pilgrimage?'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, 'Dear Gopi, I take bath in Ganges of 'gauraja' (dust from cows) and chant the names of cows. O Vṛṣabhānu's daughter gives me alms.'

Gopi said, 'Nandaraya's son, let me go home.'

gopalajira-kardame viharase vipradhvare lajjase
bruse gokula-hurikrtaih stuti-satair maunaiii vidhatse vidam |
dasyam gokula-puiiiscalisu kuruse svamyaiii na dantatmasu
***jnatam krsna tavanghri-parikaja-yugam premnacalam manjulam* ||83||**
(*Kṛṣṇa Karnamrita* by Kulasekhara Alvar)

When great yogindras and munindras offer homage with mantras, He does not even respond; while here He Himself asks the calves 'Hey! Son of Ghauri, did your mom feed you the milk or not?'

The calf replied, 'Hun hun hun!'

Service to the cows, whom even Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa cared for with reverence, is true service to the nation as well as true service to the Lord. For this earth, this god-given wealth (the cow) is the boon, and it is the backbone for the culture of Bhārat. For secular or worldly affairs as well as the matters pertaining to other worlds, the devotional service to cows gives auspicious and meritorious achievements.

Śrī Vasiṣṭha's dedication and service to cows is well known. He is recognized as the original preceptor for the philosophy of cows. In the Mahābhārata, he preached to king Saudasa about religious aspects and benefits of serving the cows. One should not sleep prior to singing glories about cows; and should only get up while remembering the cows.

nakirtayitva gah supyat tasam sansmrutya cha utpatet
sayampratar namasyescha gastatah pushtim apnuyat
(*Mahābhārata* Anushasana Parva 78.16)

gascha sankertayet ni nityam navamanyate tastatha
anishtam svapnam alakshya gam narah samprakertayet
(*Mahābhārata* Anushashana 78.18)

The complete Vedic literature is considered to be the remnant of Śrī Vedavyasa. *vyasochchishtam jagatsarvam*

He emphasized the importance of serving cows throughout his entire literature – be it Skanda Purāṇa, Bhaviṣya Purāṇa, Agni Purāṇa or Mahābhārata – the dignity and excellence of serving cows is glorified everywhere. The great Chyavana Ṛṣi upon receiving a cow from the king told him – you bought me outright, O great king!

Mahārāj Ritambhara performed unprecedented service of cows: Jabāla's son Satyakāma realized Brahmān because of serving cows; Mahārāj Dilipa, because of the devotion of cows, begot the great famous son, Raghu who became so eminent that his dynasty was renamed as Raghu Dynasty.

The distinguished devotee Nāmadeva animated a dead cow because of his extraordinary love for cow. Even in the age of Kali-yuga, the brave and eminent child Śivaji was a devotee of cows from his childhood. He could not tolerate the outrageous cruelty to cows; frequently, he alone clashed with the butchers to save the lives of cows. Sometimes, he even slayed the one who attempted to slaughter the cows.

Common Solution to all Problems – Gua seva

The source of economic prosperity is the cow. Eighty percent of the country's population subsists on farming and the farming communities totally depend upon the cows in various agricultural operations. Further, cows enhance soil fertility and organic farming practices. Food produced by using the cow dung as manure not only purifies, cleanses, and energizes the body, but also mind, intelligence, and the senses.

annashuddhau sattvashuddhi, sattvashuddhau dhruvasmruti

Even today, instead of showing contempt towards cows, if we accomplish farming with cows, then there will be no slaughtering of cows by the butchers. Today people in Bhārat and some other countries are severely affected by inflation and rising prices of diesel fuel, petrol, cooking gas, and food. Why is there a great demand for petrol and diesel? Why can we not meet some of our energy needs by using gobar gas (gas generated from cow dung)? Use of gobar gas will also control the high air pollution caused by cars, trucks and other rapidly moving vehicles. Many politicians and government officials do not even listen to these pressing problems and do nothing to help the affected people. A large portion of our land seems barren. Gradually, this will result in a situation where people will be craving for food. There will be famine and miserable living conditions and increased incidence of severe respiratory problems, cancer, and other diseases.

kali barhin bar dukal parai
binu anna duhkie sab loga marai
(*Rāmāyaṇa* Uttara-kāṇḍa 101)

On one hand, there will no food to be seen; on top of that, there will be increasing taxation by gobbling rulers. Observe this prophecy in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

nityam udvigna-manaso durbhikṣa-kara-karśitāḥ
niranne bhū-tale rājan anāvṛṣṭi-bhayāturāḥ

In the Age of Kali, people's minds will always be agitated. They will become emaciated by famine and taxation, my dear King, and will always be disturbed by fear of drought. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.39)*

vāso-'nna-pāna-śayana- vyavāya-snāna-bhūṣaṇaiḥ
hīnāḥ piśāca-sandarśā bhaviṣyanti kalau prajāḥ

They will lack adequate clothing, food and drink. They cannot properly rest, have sex or bathe and will have no ornaments to decorate their bodies. In fact, the people of Kali-yuga will gradually appear like ghostly, haunted creatures. (*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 12.3.40)

The time has come. Today, a number of common people have even no place to sleep.

śūdrāḥ pratigrahīṣyanti tapo-veṣopajīvinaḥ
dharmaṁ vakṣyanty adharma-jñā adhiruhyottamāsanam

Sūdrās, men of low character, will make their living by putting on the garb of hermits and receive charitable gifts. Those who know nothing about religion will mount a high seat and presume to speak on religious principles. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.38)

In this age of kali, people are engaged in their own selfish motives to acquire the wealth. Why would they care for happiness or distress of others?

je apakare chara tinha kara gaurava manya tehi
mana karma vachana labara tei bakata kalikala mahun

Those who do harm to others are held in great esteem and honor; and those who are babblers in thought and word and deed are orators in the Kali-yuga. (*Rāmāyaṇa* Uttara-kāṇḍa 98 kha)

bahu dama sanvarahin dhama jate
vishaya hari linhi na rahi birate

The so-called hermits build themselves houses and furnish them lavishly with considerable expense, having been wiped out by their sensuality; abstinence is no more to be seen in them. Ascetics amass wealth while householders go penniless; the fanatics of the Kali-yuga, my son, are beyond all description.

(*Rāmāyaṇa* Uttara-kāṇḍa Chopai 101)

Such people will put on the attire of holy men who decided that since there is nothing at home, so let us disguise as holy men.

nari mui gruha sampatti nasi
moodha mudhai hohin sanyasee

(*Rāmāyaṇa* Uttara-kāṇḍa 100)

Neither the king deceiving the subjects nor the disciple cheating the preceptor can be conducive to the well-being of the nation.

svashantim na janati parashantim karoti kim

If the king is satisfied and pleased with deceiving his subjects, why would he be interested in helping the subjects? In the past, demons used to devour a human; today, these kinds of rulers devour not one or two but all the subjects. They are not kings but they are the true thieves of the people.

etāṁ dṛṣṭim avaṣṭabhya
naṣṭātmāno 'lpa-buddhayaḥ
prabhavanty ugra-karmāṇaḥ
kṣayāya jagato 'hitāḥ

Following such conclusions, these demoniac people of low intelligence ruin their own souls and engage in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 16.9)

They are slow-witted and injurious. Who would want to call them rulers who perform cruel and terrible deeds? They are simply assassins and murderers.

On one hand, they are rulers in the ordinary world and on the other hand, it is absurd to consider their penetration in the spiritual world in spite of their violating both the religion and the nation.

upadesani kaun guru gusani acharanain adhamai

or

jake mana basai kama-kamini dhana
takain svapanai hun nahin sambhava anandakanda syamadhana

or

matsara badhyau bhatta gusain swami vyasa kahyau

(Vyāsa *Vanī*)

How can we recognize one as well-versed in the moral and religious matters when he could not give up envy on his own?

In the words of Gosvāmī Ji:

dama dana daya nahi janapane
jadata paravanchanatati ghane

Self-restraint, charity, compassion and understanding disappear; stupidity and dishonest dealings multiply exceedingly. Men and women alike pamper the flesh and slanderous tongues are spread throughout the world. (*Rāmāyaṇa* Uttara-kāṇḍa 102 Ka)

There is no control over senses, no alms or donation, no kindness, then discrimination is miles away. Simply they are engaged in cheating others (trapping larger fish) with deceit and trickery.

Deceitful hypocrisy of these cheaters does not guide the innocent people to become Krishna conscious, rather make them displeased and drive them away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

śūdrāḥ pratigrahīṣyanti tapo-veṣopajīvinaḥ
dharmaṁ vakṣyanty adharma-jñā adhiruhyottamāsanam

Sūdrās, men of low character, will make their living by putting on the garb of hermits and receive charitable gifts. Those who know nothing about religion will mount a high seat and presume to speak on religious principles. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.38)

People spread false rumors with hypocrisy and wickedness; so the religion and even the whole nation will become weak.

tvaṅ-māṁsa-rudhira-snāyu-
medo-majjāsthi-saṁhatau
viṇ-mūtra-pūyeramatāṁ
kṛmīṇāṁ kiyad antaram

What difference is there between ordinary worms and persons who try to enjoy this material body composed of skin, flesh, blood, muscle, fat, marrow, bone, stool, urine and pus?
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.26.21)

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying, 'People who take pleasure in sensual enjoyment are only like bacteria residing in excretion and urine.'

deha geha sampati suta dara
adhara gand bhaga uraja upase

(Vyāsa *Vanī*)

People influenced by lust and sensual desires not only cannot become passionate devotees but are not even devotees.

vyasa rasika vason kahain katen maya phanda
harijana saun hila mila rahain kabahoon vyapai na dwanda

(Vyāsa)

The eloquent speaker or teacher of worldly prosperity and sensual desires can deliver verbal knowledge but he is destined to go to the hellish planets.

harai shishya dhana shoka na haraii
so guru ghora naraka mahun paraii

The guru who robs his pupil of money but fails to rid him of his troubles is cast into a terrible hell. (*Rāmāyaṇa* Uttara-kāṇḍa 99)

guravah bahavah santi shishya vittapa harakah
tadekam durlabham manye shishya vittapa harakah

So many teachers will be available who would usurp wealth of disciples but hardly one teacher can be found who will take away mental grief and suffering.

prāyeṇārthāḥ kadaryāṇāṁ
na sukhāya kadācana
iha cātmopatāpāya
mṛtasya narakāya ca

Generally, the wealth of misers never allows them any happiness. In this life, it causes their self-torment, and when they die, it sends them to hell. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.23.15)

The accumulator of wealth can never get a spiritual master. When he is alive, he is occupied in protecting his wealth. After he is dead, journey to hell is inevitable. When a teacher's own destination after death is not certain, then what the teacher will do about his disciple? Satyavrata Manu said, 'It is better in this situation to accept the Supreme Lord as spiritual master.'

jano janasyādiśate 'satīṁ gatiṁ
yayā prapadyeta duratyayaṁ tamaḥ
tvaṁ tv avyayaṁ jñānam amogham añjasā
prapadyate yena jano nijaṁ padam

King Satyavrata prayed to Lord: A materialistic so-called guru instructs his materialistic disciples about economic development and sense gratification, and because of such instructions, the foolish disciples continue in the materialistic existence of ignorance. But Your Lordship gives knowledge that is eternal, and the intelligent person receiving such knowledge is quickly situated in his original constitutional position.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.24.51)

At the least, you will be saved from entering dense darkness. In Mānasa Ji, the Lord Himself has said:

guru pitu matu bandhu pati deva
saba mohi kahan janai drada seva।
(*Rāmāyaṇa* Aranya-kāṇḍa 16)

Lord is telling in such cases, accept Me as spiritual master. Mahādeva has also expressed:

uma rama sa hita jaga maheen
guru pitu matu bandhu prabhu nahin

There is no such benefactor as Rama in the world, O Uma, no guru, father, mother, brother or master. It is the usual practice for gods, men, and sages to make friends with motives of self-interest.
(*Rāmāyaṇa* Kishkindha-kāṇḍa 12)

Jīva Gosvāmī expressed his opinion, *vaiṣṇav dveshee gururapi tyajya,* If the teacher instructs to harvest enmity towards a Vaiṣṇava, abandon the teacher, so it will stop spreading hatred in the community. It is best to desert such teachers by all means.

If one relishes sensual desires, how can he be also relishing the nectar of devotion!

tri-vidhaṁ narakasyedaṁ
dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas
tasmād etat trayaṁ tyajet

There are three gates leading to this hell: lust, anger, and greed. Everyone should abandon these three, for they lead to the degradation of the soul. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 16.21)

The Supreme Lord has identified sexual desire, anger, and greed as the gates to hell. No one has derived happiness from them to date.

viharina dasa sukha vishaya ko vimukha hrudaya ghara
lohoo apane gala ko chata shwara itarata

So, avoid sensual pleasures, avoid the company of people who live for sensual enjoyment, otherwise, these people enjoying sensual pleasures will send you to the gateway to hell.

mahat-sevāṁ dvāram āhur vimuktes
tamo-dvāraṁ yoṣitāṁ saṅgi-saṅgam
mahāntas te sama-cittāḥ praśāntā
vimanyavaḥ suhṛdaḥ sādhavo ye

One can attain the path of liberation from material bondage only by rendering service to highly advanced spiritual personalities. These personalities are mahātmās (exalted souls). For those who are not interested in such activities, and those who associate with people fond of women and sex, the path to hell is wide open. The mahātmās are equipoised. They do not see any difference between one living entity and another. They are very peaceful and are fully engaged in devotional service. They are devoid of anger, and they work for the benefit of everyone. They do not behave in any abominable way. Such people are known as mahātmās. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.2)

Lord Ṛṣabhadeva said – never associate with people enjoying sensuous pleasures.

vishayena ko sanga bhoola na kariye

Whose condition is stated as follows:

vanan men rahata gahata kamini kucha servata peena utanga

or

tana poshata kamini mukha jovata lagi kama ki sata

Even after accepting the people enjoying sensual pleasures as teachers, do not learn about sensual pleasures.

mala tilaka swanga dhari hasi kau
nama bechi dhana lavata
shyama hi chhandata kama
vivasha hai kaminihi lagee pavata

(Vyāsa *Vāṇī*)

With clear consciousness, one should perform 'goseva' (serve the cows). The money set aside for goseva, if not used properly will guide one to hell. When the cow does not consider her own selfish interest from her own milk, then it is not proper for us to use the money set aside for goseva to satisfy our own selfish motive.

gavo vishvasya matarah

The cow is not just a mother of one specific individual but she is the mother of the whole universe; so, it is the ultimate righteous conduct of every individual in the whole world to stop slaughtering the cows and rather perform goseva. Kautilya has instructed in his 'arthashastra' in 2.26 that the king should pay full attention whole heartedly in protection of cows. Even in Aśoka's rock monuments, total prohibition of cow-slaughtering is inscribed.

Historian Badayuni has written that because of influence of Hindus and Jains, no one was allowed to slaughter the cows in the kingdom of Akbar. Historian B.A. Smith has written in his history pra-101 about Jahangir that he did not hesitate to even hang the person who slayed a cow intentionally or even accidentally. Mahātmā Gandhi, Swami Karapatri, Parbhudatta Brahmāchuri, Hanumān Prasāda Poddara (Bhai Ji), etc., tried very hard to completely stop slaughtering the cows in India; but it was an ill overture of Bhārata-deśa that our rulers could not see their ultimate benefit and march towards progress in cow protection, thus cow slaughtering flourished.

In such circumstances, it is not possible to establish pure and sanctified behavior, prosperity, opulence and peace. At one time, when cows were respected in Bhārata, milk and yogurt were available in abundance, there was peace everywhere and even the gods wished eagerly to take birth in Bhārat. The most beautiful celestial nymph, Urvaśī stayed with king Purarava for so many days just to drink the ghee made out of cow's milk. In King Maruta's yajña (sacrifice-ceremony), gods served the food and Viśvadeva used to attend the council as a regular member. Persons who serve the cows become most dear to Govinda inevitably.

Until 10th century, Bhārata-varṣa was like heaven for cows. During the period of invasion of Muhammad Gazani (999 to 1030), Sufi ascetics started coming to India and began investing their resources in India. They used to show high respect towards cows. The foresighted Babar (1526 to 1530) recognized the deep-rooted feelings of the majority of the Hindu

community and insisted that Islam will not advocate against Hindu religion. He enforced banning cow slaughter in India.

Even Akbar (1542 to 1605) abolished cow slaughter in India. From 18th century, government officials started reforming the laws. In 19th century, science promoted meat eating. Since then, cow slaughtering flourished steadily. In 1905, when the discussion of cow protection became intense, it was decided to expel meat-eating Englishmen as soon as possible. Gandhi declared at that time that we can wait for our independence; but we should not tolerate slaying the cows even for one day. Today, Bhārat became independent but cow-slaughtering has not stopped. When Indians will allow slaughtering the cows, then Europeans or Americans will not stand up to prohibit slaughtering of cows. Once Bhārat was known as 'golden sparrow' because of its highly fertile lands and it can become that once again because its fertile lands can yield good crops.

gavo vishvasya matarah

In the Vedas, the cow is recognized as the mother of the entire universe. Why did the Vedas recognize cow as mother? Everyone has a different mother. In all species, the birth giving mother nourishes the infant with her own milk. When mother's milk dries up after a few days or months, then we have to depend upon mother-cow to meet the nutritional needs of the infant. Cow's milk is available in abundance in most areas of India, and we use cow's milk throughout our life. Mother's milk only feeds her child but cows provide milk to all people of the entire world.

The birth giving mother has also a selfish motive of expecting service from her child when it grows up, but mother-cow offers milk selflessly. To kill a cow which is the mother of the universe is abominable and wrong morally and spiritually. Not only from the view point of devotion towards mother but even from the viewpoint of gratefulness, is it cruel and sinful to kill a cow. The urine and excretion of the birth giving mother is never venerable, but it is rather poisonous and causes disease. There are millions of germs and other killer bacteria residing in it. But cow dung is not filth or waste; it can be used as an excellent fertilizer; and dried dung cakes are used as fuel for cooking in many villages in India. Some Ayurvedic physicians claim that cow's urine has medicinal properties and might play a role in the prevention and treatment of various diseases. This concept needs to be evaluated and tested based on scientific methods.

When cow dung is used as fertilizer, the land becomes very fertile and that is why Bhārat was called 'golden sparrow.' Bhārat was 'golden sparrow' in the past and it can regain this status because it has rich fertile lands which yield excellent crops.

Even today Bhārata-varṣa has such a great capacity that it can alone provide the pure organic food to the entire world. For that in-depth analysis, the reader should review the following table:

Country	Total Land in Hectars	Fertile Land in Hectares	In %	Infertile Land in Hectares	In %
Russia	1 Billion	126 Million	7.38	1.82 Billion	92.62
USA	936 Million	17 Million	1.82	919 Million	98.18
Brazil	851 Million	53 Million	6.23	798 Million	93.77
China	160 Million	120.4 Million	12.92	830.6 Million	87.08
Bharat	328 Million	190 Million	57.93	138 Million	42.07

The world population is 600 Crores.

For one year, the food requirement for the world is 600 Crore Kuntal.

In Bhārat, 1 Hectare land produces 60 Kuntal crops, so in 19 Crore Hecteyar fertile land can produce 1140 Crore Kuntal crop

So, after feeding the world 600 Crore Kuntal crop, Bharat still will have 540 Crore Kuntal crop left over.

Diplomacy of the British Empire

There were two subject matters that were shocking to the Englishmen who ruled Bhārat.

1. The schools with students at the residence of spiritual preceptors unique to Bhārat.
2. Farming discipline in Bharat.

British governor, Robert Clive conducted extensive research on farming practices of Bharat. When he integrated his discoveries in preparing British policies for India, the results are quite appalling as indicated below:

1. Cow is prominent in farming practices of Bhārat and farming cannot be accomplished in Bhārat without the cows.

2. Cow is the principal foundation of farming in Bhārat. Therefore, it is necessary to destroy the cows to bring instability and insecurity in Bhārat.

3. In Bhārat, the first slaughterhouse was started in 1760 where 30,000 cows could be slaughtered and in one year, ten million cows were slaughtered.

4. He estimated that in Bengal, the number of cows exceeded the number of farmers; and this was also true in many other places in Bhārat.

5. To bring about instability in Bhārat, a big conspiracy was implemented by the British rulers by starting multiple slaughterhouses in Bhārat.

6. If the cows were destroyed, fertilizers using cow dung or cow urine (gomutra) would no longer be available. Before Clive left Bhārat, he made sure that innumerable slaughterhouses were opened and operating very well.

Just try to understand the amazing accomplishments of farming in Bhārat without slaughter houses:

1. In 1940, 54 kuntal rice was produced from only one acre of land in the district of Akota in Tamilnadu by using a common fertilizer based on cow dung (gober) and cow urine (*gomutra*).

2. In 1990, 350 slaughterhouses were active where many cows were destroyed in Bhārat and she had to borrow large amounts of food grains from England because of shortage of crops.

3. After Bhārat became independent, green revolution was achieved by using excessive amounts of chemical fertilizers in efforts to make Bhārat self-sufficient in food production.

4. Before the British left India, one editor of a local newspaper interviewed Mahātmā Gandhi, who declared that the same day Bhārat becomes independent, all the slaughterhouses will be closed.

5. In 1929, addressing a large public gathering, Nehru declared that if he were to become the Prime Minister of India, the first important task that he would undertake would be to close all the slaughterhouses.

6. On the contrary, after 1947 when Bhārat became independent, the number of slaughterhouses multiplied astronomically from 350 to 36,000.

7. Today, the meat industry in Andhra Pradesh and Ala-Kabir and Devanara districts of Maharashtra proliferated so much that where once

10,000 cows used to be slaughtered, today the number of cows being slaughtered has grown so much that the true count is not available.

Let this serve as a warning and a wake-up call for Bhārat. It is not the intention of the author to criticize anyone. It is not that in Bhāratavarṣa, there are no devotees of the cows or devotees of the Lord. Our ancient culture has conceived great men from time to time and that is why the flag of religion and morality has been waving high in Bhārat to-date. Even though the world is very stable now, people are not absorbed in devotion towards cow (gobhakti) and devotion to the Supreme Lord (Bhagavad-bhakti); and it pains my heart with remorse and sorrow.

Once again, devotion to the cows (gobhakti), devotion to God, and welfare of the whole society is emphasized here; we hope that judicious people with deep wisdom and careful thought will respect this great concept. For the people with conflicting emotions, Kabīr Dāsa has already said:

hathi apani gail chalata hai kukara bhusata vako bhusava de
(Kabīr Dāsa Ji)

Mataji Gośala

Our venerable spiritual master, Sri Baba Mahārāj who takes care of more than 50,000 cows and treats them with motherly respect said that in fact "We are not maintaining the cows but we ourselves are maintained by the cows." We receive several favors and benefits from cows. If we recognize the importance of the cows, gomutra, calves, and bulls, then the entire cow family will be saved from the contempt.

It is possible that bull-driven generators can produce electricity which may be used in every household. It will save electricity and reduce the load on diesel generators and improve the economy of the nation. People are sending at least 50% of cows to the slaughterhouses. Such cruel treatment of cows is unconscionable. When people realize the benefits of cows, then there will be no contempt for the cows and they will be treated with respect.

Hindus feel pain and agony with birth of a calf with disabilities. Today in Mataji Gośala, a unit of Śrī Maan Mandir Sansthan Trust, limp, crippled, and helpless cows are not only nurtured with tender loving care but they are also blessed with continuous chanting of Lord's names by

singing bhajans (devotional songs). Coincidentally, it is our good fortune to recognize that Śrī Mataji Gośala is established at the same place where Vṛṣabhānu's cows were kept long ago. Currently this gaushala serves over 50,000 cows, the largest cow protection sanctuary in the whole world.

Prayer Mantra for Dohani Kuṇḍa:

rakta neelasita dhoomra peeta godohana prada
vṛṣabhānu krutas teertha namastubhyam praseeda main

This Dohani Kuṇḍa was the abode of millions of cows of Vṛṣabhānu. Here cows were milked. Vṛṣabhānu milked red, white, and kajarari (yellow cows) and made this place a holy center of pilgrimage. I offer my obeisances to Dohani Kuṇḍa. Be pleased with me and shower your grace.

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to come for milking cows. Lakṣmī Ji was longing for this place.

kamalaa hun tarasata rahee hama na bhaee brajagaaya
radha letee dohanee Mohana duhate gaaya
hariso dhenu duhavata pyaree
gaudohana sukha karata 'soora' prabhu
teenihun bhoovana kaha ree

Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to milk Śrīji's cows at this kunda; it was named Dohani Kuṇḍa.

Arise Bhārat!

Bhārat! You are in deep slumber like Kumbhakarṇa. Wake up and protect the plants and cows. Cooperate in reviving the precious Vṛndāvana that has disappeared. Lord Srī Kṛṣṇa granted the vision of Vṛndāvana only after Bhārat had become opulent.

sapady evābhitaḥ paśyan
diśo 'paśyat puraḥ-sthitam
Vrindavanaṁ janājīvya-
drumākīrṇaṁ samā-priyam

Then, looking in all directions, Lord Brahmā immediately saw Vṛndāvana before him, filled with trees, which were the means of livelihood for the inhabitants and which were equally pleasing in all seasons. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.13.59)

Where there are diverse thickets and arbors, it is Vṛndāvana forest. To revive these forests from environmental pollutants, Śrī Maan Mandir initiated a campaign to plant 125,000 trees which is still ongoing. Next campaign is to target planting 12,500,000 or 12.5 million trees spreading across the whole nation. After that it is certain that the next campaign will be to plant trees spreading across the world. Today, there is an urgent need for operations that spread trees across the world. It is already initiated in Braja. Braja is the spiritual guide and mentor for the whole world; and we envision it to become an instructional role model for the whole world. Braja Gopis explained the mystery of incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as follows:

vraja-vanaukasāṁ vyaktir aṅga te
vṛjina-hantry alaṁ viśva-maṅgalam
tyaja manāk ca nas tvat-spṛhātmanāṁ
sva-jana-hṛd-rujāṁ yan niṣūdanam

O beloved, Your all-auspicious appearance vanquishes the distress of those living in Vraja's forests and is extremely auspicious for the whole universe. Our minds long for Your association. Please give to us just a bit of that medicine, which counteracts the disease in Your devotees' hearts. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.31.18)

In this sweet Vṛndāvana, there are no love-hatred conflicts.

yatra naisarga-durvairāḥ
sahāsan nṛ-mṛgādayaḥ
mitrāṇīvājitāvāsa-
druta-ruṭ-tarṣakādikam

Vṛindāvana is the transcendental abode of the Supreme Lord, where there is no hunger, anger or thirst. Though naturally inimical, both human beings and fierce animals live there together in transcendental friendship. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.13.60)

There is natural wicked enmity between a lion and deer, snake and mongoose, hawk and the pigeon; and wild animals and birds versus

humans. But this mutual reciprocal hostility is not present in divine Vṛndāvana. Because in Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eternal abode, 'ajitavasa druta-rut,' there is no 'rut' means anger and 'tarsaka' means thirst. Where there are no hatred feelings that are the real Vṛndāvana. That is why we pray to divine couple, Rādhā Mādhava to give us the strength so that we can revive Vṛndāvana and not destroy its charm and sweetness with mutual love and no hatred feelings.

I only plead Śrīji to empower us to rise above the hostility and conflicts!

Chapter 76
Eminent Worship

The perfect reward of reciting and devotion to Braja Rasili Yatra would be to become qualified in proper worship. What is eminent worship? The superior adoration of the favorite and cherished deity is the eminent and glorified worship. This doctrine should be recognized by the Vaiṣṇava community. If the Vaiṣṇava community not only understands but religiously embraces the eminent worship in their lives, then there is no doubt that not only Vaiṣṇavas but the whole Bhārat will be vigorously energized with amazing strength. That power will be so great that in the past, it even destroyed great Hiranyakasipu, the conqueror of the three worlds.

The Lord has instructed that, '*samatvam yoga uchyate*.'

Equanimity is eminent worship; discrimination is demoniac quality.

Prahlad's instructions of equanimity to the conqueror of the three worlds:

jahy āsuraṁ bhāvam imaṁ tvam ātmanaḥ
samaṁ mano dhatsva na santi vidviṣaḥ
ṛte 'jitād ātmana utpathe sthitāt
tad dhi hy anantasya mahat samarhaṇam

Prahlāda Mahārāj continued: My dear father, please give up your demoniac mentality. Do not discriminate in your heart between enemies and friends; make your mind equipoised toward everyone. Except for the uncontrolled and misguided mind, there is no enemy within this world. When one sees everyone on the platform of equality, one then comes to the position of worshiping the Lord perfectly.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.8.9)

dasyūn purā ṣaṇ na vijitya lumpato
manyanta eke sva-jitā diśo daśa
jitātmano jñasya samasya dehināṁ
sādhoḥ sva-moha-prabhavāḥ kutaḥ pare

In former times, many have conquered the ten directions without first conquering the six enemies that steal away the wealth of the body. These fools were very proud, thinking, "I have conquered all enemies in all the ten directions." But if a person is victorious over the six enemies and is equipoised toward all living entities, for him there are no enemies. Enemies are merely born of one's own ignorance.
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.8.10)

Prahlada respectfully said, "Father, give up the demoniac mentality. Adverse mind is the real demon; its conflicts and quarrels in dalliance have made you a demon. It will be the ultimate worship to the cherished god, if mind is engaged in equality and harmony."

Manu's Instructions to Dhruva about Equality:

Son! Learn purity and equality.

titikṣayā karuṇayā maitryā cākhila-jantuṣu
samatvena ca sarvātmā bhagavān samprasīdati

It is through forbearance (towards our elders), compassion (towards our inferiors), friendliness (towards our equals) and even-mindedness towards all living entities that the Lord is thoroughly pleased with us. (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 4.11.13)

Svāyambhuva Manu pointed out this fact to Dhruva Mahārāj: "Not only are you a pure devotee, but you are also recognized by all pure devotees of the Lord. You should always act in such an exemplary way that others may learn from you."

If you develop tolerance and patience against elders, compassion towards the poor, equanimity among the contemporaries, and composure towards all, then you will become dear to the Lord.

Sri Kapil Dev's Instructions on Equality :

titikṣavaḥ kāruṇikāḥ suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām
ajāta-śatravaḥ śāntāḥ sādhavaḥ sādhu-bhūṣaṇāḥ

The symptoms of a sādhu are that he is tolerant, compassionate, composed and friendly to all living entities. He has no enemies, he is peaceful, he abides by the scriptures, and all his characteristics are sublime.

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 3.25.21)

There is tolerance, compassion, and friendliness towards all without the desire of returning favor. Saints with tranquil mind who are not hostile even towards antagonists and who have no enemies are the adorned devout Vaiṣṇavas, who are the grandeur of the society.

King Pṛthu was such an adorned devout Vaiṣṇava. .

Lord's Promise to King Pṛthu:

varaṁ ca mat kañcana mānavendra
vṛṇīṣva te 'haṁ guṇa-śīla-yantritaḥ
nāhaṁ makhair vai sulabhas tapobhir
yogena vā yat sama-citta-vartī

My dear King, You may ask from Me any benediction you like as I am captivated by your virtues and excellent behavior. I am not easily accessible through performance of sacrifices, severe austerities or mystic yoga as I do in the heart of the even-minded.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.20.16)

O King! Ask for the desired boon from me because your non-discriminating qualities have pleased me. Heart without discord is my abode and I always reside there. As I am always with tranquil and quiescent mind, it is quite improbable to please me with sacrifice, penance or yoga.

Jaya and Vijaya, the gate-keepers of Vaikuṇṭha were cursed by Sanakadika, the four Sanat Kumāras (Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana, and Sanāt-kumara) and descended on earth because of committing an offense against Vaiṣṇavas).

Sanakadika addressed Jaya-Vijaya as follows :

munaya ūcuḥ
ko vām ihaitya bhagavat-paricaryayoccais
tad-dharmiṇāṁ nivasatāṁ viṣamaḥ svabhāvaḥ
tasmin praśānta-puruṣe gata-vigrahe vāṁ
ko vātmavat kuhakayoḥ pariśaṅkanīyaḥ

The sages said: Those who attain and dwell in this realm as a result of their devoted worship to the Lord, naturally imbibe the qualities (such as even-mindedness) of their master. How it is that you two living in Vaikuntha still have developed such a disordant mentality? When the Lord is extremely pacific and has no enemies, there can be none deserving to be suspected by you. Who could be envious of Him? Probably these two persons are imposters; therefore, they suspect others to be like themselves.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.15.32)

na hy antaraṁ bhagavatīha samasta-kukṣāv
ātmānam ātmani nabho nabhasīva dhīrāḥ
paśyanti yatra yuvayoḥ sura-liṅginoḥ kiṁ
vyutpāditaṁ hy udara-bhedi bhayaṁ yato 'sya

The enlightened inhabitants of Vaikuntha are in complete harmony with the Supreme Lord who contains the whole universe in the cavity of His abdomen. They find themselves comprised in the Lord even as the space in a jar is included in the infinite space. What then has happened to you two who are invested with a divine body which has filled you with fear? (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.15.33)

tad vām amuṣya paramasya vikuṇṭha-bhartuḥ
kartuṁ prakṛṣṭam iha dhīmahi manda-dhībhyām
lokān ito vrajatam antara-bhāva-dṛṣṭyā
pāpīyasas traya ime ripavo 'sya yatra

Therefore, let us consider how these two contaminated persons should be punished so that good can eventually done to you. Since you find duality even here in Vaikuṇṭha, you should be removed from this

place to go to the material world, where the living entities have three kinds of enemies. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.15.34)

As a benediction, after performing grand service to the Supreme Lord, devotees are rewarded the abode in Vaikuntha. In their nature there is certainly equanimity like the Lord, then, if the Lord is not disagreeable and non-discriminating towards everyone how did they adopt this deceit? What is the deceit? Discrimination, disagreement, and narrowness are the deceit. Every advocate of discrimination is deceitful, a destroyer, and assassin within society.

jano janasyādiśate 'satīṁ gatiṁ
yayā prapadyeta duratyayaṁ tamaḥ
tvaṁ tv avyayaṁ jñānam amogham añjasā
prapadyate yena jano nijaṁ padam

King Satyavrata prayed to Lord: A materialistic so-called guru instructs his materialistic disciples about economic development and sense gratification, and because of such instructions the foolish disciples continue in the materialistic existence of ignorance. But Your Lordship gives knowledge that is eternal, and the intelligent person receiving such knowledge is quickly situated in his original constitutional position.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.24.51)

This deceit is the darkness that cannot be overcome; it is a demoniac mentality.

If one is engaged in the welfare of an individual, or in welfare of the society or in welfare of the whole universe, until the desire of deceit and treachery is removed neither can he relish the rāsa (essence), nor can he approach the Lord of Rāsa; he will simply cherish the demoniac mentality. In the Lord's belly everyone resides together; when everyone's place of origin, place of destruction and cause is the same the Lord and when everything is equal, then where is there place for mutual conflict?

Sanakadika said:

Even after becoming gate-keepers of the Lord of Vaikuntha your poor intelligence is still overpowered by discrimination, so go to earth and

become human where passion, anger, and greed are prevalent. This means that discrimination and disagreement lead to only one destination – the hellish planets.

tri-vidhaṁ narakasyedaṁ
dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas
tasmād etat trayaṁ tyajet

There are three gates leading to this hell – lust, anger and greed. Everyone should abandon these three, for they lead to the degradation of the soul.

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 16.21)

Passion, anger, and greed are three gates to hell. One desiring good fortune should definitely abandon these three.

tata tini ati prabala khala kama krodha aru lobha
muni vigyanadhama mana karahi nimisha mahun chhobha

Brother, there are three evils most formidable of all – lust, wrath and greed. In an instant, they agitate the souls of sages that are the very repositories of wisdom. (*Rāmāyaṇa*.Ara. -kāṇḍa 38ka)?

Today in Vaiṣṇava Society, passion, anger, and greed are prevalent because of only one reason--spirit of dissension--discriminating intelligence which is the root cause of offense against devotees; and these are the great transgressions of today.

Goswami Tulasīdas Ji has said:

jai aparadhu bhagata karo karai
rama rosha pawaka so jarai
(*Rāmacarita Mānasa,* Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa}

In words of Sūradasa Ji:

Santana dvesha dohita karake arata sahita mohi aradhe
Suno sakala vaikuntha nivasi sanchi kahaun jin mano kheda

tina para krupa karaun kaisei vidhi pujata panya kantha ko chheda
Jana saun baira priti moson kara mero nama nirantara laihain
'Suradasa' bhagavanta vadata hai mohe bhaje pai jamapura jaihain

Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not tolerate offenses committed at the feet of His devotees. He declares that He cannot show His mercy to one who maintains grudges against His devotees and offends them, even if they worship and follow the religious rules. It is as though they worship His feet but at the same time give pain to His heart. Śrī Sūradāsa declares that His devotees are His heart. Committing offenses to devotees is intentionally hurting the Lord.

Śrī Sūradāsa tells us that Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that if a person commits offenses to His devotees, even if they chant the Holy Name and perform devotional service, they cannot come to Him.

The sincere devotee poets ('*rasikās*') also have the same opinion. Always be afraid of committing an offense against even an ordinary devotee.

bhakta sādharana ke aparādha hi kanpata darani hiyau

Today the entire society is absorbed in conflicts and disagreements which have weakened not only the religion but the whole society and the entire universe. Endow the religion, society, culture, country and the universe with spiritual wealth and devotional strength based on Vedic principles and Sanātana Dharma (eternal religion or duty) will prevail. Do not get absorbed in conflicts and disagreements and do not let others follow that path.

There is no possibility of any doubt in this context because *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states:

yasya prasanno bhagavān
guṇair maitri-ādibhir hariḥ
tasmai namanti bhūtāni
nimnam āpa iva svayam

Just as water automatically flows down by nature, so all living entities offer honor to one who has pleased Sri Hari with his transcendental qualities like friendliness with everyone.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.9.47)

Water is inherently liquid, river flows downward. In the same manner, it is natural for all animals and humans to be humble and follow those who have pleased the Lord with their great qualities of friendliness, equanimity, etc.

Laws of nature:

"nātiprasīdati tathopacitopacārair
ārādhitaḥ sura-gaṇair hṛdi baddha-kāmaiḥ
yat sarva-bhūta-dayayāsad-alabhyayaiko
nānā-janeṣv avahitaḥ suhṛd antar-ātmā"

My Lord, You are not very much satisfied by the worship of the gods, who arrange for Your worship very pompously, with various paraphernalia, but who are full of material hankerings. You are situated in everyone's heart as the Supersoul just to show Your causeless mercy and are pleased with one who shows compassion towards all beings. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.9.12)

When the mercy and faith encompass the entire creation, the Supreme Lord is pleased. The Lord cannot be propitiated by offering excessive offerings like fifty-six different varieties of bhoga (food), one hundred and eight varieties of foods, millions of flowers, 'shodashopachara puja' (extensive specific ceremonial rites of worship), etc. If that was the case, only very affluent people would have seen the Lord and only very well-to-do people would have been allowed to the divine abode of the Supreme Lord. But the only true path to reach the Supreme Lord is be merciful, having a feeling of equality towards everyone and become a true devotee of the Supreme Lord by following Vedic principles of Sanātana Dharma.

Instructions of equality by saintly king Chitraketu offered in prayers to Lord Śeṣa:

viṣama-matir na yatra nṛṇāṁ
tvam aham iti mama taveti ca yad anyatra
viṣama-dhiyā racito yaḥ
sa hy aviśuddhaḥ kṣayiṣṇur adharma-bahulaḥ

Being full of contradictions, all forms of religion but bhāgavata-dharma work under conceptions of fruitive results and distinctions of "you and I" and "yours and mine." The followers of Śrīmad-

Bhāgavatam have no such consciousness. They are all Kṛṣṇa conscious, thinking that they are Kṛṣṇa's and Kṛṣṇa is theirs. There are other, low-class religious systems, which are contemplated for the killing of enemies or the gain of mystic power, but such religious systems, being full of passion and envy, are impure and temporary. Because they are full of envy, they are full of irreligion. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.16.41)

If the conflicts of "I and mine," and "you and yours" are injected, no religion is spared. Such corrupted religion is very irreligious, unholy, unclean and definitely perishable. Today within the roots of religion, we have irrigated the spirit of dissension and discord that yielded very corrupted and destructive religions, even though *Bhāgavata Dharma* instructed by Supreme Lord is so pure that there is no place for conflict or disagreement in *Bhāgavata Dharma*.

kaḥ kṣemo nija-parayoḥ
kiyān vārthaḥ sva-para-druhā dharmeṇa
sva-drohāt tava kopaḥ
para-sampīḍayā ca tathādharmaḥ

How can a religious system that produces envy of one's self and of others be beneficial for oneself and for them? What is auspicious about following such a system? What is to be gained? By causing pain to one's own self due to self-envy and by causing pain to others, one arouses Your anger and practices irreligion.
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.16.42)

Discriminating religion always causes distress to the self as well to others. From such religion, we can neither achieve any benefit or benevolence. Mind is oppressed by following such irreligious faith and the Lord is offended and enraged. If our religion causes suffering to others, then what kind of religion is that? It is a complete irreligion.

This subject is very subtle and requires meticulous scrutiny for thorough understanding. In all probability, we may abandon the flow of religion and jump into the lake of irreligion. So that Vaiṣṇava communities may not spread irreligion even unknowingly, spiritual preceptors have warned us again and again.

Instructions on equality and indifference by Śrī Hita Ji :

In '*Sevaka Vāni*' compiled by Sri Hita Ji, there is a chapter 'kāche dharmmi (unripened righteous man' and another chapter '*pāke dharmmi* (matured righteous man)'...

To bring forth the significance of labor and exertion is to understand correctly distinction between religion and ireligion.

nirabhimāna nirvaira nirupama nishkalanka ju sarvadā
(*Sevaka vāṇi*)

The essence of such great saint's doctrines and mannerism is:

sri harivansh ju kahi shyāma shyāmāpada kamal sangi shira nāyau –

This is our position – bow down our head with humility and respect to those who are devoted to the Divine Couple (Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa).

granth pramāna kai jo samujhaiye
***tau taba krodha-rari phira mandata* (*Sevaka Vāṇi*)**

tacchina kesha gahan muṣti hani sākata śuddha bacavat dolat
***tacchina bolai tu preta tu rakṣasa pheri paraspar jati pramānat* (*Sevaka Vāṇi*)**

Excessive anger damages the essence and quality of love, a ghostly evil spirit emerges; instead of pleasure a demon appears.

The essence of Śrī Hita Ji's instructions :

sabasaun hita niṣkāma mata vṛndāvana vishrama
rādhāvallabha lāla ko hṛdaya dhyāna mukha nāma

Or

jo pai dharammi marammi hau to dharamminson kata antar pārata

Until the discrimination is eradicated from the heart, the ever-lasting religion can not be realized. Śrī Hita Ji eliminated the impurity of the age of Kali (Kali-yuga).

harau saba kalikāla ki bhaya
kṛpā rupa ju vapu dharayo

Today we create discrimination and engage in quarrels magnifying the impurities of Kali so we are not following the instructions of our spiritual preceptors. Kali presides in the form of anger and quarrel.

kaler durviṣahah krodhastamastamanuvartate
tamasā grasyate punsas cetanā vyāpini drutam

Therefore, we should move forward with mind focused in one direction on the path directed by the intelligence in the mode of goodness discerning the virtuous and existent vs, the illusory and non-existent.

Instructions on equality and indifference by Śrī Swami Ji (Haridās Ji) :

Compiled by the spiritual preceptor Śrī Vihārin Deva Ji in the same sect as Swami Śrī Haridās Ji:

aba haun kā saun vaira karaun
eise kahat pukārain Sri mukha ghat-ghat haun viharon
tau kahiyata aparādhi jana jo anyan parā na dharon
'sri bihāridās' haridās kṛpā ten nita nirabhai vicaron

Eliminate discrimination from intelligence, otherwise you will end up commiting 'bhaktāparādha' or an offense against a devotee. Even the offense against the most ordinary devotee causes most harmful and undesirable misfortunes.

To discriminate pastimes of the divine couple in Braja vs. pastimes of divine couple in the groves of Vṛndāvana is committing a great offense :

The spiritual preceptors have equivocally rebuked and refuted this discrimination.

acyuta gota bakhanniyai bhagatu bhagati ki jāti
puchanahāre nāraki je bhaktahi puchejāti

Only the religion without discrimination is pure religion. That is only 'mahat samarhana' or worship of Supreme Lord in the right mode.

True worship of 'Sri Banke Bihari Lāl is to practice equality and non-discrimination. That is the true worship of 'Sri Rādhāvallabha Lāl'.

That is true worship of 'Bāla Kṛṣṇa Prabhu' of Vallabha Kula(family).

That is the true service and worship of 'Sri Rādhā Raman Lāl"

If you understand this truth entirely and practice, it bestows you good fortune and salvation.

If you explain and guide others to this path, it bestows them good fortune and deliverance.

Today in the religious societies, meekness and humility are thrown aside. The desire to earn fame and respect is gradually increasing day by day. Every one wants to become 'jagat-guru (the spiritual master of the universe even though the destiny itself is afraid of these titles.

tasmai namo bhagavate vāsudevāya dhimahi
yanmāyayā durjayayā mām bruvanti jagadgurum
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.5.12)

How ironical! The world is one but there is a long battalion of world-gurus! How will the world get salvation?

anāyakā vinashyanti vinashyanti bahunāyakāh
kunāyakā vinashyanti tarishyanti sunāyakāh **(*Śrīji*)**

Upasanhāra **(conclusion)**

Author, Director, and Maan Mandir's worshippers have only one goal:

yad govinda-katha-sudha-rasa-hrade ceto maya jrimbhitam
yad va tad guna-kirtanarcana-vibhushadyair dinam prapitam
yad tat pritir akari tat priya-janeshv atyantiki tena me
gopendratmaja-jivana-pranayani shri-radhika tushyatu
(*Rādhā-rasa-sudhā-nidhi* 115)

My heart swims in the nectar lake of the descriptions of Lord Kṛṣṇa. I decorate each day with the ornaments of worshiping Kṛṣṇa and chanting the glories of His transcendental virtues. I love Kṛṣṇa's dear devotees. I pray that Śrī Rādhā, who loves Lord Kṛṣṇa, the

Prince of the gopas, and considers Him dearer than life, may be pleased with me in worshiping Kṛṣṇa and chanting the glories of His transcendental virtues. I love Kṛṣṇa 's dear devotees.

To whatever extent my mind bathed in the nectar of Govinda's wonderful pastimes through writing this book or days have blissfully passed in singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental qualities or engrossed in the thoughts of worshipping Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet or relishing His astonishing beauty and sringar, or developing unbiased and everlasting love and attachment towards Kṛṣṇa's devotees and all gurus guiding to attain devotion and love for Kṛṣṇa may result in pleasing 'Ladli Ji' or Śrīmatī Rādhikā Mahārāṇī Who is the soul of Kṛṣṇa and and only support and shelter and life of Kṛṣṇa.

Abbreviated Lists of Books

Aa. Pu	Ādi Purāṇa
Aa va Pu	Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
ishaupa	Īśopaniṣad
Ku pu	Kurma Purāṇa
Kaumarya	Kurma Purāṇa
Ga. sa. Gi kha	Garga Saṁhitā Giriraja khaṇḍa
Ga. sa.go. kha.	Garga Saṁhitā Goloka khaṇḍa
Ga. sa. ma. kha.	Garga Saṁhitā Mathura Khaṇḍa
Ga. sa. maa. kha	Garga Saṁhitā Madhurya Khaṇḍa
Ga. sa. ash. kha.	Garga Saṁhitā Ashvamegha Khaṇḍa
Ga. sa. vr. kha.	Garga Saṁhitā Vrundavan Khaṇḍa
geeta	Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā
SBG	Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā
Go. ta. up.	Gopal Taapani Upaniṣad
Go.cha.	Gopal Campu
ch.cha. ma. li	Caitanya Caritāmṛta.Madhya līlā
tai.upa.	Taitariya Upaniṣad
Pa. pu. pa. kha.	Padma Purāṇa Patal khaṇḍa
Pa. Pu.	Padma Purāṇa.
Br.na.pu.ut.kha	Brihad nardiya Purāṇa
Br.up	Bruhadaranya Upaniṣad
Br.bh.vi	Braja Bhakti Vilasa
Br.bha.ma.	Braja bhaava malika
Br.vi	Braja Vilasa
Br.vai.pu.	Brahma vaivarta Purāṇa
Br.va.pra.kha	Brahma vaivarta prakruti khaṇḍa
Br.va.br.kha	Brahma vaivarta Brahma khaṇḍa
Br.va.ke.ja.kha	Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa (Kṛṣṇa-janma-khaṇḍa)
Br.sa.	Brahma Saṁhitā
Br.pre.sa.	Braja prema saagar
Br.va.ga.kha	Brahma vaivarta Ganapati khaṇḍa
Bha.ra	Bhakti ratnakar
Bha.ra.si.	Bhakti rasamrita sindhu
	Bhavishya-taar Purāṇa

Sh.bh	Śrīmad Bhagavat Maha Purāṇa
Bha.ma	Bhagvati Mahatmya
Bha.u.ma	Bhagavatam Uttar Mahatmya
Bha.sk.pu.ma	Bhagavatam Skanda Purāṇa Mahatmya
Ma.bha.anu.pa	Mahābhārat anushaasan parva
Ma.bha.sa.pa.	Mahābhārat sabha parva
Ra.ghu	Raghuvansh
Ra.ra.	Rasiya Rasheswari
Ra.ayo.ka	Rāmāyaṇa Ayodhya kanda
Ra.ar.ka	Rāmāyaṇa Aranya kanda
Ra.u.ka	Rāmāyaṇa Uttar kanda
Ra.ki.ka.	Rāmāyaṇa Kishkindha kanda
Ra.ba ka	Rāmāyaṇa Baal kanda
Ra.Su.ka	Rāmāyaṇa sundar kanda
Ra.su.ni	Radha Sudanidhi
	Radhopanishad
Va.pu	Vaayu Purāṇa
Va.ra.a.ka	Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa Ayodhya kanda
Va.ra.Su.ka	Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa sundar kanda
Va.pu	Vaamana Purāṇa
Vi.pu	Vishnu Purāṇa
Br.gau.ta.	Brihad Gautamiya tantra
Vru.pu.sh.	Vrushbhanu pur shatak
Vya.va	Vyaas vaani (Hariram Vyas ji)
Vya.va.vru.ma	Vyasa vaani vru davan mahima
Śrī.ra.sa.	Śrīngar rasa saagar
	Śrī Vallabh Digvijaya
Sh.vi.ch.pa	Śrī Vishvanath Chakravarti pada
	Śrī Hita Chaturasi
Sa.ku.sa.	Santa Kumar Saṁhitā
	Sublopaniṣad
Su.vi.pa	Soor-vinay patrika
Su.sa	Soor saagar
	Sau-parna Samhitayam
Ska.pu	Skanda Purāṇa
Ska.pu.ma.kha	Skanda Purāṇa Mathura khaṇḍa
Ska.pu.vai.kha	Skanda Purāṇa vaishnavi khaṇḍa Br.na.