




**Bhakti Bharat**  
JOURNEY WITHIN

# VRINDAVANA-LLA

**November 29 - December 10, 2024**



'Think of Vrindavan with great devotion, roll in the dust of Vrindavan, use your body in service of Vrindavan, develop ardent love for Vrindavan, try to please moving and nonmoving inhabitants of Vrindavan. Worship the birthplace of Sri Radha and with all your heart take refuge in Vrindavan - the best of holy places.'

Sri Vrindavana Mahimamrita

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# BRIEFLY ABOUT OUR JOURNEY:

## Day 1

On the first day of our journey, Rishika Abhirami will give a satsang about Vrindavan and the saints of Vraj. Then we will visit two of Guruji's favorite temples with self-manifested deities.

## Day 2

We will visit many amazing places and temples of Vrindavan and do Om-Chanting. Satsang with Swami Kanjalochana in the evening.

## Day 3

In the morning we will go to Mathura, the place of Krishna's appearance, and on our return to Vrindavan we will visit several more amazing temples.

## Day 4

Parikrama around Vrindavan, along the way we will visit various famous temples and places where Krishna's pastimes took place. Before lunch, free time for rest and shopping. Then we will go on a boat trip on the Yamuna River and observe Arati to Yamuna-devi on Keshi Ghat.

## Day 5

This day we will visit Barsana. The place where the beloved of the Lord, Srimati Radharani, grew up. Here we will visit secret places and saints that only few people know about.

## Day 6

Visit several temples and the Shakti-pithin Vrindavan. Satsangs with Swami Kanjalochana on the Bhagavad Gita and the scriptures.



## Day 7

Go for Parikrama around Govardhan. Visit to holy places and Samadhis of saints on the way.

## Day 8

This time we decided to add several more unique places to our program, which are considered the original Himalayas. All the holy places outside the territory of Vraj are only projections of those places that are present in Vraj. We will go to the original Badarik Ashram - Adi-Badri, visit the temples of Yamunotri and Gangotri, the wonderful temple of Yogamaya (Adi-Haridwar), climb 300 steps to the cliffs of Kedarnath - the abode of Lord Shiva, and receive the darshan of one of the 4 main Shiva-lingams in Vraj - Kameshwar Mahadev in Kamyavan, who fulfils all the desires.

## Day 9

Visit to Bhandirvan, the secret place of Radha and Krishna's wedding. We will visit the holy hermits in the nearby forest.

## Day 10

Visit the holy places around Vrindavan: the place where Vrinda devi lives, the place of morning meetings of Radha and Krishna, and the place where Krishna lived when He was a small child.

## Day 11

Shopping and free time. Meeting with everybody, satsang, exchange of impressions, farewell dinner at the restaurant. Late night - leave to the airport and back home.





# VRaJ

Vraj-mandala (or Braj) is a historical place in the Northern part of India, Uttar Pradesh, where Sri Krishna played His lilas five thousand years ago.

In Vraj He was born, raised and played with the gopas and gopis. Here He killed the many demons and met with His beloved Radha, danced the Rasa Dance and has been a true friend for the village cowherd boys. Krishna has walked every part of Vraj.

Vraj consists of several towns, small villages, forests and fields. The central part of the mandala consists of the places of the great Rasa-lila of the Lord.



## Day 1



# THE PRINCE OF VRINDAVAN



Banke Bihari Temple is one of the most visited and most famous temples in India. It is a symbol of unwavering faith and devotion to the beloved Lord. Every day thousands of devotees come to worship Sri Banke Bihariji. In Vrindavan, lots of people go to Banke Bihari daily, because receiving His darshan is priceless. Banke Bihari means 'bent in three places enjoying'. The deity Banke Bihari is Swayambhu which means that the deity was self-manifested. Half a millennium ago, Saint Swami Haridas received the darshan of Radha and Krishna in Their one form in Nidhivan. He prayed to Them that every person on this earth who does not have divine vision should be able to receive Their darshan. Thus Banke Bihari, the one form of Radha and Krishna, revealed Himself to His devotees.

## Swami Haridas

Swami Haridas was born in a small village, now known as Haridaspur, near Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh. The lineage of the family can be traced back to Shri Gargacharya. Shri Gargacharya was the Kulaguru (family guru) of Yadavas and visited Braj secretly for conducting the Namakarana Samskara (naming ceremony) of young Krishna and Balarama on request of Vasudeva. Swami Haridas was the reincarnation of Lalita Sakhi, of the inner consortium of Lord Krishna. This easily explains the fact that even in his childhood, he was more into meditation and scriptures, while other children of his age were busy playing. He was married at the suitable age according to the time to Harimati. Even after his marriage, young Haridas stayed away from worldly pleasures and concentrated on meditation. Hari mataji was such a saintly soul herself that on realizing the inclination of her husband, she prayed intensely and her body was bodily transported to the heavenly abode of Lord by entering the flame of a small lamp in the presence of Swami Haridas. No physical remains were left behind. Soon after that Haridas left his village for Vrindavan, which was a dense forest at that time and chose a secluded spot, which is now known as Nidhivan, to practice his music and to enjoy the eternal bliss of meditation.

Initially, the deity of Banke Bihari was installed in a temple close to the first appearance in Nidhivan. A new temple befitting the glory of Bihariji was constructed in 1862.





The Divine presence in the Bihariji's temple can be felt very intensely, and it is never quiet here: the place is always full of people singing and shouting His Name. There are several amazing stories associated with Banke Bihari.

**One of the stories says** that around five centuries ago there was a Rajput princess who came to see Him. She fell so much in love with Bihariji that she could not take her eyes off Him all day.

When the temple was about to close, she went to her palanquin where to her surprise she discovered the murti of Banke Bihari. He was so captivated by her love that He did not want to be away from her, so He left with the princess. Everyone was looking for Him, but Bihariji was nowhere to be found... Coming back home, of course, the princess sent a letter to Vrindavan and informed the temple that Bihariji was staying with her. The deity was returned to Vrindavan, but since then there had been a tradition in the temple that every few seconds the curtains separating the deity from the public are closed and opened every few seconds, so that no one can look continuously into His eyes. You never know where you have to go to look for Bihariji next time, and whether He will want to return at all... It is forbidden to take photographs of Banke Bihari, but they say that a few years ago a devotee, after sincere prayers, got permission to take photographs of Bihariji. Thanks to that devotee others now have the opportunity to admire Sri Banke Bihari as well.

### **Another Story Related to Bihariji's Disappearance during the Night**

One night, a pujari was pulling the strings of a hand fan so that it wouldn't be too hot for Bihariji to sleep. Without realising it, he fell asleep. When he woke up, he wanted to check if Bihariji was sleeping soundly but to his surprise, Bihariji wasn't there!

It was a late night but the pujari couldn't sleep anymore. He was waiting for Bhagavan's return. At 4 a.m. he saw Bihariji getting back with a sweaty, flushed face. The next night the pujari saw Banke Bihariji leaving at midnight. He decided to follow the Lord and found Him entering Nidhivan. Following that, the sounds of a flute and dancing filled the air, and at 4 a.m. Bihariji returned to the temple again.



Now the pujari knew that Bhagavan was not getting much rest during the night, so when another pujari came early in the morning to wake the Lord up for mangala-arati, he stopped him, saying that the Lord had not had enough sleep due to His overnight visit to Radha and the gopis in Nidhivan. From that moment, the time of the first arati was changed to 8:30 a.m., so that Banke Bihari would have enough time to rest.

## **There is a third story that Gurudev told in His book.**

Paramahansa Vishwananda  
«Just Love: a journey into the Heart of God»  
pages: 363-370

«Banke Bihari Bears Witness.

In Vrindavan there was a mataji by the name of Natyabai. She was always sitting in the corner of the street in Vrindavan and she was always giving water to people. That was her seva. That was her bhajana. That was her yajna, her sacrifice, and she was doing it with full love and devotion. Every day she was there for the people. One day somebody asked her, «Please, tell me: why do you do that?»

Then she started relating her story of how the Lord Himself had come to her father. Her father was a school teacher. They were not rich. They didn't have much money. They were very average people. It so happened that his eldest daughter, mataji Natyabai, was going to get married. In India the custom is that you have to give a lot of dowry and prepare a big festival, because a marriage is not something small in India. However, they didn't have much money. The father didn't have much and the mother didn't have much either. So, he went around asking his friends, «Please, help me! I want to marry my daughter, but I don't have enough means.» Everybody said, «no», because they knew that he was poor. Even if he said, «With time I will return your money to you.» Everybody refused him. And they all found a hundred excuses for not lending him the money. These so-called friends, who would sit and chat with him every day, when the time came to help him nobody was there for him. When he returned home he was in such a depressed state that his wife said, «Don't worry. We don't need to marry our daughter now.»



In all the villages they have a munimji. The munimji, the money lender, of that place used to lend money, but in a very crooked way. He always ruined people and everybody in the village knew him. Everybody who had gone through his hands had lost out and had more worries and more problems and debts afterwards. However, the only solution for Natyabai's father, if he wanted to marry his daughter, was to go to this man. So, he went to the munimji and, of course, the man welcomed him nicely, «Come, headmaster! Take a seat.» He asked the munimji, «Please, I need money for my daughter's wedding.» He was in a depressed state.

The munimji was very cunning. He prepared a paper saying, «Yes, you will return this money to me in two years' time, otherwise we will take your whole property.» He said, «Okay, I will try. If God wills it, we'll return it.» He was very adamant about it, that he would return it in two years. The munimji gave him the money and then he returned home. On that day he was very joyful when coming home. His wife was looking and said, «Why are you so happy?» «Well, I'm very happy because our daughter will get married.»

Everything was prepared. The daughter got married in a very grandiose way and he gave the dowry. And then, like promised to the munimji, he paid back the money every month. He worked very hard and returned the money. In the Hindu tradition, in North India, after the daughter gets married, the parents always make a promise. The father and mother had made a promise that if their daughter got married, they would go to Char Dham. As promised, when he finished returning all the money, he went to the munimji and said, «I have returned everything to you». And the munimji welcomed him very nicely saying, «Yes, of course. You have returned everything. Here, sign.» He signed the paper that he had returned the money. The munimji said, «I will send you the paper by post.» He trusted him so much that he said, «Well, fine. No problem. We will not be here for a month.»



So, husband and wife went on the pilgrimage and when they came back after a month, the man got a letter from the court that he had to present himself in the court of Delhi because he had borrowed some money and had not returned it by the due date. He was shocked and said, «But, I did give all the money back. I did return all the money. Why did they send me this letter?» He was very nervous and went to the munimji's place. When he arrived there, the munimji welcomed him and said, «Ah you came back.» Then the headmaster said, «Listen, I returned the money to you and you told me that you would send me the signed paper. But look, I received this letter from the court.»

At that moment, the munimji became very angry and started saying, «We will see you in court because you have not returned the money.» He was lying and had changed completely saying, «If you don't return the money to me, I will confiscate your house. I will take everything from you.» Upon hearing this, the man became depressed, very hurt. He came home and told his wife about it. His wife said, «I told you. You should not have gone to such a cunning man.»

The headmaster was in a very depressed state. He went to all his friends and said to them, «You know that I have returned all the money to him and have not returned it. He is lying. What shall I do? Please, bear witness for me for that, because I have to go to the court. Who will bear witness for me?» The friends said, «No. We told you not to go there. We told you not to borrow money from that man and not to engage yourself with him.» All the friends denied him; they refused to help him. They all left him completely alone. He was so depressed that he said he would go and kill himself.



In such a depressed state he didn't know what to do. He started walking like mad, absent-minded, and didn't know where he going. So, he arrived on the main road that links Delhi to Agra. He was walking like a madman without looking left or right. At that moment there was a bus coming. He was crossing the road. The bus stopped. Of course, everybody was looking at what was wrong with this man, why was he walking on a busy road like that. He didn't say anything to anybody. He just went onto the bus not saying anything to anyone.

The bus driver was one of his students. When the bus driver was a child, this man used to be his teacher. So, the bus driver recognised him and started talking with him saying, «Ah, you are the headmaster.» He replied, «Yes, I am.» Then the driver started conversing with him and said, «I was your student. I studied under you when I was small and now I'm a bus driver.»

Then, the driver asked him, «Where are you going?» The headmaster said, «I don't know where I'm going. Anywhere.» At that moment the driver realised that there was a problem. That's why the headmaster had been walking so absent mindedly. So, he started asking him questions.

The headmaster started to tell him what had happened and the driver was very touched. So he started talking about Krishna and telling him about the glory of Lord Krishna. Of course, the headmaster knew about Krishna. Everybody in India knows about Krishna, but the headmaster hadn't shown much interest in Him before. So, here, the driver started telling him his experiences with the Lord.

The driver left the headmaster in Vrindavan and explained to him how to get to Banke Bilhari Temple: «Ask anybody, they will show you.» So, he went to the temple and he sat down. When he looked at Krishna, he was filled with peace and love. He was filled with this tremendous calmness inside him. First he was agitated and was very overwhelmed, and also depressed, but all of a sudden all of that disappeared. At that moment he had a deep realisation that everything would be okay, that everything would be fine. He sat there for hours and hours. It started to get dark, and suddenly he realised he had to go home. Before going home, he said, «I will take a dip in the Yamuna.» So, he went to the Yamuna river, took a dip in it and came out. With all his clothes wet he walked back to the bus station and took the bus back to his place.



When he was back at home, arriving late at night, he was constantly chanting the Name of Krishna. All the time he was singing the Name of Krishna, and he was joyful, he was blissful. When his wife saw him, she said, «My husband has gone mad. Due to that deep depression, deep worries, because he didn't know how to pay. I'm sure he has gone mad... he is finished.» But, that night he slept so well, without any worries.

The next morning, he went to the court of Delhi, and he felt very light. He went alone. In the court they showed him a paper and asked him, «Did you sign this?» He replied, «Yes, I signed it.» Then, the judge said, «This munimji said that he lent you money, but you have not returned it.»

The headmaster said, «No, I have returned the money to him.» And he told the whole story, and how the munimji had said to him that he would send the paper to him by mail. Of course, the judge knew what these munimjis were like, but he had just the document that this man had signed when the munimji lent him the money. So, the judge continued, «This munimji has the paper to prove that you have taken this money from him. When you return the money, you have to sign a document.» Then, the man said, «Yes, I signed that paper that I have returned all the money. He himself also signed the paper and he said that he would send me a copy of that signed paper, but he has not sent that copy to me yet.»

Of course, the judge knew inside himself that what the headmaster was saying was true. But, according to the law you need proof. The headmaster was standing in the court and the judge asked him, «Do you have any proof, anyone to bear witness to what you are saying to me?» At that moment he was taken with so much bhava inside him. He closed his eyes and he saw Banke Bihari. He saw the image of Banke Bihari and said, «Yes, I have. Banke Bihari is my witness.»

Of course, the Lord is a witness of everything. So, when he said that, of course, everybody started laughing. The judge had to ask the question, «What is the address of Banke Bihari?» He replied, «The address is Banke Bihari Mandir, Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh.»



When he gave this address, of course, everybody was making fun of him, because Banke Bihari is just a deity there. At that moment, the munimji was relieved, «No witness. He's gone mad.»

So, the court was adjourned for five days. He went home waiting for the five days to pass. Meanwhile, the court had to send a letter to tell Mr. Banke Bihari to come and to be a witness. They wrote a nice letter and sent the clerk of the court to go and deliver the letter to Mr. Banke Bihari. The clerk took the train from Delhi to Mathura. In Mathura he took a taxi to Vrindavan. In Vrindavan, when he got out of the taxi, he started looking for the address. A small boy, dark in colour, approached him and said, «Come, I will show you!» He took the hand of the man and pulled him to the temple of Banke Bihari. When he was in front of the temple, the temple was closed. Then the man said, «Well, it's closed. How can I go inside to give Mr. Banke Bihari the letter from the court telling Him to show up as a witness?» Then the little boy said, «Listen, Banke Bihari is resting right now. Nobody can go inside. Stick it on this door there! When Banke Bihari gets up, He will read your letter.» The man didn't know what to do. Finally, he said, «Okay.» He stuck the letter on the door and left. Meanwhile, the little boy had disappeared.

On the fourth day the headmaster went to Vrindavan. He knew that the witness he was referring to was Krishna and He is the only eternal witness of all. He only had Him as a witness, nobody else. He said, «Now, for sure I'm in deep trouble.» So, he went to Banke Bihari Temple, had darshan of Banke Bihari and sat there. As time passed he fell asleep. He was worried, thinking, «Who will come and bear witness for me in the court?» While he was sleeping, he had a dream. In that dream Banke Bihari appeared to him and said, «Listen my dear, you have come into My shelter. You have come to My place and asked Me for something. I can't refuse you. I will come. I will bear witness for you.»

At that moment he woke up. He woke up with so much love and bhava that he started singing and dancing, crazy for Krishna. He was so full with this bhava that he went back home joyfully. His wife saw him again and said, «This time he's had it. My husband is finished!»



The next day he went to Delhi. The munimji and all the others were there: the judge, the lawyers... And he was standing there but didn't have anybody with him. So, they asked him, «Have you brought the witness?» He kept quiet and didn't say anything. Of course, the munimji was sure that nobody would come. So, the headmaster closed his eyes, and looked down not knowing what to do nor what to say.

They called the name of the witness, «Mr. Banke Bihari!» One time, nothing! Second time, nothing! Third time, silence. And then, all of a sudden, in the deep silence behind the door they heard a voice saying, «Yes, I'm here!» At that moment everybody turned around. The door opened and everybody turned to look at Mr. Banke Bihari. When the door opened, a small boy came in. He was completely covered, even his head was covered with a black shawl. His head was down, and he was walking barefoot. He came in front of the judge and stood there.

Of course, everybody was curious to know who this boy was, who was this person. At that moment the little boy started telling everything in perfect detail, every single thing that had happened and he revealed where the crooked munimji had hidden the original signed document. At that moment the munimji's heart was beating so badly, because he knew that nobody else knew about this document. How come this small boy knew in perfect detail about everything? The judge asked the munimji and the munimji could not lie, so he said the truth.

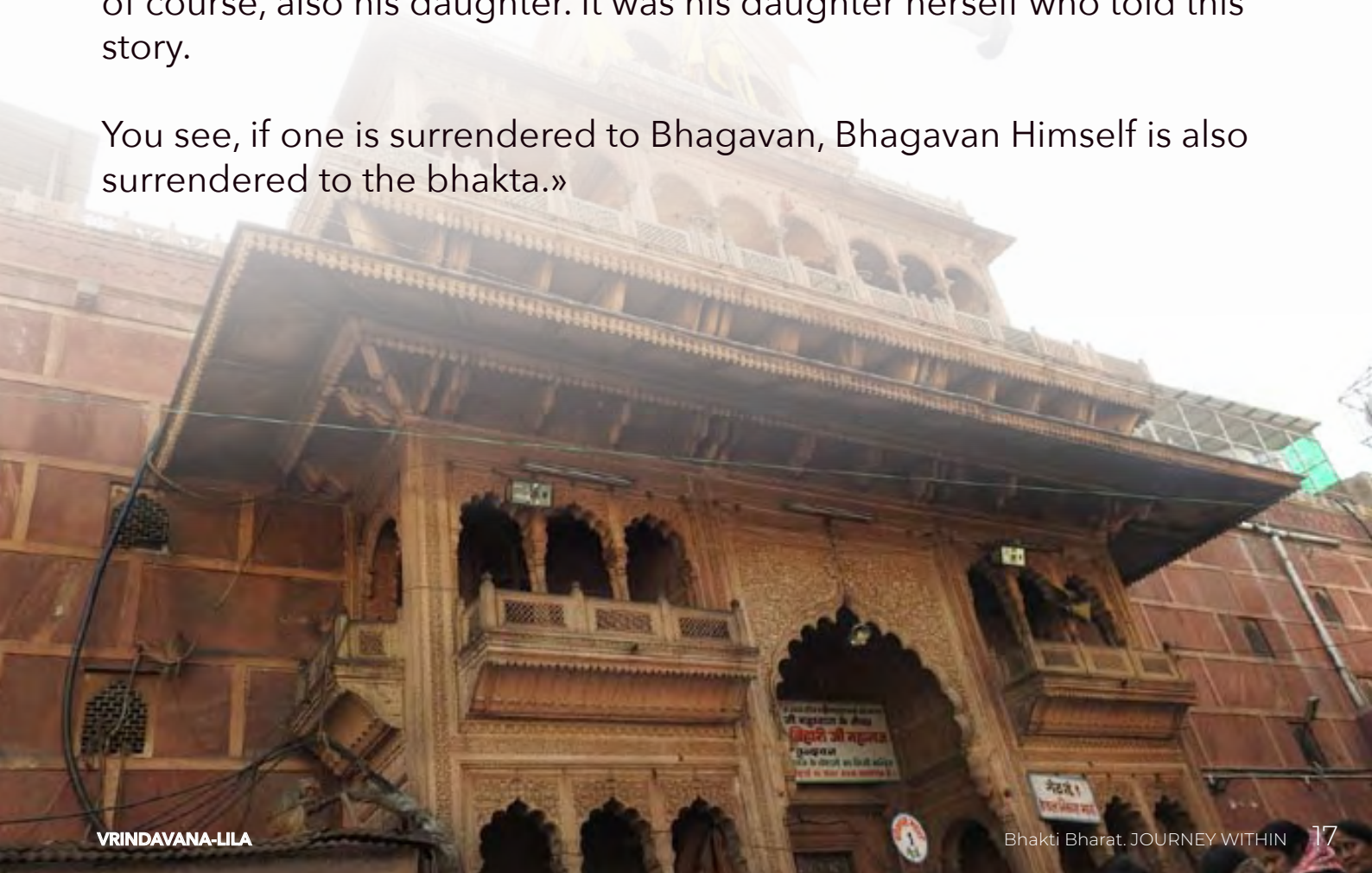




They all wanted to know who this Mr. Banke Bihari was. Even the judge wanted to know who was in front of him, because when He came in, everyone felt so much brightness and Love in the courtroom that they had never felt before. Of course, they could not see His face, because He had covered Himself. However, the headmaster knew that whoever was standing there was not a normal person.

It was Krishna Himself, as He had promised him. The judge wanted to see who He was, so he started asking, «Who are you?» The boy didn't say anything. Then, he continued asking, «Please, let me see you! Let me just see your face.» At that moment, the little boy just opened up the shawl in a way that only the judge could see His face. The judge had a pen in his hand and was writing. At that moment, when he looked at the boy's face, he was face to face with Krishna. His pen just fell down and he was completely emotional and taken aback. He didn't know what to do. At that moment, the little boy just disappeared leaving the black shawl on the floor. And, of course, this incident had also a great impact on the people in the court itself. On that day, the judge resigned from his job, renounced everything and went to live in Vrindavan. People started calling him «Judge Baba». On that day, the headmaster also didn't return home and went to live in Vrindavan. And, of course, also his daughter. It was his daughter herself who told this story.

You see, if one is surrendered to Bhagavan, Bhagavan Himself is also surrendered to the bhakta.»





# RADHA VALLABH

The Radha Vallabh Temple is a symbol of the pure love between Lord Krishna and Radha, who is the embodiment of the Rasa-bhakti ideal. Even though Radharani is the main revered deity here, throughout the entire temple, one cannot find a single murti of Radharani being separate from Krishna.

Radha Vallabh is a Svayambhu, a self-manifested deity. It is Radha and Krishna in Their united form. Next to the deity on the altar is a crown which represents Radha Herself, the highest form of bhakti, and only he who has a devotion to the Lord and purity in his heart can receive the darshan (blessings) of Radharani.

Sundardas Bhatnagar built the temple during the reign of Emperor Akbar the Great, in the late 16th century, on the money given by the Emperor himself.



Sundardas Bhatnagar had also got permission from Akbar to use red sandstone for the construction of the temple, which, at that time, was only used for the construction of imperial buildings, royal palaces, and fortresses. The descendants of Sundardas Bhatnagar are still the caretakers of the temple.

King Man Singh, the most trusted general of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, was the first who wanted to build this temple. However when he heard the legend that whoever did so would die within a year, he refused. What the legend said became true in the end: Sundardas Bhatnagar, who built the temple, died within a year of its completion of the temple.

# Day 2



# MAHAVATAR BABAJI



The mystical immortal yogi Mahavatar Babaji is known as the founder of all Kriya Yoga traditions. He comes as Guru to great spiritual Masters such as Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar Giri, Paramahansa Yogananda and Paramahansa Vishwananda.

Many people first got to know about Babaji in the late 19th century thanks to Paramahansa Yogananda and his book 'Autobiography of a Yogi', which had a significant impact on the proliferation of yoga and meditation in the West and influenced famous world innovators such as Steve Jobs.

## **'Autobiography of a Yogi' by Paramahansa Yogananda CHAPTER 33 'Babaji, the Yogi-Christ of Modern India'**

'The northern Himalayan crags near Badrinarayan are still blessed by the living presence of Babaji, guru of Lahiri Mahasaya. The secluded master has retained his physical form for centuries, perhaps for millenniums.

The deathless Babaji is an avatara. This Sanskrit word means 'descent'; its roots are ava, 'down', and tri, 'to pass'. In the Hindu scriptures, avatara signifies the descent of Divinity into flesh.

'Babaji's spiritual state is beyond human comprehension,' Sri Yukteswar explained to me. 'The dwarfed vision of men cannot pierce to his transcendental star. One attempts in vain even to picture the avatar's attainment. It is inconceivable.' <...>



An avatar is unsubject to the universal economy; his pure body, visible as a light image, is free from any debt to nature. The casual gaze may see nothing extraordinary in an avatar's form but it casts no shadow nor makes any footprint on the ground. These are outward symbolic proofs of an inward lack of darkness and material bondage. Such a God-man alone knows the Truth behind the relativities of life and death. Omar Khayyam, so grossly misunderstood, sang of this liberated man in his immortal scripture. <...>

Babaji's mission in India has been to assist prophets in carrying out their special dispensations. He thus qualifies for the scriptural classification of Mahavatar (Great Avatar). He has stated that he gave yoga initiation to Shankara, ancient founder of the Swami Order, and to Kabir, famous medieval saint. His chief nineteenth-century disciple was, as we know, Lahiri Mahasaya, revivalist of the lost Kriya art.





The Mahavatar is in constant communion with Christ; together they send out vibrations of redemption, and have planned the spiritual technique of salvation for this age. The work of these two fully-illuminated masters—one with the body, and one without it—is to inspire the nations to forsake suicidal wars, race hatreds, religious sectarianism, and the boomerang-evils of materialism.

Babaji is well aware of the trend of modern times, especially of the influence and complexities of Western civilization, and realizes the necessity of spreading the self-liberations of yoga equally in the West and in the East.

That there is no historical reference to Babaji need not surprise us. The great guru has never openly appeared in any century; the misinterpreting glare of publicity has no place in his millennial plans. Like the Creator, the sole but silent Power, Babaji works in a humble obscurity. <...> ‘Whenever anyone utters with reverence the name of Babaji,’ Lahiri Mahasaya said, ‘that devotee attracts an instant spiritual blessing.’

The deathless guru bears no marks of age on his body; he appears to be no more than a youth of twenty-five. Fair-skinned, of medium build and height, Babaji’s beautiful, strong body radiates a perceptible glow. His eyes are dark, calm, and tender; his long, lustrous hair is copper-colored.

A very strange fact is that Babaji bears an extraordinarily exact resemblance to his disciple Lahiri Mahasaya. The similarity is so striking that, in his later years, Lahiri Mahasaya might have passed as the father of the youthful-looking Babaji. <...>’



# GOPESHWAR mahadev





## From Swami Revatikaanta's satsang of March 15, 2021:

'Lord Narayana is the Supreme Lord, and Lord Shiva is the greatest bhakta, Narayana's devotee. This special devotion of Mahadev is highlighted in the lila, in which Lord Shiva became a gopi, Gopeshwar Mahadev.

There are several different versions of this story, and I will tell you the one that Guruji has often told us. So, one day, when Krishna was preparing to perform the Maha-Rasa-lila with His gopis (Rasa-lila is the highest level of bhakti), Mata Parvati was getting dressed to participate in that lila, and of course, Mahadev noticed it and started asking, what his wife was getting ready for. Parvati replied that she was planning to participate in the Rasa-lila and dance with Lord Krishna.

Having heard this, Mahadev became extatic, as he was the greatest bhakta of Lord Narayana, and it was the greatest pleasure for him to participate in His Rasa-lila. However, Parvati said that Shiva could not participate, as Krishna was the only man in the Rasa-lila. Even Balarama, Krishna's brother, could not join the lila. Shiva was not discouraged by this, and he decided to dress as a gopi. He made a very large and masculine gopi (laughing). So, he dressed in a sari, covered his face with a veil, and they both went to Vrindavan.

On the way there, Parvati told Shiva that he was not supposed to say anything, even if Krishna Himself would ask him anything, as in such a case everyone would know it was him.

They joined the dance, and Krishna, who was Antaryami (the indweller of every single being), of course, knew everything. He approached Parvati and said: 'Mata Parvati, it's so nice that you have come. Who have you brought along with you?' Parvati replied: 'Oh, it's just a girl that I met on my way here. She is very modest and shy. Don't mind her.'

But Krishna was playing His game :) He started walking around that 'girl' saying how beautiful she was and asking her to show Him her face, tell Him her name... Meanwhile, Parvati was getting nervous)). Krishna asked this new gopi for a dance.



There is this dance called Tandava. When Shiva is dancing Tandava, the universe is destroyed. Only Shiva and Lord Narayana know this dance. So, they were dancing, and Shiva was trying to control himself not to forget who he was, but at a certain moment Krishna performed a move from the Tandava dance, and Lord Shiva, in the bhava of dancing with his beloved Lord, forgot where he was, and repeated that Tandava dance movement.

So Krishna said: 'Aha! I got you! There's only one person, who can dance like this, apart from Myself, and that is Lord Shiva! So you must be none other than Mahadev himself!' Of course, Shiva had to reveal himself, and Krishna was happy to see him.

It was a Divine play between the utmost devotee of the Lord - Shiva - and his Beloved Lord.

So, thousands of years ago, Vajranabh, the great grandson of Krishna, installed a Shiva-lingam in Vrindavan. 'Gopeshwar Mahadev' means 'the Lord of all gopis'. This deity is dressed in a sari. There is this tradition in Vrindavan: when you arrive there, the first temple you should visit and pray in the Gopeshwar Mahadev Temple. You need to ask for a blessing from the topmost devotee of the Lord. Firstly, we have to become such devotees as Shiva was. Only later, when we accept all these qualities of the devotee as our own, we can connect to Lord Narayana.'





# VAMSHI VAT

One day Krishna was sitting on a branch of a banyan tree, playing His flute, and calling Radha and the gopis to join Him in the Rasa dance – the sweetest of all His transcendental pastimes...

'Vamsi' means 'flute' and 'vat' means 'banyan tree'. As you enter Vamshi Vat, you see a tree and the main altar with Radha Krishna deities to the left of it. Around the courtyard, there are murtis of Srila Vyasadeva, Sukadeva Goswami and Asuri Muni. On the right from the main altar, there is a murti of Lord Brahma and Gopeshwar Mahadev (Shiva in the form of a gopi).

The great-grandson of Sri Krishna installed the deity of Gopinath (the form of Krishna as the Lord of the gopis) here 5,000 years ago. The temple officials fearing Muslim raids buried Gopinath in the roots of this banyan tree. However, during a flood, the water current eroded

the soil around that tree, breaking it and carrying it away. In Vrindavan, there lived a saint named Madhu Pandit. At that moment, during the flood, he was in Vamshi Vat singing bhajans to Radha Krishna.

Having seen the tree being taken away by the current, Madhu Pandit rushed after it and managed to break off one branch. He planted that branch and discovered the murti of Gopinath in place of the tree. The branch that he planted grew into the banyan tree, that is still there today.





The deity of Gopinath is now in Jaipur, it was taken there several centuries ago in fear of the Mughal invasions. Gopinath is the sweetest form of Krishna, and Madhu Pandit because he worshipped Gopinath, became as sweet himself. People who came here to listen to him chanting and glorifying the names of God would start crying and their hearts would melt. The saint was an incarnation of Mandali gopi. Here, he praised and glorified the Lord for many years, and here he went into samadhi.



## THE THREE MURTIS OF LORD KRISHNA



About 5,000 years ago, Lord Krishna's great-grandson Brajranabh wanted to make an exact replica of the Lord, his great-grandfather. After receiving proper instructions from his grandmother Uttara, the mother of Parikshit, about His likeness, the young 13-year-old boy set to work.

- \* The first murti he made had only the lower part of the body like Lord Krishna. And this first murti was named Madan Mohan.
- \* Brajranabh made the second murti, but that too did not turn out to be completely Krishna-like, but only the chest. The Lord in this form is called Gopinath.
- \* Then Brajranabh made the third murti, looking at which Uttara blushed and said that this is how Lord Krishna looked! Krishna in this form became known as Govind Dev Ji.

All three murtis were originally installed in Vrindavan. But as the centuries passed, the glory of Vrindavan was almost forgotten. By the XVI century, the city was overgrown with dense forest, and with that, all three murtis were lost. The appearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the early XVI century led to the restoration of the holy place, and one way or another, the murtis were again revealed to Chaitanya's devotees. Later, during the Mughal expansion, in the XVII century, they were taken out of Vrindavan by the Rajputs.





# RADHA GOPINATH

One day Krishna was sitting on a branch of a banyan tree, playing His flute, and calling Radha and the gopis to join Him in the Rasa dance - the sweetest of all His transcendental pastimes...

Gopinath is an unbelievably sweet form of Krishna. The deity of Gopinath, the Lord of all gopis, was originally established in Vamshi Vat, Vrindavan, by the great-grandson of Lord Krishna. The temple officials fearing Muslim raids buried Gopinath in the roots of the very same banyan tree.

In 1502, during a flood, the water current eroded the soil around that tree, breaking it and carrying it away.

In Vrindavan, there lived a saint named Madhu Pandit. At that moment, during the flood, he was in Vamshi Vat singing bhajans to Radha Krishna. Having seen the tree being taken away by the current, Madhu Pandit rushed after it and managed to break off one branch. He got back to plant that branch and discovered the murti of Gopinath in place of the tree that had been taken away by the current. The branch that he planted grew into the banyan tree, that is still there today.

Nowadays the deity of Gopinath is located in Jaipur. He was taken from Vrindavan to Radha Kund in 1669 and then to Jaipur in 1775. The sacred pearl garment usually worn by Sri Madhu Pandit was also taken to Jaipur and is now displayed in a temple room.





# RADHA RAMAN, GOPAL BHATTA GOSWAMI SAMADHI PLACE

Sri Radha Raman Temple is dedicated to Radha Krishna, and this is one of the favorite temples of Vrindavan devotees. If Banke Bihari means "one who enjoys", the name Radha Raman means "one who gives pleasure to Radha". Just like Bihariji, the deity of Radha Raman is also Svayambhu, or Sri Radha Raman self-manifested one. On Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's instructions, Gopal Bhatta Goswami went to the Kali Gandaki River in Nepal. There, he found 12 Shaligrams, the physical manifestation of Lord Narayana, but on his way back to Vrindavan, he realised that he was not worthy of serving the Shaligrams and again went to the Kali-Gandaki Valley to return them back.

As soon as Gopal Bhatta Goswami wanted to release them into the river, the Shaligrams were jumping back into his hands. Recognizing God's will, he brought the Shaligrams back to Vrindavan, where he began to worship and serve them with deep devotion. Still, his desire to worship the Divine form of the Lord, an image that could be fed, touch and dressed, grew stronger and stronger as the years passed. So one morning, Gopala Bhatta Goswami found that the basket where the Shaligrams normally rested was open. Looking inside, he discovered that eleven Shaligrams were in their original form, and the twelfth one turned into a beautiful black murti of Radha Krishna.

Sri Radha Raman appearance place is in the Radha-Raman Temple, next to the samadhi of Gopala Bhatta. Gopal Bhatta Goswami's other saligram-shilas are also worshiped on the altar here. Radha-Ramanji is one of the few original Deities of the Goswamis which are still in Vrindavan. The standard of worship in this temple is very high.





Although there is no Deity of Radha in this temple, the name of Radharani is worshiped in this temple, invoking her love and devotion for the Lord. There is a golden plate next to Krishna, which has the name of Radharani engraved into it.

Gopala Bhatta Goswami was one of the six Goswamis of Vrindavan, the closest disciples of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, but he always maintained meekness and humility. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu loved him so much that he gave Gopal Bhatta his own belt, a kaupina (cloth) and asana (seat) that he used. These relics are still present in the temple and are brought out to be seen by the public for six days a year.

Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami left his body in 1585 (according to other sources in 1578). His samadhi is located behind the Radha Raman Temple.

## NIDHIVAN

Nidhivan is the garden, where Krishna, Radha and the gopis dance the Rasa Dance. Here, in Vrindavan, in the Nidhivan Garden, every night a game of great Love is played, the Rasa-lila, in its utmost expression.

After the evening arati, everyone, including the service people, leave the garden and the temple. Even birds and animals leave Nidhivan, and not a bird call, not the local chipmunk's whistle can be heard.

The trees of Nidhivan grow in pairs, very low, entangling and snuggling up to the earth. Even Tulsi grows in pairs here. In the evening, the trees turn into gopis and dance the Rasa Dance, and in the morning, they freeze again in tight embraces. When someone tried to take a leaf or a part of those trees, they faced certain consequences.



Inside Nidhivan, there is a small palace called Rang Mahal. Here, a sandalwood bed is prepared for Radha and Krishna every night. When the doors are opened in the morning, it is obvious that They took rest on this bed.

No one is allowed to watch this dance, even from the distance. Those who tried to hide themselves in the garden for the night, went blind, lost their mental balance or left the body soon afterwards. People, who live nearby, close their windows after the sounds of the evening arati, or even have sealed their windows with bricks. Nidhivan is also a place where the grate saint of Vrindavan - Sri Haridasji - lived and found the deity of Bankey Bihari.



## seva kunja

Seva Kunja is also called Nikunjvan. This is the place of Rasa-lila and here Lord Krishna serves Srimati Radharani. The walls of the temple are decorated with paintings. On one of them, Krishna combs and decorates Radha's hair. On the other one, Lord Krishna massages the feet of Radha, who is tired from dancing. On some other paintings, Radha and Krishna are playing with colours together with the gopis...



# Day 3



# MATHURA

Mathura is the place where the glorious lila of the Lord began. Here the birth of the baby Krishna took place, and it is also where He came back years later.

**Sri Krishna Janmasthan Temple** is built around the prison cell where Lord Krishna's parents, Mata Devaki and Vasudeva, were locked up by His uncle Kamsa. It was in this prison that baby Krishna came to this world.

**Sri Dwarkadhish Temple** is one of the most sacred temples in Mathura, and is known for its sophisticated architecture and paintings. Built in 1814, the temple is relatively new but is highly respected. The temple is dedicated to Lord Dwarkadhish, a form of Lord Krishna known as Dwarkanath, King of Dwaraka.

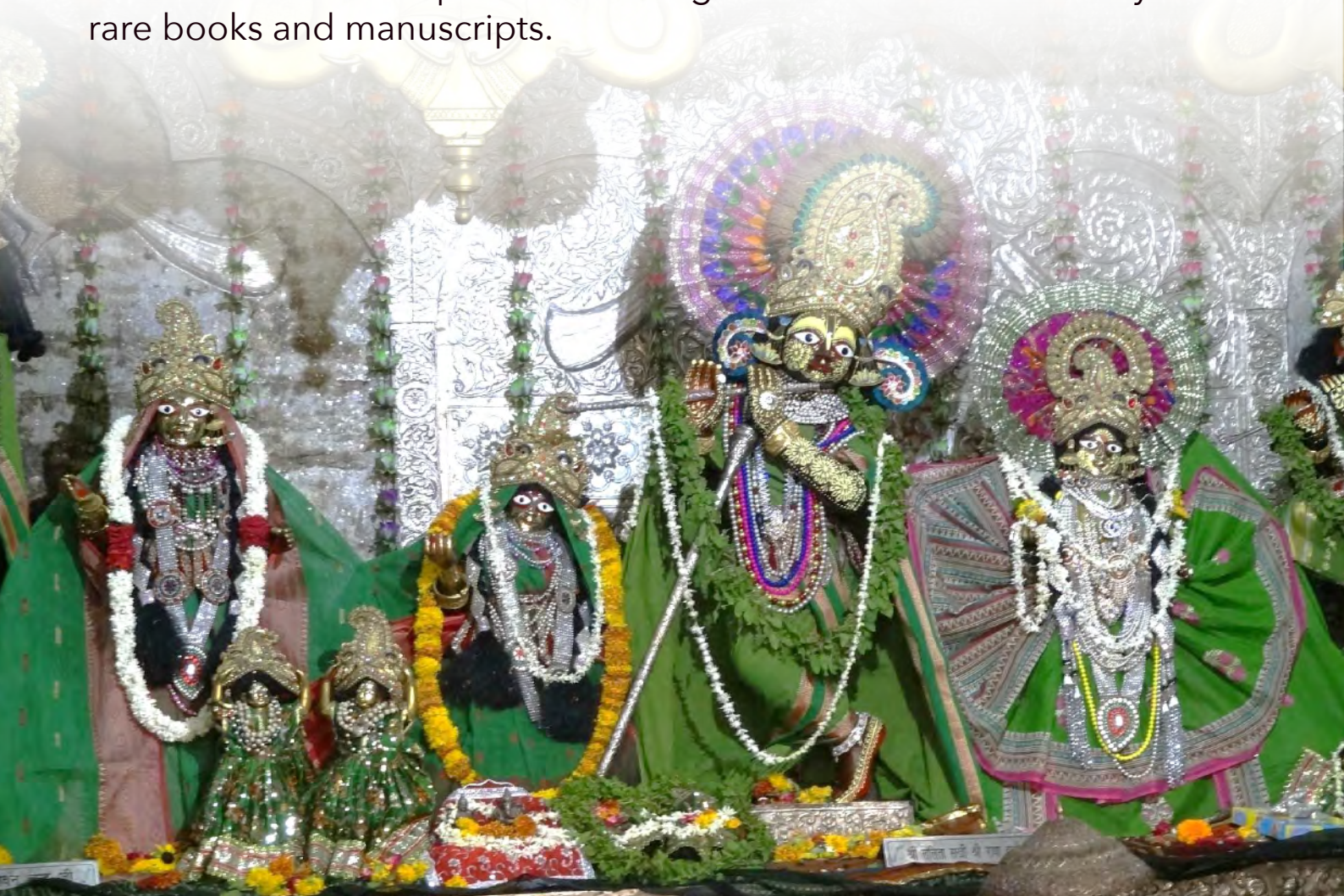




# RADHA DAMODARA

Jiva Goswami installed the deities of Radha Damodara in 1542 here. During the Muslim expansion, they moved the deities to Rajasthan under the protection of the Rajputs. Not all the deities of Vrindavan have returned to their native places; in some temples they now worship newly made murtis. But Radha Damodara had returned to Vrindavan. In the inner courtyard of the temple complex, there are many mandirs dedicated to samadhi of Srila Jiva Goswami, Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami, Srila Bhakti Pramode Puri Goswami and some other saints. The deities of this temple were carved by one of the 6 most famous Goswamis of Vrindavan - Shрила Rupa Goswami. Srila Rupa Goswami's Samadhi and Bhajan Kutir are also located at Radha Damodar Mandir.

Near the Samadhi of Rupa Goswami in this temple is the place where Jiva Goswami used to wash his feet. Radha Damodara Temple has become famous as a place of learning due to its extensive library of rare books and manuscripts.





## RADHA SHYAMASUNDARA

On the altar we can see big deities of Sri Radha Shyamasundara, which appeared more later than the main deities. The original small deities of Sri Radha Shyamasundara are standing on the right side of the altar. Deity of Shyamasundara was given by Srimati Radharani Herself to the Saint Shyamananda Prabhu, whose name was Dukhi Krishna at that time.

### **Swami Vishwaparantapananda:**

'In Switzerland I was telling the story of Dukhi Krishna, who is Shyamananda Prabhu, you remember? Dukhi Krishna was born in Calcutta. And when he was born, they knew that he was different, you know? So at the age of twelve, he heard there was a famous guru in Mayapur. He knew inside his heart, He is the guru for him. So he wanted to go there, but as being so young, he could not go. So at the age of twelve, he ran away to the feet of his guru. So when he reached Mayapur, his gurudev accepted him. And his duty was to water the plants. He had to walk a lot, fetching the water on his head.



So throughout his life, throughout his service, he had a tremendous joy of serving his master. So much so, that he forgot about himself - in his mind, there was only his guru.

There was no himself. So he was walking everyday, serving him. During that time, on his head, he got some wounds, and the wounds got infected, and as he was walking past the guru, there were worms in the infected area and they fell down.

The guru called him and said, 'My dear, you have worms on your head, you have hurt yourself.' Only at that moment did he realise that he was hurt. Because for him, it was not about himself, it was about the guru, serving the master.

So, because of that love, the guru was very touched and very pleased. So with his yogic shakti, he healed him instantly and he embraced him. Saying, 'You have served me well all these years. You have never asked me for anything.' And he replied to the guru, 'My life is to serve you, I have surrendered to you. I have taken shelter at your feet, not to please myself, but to please you. You are the only one that I aim for.'

Then the guru was so touched and so pleased that he said to him, 'Your service to me here in Mayapur is finished now. I want you to carry on your service in Vrindavan.'

So he sent him to Vrindavan. This was in the 1600's or something. He sent him to Vrindavan and said to him, 'When you are in Vrindavan, I want you to sweep the floor on the path to Nidhivan.' Nidhivan is where Lord Krishna is still doing the Rasa-lila. Because this lila, it happens even now, every night, and the gopis are dancing with Krishna. So he said to him, 'Go there and sweep the floors, and serve me there.'

So when Dukhi Krishna went to Vrindavan he was constantly always thinking of his gurudev, nothing else. And he was sweeping the floor with so much joy. He never once asked 'Why am I doing this?'. He never asked 'Which kind of seva should I do?'. The guru had instructed, and without thinking, he was serving.



So as he was cleaning one day, he found an anklet. Looking at this anklet with diamonds and gold, he was thinking, 'To whom could that belong? Such a precious thing can only belong to a queen.' And to his knowledge, there was no queen visiting Vrindavan during that time. So there was only one queen left, that's Srimati Radharani. She's the only queen there now. So he was wondering, he was thinking about it, holding the anklet.

At that moment, in the other dimension, Radharani was returning from the Ras, and She noticed that Her anklet was missing from Her foot. So She turned to Lalita and said, 'Lalita, when we were dancing, one of My anklets fell down, go and get it back. I can't go back to My house, otherwise the people will ask Me, 'where did You lose Your anklet?''

You see, you have to understand that in the other dimension, the whole lila is still happening continuously. So Lalita appeared into the physical world again, of course not in her true form, she changed into the form as a young girl. So she saw that Dukhi Krishna was holding the anklet. So she went and said, 'Please give me this anklet, this belongs to my mistress. Give it to me.'

Of course, when Dukhi Krishna held the anklet in his hand, he felt that it is not a normal anklet, it surely belonged to Srimati Radharani. So he said, 'No. I will not give it to you.' Then he said, 'If your mistress has lost it, tell Her to come and get it Herself. Then I will give it back.'

So she insisted, but Dukhi Krishna insisted back. He was very stubborn not to give it. Lalita, thought, 'Okay, I can't change him.' So she went back into the other world and said to Radharani, 'Difficult situation my dear. There is this guy down there, he has got Your anklet, and he doesn't want to give it up. I even fought with him, but he doesn't want to give it, and he said that You should come and get it.' Radharani said, 'How can I go there?' But how can She also go home without the anklet? So it was a big dilemma. So Srimati Radharani said, 'Okay fine, let's go.'

They appeared back again into this physical world but in disguise. So when She materialized with Lalita, they came to Dukhi Krishna, and said to him, 'Please give Me My anklet, that's Mine. Look, the other one is on My foot, give Me the second one back.'





Dukhi Krishna said, 'No.' He said, 'I know who You are.' She said, 'What do you mean?' And Dukhi Krishna said, 'Well I would like to see Your true form, so please show me Your true form, then I will give the anklet back.' Then Radharani tried to say, 'Are you crazy? What are you talking about? Which true form are you talking about?'

At that moment, he knew that deep inside of himself, through the guru's grace, through the guru kripa, he had the insight of who was in front of him. So, She didn't have any choice and at that moment She appeared in Her true aspect in front of him. And Srimati Radharani pulled up Her foot, Her leg, and asked Dukhi Krishna to tie the anklet back onto Her feet. When he did that, he was in deep ecstasy, he was in deep bhav. So Sri Radharani gave him the name Shyamananda. And with the anklet, She touched it to his forehead, leaving a mark. So when Sri Radharani disappeared, this mark was still there. He tried to remove it, but he could not, so this became the guru dot.

Through the guru's grace, he received the grace of Sri Radharani, he received the grace of God, only through the guru's grace, only through serving, with single-minded devotion to the guru. Even if he had never been initiated into any mantra, nothing, but only by the adesh, only by the instruction of the guru, and the love, the love and the service that he had for the guru, attained one of the highest form of devotion.

There's another time when Srimati Radharani appeared to him, and from Her heart, She gave the daity of Shyamasundar to him. So this is just a reminder, that only through service, single-minded devotion to the master, one attains the grace of the Lord.

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In a courtyard of the temple, you can find a place of Samadhi of Sri Shyamananda and exactly that place of his meeting with Srimati Radharani and Her sakhi Lalita (on the photo).





## MIRABAI KUTIR

Mirabai is the famous Indian Saint, who has spent a part of her life in Vrindavan.

Mirabai was born in approximately 1500 year into a royal family in Rajasthan. When she was three years old, a sadhu came to their house. He had a murti Giridhari Gopal. And when little Mirabai saw Giridhari, she began to cry and beg Him for herself. The saint didn't know if he should give Him to her. But at night Krishna Himself came to him in a dream and said that this was the purpose of his coming here - to give Giridhari Gopal Mirabai. And in the morning the saint gave his murti to the little princess. As she was growing older, she became so attached to Krishna that she decided to make Him her friend, lover and husband for life.

At the insistence of her family, Mirabai has married a young prince from a kshatriya family, but despite her marriage, she was always focused on worshipping Krishna.



This deep attachment to Krishna was not to the liking of her family. There were a few attempts to kill her, but all attempts were thwarted by the boundless love of Mira for Krishna and Krishna for her. Mirabai's poetry reflects the moments of miracles in her life.

**'I dance with ankle-bells on my feet.  
People say I am mad; my mother-in-law  
said I ruined the family reputation.  
Rana sent me a cup of poison and I drank it laughing.  
I dedicate my body and soul at the Feet of Hari.  
I am thirsty for the nectar of the sight of Him.  
My Lord is Giridhar Nagar; I will  
come for refuge to Him.'**

**Mirabai**

She invariably signed all her poems: 'Giridhar Gopal'. Over time, the situation at home deteriorated, until one day Mirabai went to Vrindavan and stopped at the place where her temple is now located.

On the altar are Radha Manohara, and to the left of the deities is the deity Mirabai singing bajan. There, on the altar, is the Shaligram, into which the snake turned after her touch. To the right of the altar is a small room where she lived.

Mirabai once came to Saint Jiva Goswami to receive darshan. He refused to accept her, saying that he does not communicate with women. But Mirabai replied: 'In Vrindavan, all women and only Giridhar Gopal - Purusha (male)! But I just found out today that there is another Purusha besides Krishna.'

Jiva Goswami was amazed. He understood that Mirabai is a parama-bhakta, a great devotee of the Lord.



# SHALIGRAM TEMPLE

A specific Shaligram rock known as Sawaman (48 kg) was discovered in the Gandaki River, and it is currently venerated in the temple of Vrindavan.

According to the temple priest, one devotee of the Lord from Nepal received divine instructions during a period of penance. In a dream, he was commanded to retrieve a large Shaligrama rock from the Gandaki River and transport it to Vrindavan. Following the guidance, the saint located the rock in the river, fashioned a bamboo pannier, placed the Shaligram Shila in it, and journeyed to Vrindavan. The temple, situated prominently in the city center, became the sacred abode for the Shaligram Shila.

Legend has it that the worship of a single Shaligrama stone was deemed incomplete. Once, a saint from the same temple dreamt that another immense Shaligrama enshrined in Sitaram Bagh, Hyderabad, was also incomplete, as Tulsi wasn't available there. Consequently, this Shaligrama was brought to Vrindavan and consecrated in the temple.



# NITAI GAURANGA

Nitai-Gaur are the deities of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (Gaur) and Nitai, his closest associate, in their child form. Nitai Gauranga Temple is located near Loi Bazar in Vrindavan. Here saint Pishima (or Chandrashashi, as her parents called her) lived and served the deities for many years.

She saw these Nitai-Gaur deities for the first time in Suri when she was 20 years old. Chandrashashi was passing through Suri and got so attached to Nitai-Gaur that she could not return back to her village. Furthermore, they did not want to let her go either.

One night she had a dream in which the deities appeared to her in the form of little boys and told her that they were very hungry and wanted her to feed them kheer. In the morning, Chandrashashi was already at the temple with sweet rice for her sons.

A few days later, when she was about to leave Suri to go home, she had another dream in which Nitai-Gaur begged her not to leave because otherwise, they would remain hungry. They were naughty, kept tugging at her skirt and even tore off a piece of it. When Chandrashashi woke up, she saw that a piece of her skirt had been torn off. The missing part was found by the pujari of the temple in the hands of the Gaura deity. From that moment on, she no longer tried to return home.

After a while, Pishima, following the instructions of Nitai-Gaur, moved with them to Vrindavan, which is 1,500 kilometres away. Here, she built a new temple for them.

When Pishima grew old and could no longer look after her Nitai-Gaur, other people served them, but she always knew if everything was done as it should have been because her children would tell her everything. One morning they were bathed in cold water. Pishima saw that the deities got a cold and runny noses. She scolded Gopeshwar Goswami, who was serving in the temple, and dabbed the deities' noses with a handkerchief to show that they had caught a cold due to his carelessness.



When Pishima first asked Gopeshwar Goswami to take up the service of Nitai-Gaur, he complained that he did not have the same parental affection as she did, and therefore did not consider himself worthy to serve them. Rather, he perceived Nitai-Gaur as his friends, but they were too small for such friendship. Then Pishima approached the deities, pulled their chins, and they immediately grew to their current size.





# Day 4





# Yamuna-DEVI

Yamuna is the daughter of Surya, the sun god, and Sanjna, the cloud goddess. She is also the twin sister to Yama, the god of death. Sanjna could not stand the sun heat and dazzling radiance of her husband and closed her eyes in his presence. Surya said that their son would be known as Yama. After that, Sanjna did her best to keep her eyes open; however, she could not help blinking, and Surya again said that her daughter would be Yamuna. As Sanjna was trying to keep her eyes open, Yamuna was blessed to be worshipped as a goddess and remembered in all times.

Yamuna-devi plays an important role in early lilas of Lord Krishna. When Vasudeva, Krishna's father, took his newborn son from Mathura to a safe place, he crossed Yamuna by foot. Vasudeva was praying to Yamuna-devi to give way to him, but she raised her waters higher and higher instead. Finally, when he was seized with fear that they would drown with little Krishna together, Yamuna touched the foot of Sri Hari and moved back that same moment. That was the first time when she touched Him.

Scriptures explain the dark color of Yamuna and her second name Kalindi.

Srimad Bhagavatam (Canto 10, Chapters 16 and 17) narrates about a thousand-headed serpent Kaliya hiding in Yamuna's waters, in the fear of being eaten by Garuda, Sriman Narayana's vahana. His venom and the venom of his numerous family immediately contaminated the water, and it became black.

No one dared to enter it or even come close to the river. The wind started carrying around the smallest drops of water from the river, and everything alive started dying around it. This made Yamuna-devi very sad.

At that time, Sri Krishna jumped into the river. Kaliya started pouring streams of venom on Him, irritated that his rest had been disturbed. Sri Krishna was dancing on his hoods inflated with anger. When any head of the serpent dared to rise, Gopal kicked it with His Lotus Foot.





Kaliya was saved from death by his wives, who began to pray to Krishna, and Krishna told the entire Naag family to move to the ocean. When Kaliya was preoccupied with the fact that the waters of the holy river would not protect him anymore, and Garuda would for sure eat him in the ocean, Krishna said that, as of that moment, there would be footprints of His Lotus Feet on each of the snake's heads, and no one would dare to touch Kaliya.

After that, Yamuna-devi's wish to participate in sweet lilas of Lord Krishna came true, and she remained dark to be the same color as her beloved Krishna.





The first 16 years of His life, Lord Krishna spent on the shores of Yamuna, playing with Radha and the gopis in her waters and grazing cows on her shores.

Srimad Bhagavatam (Canto 10, Chapter 58) says that once, when He already was the King of Dwaraka, Krishna visited His cousins, the Pandavas, in their capital Indraprastha located on the shore of Yamuna. So, Krishna and Arjuna, the middle brother from the five Pandavas, were walking in the forest and decided to go to Yamuna to bathe in it. There, they saw a beautiful young girl. Krishna asked Arjuna to find out who she was and invite her over to Them. The girl told Arjuna that her name was Kalindi (another name of Yamuna-devi), that she was the daughter of Surya and lived in a house built by her father there on the river. Kalindi also said she had been performing penance to become the wife of Maha Vishnu, and would not leave that place until the Lord Himself would come for her.

Arjuna conveyed this message to Krishna, and the Lord, satisfied by the penance of the beautiful girl, fulfilled her wish and made her His wife.

Yamuna is the main tributary of the Ganga River.

Once Yamuna was encircling Vrindavan, but today it only touches it, leaving numerous dried ancient ghats on both shores. Pilgrims still come to these ancient ghats and cover their heads with sand, which is considered equal to bathing in Yamuna.

Around Vrindavan, there is not a single stone in Yamuna. Its bottom is extremely soft and warm. Here, her love to Lord Krishna became so hot that it melted everything it touched, even stones.

## KESHI GHAT

Keshi Ghat is a famous ghat located in the North-Eastern part of Vrindavan. Here, Lord Krishna killed the Keshi-demon in the form of a giant horse. This is one of the most popular bathing places in Vrindavan. Every evening, an arati to Yamuna-devi is held here.



# KALIYA GHAT

Sometime long ago, this was part of Yamuna, where now there is Kaliya Ghat. Once Eagle Garuda, Sriman Narayana's vahana, was flying over this place with a pot of Amrita. He landed on a tree on the river shore to take a rest, and drops of the Divine nectar fell on the branches of this tree making it immortal. Garuda saw a large fish in the river, flew to the water, caught it and ate it. This fish was the king of all fishes, and the other fish in the water expressed dissatisfaction to Garuda.

Not far from that place, Saubhari Muni was performing penance; he had been standing in the water reaching his neck for many years. The fish addressed him for justice, and Saubhari Muni cursed Garuda saying: 'If you try to approach this place, next time your head will fall off'. Garuda did not pay specific attention to this and flew away, but, due to this curse, the waters of Yamuna became home to many serpents, who found shelter there from the Divine Eagle Garuda.

The venomous serpent Kaliya lived on the Ramanaka Island. On that island, serpents lived calmly, as they would give fruit offerings to Garuda every year.

Kaliya became puffed up, ate all the offerings himself and sent a challenge to Garuda. They started fighting, and soon Kaliya realized that he could not beat Garuda and rushed to the Yamuna waters for safety. He knew about the curse of Saubhari Muni and that Garuda would not be able to reach that place.

With time, Kaliya's venom poisoned the waters of the Yamuna. Smallest drops of water spread the venom by air, and soon everything alive on the shores also died. Everything, except for the tree, where Garuda had rested. Later, having heard the prayers of Yamuna-devi, Krishna jumped into water from that tree and released Yamuna from the venomous serpent.



## Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 10, Chapter 16

### **Text 8:**

Kṛṣṇa began sporting in Kāliya's lake like a lordly elephant – swirling His mighty arms and making the water resound in various ways. When Kāliya heard these sounds, he understood that someone was trespassing in his lake. The serpent could not tolerate this and immediately came forward.

### **Text 9:**

Kāliya saw that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who wore yellow silken garments, was very delicate, His attractive body shining like a glowing white cloud, His chest bearing the mark of Śrīvatsa, His face smiling beautifully and His feet resembling the whorl of a lotus flower. The Lord was playing fearlessly in the water. Despite His wonderful appearance, the envious Kāliya furiously bit Him on the chest and then completely enwrapped Him in his coils.

### **Text 10:**

When the members of the cowherd community, who had accepted Kṛṣṇa as their dearest friend, saw Him enveloped in the snake's coils, motionless, they were greatly disturbed. They had offered Kṛṣṇa everything – their very selves, their families, their wealth, wives and all pleasures. At the sight of the Lord in the clutches of the Kāliya snake, their intelligence became deranged by grief, lamentation and fear, and thus they fell to the ground.

### **Text 11:**

The cows, bulls and female calves, in great distress, called out piteously to Kṛṣṇa. Fixing their eyes on Him, they stood still in fear, as if ready to cry but too shocked to shed tears.

**Text 16:**

The Supreme Lord Balarāma, the master of all transcendental knowledge, smiled and said nothing when He saw the residents of Vṛndāvana in such distress, since He understood the extraordinary power of His younger brother.

**Text 22:**

Lord Balarāma then saw that Nanda Mahārāja and the other cowherd men, who had dedicated their very lives to Kṛṣṇa, were beginning to enter the serpent's lake. As the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Balarāma fully knew Lord Kṛṣṇa's actual power, and therefore He restrained them.

**Text 23:**

The Lord remained for some time within the coils of the serpent, imitating the behavior of an ordinary mortal. But when He understood that the women, children and other residents of His village of Gokula were in acute distress because of their love for Him, their only shelter and goal in life, He immediately rose up from the bonds of the Kāliya serpent.

**Text 24:**

His coils tormented by the expanding body of the Lord, Kāliya released Him. In great anger the serpent then raised his hoods high and stood still, breathing heavily. His nostrils appeared like vessels for cooking poison, and the staring eyes in his face like firebrands. Thus the serpent looked at the Lord.

**Text 25:**

Again and again Kāliya licked his lips with his bifurcated tongues as He stared at Kṛṣṇa with a glance full of terrible, poisonous fire. But Kṛṣṇa playfully circled around him, just as Garuḍa would play with a snake. In response, Kāliya also moved about, looking for an opportunity to bite the Lord.

**Text 26:**

Having severely depleted the serpent's strength with His relentless circling, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the origin of everything, pushed down Kāliya's raised shoulders and mounted his broad serpentine heads. Thus Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the original master of all fine arts, began to dance, His lotus feet deeply reddened by the touch of the numerous jewels upon the serpent's heads.

**Text 28:**

My dear King, Kāliya had 101 prominent heads, and when one of them would not bow down, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who inflicts punishment on cruel wrong-doers, would smash that stubborn head by striking it with His feet. Then, as Kāliya entered his death throes, he began wheeling his heads around and vomiting ghastly blood from his mouths and nostrils. The serpent thus experienced extreme pain and misery.

**Text 30:**

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 Personality of Godhead, the supreme master of all moving and nonmoving beings, Śrī Nārāyaṇa. Thus within his mind Kāliya took shelter of the Lord.

**Text 31:**

When Kāliya's wives saw how the serpent had become so fatigued from the excessive weight of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who carries the entire universe in His abdomen, and how Kāliya's umbrellalike hoods had been shattered by the striking of Kṛṣṇa's heels, they felt great distress. With their clothing, ornaments and hair scattered in disarray, they then approached the eternal Personality of Godhead.

**Text 33:**

The wives of the Kāliya serpent said: The punishment this offender has been subjected to is certainly just. After all, You have incarnated within this world to curb down envious and cruel persons. You are so impartial that You look equally upon Your enemies and Your own sons, for when You impose a punishment on a living being You know it to be for his ultimate benefit.

**Text 36:**

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.

**Text 37:**

Those who have attained the dust of Your lotus feet never hanker for the kingship of heaven, limitless sovereignty, the position of Brahmā or rulership over the earth. They are not interested even in the perfections of yoga or in liberation itself.



**Text 39:**

We offer our obeisances unto You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although present in the hearts of all living beings as the Supersoul, You are all-pervasive. Although the original shelter of all created material elements, You exist prior to their creation. And although the cause of everything, You are transcendental to all material cause and effect, being the Supreme Soul.

**Text 52:**

O Supreme Lord, please be merciful. It is proper for the saintly to feel compassion for women like us. This serpent is about to give up his life. Please give us back our husband, who is our life and soul.

**Text 53:**

Now please tell us, Your maidservants, what we should do. Certainly anyone who faithfully executes Your order is automatically freed from all fear.

**Text 55:**

Kāliya slowly regained his vital force and sensory functions. Then, breathing loudly and painfully, the poor serpent addressed Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in humble submission.

**Text 56:**

The serpent Kāliya said: Our very birth as a snake has made us envious, ignorant and constantly angry. O my Lord, it is so difficult for people to give up their conditioned nature, by which they identify with that which is unreal.

**Text 58:**

○ Supreme Personality of Godhead, among all the species within Your material creation, we serpents are by nature always enraged. Being thus deluded by Your illusory energy, which is very difficult to give up, how can we possibly give it up on our own?

**Text 59:**

○ Lord, since You are the omniscient Lord of the universe, You are the actual cause of freedom from illusion. Please arrange for us whatever You consider proper, whether it be mercy or punishment.

**Text 60:**

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: After hearing Kāliya's words, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who was acting the role of a human being, replied: ○ serpent, you may not remain here any longer. Go back to the ocean immediately, accompanied by your retinue of children, wives, other relatives and friends. Let this river be enjoyed by the cows and humans.

**Text 61:**

If a mortal being attentively remembers My command to you – to leave Vṛndāvana and go to the ocean – and narrates this account at sunrise and sunset, he will never be afraid of you.

**Text 62:**

If one bathes in this place of My pastimes and offers the water of this lake to the demigods and other worshipable personalities, or if one observes a fast and duly worships and remembers Me, he is sure to become free from all sinful reactions.

**Text 63:**

Out of fear of Garuḍa, you left Ramaṇaka Island and came to take shelter of this lake. But because you are now marked with My footprints, Garuḍa will no longer try to eat you.

**Text 64:**

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: My dear King, having been released by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose activities are wonderful, Kāliya joined his wives in worshiping Him with great joy and reverence.



**Texts 65-67:**

Kāliya worshiped the Lord of the universe by offering Him fine garments, along with necklaces, jewels and other valuable ornaments, wonderful scents and ointments, and a large garland of lotus flowers. Having thus pleased the Lord, whose flag is marked with the emblem of Garuḍa, Kāliya felt satisfied. Receiving the Lord's permission to leave, Kāliya circumambulated Him and offered Him obeisances. Then, taking his wives, friends and children, he went to his island in the sea. The very moment Kāliya left, the Yamunā was immediately restored to her original condition, free from poison and full of nectarean water. This happened by the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who was manifesting a humanlike form to enjoy His pastimes.





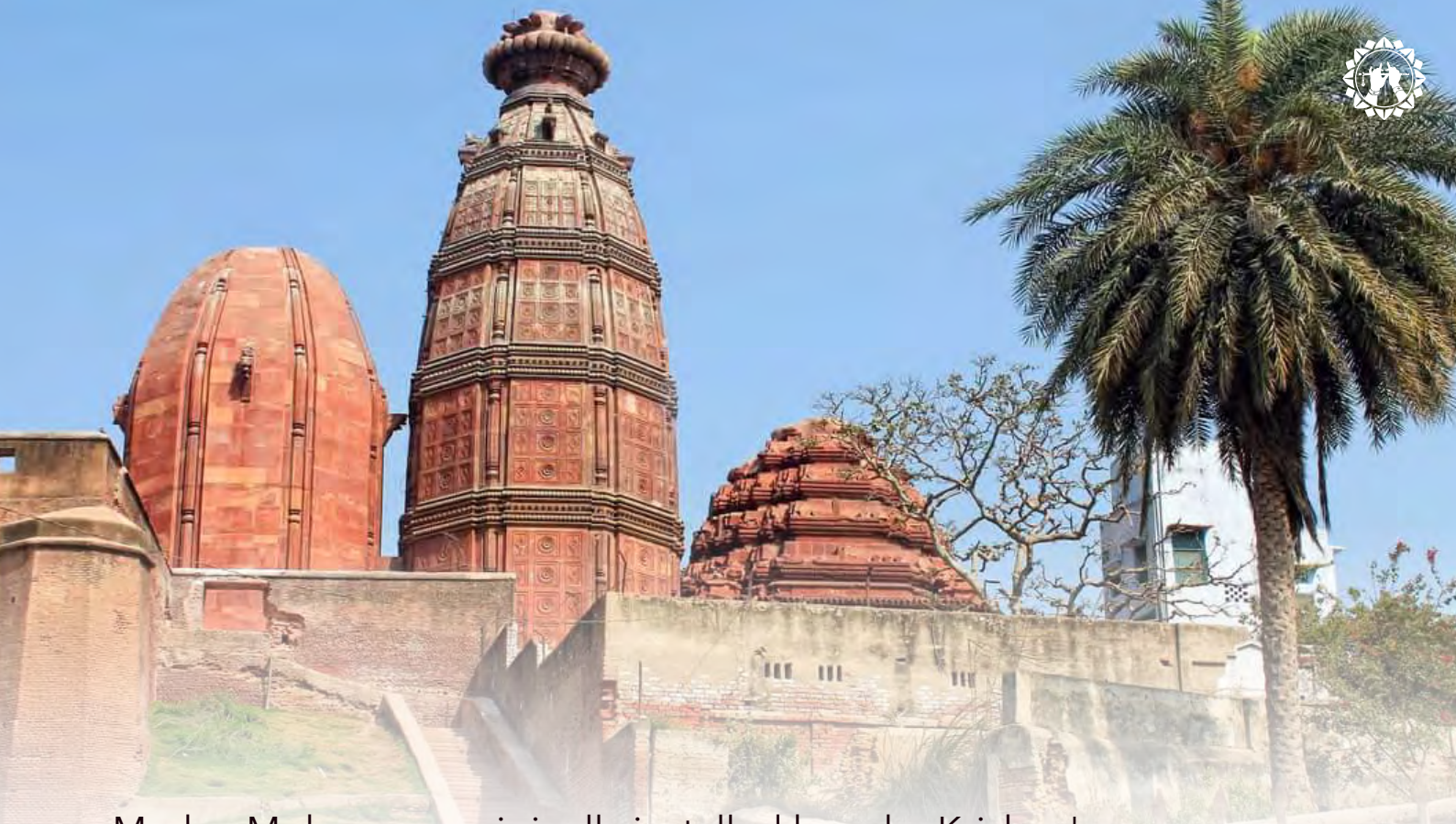
# SAMADHI OF SANATANA GOSWAMI

Sanatana Goswami (1488-1558) was a theologian and a saint, one of the closest associates of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the chief of the six great Goswamis of Vrindavan. Sanatana Goswami is an author of several important philosophical and theological works, and, along with his younger brother Rupa Goswami, was the most respected and influential of the six Goswamis. Being a brahmana by birth, Sanatana Goswami was a central figure in the government of Bengal, however, he gave up his government duties to follow Lord Chaitanya.

The two brothers, Sanatana and Rupa, back then known as Sakara Mallik and Dabhir Khas, served as ministers in the Muslim government of Nawab Shah Hussain. When they met Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, they decided to resign from their government positions. Sanatana remained at home, claiming he was ill, however, one day Shah Nawab's doctor came to see Sanatana and realised that he was completely healthy, thus, Sanatana Goswami was arrested. He did not remain in prison for long, as his brother Rupa, taking advantage of Shah Nawab's absence from the city, got him out of prison.

Having renounced wealth, position in court and power, Sanatana walked all the way to Benares, where Chaitanya was living then. He came to his Lord empty-handed and free from the past. After receiving instructions, Sanatana Goswami left for Vrindavan. At that time, 500 years ago, Vrindavan was a desolate place, and many holy places were lost in dense forests. Goswami became one of the first to revive the memory of the Lord's pastimes and restore Vrindavan. Goswami lived a very humble life in a small hut, sustaining himself on whatever alms were given and devoting all his time to writing sacred texts, as ordered by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

The name of Sanatana Goswami is inextricably linked with the deity and the temple of Madan Mohan on the banks of the Yamuna River.



Madan Mohan was originally installed here by Krishna's great-grandson Vajranabha. The story goes that after the deity was made, it was given to Uttara, the widow of Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna, to have a look at. She was the last living person who saw Krishna in person. After a while, the deity was lost for many centuries and it was only about 500 years ago that devotees of Sri Krishna found Madan Mohan again.

Once, Sanatana Goswami had a dream in which Madan Mohan revealed His location and asked Goswami to take Him to Vrindavan. The next day, Sanatana Goswami found the house in Mathura and saw the very same deity from his dream being worshipped by a brahmana named Chaube. Chaube, of course, did not give the deity, however, the following night Madan Mohan appeared to the brahmana and said that it was His will to leave with the Goswami, so the brahmana agreed. Thus, the deity of Madan Mohan was found again and returned to Vrindavan.

There is another lila associated with the construction of the temple. At first, Goswami served the deity in his tiny hut and fed him with whatever people gave as alms. Very often it was very simple, bland food, even without salt. So, one day Madan Mohan asked for something tastier or at least to add salt to the food, however, Sanatana Goswami replied that he had nothing better, and even more so he did not have salt.



At that time salt was very expensive still. Madan Mohan accepted this food, but after some time, a ship loaded with salt that was heading to Agra ran aground just opposite Goswami's hut near the Yamuna. The owner of the ship, named Kapoor, did not know what to do, and local residents advised him to speak to Sanatana Goswami. Kapoor came to Goswami and asked for help, but Goswami replied that he was a poor man and could not help, suggesting to ask for help from Madan Mohan. Kapoor prayed at Goswami's hut, and the next day heavy rain caused the water level in the Yamuna to rise making the ship float. Having sold salt in Agra, Kapoor gave all the money from it for the construction of the Madan Mohan temple as well as accepted initiation from the Goswami with the new name Krishnadas.

Sanatana Goswami's samadhi is located near the Madan Mohan temple.





# IMLI TALA

Not far from the Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Temple, there is the Vraja-Mohan Temple. The main deities on the altar here are Radha-Vraja-Mohan; they were installed during the first Gaura Purnima festival (the celebration of the Day of Appearance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu), that took place approximately 30 years after Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had left.

In the Temple's yard is an ancient tamarind (Imli-tala) tree. This tree has been here since ancient times. Here, the beautiful lila between Radha and Krishna took place, witnessed by Srila Rupa Goswami.

Rupa Goswami came here once and sat under the tree to sing bhajans to the Lord. He glanced up and saw a beautiful swing on one of the branches. Then he saw Radha, Krishna, and all Their friends. Krishna jumped on the swing and asked Radharani to join Him. At first, Radharani refused because Krishna would always swing very high, which would frighten Her. Krishna, however, started persuading Radharani, and gopis and gopas joined His request, and Radharani agreed. So the friends started pushing the swing gently with Radha and Krishna.

When Krishna saw that Radha became relaxed, He moved His legs softly so the swing would go a little higher. But, before everyone knew it, the swing already went too high. Srimati Radharani got very frightened and demanded that Krishna stop the swing and let Her go.

Krishna moved the swing higher and higher. Finally, it went so high that it seemed it was about to come off the tree. Suddenly, in fear, Radharani screamed and grabbed Krishna. Krishna was happy to see Radharani hold Him so tightly. He pushed the swing further so that they made a full circle.

After Srila Rupa Goswami witnessed all this, he fell into an ecstatic swoon and passed out. When he regained consciousness, Radha and Krishna had already gone, but the swing was still hanging on that tree. He was surprised to see that the tree had twisted under it.



Once, during the Rasa Dance, Srimati Radharani suddenly ran away. Krishna started looking for Her, but with no success. Finally, He came to that tree, sat under it on the Yamuna shore, and repeated: "Radhe! Radhe! Radhe!" From this intense emotion of separation from His beloved, Krishna's body gradually became the same golden color as that of Srimati Radharani. He started feeling the same as She did then.

When Sri Radha appeared surrounded by Her gopi friends, She was astonished by this golden form of Her beloved. Radha asked: "What is the meaning of this astonishing form You took? I have never seen You look like this before". Then Krishna explained that soon, in Kali-yuga, He would take this form fulfilled with Her love for Him.

Around 500 years ago, Krishna came again as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the golden incarnation of Krishna. During the pilgrimage to Vrindavan, He often went to this tree and sang the Holy Names of the Lord. During the singing, His body became darker, and Lord Chaitanya became as dark as Shyam.



The initial tree, under which Lord Krishna and Lord Chaitanya sat, recently left this world. It was a large branchy tree, and one large branch was hanging over one neighbor's land. A man who lived near this Temple did not like that this branch was reaching over to his yard, so he cut it off. After the first blow of the ax, blood dashed from the branch. In Vrindavan, trees are live creatures who come there to meditate on Krishna. Soon after the Imli Tala tree was wounded, the tree dried out. When the branch was cut off, the tree should not have gone dry, but the tree took it very much to heart.

Nowadays, the trunk of this tree is still kept in a metal shell. When it became apparent that the tree would not survive, the devotees took its branch and planted it at the base of the old one. The new tree is now growing, and the old one can still be seen nearby. Under the tree, there is a deity of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.





# SRINGAR VAT

At this divine location, Sri Krishna personally adorned Sri Radharani with flowers. 'Sringar' denotes decoration, and 'Vat' refers to a Banyan tree. This site, known as Sringar Vat, is one of the oldest places and temples in Vrindavan.

Sri Radharani once left the Raas dance, and concealed Herself under a Banyan tree. Krishna, in search of Radharani, discovered Her under the Banyan tree. While seated beneath its branches, He intricately decorated Sri Radharani's hair with exquisite forest flowers, applied kajal to Her gleaming eyes, and adorned Her body with ornaments embedded with precious gems and stones.

During his visits to Vrindavan, Nityananda Prabhu would stay under this Banyan tree, absorbed in chanting the names of Lord Krishna.

The sacred Sringar Vat in Vrindavan safeguards the original Japa beads of Sri Jiva Goswami, belonging to Nityananda Prabhu, and the handwritten books penned by Sri Rupa Goswami and Jiva Goswami. Even today, visitors have the opportunity to witness and seek the blessings of these sacred relics.





# JAGANNATH TEMPLE

Around 500 years ago, Lord Sri Krishna appeared before Sri Haridasji, a great Saint of Vrindavan, and instructed him to replace the existing images of Jagannath, Balram, and Subhadra Devi with new ones in the month of Ashadh. Lord Krishna ordered Haridas to bring the old vigrahas to Vrindavan.

The tradition in Jagannath Puri involves replacing the old wooden murtis with new ones approximately every thirty-six years during the anavasar period between Snana Yatra and Ratha Yatra.

Haridas, accompanied by his disciples, undertook a journey on foot to Puri and reached there four days before Rath Yatra. He requested the temple priest to hand over the old vigrahas as per Lord Krishna's instructions. However, the priest directed him to seek authorization from King Maharaja Pratap Rudra, who initially refused due to the tradition of immersing the old vigrahas in the ocean.

Facing this obstacle, Saint Haridas entered deep meditation on the seashore, contemplating the orders of his Lord. In a dream at midnight, Lord Jagannath directed the King to hand over the old vigrahas to Haridasji, as Lord Krishna desired to be worshipped both in Puri and Vrindavan.

Following this divine intervention, the King granted the old vigrahas to Haridas, who, along with his disciples, brought them to Vrindavan in a cart. A temple was then constructed on the banks of the sacred river Yamuna, at the location where Lord Krishna had appeared to Haridas. This site is now known as Jagannath Ghat, and the deities have been worshipped there since then.



# SRI CHAITANYA MAHAPRABHU





Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in the city of Navadvipa (state of West Bengal) on the evening of the February 18th, 1486. His father, Sri Jagannatha Mishra and His mother, Srimati Sachidevi, belonged to Brahmin families and lived in poverty. Before the appearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu they had many daughters, but all their children died at the young ages.

Mahaprabhu was a charming child and women from all over the city would come with gifts to see Him. For the golden color of His skin, the neighbors called Him Gaurahari, and His mother named Him Nimai to the honor of the Nim Tree under which He was born beneath. In His childhood, Nimai was a very mischievous child, as evidenced by His many games and pranks, during which He often performed various miracles.

One day, a brahmin who was on a pilgrimage was hosted at Nimai's father house. While he was worshiping God and offering the food to the God, Nimai appeared in front of him and tasted the prepared dishes. The food declared as unsuitable, because the child already touched it, and the upset brahmin in response to the persuasion of Jagannatha Mishra, agreed to cook the food again. However, the same thing happened again for a second time, and it happened for the third time. Finally the child was put to bed. Around midnight, when all members of the house were deeply sleeping, the brahmin again was trying to offer the prepared food to God, but Nimai again appeared in front of him and 'spoiled' the offering. The brahmin started to cry. Then the child revealed to the brahmin His identity as Lord Krishna Himself.

Near the Ghat (a place for ablution) little Nimai often played jokes on neighboring girls who were praying to Lord Shiva to bless them with good husbands. When they were doing the ceremony, Nimai would appear in front of them and tell them: 'My dear sisters, it is better if you'll give Me all the offerings that you brought for Lord Shiva'. For Lord Shiva is My devotee, and Parvati is My maidservant. You will bring more pleasure to Lord Shiva if you worship Me. Some of them refused to the obey the naughty Lord, and then He was cursed them.



Nimai said that for their refusal they will receive as old men as husbands who had seven children from their previous wives. In response to that, poor girls, some of them out of fear, some out of love, were offering Him different gifts, and Nimai blessed them. He reassured the girls that they would get kind and youthful husbands and would give birth to a dozen children.

In His eighth year of life, Nimai was accepted at the school of Gangadasa Pandit and He completed the whole school program in two years. Then He continued studying at home and would study His father's books. At the age of fifteen, Mahaprabhu married Lakshmipriya, but she left this world early because of the snakebite. After some time, Mahaprabhu married a second woman by the name of Vishnupriya.

When Nimai barely turned sixteen years old, He opened His own rural school. He was talking about Krishna even in grammar classes. Srila Jiva Gosvami, one of the closest followers of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in the future compiled a textbook of Sanskrit grammar, where all the rules were explained by examples with the holy names of the Lord. Notable, in the Bengal schools they still use these textbooks, which are called 'Hari-namamrta-vyakarana'.

Very quickly, people started to speak about Mahaprabhu as one of the best scholars of Nabadwip, which was famous all over India as a center of education. Mahaprabhu loved to arrange unusual philosophical disputes with His friends. He would put forward a thesis and then He would prove His thesis. However when His opponents agreed with Him, He would then proved exactly the opposite thesis and again, they would agree with Him. Afterwards, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu again would very convincingly refute His own arguments, and the participants of the dispute had no choice and they again humbly agreed with Him for the third time.

At the age of seventeen, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu traveled to Gaya, accompanied by many of His students. There He took spiritual initiation from Isvara Puri, who was a disciple of the famous Vaishnava saint Madhavendra Puri.



After returning to Nabadwip, Sri Chaitanya changed drastically. His philosophical disputes transformed into satsangs. Often during the satsang He fell into a religious trance and He could even lose consciousness. Exactly during that time, together with Srivasa Pandit and other followers, He opened an evening school of kirtan (group chanting the Names of God).

His closest companion, Nityananda Prabhu, joined Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu wherever He went. From that time until the age of 23, Mahaprabhu preached His principles not only at Navadvip, but in all significant town and villages of the district.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu performed miracles many times. Once, in the midst of kirtan, He asked His devotees what they would like to eat, and when He knew that they want a mango, He asked for a mango seed. When the seed was brought to Him, He planted it in a yard and immediately it sprouted. In front of everyone's eyes, the sprout grew into a full-grown tree, and the branches of the tree bent under the weight of ripe fruits, which was much more than devotees could eat.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's followers grew in number. The pandits of Nabadwip, because of their envy, appealed to the local Muslim judge Chand Kazi with a complaint on Mahaprabhu. The judge forbade Sri Chaitanya and His disciples to chant the Name of Sri Hari aloud. However, they continued their street kirtans as if nothing had happened. Then the judge sent guards, who were trying to pacify the singers. In response, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu organized a procession that included around one thousand people. These people came with their mridanga (drums) and other musical instruments. This procession of people went through the streets of Nabadwip and chanted the Names of the Lord very loudly.



Finally the procession reached the house of Judge Kazi. Then between Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Kazi a conversation occurred about the Koran and Hindu scriptures, and after that Kazi cried and spoke about how he had experienced a deep spiritual upheaval. Chand Kazi announced that no one had the right to hinder Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and bequeathed this to his descendants. After that incident, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu became even more energetic about preaching. The tomb of the Kazi is preserved in Nabadwip. His descendants, who never interfered with the street kirtans (even during the Hindu-Muslim clashes), are still living there.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa (the path of renunciation of worldly life) at the age of 24 and went to the city of Puri. One of the most famous temples of the Lord Jagannath is located in Puri. When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu entered the Temple and saw the deity of Jagannath, He fell into transcendental ecstasy and fell down. People tried to bring Him to the senses, but they were unsuccessful. He came back to His senses only when he heard the chanting the Names of the Lord.

After Puri, Mahaprabhu went to the South of India. He performed many miracles during His journey and He gathered many of His disciples and initiated many people. The Great Saint of Maharashtra Tukaram was also initiated by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Tukaram filled Maharashtra with kirtans and bhajans (songs about the glory of the Lord) which were composed by him and are still sung to this day.

After a two-year journey to South, Lord Chaitanya returned to Puri and soon, 28 years of age, He journeyed to Bengal. When He reached the city Ramakeli, He met two prominent brothers - Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami.



At that time they served at the courtyard of Hussein Shah, who was one of the Muslim rulers which occupied India. They asked Mahaprabhu for a spiritual guidance, and Mahaprabhu told them to go to Vrindavan and wait for Him there. Rupa and Sanatana, who occupied high ranks in the Government of Hussein Shah and were quite wealthy people, left everything.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu while He was traveling to different cities and provinces of India filled the whole subcontinent with music and voices of kirtan, and He rediscovered and presented to the whole world Vrindavan - a shrine, the eternal abode of Sri Krishna on earth. Mahaprabhu stayed in Puri from the age of 31 until He passed away at the age of 48.

He slept just a little bit and devoted all His time to the service of the Lord and to His devotees. During this period, Chaitanya spoke very little, He chanted the Names of the Lord, danced, and from time to time, He forgot Himself and fell into spiritual bliss.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu being the Lord Himself, who descended into the world to bring blessings to the all humanity. Once Mahaprabhu entered to the Temple Tota Gopinath, but did not come back...

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu walked on the earth for 48 years and left His body in Puri in the year 1534. Though Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was quite young, He was widely known as a pandit. After He left His body, there were only 8 written verses by Him under the title 'Shikshashtakam', but His heritage in hearts of the humanity, in the culture of Hinduism and in the life of all of India became imperishable. His prayer-verses reveal His mission and commandments. His great devotees, six Goswamis of Vrindavan, and their disciples composed all the other extensive writings about Him.

## SHIKSHASHTAKAM



### **Text 1**

ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam  
śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam  
ānandāmbudhi-varadhanam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam  
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam

Glory to the Sri Krishna Samkirtan which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years together. Thus the fire of conditional life, of repeated birth and death, is extinguished. This Samkirtan movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction Moon. It is the life of all transcendental knowledge, it increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, and it helps to have a taste of the full nectar for which we are always anxious.

### **Text 2**

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

O my Lord! Your Holy Name alone can render all benediction upon the living beings, and therefore You have hundreds and millions of Names, like Krishna, Govinda, etc. In these transcendental Names You have invested all Your transcendental energies, and there is no hard and fast rule for chanting these Holy Names. O my Lord! You have so kindly made approach to You easy by Your Holy Names, but, unfortunate as I am, I have no attraction for Them.





### **Text 3**

ṭṛṇād api su-nīcena  
taror api sahiṣṇunā  
amāninā māna-dena  
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ

One can chant the Holy Name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking himself lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than the tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the Holy Name of the Lord constantly.

### **Text 4**

na dhanam na janam na sundarim  
kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye  
mama janmani janmaniśvare  
bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi

O almighty Lord! I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor I have any desire to enjoy beautiful women; neither do I want any number of followers of mine. What I want only is that I may have Your causeless devotional service in my life—birth after birth.

### **Text 5**

ayi nanda-tanuja kin-karam  
patitam mam visame bhavambudhau  
krpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-  
sthita-dhūli-saḍṣam vicintaya

O Son of Maharaj Nanda, I am Your eternal servitor, and although I am so, somehow or other I have fallen in the ocean of birth and death. Please, therefore, pick me up from this ocean of death, and fix me as one of the atoms of Your Lotus Feet.

### **Text 6**

nayanam galad-asru-dhārayā  
vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā  
pulkair nicitam vapuḥ kadā  
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati



O my Lord! when shall my eyes be decorated with tears of love, flowing constantly while I chant Your Holy Name? When will my words be choked up when uttering the Holy Name? And when will all the holes of hair on my body have eruptions by the recitation of Your Name?

### **Text 7**

yugāyitaṁ nimeṣeṇa  
cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitaṁ  
śūnyāyitaṁ jagat sarvaṁ  
govinda-virahaṇa me

O Govinda! Feeling Your separation I am considering a moment twelve years or more, and tears are flowing from my eyes like torrents of rain. I am feeling all vacant in the world, in the absence of You.

### **Text 8**

āśliṣya vā pāda-ratāṁ pinaṣṭu mām  
adarśanān marma-hatāṁ karotu vā  
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampāṭo  
mat-prāṇa-nāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ

I do not know anyone except Krishna as my Lord, and He shall always remain as such, even if He handles me roughly by His embrace; or He may make me broken-hearted by not being present before me. He is completely free to do anything and everything, but He is always my worshipful Lord, unconditionally.



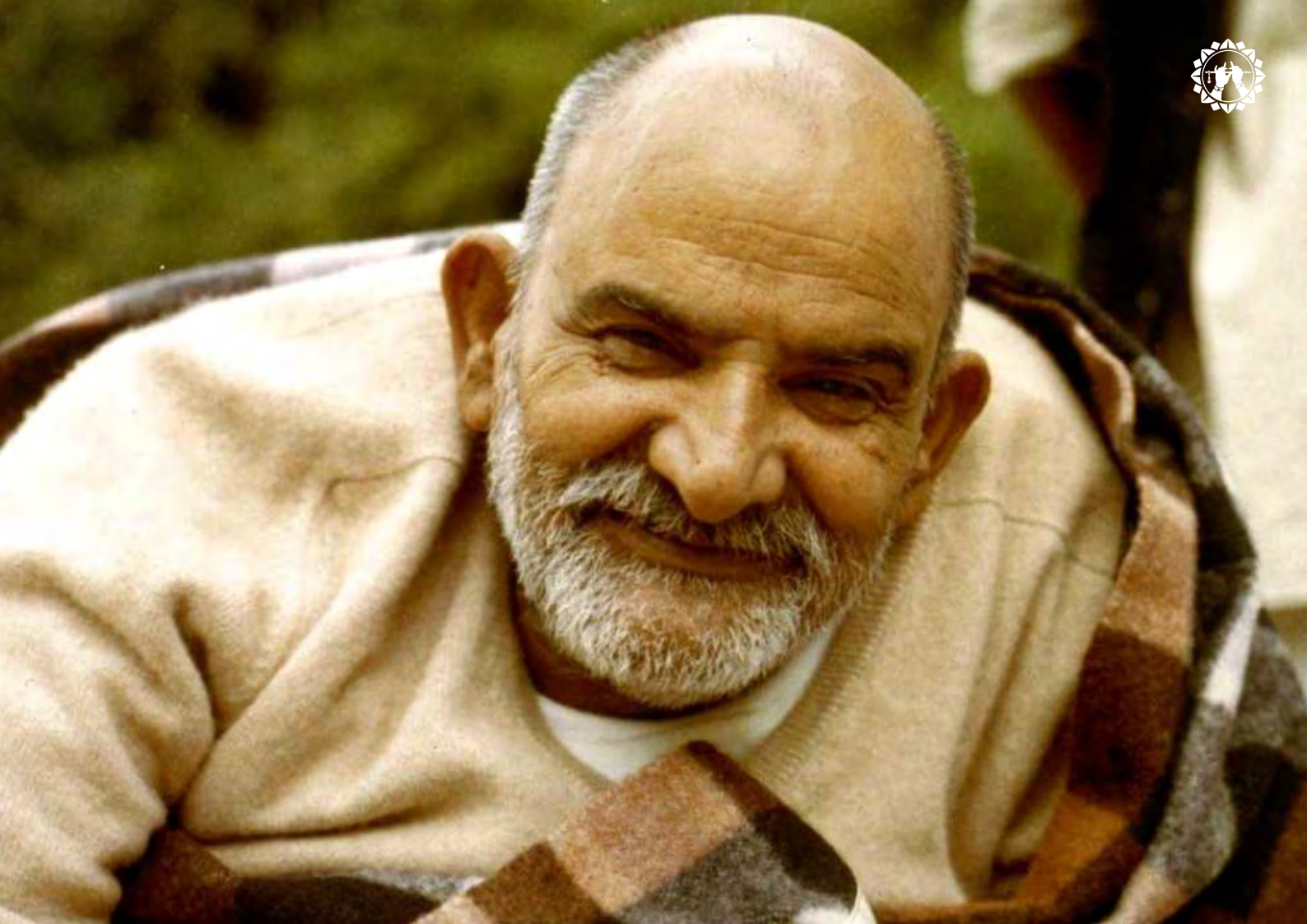


# CHAMUNDA DEVI TEMPLE

The Chamunda Devi Temple, situated directly opposite Maa Gayatri Tapobh, holds a sacred significance rooted in Hinduism. It is believed that a strand of hair from Maa Gayatri fell on this spot, a detail also mentioned in the sacred text of Shreemad Bhagavatam.

The temple holds historical and spiritual importance as a meditation center for Sage Shandilya. Additionally, it is believed that Sri Gorakhnath attained knowledge at this revered site. During the festive period of Navratri, a large number of devotees flock to this shrine.





## NEEB KARORI ASHRAM

The Kainchi Temple is located in the ashram of Neeb Karori (or Neem Karoli) Baba and is dedicated to Hanuman. It was founded by this great saint in the 1960s.

Baba Neeb Karori Maharaj was born in Uttar Pradesh, India, in a wealthy family in the village Akbarpur. Orphaned at an early age, he married at eleven and left home at twelve. He travelled for 10-12 years, earning recognition for his service and devotion in Rajasthan and Rajkot.

In Bavania village, he meditated by a water pond, earning the name Talaiyaa Baba. Eventually, he settled in Neeb Karori village, Farrukhabad district. The villagers built a cave for his spiritual practices, where he lived and engaged with the community.



Maharaj displayed mystical abilities, astonishing the villagers with his playfulness and supernatural abilities. Despite his unassuming nature, he had a profound impact on people from different backgrounds.

Numerous anecdotes happened in Neeb Karori's life, such as the train incident. Once he went to Farrukhabad in the first-class compartment of a train. Seeing his sadhu-like appearance, an Anglo-Indian conductor told him to get off the train at the next station. Neeb Karori got off and sat on the platform. Following this, no matter the efforts of the station staff, the train could not move. The conductor could not explain the problem since no mechanical defect was found – the engine was running, but the wheels would not turn. Some railway employees asked Maharaj in jest to make the train move. Maharaj said, 'I got kicked out of the train and you are asking me to let it move!' An employee replied, 'Perhaps you had no ticket.' At this, Neeb Karori showed them several genuine first-class tickets. Amazed, the train staff begged him to re-board the train and once he boarded the train started moving.

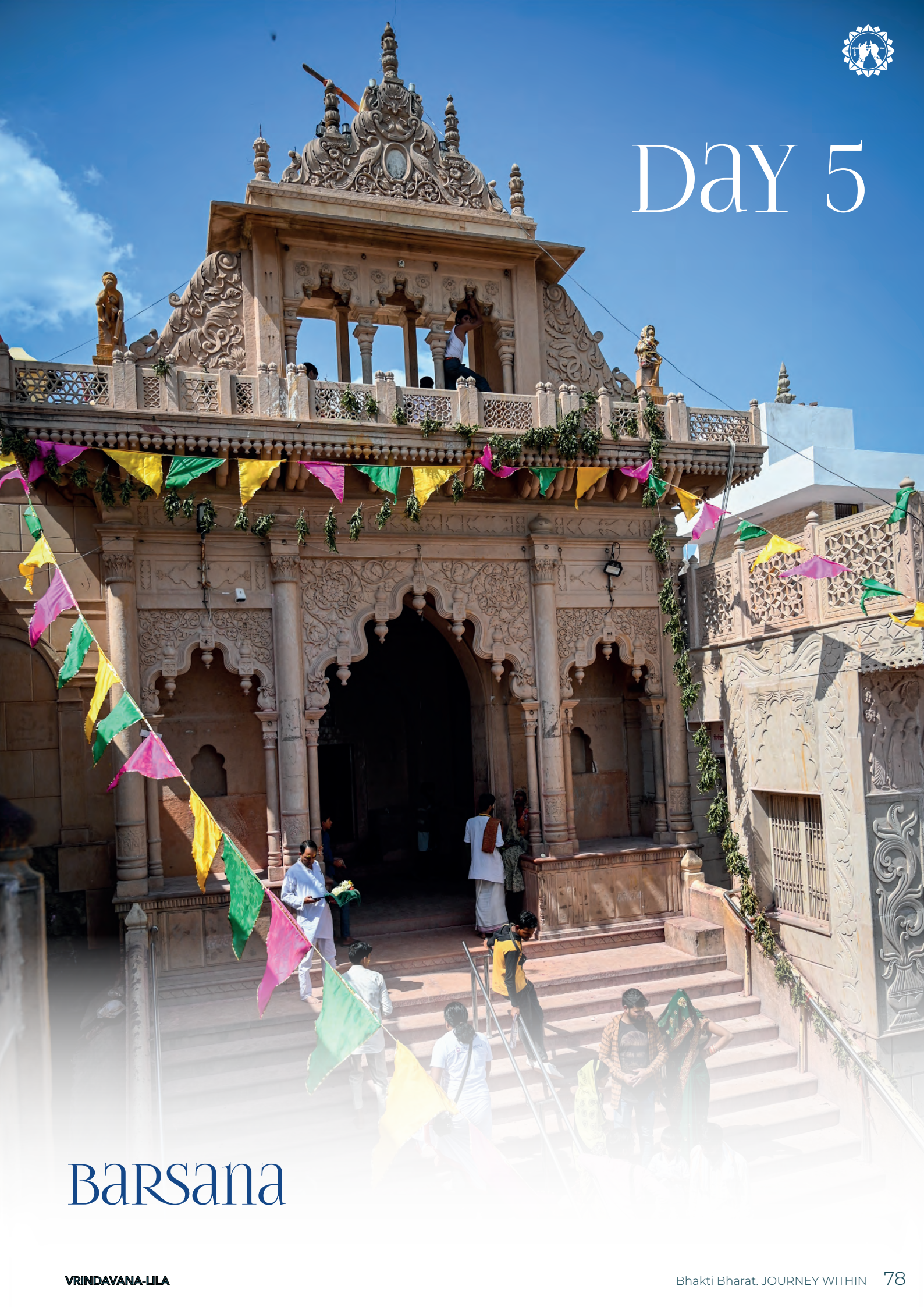
There was an inexplicable bliss in the households that Neeb Karori Baba visited. No effort was needed to find out where he was in the town at any particular moment because his presence could be felt by the spirit of joy and festivity pervading that place.

Neeb Kakori Baba was a family man who managed to take care of everyone in his large spiritual family. He regarded all human beings as his own children and treated them accordingly. He often said, 'You get tired with just a few children, but I have so many.' A devotee shared that Maharaj once said, 'Why do you come to me? You come to me because of my love for you.' He nurtured the concept of vasudhaiva-kutumbakam (the world as one family) and would say that love binds all together.

In 1973, Neeb Kakori Baba left his physical form in Vrindavan, leaving behind a legacy of divine presence.



# Day 5



## Barsana



The very name 'Barsana' means 'falling', 'scattering' or 'spreading'. The meaning of Barsana as explained by saints here is that mercy and karuna (compassion, love) of Srimati Radharani is spreading, falling or scattering here on everybody.

The beloved of Krishna was raised in Barsana. Sri Radha was hurrying from here with Her gopi friends, once Her Kanhā would barely start playing His flute. Barsana is a small town not far from Vrindavan, where there was the palace of Vrishabhanu, Radha's father.

Barsana is circled with a seven-kilometer parikrama road that pilgrims follow when they go round the holy place. The town is located between two hills. One hill is whitish and is associated with Brahma, and the other one is dark and associated with Vishnu. On the Brahma Hill, Shriji Mandir, the main temple of Barsana, is located. Sri Lali Lal (which means beloved daughter and son) is another name of Radha Krishna. They are the main deities of the temple.

Four peaks of the hill are the four heads of Brahma. According to Padma Purana, when Brahma wanted to serve personally Radha and Krishna, he took the form of Barsana hills. Other hills of Barsana host the Maan Mandir, where Radharani stays in the mood of Maan (anger) and Mor (Mayur) Kutir, where Krishna becomes peacock to pacify Her. Maan Mandir built in the 18th century is located. Over 200 steps lead to the temple, and the viewpoint of the temple offers a splendid view to Barsana and its outskirts.





# Day 6





# SRI RANGANATH MANDIR

Sri Rangji Mandir was built in 1851. The temple is dedicated to the Divine couple Sri Goda-Rangamannara. Goda or Andal, as she is called in South India, was an eighth-century Vaishnava saint who composed 'Tiruppuvai', a work about her love for Lord Krishna. This song describes the feelings of a saint in love, her plea and desire to marry Sri Krishna. Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Krishna, answers her prayers by becoming her groom.

In Sri Rangji Mandir, Lord Krishna holds a cane like a groom at a traditional Indian wedding. To His right is Saint Andal, and to His left is Garuda, the vahana of Lord Narayana. In another of her works, Andal expressed three wishes. Her first wish was to spend her life at the Feet of Lord Krishna in Vrindavan. It was not performed during her life, but a millennium later. Her murti was installed together with Sri Ranganath in Sri Rangji Mandir. Here Sri Goda-Rangamannar live as divya dampati (divine couple). Her second wish was for Lord Krishna to accept her as His bride. He accepted her as His bride way before she was left this world. Her third wish was for Lord Ranganatha to be offered 'Kshiranna' (a dessert made of rice and milk) in a hundred pots. This wish was fulfilled two centuries later by Sri Ramanujacharya himself.



# KATYAYANI-PITHA

Katyayani-pitha in Vrindavan (also known as Uma-Shakti-pitha) is one of 51 Shakti-pitha - Divine Mother's places of power on Earth. Goddess Sati is worshipped here in the form of Uma.

Details of Shakti-pitha's appearance on Earth are found in Skanda Puranas. It is described here how Sati has burned herself alive in the fire of yajna being unable to withstand her father's Pradjapati Daksha humiliation of Lord Shiva who was Sati's beloved husband. When Sati died, Lord Shiva's grief was so great that he lifted Sati's body in his arms and began to dance his Tandava Dance. This horrified all the gods in Heaven, as it could lead to destruction of the whole universe.

To stop this destruction, Lord Vishnu had intervene. He has sent his Sudarshana-chakra and it cut Sati's body into 51 parts which fell to the ground in different places. All these places have the most powerful energy of the Divine Mother. At the place where the Katyayani-devi temple is built, Sati's hair has fallen. In this temple, like nowhere else, the Goddess presence is felt. It is serenely quiet there, and only gentle, enveloping voices of Indian women singing the names of the Divine Ma can be heard.





# GOVIND DEV JI TEMPLE

The original murti of Govind Dev ji was hidden in Vrindavan for a long time. About 500 years ago, Sri Rupa Goswami with Sanatana Goswami, following the instruction of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, set out to rebuild Vrindavan. And in 1525, on the Vasanta Panchami day, Govind Dev ji Himself appeared in front of Rupa Goswami.

At the end of the XVI century, King Amera Sawai Man Singh along with Akbar, the Great Mughal Emperor, built a large temple in Vrindavan. But later on, the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb started destroying Hindu temples and murtis. So, in 1714, Govind Dev ji was taken away by Sawai Jai Singh, the ruler of Amer.

Once, Maharaj had a dream in which Lord Krishna told him to take His deity away from Vrindavan and install it in his residence. For some time the location of the murti was kept secret because Amer had diplomatic relations with the Mughals. But then, in 1735, Govind ji was brought from Amer to Jaipur and installed in Surya Mahal (or Suraj Mahal).

Surya Mahal was the residence of Sawai Jai Singh at that time but he gave this magnificent palace to Govind Dev ji and moved to Chandra Mahal located nearby. Chandra Mahal was built in such a way that Govind Dev ji could be seen from its windows, and Sawai Jai Singh could receive His darshan directly from his residence. Later on, the Surya Mahal was renamed as the Radha Govind Dev ji Temple.



# Day 7



# GOVARDHAN

A large part of His life, Krishna has spent in Vraj. Here thousands of years ago He was playing His beautiful lilas. One of the most significant events described in the Bhagavat Purana is the Mount-Govardhan-lila.

Govardhan is located in the center of Vraj. However, based on the Srimad Bhagavatam, cowherds and farmers went to Govardhan to perform worshiping rituals for Indra - the god of rain. But Krishna did not approve of this, because He wanted the villagers to worship the Supreme Lord Narayana and not the demigods. Indra got angry and has sent thunderstorms that were destroying the universe to wipe this place and all its inhabitants from the face of the earth.

In order to protect people from this continuously downpour of rain and thunderstorms, Sri Krishna raised hill Govardhan on His little finger and gave shelter to all the people and cattle of the city. After seven days of continuous storms, Indra conceded defeat.

After Krishna protected the inhabitants of Vraj from the wrath of Indra, he counselled them to worship Govardhan Hill which they did through puja and a parikrama around the hill.

Govardhan is one of the key places of pilgrimage to Vraj. Devotees of Lord Krishna make parikrama - walking around the holy hill. Over last five thousand years, the flow of pilgrims to Govardhan didn't dry up. There are a lot of amazing temples and places along this way, where Sri Krishna has left traces of His Divine presence.

The Govardhan Hill is shaped like a peacock and that Radha Kund and Shyam Kund are its eyes. Mansi Ganga is its long neck. Mukharavinda is the mouth, Kusum Sarovar its face, and Punchari is its back and tail feathers. A peacock often curves its neck and puts his head under its stomach. The Govardhan Hill is thus shaped in this pose of a peacock.



## SAINT SURDHAS

The Samadhi of Surdhas is located by the Chandra Sarovar. Here, Surdhas spent 70 years living in a simple hut and composing poems. Chandra Sarovar is the place where Krishna is dancing the Vasanta Rasa, the spring dance, with Radha and the gopis. The Sarovar is located in Parsauli village, near Govardhan. They say it appeared when the moon got stuck on one spot watching Radha Krishna's Rasa-lila.

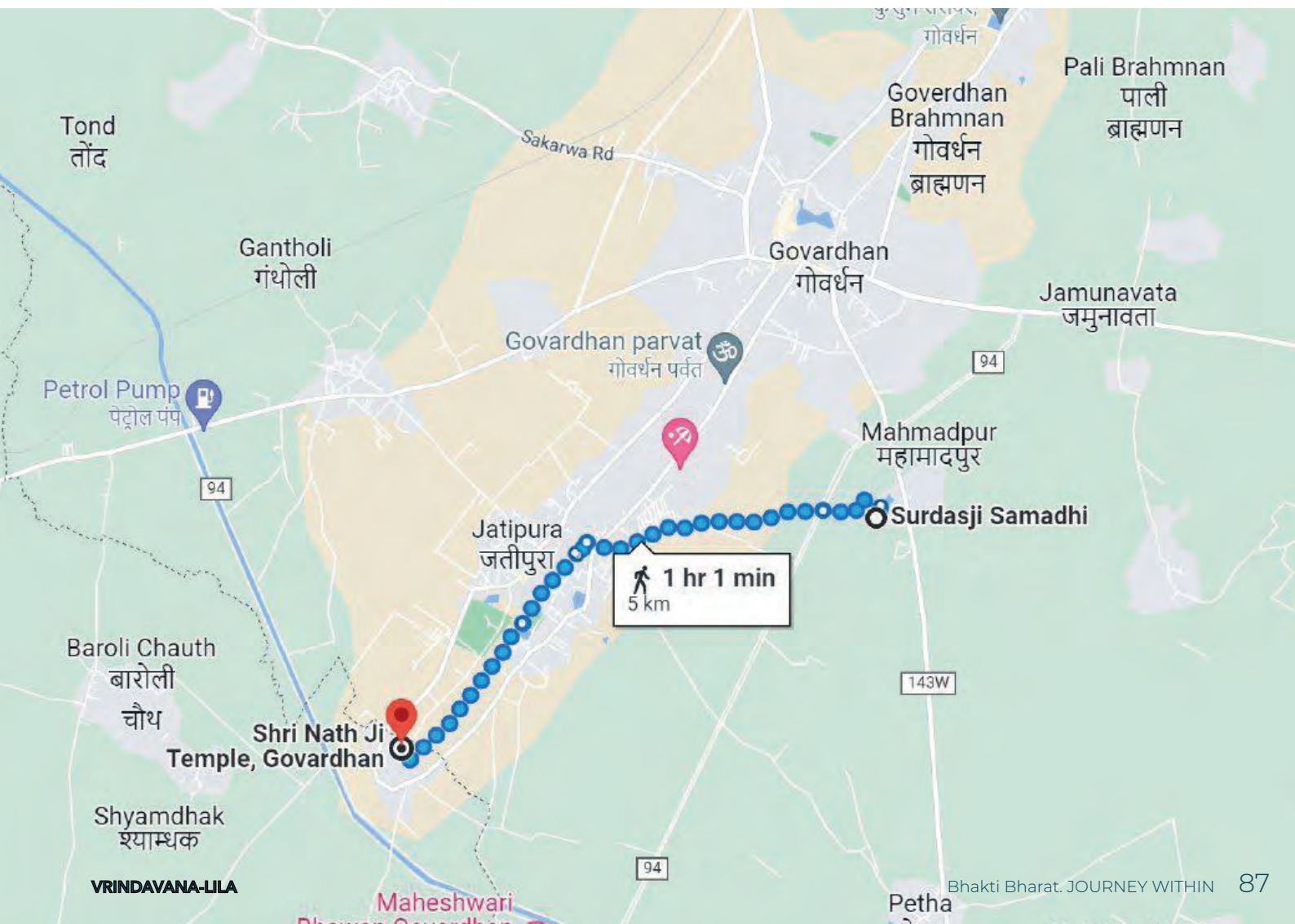
The exact dates of his birth and samadhi vary; we know that he lived for much of the 16th century. Surdhas was from a Brahmin family and lived for 106 years at the same time as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Surdhas was born blind; he had no eyebrows or eyelashes. His family was poor, and the father would often blame little Surdhas for being useless. Once, when he was 6, Surdhas left his home. The little boy lived begging on the streets and continued singing his bhajans that he composed on foot, fully relying on Krishna's will.





With time, people became attracted to him, and, when he was a youth, Surdhas had already gained many disciples and admirers. At the age of 18, he moved to a remote place between Mathura and Agra called Gau Ghat, and lived there for about two years. When he was 20, Vallabhacharya, a saint and disciple of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, came to Gau Ghat. They met, and for several days Vallabhacharya revealed to Surdhas the beauty of Lord Krishna's lilas, telling him Canto 10 of Srimad Bhagavatam, and later initiated him into adesh to always chant the Glory of Sri Hari.

Once, when Surdhas and Vallabhacharya were walking the Vraj Mandala Parikrama, Vallabhacharya took the disciple to Chandra Sarovar and ordered him to serve Lord Sri Nathji at the Temple. So Surdhas spent 70 years there going to the Sri Natha Temple and singing His Name at the Temple.





Every day he would sing a new bhajan and each time he would sing about Krishna's looks, sometimes in the smallest detail, and sometimes in general. The service people in the Temple started doubting whether Surdhas in fact had the divine vision. They decided that someone had whispered to him what the little Krishna was wearing on a certain day. It was very hot outside, and in India, children could walk naked, when it was hot, so the pujaris had not dressed Sri Nath and only put jewels on His neck. They did not let Surdhas go inside the Temple. When they opened the altar, everyone was surprised, as no one, except for the pujaris, had seen Sri Nathji naked before that.

On that day, Surdhas sang his bhajan outside. "Oh Krishna, how beautiful You are! You showed me Your naked beauty, and I have never seen You in these pearl jewels! Kamdev saw You naked and fainted, and his wife Rati also fainted, and they both lie unconscious, and Surdhas is bringing them back to life. This is what Your beauty is like."

Guruji loves telling the Radha Krishna's lila, when they gave Their Darshan to Surdhas in a funny way. Surdhas was walking to Govardhan. On his way, there was a well; he fell in it, and no one was around. Surdhas started yelling for help, and little Krishna came to help him. He took Surdhas out of the well, but, when Surdhas grabbed His hand, he recognized Him immediately. He would not let go of the boy's hand, despite His appeal and persuasion. Finally, Gopal managed to escape and ran away to continue playing with His Radha.

Radha asked Krishna, who He had ran away so fast from. Krishna said: 'There is this baba. Do not go there! He is so weird! I could barely save myself from him!' However, with feminine curiosity, Radha hurried to the well, where Surdhas was begging for Krishna to come back. When Surdhas heard the noise of Her anklets, he ran and grabbed the feet of little Srimati Radharani.

Radha got very scared and tried to escape, but Surdhas started crying. Krishna came over and said: 'I told You not to go there! I warned you! I know him!' Surdhas grabbed the feet of both children and begged Them for Darshan.





Then Krishna gave a vision to Surdhas, and he saw Srimati Radharani and his Sri Nathji...

Then he asked Krishna to make him blind again, as he had already seen Them, and there was no need for him to see the world.

Surdhas' poetry is still very popular. His most famous hymn collections are "Sur Sagar" and "Ocean of Hymns of Sura". According to some sources, Surdhas composed 125,000 songs about Krishna, but in fact there were much more. Surdhas would celebrate Krishna's glory all his life and every day, from his early childhood. He also put a lot of them into music. Surdhas' poetry has always had universal appeal, and now much of it has been translated into English.

When he became a very old man, Surdhas took a vow that he would not return to the spiritual world until he would have written 125 000 poems about Krishna. This was a challenge not for him, but for Bhagavan Himself. Our Gurudev spoke about such challenges from the great saints, when the saints were so much in love with Him and so humble, that they themselves would decide to test the Lord's love and longing for them.

Surdhas wrote only 100 000 poems and stop writing. Nobody understood what was going on. His disciples started worrying that he would not complete the vow, as he was already very old. Years were passing by, and Surdhas still would not write. Once, Bhagavan Himself came for him. During one night, He wrote all the 25 000 missing poems, named each poem "Sur Krishna Shyam" and added them to the rest of Surdhas' poems.





When the calligrapher found so many new songs, he reported to Surdhas. That morning, Surdhas did not go to the Temple of Sri Nathji. Everyone was used to his singing, and, when they opened the altar and did not hear Surdhas' voice, they started worrying. The Temple attendants came to visit the saint and found him in bed barely alive. They said: "Surdhas, get up, Krishna wants to hear your songs!" Surdhas got up, although he had been very sick before that. They went to the Temple, and Surdhas started singing for his Krishna. He sang, and people would ask for more and more...

So Surdhas started singing his last bhajan, the one that is engraved on his tombstone.

"Krishna's eyes are like chakora bird; they never stay at the same place, they always fly, and I see this bird chakora flying to the sky, and my eyes are like His beloved, but His beloved are in a cage, and I want to fly to the sky, but I cannot fly to the sky, as I am currently in this cage. So open this cage! My soul will escape the cage of this body and return to her beloved, just as the bird would join her consort..."

Finishing the words "Krishna's beautiful eyes are like Khanjan birds. They are full of rasa, very restless, and slightly reddened due to intoxication. My life can no longer remain engaged in this body," he left both his body and this world.





# RADHA KUND

Radha Kund and Shyam Kund – Sacred bathing place of Srimati Radharani and Sri Krishna

Radha Kund is situated on the parikrama road around the Govardhan Hill and is considered to be the holiest place on earth for all Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

Radha Kund appeared after Lord Krishna killed the demon Aristasura. Radharani rebuked Krishna, saying that He became impure by killing a bull, the symbol of religion. She suggested that He could get purified by taking bath in the holy rivers of all sacred places.

Krishna immediately shoved His Lotus Foot into the ground, making a large hole, and called all the sacred rivers to enter into it. They appeared before Him and formed Shyam Kund.

In a competitive mood, Radharani, along with some of Her gopi friends, broke their bangles and dug a hole with the broken pieces. But there was no water - so Krishna laughed. Later all the sacred rivers again arrived in person and requested permission to enter into Radharani's Kund, which they did after receiving Radharani's blessing.





# GOVINDA KUND

Govinda Kund is located on the outskirts of Aanyor village at the foot of Govardhan Hill. At this place, Indra performed abhishekam to Lord Krishna and offered prayers to Him after the Lord lifted Govardhan Hill and Indra realised his mistake. During the abhishekam, a ceremony to name Krishna 'Govinda' took place. Govinda means 'protector of cows, shepherd who brings happiness to cows, the Earth and the entire creation'. Sri Vajranabha, the great-grandson of Krishna, built a kund here in memory of this lila.

All the demigods participated in this incredibly magnificent ceremony. The heavenly cow Surabhi washed Sri Hari with her milk. Lord Brahma was the chief priest and Lord Shiva also came to give his blessings. After the demigods completed their worship, they offered obeisances to the Lord and returned to their respective abodes. While Krishna remained sitting in this place completely alone. It happened that during the worship, a few cowherd boys were passing by looking for their cows. They watched the entire ceremony, and after the demigods left, they saw their dear friend sitting alone on a very beautiful throne. The boys found puja items left by the demigods nearby, so they decided to repeat what they had just seen. They began to fan Him, offer incense and lamps, and sing hymns, imitating the demigods.

At that time, Nanda Maharaj, Krishna's father, was also passing by and saw Krishna with the boys. He asked where all these luxurious puja items came from and what was happening there. The boys responded: 'We were looking for our cows, came here and saw something incredible! There was such a beautiful cow here! And she was talking to Krishna and bathed Him in her milk! There was so much milk! And then we saw this man with thousands of eyes on his body offering his obeisances! And another man with four heads and many other beautiful people offering their prayers to our friend. We also saw a huge elephant pouring water from the Ganges from its trunk on Krishna! And then they all left, and Krishna was left here all alone with all these items nearby...'



When the demigods looked down and saw this, they were ashamed and at the same time joyful at the sight of such devotion, such simple and spontaneous love of these cowherd boys. They realised that the actions of the gopas were incomparably more devotional than their own. Seeing these little children worshipping Krishna with such pure love, the demigods began to dance and sing, worshipping the feet of the cowherd boys of Vrindavan.



## KUSUM SAROVAR

Here are the feet of Krishna. The name of the temple complex is translated from Sanskrit as 'the lake of flowers'. This is a place, where gopis used to collect flowers for puja, and Krishna would disturb them with His pranks, causing a storm of irritation, delight, love and joy in their hearts.

In front of the temple, there is a kund of extraordinary depth. Some believe that it has no bottom, while others claim that its depth is 60 metres. Large turtles live here, which are called great sages. They lived in Kusum Sarovar for centuries, meditating on the pastimes of Radha and Krishna.



Once upon a time, there was a quarrel between Krishna and Srimati Radharani over flowers. Krishna sneaked up behind Radha and scared Her, causing Radha to drop the flowers She had collected for puja. She became angry with Her Kanha exclaiming, 'I wanted to offer these flowers, but now they are unclean and there is no time to go to the Yamuna to wash them!' Then Krishna made a hole in the ground with His flute, water rushed there, and Kusum Sarovar was formed.

Here, by this lake, Srimati Radharani and Krishna meet secretly in the morning time.





# Day 8

## ADI HIMALAYAS

There is a wonderful story about how Krishna brought the people of Vraj to this place. One day a sadhu came to Vrindavan and began to glorify Badrinath and the holy places of the Himalayas. After spending several days in Vrindavan, with his praises he inspired local residents to go on a distant pilgrimage to the shrines of the Himalayas. However, Krishna opposed this, saying there was no need to go anywhere. Anywhere where He is present, all the shrines of the world are also there. Little Hari never wanted to let go of His parents and the inhabitants of Vraj, who loved Him dearly, so He took them to the shrines of Adi Himalayas. Here, He left the footprints of His lotus feet.

We will go to the original Badarika Ashram - Adi-Badri, visit Yamunotri and Gangotri temples, a wonderful Yogamaya temple (Adi-Haridwar), climb 300 steps to reach Kedarnath - the abode of Lord Shiva, and get darshan of one of the four main Shiva-lingams in Vraj - Kameshwar Mahadev in Kamyavan, who fulfils all the desires.

Not far from here, there is also a mountain where Krishna killed the demon Vyomasura, and a cave in which the demon locked cowherd boys after kidnapping them. Here, the imprints of the feet of Sri Krishna and Balarama can be seen.







# Day 9

## BHANDIRVAN FOREST

Bhandirvan is one of the 12 forests of Vrindavan. It was in Bhandirvan that Radharani and Krishna got married. However, it was not an ordinary worldly marriage that you see nowadays. This marriage was arranged by yogamaya herself, which is the Lord's Divine illusory power. Lord Brahma acted here as a priest, and only 10 million trustful friends of Radha and Krishna (including sakhas, peacocks, parrots, cows and monkeys) were allowed to be present. Moreover, only these 10 million to whom Radharani and Krishna had given such grace can enter Bhandirvan at present.



# Mansarovar Lake



Lake Mansarovar and Vrindavan Temple are devoted to the Rasa-lila of Radha Krishna. Lake Mansarovar is located close to Vrindavan. The temple here is unique, as it contains only a murti of Radha. This place is connected with one of the Rasa-lila stories. The lake appeared from Radha's tears, when She was crying and longing for Krishna.

During the Rasa Dance, Radha got angry, as She saw pride in the gopis' minds. Each of them thought they were special, without noticing that Krishna was dancing with all of them at the same time. She left the dance and burst into tears because of Her longing for Krishna. This beautiful lake appeared from Her angry and bitter tears.

When Krishna noticed that Srimati Radharani was absent, He started worrying. He forgot that He was the Bhagavan dancing with all the gopis, and left the Rasa Dance.

He found Srimati Radharani on the shore of this lake.

It is hard to imagine that the Lord's lila would express just selfish games of love and jealousy. It is impossible to comprehend the deep meaning of this lila at once. What looks like jealous or anger from the side is in fact the utmost and purest expression of love. The Lord replies to each devotee's love in a perfect way. Perhaps, Sri Radha was hurt by the fact that Lord Krishna wanted to express all His love, but could not express love bigger than the love that gopis expressed to Him. Radha wanted everyone to be happy, but when there is pride, happiness is impossible.

**'He has everything in His hands. However, He submitted Himself to the highest expression of Himself, Āhlādīni (blissful Love), manifested in the form of Rādhā. She is the one who shows the way. She is the one who takes you to the highest stage of devotion, the stage where you will surrender completely to Kṛṣṇa. At that stage, due to your devotion, Kṛṣṇa Himself will also surrender to you.'**

Paramahansa Vishwananda

'The Essence of Sreemad Bhagavatam. A Seven-day Journey to Love'

p. 452



# Day 10





# VRINDA KUND

Tulsi-devi or Vrinda-devi (Vrinda-devi is the second name of the goddess) is one of the highest devotees of the Lord. Numerous scriptures emphasize the importance of obtaining her grace on the spiritual path.

**Skanda Purana, Kartikamasa-mahatmya, Chapter 8 'The Greatness of Tulsi', Verses 8-13, 18**

8. After the advent of the month of Kartik, those men who devoutly worship Tulsi and Hari, attain the highest region.

9. Hence, by all means, the Lord who destroys all pains and distresses should be worshipped with great devotion, with the tender leaves of Tulsi.

10. The devotee is honored in the world of Brahma for as many thousands of Yugas as the extent of the roots of the Tulsi plants fixed by him.

11. If a person takes a bath in the water that has come into contact with Tulsi leaves, he shall be rid of all sins. He rejoices in the abode of Vishnu.

12. Even if a person who makes a raised platform for planting Tulsi, O great sage, he gets instantly rid of his sins thereby. He becomes worthy



of being absorbed in Brahman.

13. O Brahman, the house in which there is a grove of Tulsi plants becomes a sacred place. The servants of Yama do not go there.

18. He who constantly listens to the greatness of Tulsi with great respect, becomes absolved of all his sins and goes to the world of





Brahma.

Long before Krishna's incarnation, Vrinda-devi had incarnated as a daughter of the emperor. She performed penances, so that Sriman Narayana would become her husband. Pleased by this, the Lord gave a blessing that all the penances performed in Vrindavan would be very powerful. So, Vrinda-devi had made this place holy, and it became known as Vrindavan. 'Van' means 'forest', and Vrindavan is 'Vrinda's forest'. Vrindavan is under the control of Vrinda-devi. Without her grace, it is impossible to approach the sacred lilas of Radha Krishna.

However, in that incarnation Vrinda did not become Narayana's spouse. Instead, she married Jalandhara demon, one of Shiva's sons. He had been the king of the three worlds for a very long time, and devas had a hard time during his reign. He had been blessed that, while his wife would be devoted to him, no one would be able to defeat him. Hence, Jalandhara gained power in the purity and fidelity of his wife.

Then Rishi Narada decided to outsmart Jalandhara. He told the demon about Mount Kailash, the beautiful abode of Lord Shiva, and about even more divine host of this abode, Shiva's consort Parvati, and Jalandhara became obsessed with lust. Jalandhara decided to fight with Shiva and force Parvati to marry him. The battle between Shiva and Jalandhara lasted for several centuries. However, Vrinda's devotion was so strong that even Shiva could not win the battle.

When the devas realized that there was no way for them to knock Jalandhara down, they went to Lord Vishnu and asked for His assistance. Vishnu agreed to help them. There was only one way to defeat the demon: to break Vrinda's chastity. Only if Vrinda would deceive him, Jalandhara would lose his power. The Lord went to Vrinda-devi in the form of her husband, and her chastity was shattered. Demigods used this to kill Jalandhara. When Vrinda-devi realized what had happened, Lord Vishnu revealed His real form. Furious, Vrinda cursed the Lord to become a stone. Lord Vishnu accepted this curse and promised to appear on Earth in the form of Shaligrams. He also blessed Vrinda-devi to eternally dwell with Him as



His consort on Vaikuntha.

He said, at that time, she could leave her body and become very dear to Him, just like His eternal consort Maha Lakshmi. The new body of Vrinda would become the Gandaki River, where Narayana would be with her eternally in the form of Shaligrams, and Tulsi trees would become her hair. Ever since, no worship to Narayana is possible without a leaf of Tulsi.

**Padma Purana, Srishti Khanda, Chapter 60 'In Praise of Tulsi', Verses 105-107**

The Lord said:

105. Of all leaves and flowers the auspicious Tulsi, which grants all desires, which belongs to and is very much liked by Vishnu, is the best.

106. Tulsi gives enjoyments and liberation, is the chief, greatest in all worlds and auspicious, resorting to which the best sages have eternally gone to heaven.

107. She was formerly planted by Vishnu for the good of all the







worlds. The leaf and flower of Tulsi are valued in all good works.

Later, Vrinda-devi came to the Earth again as Tulsi-devi and incarnated in Rasa-lila as a young gopi, friend of Srimati Radharani. Tulsi-devi is the organizer of all transcendent games of Sri Krishna and Srimati Radharani. She is the one who manages secret meetings of Radha and Krishna, who serves eternally for the pleasure of the Lord on Earth and on Vaikuntha, so that Rasa-lila would never stop.

Tulsi-devi has many trusted helpers, with the help of whom she takes care of lilas of Radha and Krishna. Her main assistant, parrot Daksha, is sitting on her hand. Together with her assistants, Tulsi decorates forests and summer houses for the Divine Couple and creates festive atmosphere. Even every smallest detail is planned by her: what peacocks would dance, what bumblebees would buzz, what birds would sing, what winds would blow, what flowers would decorate Their bed...

She has spies - her parrots, who make sure no one sees the secret Beloved and disturbs Them. What is more, Tulsi-devi personally takes Radha to the place of Her meeting with Krishna.

Tulsi-devi is responsible for the awakening of Radha and Krishna; she rushed Them home before the sunrise, so that no one would notice Their absence. On behalf of Radha, Tulsi delivers love notes and gifts to Sri Krishna. She maintains all the appliances in good order that are used in the games of Radha and Krishna: swings, musical instruments, clothing and jewelry, paints, treats and drinks.

Tulsi-devi has a beautiful face and skin with the color of molten gold. She is decorated with pearls and flowers and dressed in blue clothing. Tulsi tree has tender purple and green leaves and flower tassels with sweet scent attracting yogis to serve Krishna.

The Lord always decorates Himself with a garland of Tulsi. Lakshmi sometimes envies the leaves of Tulsi, for they are put on the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Even while Lakshmi Herself are at the Feet of the Lord, She is bound to visit Her devotees who pray for Her grace.

In the appreciation of Tulsi's devotion and effort in preparing Radha's love games for Krishna, Radha, together with Lalita and Vishakha,



prepared a surprise for her.

They made a beautiful throne, put Tulsi-devi and Krishna on it and organized a wedding. Lalita-sakhi held the marriage ceremony, and that is how Vrinda-devi, under the grace of Srimati Radharani, finally obtained Krishna as her husband.

Padma Purana, Srishti Khanda, Chapter 61 - Glorification of Tulsi

'O Tulsi, you are born immortal; O you, who are always dear to Vishnu, I am looking out for you for Vishnu; O you virtuous one, be a granter of boons. O you of a pure form, do that by which I shall daily worship Vishnu with (leaves etc.) produced from your body; O you, who destroy the dirt (i.e. the sin) in the Kali age.

That worship of Vishnu, which a man does after collecting Tulsi leaves, with (the recital of) this sacred prayer is a lakh crore times meritorious. '

Scriptures contain a lila showing the greatness of Tulsi-devi's devotion to Krishna. Radha was attached to Krishna so strongly, that She would not let Him go anywhere. He totally forgot about everything and spent all the time with Radha and the gopis. Then Sage Narada came to Radha and asked for charity. 'Take anything you wish,' - said Radha thinking that he wanted jewelry, cattle or food. Narada, however, asked for Krishna Himself. Radha had already given Her word and could not take it back. So, Narada said: 'Well, I can change Krishna for all earthly possessions, if they are equal to the weight of Krishna.'

Radha was ready to give anything to get Krishna back. Huge scales were brought in. On one tray of the scales sat Krishna, and on the other scale they started putting various items: fruit, jewels, and textiles. However, no matter what or how many items they put on the tray, the tray with Krishna would not rise a millimeter. Radha brought everything from all the homes, but still the tray with Krishna was heavier. Radha started crying at the thought that She would end up losing Krishna, but Someone's tender voice whispered to Her: 'Take everything off the tray and put a leaf of Tulsi on it.' The moment She did that, the scales, on which Krishna was sitting, flew to the air, and the tray with the leaf of Tulsi came down. Then the scales balanced perfectly. Radha obtained Krishna back. As of that time, they started



# GUPTA KUND

Gupta Kund holds a significant place in the Braj area, considered one of the most important kunds in the region. It is renowned as one of the three yoga-pithas in Braj. A yoga-pith is regarded as an eternal center of the Lord's divine pastimes. According to tradition, Radha and Krishna meet in the morning at Gupta Kund, during mid-day at Radha Kund, and near the Radha Govinda temple in Vrindavan at night.

At Gupta Kund, there exists an ancient Radha Krishna murti carved out of stone, believed to have been established by Vajranabha, the great-grandson of Krishna. Unfortunately, this murti has been desecrated by historical events, and as a result, formal worship is no longer conducted. However, a ritual persists where local villagers gather every Monday to pour milk over the murti of Radha and Krishna, maintaining a connection with the sacred site despite its historical challenges.





# TER KADAMB

Ter Kadamb is the place where Radharani and Krishna meet in the morning. 'Ter' means 'to call' and 'kadamb' means 'kadamba tree'. A huge kadamba tree used to grow here.

After breakfast, Krishna and his friends would go to tend the cows. They would come to this place with the kadamba tree and tie food bundles that their mothers had prepared for them to its branches. With a heavy heart, mother Yashoda would give the food bundle to Krishna and separate from Him for the whole day. This would make His bundle so heavy that the branches of a large, strong tree would bend to the ground.

Krishna would go into the forest with the gopas, and a little later, having said to come back soon, would return to Ter Kadamb. The older gopas would help Krishna meet Radha in the same way as the gopis would help Radha, but the very young boys, who did not know all the secrets of their friend, could not understand why He would go to the girls. 'It's so boring to be with the gopis. You cannot fight with them or roll in the sand, they cannot run fast and cry at the first opportunity. What games can be played with girls?' But it is in Ter Kadamba that fleeting meetings of the two Beloved take place in the morning...

And in the evening, Krishna would come here to call the cows to return back to Nandgaon. He would climb this huge tree and play His flute. Then thousands of cows would start running from everywhere. Krishna's flute would make only one sound, but each of the 999 thousand cows would hear only its own name.

This place was also a bhajan kutir of Srila Rupa Goswami, the place where he chanted the glory of the Lord and composed many poems dedicated to the Divine. When he was writing about the separation of Radha and Krishna, the leaves were falling from the trees around, and when he was writing about Them meeting up, the trees would turn green and blossom again.



Once, the following story happened in Ter Kadamba. On the eve of Sanatana Goswami's birthday, Rupa Goswami was sad that he had nothing to give to his brother in God. He was composing poetry in his kutir and noticed a girl. She approached Rupa and handed him a pot of sweet kheer, Radharani's favourite dish, and told him that she had brought him some food that was left over from the wedding in the village. Rupa Goswami was delighted that he now had food for Sanatana. He went to Pavan Sarovar, where Sanatana Goswami used to sing bhajans, and gave him this pot of food. Sanatana tasted the rice and fell into a state of bliss. When he asked where this amazing prasad came from, Rupa replied that it was left over from a wedding that took place in the village. 'But there was no wedding in the village,' Sanatana said in surprise. Then they realised that Radharani Herself had brought this sweet rice. The Goswamis ate it with tears dropping onto the prasad...

## NANDGAON

Nandgaon was the place where He spent nine years and 50 days with His foster parents. Nanda baba built the house on top of a big hill to protect his son from the demons that His uncle Kansa sent to get rid of the Lord. The hill where the main temple stands is called Nandishwara Hill. Lord Shiva performed penance for many centuries praying to Lord Krishna to let Shiva witness His transcendental games, and when Lord Krishna asked him about his wish, Lord Shiva told Him that his greatest desire is to become a mountain in Nandgaon so that the gopis could step on it, leaving the dust from their feet on it. Krishna granted him this boon and Lord Shiva became the hill of Nandishwara on which Nandgaon is located.

**Nand Bhavan** was built on the very spot where Nand Maharaj's residence used to be, right on top of the Nandishwar Hill. The temple was established in the 19th century, and it is the only temple in the world where Nanda and Yashoda, the foster parents of Lord Krishna, are the main deities.



**The Nandishwara Temple** can be found not far from the Nand Bhavan Temple and is considered one of the five most sacred temples of Lord Shiva in the Vraj region. It is home to the Shiva-lingam established by Lord Krishna's grandson. One day Lord Shiva, being in his usual guise in ashes and with a Vasuki serpent around his neck came, to the house of Nanda and Yashoda, willing to receive the darshan of Sri Krishna. However, his appearance embarrassed Yashoda and she refused to let Mahadev in.

After having received the refusal Lord Shiva decided to go into the forest to meditate, asking Lord Krishna for darshan. Little Krishna started crying and Yashoda was forced to call this strange saint (Lord Shiva). On seeing him, little Krishna smiled pleasantly and brought a sense of joy to everyone around. In response to Yashoda asking if there was anything else she could do, Lord Shiva asked for a morsel of Krishna's food. To this day, the Prasad that has already been offered to Lord Krishna at the Nand Bhavan Temple, is offered to Mahadev at Nandishwar Dham.



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